


Altered States:  
Sympathy, Identification, and the Problem of Hypnosis in  
Hawthorne, George Eliot, and Freud

by  
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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy  
Department of English  
New York University  
September 2003



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For Stephanie, Sam,  
and Will

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I have been aided in writing this dissertation by a Penfield Fellowship from the Department of English and an assistantship from the Institute for the History of the Production of Knowledge, for which I would like to thank Mary Poovey.

I owe a particular debt of gratitude to the members of my committee. I want to thank, first of all, my director, Perry Meisel for his support and his generosity with his time, even in the middle of August; Anselm Haverkamp, who crucially reframed my thinking about my topic on more than one occasion; and Avital Ronell for her encouragement and intellectual generosity. Their influence can be found throughout these pages – though I alone of course am responsible for how it has been received.

I also want to thank Pam Schirmeister, who was an important interlocutor as this project began to take shape, and Betsy Duquette, for her thoughtful reading of most of these pages and, somewhat more ambivalently, for the difficult questions she asked.

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## INTRODUCTION

In the early Socratic dialog *Ion*, Plato famously compares the “divine power” that inspires and possesses poets to a magnet. “This stone, you see,” Plato writes, “not only attracts iron rings on their own, but also confers on them a power by which they can in turn reproduce exactly the effect which the stone has, so as to attract other rings” (533d-e). “Similarly,” he argues, “the Muse makes some men inspired, from whom a chain of other men is strung out who catch their own inspiration from theirs” (533e). As is well known, Plato challenges in the dialog the legitimacy of literary knowledge. Poets and rhapsodes do not possess knowledge, he insists, they are not self-possessed, but perform or compose in a “state of inspiration (or enthusiasm [*enthusiasmos*]) and possession.” Inspiration and power are kept strictly apart from *techne*, from any skill or technique. Plato’s allegory of magnetism, however, does not so

much explain the transmission system he describes as name a mystery. The magnetism communicates a force; it allegorizes its transmission, a transitivity and communicability. The magnetism in Plato's *Ion* "serves as a prelude," as Jean-Luc Nancy puts it, to other later magnetisms, to animal magnetism or mesmerism and to hypnosis, and seems to prefigure their literary and philosophical as well as psychoanalytic appropriations. "The poets," as Nancy writes, "are the first hypnotists [*magnétisés*]," but only insofar as they have, we might add, already been hypnotized ("Sharing Voices" 234).

This dissertation examines the ambivalence of sympathy and identification in nineteenth-century literature and in psychoanalysis and its relation to the problem of hypnosis. The figure of hypnosis and earlier of mesmerism, I argue, represents a kind of limit of sympathy or identification, a blind or nonspecular identification that precedes or does not take place on the basis of a subject-object distinction. Hypnosis or mesmerism represents, in one sense, an ideal or fantasy of direct communication, a communication no longer mediated by the constraints of self or of consciousness. But it is also a figure of excessive communicability, bringing the subject into contact with a passive, mechanical automatism, and infecting

identity with something irreducibly other. Hypnosis is a figure of both immediate communion and of dissociation.

I do not attempt in this dissertation, however, to define hypnosis or claim to know what it is. Hypnosis and mesmerism, like the magnetism in Plato's *Ion*, name a mystery. There is not now, nor has there ever been, a broad consensus about the nature of hypnosis or mesmerism.<sup>1</sup> Franz Anton Mesmer's theory of "animal magnetism," which explained what came to be known as mesmerism in physical terms as the influence of a universal and all-pervasive magnetic fluid, was challenged almost immediately after his arrival in Paris, most notably by the Royal Commission, headed by Benjamin Franklin, which concluded that it was an effect of imagination and imitation.<sup>2</sup> Contemporary opinion on hypnosis is divided between the view that it is an altered state of consciousness, a "special state," and the argument that it is simply an elaborate form of role playing.<sup>3</sup> Hypnosis and mesmerism represent a wide range of phenomena and of theories attempting to account for them. Mesmerism was not so much "a body of doctrine," as Alison Winter observes, as "a diverse... set of practices whose meaning was very much up for grabs" (*Mesmerism* 10). Mesmerism and hypnosis

often served in the nineteenth century as touchstones for wildly divergent views of the psyche. I do not make a sharp distinction, as is sometimes done, between mesmerism and the later, supposedly more scientific hypnotism – a term coined in 1843 by the Scottish physician James Braid. For neither mesmerism nor hypnosis designates a unified concept or theory, and there is considerable overlap between them, particularly in relation to the questions of sympathy and identification, which will be my principle concern.

Mesmerism and hypnosis are from the very first inextricably bound up with sympathy and identification. Mesmerism and hypnosis belong, in a sense, however eccentrically, to the Post-Enlightenment discourse on sympathy. Magnetism and sympathy were in fact often used as synonyms – as when, for instance, Hawthorne writes in *The Houses of the Seven Gables* of the universal “sympathy or magnetism” that vibrates among all “classes of organized life” or of “the great sympathetic chain of human nature.” Sympathy is implicated in mesmerism and later in hypnosis not only in the rapport between the mesmerist and the mesmerized subject, which was commonly seen as kind of sympathy (a “perfect sympathy” as one mid-century “expert” put it), but also of the



purported immediacy of the subject's relation to what is outside (as well as inside) its self. Mesmerism and hypnosis were often understood to bring the subject into direct contact or immediate communion with a greater unity of which it was a part. Mesmerism, in particular, was frequently depicted as awakening an "inner sense," a sympathetic clairvoyance that enabled the subject to overcome differences and distance and to achieve the unity (between self and other, mind and nature, subject and object, conscious and unconscious, etc.) it could not in a normal state.<sup>4</sup>

Mesmerism and hypnosis, however, represent not only the fantasy of an immediate communion, of a perfect sympathy, but also its threat. The unity it promises takes place only on the basis of a dissociation. In hypnosis and hypnotic suggestion, Freud wrote in the "Preface" to his translation of Hippolyte Bernheim's *Suggestion* (1888), an idea "has been introduced into the brain of a hypnotized person by an external influence and has been accepted by him as though it had arisen spontaneously" (*SE* 1: 77). It involves an identification so profound that the other is not recognized as other. This view of hypnosis as a blind, nonspecular identification was, under the influence of Bernheim, widespread in

the 1880s and 1890s. But it was, as I argue at greater length in Chapter 2, already a commonplace early in the century in relation to mesmerism and animal magnetism. Hegel, for instance, wrote in his *Philosophy of Mind* [Geistes] in 1830 that in hypnosis, or what he calls in the language of the day “animal magnetism” and “magnetic somnambulism,” the subject is “immersed” in a “form of immediacy, without any distinctions between subjective and objective” (105). The magnetized subject, he argues, does not perceive “its relationship to the world” as a relation and is unable to tell what he “receives, beholds, and brings to knowledge from his own inward self” and what comes “from the suggestions of the person with whom he stands in relation” (104-5).

The problem of hypnosis raises critical questions about the subject and the subject in its relation to language and to others, questions that are, but are not merely, literary. My approach in this dissertation is interdisciplinary, in part because the question raised by the problem of hypnosis are. They cut across disciplinary boundaries in the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, impacting literature and philosophy, as well as the emerging sciences of the mind and of society. While my primary focus is on

literature, I begin with Freud, for his psychoanalytic concept of identification remains arguably the dominant model in contemporary thinking about identification. Freud's theory of identification is also, as I try to show, tied from the beginning to the problem of hypnosis, which it can neither fully account for nor entirely exclude. What Freud repeatedly called the "riddle [*Rätse*l] of hypnosis" resists psychoanalytic appropriation. Psychoanalysis in this dissertation does not provide a theory or an explanation of hypnosis, which is then applied to literature. Rather, Freud's engagement with the problem of hypnosis helps to make readable what is at stake in the other, "literary" texts I discuss – and opens up I hope a way of approaching the question of their relation otherwise.

Chapter 1 examines the curious place of hypnosis in psychoanalysis and considers the ways in which, despite his ostensible repudiation of it – a repudiation that is in many ways constitutive of psychoanalysis itself – the problem of hypnosis continued to impact Freud's thought. While it often figures, especially in his writings on therapy and technique, as the specular other of psychoanalysis, hypnosis never ceased to be for Freud the

paradigmatic instance, along with dreams, of the unconscious. Hypnosis not only played a formative role in the so-called “discovery of the unconscious” in the nineteenth century, but also, as I try to demonstrate, in the emergence of the concept of psychical trauma. Focussing on Freud’s early, pre-psychoanalytic writings, and specifically on the “Frau Emmy von N.” case history in the *Studies on Hysteria* (1895), I explore the implications of the problem of hypnosis in the cathartic method – in both its theory of traumatic hysteria and in its therapeutic procedure, its talking cure. The “riddle” of hypnosis and of hypnotic suggestion is bound up for Freud with what he called “the magic of words,” with an event of language. The chapter concludes with a reading of *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* (1921) and of Freud’s later writings on telepathy and thought-transference. *Group Psychology*, which contains Freud’s most extensive discussion of identification and of the riddle of hypnosis, revolves around, I argue, the question of an originary identification or sociality that is prior to the positioning of self and other, subject and object. My reading tracks the way in which the riddle of hypnosis overcomes and supplants the question of identification in *Group Psychology* and its

displacement in Freud's later writings onto the question of telepathy and thought-transference.

From the psychoanalytic concept of identification, I turn in Chapter 2 to an earlier Romantic discourse on sympathy. The repeated staging of scenes of mesmerism in Hawthorne's fiction is, as I try to show, bound up with sympathy, a key ethical and aesthetic notion in his writing, engaging both the tradition of eighteenth-century moral philosophy in which he was educated and Romanticism and Transcendentalism. Mesmerism is in *The House of the Seven Gables*, I argue, and later in *The Blithedale Romance*, an allegory of romance, of both its reading and its writing. The staging in the novel of a tale and its telling as mesmeric reflects an ambivalence towards romance fiction, towards the force of its language and the loss of sense and power that seems to attend it. My reading links the figure of mesmerism in the novel not only to sympathy, and specifically to a kind of blind identification, but also to allegory and to the tensions in his fiction between maintaining and dissolving boundaries and differences.

My final chapter looks at George Eliot's aesthetic of sympathy, which is one of the most significant formulations of sympathy in

nineteenth-century literature and a major touchstone in discussions of it. “Eliot’s *Middlemarch* represents,” according to Marc Redfield, “the culmination of a discourse on sympathy which originates with Shaftesbury and eighteenth-century psychological aesthetics” (*Phantom Formations* xi). While Eliot does not thematize mesmerism or hypnosis the way, for instance, Hawthorne and Poe do, her fiction is, as I try to demonstrate, preoccupied with the problem of hypnosis. Eliot’s aesthetic of sympathy and the complex notion of organic form that underlies it presupposes the kind of specular or perceptual distance that hypnosis would seem to collapse. The chapter examines the way in which the problem of hypnosis disrupts her aesthetic of sympathy in “The Lifted Veil” and in *Daniel Deronda* – a novel that, I argue, revolves around the ambivalence of sympathy, dramatizing that ambivalence in the figures of Gwendolen Harleth and Daniel Deronda. What come to the fore in my reading of George Eliot – though it runs through the earlier chapters as well – is the way in which the supposed naturalness of sympathy and its unmediated communication is inseparable from a certain mediation, from something unnatural and technical, material and social.

In each of the writers I discuss, the problem of hypnosis is bound up with what in their own literary (or analytic) performance escapes cognitive mastery and understanding, with what remains unpredictable and incalculable in it. It is, however, not simply a matter of the writer (or analyst) being in the position of the hypnotist, but also of the writer as hypnotized. The problem of hypnosis, I suggest, inheres in the openness to alterity, in the passivity and receptivity that is, however ambivalently, an inextricable part of their writing.

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### Notes

1. On the history of hypnosis and mesmerism, see Alan Gauld, *A History of Hypnosis*; Adam Crabtree, *From Mesmer to Freud: Magnetic Sleep and the Roots of Psychological Healing*; Derek Forest, *Hypnotism: A History*; Jonathan Miller, "Going Unconscious"; and Henri Ellenberger's *The Discovery of the Unconscious*." See also Alison Winter's social or cultural history *Mesmerism: Powers of Mind in Victorian Britain*.
2. On the Royal Commission and the controversies surrounding Mesmer in Paris, see Robert Darnton, *Mesmerism and the End of the Enlightenment in France*.

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3. For an overview on the contemporary debates about hypnosis, see Gauld 586-608.

4. On the links between the “inner sense” of mesmerism and the inner moral sense of eighteenth-century moral philosophy as well as Romantic formulations of inner sense, see Tatar, *Spellbound* (45-81).



## CHAPTER 1

### HYPNOTIC ANALYSIS

*Hypnosis, what do you mean, hypnosis, everything we do is hypnosis too.*

— Sigmund Freud to Sergei Pankeiev (the Wolf Man)<sup>1</sup>

Hypnosis occupies a curious place in psychoanalysis.<sup>2</sup> On the one hand, Freud repudiated hypnosis and decisively set psychoanalysis apart from the hypnosis out of which it emerged. “Psycho-analysis proper [*eigentliche Psychoanalyse*],” Freud wrote in his *Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis* (1916-17), “began when I dispensed with the help of hypnosis” (SE 16: 292). “As everyone knows,” according to Jacques Lacan, “it was by distinguishing itself from hypnosis that analysis became established” (*Four Fundamental Concepts* 273).

On the other hand, hypnosis never ceases to be for Freud the principal evidence, along with dreams, of the unconscious. “Even before the time of psycho-analysis,” he observes in “The Unconscious” (1915), “hypnotic experiments, and especially post-hypnotic suggestion, had tangibly demonstrated the existence and mode of operations of the mental unconscious” (SE 14: 168-69). One of the “fundamental lessons” of hypnosis and especially of “the behavior of subjects *after* hypnosis” is, Freud writes in 1923, “the existence of mental processes that one could only describe as ‘unconscious’” (SE 19: 192). “The well-known experiment... of ‘post-hypnotic suggestion’ teaches us,” he argues in “A Note on the Unconscious in Psycho-Analysis” (1912), “to insist upon the importance of the distinction between *conscious* and *unconscious* and seems to increase its value” (SE 12: 261). Freud makes similar statements throughout his writings – from his early pre-psychoanalytic writings to the late, unfinished “Some Elementary Lessons in Psycho-Analysis” (1940), where he asserts that “it is possible in the case of persons in a state of hypnosis to prove experimentally that there are such things as unconscious psychical acts” (SE 23: 285).

It is, it would seem, difficult for Freud to imagine a theory of the unconscious without a theory of hypnosis. They can be neither confused nor dissociated. “It is not easy to over-estimate,” Freud writes in “A Short Account of Psycho-Analysis” (1924), “the importance of the part played by hypnotism in the history of the origin of psycho-analysis” (SE 19: 192). Psychoanalysis “has inherited from hypnotism,” he acknowledges, a “theoretical” as well as a therapeutic “legacy” [*Erbe*] (SE 19: 192). The “well-known phenomenon of post-hypnotic suggestion” is not only “an admirable example [*vorzügliches Vorbild*],” as Strachey translates it, “of the influences that can be exerted on the conscious state by what is unconscious,” but as the German *Vorbild* (literally: prefiguration) suggests also its model (SE 11: 19; translation modified).<sup>3</sup>

Hypnosis, and especially hypnotic suggestion, is for Freud a paradigmatic instance of the unconscious – if not quite a royal road. It is in fact precisely its willingness to take hypnosis (as well as dreams) into account that, he will insist, distinguishes psychoanalysis from philosophy. “To most people who have been educated in philosophy,” he writes in *The Ego and the Id* (1923),

the idea of something psychical which is not also conscious is so inconceivable that it seems to them absurd and refutable

simply by logic. I believe this is only because they have not studied the relevant phenomena of hypnosis and dreams, which – quite apart from pathological manifestations – necessitates this view. Their psychology of consciousness is incapable of solving the problems of dreams and hypnosis. (SE 19: 17)

The “problem of hypnosis,” according to Freud, like that of dreams, necessitates a theory of the unconscious. The “enigma” or “riddle” (*Rättsel*) of hypnosis, as he repeatedly calls it, is the very enigma of the unconscious – the singular object of psychoanalysis. While he tried to set psychoanalysis apart from hypnosis and to banish it from the analytic scene, Freud nonetheless continued to place the problem or enigma of hypnosis at the very center of psychoanalysis. He attempted, in other words, both to exclude hypnosis and to appropriate it theoretically, to resolve the enigma psychoanalytically. Neither, however, will prove to be entirely successful.

While it later takes on great theoretical importance, Freud appears to have initially abandoned hypnosis simply as a technical procedure. He began using hypnosis therapeutically in the late 1880s with Bernheim’s technique of hypnotic suggestion, which sought to remove symptoms by direct suggestion. Freud also employed, “from the very first” he claims in his *Autobiographical*

*Study* (1925), a method he attributed to Breuer of investigating patients under hypnosis about the traumatic origins of their hysterical symptoms – what he calls in *Studies on Hysteria* (1895) “hypnotic analysis.” Breuer’s cathartic method, Freud reminds us in his Clark University lectures, or the *Five Lectures on Psycho-Analysis* (1910), “presupposed putting the patient into a state of deep hypnosis” – something he was not always able to do (SE 11: 22). Freud tells the story in his *Autobiographical Study* of a patient who awoke from hypnosis and threw her arms around him, making him suddenly grasp “the nature of the mysterious [libidinal] element that was at work behind hypnosis,” and forcing him, “in order to exclude, or at all events to isolate it,... to abandon hypnosis” (SE 20: 27). He appears, however, to have given up hypnosis gradually rather than to have made a sudden break with it. There is considerable overlap between Freud’s use of hypnotic analysis and other methods such as “concentration,” the so-called “pressure technique” (*Druckprozedur*), and “free association” – as there is earlier between the direct suggestion and the cathartic method.<sup>4</sup> His movement away from and dissatisfaction with hypnosis is certainly apparent by the time of the *Studies on Hysteria*. What

made him “determined to give up hypnosis” was, he declared some years later in his Clark University lectures, “I could not bring more than a fraction of my patients into a hypnotic state” (*SE* 11: 22). Freud probably gave up hypnosis for good (“except,” as he put it, “for a few special experiments”) around 1896, though it is difficult to date precisely.<sup>5</sup> There is no letter to Fliess announcing that he has dispensed with the help of hypnosis.

Freud’s “break” with hypnosis, however, acquires considerably greater significance belatedly. Hypnosis becomes, especially in his writings on therapy and technique, the specular other of psychoanalysis. By 1904, Freud is insisting that there is “the greatest possible antithesis” between suggestion and analysis (*SE* 7: 260). His “break” with hypnosis comes to be associated by Freud, from quite early on, with his rejection of Breuer’s notion of the “hypnoid state,” which they had both argued in their “Preliminary Communication” to the *Studies on Hysteria* was “the basis and *sine qua non* [*Grundlage und Bedingung*] of hysteria” (*SE* 2: 12), in favor of a model based on “defense” and eventually “repression.” “It was, he writes in his *Autobiographical Study*, “a case of ‘hypnoid hysteria’ versus ‘neuroses of defense’” (*SE* 20: 27) – and in a sense of a

hypnotic versus a repressed unconscious. Although “resistance” first appears in his writings as the resistance to hypnosis and suggestion, Freud argues in his Clark University lectures that “its is only when you exclude hypnosis that you can observe resistances and repressions” (*SE* 11: 26).<sup>6</sup> “Hypnosis conceals the resistance,” he writes, the phenomenon from which he derives his theory of repression (*SE* 11: 26). “The theory of repression is,” Freud asserts in “On the History of the Psycho-Analytic Movement” (1914), “the corner-stone on which the whole structure of psycho-analysis rests” (*SE* 14: 16). “It is the most important part of it,” he insists; “and yet it is nothing but a theoretical formulation” of the “phenomenon” of resistance that can be “observed... if one undertakes an analysis... without resorting to hypnosis” (*SE* 14: 16). “The use of hypnosis was bound to hide this resistance,” Freud argues; “the history of psycho-analysis proper therefore only begins with the new technique which dispenses with hypnosis” (*SE* 14: 16).<sup>7</sup> While in his lectures at Clark University in 1909 Freud had credited Breuer with bringing “psycho-analysis into being” and had described the gradual evolution of psychoanalysis from the hypnotic-cathartic method, less than five years later, in the more polemical “On the History of

the Psycho-Analytic Movement,” he declares that “psycho-analysis is my creation” and the “break” with hypnosis becomes constitutive of the identity of psychoanalysis itself – of what is properly its and his own.

The problem of hypnosis is, as Freud says of the “problem of anxiety,” “a nodal point in which the most diverse and most important questions converge” (SE 16: 373): questions of the boundaries of psychoanalysis and of its subject; questions of the subject in its relation to others and to language and of the relation of internal to external; questions, that is, of the delimitation of the psyche, or perhaps more precisely, of the delimitation of the unconscious. And yet, as Freud acknowledges in *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* (1921), hypnosis eludes his attempts to give a “rational explanation” of it (SE 18: 115). “Hypnosis has something positively uncanny about it,” he writes (SE 18: 125).. “There is still a great deal in it which we must recognize as unexplained and mysterious” (SE 18: 115). Hypnosis escapes psychoanalytic appropriation; Freud can neither fully incorporate it into psychoanalytic theory, nor entirely exclude it. The “boundary line that separates Freud from his prehistory” is also, as Mikkel



Borch-Jacobsen remarks in *The Freudian Subject*, “an internal limit or boundary of psychoanalysis” (51).<sup>8</sup>

Freud’s “break” with hypnosis is bound up not only with his rejection of Breuer’s “hypnoid state,” but also with his attempt to supplant contemporary notions of suggestion, of sympathy and imagination, of psychical contagion and hysterical imitation, and to replace them with a properly psychoanalytic concept of identification. In the “Preface” to his translation of Bernheim’s *Suggestion* (1888), Freud defines a hypnotic suggestion as “a conscious idea, which has been introduced into the brain of the hypnotized person by an external influence and has been accepted by him as though it had arisen spontaneously” (*SE* 1: 77). Hypnosis, in other words, involves an identification so profound that the other is not recognized as other – a blind, non-specular identification that precedes or does not take place on the basis of a subject-object distinction. It entails, as Borch-Jacobsen puts it, “a radical forgetting of the other – a forgetting inaccessible to any recollection” (“Hypnosis in Psychoanalysis” 50). It is as such a blind identification, with its disconcerting lack of differentiation and of perceptual or specular distance, that hypnosis haunts

psychoanalysis. In *The Freudian Subject* and in a series of related essays collected in *The Emotional Tie*, Borch-Jacobsen has effectively demonstrated the importance in Freud's thought of the problem of identification or what he calls (following Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy) *mimesis* – for *mimesis* does not presume the perceptual or specular distance that is at issue.<sup>9</sup> Freud tried, Borch-Jacobsen argues, to contain *mimesis* both theoretically and practically; he attempts to control it by attributing it to a subject, to the (unconscious) desire of a subject that is anterior to it – an attempt that is closely bound up with his “break” with hypnosis. But, Freud never succeeds in containing *mimesis* or in controlling it either theoretically or practically. His texts, as Borch-Jacobsen concedes, “at once include and evade” his “mimetology” (*The Freudian Subject* 53).<sup>10</sup> Freud increasingly placed identificatory mechanisms at the origin of the self and of sociality, of both individual and collective identity. Freud's writings on identification and hypnosis, and on what he called “the obscure problems bordering on hypnotism,” such as telepathy and “thought-transference” (*Gedanken-Übertragung*) often seem to be at odds with his previously constituted psychoanalytic system, to presume a

state or mode of mental functioning that knows no distinction between self and other, subject and object, however “allergic” his psychoanalytic theory might be to it.<sup>11</sup> Freud seems at times to acknowledge a kind of originary mimesis out of which the subject is born. “I am the breast,” as Freud writes in the famous, posthumously published fragment. “Only later: ‘I have it’ – that is, ‘I am not it’...” (*SE* 23: 299).

My principal concern in this chapter is not so much the maintenance of the notion of the subject in Freud’s writing, or the degree to which the Freudian subject or the subject of the unconscious remains unified and unifying – remains, that is, a traditional philosophical or Cartesian subject of consciousness only cut off from the moment of self-presence – though it is the case, as Borch-Jacobsen among others has shown, of a certain strain of Freud’s thought. Rather, I want to consider what in identification in Freud “resists,” as Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy put it, “a logic of the identity-of-subject” (“The Unconscious Is Destructured” 192). The ongoing significance of Freud’s thought, I want to suggest, lies as much in the possibilities opened up by such resistances as in his relative success or failure at integrating them into psychoanalytic

theory. Freud's thinking is, as Samuel Weber has argued, "open to the imposition of alterity, above and beyond the unavoidable need to assimilate such otherness to the conceptual constraints of a cognitive discourse" ("Laughing in the Meanwhile" 696). Freud's writings remain, despite his lapses, one of the most rigorous and sustained attempts to think our subjection to otherness, to take it into account, and the problem of hypnosis is, as he himself indicated, one of the domains in which this thinking takes place.

This chapter will examine Freud's engagement with the enigma of hypnosis, both early and late. Before turning to consider the ways in which the problem of hypnosis returns in to dislocate psychoanalysis in *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* and its continuation in "the obscure problems bordering on hypnotism," telepathy and "thought-transference," I want look at the hypnotic pre-history of a psychoanalysis. For the pre-history of psychoanalysis, as Freud has taught us of the pre-history of the subject, is a past that is not entirely past.

## **Crypt Doctor**

*“I am a woman from the last century.”*

— Fanny Moser (Emmy von N.)

It would be difficult to overestimate the importance of hypnosis in the emergence of the concept of psychic trauma in the late-nineteenth century. The origin of the modern concept of trauma is generally traced to attempts in the 1860s to account for the belated effects of railway accidents on those who had escaped without any apparent physical injuries and specifically to publication in 1866 of John Erichsen’s *On Railways and Other Injuries of the Nervous System*,<sup>12</sup> A British surgeon, Erichsen argued that “railway spine,” as he called it, was the result of a “spinal concussion,” caused by a violent a blow or shock to the spine. Erichsen attributed “railway spine” to the physical shock and damage caused by the accident.<sup>13</sup> As “when a magnet is struck a heavy blow with a hammer,” he wrote, “the nervous force is to a certain extent shaken out of the man, and that he has in some way lost nervous power” (Quoted in Schivelbusch 140). While he did not ignore psychological factors, Erichsen was unable, as Wolfgang Schivelbusch notes “to distinguish between the accident’s

mechanical *power* to shock and the psychic *reception* of that shock” (142).

Erichsen’s theory received a significant challenge in 1883 by another British surgeon, Herbert W. Page. Page, who was employed by a railway, argued that the effects of railway accidents could be explained by “purely psychical causes,” by severe fright primarily but also “in ‘wholly unconscious ways’ by a desire for compensation” (Caplan 18; Young 17). “Railway spine” became “railway brain” or as Page preferred “nervous shock.” Drawing on James Paget’s concept of “neuromimesis” or “nervous mimicry” (an involuntary imitation of organic disease), Page compared the effect of railway accidents to a kind of voluntary hypnotic state. “As of the hypnotic state,” he wrote,

so of other neuromimeses also, the patients may voluntarily submit themselves to their exhibition, and the manifestation thereof become in themselves not less real. The existence of a certain amount of control is shown moreover by the disappearance of the mimicries, when all cause for their representation is removed.... The typical neuromimesis came to an end shortly after the settlement of claim had secured for the patients complete repose of mind, and had freed them from the necessity of any longer allowing themselves to be victims of the mimetic phenomena. (Quoted in Caplan 18).

While Page did not accuse those suffering from nervous shock of faking – they are in a sense “victims of the mimetic phenomena” –

his volitional model is at odds with the concepts of neuromimesis and hypnosis on which it is based. Page “simply could not fathom,” according to Eric Caplan, “the possibility of unconscious, involuntary submission to psychical forces” (19) – though just such a submission was implicit in Paget’s neuromimesis and in most contemporary theories of hypnosis.

Charcot’s intervention into the debate was crucial. Siding with Page and his American supporters, such as James Jackson Putman and George Walton – and opposing the view of German neurologists like Hermann Oppenheim that there was a separate group of “traumatic neuroses” (the term is Oppenheim’s) – Charcot argued that the symptoms of railway accidents “are in fact, whether occurring in man or woman, simply manifestations of hysteria” (221).<sup>14</sup> In a series of experiments at the Salpêtrière in 1884 and 1885, Charcot reproduced traumatic paralyses under hypnosis – as he had already reproduced hysterical symptoms – and demonstrated that such paralyses were hysterical rather than organic.<sup>15</sup> Charcot’s “artificial products showed,” according to Freud, “down to their smallest details, the same features as spontaneous attacks” (*SE* 20: 13). Charcot saw hysteria as a

specific neurological disorder, a dysfunction resulting from a “hereditary predisposition to nervous degeneration,” and an *agent provocateur* (Micale, *Approaching Hysteria* 27). Traumas such as railway accidents were, for Charcot, merely *agent provocateurs*, just the “incidental causes,” as Freud puts it, of hysteria in those with a hereditary predisposition to it. Strong emotions like extreme fright could produce, Charcot argued in his *Clinical Lectures on Diseases of the Nervous System*, a kind of “hypnotic state” in which “the mental *spontaneity*, the *will*, or the *judgment*, is more or less suppressed or obscured, and suggestions become easy” (335). Charcot “equates” the “special state of mind during the trauma,” as Freud explains, “with the artificially induced state of hypnosis” (*SE* 3: 29). Traumatic symptoms were the result of auto-suggestions – often after a period of unconscious psychological “elaboration” in which they acquired greater strength.<sup>16</sup> Hypnosis was for Charcot, in other words, not only an artificial hysteria and a technique that allowed him to reproduce it experimentally, but also the model on which his theory of *hystérie traumatique* or traumatic hysteria was based.



When they wrote their “Preliminary Communication,” which preceded as well as introduced the *Studies on Hysteria*, he and Breuer were, Freud later acknowledged, “completely under the spell (*Banne*) of Charcot’s researches” (*SE* 11:21). “Breuer’s hypothesis of hypnoid states was itself,” he remarks in his Clark University lectures, “nothing but a reflection of the fact Charcot had reproduced traumatic paralysis artificially under hypnosis” (*SE* 11: 21). In the conclusion to their “Preliminary Communication,” Freud and Breuer explicitly place their attempt to uncover “the psychical mechanism of hysterical phenomena... along the path first traced so successfully by Charcot with his explanation and artificial imitation of hysterical paralyzes” (*SE* 2: 17). Their work is, Freud wrote at the time, a “continuation” of Charcot’s. The theory of hysteria Breuer and Freud present in the “Preliminary Communication” is, as they put it, “an extension of the theory of traumatic hysteria” (*SE* 2: 5). It is, in other words, an extension (and a generalization) of *Charcot’s* theory of traumatic hysteria. “There is a complete analogy between traumatic paralysis and common non-traumatic hysteria,” Freud argued in “On the Psychical Mechanism of Hysterical Phenomenon” (1893), a lecture

contemporaneous with the publication of the “Preliminary Communication.” “The pattern of traumatic hysteria, as it was laid down by Charcot for hysterical paralyses, applies quite generally to all hysterical phenomena” (SE 3: 30-1).<sup>17</sup> Their notion of “hypnoid states” is similarly an extension and generalization of Charcot’s ideas. “We should like to balance,” they write, “the familiar thesis that hypnosis is an artificial hysteria [that is, Charcot’s theory] by another – the basis and *sine qua non* of hysteria is the existence of hypnoid states” (SE 2: 12). Rather than hypnosis being an artificially produced hysteria, in a reversal of priority, hysteria becomes an effect of a more generalized hypnotic or hypnoid state. This is why, for instance, William James in reviewing their work sees it as confirming F. W. H. Myers’ observation that “hysteria is a disease of the hypnotic stratum” (Kiell 31).<sup>18</sup> A hypnoid state is, for Breuer and Freud, an altered state of consciousness characterized by amnesia and by a radical absence of resistance and of conscious reflection. In a hypnoid state the subject lacks the specular distance necessary to cognitively grasp, to remember, or defend against what happens to it. Hypnoid states are, as Akira Mizuta

Lippit all too aptly puts it, “preliminal” (108). What is traumatic is, in a sense, precisely this lack of distance.

The theory and method of hypno-catharsis, like so many others at the time, is an amalgam of Charcot’s ideas and Hippolyte Bernheim’s – despite the seeming incompatibility of the two schools.<sup>19</sup> In the late 1880s and early 90s, Freud translated two of Bernheim’s books into German as well as two of Charcot’s. While he and Breuer differentiate themselves from Charcot in some ways – they attribute, for instance, as did Bernheim, considerably less importance to hereditary predisposition<sup>20</sup> – their reliance on him theoretically generates certain problems. For Charcot discouraged the therapeutic – as opposed to the experimental – use of hypnosis. Hypnosis was, for Charcot, quite literally the disease of which it purports to be cure. To be hypnotizable was, for him, a symptom of hysteria; to be hypnotized was by definition to be a hysteric. What I want to suggest is that hypnosis or the hypnotic state figures in the *Studies on Hysteria* as a kind of *pharmakon* in Derrida’s sense of the term.<sup>21</sup> It is both the cause of the disease and its cure, both the “basis and *sine qua non* of hysteria” and the means of combating it, both the generator of amnesia and a technique for overcoming it.

In their "Preliminary Communication" and in the rest the *Studies on Hysteria*, Breuer and Freud present hysteria as a disease of the memory, as a *maladie de la memoire* as the French called it.<sup>22</sup> "Hysteric suffer," in their famous phrase, "mainly from reminiscences." While they give considerable emphasis to remembering, the hypno-cathartic method has a radical forgetting inscribed within it. In the "Preliminary Communication" Freud and Breuer elide the distinction, which will later be so important in psychoanalysis, between remembering and repeating, recollecting and acting out. "Recollection [*Erinnern*] without affect," they write, "invariably produces no result. The psychical process which originally took place must be repeated [*wiederholt*] as vividly as possible; it must be brought back to its *status nascendi* and then given verbal utterance" (*SE* 2: 6). Freud writes in similar terms in his *Autobiographical Study* of the role of "hypnotic reproduction *in statu nascendi*" in the cathartic method (*SE* 20: 21). But, as Borch-Jacobsen observes in "Hypnosis in Psychoanalysis": "repetition *in statu nascendi*, in the state of being born, is clearly not remembering; it is neither telling a story nor representing a past event *as past*" (46). It "is reproducing it tangibly as though it were

actually happening,” as Freud later writes of the transference, “instead of remembering” (*SE* 20: 226). “In the hypnotic state,” as Lacan notes, “verbalization is dissociated from the *prise de conscience*,” that is from insight into the event (“Function and Field of Speech” 46). In their account of hypnotic reproduction in the “Preliminary Communication,” however, Freud and Breuer do not seem to differentiate between repeating and remembering, or, in the Platonic terms crucial to Borch-Jacobsen’s argument, between “*mimesis*, in which the speaker enacts a role” and “*diegesis*, in which the speaker recounts events” – though their use of the word “catharsis” suggests a theatrical dimension (“Hypnosis in Psychoanalysis” 45).<sup>23</sup> Freud and Breuer repeatedly stress the “vividness” even the “hallucinatory vividness” of their patient’s repetitions and reproductions. “One of our patients,” they writes, “reproduced under hypnosis with hallucinatory vividness,” another “re-lived with hallucinatory clarity” (*SE* 2: 9). Their patients are immersed in the scenes of their traumas, reliving them rather than maintaining a reflective distance from them or recognizing them as past. They must be reproduced or relived “as vividly as possible,” vividly enough at least to generate the “accompanying affect.” Their

patients' reproductions under hypnosis bear a disconcerting similarity to the hysterical attacks they are meant to cure, attacks which Freud and Breuer argue can be shown to be the "hallucinatory reproduction of a memory" or the "re-living" of a scene (*SE 2: 14*). They even recommend provoking such attacks ("...or if, better still, one can succeed in provoking the attack under hypnosis" (*SE 2: 14*)) – though it is not clear if it is meant to be for investigative or therapeutic purposes.

What matters in the hypno-cathartic method is, at least initially, I want to argue, not so much the recollection of the psychological trauma as its reproduction *in statu nascendi*. "We get him to experience it a second time," as Freud explained in his lecture, "but under hypnosis" (*SE 3: 39*). It is this re-experiencing or reliving of the psychological trauma that makes its conscious recollection possible – or, more precisely, it is what makes it possible for the physician to intervene in and to alter the patient's relation to it. It is this that the cathartic method shares with the other contemporary "therapeutic procedures" cited by Freud and Breuer in the "Preliminary Communication" as being similar to it. "By taking the patient back by means of a mental artifice to the very moment at

which the symptom first appeared,” they quote Alfred Binet, “we may make him more susceptible to a therapeutic suggestion” (SE 2: 7). The hypnotist, they quote Joseph Delboeuf as writing, “puts the subject back into the state in which his trouble first appeared and uses words to combat that trouble, as it now makes a fresh emergence [*renaissant*]” (SE 2: 7). They also mention that Pierre Janet, had used a “method analogous to ours” (SE 2: 7). Janet’s analogous method, however, did not involve recollecting or abreacting traumatic memories but altering or eliminating them.<sup>24</sup> What the cathartic method shared with Janet’s procedure was, Freud later writes in his *Autobiographical Study*, “the tracing back of hysterical symptoms to events in the patient’s life, and their removal by means of hypnotic reproduction *in statu nascendi*”— though he is conspicuously vague about how that “removal” took place (SE 20: 21). He and Breuer are considerably more direct in the “Preliminary Communication”:

It will now be understood how it is that the psychotherapeutic procedure which we have described in these pages has a curative effect. *It brings to an end the operative force of the idea which was not abreacted in the first instance, by allowing its strangulated affect to find its way out through speech; and it subjects it to associative correction by introducing it into normal consciousness (under light hypnosis) or by removing it through*

*the physician's suggestion, as is done in somnambulism accompanied by amnesia. (SE 2: 17; their italics)*

Their procedure cures, in other words, either by introducing an idea or memory into “normal consciousness (under light hypnosis),” which subjects it to “associative correction” and to the “normal wearing away process” that deprives it of its “force” and allows it to be forgotten, *or* by removing it through hypnotic suggestion. (Freud uses the latter method, as I discuss below, in the “Frau Emmy von N.” case.) Hypnosis figures in the cathartic method as a virtual technology for altering our relation to the past, a technique for remembering and for forgetting.

In the tension between remembering and repeating, between the “impulse to remember” and the “compulsion to repeat,” Freud’s writings “thematize,” according to Cynthia Chase, “the tension between the cognitive and performative aspects of language” (“Translating the Transference” 113). Hypnosis and hypnotic suggestion are associated by Freud from the very beginning with the performative dimension of language, or what he called the “magic of words” (*Zauber des Wortes*). “Words are,” Freud wrote in “Psychical (or Mental) Treatment” (1890),

the essential tool of mental treatment [*Seelenbehandlung*]. A layman will no doubt find it hard to understand how



pathological disorders of the body and mind can be eliminated by “mere” words. He will feel that he is being asked to believe in magic. And he will not be so very wrong, for the words which we use in our everyday speech are nothing other than watered-down magic. (*SE* 3: 283)<sup>25</sup>

Through hypnosis science is, Freud claims, “restoring to words a part at least of their former magical power” (*SE* 3: 283). Freud’s remarks do not, however, refer to the patient’s words or to those of the hypnotized subject (though in the cathartic method they are certainly performative) but to the words of the hypnotist.<sup>26</sup> “Words are the most important media by which one man seeks to bring his influence to bear on another,” Freud writes; “words are a good method of producing mental changes in the person to whom they are addressed. So that there is no longer anything puzzling in the assertion that the magic of words can remove symptoms of illness” (*SE* 3: 292). “The hypnotist says, ‘You can’t move your arm,’” to use Freud’s favorite example, and the hypnotized subject is unable to do so (*SE* 3: 295). “If the hypnotist says, ‘Your arm’s moving of its own accord, you can’t stop it,’ the arm moves” (*SE* 3: 295). The hypnotist’s words, as Freud describes them, are not so much imperatives as statements (‘You can’t move your arm.’ “You see a snake.” “You’re feeling tired.”) which the subject enacts. “The idea which the hypnotist has given to the subject by his words,” as Freud

explains it, “has produced in him precisely the mental-physical behavior corresponding to the ideas content.... Words have once more regained their magic” (SE 3: 295-96.). In hypnosis, it was generally believed at the time, ideas were immediately translated into action – even if the origin of those ideas remains unconscious. Hypnosis represents a hyper-performativity; the hypnotists words have an excessive force and persuasiveness. It is even possible, Freud claims in “Psychical (or Mental) Treatment,” to “talk” people “into hypnosis,” to talk him into an extreme credulity and suggestibility, into being affected, persuaded, altered by words. The hypnotized subject can be made “to see what is not there” and “forbidden to see what is there.” Hypnosis characteristically functions as both a kind of truth serum and as a hallucinogen. Like the unconscious itself, the hypnotized subject seems to know no doubt or negation, to be indifferent to reality, to the distinction between past and present and, in the blind identification of the rapport, to the difference between itself and another.

Freud tempers is often hyperbolic claims about hypnosis in “Psychical (or Mental) Treatment,” however, by noting that the deep hypnosis in which the subject is “credulous... to an almost

unlimited extent,” is after all quite rare, that patients often “resist” or become addicted to it or its effects are only temporary. It is, he writes, “a strange and unpredictable method” (*einem eigentümlichen und nicht vorherzusehenden*); it is “incalculable” and frequently misfires. Despite the therapeutic potential of hypnosis, its excessive performativity, its unpredictability and incalculability makes it something of wild card in therapy as well as in theory. It represents the “magic of words,” both their power and their uncanniness, both their promise and their danger. The “enigma of hypnosis” and the “riddle of suggestive influence” are figures in Freud’s writings of what Cynthia Chase calls “the enigmatic fact fundamental to psychoanalysis of the status, as event, of words” (“Translating the Transference” 109). Such events are an integral part not only of the “talking cure” in the *Studies on Hysteria* but also of the “traumatic precipitating causes” to which it responds. Frau Cäcilie M., for instance, repeatedly takes “verbal expressions” (like a “stab in the heart” or a “slap in the face”) “literally,” takes them, as Freud puts it, “as a real event” (SE 2: 181).<sup>27</sup> Hypnosis, Freud later writes in *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, “contains an element of paralysis,” which he likens to the “hypnosis of fright which occurs

in animals” (*SE* 18: 115). It has, in other words, a traumatic element, as paralysis is always for Freud the paradigmatic effect of trauma.<sup>28</sup> A certain trauma, I want to suggest, inheres in the hypno-cathartic method.

“Frau Emmy von N.” was Freud’s first case history and the first case in which he used the hypno-cathartic method or, as he calls it in introducing the case, “Breuer’s technique of investigation under hypnosis” (*SE* 2: 48).<sup>29</sup> “This was,” Freud writes, “my first attempt at handling that therapeutic method” (*SE* 2: 48). Emmy von N., whose real name was Fanny Moser, was referred to Freud, probably by Breuer, in May of 1889 or, perhaps, 1888.<sup>30</sup> She was at the time about 40 years old with two teenage daughters. She had been married in her early twenties to a man over forty years her senior with several grown children. Shortly after the birth of their second daughter, her husband, while reading a newspaper at breakfast, dropped dead suddenly of a heart attack in front of her. The death of her husband made Fanny Moser one of the richest women in Europe. But, its also made her the object of considerable scandal, as her husband’s grown children spread the rumor, which

was widely circulated in the newspapers, that she had poisoned her husband. While two exhumations of the body discovered no evidence of poison, the rumors persisted, as Ola Andersson found, into the second half of the twentieth century and even her younger daughter seemed to have had some doubts (Andersson 11).<sup>31</sup>

When she was referred to Freud, Fanny Moser or Emmy von N. was suffering from a variety of hysterical symptoms including a convulsive facial tic, animal phobias and hallucinations, and intermittent states of what he calls “delerium” – which seems to be an altered state of consciousness analogous to a hypnotic state, a *condition seconde*. Her speech is frequently interrupted by a “stammer,” a “curious ‘clacking’ sound, which according to Freud “defies imitation,” and a “protective formula” (“Keep still! – Don’t say anything! – Don’t touch me!”), which she repeats without apparently being aware of it. “She was,” Freud tells us, “a hysteric and could be put into a state of somnambulism with the greatest ease” (*SE 2*: 48). “She was highly suggestible” (*SE 2*: 99). The case is, in fact, notable for the lack of resistance, though she was, Freud assures us the “Discussion,” “far from exhibiting a pathological absence of resistance” (*SE 2*: 99). Questioning her under hypnosis, Freud’s

“hypnotic analysis,” as he calls it, traces Emmy von N.’s symptoms back to several dozen “traumatic precipitating causes,” ranging from the trivial (a toad jumping out from behind a rock) to the serious (the sudden death of her husband), and tries to get rid of them by suggestion. The hypno-cathartic method Freud employs in “Emmy von N.” is the method he and Breuer described in the conclusion to the “Preliminary Communication” as “removing” pathogenic ideas and memories “through the physician’s suggestion, as is done in somnambulism accompanied by amnesia.” “I cannot say how much of the therapeutic success,” Freud concedes in the “Discussion” at the end of the case, “was due to my suggesting the symptom away *in statu nascendi* and how much by resolving the affect by abreaction, since I combined both therapeutic features” (*SE* 2: 101). The latter is, however, very little in evidence in “Emmy von N.,” and it suggests that in his use of the hypno-cathartic method, of “Breuer’s technique of investigation under hypnosis,” Freud moved from simply trying to discover and to “suggest away” his patients’ traumatic memories and pathogenic ideas towards an emphasis on their recollection and introduction “into normal consciousness.” “The divorce between analysis and hypnosis,” as

Borch-Jacobsen argues, “occurred essentially over the issue of remembering” (“Hypnosis in Psychoanalysis” 47). At the time of his hypnotic analysis of Fanny Moser, however, Freud was still under the spell of what Michael Roth calls, the French “school of forgetting,” was still, as he wittily puts it, “trying out his French lessons” (“Falling into History” 171).

Freud treated Fanny Moser for about seven weeks beginning in May 1889 (or 1888) and again the following May for around eight weeks. Freud reproduces in the case history his evening notes for the first three weeks of the initial treatment and summarizes the remainder of the two treatments and his subsequent visit to her estate in Au. With the exception of his “Discussion” at the end, however, which was evidently written several years after he had finished treating her, there is from a later psychoanalytic perspective very little analysis or interpretation in the case history. The issue of sexuality is barely even raised. “I did not carry the analysis of the symptoms far enough,” Freud concedes at the beginning of the case, “nor did I pursue it systematically enough” (*SE* 2: 48). There is, in fact, a kind of dialog in the case history between the evening notes Freud reproduces from the first weeks of

her treatment and the footnotes he added later. “I unfortunately neglected to inquire,” he remarks in one footnote, “into the significance of Frau Emmy’s animal visions” (*SE* 2: 62). “A special kind of symbolism must, no doubt, have lain behind the toad,” he observes in another (the toad “made her lose her power of speech” and was one of her most persistent phobias), “but I unfortunately neglected to inquire into it” (*SE* 2: 55). Freud seems to have just questioned Emmy von N. about the origins of her symptoms and to have taken her at her word. “I was too often content,” he admits in still another footnote, “to receive the most superficial explanations” (*SE* 2: 64). “At that time I didn’t understand anything,” Freud wrote almost a half century later to her elder daughter, who was also named Fanny Moser, “and just believed in her information” (Cited in Tögel 152).<sup>32</sup>

When Freud asks Emmy von N. under hypnosis “what event in her life had produced the most lasting effect on her and came up most often in her memory,” she responds that it was “her husband’s death” (*SE* 2: 60). “I got her to describe the event to me in full detail,” he writes,

and this she did with every sign of deepest emotion but without any clacking or stammering: – How, she began, they



had been at a place on the Riviera of which they were both very fond, and while they were crossing a bridge had suddenly sank to the ground and lain there lifeless for a few minutes but had then gotten up again and seemed quite well; how, a short time afterwards, as she was lying in bed after her second confinement, her husband, who had been sitting at breakfast at a small table beside her bed, reading a newspaper, had got up all at once, looked at her so strangely, taken a few paces forward and then fallen down dead; she had got out of bed, and the doctors who were called in had made efforts to revive him which she had heard from the next room; but it had been in vain. (*SE* 2: 60)

While Emmy von N. describes the event with the “deepest emotion,” it does not appear to be a case of abreaction, nor is it a question of Freud’s introducing the memory into normal consciousness – since it never seems to have been inaccessible to it. Freud’s therapeutic approach is instead to try to get rid of her traumatic memory. “I made it impossible for her to see any of these melancholy things again,” Freud writes, “not only by wiping out [*verlösche*] her whole recollection of them in their plastic form [*die plastische Erinnerung*] but by removing [*löse*] her whole recollection of them [*die ganze Reminiszenz aus ihrem Gedächtnisse*], as though they had never been present in her mind” (*SE* 2: 61). Freud’s therapeutic procedure in “Emmy von N.” is based on “expunging [*Auslöschen*] her memories” (*SE* 2: 58-59). “I wiped out [*verwische*] all these memories,” he writes elsewhere in the case history. “I extinguished

[*auslösche*] her plastic memory [*die plastische Erinnerung*] of these scenes” ” (SE 2: 58). “She told me,” Freud writes early in the case, “that while she was describing these scenes she saw them before her in plastic form and in their natural colors.” “My therapy consists,” he explains, “in wiping away [*wegzuwischen*] these pictures, so that she is no longer able to see them before her” (SE 2: 53).

Freud’s procedure in “Emmy von N.” of “wiping away” or “suggesting away” her symptoms *in statu nascendi* would seem to be characteristic of his approach when he first took up “Breuer’s technique of investigation under hypnosis” and to reflect his initial understanding of it.<sup>33</sup> Freud appears to have seen the hypno-cathartic method at first as a means of discovering and getting rid of the traumatic precipitating causes of hysteria, a method that he saw as both more effective than just suggestion for it acted on the origin of hysteria and as more satisfying to his intellectual curiosity.<sup>34</sup> According to Peter Swales, when Freud visited Bernheim in Nancy in the summer of 1889, he wrote his sister-in-law, Minna Bernays, that if she was curious about his treatment of the patient who had accompanied him (Anna von Lieben, the Frau Cacilie M. of the

*Studies on Hysteria*), she should read the novel *Dr. Heidenhoff's Process* (Swales 35). Written in 1880 by the American novelist Edward Bellamy, *Dr. Heidenhoff's Process* is the story of a woman haunted by the memory of her guilty sexual past. The process of the title is a method not of remembering but of forgetting that past. In the novel, Dr. Heidenhoff has invented a procedure for the "extirpation of thought" through the use of a galvanic battery. Once the physical basis of mind has been established, he explains "thought extirpation" is "merely a nice problem in surgery" (104).<sup>35</sup> Freud was similarly engaged in "Emmy von N." and in his early experiments with the hypno-cathartic method with the extirpation of memories. When he visits her estate in Au some eighteen months after her initial treatment, Fanny Moser complains to Freud "about gaps in her memory 'especially about the most important events'" (SE 2: 84). "She complained that there were a number of the most important moments of her life of which she has only the vaguest memory" (SE 2: 61). Though he is "careful not to tell her the cause of this particular occasion of amnesia," Freud acknowledges in a footnote that in the case of her husband's death he may have gone too far (SE 2: 61). Freud's therapy generates the very gaps in

memory, in the ordered narrative of his patient's history, that is, for him, one of the principle characteristics of hysteria. His hypnotic intervention bears an uncanny resemblance to the traumas it meant to resolve.

In what is surely one of the most bizarre moments in any of his case histories, Emmy von N. announced to Freud on his first visit to her: "I am a woman from the last century (*Ich bin eine Frau aus dem vorigen Jahrhundert*; not as Strachey translates it "a woman *dating* from the last century)" (*SE* 2: 52; translation modified).<sup>36</sup> Several weeks later, according to Freud, Emmy von N told him that she had been thinking at the time of an antique cupboard and it was the cupboard to which she was referring – an explanation Freud seems to accept. Yet, how is it possible to mistake oneself for an inanimate object? How can one confuse oneself with an other? To say "I am a woman of the last century" is to speak as an other. It is not to differentiate between oneself and an other. "I am a woman from the last century" designates, as Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy write of the famous posthumous fragment "I am the breast," the "relation without relation of an 'I' that is not an 'I'" (*La Panique Politique* 17). Freud's response to her

mimesis is symptomatic of his failure in the case, or elsewhere in the *Studies on Hysteria*, to address the question of mimesis or of identification. There is no explicit theory of hysterical identification put forth in the *Studies on Hysteria* by either Freud or Breuer – though they often presume such a mechanism. Whether it was understood as imitation or psychical contagion, neuromimesis or nervous mimicry, a kind of radical identification was one of the marked characteristics of late-nineteenth century hysteria and of its theorization. Such identifications are certainly in evidence in the case history of Emmy von N. She even seems at one point to catch Freud’s railway anxiety. A blind identification, a radical forgetting of the other, is also, as we have seen, an integral part of Freud’s conception of the hypnotic suggestion he uses both to investigate the origins of her hysterical symptoms and so aggressively to remove them. Her protective formulas (“Keep still! – Don’t say anything! – Don’t touch me!”) can be seen as attempts to maintain the boundaries between her self and others, to defend against or ward off the threat of annihilation. Touching phobias, like the one expressed in her formula “Don’t touch me,” derive, Freud will argue in *Totem and Taboo* (1913), from a fear of contagion, imitation, and

communicability (*SE* 8: 27-35). Though largely unacknowledged, the problem of identification is, I want to argue, inscribed at the very heart of the Emmy von N. case.

When Freud questioned her too aggressively about her animal hallucinations, trying to link them to her gastric pains, Emmy von N. objected and told him to stop “asking her where this and that came from” and to let her tell him what she had to say. “I fell in with this,” Freud tells us, “and she went on without preface: ‘When they carried him out, I could not believe he was dead’ – a remainder of her memory of her husband’s death not deleted the day before (*SE* 2: 63).<sup>37</sup> What is striking in “Emmy von N.” is how many of the memories she relates to Freud concern the shock of a sudden encounter with another’s death. The first “terrifying memories” she shares with Freud in the case are, in fact, all encounters with death:

First when I was five years old and my brothers and sisters often threw dead animals at me. That was when I had my first fainting fit and spasms.... Then I was frightened when again when I was seven and I unexpectedly saw my sister in her coffin;... and again, when I was nine and I saw my aunt in her coffin and her jaw suddenly dropped. (*SE* 2: 52)

When she was fifteen, we later learn, “she found her mother, who had had a stroke, lying on the floor (her mother lived for another four years)” and “again, at nineteen... she came home one day and

found her mother dead, with a distorted face” – a double structure that seems to anticipate her experience of her husband’s death (*SE* 2: 55). At one point Freud reports, but does not really analyze (except to say it is “obviously a recollection of her husband”) a dream in which she “had to lay out a number of dead people and put them in coffins, but would not put the lid on” (*SE* 2: 74). What I want to suggest is that the case of Emmy von N. revolves around in a sense not only her traumatic encounters with death, but also and more specifically around her ambivalent relation to the deaths of others.

In a letter to the younger Fanny Moser in 1935, Freud wrote that his “bad diagnostic error” in her mother’s case was not to have understood her ambivalence towards her daughters (Tögel 152). Freud wrote in similar terms to the daughter in 1918, declaring that “she loved her children just as tenderly as she also hated them bitterly (what we term ambivalence)” (Quoted in Andersson 15). The psychoanalytic notion of ambivalence was first elaborated by Freud in *Totem and Taboo*.<sup>38</sup> “The classical example [*der klassische Fall*], the prototype [*Vorbild*], of the ambivalence of human emotions” is in *Totem and Taboo* ambivalence about the death of a loved one, as

when, he writes as though of Emmy von N., “a wife has lost her husband or a daughter her mother” and is afterwards “overwhelmed by tormenting doubts” and self-reproaches (*SE* 13: 60). Her obsessive self-reproaches, what Freud calls her “tendency to self-deprecation” and “morally oversensitive personality,” are one of Emmy von N.’s most pronounced character traits. In *Totem and Taboo* Freud links ambivalence to the “pathological form of mourning” he will later term melancholia. This ambivalence is not simply a question of both love and hate for, or of unconscious hostility towards, the one who has died. The ambivalence also consists, in Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy’s words, “in the coincidence of sameness and difference in the same rapport” (“The Unconscious Is Deconstructed” 206). In the section of “Thoughts for the Times on War and Death” (1915) on “Our Relation [*Verhältnis*] to Death” (not as Strachey translates it “Our Attitude Towards Death”), discussing our ambivalent relation to the death of “someone we love,” of someone, as he puts it, who “belonged” to us, Freud writes: “These loved ones are on the one hand an inner possession, components of our own ego; but on the other hand they are partly strangers, even enemies” (*SE* 14: 298). Our hostility is due, at least partly, Freud



implies, to what is foreign to us in the dead other, what we can no longer recognize ourselves in. The death of another, as Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy write, “simultaneously installs him in identity and envelops him in an absolute alterity” (“The Unconscious Is Deconstructed” 204).<sup>39</sup> The death of someone who “belonged” to us, both compels a certain identification and eludes it. For death marks the absolute limit of identification. “Our own death,” Freud writes in “Our Relation to Death,” “is unimaginable [*unvorstellbar*, or unrepresentable], and whenever we attempt to do so we can perceive that we are still present as spectators” (*SE* 14: 289).

Emmy von N. had, Freud tells us in his “Discussion” of the case, a great “fear of being buried alive,” a fear he links to “her belief that her husband was not dead when they carried him out” (*SE* 2: 88). She both identifies and is unable to identify with her dead husband. Inscribed throughout her case history is an ambivalent, impossible relation to another’s death – to the death of her husband, to the earlier death of her mother, and beyond that to the deaths of several of her siblings when she was a child. She appears to be suffering not only from the shock of her repeated encounters with death, but also from a kind of mourning sickness. Like so

many of Freud's hysterics, Emmy von N. is unable or unwilling to bury the past. While she tries in her protective formulas to ward off its shock and to maintain a certain distance, she records in her symptoms the traumatic failure of defense.

Late in the case history, "When she was feeling in good health," Freud writes,

she told me of a visit she had made to the Roman Catacombs, but she could not recall two technical terms; nor could I help her with them. Immediately afterwards I asked her under hypnosis which words she had in mind. But she did not know them in hypnosis either. So I said to her: "Don't bother about them any more now, but when you are in the garden tomorrow between five and six in the afternoon – nearer six than five – they will suddenly occur to you." Next evening, while we were talking about something which had no connection with the catacombs, she suddenly burst out: "Crypt,' doctor, and 'Columbarium'." (SE 2: 98)

Maria Torok, along with Nicholas Rand, argues in "The Secret of Psychoanalysis," that that Emmy von N's words "Crypt" and "Columbarium" describe Freud "as the place where the burial of her past had secretly occurred" (71). Freud becomes, they write, "Emmy von N.'s crypt or secret reliquary" (71). But the scene can as easily be read the other way around, with her words "Crypt" and "Columbarium" designating a secret or secrets Freud never possesses, as pointing to what remains unanalyzed and perhaps unanalyzable in the case. Given the overdetermination of the word

in Torok and Nicholas Abraham's work, it is tempting to read Emmy von N.'s "crypt" as pointing to the melancholically incorporated others buried within her.<sup>40</sup> Freud certainly did not believe that he possessed her secret. "I never reached the causes of her illness," he admitted late in the *Studies on Hysteria* (SE 2: 284). "I did not understand anything about your mother's case," he wrote her daughter years later, "although on two occasions she had been my patient for a number of weeks" (quoted in Anderson 15).

"Hypnosis," Freud argued in his lectures at Clark University, "conceals the resistance and renders a certain area of the mind accessible; but, as against this, it builds up the resistance at the frontiers of this area into a wall that makes everything beyond it inaccessible" (SE 11: 26). "It pushed the resistance back, making a certain area free for analytic work," he writes in his *Introductory Lectures*, "and damned it up at the frontiers of that area in such a way as to be impenetrable" (SE 16: 292). The anecdote of the crypt can be read as an allegory of this curious relation of hypnosis to resistance. For Freud's hypnotic suggestions to appear to render a part of her mind accessible, to enable her to remember what seemed forgotten and inaccessible. But "Crypt" and "Columbarium" also

mark a resistance that analysis cannot overcome, an impenetrable resistance that remains inaccessible to any recollection or analysis. They mark an irreducible resistance, what Derrida calls the “hyperbolic resistance of non-resistance” (*Resistances of Psychoanalysis* 24) – a resistance that, I want to suggest, inheres not only in the hypno-cathartic method but also in the event of psychoanalysis.

### **Dreams and Hypnosis**

With the publication of *The Interpretation of Dreams* in 1900, Freud seemed to set aside at least temporarily the interlocking problems of hypnosis, trauma, and hysteria that had preoccupied him for more than a decade. The problem of hypnosis does not in any case appear to be a problem for Freud’s theory of dreams. One of the few mentions of hypnosis in *Die Traumdeutung* is when Freud asserts that the “occurrence of sexual symbolism in dreams” has been “experimentally confirmed” by post-hypnotic suggestion (*SE* 5: 284). “Subjects under deep hypnosis were given suggestions” by the doctor who performed the experiments, Freud explains, “and these led to the productions of dreams a large part of whose content was

determined by the suggestion” (SE 5: 284). “For instance,” he writes, “when a suggestion was made to a female subject that she should dream of having homosexual intercourse with a friend, the friend appeared in the dream carrying a shabby handbag with a label stuck on it bearing the words ‘Ladies only’” (SE 5: 284). While the wish is not strictly speaking the dreamer’s own, her all too witty dream seems nevertheless to confirm Freud’s theory of dreams. The “essence of dreams,” as Freud often reminds us, lies not in their latent content or the first-person wish that lies behind them, but in the dream-work, the “particular form of thinking, made possible by the conditions of dreaming” (SE 5: 506).<sup>41</sup>

But if hypnosis does not seem to be a dream problem, identification undoubtedly is. The problem of identification is inextricably bound up with the essential nature of dreams.

“Dreams are completely egotistical,” Freud writes in *The Interpretation of Dreams*.

Whenever my own ego does not appear in the content of the dream, but only some extraneous person, I may safely assume that my own ego lies concealed, by identification behind this other person.... On other occasions, when my own ego does appear in the dream, the situation in which it occurs may teach me that some other person lies concealed, by identification, behind my ego.... There are also dreams in which my ego appears along with other people who, when the

identification is resolved, are revealed once again as my ego.... Thus my ego may be represented in a dream several times over, now directly and now through identification with extraneous persons. (*SE* 4: 322-23)

Identification is an integral part of the dream work and a part of the curious egoism of dreams, an egoism in which the ego is dispersed into multiple, fragmented egos, at once everywhere and everything. “The fact that the dreamer’s own ego appears several times, or in several forms, in a dream,” Freud reassures us, “is at bottom no more remarkable than that the ego should be contained in a conscious thought several times or in different places or connections – e.g. in the sentence ‘when *I* think what a healthy child *I* was’” (*SE* 4: 323).<sup>42</sup> In trying to make this peculiar egoism familiar, Freud performs a kind of secondary revision. He reduces the ego’s dispersal and fragmentation in the dream to a temporal difference between a present and past self in which the ego achieves the kind of specular (almost allegorical) distance that was absent from the dream. As Samuel Weber reminds us, unlike daydreams or fantasies in which the dreamer occupies the position of a “detached observer,” “set apart from the spectacle,” the dream is a “form in which the I abandons itself to... dispersion” (*Legend of Freud* 6-7).

In dreams distance and proximity, sameness and difference, self and other are not mutually exclusive.

What *The Interpretation of Dreams* stages in a sense is the question of how to account for the pre- or non-specular, for the pre-reflexive, within the constraints of a theoretical and cognitive discourse. There is a certain tension in *The Interpretation of Dreams* between the meaning of dreams, the assertion that they have an interpretable meaning, and the way in which they produce meaning, the process of displacement, distortion, disfiguration (*Entstellung*). There is a tension, as Borch-Jacobsen puts it, “between... the description of wish-fulfillment and its theorization” (*Freudian Subject 24*.) Freud’s resolution is, according to Borch-Jacobsen, to attempt to maintain distortion and identification in a “position of exteriority” in relation to the wish (*Freudian Subject 25*). The wish comes first and is followed by the distortions and identifications through which it is fulfilled.

This is evident in Freud’s analysis of the Dream of the Witty Butcher’s Wife, a dream commonly referred to as the Dream of the Abandoned Supper Party.<sup>43</sup> The dream occupies an over-determined place in *The Interpretation of Dreams* as well as in

psychoanalysis. The butcher's wife is an hysteric, and Freud's discussion of the dream is something of a placeholder for the missing chapter on "Dreams and Hypnosis," which he had originally intended to write for the dream book, and links the interpretation of dreams to the analysis of hysterical symptoms (*Freudian Subject* 10). It is also the site of the belated emergence of Freud's theory of hysterical identification, which was as we have seen conspicuously absent from the *Studies on Hysteria*. It marks his first attempt to articulate a specifically psychoanalytic concept of identification. The dream was told to Freud by a "clever patient" to challenge his theory that dreams are the fulfillment of wishes by giving him an example of a dream in which one of her wishes was not fulfilled.

Here is Freud's account the dream:

I wanted to give a supper-party, but I had nothing in the house but a little smoked salmon. I thought I would go out and buy something, but remembered then that it was Sunday afternoon and all the shops would be shut. Next I tried to ring up some caterers, but the telephone was out of order. So I had to abandon my wish to give a supper-party. (*SE* 4: 147)

The dream seems, first of all, to fulfill the witty butcher's wife's desire to prove Freud wrong. But Freud points out that she also has, in her waking life, the desire for an unfulfilled wish. Despite or rather because of her craving for caviar, a craving her husband



would certainly have been willing to indulge, she insists that he not permit her to have any. The remaining cast of characters, which turns out not surprisingly to be a threesome, includes her husband, a wholesale butcher, who is trying to lose weight and therefore vows not to accept any more invitations to dine out, and her friend, who begrudges herself salmon every bit as much as the butcher's wife does caviar, and whom the husband admires, even though he usually prefers a "plumper figure." Freud's first interpretation of the dream is that it fulfills his patient's wish to deny her friend the opportunity to gain weight and become even more attractive to her husband. But the dream also admits of what Freud calls a "more complicated" and "subtler interpretation": that she identifies with her friend in the dream, that it is her friend rather than herself who is the person indicated in the dream, the "I" of the dream. The renunciation of a favorite food serves as a point of coincidence between them. She identifies with her friend, Freud writes, "because she wanted to take her friend's place in her husband's high opinion" (*SE* 4: 147).

The witty butcher's wife's inadequate explanation of her wish for an unsatisfied desire "reminds one," Freud observes, "of one of

Bernheim's hypnotized patients. When one of these carries out a post-hypnotic suggestion and is asked why he is acting in this way, instead of saying that he has no idea, he feels compelled to invent some obviously unsatisfactory reason" (*SE* 4: 148). Hypnosis – and specifically Bernheim's demonstrations of post-hypnotic suggestion – occupies its familiar place here as evidence of the unconscious. Yet Freud's analogy is a curious one, drawing as it does on the radical identification implicit in hypnotic suggestion. For it is precisely the priority of the wish or desire over such identifications that is at stake in his analysis of the dream.

It is for this reason that Freud interrupts his analysis of the witty butcher's wife's dream to offer a "somewhat lengthy explanation" of hysterical identification. Freud introduces in the digression a specifically psychoanalytic concept of identification intended to explain and to supplant contemporary notions of sympathy, hysterical imitation, and psychical infection. "What is the meaning of hysterical identification?" Freud asks:

Identification is a highly important factor in the mechanism of hysterical symptoms. It enables patients to express in their symptoms not only their own experiences but those of a large number of other people; it enables them, as it were, to suffer on behalf of a whole crowd of people and to act all the parts in a play single-handed. I shall be told that this is no more than

the familiar hysterical imitation, the capacity of hysterics to imitate any symptom in other people that may have struck their fancy – sympathy [*Mitleiden*], as it were, intensified to the point of reproduction. (*SE* 4: 149)

“What we have here,” as Lacan observes, “is the imitation dear to Tarde” (“Direction of Treatment” 261). Freud’s argument seems to be specifically directed against Bernheim’s suggestion and the theories of imitation, such as Tarde’s, derived from it. Freud does not argue that the “familiar” theories of hysterical imitation are wrong, however, but that they only “show the path [*Weg*] along with the psychical process in hysterical imitation proceeds” and do not explain it (*SE* 4: 148). Only psychoanalysis asks what the meaning of hysterical imitation is. “The path is something different from the mental act that proceeds along it,” he writes.

The latter is a little more complicated than the common picture of hysterical imitation; it consists in the unconscious drawing of an inference, as an example will make clear. Supposing a physician is treating a woman patient, who is subject to a particular kind of spasm, in a hospital ward among a number of other patients. He will show no surprise if he finds one morning that this particular kind of hysterical attack has found imitators. He will merely say: “The other patients have seen it and copied it; it’s a case of psychical infection [*Infektion*].” That is true; but the psychical infection has occurred along some such lines as these. Let us imagine that this patient had her attack on a particular day; then the others will quickly discover that it was caused by a letter from home, the revival of some unhappy love affair, or some such thing. Their sympathy [*Mitgefühl*] is aroused and they draw the following inference: “If a cause like this can produce an

attack like this, I may have the same kind of attack, since I have the same grounds for having it.” If this inference were conscious it might give rise to a *fear* of having the same kind of attack. But in fact the inference is made in a different psychical region, and consequently results in the actual realization of the dreaded symptom. Thus identification is not simple imitation but *assimilation* [*Aneignung*; or assimilation] on the basis of a similar aetiological pretension; it expresses resemblance and is derived from a common element which remains in the unconscious. (*SE* 4: 149-50)

Like dreams hysterical identifications have a meaning. They express a resemblance and a wish. Identification is not, as in the “common picture” or “familiar” theories something passive, but active. It is based on a “mental act” however unconscious. Identification derives, according to Freud, from the recognition of a “common element” and “it expresses resemblance.” It is a kind of metaphorical substitution and as such implies certain specular conditions.<sup>44</sup> The seeming immediacy of sympathy or of “psychical infection” is invariably mediated by a third term. It is triangular. The butcher’s wife’s identification with her friend is mediated by a desire for her husband that is anterior to and independent of it. “My patient put herself in her friend’s place in the dream,” Freud concludes, “because her friend was taking my patient’s place with her husband and because she (my patient) wanted to take her friend’s place in her husband’s high opinion” (*SE* 4: 150-51).

In his example from the hysteria ward, an assimilation or appropriation (*Aneignung*) of the other lies behind and explains what appeared to be a case of “psychical infection” or contagion. Infection or contagion is, as Diana Fuss notes, one of the two principle metaphors of identification in Freud writings – the other being ingestion or (oral) incorporation (*Identification Papers* 41). Infection and contagion imply an invasion of or intrusion into the psyche. In his shift from the study of hypnosis and the hypnotic state to the interpretation of dreams, however, Freud brackets off such identifications, brackets off a certain passivity in relation to an other or others. Dreams “come from within,” he writes in “Dreams and Telepathy” (1922), they “are products of our mental life” and do not entail the introduction of “something external, in relation to which the mind remains passive and receptive” (*SE* 18: 208). If there was such thing as a purely telepathic dream (his official position at the time is that he has “no opinion on the matter and knows nothing about it”), a dream “in which there is no difference between the event and the dream,” it would not, he argues, be a dream (*SE* 18: 220, 207). “The essential nature of dreams,” Freud reminds us again, “consists in the peculiar process of ‘dream-work’”

(SE 18: 207). “A dream without condensation, distortion, dramatization, above all, without wish-fulfillment,” Freud writes, “surely does not deserve the name” (SE 18: 208). Thought-transferences or hypnotic suggestions are not a problem for Freud’s theory of dreams so long as they are subject to the dream-work. There is no dream without distortion, displacement, disfiguration. It is the distortion or, to put it somewhat differently, the resistance which constitutes the dreamer as a subject.

### **Thought-Transference and the Analysis of the Ego**

*Difficult to imagine a theory of what they still call  
the unconscious without a theory of telepathy.  
They can be neither confused nor dissociated.*

— Jacques Derrida, “Telepathy”

*Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* contains Freud’s most extensive discussion of identification. The text also marks the explicit return of the problem of hypnosis to the forefront of his psychoanalytic theory. In *Group Psychology (Massenpsychologie; or mass psychology)*, Freud again takes up the question or as he calls

it the “riddle” (*Rätse*) of hypnosis and of “suggestion” that had occupied him in the 1880s and 1890s. *Group Psychology* belongs to the period of the unraveling of the so-called first topography in the years following the first World War and before the solidification of the second topology in *The Ego and the Id*, for which it helps to lay the groundwork. Like the problem of trauma in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), the work that immediately precedes it, the problem of hypnosis and of hypnotic suggestion returns in *Group Psychology* to disrupt Freud’s previously constituted psychoanalytic system. What becomes apparent in *Group Psychology* as it had not always been previously, is the extent to which Freud’s theory of identification is bound up with and haunted by the problem of hypnosis.

“The striking thing about... identification,” Freud observes in Chapter 7 of *Group Psychology*, “is its ample scale” (*SE* 18: 108). It moulds and remolds the ego. “Identification is known to psychoanalysis,” Freud declares at the beginning of the chapter, “as the earliest expression of an emotional tie [*Gefühlsbindung*; or affective bond] with another person” (*SE* 18: 105). “Identification is the earliest and original form of emotional tie [*Gefühlsbindung*]” (*SE* 18:

107). Yet, whether this identification or *Gefühlsbindung* precedes the differentiation of subject and object, self and other, whether it is simply a matter, as in Freud's predictable example, of the little boy taking his father as a model, as who he would like to be, or whether it gestures towards a more obscure maternal instance, the "I am the breast" of the famous posthumous fragment, is not clear.

Identification, a relation of being rather than having is, for Freud, both prior to object-choice and a replacement of or a substitute for it. In his chapter on "Identification" in *Group Psychology*, Freud designates three types or modes of identification:

First, identification is the original form of emotional tie with an object; secondly, in a regressive way it becomes a substitute for a libidinal object-tie, as it were by means of introjection of the object into the ego; and thirdly, it may arise with any new perception of a common quality shared with some other person who is not an object of the sexual instinct. (SE 18:107-8)

In the third, triangular mode of identification, there is no "object-relation to the person who is being copied" (SE 18: 107). It is essentially the hysterical identification Freud discussed in *The Interpretation of Dreams*.

In *Group Psychology* Freud restages the scene of hysterical identification in *Die Traumdeutung*. Though he shifts the scene from the hysteria ward to a girl's boarding school, the contagious



effects of the letter are largely the same, as is his reading of them.

“Supposing,” Freud writes,

that one of the girls in a boarding school has had a letter from someone with whom she is secretly in love which arouses her jealousy, and that she reacts to it with a fit of hysterics; then some of her friends who know about it will catch the fit, as we say, by mental infection. The mechanism is that of identification based on the possibility or desire of putting oneself in the same situation. The other girls would like to have a secret love affair too, and under the influence of a sense of guilt they also accept the suffering involved in it. It would be wrong to suppose that they take on the symptom out of sympathy [*Mitgefühl*]. On the contrary, the sympathy [*Mitgefühl*] only arises out of the identification, and this is proved by the fact that infection or imitation of this kind takes place in circumstances where even less pre-existing sympathy [*Sympathie*] is to be assumed than usually exists between friends in a girls’ school. One ego has perceived a significant analogy with another upon one point – in our example upon openness to a similar emotion; an identification is thereupon constructed on this point.... The identification by means of the symptom has thus become the mark of a point of coincidence between the two egos which has to be kept repressed. (*SE* 18: 107)

Sentiment or feeling (*Gefühl*) precedes sympathy or fellow feeling (*Mitgefühl*); it does not come from an other or others. The identification of the boarding school girls, the apparent infection and imitation, is mediated by their relation to a common element, by their relation to a third term. It is on the basis of this hysterical, triangular identification that Freud will attempt to construct his theory of group formation – though its relation to the other modes of

identification, especially to the earliest and original form, remains ambiguous.

“In the individual’s mental life someone else [*andere*; or other] is invariably involved,” Freud writes in the Introduction, “as a model, as a object, as a helper, as a opponent; and so from the very first individual psychology... is at the same time social psychology as well” (*SE* 18: 69). *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* revolves around, in a sense, the question of an originary sociality. “Does primary sociality begin in the stage of transition toward the object, of the face-to-face encounter with others?” as Borch-Jacobsen puts it. “Or does it precede the *positioning* of others, which means the positioning of the ego as well?” (*Freudian Subject* 133). It is little wonder then that the problem of hypnosis, of what precedes or does not take place on the basis of such positioning, comes to haunt Freud’s text. “The entire book must also be read,” as Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy observe, “as a resumption of the question of the power of suggestion, of hypnosis – and of analysis” (*La Panique Politique* 11). What is striking about the problem of hypnosis in *Group Psychology* is, however, as Freud remarks of identification, “its ample scale.”

The crowd psychology of Gustave Le Bon, which is based on hypnosis and suggestion, is Freud point of departure in *Group Psychology*. “Le Bon explains the condition of an individual in a group as being actually hypnotic,” as Freud observes, “and does not merely make a comparison between the two states” (*SE* 18: 76). Yet, Freud follows Le Bon’s account of the condition of the individual in the crowd fairly far, agreeing with him that it is a manifestation of the unconscious (crowds know no doubt, no contradiction, etc.) and that it is a regression to an earlier stage of ontogenetic and phylogenetic development. Le Bon’s “unconscious” (he uses the term) is the unconscious of hypnosis and not the unconscious of repression. It is reflexive and automatic, passive and suggestible, collective and social rather than individual. “Le Bon’s unconscious... is,” as Borch-Jacobsen writes,

indissolubly nonsubjectal and “social,” to the extent that it never designates anything but immediate communion with others (their representation, desires, affects) prior to any consciousness of self, and thus also prior to any consciousness of others. Taken to the extreme, it is thought transmission, telepathy. (*Freudian Subject* 140)

There is, however, a certain tension in Le Bon’s theory of the crowd between “the unalterable psychological elements of a race,” which are fixed and immutable, and the seemingly infinite mutability and

alterability of the individual in the crowd (*The Crowd* 90). “The suggestions of the race,” as he calls them, are for Le Bon paramount (*The Crowd* 45). In a footnote, Freud distinguishes his own notion to the unconscious from Le Bon’s, “which contains the most deeply buried features of the racial mind, which as a matter of fact lies outside the scope of psycho-analysis” (*SE* 18: 75). “We do not fail to recognize,” Freud adds, “that the ego’s nucleus [*Kern*], which comprises the ‘archaic heritage’ of the human mind, is unconscious, but in addition to this we distinguish the ‘unconscious repressed,’” which Le Bon does not (*SE* 18: 75). What comes to trouble Freud in his discussion of Le Bon is the possibility that our “archaic heritage” may consist of a certain suggestibility or affectability, of an ordinary alteration or sociality.

Freud’s principle interlocutor in *Group Psychology* is in many ways Bernheim. What lies behind the explanations of the supposed “authorities on sociology and group psychology,” what lies behind Le Bon’s psychology of crowds, Tarde’s “imitation,” and McDougall’s “sympathetic” or “primitive induction of emotion,” is, Freud argues, “even though it is given various names... the magic word ‘suggestion’” – that is, Bernheim’s suggestion (*SE* 18: 88). Freud’s

objection to the “tyranny of suggestion,” as he calls it, is not only to the authoritarian nature of hypnotic suggestion or of suggestive therapies, but also to its theoretical dominance and explanatory power. “My resistance took the direction,” he tells us, “of protesting against the view that suggestion, which explained everything, was itself exempt from explanation” (SE 18: 89). Freud does not deny the significance of suggestion or of suggestive phenomena, like contagion and imitation, but argues that the concept of suggestion is never explained – which is, in fact, his longstanding complaint against Bernheim, dating back at least to his “Review of August Forel’s *Hypnotism*” (1889).<sup>45</sup> Suggestion “is only a ‘magic word’ (*Zauberwort*),” as Borch-Jacobsen summarizes Freud’s argument, “employed to explain, tautologically, ‘the magic of words’” (“Hypnosis in Psychoanalysis” 41.) Freud primary objection is to the notion, which he attributes to Bernheim, “that suggestion (or more correctly suggestibility) is... an irreducible, primitive phenomenon, a fundamental fact in the mental life of man” (SE 18: 89). Freud attempts in *Group Psychology* to explain suggestion and suggestibility, as well as the “riddle of group formations,” in psychoanalytic terms, to explain them in terms of libido and of the

unifying or binding (*Bindung*) force he generalizes, as he had earlier in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, as Eros, “which holds together everything in the world” (*SE* 18: 92).

What binds the members of a group or mass together into a unity, according to Freud, is not the direct ties between them, but the libidinal tie (*Libidobindung*) they share with the leader.<sup>46</sup> A group or mass is, for Freud, not just a collection of individuals but forms a unity, an organized whole. It is, at certain points in the text, specifically an organic unity, “a continuation,” as he puts it, “of the multicellular character of all the higher organisms” (*SE* 18: 87). The unity group formations, the unity of the social body is, for Freud, embodied in the figure of the leader. A group formation, as he presents it in *Group Psychology*, appears to be a kind of collective ego modeled on and taking as its ideal the figure of the leader, the figure, he later proposes, of the “absolutely narcissistic” [*absolut Narzissmus*] primal father/hypnotist/chief. (*SE* 18: 124).<sup>47</sup> It is a narcissistic sociality, a narcissistic politics – and, as many commentators have noted, a manifestly totalitarian model.

This model of group formation is, however, from the very first, difficult for Freud to sustain. *Group Psychology* repeatedly overflows

his theory – notably, as Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy have shown, in his discussion of panic (*La Panique Politique*).<sup>48</sup> “Anyone who like McDougall describes a panic as one of the plainest functions of the ‘group mind,’” Freud writes, “arrives at the paradoxical position that this group mind does away with itself in one of its most striking manifestations” (*SE* 18: 97). Freud is arguing against McDougall’s use of panic as an example of emotional contagion, of what he calls the “direct induction of emotion by way of a primitive sympathetic response” (*SE* 18: 84). “Panic,” according to Freud, “means the disintegration of the group” (*SE* 18: 97). It is a kind of radical unbinding caused by the loss of the leader and therefore “of the emotional ties which hold the group together” (*SE* 18: 97). In their panic, however, the members of the disbanding group do not behave as autonomous individuals, but are seemingly infected or invaded by the affects of the others, their emotions breaching, to use the language of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, the boundaries of the self or psyche. “The acme of the ‘sympathetic’ relationship with others,” as Borch-Jacobsen writes, “is simultaneously the ultimate nonrelationship with others” (“The Primal Band” 9). Their “panicky

disbanding bond,” as he calls it, is a relation without relation. It is both social and asocial.

It is at this point that Freud interrupts his argument and devotes Chapter 7 to the elaboration of his theory of identification. The theory he puts forth, however, as Freud himself acknowledges, is unable to fully account either for identification or for what he calls “the riddle of group formations.” “We are very well aware,” Freud writes in a footnote at the end of the chapter, “that we have not exhausted the nature of identification... and that we have consequently left part of the riddle of group formations untouched” (SE 18: 110). “Moreover,” he adds,

there is still much to be explained in the manifestations of existing identifications.... The study of such identifications, like those, for instance, which lie at the root of clan feeling, led Robertson Smith... to the surprising discovery that they rest upon the acknowledgement of the possession of a common substance [by the members of the clan], and may even therefore be created by a meal eaten in common. This feature makes it possible to connect this kind of identification with the early history of the human family which I constructed in *Totem and Taboo*. (SE 18: 110)

Freud alludes here not to the murder of the primal father by the band of brothers, but rather to the “devouring of him” afterwards, to the literal act of incorporation through which “they accomplished their identification with him” – and, I want to suggest, to the failure



of their devouring, appropriating identification, to what remains unassimilable in it (*SE* 13: 142). None of the brothers, according to Freud, succeeded in taking the father's place. Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy argue in "*La Panique Politique*" that the "common substance" Freud refers to here is in certain way maternal (28). The totem meal repeats what he calls in *Totem and Taboo* the "mother's substance," which, as Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy observe, Freud notes but does not see ("The Unconscious Is Destructured" 202). ("It is not merely based on the fact that a man is part of his mother's substance, having been born of her and nourished by her milk, but... it can be acquired and strengthened by food which a man eats later" (*SE* 13: 135).) "The identification with the father," as Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy write, "occurs only on the basis on this other identification, wholly other because not supported by any figure" ("*La Panique Politique*" 28).

The theory of identification in *Group Psychology* requires, in a sense the supplement of a theory of hypnosis. Hypnosis provides Freud with the model for the libidinal bond between the individual members of a group and its leader. Hypnosis becomes in Freud's argument the ultimate specular identification: the hypnotized

subject puts the hypnotist, the other or the object, in the place of its ego ideal.<sup>49</sup> It is a state that resembles being in love, but with the “directly sexual trends excluded.” “It would be more to the point to explain being in love by hypnosis,” Freud observes, “than the other way around” (*SE* 18: 114). “Hypnosis is not a good object for comparison with a group formation,” he declares, “because it is truer to say that it is identical with it” (*SE* 18: 115). The only difference is that hypnosis is limited to two people; it forms a couple rather than a group. A group formation is for Freud a sort of group of couples, of individuals each of whom is hypnotically tied to the same person or object. “A primary group of this kind,” he writes, “is a number of individuals who have put one and the same object in the place of their ego ideal and have consequently identified themselves with one another in their ego” (*SE* 18: 116).

But this specular model of hypnosis does not, Freud admits, solve the “riddle of hypnosis,” much less “the riddle of group formations.” He has only managed, as he puts it, “to shift the question onto the riddle of hypnosis, about which so many points have yet to be cleared up” (*SE* 18: 117). “Hypnosis would solve

the riddle of the libidinal constitution of groups for us straight away,” Freud writes,

if it were not that it itself exhibits some features which are not met by the rational explanation we have hitherto given of it as a state of being in love with the directly sexual trends excluded. There is still a great deal in it which we must recognize as unexplained and mysterious. It contains an additional element of paralysis derived from the relation between someone with superior power and someone who is without power and helpless – which may afford a transition to the hypnosis of fright which occurs in animals. The manner in which it is produced and its relationship to sleep are not clear; and the puzzling way some people are subject to it, while others resist it completely, points to some factor still unknown which is realized in it. (*SE* 18: 115)

Hypnosis contains in this passage an element of trauma. Paralysis is, as I noted earlier, the paradigmatic effect of trauma for Freud.

The “hypnosis of fright” he invokes would seem to bring us back to the notion of a kind of hypnoid state, to the equation of trauma and the hypnotic state. Hypnosis is also, he indicates, something other than the specular relation he described. Hypnosis has something in it that remains “unexplained and mysterious,” a traumatic element, an unknown factor that continues to escape his theory, to escape psychoanalytic appropriation, even as it takes on a more and more ample scale in it.

“Hypnosis as something positively uncanny [*direkt Unheimliches*] about it,” Freud writes, and its “uncanniness

[*Unheimlichen*] suggests” to him “something old and familiar that has undergone repression” (SE 18: 125). The riddle of hypnosis, of what “lies hidden behind enigmatic words ‘hypnosis’ and ‘suggestion’” leads Freud back in *Group Psychology* to the pre-history of the subject, to the pre-history of the “human family,” which often serves as a placeholder for it, and to his myth of the primal horde. “Hypnosis is solidly founded,” he declares, “upon a predisposition which has survived in the unconscious from the early history of the human family” (SE 18: 128). “The hypnotist awakens in the subject a portion of his archaic heritage which had also made him compliant towards his parents and which had experienced an individual re-animation in his relation with his father” (SE 18: 127). Freud ends by positing the kind of “primitive phenomenon” he criticized in the social psychologists, an “archaic heritage,” whose relation to the repressed unconscious is ambiguous. But if the hypnotist cannot be looked at “in the face,” as Freud says, it is perhaps not that the rapport is a renewal of the relation of a member of the primal horde to the primal father, but that it is too close, a blind identification, that what it repeats precedes the face-to-face encounter with others, precedes the differentiation of self

and other, subject and object. It is an “other identification,” as Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy put it, unsupported by any figure. What is this “archaic heritage” but a certain constitutive belatedness in relation to our own birth, the originary identification or sociality out of which the subject is born. What hypnosis repeats in a sense is an originary alteration of the subject.

While Freud does not succeed in *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* in solving the problem or the riddle hypnosis, he appears to break off his inquiry into it. In *The Ego and the Id*, written the next year, Freud draws on his theorization of identification in Chapter 7 of *Group Psychology*, but the question of hypnosis is never explicitly addressed – though the problem of hypnosis is perhaps implicit in Freud’s discussion of “an individual’s earliest and most important identification, his identification with his father in his own personal pre-history,” which he claims “is a direct and immediate identification and takes place earlier than any object-cathexis” (*SE* 19: 31). What I want to argue, however, is that the problem of hypnosis is displaced in the wake of *Group Psychology* onto what Freud called “the obscure problems bordering

on hypnotism,” telepathy and thought-transference (*Gedanken-Übertragung*). It is no coincidence that the first of Freud’s writings on telepathy, “Dreams and Telepathy” and “Psychoanalysis and Telepathy” (1941 [1921]), were written in the immediate aftermath of *Group Psychology*.<sup>50</sup>

Like hypnosis, telepathy occupies a curious place in psychoanalysis.<sup>51</sup> On the one hand, Freud insisted that “the theme of telepathy is in essence alien to psychoanalysis” (quoted in Jones 3: 396). “If anyone adduces my fall into sin” (that is his belief in telepathy), he writes to a nervous Ernst Jones, “just answer him calmly that conversion to telepathy is my private affair like my Jewishness, my passion for smoking and many other things” – though his examples are perhaps a little too interesting not to hear a note of irony in his remark (Jones 3: 395-96). On the other hand, Freud never ceased to pose, even in the titles of his writings on telepathy, the question of telepathy’s relation to psychoanalysis, and to the theory of dreams that is so fundamental to it. The instances of telepathy or thought-transference Freud cites repeatedly place it in the analytic setting. Telepathy is, as Derrida calls it, a “foreign body” in psychoanalysis (“Telepathy” 35). Freud was haunted by

the problem of telepathy. It was, he confessed to Max Eitingon, one of the “two themes” (the other being the Shakespeare-Bacon controversy) that “always perplexed him to distraction [*bringen mich immer aus der Fassung*]” (Jones 3: 391). In her *Freud Journal* Lou Andreas-Salomé recalls having with Freud a “long conversation (in confidence) on these rare instances of thought transference which certainly torment him,” a case in which a mother “abreacted that which had retained its intensity in the daughter, quite as though it were her own, far beyond her own experience” (169-70; quoted in Torok, “Story of Fear” 179). “This is a point he hopes need never again be touched in his lifetime,” she adds. “I hope the contrary.”

Telepathy stands in Freud’s thought as though isolated; it is not so much repressed or denied as simply cut off from its associative connections. What is surprising about Freud’s writings on telepathy is that in them he seems to allow precisely what he takes such pains elsewhere to disallow. “If only one accustoms oneself to the idea of telepathy,” he writes in “Dreams and Occultism,” one of the *New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis* (1933),

one can accomplish a lot with it – for the time being, it is true, only in the imagination. It is a familiar fact that we do not

know how the common purpose [*Gesamtwille*] comes about in the great insect communities [*Insektenstaaten*]: possibly it is done by means of a direct psychical transference of this kind. One is led to the suspicion that this is the original, archaic method of communication between individuals and that in the course of phylogenetic evolution it has been replaced by the better method of giving information with the help of signals which are picked by the sense organs. But the older method might have persisted in the background and still be able to put itself into effect under certain conditions – for instance, in passionately excited mobs [*Massen*]. (*SE* 22: 55)<sup>52</sup>

Freud proposes in this passage precisely the kind of “direct psychical transference” that he had argued against in *Group Psychology* and earlier in *The Interpretation of Dreams*. The immediate communion with the thoughts or affects of others in a group or mass is unmediated by any leader or third term, unsupported by any figure. It is an archaic heritage anterior to and independent of any relation to a leader, that precedes or does not take place on the basis of perceptual or specular distance. It is irreducible even to the human. Unlike Freud’s earlier example, sympathy, the shared feelings, thoughts, and desires precede and determine those of the individual.

At stake for Freud in the question of telepathy, which he tends to reduce to thought-transference – the two can he argues “without too much violence be regarded as the same thing” – is the question of unconscious communication or of communication



between unconsciousnesses. “Psycho-analysis, by inserting the unconscious between what is physical and what was previously called ‘psychical,’” Freud writes in “Dreams and Occultism,” “has paved the way for the assumption of such processes as telepathy” (*SE* 22: 55). “The telepathic process,” he explains,

is supposed to consist in a mental act in one person instigating the same mental act in another person. What lies between these two mental acts may easily be a physical process into which the mental one is transformed at one end and which is transformed back once more into the same mental one at the other end. The analogy with other transformations, such as occur in speaking or hearing on the telephone, would then be unmistakable. (*SE* 22: 55)

Telepathy is, Freud writes earlier in the “lecture,” “a kind of psychological counterpoint to wireless telegraphy” (*SE* 22: 36). Such figures of technology, and specifically of teletechnology and telecommunication, pervade Freud’s writings on telepathy, as they do (as I discuss at greater length in Chapter 3) the broader discourse on telepathy. But what I want to draw attention to here is that Freud uses remarkably similar language, including the figure of the telephone, in describing the role of the analyst.<sup>53</sup> The analyst, Freud remarks in one of his papers on technique,

must turn his own unconscious like a receptive organ towards the transmitting unconscious of the patient. He must adjust himself to the patient as a telephone receiver is adjusted to the transmitting microphone. Just as the receiver converts

back in to sound-waves the electric oscillations in the telephone which were set up by sound waves, so the doctor's unconscious is able, from the derivatives of the unconscious which are communicated to him, to reconstruct that unconscious. (*SE* 12: 115-6)

Analysis becomes in this passage not so much an act of interpretation as a kind of telepathy or thought-transference. The analyst becomes a telepathic or telephonic medium. Like the purely telepathic dream, analysis involves "the perception of something external, in relation to which the mind remains passive and receptive" (*SE* 18: 208). The analyst must "not tolerate any resistances in himself" (*SE* 12: 115-6).

There is a recurring narrative in Freud's writings on telepathy, a series of cases in which a patient visits a fortune teller of some sort, whose prediction does not come true but nonetheless gives the patient great satisfaction. While Freud dismisses the reality of fortune telling, his readings invariably turn up an instance of thought-transference. Freud reads the fortunes as though they were dreams of the patients, as the fulfillment of one of their suppressed or repressed wishes. The fortune tellers have, he suggests, while distracted by some meaningless activity, unwittingly served as mediums, becoming like a "photographic plate," able to receive the wishes of others. "Diverting her own psychical forces"

with various contrivances, as is often done in jokes or in hypnosis, Freud writes of one of the fortune tellers, she becomes “receptive and accessible to the effects upon her of her client’s thoughts,” becomes “a true ‘medium’” (SE 18: 184). The ostensible significance of these cases, for Freud, is that it was only through analysis that the thought-transference was discovered, “that it was only analysis that created the occult fact” (SE 22: 42). But it is not difficult to see that they are also allegories of analysis, with the analyst cast in the role of the medium. They are, I want to suggest, allegories of a certain materiality in psychoanalysis, of the openness to alterity, the unpredictability and incalculability, that makes in something of a wild card even in relation to its own theory.<sup>54</sup>

The thought-transferences in Freud’s examples are largely one-way transmissions from analysand to analyst. There are few cases of what we might call counter-thought-transferences, which would raise perhaps a little too directly questions of suggestion and of hypnosis.<sup>55</sup> There are, however, two exceptions, both of which appear at the end of “Dreams and Occultism,” the last of his “fake lectures” on telepathy. The first is the case of Dr. Forsyth and the *Forsyte Saga*, a case in which several names which were on Freud’s

mind emerged in the associations of his patient Herr P. (who Maria Torok suggests was Sergei Pankeiev, the Wolf Man).<sup>56</sup> It was to have been the third case in “Psycho-Analysis and Telepathy,” but Freud left the manuscript in Vienna by “mistake,” which is “proof,” he claims, that he discusses the “subject of occultism under the greatest of resistance” (*SE* 18: 190). But, the impact of the counter-thought-transference in this instance appears to be fairly minimal. Herr P. seems to treat what is transferred like a sort of day’s residue, incorporating it into his already well-established transference, just as though he had learned of it in some other way.

The other is the final case in Freud’s “lecture.” The case comes to Freud from Dorothy Burlingham, whom he calls “a trustworthy witness.” If her “observations... can be confirmed,” he declares, it “would be bound to put an end to the remaining doubts on the reality of thought-transference,” which he now suspects “is quite a common phenomenon” (*SE* 22: 56, 55). “She made use of a situation,” Freud writes,

no longer a rare one, in which a mother and child are simultaneously in analysis.... One day the mother spoke during her analytic session of a gold coin that had played a particular part in one of the scenes of her childhood. Immediately afterwards, after she had returned home, her little boy, about ten years old, came to her room and brought

her a gold coin which he asked her to keep for him. She asked him in astonishment where he had got it from. He had been given it on his birthday; but his birthday had been several months earlier and there was no reason why the child should have remembered the gold coin precisely then. The mother reported the occurrence to the child's analyst and asked her to find out from the child the reason for his action. But the child's analyst threw no light on the matter; the action had forced its way that day into the child's life like a foreign body [*Fremdkörper*]. A few months later the mother was sitting down at her writing-desk to write down, as she had been told to do, an account of the experience, when in came the boy and asked for the gold coin back, as he wanted to take it with him to show in his analytic session. Once again the child's analyst could discover no explanation of his wish. (*SE* 22: 55)

Freud's account of this case raises a number of questions. How are we to read the rapport between the mother and the child, or its curious mediation by psychoanalysis? What is the significance of the gold coin that circulates between mother, child, and analyst, or of the mother's writing, "as she had been told to do?" What are implications of the wish forcing itself into the child like a "foreign body" (*Fremdkörper*), like a trauma? Why does it resist analysis? Why can psychoanalysis offer no explanation of it?

But Freud breaks the connection. "And this brings us back," he announces, "to psycho-analysis, which was what we started out from." Brings us back from what? At what point were we no longer in psychoanalysis?

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## Notes

1. The quotation is taken from Karin Obholzer's interview with Sergei Pankeiev in *The Wolf-Man: Conversations with Freud's Patient Sixty Years Later* (38). The passage reads in full:

By the way, Freud told me he used to use hypnosis.... In the beginning and then he stopped. I think that being hypnotized is dangerous because it is also a kind of transference. It's not the same, because under hypnosis, one isn't aware that one puts one's trust in someone. But when there is transference, you know when your trust is excessive. One can adopt a more critical attitude.... But basically the two things are similar, of course. When I do what the transference shows me, it is really like being hypnotized by someone. That's the influence. I can remember Freud saying, "Hypnosis, what do you mean hypnosis, everything we do is hypnosis too." Then why did he discontinue hypnosis. I can't remember. You must have read something about it. Why did he confine his method to conversations with his patients, and stop using hypnosis? (38)

2. Despite its prominence in Freud's writings, hypnosis has, at least until fairly recently, received comparatively little attention in psychoanalytic literature. The publication of Henri Ellenberger's monumental *The Discovery of the Unconscious*, which showed the degree to which psychoanalysis and modern "dynamic psychiatry" grew out of mesmerism and hypnosis, is an important exception and a key turning point. In recent years hypnosis has been, especially in France, the subject of renewed theoretical interest – perhaps, because of the extent to which it was anathema to Lacan and the Lacanians. Hypnosis is a scandal in French psychoanalysis the way it is not, for instance, in the United States, where many therapists practice it. See Leon Chertok and Isabelle Stengers, *A Critique of Psychoanalytic Reason*; François Roustang, *Psychoanalysis Never Lets Go*; Ruth Leys, "The Real Miss Beauchamp" and *Trauma: A Genealogy*; and especially Mikkel Borch-Jacobsen, "Hypnosis in Psychoanalysis," *The Freudian Subject*, and *The Emotional Tie*. See also Adam Crabtree, *From Mesmer to Freud*.

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3. In his retranslation of Freud's lectures at Clark University, Saul Rosenzweig (with some justification) translates *Vorbild* as "prototype" (405), rather than as "example" as Strachey does. The fact that Freud concludes the sentence "moreover, it [the phenomenon of post-hypnotic suggestion] provides a pattern (*Muster*) upon which we can account for the phenomena of hysteria" indicates that what is at that what is at issue is hypnosis's role as a model, a prototype, a pattern (*SE* 11: 19).

4. In 1892-93, for instance, several years after he began using the cathartic method, Freud published "A Case of Successful Treatment by Hypnosis," an account of a treatment by hypnotic suggestion. The paper, as Strachey notes, is "almost exactly contemporaneous with Breuer and Freud's "Preliminary Communication."

5. The 1896 date comes from a lecture, "On Psychotherapy," Freud delivered in 1904 in which he declared that "I have not used hypnosis for therapeutic purposes for some eight years (except for a few special experiments)" (*SE* 7: 260). Freud's parenthetical remark suggests, however, that it was not an absolute break. Ironically, Freud began his lecture by noting that he had not spoken before the group, the *Wiener medizinisches Dokorenkillegium*, for "some eight years," when, as Strachey informs us in a footnote, it had in fact been nine years, which raises even more questions about the accuracy of the date.

6. In "Psychical (or Mental) Treatment," for instance, which was written in 1890, Freud discusses patient's "resistance" (*Widerstand*) to hypnotic suggestion. "If... we are dealing with a patient, and urge him by suggestion, to give up his illness," Freud writes, "we perceive that this means a great sacrifice to him and not a small one. Here the power of suggestion is contending against the force which created the symptoms and maintains them" (*SE* 7: 301). Freud later writes in very similar terms, in the psychotherapy section of the *Studies on Hysteria*, for instance, of the resistance that is supposedly only evident without hypnosis. "Psychoanalysis began," as Derrida notes in *Resistances of Psychoanalysis*, "by analyzing a resistance to hypnotic suggestion" (16).

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7. On the implications of psychoanalysis being determined in relation to what resists it, see Jacques Derrida *Resistances of Psychoanalysis*. “If... the concept of *resistance to analysis*,” he writes, “cannot unify itself, for nonaccidental or noncontingent reasons, then the concept of analysis and of psychoanalytic analysis, the very concept of *psychoanalysis* will have known the same fate. Being determined, if one can say that, only in adversity and in relation to what resists it, psychoanalysis will never gather itself into the unity of a concept or task. If there is not *one* resistance, there is not ‘*la psychanalyse*’ – whether one understands it here as a system of theoretical norms or a charter of institutional practices” (20).

8. Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy argue in “*La Panique Politique*” that identification is “an internal limit of psychoanalysis” (15), an argument to which Borch-Jacobsen’s, as well as mine, is indebted.

9. On mimesis see Lacoue-Labarthe, “Typography” and “The Echo of the Subject.” Borch-Jacobsen studied with Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy in Strasbourg, and his reading in *The Freudian Subject* and in *The Emotional Tie* of problem identification or mimesis in Freud was strongly influenced by their work. See their “*La Panique Politique*,” “The Unconscious is Destructured Like an Affect,” and “From Where Is Psychoanalysis Possible?”

10. On mimetology see Lacoue-Labarthe, “Typography.”

11. “All the major revisions that lead to the ‘second topography are,’” according to Borch-Jacobsen, “summoned up by the ever more pressing necessity to integrate the mimetic mechanisms, for better or worse, into a problematic [of the subject] that is allergic to them” (*The Freudian Subject*, 52).

12. On the origins of the modern concept of trauma see Allan Young, *The Harmony of Illusions: Inventing Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder*; Eric Caplan, *Mind Games: American Culture and the Birth of Psychotherapy* (11-36); and Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *The Railway Journey* (134-149). See also Ruth Leys, *Trauma: A Genealogy*, which explores the significance of hypnosis and mimesis in the history of the concept of trauma.



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13. On and the tension or confusion in Erichsen's work "between pathological and psychopathological explanations" see Schivelbusch, *The Railway Journey* (142). On Erichsen, see also Caplan 13-17; and Young 14-17.

14. At issue in the contemporary debate over "male hysteria" was not, as it is often assumed, the question of whether men could be hysterics (it was widely assumed that they could be), but the question of whether male cases of "railway spine" or "railway brain" were cases of hysteria or a separate "traumatic neurosis." On the historical context of Freud's famous lecture on male hysteria, where he essentially took Charcot's side of the debate against the majority of German and Austrian physicians, see Henri Ellenberger, "Freud's Lecture on Masculine Hysteria (October 15, 1886)."

15. When Freud left Paris in February 1886, after studying for six months at the Salpêtrière, Charcot ostensibly gave him an assignment to write a paper on the difference between hysterical and organic paralysis. For reasons that remain unknown, the paper, "Some Points for a Comparative Study of Organic and Hysterical Motor Paralysis," did not appear until 1893. In the essay Freud argued that hysterical paralysis was based on the "conception" or "idea" of the arm, for instance, rather than its anatomy, on where one imagines the arm to begin rather than where it does anatomically. "Hysteria behaves," he declares, "as though anatomy did not exist or as though it had no knowledge of it" (*SE* 1: 169). On the implications of Freud's early essay for later psychoanalytic understandings of the body and sexual difference, see Shepherdson.

16. Mark Micale suggests in "Jean-Martin Charcot and *les névroses traumatique*" that Charcot was the first to make the analogy between "the mental state of hypnosis and traumatic hysteria" (125), an analogy he drew frequently. Charcot himself, however, cited Page's less systematic comparison in support of his own argument in his *Clinical Lectures* (Charcot 335).

17. Freud gave the lecture in January 1893 between the appearance of the two installments of the "Preliminary

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Communication,” and it was published later in the month. The German original, according to Strachey, is headed “By Dr. Josef Breuer and Dr. Sigm. Freud of Vienna,” but was written, delivered, and revised for publication by Freud. While the argument as well as the subject matter of the two texts is largely the same – and they even share the same title (“Preliminary Communication” is the subtitle of the chapter that appears in the *Studies on Hysteria*) – Freud devotes the first section of his lecture to Charcot, which makes his influence on it more apparent. Interestingly, in an abstract of the “Preliminary Communication” he wrote in 1897, Freud begins: “The mechanism to which Charcot traced back to hystero-traumatic paralyses, and the assumption of which enabled him to provoke them deliberately in hypnotized patients, can also be made responsible for numerous symptoms of what is described as non-traumatic hysteria” (*SE* 3: 244).

18. James was reviewing Freud’s lecture “On the Psychological Mechanism of Hysterical Phenomena,” which appeared under both their names (see above), rather than the “Preliminary Communication.”

19. The differences between Charcot and Bernheim, between the Salpêtrière and Nancy schools, turned on the question of hypnosis. Charcot believed that hypnosis was a specific physiological condition, with three distinct stages, analogous to those of hysteria. In the preface to his translation of Bernheim’s *Suggestion*, Freud sides with Charcot, but he seems to have gradually gone over to Bernheim’s position. In his laudatory “Review of August Forel’s *Hypnotism*” (1889) (Forel was a supporter of Bernheim’s), Freud advises physicians “to adopt the suggestion theory from the first” (*SE* 1: 98). Bernheim and the Nancy school exposed the fatal flaw of Charcot – the role of suggestion in his experiments at the Salpêtrière, in his supposed demonstrations of his theories of hysteria – and were largely responsible for the steep decline in his reputation and influence in the 1890s.

20. As Sander Gilman notes in “The Image of the Hysteric,” the notion of a hereditary predisposition to hysteria often had anti-Semitic overtones, which may help explain Freud and Breuer’s

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movement away from it and, he suggests, from the anti-Semitic Charcot towards Bernheim (415-19).

21. Borch-Jacobsen makes a similar point in “Mimetic Efficacy,” where he calls it a “catharsis of mimesis by mimesis” (109).

22. On the *maladies de la mémoire* see Michael Roth, “Remembering Forgetting: *Maladies de la Mémoire* in Nineteenth-Century France” and “Hysterical Remembering.” See also Hacking, *Rewriting the Soul*.

23. The theatrical dimension of the cathartic method did not apparently end with the abandonment of hypnosis. In one of his letters to Fliess, Freud writes of having “traced back” a hysteria “to a seduction, which occurred for the first time at 11 months and [I could] hear again the words that were exchanged between two adults at the time! It is as though it comes from a phonograph” (*The Complete Letters of Sigmund Freud to Wilhelm Fliess* 226). On the significance of the question of suggestion in the issues surrounding Freud’s abandonment of the seduction theory – a significance that is completely ignored by Jeffrey Masson in *The Assault on Truth* – see Borch-Jacobsen, “Neurotica.”

24. In Janet criticized Freud and Breuer’s cathartic method, “on the grounds,” as Ruth Leys writes, “that what mattered in the treatment of neurosis was not ‘confession’ of the traumatic memory but its elimination” (650). On Janet’s altering of traumatic memories, which is often overlooked by his contemporary supporters, see Leys “Traumatic Cures: Shell Shock, Janet, and the Question of Memory,” which is reprinted in her *Trauma: A Genealogy*; and Roth, “Remembering Forgetting.” On Janet’s theory of traumatic memory, though it largely elides the question of his alterations of them, see Bessel A. van der Kolk and Onno van der Hart, “The Intrusive Past.”

25. While it is dated 1905 in the *Standard Edition* and in the *Gesammelte Werke*, “Psychical (or Mental) Treatment” [*Psychische Behandlung (Seelenbehandlung)*] was actually written and published in 1890. As Strachey notes in Volume 1 of the *Standard Edition*, Saul Rosenzweig discovered that 1905 date refers to the third edition of *Die Gesundheit*, a collective work on medicine, where

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Freud's article was reprinted unchanged from the 1890 edition (*SE* 1: 63). The fact that the date of "Psychical (or Mental) Treatment," with its hyperbolic praise of and claims for hypnosis and suggestion, indicates the degree to which the significance of hypnosis has been overlooked.

26. Freud makes similar remarks about the "magic" of words in the first of his *Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis*, referring this time to the words of the analysand as well as the analyst.

27 Frau Cäcilie M., who Freud called his teacher, was one of his most important early cases. Peter Swales suggests in "Freud, His Teacher, and the Birth of Psychoanalysis" that the reason Freud did not publish a case history of Frau Cäcilie (whose real name was Anna von Leiben) in the *Studies on Hysteria* was that she would have been too-easily recognized. The clichés in Frau Cäcilie's all too witty conversions function as auto-suggestions. In the *Studies on Hysteria*, however, Freud displays some (belated) anxiety about the role of words in the formation of her symptoms, insisting on the priority of feeling over its mediation by words. Verbal expressions seem to us, he writes,

to be a figurative picture of them, whereas in all probability the description was once meant literally; and hysteria is right in restoring the original meaning of the words in depicting is unusually strong innervations. Indeed, it is perhaps wrong to say that hysteria creates these sensations by symbolization. It may be that it does not take linguistic usage as its model after all, but that both hysteria and linguistic usage alike draw their material from a common source. (*SE* 2: 181)

Or perhaps, as Freud writes of hypnosis in "Psychical (or Mental) Treatment," hysteria has "restored to words... their original magic."

28. On the figure of paralysis in Freud, see Neil Hertz's "Forward" to *Writings on Art and Literature*. Hertz draw attention to Freud's use of figures paralysis and "temporary immobility" to describe the way we are "powerfully affected" by works of art" as well as what he calls "moments of shared 'unconsciousness,' when important transmissions are taking place" (xvii).

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29. "Frau Emmy von N." has tended to be overshadowed in the critical literature by the Anno O. case that precedes it in the *Studies on Hysteria* and by the later Dora case. An important exception is Maria Torok's "A Remembrance of Things Deleted: Between Sigmund Freud and Emmy von N.," an essay that is republished in somewhat different form (co-authored by Nicholas Rand) as "The Secret of Psychoanalysis: History Reads Theory," and as a chapter in their *Questions for Freud*. See also Ellenberger, "The Story of 'Emmy von N.'"; Ola Andersson, "A Supplement to Freud's Case History of 'Frau Emmy von N.'"; Michael Roth, "Falling into History"; and Christfried Tögel, "My Bad Diagnostic Error."

30. As Strachey notes in an appendix to the *Studies on Hysteria*, the dates in the Emmy von N. case are inconsistent and contradictory. Some of the dates later in the case indicate that it may have begun in May of 1888 rather than 1889 as Freud claims at the beginning. The earlier date would make more sense in many ways, especially in terms of the development of Freud's theory and technique. Ola Andersson and Henri Ellenberger, however, both concluded that the case did begin in May 1889. In a recent essay, Christfried Tögel argues, based on the date of a revolution in Haiti (San Domingo in the case history), which Emmy read about in the newspaper during the treatment, that the earlier (1888) date is correct. The question of when the treatment took place remains an open one.

31. While Fanny Moser's younger daughter, Mentona, did not in her unpublished autobiography offer an opinion about her mother's guilt, she did, according to Henri Ellenberger, include "some rather bizarre factual information": that rat poison was found in the room where her father died, for instance, and that some of the most important parts of the father's file was missing ("The Story of 'Emmy von N.'" 285-86).

32. In another letter to the younger Fanny Moser, who seems to have maintained a correspondence with him, in 1918, Freud wrote: "will you please bear in mind that at the time I also did not understand anything about your mother's case, although on two occasions she had been my patient for a number of weeks." "It was

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precisely in connection with this case and its outcome,” he added, “that I recognized that treatment with hypnosis is a meaningless and worthless procedure and received the incentive to create psychoanalytic therapy more in accordance with reason” (Quoted in Andersson 15). Since “Emmy von N.” was the first case in which he used the hypno-cathartic method, Freud’s remark appears to be a retrospective construction. His claim in “Emmy von N.” that in the case he “began for the first time to have grave doubts” about Bernheim’s view of hypnosis (“*tout est dans la suggestion*”) should probably be regarded with similar skepticism. Freud’s remarks nonetheless indicate the degree to which the case remained a major touchstone of his thinking of hypnosis.

33. In “A Remembrance of Things Deleted” Maria Torok argues that Freud’s procedure in “Emmy von N.” is not the cathartic method (237-38). When she cites Freud and Breuer’s definition of the cathartic method in the conclusion to their “Preliminary Communication,” however, she does so selectively. She quotes only the first part of the definition, ending with “it subjects it to associative correction by introducing it into normal consciousness” (237). But, she leaves out “(under light hypnosis) or by removing it through the physicians suggestion, as is done in somnambulism accompanied by amnesia” (*SE* 2: 17), which does describe Freud’s method in the case. She and Nicholas Rand quote it the same way in their *Questions for Freud* (112). The uniqueness of Freud’s approach to Emmy von N. is an important part of Torok argument, which seeks to link his response to her case to a family trauma from his childhood, and specifically to a perceived connection between the circulation of the scandal in the newspaper after her husband’s death and the reporting in the newspapers after the arrest of Freud’s uncle Josef.

34. See, for instance, Freud’s remarks in his *Autobiographical Study*, where he writes “Not only did this method seem more effective than bald suggestive commands or prohibitions, but it also satisfied the curiosity of the physician, who, after all, had a right to learn something of the origin of the phenomenon which he was striving to remove by the monotonous procedure of suggestion” (*SE* 20: 19).

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35. Swales praises *Dr. Heidenhoff's Process* for anticipating the cathartic method. "Heidenhoff gets her to tell him her story – that is, she has to plunge into her past and tell him what is troubling her so deeply. Whereupon all of her traumatic memories are abolished during the narration through the action of an electric machine" (36). But as Ruth Leys points out, the woman in the novel, Madeleine, is not asked to narrate the past or to tell Heidenhoff about it, but merely to concentrate on it so the machine can delete it (*Trauma* 108).

Typical of Bellamy, who used a similar plot device in *Looking Backward*, the thought extirpation process turns out to be merely a dream of the hero (too much morphine before bed), who had hoped to get rid of Madeleine's memory of her seduction and abandonment by another man so she would be willing to marry him. Much of the novel is concerned with the implications of such a process of thought extirpation would have on our understanding of individual identity and ethics. The novel ends with Madeleine's suicide, death figuring as the only ethical means of forgetting.

36. Strachey addition of the word "dating" to Emmy von N's remark "I am a woman from the last century" has the effect of making Freud's (or rather Emmy von N's) explanation of it seem somewhat more believable, since "dating from" is an expression that would be more likely to be used in referring to a piece of furniture or an inanimate object than to a person or to oneself.

37. Freud's falling in with Emmy von N. is frequently celebrated in the psychoanalytic literature as a moment when he learns to begin listening to his patients and stops trying to control the conversation. See, for instance, Bromberg, "Hysteria, Dissociation, and Cure: Emmy von N. Revisited"; and Roth, "Falling into History." Freud gives considerable attention in the case history to his relationship with Emmy, rather than just reporting on his discovery of her symptoms and their cure. His behavior towards her, however, often shocking. At one point he uses hypnotic suggestion to play a practical joke on her, which Breuer apparently put a stop to, and at another he uses post-hypnotic suggestion to reassert his authority and to demonstrate his power over her.

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38. Freud's first use of the term ambivalence, which he borrowed from Bleuler, was in "The Dynamics of Transference" (1912) in relation to positive and negative transference. *Totem and Taboo* is his first extensive discussion of the concept.

39. I have quoted this passage from a footnote to the "The Unconscious Is Deconstructed Like an Affect," where I first encountered it. It is from their earlier essay "*La Panique Politique*," where it is translated slightly differently (26).

40. On Abraham and Torok's notion of the crypt, see their *The Wolf Man's Magic Word* and, on its relation to melancholic incorporation, "Mourning or Melancholia: Introjection versus Incorporation."

41. On the implications of Freud's argument that the dream-work is the essence of dreams, see Samuel Weber, *Return to Freud: Jacques Lacan's Dislocation of Psychoanalysis*, 1-6.

42. While Freud seems to be "trying to emphasize the normal, everyday nature of the dream's 'egoism,'" as Samuel Weber notes, "his implication of what he is describing works the other way: to render the everyday sense of the ego's unity problematic" (*The Legend of Freud* 240).

43. The Dream of the Abandoned Supper Party has attracted a considerable amount of critical commentary. In addition to Borch-Jacobsen's discussion of it in *The Freudian Subject* (10-16, 50-51), see Lacan, "The Directions of the Treatment and the Principles of Its Power"; Catherine Clement, *The Lives and Legend of Jacques Lacan*; and Cynthia Chase, "The Witty Butcher's Wife: Freud, Lacan, and the Conversion of Resistance to Theory" and "Desire and Identification in Lacan and Kristeva." Diana Fuss offers an interesting overview of the criticism in her discussion of the dream in *Identification Papers* (27-32).

44. In "The Witty Butcher's Wife: Freud, Lacan, and the Conversion of Resistance to Theory," Cynthia Chase considers "the significance of narcissism" in the dream or, as she puts it, "of the specular conditions of any playing out of desire, any establishing of relations, any symbolizing activity" (989). In her discussion of the dream in



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“The Witty Butcher’s Wife” and in the later “Desire and Identification in Lacan and Kristeva,” Chase draws on Kristeva’s notion of “primary narcissism,” which as she rightly notes designates a triadic specular structure. While I cannot hope to do justice here Chase’s complex and nuanced argument, I just want to note that the question of how to account for the pre- or non-specular is also at issue in Freud’s analysis of the dream.

45. Freud, in fact, cites the same “conundrum” in discussing Bernheim’s suggestion in *Group Psychology* that he had over 30 years earlier in his “Review of August Forel’s *Hypnosis*” (SE 1: 101): “Christopher bore Christ; Christ bore the whole world; where did Christopher put his foot?” (SE 18: 89).

46. Freud criticizes Le Bon for not giving enough significance to the role of the leader. Freud’s criticism seems at first to be surprising, since Le Bon gives considerable importance to the leader, writing in *The Crowd*, that the will of the leader “is the nucleus around which the opinions of the crowd are grouped and attain to identity.... A crowd is a servile flock that is incapable of doing without a master (72). Yet the relation of the members of the crowd are not for Le Bon mediated by their relation to the leader in the same way as they are for Freud. And far from being the absolute narcissist described by Freud, the leader, Le Bon suggests, is most often one of the crowd who has been “hypnotized by the idea” (72).

47. Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy argue in “La Panique Politique” that the socio-political unity in *Group Psychology* is the unity of the subject (12-13). See also, Borch-Jacobsen “The Primal Band,” “The Freudian Subject,” and *The Freudian Subject*, 154-163.

48. See also Borch-Jacobsen’s “The Primal Band,” which takes up and elaborates their argument.

49. Lacan follows Freud in this interpretation of hypnosis and even reproduces in *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis* he graphic representation of it. Lacan writes in *The Four Fundamental Concepts*: “To define hypnosis as the confusion, at one point, of the ideal signifier in which the subject is mapped with the *a*, is the most assured structural definition that has been advanced” (273). “As

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everyone knows,” Lacan adds, “it was by distinguishing itself from hypnosis that analysis became established. For the fundamental mainspring of the analytic operation is the maintenance of the distance between the I – identification – and the *a*” (273). Lacan even calls analysis “an upside-down hypnosis.” But the hypnosis is for Lacan the opposite of hypnosis, is Borch-Jacobsen argues in “The Alibi of the Subject,” “an alibi-hypnosis: a specular, specularizable, representable hypnosis, a hypnosis kept at a distance precisely so that one can become conscious of it.... Not that completely other hypnosis which seizes us ‘before’ any consciousness” (175).

50. “Psycho-Analysis and Telepathy” was not, however, published in Freud’s lifetime. The history of Freud’s writings on telepathy is a comedy of “fake lectures” (as Derrida call them), missing chapters, and forgotten case histories. “Psycho-Analysis and Telepathy” was read by Freud to the Secret Committee, though he forgot the manuscript of the third case history. “Dreams and Telepathy” was apparently written as a lecture and while it was published, it was never delivered as a lecture. “The Occult Significance of Dreams” (1925) was written as a “supplementary chapter” to the *Interpretation of Dreams*, but unlike the other supplementary chapters, it was not, with the exception of one German edition, ever included in the dream book. And finally, “Dreams and Occultism” was one of Freud’s undelivered *New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis* (1933)

51. Freud’s writings on telepathy have been the subject of renewed critical interest in recent years in the wake of Jacques Derrida’s “Telepathy.” In addition to “Telepathy,” see Maria Torok, “Afterword: What Is Occult in Occultism? Between Sigmund Freud and Sergei Penkeiev Wolf Man”; Marc Redfield, “The Fictions of Telepathy”; Nicholas Royle, *Literature and Telepathy* and “The Remains of Psychoanalysis (1): Telepathy” in *After Derrida*; François Roustang, “Suggestion over the Long Term” in *Psychoanalysis Never Lets Go*; John Forrester, “Psychoanalysis: Gossip, Telepathy, and/or Science?” in *The Seductions of Psychoanalysis*; and Pamela Thurschwell, “Freud, Ferenczi and psychoanalysis’s Telepathic Transferences” in *Literature, Technology and Magical Thinking*. See

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also, the chapter on “Occultism” in Ernst Jones, *The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud*.

52. Citing this passage in a footnote in *The Freudian Subject*, Borch-Jacobsen remarks that Freud “quite oddly concedes to the telepathy thesis all he that he denied to thesis of suggestion” (266). “The mass bond,” Borch-Jacobsen writes, “may have to be thought of as a telepathic umbilical cord” (266) but he does not take up the question of Freud’s odd concession again or discuss his writings on telepathy any further.

53. On the figure of the telephone, see Avital Ronell, *The Telephone Book: Technology – Schizophrenia – Electric Speech*.

54. My reference to a “wild card” is an allusion to a well-known passage in Paul de Man’s essay “The Resistance to Theory,” where he argues that literary theory “contains a necessarily pragmatic moment that... makes it something of a wild card in the serious game of the theoretical disciplines” (“Resistance to Theory” 8). In a recent essay Laurence Rickels proposes reading “psychoanalysis,” which also contains a necessarily pragmatic moment, in place of “literary theory” in the passage. “Psychoanalytic discourse is pragmatic or (as I would prefer to say) materialist,” Rickels writes, “to this extent that it accumulates its reformulation in the space of tension between its own self-reference and the emergency contacts it must nevertheless make with that lies outside” (“Resistance in Theory” 155).

55. François Roustang discusses this aspect of Freud’s writings on telepathy in “Suggestion over the Long Term” in his *Psychoanalysis Never Lets Go*.

56. See Maria Torok, “Afterword: What Is Occult in Occultism? Between Sigmund Freud and Sergei Penkeiev Wolf Man” in *The Wolf Man’s Magic Word*.

## CHAPTER 2

### ALLEGORIES OF MESMERISM:

#### HAWTHORNE'S *THE HOUSE OF THE SEVEN GABLES*

*For Poesy alone can tell her dreams,  
With the fine spell of words alone can save  
Imagination from the sable charm  
And dumb enchantment.*

— Keats, *The Fall of Hyperion*

Midway through *The House of the Seven Gables*, after Holgrave reads Phoebe Pyncheon the story of Alice Pyncheon's mesmeric possession by Matthew Maule, "plunging into his tale with energy and absorption" and animatedly acting out many of the parts, he comes to discover that his tale or its telling has left Phoebe in a trance-like state. With "but one wave of his hand and a

corresponding effort of his will,” Holgrave believes, he “could complete his mastery” of Phoebe and “establish an influence” over her “as dangerous and perhaps as disastrous, as that which the carpenter of his legend had acquired and exercised over the ill-fated Alice” (212). But Holgrave does not do so. He resists the “temptation” to mesmerize Phoebe and wakes her instead. “He forbade himself,” the narrator tells us, “to twine that one link more, which might have rendered his spell over Phoebe indissoluble” (212). Holgrave’s rejection of mesmerism in this scene is commonly considered to mark a key turning point in the narrative, paving “the way for the resolution of various tensions in the novel” (Tatar 215) and moving “the book toward thematic resolution” (Millington 140). Yet what precisely is it that is renounced here as mesmerism? What kind of encounter, with what or with whom, does it name? For mesmerism appears in this scene not only as the subject of Holgrave’s tale, but as a threat (and a temptation) in its performance. Is it figure for a relation to others or to language, to what Freud called “the magic of words”?

We might begin with sympathy, a key aesthetic and ethical notion in Hawthorne's writings.<sup>1</sup> Mesmerism is, for Hawthorne, as for so many of his contemporaries, bound up with sympathy.<sup>2</sup> Hawthorne even uses sympathy and magnetism, as well as sympathy and imagination, as synonyms in the novel. "The sympathy or magnetism among human beings," the narrator tells us, "is far more subtle and universal than we think; it exists ... among different classes of organized life, and vibrates from one to another" (174). This organic conception of sympathy and the unity it posits are invoked repeatedly in *The House of the Seven Gables*, as "the great sympathetic chain of human nature," for instance, or as an "intuitive sympathy" or a "natural magnetism."<sup>3</sup> Mesmerism or animal magnetism, as it is also called in the novel, belongs, in a sense, to this rhetoric of sympathy, with its tropes of electricity and magnetism, of universal animating energies and (nervo-)vital forces.<sup>4</sup> Holgrave's mesmeric ability is, for instance, referred to by the narrator as a "certain magnetic element in the artist's nature." But mesmerism also disrupts this sympathy. It brings sympathy into contact with a passive and mechanical automatism that undermines

the organic unity it promises, including, most notably perhaps for Hawthorne, the unity and autonomy of the self.

Mesmerism figures repeatedly in Hawthorne's writings as a threat to the individuality of the subject. In *The House of the Seven Gables* the narrator attributes Holgrave's resisting the temptation to mesmerize Phoebe to what he calls a "rare and high quality of reverence for another's individuality" (212). "Supposing this power arises from the transfusion of one spirit into another," Hawthorne wrote in a well-known letter to his future wife Sophia, "it seems to me that the sacredness of an individual is violated by it" (*Letters* 588). Were mesmerism "to be believed," Coverdale remarks in *The Blithedale Romance*, "the individual soul was virtually annihilated" (183). In a sense, the threat to the individual that mesmerism seems to represent is already contained in the fusional logic of organic sympathy.<sup>5</sup> Transfusion and self-annihilation are, after all, key terms in the discourse of sympathy.<sup>6</sup> The virtual annihilation of the self in mesmerism, however, is not for Hawthorne, as it so often is in the aesthetics of sympathy, recuperable, but represents a more thoroughgoing self-loss. Its virtual dissolution of the self is not a

transcendence of the self and its limits but a potentially traumatic violation of its boundaries. Mesmerism transfusion of one spirit into another, of one mind into another, appears to dissolve the boundaries separating self and other, but it does not lead to a greater unity. For what Hawthorne calls in his letter to Sophia mesmerism's "intrusion" into the psyche interrupts and disrupts the subject's relation to and communion with itself. What is at issue for Hawthorne in mesmerism, in other words, is not only the dissolution of the individual self, but its dissociation, a threat to the indivisibility of the self, its unity and self-identity, as well as its individuation.

In the letter to Sophia trying unsuccessfully to persuade her not to allow herself to be mesmerized, Hawthorne wrote that he objects to mesmerism out of "a deep reverence of the soul, and of the mysteries which it knows within itself, but never transmits to the earthly eye or ear" (589-90). Hawthorne's argument in the letter hinges on mesmerism's difference from a kind of immediacy, a direct, unmediated communication or "communion" as he puts it, that is accessible to the imagination and to an inner sense but not



to the (external) senses, that is never transmitted to “earthly eye or ear” or in a sensuous, material form. Mesmerism, he argues, is both mistaken for this “communion” and irrevocably “contaminates” it. For all its apparent immediacy, it is not a communion of the self with itself, with others or another, with nature, or with the divine, but its undoing. Mesmerism’s “influence,” Hawthorne insists, is not “spiritual” but “physical and material.” The clairvoyance and the seemingly spiritual “insight” of the mesmeric subject into the mysteries buried within the self or into “the mysteries of life beyond death” are, he writes, like opium dreams “to be accounted for as the result of a physical and material, not of a spiritual, influence” (589). “What delusion can be more lamentable and mischievous,” he asks, “than to mistake the physical and material for the spiritual? What so miserable as to lose the soul’s true, though hidden knowledge and consciousness of heaven, in the mist of an earth-born vision?” (589). Rather than demonstrating the unity of matter and spirit or of mind and matter as its proponents so often claimed, mesmerism represents, according to Hawthorne, a materialist, “earth-born” vision of the spiritual, extending “the laws of our actual world,” as

Coverdale puts it in *The Blithedale Romance*, “across the boundaries of the spiritual world” (6).

Mesmerism is not for Hawthorne, however, merely a delusion. It is also a kind of material event or occurrence, which permanently, indissolubly alters its subject. Its material influence contaminates the inmost self, a hidden, secret self in “communion” with the universal and the divine. The “sacredness of the individual” that mesmerism “violates” is precisely this self-transcendence within the self, what Emerson called in “Circles” “a residuum unknown, unanalyzable,” that, however paradoxically, insures the individuality and the indivisibility of the self, its unity and infinity. What must be renounced in mesmerism, Hawthorne suggests, is its desire for “complete... mastery,” an acknowledgement of the limits of what can or should be possessed or mastered by cognition. The refusal of such limits links mesmerism to the figures of “cold philosophical curiosity” elsewhere in his fiction, such as Aylmer in “The Birth-mark” or Ethan Brand. But Hawthorne’s renunciation also appears to try to exclude what is unmasterable in the figure of mesmerism,

to maintain against its disruptive materiality and force the inviolate self and the “true communion” of its “sane” imagination.

There is a similar tension in *The House of the Seven Gables* between exposing complete mastery as a dangerous delusion and preserving the sovereign self. Mesmerism threatens in the novel to contaminate not only the purity of the sympathetic imagination but what Hawthorne elsewhere calls the individual’s “circle of self-communion.” For mesmerism’s transfusion of one spirit into another is also a confusion of self and other, a mistaking not only of the material for the spiritual, but of the other for the self. In the “curious psychological condition” that overtakes Phoebe when Holgrave reads her his legend, she begins, we are told, to live only in his “thoughts and emotions.” In Holgrave’s legend, Matthew Maule is said to have the power both to “draw people into his own mind” and of “getting into people’s dreams, and regulating matters there,” unseen “like the stage-manager of a theatre” (189). The mesmerist becomes, as he puts it, the “unseen despot” of another. The mesmerist is “unseen,” I would suggest, precisely because he is too close, the sympathy or identification between them is blind. The

mesmerized subject is both carried out of itself into another and is affected from within by an otherness, an unrecognized and perhaps unrecognizable alterity within its self. In the mesmeric rapport the other is not recognized as other, for the mesmerized subject is without the perceptual or specular distance necessary to do so. The rapport is a relation without relation. It involves, what Borch-Jacobsen calls in "Hypnosis in Psychoanalysis," "a radical forgetting of the other" (50).

The common, late-nineteenth-century conception of hypnosis as a blind, nonspecular identification that we saw in the previous chapter on Freud was already a commonplace in Hawthorne's time in relation to mesmerism. Joseph Haddock wrote, for instance, in 1849 that mesmerized subjects "are so intimately, interiorly blended" with the mesmerist, that they "feel his cerebral consciousness as their own" (58). "The idea existing externally in the cerebrum of the mesmerizer is," he argues, "perceived by the subject as if existing in his or her cerebrum" (58). The mesmerized subject, as Gillian Brown observes of Haddock's formulation, "does not even experience his or her own subjection" (89). William

Gregory argued in 1851 that in mesmeric “sympathy,” which he also referred to variously as a “community of sensation,” of “senses,” of “taste,” of “touch” and of “emotion,” the “sensations” of the magnetizer are “so vividly felt” by the mesmerized subject “that he cannot distinguish them from the same sensations produced by direct external impressions on his own frame. Indeed, there appears to be no difference whatever between the two” (102).

Such assumptions about mesmerism, or what he termed in the language of his day “animal magnetism” and “magnetic somnambulism,” were already in place in Hegel’s *Philosophy of Mind* (*Geistes*) in 1830. “The individual in such morbid states” of sensitivity, Hegel writes, “stands in direct contact with the concrete contents of his own self,” to which belong “both the essential and the particular ties which connect him with other men and with the world at large” (101, 102). “This world which is outside him,” he observes, “has its threads in him to such a degree that it is these threads that make him what he really is: he too would become extinct if these externalities were to disappear” (102). Hegel offers as an illustration of this “identity with the surroundings” the

pathological form of mourning that Freud will call melancholia: “the effect produced by the death of beloved relatives, friends, etc. on those left behind, so that the one dies or pines away with the loss of the other” (102-3).<sup>7</sup> The self-possessed individual is, Hegel writes, “awake” to the “interconnection between himself and the features of that reality conceived as an external and a separate world, and is aware that this world is in itself also a complex of interconnections of a practically intelligible kind” (101). But the somnambulist “lives in the heart of the interconnection” (102), and does not perceive the “rational interconnection.” “Immersed” in a form of “immediacy,” the magnetized subject does not recognize “its relationship to the world” as a relation.

“The visible liberation of mind in ... magnetic phenomena from the limitations of time and space and from all finite associations” has, Hegel concedes, helped to oust “untrue, finite interpretations of mind” (7, 6). It both calls for speculative philosophy and is somehow “akin” to it. At the same time, however, citing Plato (though not the *Ion*), Hegel specifically excludes the “revelations of somnambulistic vision” from properly philosophical knowledge.<sup>8</sup>

Mesmerism is, he insists, an inferior, “pathological state,” diseased and morbid.<sup>9</sup> Its “essential feature,” Hegel writes, is “that it is a state of passivity, like that of the child in the womb” (104).

Immersed in an “inarticulate mass of mere sensitivity,” a “form of immediacy, without any distinctions between subjective and objective,” the somnambulist is “at the mercy” of “foreign suggestions” and of “every private contingency of feeling and fancy” (103). “The patient has a sort of individuality,” he writes, “but it is empty, not on the spot, not actual” (104). In the rapport, Hegel remarks, “it is impossible to say precisely which sensations and which visions he ... receives, beholds, and brings to knowledge from his own inward self and which from the person with whom he stands in relation” (104-5).

While a consideration of the role of animal magnetism in the *Philosophy of Mind* or in Hegel’s philosophy is well beyond the scope of this chapter, what I want to emphasize for our purposes is that he does not attribute “magnetic phenomena” to any particular ability or power on the part of the mesmerist, much less to a mysterious fluid, but to the receptivity and passivity of the subject,

a radical passivity that has a specifically social dimension.<sup>10</sup> For Hawthorne, as for Hegel, both the fascination and the danger of mesmerism lie in the passivity of the mesmerized subject, its seeming indifference to differences between self and other, subject and object, past and present, or spirit and matter. This indifference is not, however, an achieved reconciliation of opposites or an organic unity; its apparent immediacy is more ambivalent, an effect of not being as Hegel puts it, “mediated by the understanding” or by consciousness or reason. The critical focus on the figure of the mesmerist in *The House of the Seven Gables* and on the ethical decisions faced by Holgrave and Matthew Maule has tended to obscure the importance of such states of passivity in the novel.<sup>11</sup> What is dangerous and potentially disastrous about mesmerism for Hawthorne is not simply the power and control that one person has over another, or even the possession of one person by another, but that it is not recognized as such. The subject’s mesmeric possession by another is never present as an experience or possessed as knowledge. Neither Alice Pyncheon in Holgrave’s legend nor Phoebe Pyncheon in the scene that frames it have any



“recollection” of being mesmerized, and both emphatically deny that it took place. Phoebe was, we are told, “as unconscious of the crisis through which she had passed, as an infant” (212). Escaping self-reflection, mesmerism remains a residuum unknown and perhaps unknowable, possessing but not possessed by the subject. What mesmerism names is the force of such gaps in cognition.

Such gaps in cognition are linked in *The House of the Seven Gables* to what Georges Poulet calls the “irruptive force of the past” in Hawthorne’s fiction (109). For Holgrave to have mesmerized Phoebe would, of course, have been for him to repeat, almost exactly, the actions of his ancestor – at least as they are portrayed in the legend. In the novel history appears to be repetitive; events seem to recur and characters to be new versions of earlier figures, prescribed types performing the same roles generation after generation. This seemingly unconscious repetition compulsion is bound up in the novel, as in *The Marble Faun*, with allegory and typology. “The whole seemed,” we are told, “a series of calamity, reproducing itself in successive generations... and varying in little save the outline” (240). Holgrave is associated throughout the novel

with a modernist desire for a radical break with the past, for “everything to begin anew” rather than repeating, to be an individual rather than a prescribed type. He wrote the tale of Alice Pyncheon’s mesmeric possession, Holgrave tells Phoebe, as a way of coming to terms with the seemingly “contagious” past, which has “taken hold” of his mind “with the strangest tenacity of clutch”(186). It is, he says, a “method of throwing it off” (186). Yet, far from achieving a kind of retrospective mastery that would enable him to put the past securely behind him, for the past, in the terms of the novel, to be properly buried, Holgrave’s legend generates the very contagion he sought to escape. It reanimates the past rather than burying it, repeating rather than merely representing it. Undermining his claim to be only a “spectator” or a “mere observer,” Holgrave’s reading of the legend, exposes, seemingly against his will, his implication in the family histories he narrates. What is staged in this scene of reading is not so much a relation of interpretation or of understanding, but what we might call a relation of transference.<sup>12</sup> Holgrave’s attempt to narrate the entangled history of the Pyncheons and the Maules can be seen as a kind of revision of the

narrator's account of it in the opening chapter of the novel, focusing on the Maules' sins, rather than the Pyncheons'. Yet, while the narrator emphasizes the unreliability and uncertainty of his narrative, calling attention to the dubious sources, the suppositions and speculations on which his interpretations are based, the question of the accuracy of Holgrave's tale is never raised in the novel. For it is the performance of the narrative, its force that at issue in this scene rather than its historical truth.

Mesmerism is portrayed in Holgrave's legend as a kind of speech act or performative. Matthew Maule says "Alice, laugh!" and, Holgrave tells us, "Alice must break into wild laughter. 'Alice, be sad!' – and, at the instant, down would come her tears.... 'Alice, dance!' -- and dance she would" (209). Holgrave attributes the power and affective force of Maule's words to the will of the mesmerist. Language is represented in the tale as merely a medium, theoretically dispensable, through which the mesmerist exercises his will. Holgrave even speculates that its effects could take place through an act of will alone, without any sort of mediation, "without a spoken word."<sup>13</sup> In the scene that frames his

reading of the tale, however, Holgrave does not appear to will or intend the mesmeric effects that it has on Phoebe. “Plunging into his tale with energy and absorption,” he does not even notice Phoebe’s “curious psychological condition” until after he finishes reading the story. “Very possibly,” the narrator remarks shortly before Holgrave begins his legend, “he forgot Phoebe while he talked to her” (182). A “country-girl, unused to works of that nature,” Phoebe “often became,” we are told earlier in the novel, “deeply absorbed” in works of fiction. The trance state into which she falls when Holgrave reads her his legend appears, in other words, to be a kind of literary-effect, an effect of the fictional narrative and its language, an effect, that is, of the very mediation dismissed as unnecessary in the legend. The effects of the narrative and force it generates cannot be attributed solely to intention or will. There is in this scene a certain automatism in the functioning of language, something arbitrary and seemingly mechanical that is not governed by the will or intention of a subject. It is, of course, possible to attribute the mesmeric effects of the narrative to an unconscious desire on Holgrave’s or Phoebe’s part – and given the erotic

overtones of Hawthorne's mesmeric scenes, there is certainly a temptation to do so – and to inscribe them back into a system of desires, intentions, and motives. While Hawthorne is concerned in the figure of mesmerism as elsewhere in his writings with the intentional use of language as power, he is, I want to suggest, by no means limited to such instances. Mesmerism is also a figure for a certain resistance in language to human will or intention. For Hawthorne we do not simply possess language but are also possessed and dispossessed by it. As with so many Romantic tropes, the figure of mesmerism slides between questions of subjectivity and questions of representation. Mesmerism is in this scene not only or even primarily an intersubjective relation, but a relation to language. It is an event of language, of the magic of words.

If mesmerism is in *The House of the Seven Gables* the modern equivalent of witchcraft, so too it would seem is the art of fiction. While Holgrave's renunciation of mesmerism is exemplary in many respects, he seems to presume that the effects of language are ultimately determined by the speaker or writer, that its

incalculability and unpredictability is under the author's control. He assumes, even in sacrificing it, the same kind of mastery over language and its effects portrayed in his legend, and which the scene that frames it puts in question. Phoebe's is not the only individuality that is threatened in this scene. Although tropes of absorption characterize Holgrave's relation to the text as well as Phoebe's, their identification is refused. He insists on an absolute distinction between his active use of language and her passive reception. The passive relation to others, to the past, and to language mesmerism figures is disavowed, repudiated as feminine, as something belonging to the other.<sup>14</sup> Holgrave's renunciation of mesmerism does not, in other words, constitute an adequate response to the questions raised in this scene about the effects of language or the irresponsibility of fiction. But, if the effects of language that mesmerism allegorizes are not governed by intention, how can Hawthorne's fiction avoid generating, like Holgrave's, the very gaps in cognition it tries to represent? How can his romance fiction ultimately be distinguished or distinguish itself from mesmerism?

## **Allegories of Romance**

Despite the various repudiations and disavowals, mesmerism imposes itself in *The House of the Seven Gables* – and later in *The Blithedale Romance* – as an allegory of romance, of both its reading and its writing. The staging in the novel of the tale, its telling and reception, reflects a certain ambivalence towards fiction, towards the force of its language and the loss of sense and power that seems to attend it. Like mesmerism, Hawthorne's romance fiction is often taken to be, in Michael Davitt Bell's words, "fundamentally an integrative mode" (7), seeking to reconcile self and other, past and present, spirit and matter, actual and imaginary. In romance's "atmosphere of strange enchantment," Hawthorne writes in the Preface to *The Blithedale Romance*, "one cannot well tell the difference" (2). Romance is, he observes in a well-known passage from "The Custom-House" sketch, "a neutral territory, somewhere between the real world and fairy-land, where the Actual and the Imaginary might meet, and each imbue itself with the nature of the

other” (46). Hawthorne’s neutral territory is, however, carefully demarcated both temporally and spatially.<sup>15</sup>

Hawthorne’s prefaces insist on the very differences his romance fiction seems to try to overcome, emphasizing distance and separation as well as unity and reconciliation, seeking, in Evan Carton’s words, to “both transgress and sustain” boundaries. In his prefaces, Hawthorne repeatedly stresses the importance of a sympathetic rapport between the author and the reader, typically staging his texts as an encounter between sympathetic friends, as an intersubjective relation. In writing, Hawthorne tells us in the Preface to *The Marble Faun*, he “implicitly makes his appeal” to “one congenial friend,” a reader, perhaps imaginary, whose “apprehensive sympathy” he has always presumed. (1,2). Hawthorne’s figure of “apprehensive sympathy” suggests both a perception prior to comprehension and a certain wariness and anxiety.<sup>16</sup> In “The Custom-House” sketch that precedes *The Scarlet Letter*, Hawthorne declares that “thoughts are frozen and utterance benumbed, unless the speaker stand in some true relation to his audience” (22). Yet at the same time, he specifically rejects as narcissistic the desire for



the “perfect sympathy” of writer and reader, “as if the printed book, thrown at large on the wide world, were certain to find out the divided segment of the writer’s own nature, and complete his *circle* of existence by bringing him into *communion* with it” (22, my emphasis).<sup>17</sup> Specular and narcissistic, the desire for such perfect sympathy ignores the mediation, the otherness that constitutes its circle of self communion.

Hawthorne’s attempt to both overcome and to maintain boundaries is evident in his Preface to *The House of the Seven Gables*. In the Preface he claims that the his narrative is a romance in its “attempt to connect a by-gone time with the very Present that is flitting away from us,” but also warns against exposing his “Romance to an inflexible and exceedingly dangerous species of criticism, by bringing his fancy-pictures into positive contact with the realities of the moment” (2,3). The difference hinges on an ambiguous distinction between connection and positive contact, as the earlier one does between apprehensive and perfect sympathy. While his romance fiction may mediate differences, it does not dissolve them; they are never, he insists, completely reconciled.

Hawthorne repeatedly reminds us in his writings of the frame, that his romances, his tales and sketches, and even his prefaces are figurative and allegorical. Hawthorne's romance fiction belongs not to the realm of romantic symbol, to the unity of the sympathetic imagination, but to, in Henry James' words, "the province of allegory." While "the symbol," Paul de Man famously writes in "The Rhetoric of Temporality,"

postulates the possibility of an identity or identification, allegory designates primarily a distance in relation to its own origin, and, renouncing the nostalgia and the desire to coincide, it establishes its language in the void of this temporal difference. In so doing, it prevents the self from an illusory identification with the non-self, which is now fully, though painfully, recognized as a non-self. (207)

Hawthorne's insistence on difference, on distance and separation, appears, however, not only as the painful, "negative self-knowledge" de Man describes, but also as a defensive strategy, setting itself apart from a more threatening indifference.<sup>18</sup> It is by no means clear whether for Hawthorne the greater danger lies in the failure to recognize distinctions or in the apprehension of irreducible difference.

What Hawthorne called his “inveterate love of allegory” has been a problem for critics at least since Poe in his second review of Hawthorne’s tales denounced the “strain of allegory” in them for, among other things, interfering with “the bond of sympathy” between reader and writer that should “irradiate” a work of fiction.<sup>19</sup> “If allegory ever establishes a fact,” he writes, “it is by dint of overturning a fiction” (25). As Michael Davitt Bell notes, Hawthorne’s denunciation of mesmerism in his letter to Sophia as a “delusion” that mistakes “the physical and material for the spiritual” recalls Coleridge’s condemnations of allegory – as does Coverdale’s remark in *The Blithedale Romance* that it is “a delusive show of spirituality, yet really imbued throughout with a cold and dead materialism” (Bell 132). In *The Statesman’s Manual*, Coleridge makes a well-known and extremely influential distinction between symbol and allegory. The symbol, according to Coleridge, “is always tautegorical.” It is “characterized... by the translucence of the eternal through and in the temporal” (661). While symbols are “consubstantial with the truths of which they are the conductors,” allegories are, he writes, “but empty echoes which the fancy

arbitrarily associates with apparitions of matter” (661, 662). The “counterfeit product of the mechanical understanding,” allegory is, Coleridge argues, a mere “picture-language,” associated with the “dead letter” and with the unsubstantiality and “hollowness of abstraction.” Hawthorne seems to share many of Coleridge’s assumptions about allegory, typically using, like Coleridge, romantic tropes of allegory as frozen, as cold and dead.<sup>20</sup> “Even in what purports to be picture of actual life,” he writes in the 1851 Preface to *Twice-told Tales*, “we have allegory, not always so warmly dressed in its habiliments of flesh and blood, as to be taken into the reader’s mind without a shiver” (1152). But, Hawthorne, unlike Coleridge, does not appeal to a mystical and quasi-theological notion of the symbol. Such a notion appears in Hawthorne writings an unreachable ideal and a dangerous delusion. The delusion of mesmerism is, in a sense, precisely the mistaking of allegory for the pure communion of the symbol, a failure to recognize its allegorical structure.

Mesmerism is further linked to allegory in Hawthorne’s portrayal of the mesmeric clairvoyant in *The Blithedale Romance* as

the “Veiled Lady” – a veiled woman being as Hawthorne was no doubt aware a traditional representation of allegory.<sup>21</sup> The veil is a recurring figure in Hawthorne’s writing, appearing repeatedly in his prefaces as a figure for his relation to his readers. “So far as I am a man of really individual attributes,” he writes in the 1851 Preface to *Mosses from an Old Manse*, “I veil my face” (1147). Hawthorne’s keeping “the inmost Me behind its veil” marks in “The Custom-House” sketch his renunciation of the desire for perfect sympathy with his readers, visibly interrupting the imaginary circle of self-communion, drawing attention to its mediality. The veil is, however, not only a figure of distance and separation in Hawthorne’s writings, but also of enchantment. It is medium of mystification as well as of de-mystification. In *The Blithedale Romance* the veil is, we are told, “supposed to insulate her [the Veiled Lady] from the material world, from time and space, and to endow her with many of the privileges of a disembodied spirit” (6). In “The Minister’s Black Veil,” as in *The Blithedale Romance*, the veil has a certain power and is seen (though not necessarily by the narrator) as mediating between the spiritual and the material, between the living and the dead. The veil

generates an allegorical desire that no unveiling can satisfy, for it is staged as an effect of the material rather than of something behind it, of a living spirit encrypted in the dead letter.

Hawthorne's allegories often appear in his fictions as allegories; they are staged as allegories in the narrative. In figures like the veil, we are faced not with a "device of multiple choice," as F. O. Matthiessen's phrased it, but with, in Christopher Diffie's words, a "withering allegorical *techne*" that operates mechanically, indifferent to its possible signification. "The machinery alone is visible," Henry James writes, "and the end to which it operates becomes a matter of indifference" (50). "We are struck," he observes, "with something stiff and mechanical, slightly incongruous, as if the kernel had not assimilated its envelope" (51). Attending to the power of the veil and of the letter, Hawthorne both draws and undercuts "its shimmering suggestion of sacral authority."<sup>22</sup> Hawthorne's allegory of mesmerism makes readable what in language, in reading, cannot be reduced to a relation of interpretation or of understanding, its senseless materiality and force.

But, is Hawthorne's staging of the allegory of mesmerism in *The House of the Seven Gables*, therefore, an attempt not simply to exclude the mesmeric effects of language, but to reflexively contain them? Are his apparently self-referential allegories a way of reflexively accounting for the effects of his fiction? Are they, as Michael Davitt Bell has influentially argued, anti-allegorical in intention? Emily Miller Budick contends, for instance, that Hawthorne's fiction teaches us distance, that in making us aware of allegory as allegory (which she associates with conformity and "mindless consensus"), it turns a dangerously passive relation to language and to others into an active one ("American Literature's Declaration of In/dependence" 219).<sup>23</sup> Or, in a somewhat more precise formulation, William Jewett writes that Hawthorne "means to bring dead metaphors to life in order to help the reader meditate on the habitual failure to register their deadness" (60). They only need, we might say in the language of the novel, to be properly buried. But to what extent is that deadness knowable? Is mesmerism, an allegory for what escapes self-reflexive acts of

understanding, simply recuperated in the novel as an object of reflection, as an object of knowledge?

While it is tempting to read his allegory of mesmerism in this way, something remains that is at odds with such a recuperation. The tension in Hawthorne's fiction between, in Edgar Dryden's words, "enchantment and disenchantment" (12), or between illusion and disillusion, mystification and demystification, difference and indifference is not just a narrative that leads from one to the other. Hawthorne, in fact, rarely offers his readers or his characters a position of mastery in which they are able to see things as they actually are and to recognize their earlier state as one of mystification. Hawthorne's allegories are sometimes mimetic and representational, and are sometimes an attempt to reflexively account for the production and the reception of his romance fiction. But allegory, for Hawthorne, also I want to suggest, opens language to an otherness – an otherness for which it cannot fully account.<sup>24</sup> What his allegory of mesmerism makes readable, I would argue, is an ambivalence towards this openness and the tension between it and the desire for recuperation and mastery.



What is at issue in Hawthorne's allegory of mesmerism is not only the figure of the artist as mesmerist, but also as mesmerized subject. In her study of mesmerism in literature, Maria Tatar argues that for Hawthorne "the mesmerist stands as a model for the coldly intellectual artist, while the medium represents the divinely inspired artist. In the tradition established by the German Romantics, Hawthorne held that the true artist surrenders himself to the divine sympathy of nature and becomes the vessel of a higher spiritual force" (226). "The authentic artist," she writes, "subordinates his own will to an invisible current of sympathy vibrating through the universe. As the vessel of this higher force, he becomes a spiritual medium invested with the power to communicate life to his creations" (229). While Tatar rightly emphasizes the significance of passivity in Hawthorne's conception of artistic creation and its links to mesmerism, her distinction between the "coldly intellectual" and the "divinely inspired" artist – a recasting, in a sense, of the symbol/allegory distinction – overlooks his repeated insistence on mesmerism's technical, mechanical element and its mistaking of the material for the spiritual.

Hawthorne never claims any sort of divine inspiration. He remains in the province of allegory, a second story man, a teller of twice told tales.

One of the first versions of Hawthorne's famous neutral territory – a state that he considered essential to romance – appears in the early sketch "The Haunted Mind" as an "intermediate space" between dreaming and awakening, a state "on the borders and sleep and wakefulness" in which "the mind has a passive sensibility, but no active strength; when the imagination is a mirror, imparting vividness to all ideas, without the power of selecting or controlling them" (106). What emerges from the haunted mind in this passive sensibility and receptivity is not something that is merely individual and subjective but a train of allegorical associations. The "buried ones," as he puts it, within the self turn out to be allegorical figures.<sup>25</sup> In *The Blithedale Romance*, Coverdale's illness "transforms" him, he tells us, "into something like a mesmerical clairvoyant," his reduced physical condition and weakened "self-defensive energy" providing him with a "species of intuition – either a spiritual lie, or [a] subtle recognition" and giving others a "vastly

greater influence” over him (43). But perhaps the paradigmatic scene of writing in Hawthorne’s work occurs in “The Custom House” sketch, when he faces the characters of his narrative that “would not be rendered warm and malleable, by any heat I could kindle,” allegorical figures that “retained all the rigidity of dead corpses” (45). What animates such figures is, according to Hawthorne, not the will of the author, but a passive “susceptibility,” a kind of negative capability. In his description of the neutral territory, the romance writer is not divinely inspired or the “vessel of a higher spiritual force,” he is under the influence of moonlight rather than direct sunlight, of images reflected in the mirror rather than seen face to face.

The writing of romance takes place in a kind of altered state, analogous to mesmerism. It is, what Jacques Derrida calls in “The Rhetoric of Drugs,” an experience of “quasi-possession,” of the “asymmetrical experience of the other ... that commands a certain writing, perhaps all writing even the most masterful” (238). Such “figures of dictation,” Derrida writes, are “a matter of a methodical provocation, of a technique for calling up the phantom: the spirit,

the ghost (*Geist*), inspiration, dictation” (238). Altered states and figures of dictation, like mesmerism, occupy in Hawthorne’s writing the place of the transcendental, of divine inspiration and possession, but they are not sacred. It is a technique for calling up ghosts. (“Ghosts might enter here,” as he writes in “The Custom House.”) “Where allegory prevails,” as Avital Ronell remarks, “there is an acute crisis in the management of anteriority” (*Stupidity* 106). It opens up the possibility of its alteration. *The House of the Seven Gables* revolves around and dramatizes, I want to suggest, just such a crisis in the management of anteriority.

The Preface to *The House of the Seven Gables* is one of the canonical sites for attempts to define American Romance as a genre. Hawthorne famously distinguishes in the Preface between romance and the novel. “The later form of composition,” he writes, “is presumed to aim at a very minute fidelity, not merely to the possible, but the probable, and ordinary course of man’s experience” (1). What distinguishes romance, in other words, is not only a question of representation, of the novel’s mimeticism, but also, in

Henry James's words, of "the kind of experience with which it deals" (280). Romance's difference is for Hawthorne, at least in part, a different understanding of the structure of experience, including the experience of reading and of writing, its concern for what lies outside of "ordinary" experience. "The romantic," James argues in the Preface to *The American*, "stands... for the things that...we never *can* directly know; the things that reach us only through the beautiful circuit and subterfuge of our thought and our desire" (279, James's emphasis). "The point of view in which this Tale comes under the Romantic definition," Hawthorne writes in the Preface to *The House of the Seven Gables*, "lies in the attempt to connect a by-gone time with the very Present that is flitting away from us" (2). The question to which Hawthorne's romance responds is how account for what did not take place as experience, that registers its impact.

Just such a missed experience lies at the heart of *The House of the Seven Gables*. Here is the narrator's description of what we might call the novel's primal scene, the discovery of Colonel Pyncheon dead in his new house:

At the first glimpse, they beheld nothing extraordinary; a handsomely furnished room of moderate size, somewhat darkened by curtains; books arranged on shelves; a large map on the wall, and likewise a portrait of Colonel Pyncheon, beneath which sat the original Colonel himself, in an oaken elbow-chair, with a pen in his hand. Letters, parchments, and blank sheets of paper were on the table before him. He appeared to gaze at the curious crowd, in front of which stood the Lieutenant Governor; and there was a frown on his dark and massive countenance, as if sternly resentful of the boldness that had impelled them into his private retirement.

A little boy – the Colonel's grandchild, and the only human being that ever dared to be familiar with him – now made his way among the guests and ran towards the seated figure; then pausing half-way, he began to shriek with terror. The company – tremulous as the leaves of a tree, when all are shaking together – drew nearer, and perceived that there was an unnatural distortion in the fixedness of Colonel Pyncheon's stare; that there was blood on his ruff, and that his beard was saturated with it. It was too late to give assistance. The iron-hearted Puritan – the relentless persecutor – the grasping and strong-willed man – was dead! (15)

Much could be said about this passage – that the dead Colonel is in the position of a writer is certainly over-determined. But what I want to point to is a certain latency in the scene. Colonel Pyncheon is initially taken to be alive and only belatedly discovered to be dead. (The temporal dynamics of this scene are, as I will discuss, played out in much greater detail later in the novel in the disembodied narrator encounter with the corpse of Judge Pyncheon, whom he addresses throughout the chapter as though he were alive.) The

coroner's verdict in this case is, appropriately enough, one of "Sudden Death!" – a verdict apparently rendered with an exclamation point. While Colonel Pyncheon is by no means a beloved figure, the shock of sudden death, the encounter with his death is, at least for his grandson, a kind of trauma. "The experience of trauma, the fact of latency," as Cathy Caruth notes, consists "not in the forgetting of a reality that can hence never be fully known, but in an inherent latency within the experience itself" (17). The scene dramatizes what Caruth calls "the inherent gap of knowing" in the experience of another's death. In the death of another, in our relation to death, something remains that is unknowable and unassimilable, that resists internalization. Death marks an absolute limit of identification, even if in a certain way it also calls for it. "One's own death is," as Freud observes, "unimaginable [*unvorstellbar*, or unrepresentable]" (SE 14: 289). Colonel Pyncheon's death leaves behind an unappropriable legacy, a gap of knowledge that haunts the Pyncheons, possessing but not possessed by them. Its emblem is the Waldo Patent, a deed granting them much of Waldo County, Maine, concealed behind the

Colonel's portrait, which evades the Pyncheon's appropriating grasp, their cognitive as well as their material possession.<sup>26</sup>

Gervayse Pyncheon, the grandson in the passage quoted above, is said to have suffered "a shock to his sensibility, in early childhood, from the sudden death of his grandfather. In the very act of running to climb Colonel Pyncheon's knee, the boy had discovered the old Puritan to be a corpse!" It is also Gervayse who later tries to use mesmerism to turn his daughter Alice into a kind of "telescopic medium" into the spiritual world in order to recover the Waldo Patent. The Pyncheons' attempt to recover the Waldo Patent is, in fact, repeatedly described in terms of a crossing between the living and the dead. Death comes in the novel to mark not only the limits of identification and of understanding, but to virtually define our relation to the past. "Shall we never, never get rid of this Past!" Holgrave declares.

It lies upon the Present like a giant's dead body! In fact, the case is just as if a young giant were compelled to waste all his strength in carrying about the corpse of the old giant, his grandfather, who died a long while ago, and only needs to be decently buried. Just think, a moment and it will startle you what slaves we are to by-gone times – to Death, if we give the matter the right word! (182-83)



That the dead body that lies on the present is represented as the corpse of a grandfather, rather than say a father or a more distant ancestor, links Holgrave's call for a radical break with the past to the scene of Colonel Pyncheon's death. Freeing ourselves from the burden of the past becomes a work of morning. "We read in Dead Men's books!" Holgrave continues:

We laugh at Dead Men's jokes, and cry at Dead Men's pathos!  
We are sick of Dead Men's diseases, physical and moral....  
We worship the living Deity, according to Dead Men's forms  
and creeds! Whatever we seek to do, of our own free motion,  
a Dead Man's icy hand obstructs us! Turn our eyes to what  
point we may, a Dead Man's white, immitigable face  
encounters them, and freezes our very heart! And we must be  
dead ourselves, before we can begin to have our proper  
influence on our own world. (183)

A certain reversal takes place in this passage; the dead grow animated and the living take the place of the dead, the icy hand of the dead freezing the living in their place. The "white, immitigable" face of the dead man, which also turns up in *Daniel Deronda* threatening to freeze "our very heart," is indissoluble. It can neither be assimilated nor forgotten. Our relation to death, and thus to the past, for Hawthorne, calls for a response that is in certain ways literary. What complicates the situation in *The House of the Seven*

*Gables* is that Colonel Pyncheon's death and its uncanny repetitions in later generations may or may not be an event generated by words, by Maule's prophetic curse "God will give him blood to drink!" The exact relation between Maule's words and the Colonel's death is never explained in the novel.

Holgrave, who has according to the narrator "a literary turn," is not only a mesmerist in the novel, but also "an artist in the daguerreotype line." "I make pictures out of sunshine" (91), Holgrave tells Phoebe. "I misuse heaven's blessed sunshine," he says to Hepzibah, "by tracing out human features through its agency" (46). Tropes of sunlight, a solar language of cognition, permeate the novel, especially in descriptions of the daguerreotype – and in relation to Phoebe. Holgrave's translation of light, however, is a "misuse," a distortion. The daguerreotype is not purely mimetic for Hawthorne, any more than mirrors are. He does not, as one might expect, associate the daguerreotype with the minute fidelity of the novel and its ideology of realism, but with romance. The daguerreotype is, like mesmerism, an allegory of romance in the novel. In a recent article in *American Literary History*, Alan

Trachtenberg argues that the distinction between romance and the novel “corresponds to a distinction already well formulated in theories of photography at the time, between merely mechanical and self-consciously artistic uses of the new medium” (461). Yet the “insight” of Holgrave’s daguerreotypes comes not from his intention, I would argue, or from his self-conscious use of the medium, but from the medium, from the mechanical process itself. The significance of the daguerreotype in the novel is in many ways that it is mechanical. What the daguerreotype shares with allegory and mesmerism is a certain automatism, a technical, mechanical element.

“For light to survive,” as Eduardo Cadava observes, “it must come again, and this coming again has, as one of its names, the name of photography” (5). “There is,” Holgrave tells Phoebe, “wonderful insight in heaven’s broad and simple sunshine. While we give it credit only for depicting the merest surface, it actually brings out the secret character with a truth that no painter would ever venture upon, even could he detect it” (91). As evidence of this, Holgrave shows Phoebe a picture of Jaffrey Pyncheon that he took

“over and over again” with the same result. The Judge, according to Holgrave, is known for his “benevolence,” his “openness of heart,” and “sunny good humor,” but the sun “tells quite another story and will not be coaxed out of it, after a half-a-dozen attempts” (92).

While Holgrave attributes the insight to the sun’s agency, it is at least partly an effect of the technique itself, of the fixity of daguerreotype images. Jaffrey’s “look,” the narrator speculates earlier in the novel, “might grow positively harsh, in the process of being fixed upon the canvas” (57). A similar logic is at work in the narrator’s description of the portrait of Colonel Pyncheon, which Holgrave’s daguerreotype uncannily resembles and which reveals “the unlovely truth of a human soul,” not despite but because of the distorting effects of time on the painting. Phoebe mistakes Holgrave’s daguerreotype of Jaffrey Pyncheon for a picture of the old Colonel. The photograph enables her to see the dead Colonel Pyncheon in the living Jaffrey Pyncheon, and the living Jaffrey in the dead Colonel.

“Whether or not the subject is already dead,” Roland Barthes writes in *Camera Lucida*, “every photograph is this catastrophe.”

“The power of photography,” Pierre Mac Orlan wrote in the Preface to a 1930 edition of Atget’s photographs of Paris, “consists in creating *sudden death*” (cited in Cadava 7, my emphasis).<sup>27</sup>

Holgrave’s daguerreotype reproduces, in a sense, the sudden death of the novel’s primal scene and its uncanny repetitions. Fixing the “Present that is flitting away from us,” offering us picture of the “Now, that if you look closely at it is nothing,” the daguerreotype allegorizes time in the novel. “What photography is taking pictures of,” as Anselm Haverkamp writes in an essay on Barthes’ *Camera Lucida*, “is Time itself” (264). What it reveals is, in Cadava’s words, “the posthumous character of our lived experience” (8). “The photograph,” as Barthes writes, “mechanically repeats what could never be repeated existentially,” mechanically repeating what was never present as an experience. It makes visible what Benjamin called “the optical unconscious,” what sight can not see. What Phoebe sees in the daguerreotype of Jaffrey is visible not despite but because of the unnatural fixedness of the mechanical technique.

Yet, what is the “secret character” that is supposedly revealed in the daguerreotype of Jaffrey? Jaffrey Pyncheon is, according to

the narrator, the “model” of “a very high order of respectability” (56). The Judge himself, he assures us, did not entertain any doubts about his reputation, “taking his idea of himself from what purports to be his image, as reflected in the mirror of public opinion” (232). Even “his conscience... usually considered the surest witness to a man’s integrity... bore an accordant testimony with the world’s laudatory voice” (228-29). But the narrator acknowledges, “hidden from mankind – forgotten by himself, or buried so deeply under a sculptured and ornamented pile of ostentatious deeds, that his daily life could take no note of it – there may have lurked some evil and unsightly thing... without his necessarily... being aware of it” (229). “Men of strong minds, great force of character, and a hard texture of the sensibilities,” he continues,

are very capable of falling into mistakes of this kind. They are ordinary men to whom forms are of paramount importance. Their field of action lies among the external phenomena of life. They possess vast ability in grasping, and arranging, and appropriating to themselves, the big, heavy, solid unrealities, such as gold, landed estate, offices of trust and emolument, and public honors. With these materials, and with deeds of goodly aspect, done in the public eye, an individual of this class builds up, as it were, a tall and stately edifice, which, in the view of other people, and ultimately in his own view, is no other than the man’s character, or the man himself. Behold, therefore a palace!... With what fairer and nobler emblem

could any man desire to shadow forth his character? Ah; but in some low and obscure nook – some narrow closet on the ground floor, shut, locked, and bolted, and the key flung away... may lie a corpse, half-decayed, and still decaying, and diffusing its death-scent all through the palace! The inhabitant will not be conscious of it; for it has long been his daily breath! (229-30)

The “inhabitant” of the palace, the ego is not master of its own house; the house is haunted. The corpse encrypted in the self, the internal foreign body, is a figure for what interrupts Jaffrey’s circle of self-communion, for what eludes his appropriating grasp. What this passage stage (somewhat heavy-handedly) is Jaffrey’s misrecognition (*meconnaissance* in the Lacanian sense) of himself in “what purports to be his image, reflected in the mirror of public opinion.” Mirrors are not for Hawthorne, any more than they are for Lacan, perfectly mimetic. The corpse is what escapes self-reflection, the residuum of his mistaking himself for the image, the unified form he sees reflected. Jaffrey is, we are told, a man for whom “forms are of paramount importance.” He believes that he perceives the word with “no obstructing medium between,” seeing it “through the most transparent of plate-glass.” “The Judge prided himself,” the narrator tells us, “on eschewing all airy matter, and never

mistaking a shadow for a substance,” taking “hold of everything as though it were real” (118, 312). From the Judge’s realistic point of view, what cannot be grasped or appropriated is merely fiction, airy matter. His “common sense” and pragmatic realism turn out, however, to be a more thoroughgoing idealism, burying him under the weight of “big, heavy, solid unrealities.”

One of the figures in the novel for what resists the appropriating grasp of the Pyncheons, for what escapes the Judge’s imposition of form, is a “certain noise” in his throat, which was, we are told, “rather habitual with him, not altogether voluntary, yet indicative of nothing” (124). This involuntary and meaningless noise, which the narrator concedes he “never did hear, and therefore cannot describe,” allegorizes a certain materiality and contingency in language. It associated, at least in the popular mind with Maule’s curse “against Colonel Pyncheon and his posterity – that God would give them blood to drink – and likewise... that this miraculous blood might now and then be heard gurgling in their throats” (124). Hepzibah, too, seems to suffer from a version of this family curse. Her voice has “contracted a kind of croak,” “one of the



symptoms of a settled melancholy,” which runs “through all the variations of the voice... like a black silken thread, on which the crystal beads are speech are strung, and whence they take their hue” (134, 135). But, the most extreme example of this disarticulating family trait is Clifford’s voice, which at times is but a “vague murmur,” an “indistinct shadow of human utterance” (97). “It was strangely indistinct,” the narrator observes, “less like articulate words than an unshaped sound, such as would be the utterance of feeling and sympathy, rather than of the intellect. So vague was it, that its impression or echo, in Phoebe’s mind, was that of unreality. She concluded that she must have mistaken some other sound for that of the human voice” (95). As though unable to overcome a material resistance to form and meaning, the “indistinct” and “unshaped sound” of Clifford’s voice seems to skirt the boundaries of the human. His speech is taken to be an “utterance of feeling and sympathy, rather than of the intellect” or of human reason. Pre-figurative and formless, it is without the differentiation necessary to cognition. It is not a symptom of a

settled melancholia, but of a more thoroughgoing loss of “sense and power.”

### **Displacements**

Clifford is a figure of radical passivity in novel. His “sensitive but ruined mind” is, the narrator tells us, “without force or volition” (224). In his state of “suspended” or “imperfect animation,” Clifford lacks “the power to deal with unaccustomed things and to keep up with the swiftness of the passing moment” (161). He is unable “to grapple with the present scene, and bring it home to his mind with a more satisfactory distinctness” (105). “Continually,” we are told,

he faded away out of his place; or, in other words, his mind and consciousness took their departure, leaving his wasted, gray, and melancholy figure, a substantial emptiness, a material ghost – to occupy his seat at table. Again, after a blank moment, there would be a flickering taper-gleam in his eyeballs. It betokened that his spiritual part had returned, and was doing its best to kindle the heart’s household-fire, and light up intellectual lamps in the dark and ruinous mansion, where it was doomed to be a forlorn inhabitant. (105).

The ego is not only not master of its own house, the house is virtually unoccupied. The antithesis of Jaffrey, Clifford is in danger

of fading entirely out of his place. While Jaffrey is oblivious to the materiality that constitutes his self-reflection, Clifford appears to be “a substantial emptiness,” to be, in Hawthorne’s remarkable figure, “a material ghost.” Clifford’s passivity seems to call for the very narcissism criticized in the portrait of Jaffrey, his grasping and appropriating power, the ability to bring events “home to his mind with a more satisfactory distinctness.” “With a mysterious and terrible Past, which had annihilated his memory, and a blank Future before him,” we are told, “he had only the this visionary and impalpable Now, which, if you look closely at it, is nothing” (149).

Clifford is an ambivalent figure in *The House of the Seven Gables*. Like Holgrave, he is an artist and a kind of author surrogate in the novel. The narrator, for instance, refers to Clifford as the “instinctive lover of the Beautiful” and the “abortive lover of the Beautiful” and compares him to a poet. An aesthete, whose “fancy is stronger than either his will or his judgment, Clifford is an artist because, not despite, of his extreme passivity, his negative capability. At times, the narrator observes, “for the effect was seldom more than momentary – the half-torpid man would be full of

harmonious life, just as a long-silent harp is full of sound, when the musician's fingers sweep across it" (142). This momentary harmony "seemed," the narrator remarks, "rather a perception, or a *sympathy*, than a sentiment belonging to himself as an individual" (142, my emphasis). The animating force, like the musician's fingers across an instrument, seems to come from elsewhere, an effect of his passive susceptibility. Clifford's sensitivity and love of the Beautiful are repeatedly characterized in the novel as "feminine traits" – though the relation between his passive sympathy and susceptibility and Phoebe's natural, intuitive sympathy remains ambiguous. Clifford is the site of considerable anxiety in the novel. Continually in danger of losing his individuality, of fading entirely out of his place, Clifford conjures up an image of the writer or artist's becoming, as Hawthorne writes in "Night Sketches," "altogether a chameleon spirit, with no hue of its own," melting, as he puts it in another sketch of the same year, "into the indistinguishable mass of human kind" (553, 569).

At one point in the novel, a political procession passes in front of the House of the Seven Gables. Up close, where "the tedious

common-place of each man's visage" can be distinguished, nothing, the narrator assures us, is "more deficient in picaresque features" than such processions. Viewed from the right "vantage-point," however, it can become something "majestic." "For then," he tells us,

by its remoteness, it melts all the petty personalities, of which it is made up, into one broad mass of existence – one great life – one collected body of mankind, with a vast, homogeneous spirit animating it. But... if an impressible person, standing alone over the brink of one of these processions, should behold it, not in its atoms, but in its aggregate – as a mighty river of life, massive in its tide, and black with mystery, and, out of its depths, calling to the kindred depth within him – then the contiguity would add to the effect. It might so fascinate him, that he would hardly be restrained from plunging into the surging stream of human sympathies.

So it proved with Clifford. (165)

"Possessed" by an "irrepressible instinct," Clifford tries to throw himself off the balcony into the crowd, but is stopped by Phoebe and Hepzibah. Whether he is "impelled by the species of terror, that sometimes urges its victim over the very precipice which he shrinks from, or by a natural magnetism, tending towards the great centre of humanity," the narrator is unable to decide (166). (When she is in the trance state after Holgrave reads his legend, Phoebe is similarly described as being on the edge of a precipice.) Like Freud,

Le Bon, and the social psychologists discussed in Chapter 1, Hawthorne associates crowd consciousness, the psychology of the mass or crowd – the specter of which, in the form of the “terrible delusion” of the Salem witch trials and the “singular indiscrimination” of its mobs, haunts the novel – with hypnosis or mesmerism. Fluid tropes, so prevalent in the rhetoric of mesmerism, pervade the passage, the individual and all the “petty personalities” dissolved into the whole. The man in the crowd, immersed in “the surging stream of human sympathies” is, like the mesmerized subject, seemingly indifferent to differences between self and other, subject and object. While Hawthorne describes the crowd in largely organicist terms (the “river” or “ocean of human life,” “the surging stream of human sympathies,” a “natural magnetism,” etc.), his account of the procession emphasizes that its apparent unity, the perception of it as “one broad mass of existence – one great life – one collected body of mankind, with a vast, homogeneous spirit animating it” is the distorting effect of the vantage-point from which it is viewed. It is not the discovery of an organic unity, but the loss of clear distinctions.

Immediately preceding the political procession in the spectacle in front of the House of the Seven Gables is a different, though similarly ambivalent, image of the social: the Italian organ grinder's "fortunate little society" of automatons. The automatons, which "might truly be said to enjoy a harmonious existence, and to make life literally a dance" (163), offer the highly aestheticized image of society as an organized movement of figures. What this "harmonious existence" shares with Clifford's moments of harmonious life and with the apparent unity of the crowd is a certain loss of conscious control. The narrative, however, appears ambivalent about the possible effects of Clifford's plunging into the crowd, whether his losing himself in the "surging stream of human sympathy," would be therapeutic or fatal. "Possibly," the narrator concedes, "Clifford may have been right. He needed a shock; or perhaps required to take a deep, deep plunge into the ocean of human life, and to sink down and be covered by its profoundness, and then to emerge, sobered, invigorated, restored to the world and to himself. Perhaps, again, he required nothing less than the great final remedy – death!" (166).

A similar ambivalence underlies the “flight of two owls,” Hepzibah and Clifford’s flight from the House of the Seven Gables after they discover Jaffrey dead in the study. Boarding a train, they are, the narrator tells us, in much the same language as in Clifford’s encounter with the crowd, “drawn into the great current of human life, and were swept away with it as by the suction of fate itself” (256). “Adrift,” Hepzibah has, we are told “lost the faculty of self-guidance” (253). “She was like a person in a dream, when the will always sleeps” (251). Hepzibah is in kind of mesmeric state, a state of “indistinctness and unreality,” throughout the journey. In such states, the narrator tells us, individuals will “follow implicitly whatever guidance may befall them, even if it be a child’s” (250). In a sort of waking dream, unable to distinguish the actual from the imaginary, hallucination from reality, she asks repeatedly “Am I awake? – Am I awake?” “If fixed idea be madness,” the narrator remarks, Hepzibah “was perhaps not remote from it.... This one old house was everywhere! It transported its great, lumbering bulk, with more than railroad speed, and set itself phlegmatically down on whatever spot she glanced at. The quality of Hepzibah’s mind was



too unmalleable to take new impressions so readily as Clifford's" (258). While Clifford is fairly animated in this scene, at least initially, his "naturally poignant sympathies" aroused, he too seems to lack the "faculty of self guidance" once they board the train. They are both "drawn onward," as the narrator puts it, by a "mighty influence that had taken their two selves into its grasp" (257). The influence to which they are subjected is not the will of an individual or the "surging stream of human sympathies," but the railroad.

While the scene of Clifford and Hepzibah's train ride contains an ostensibly realistic portrayal of "the interior life of the railroad," it is every bit as allegorical in its way as the train ride in "The Celestial Railroad," or the train of allegorical figures in "The Haunted Mind." If the house is a figure for the self in the novel and for fixed and settled habits of thought, the train is a figure for their displacement. "Looking from the window" of the train, Clifford and Hepzibah

could see the world racing past them. At one moment, they were rattling through a solitude; — a few breaths more, and it had vanished, as if swallowed by an earthquake. The spires of meeting-houses seemed set adrift from their foundations; this broad-based hills glided away. Everything was unfixed from its age-long rest, and moving at whirlwind speed in a direction opposite to their own. (256)

The movement of the train unfixes settled habits of thought from their “age-long rest,” setting them “adrift from their foundation.” The speed of the railroad dislocates traditional conceptions of time and space, mechanically altering our relation to them.<sup>28</sup> It is this dislocation of familiar conceptions that leads Clifford to say that the railroads “spiritualize travel” and to call the electric telegraph “an almost spiritual medium.” The railroad makes it possible, Clifford insists, to dwell everywhere and nowhere, to be, in a sense, everyone and no one. If the daguerreotype and the photograph appear to freeze time, fixing an image of “the very Present that is flitting away from us,” the railroad’s “rapid current of affairs” and constant change seems to speed it up. It is the virtual embodiment of the “shifting world” Holgrave described to Phoebe, a “common and inevitable movement onward,” a constant influx of new impressions.

In her discussion of *The House of the Seven Gables* in *Fiction and Historical Consciousness*, Emily Budick compares Clifford and Hepzibah’s train ride to a passage in Emerson’s *Nature*, and their juxtaposition is, I think, instructive.<sup>29</sup> “Certain mechanical changes,” Emerson writes,

a small alteration in our local position, apprizes us of a dualism. We are strangely affected by seeing the shore from a moving ship, from a balloon, or through the tints of an unusual sky. The least change in our point of view gives the whole world a pictorial air. A man who seldom rides, needs only to get into a coach and traverse his own town, to turn the street into a puppet show. The men, the women – talking running, bartering, fighting ... are unrealized at once, or at least, wholly detached from all relation to the observer, and seen as apparent, not substantial beings. What new thoughts are suggested by seeing the face of country quite familiar, in the rapid movement of the railroad car!...

In these cases, by mechanical means, is suggested the difference between the observer and the spectacle – between man and nature. Hence arises a pleasure mixed with awe; I may say, a low degree of the sublime is felt, from the fact, probably, that man is hereby apprized that whilst the world is a spectacle, something in him is stable. (28)

As in Hepzibah and Clifford's railway journey, everything is, by mechanical means, "unfixed." These mechanical changes are, according to Emerson, our "first intuition in the Ideal philosophy" (28). "The poet," he adds, "communicates the same pleasure" in a "higher manner." The image of the balloon in the passage and of the severing of all relation reappear in Henry James' famous definition of romance in the preface to *The American*.<sup>30</sup> For Emerson, the dislocations of the self by mechanical means, by the poet, or by the words of another are above all a source of strength. Like the experience of the sublime to which he compares it, the loss

of “all relation,” which might appear to threaten the self ultimately confirms its stability and the infinite, divine spirit within it.

Hawthorne is, however, far more ambivalent. While he shares many of Emerson’s assumptions about the limitations of the understanding and the preoccupation with the economical side of things, the altered states that expose them are not, for Hawthorne, necessarily recuperable. They appear as instances of human finitude rather than assurances of the infinity of the divine spirit in “man.” The dislocations of the railway journey in *The House of the Seven Gables* does not confirm the stability of the self, but undermines its foundations, the unity of place, for instance, on which the unity of the self depends. It does not, as Emerson would have it, apprise us of the dualism of man and Nature, me and not me, or spirit and matter, but, like mesmerism, confuses them.

In his often rambling conversation on the train with the common-sensical old gentleman, Clifford repeatedly refers to the effects of technology as manifestations of spirit, mistaking, as Hawthorne writes in the letter to Sophia, “the physical and material for the spiritual.” The railroads have “spiritualized travel,” he tells

the man, and the electric telegraph is, he says, “an almost spiritual medium.” Human history is, according to Clifford, a process of spiritualization. “All human progress is in a circle;” he declares,

or, to use a more accurate and beautiful figure, in an ascending spiral curve. While we fancy ourselves going straight forward, and attaining, at every step, an entirely new position of affairs, we do actually return to something long ago tried and abandoned, but which we now find etherealized, refined, and perfected to its ideal. The past is but a coarse and sensual prophesy of the present and the future. (259-60).

This teleological and typological vision of history, which needless to say is not Hawthorne’s, posits a final unity of spirit and matter towards which everything is moving. “Mesmerism, now!” Clifford asks. “Will that effect nothing, think you, towards purging away the grossness out of human life?” (263) “These rapping spirits that little Phoebe told us of the other day,” He adds. “What are these but the messengers of the spiritual world, knocking on the door of substance?” (263-64).<sup>31</sup> “Then there is electricity;” he continues,

the demon, the angel, the mighty physical power, the all-pervading intelligence! ... Is it a fact – or have I dreamt it – that, by means of electricity, the world of matter has become a great nerve, vibrating thousands of miles in a breathless point of time? Rather, the round globe is a vast head, a brain, instinct with intelligence! Or, shall we say it is itself a thought, nothing but thought, and no longer the substance we deemed it? (264).

(To which the gentleman hilariously responds: “If you mean the telegraph.”) Despite the heavy-handed irony, Clifford’s speech is not very far from the claims made by contemporary apologists for mesmerism or its derivatives like Electrical Psychology – or even from some of Poe’s metaphysical speculations in “Mesmeric Revelation” or *Eureka*. Clifford’s hyperbolic praise of mesmerism and electricity’s “all-pervading intelligence” is a kind of literalization of the romantic or Transcendentalist desire to reconcile matter and spirit. We are even offered the farcical image of the dead telegraphing distant friends from “the world of happy spirits.” Clifford’s optimistic pronouncements about spiritualization, however, stand in stark contrast to the outcome of his railway journey, which gets nowhere. As though unable to keep up with the swiftness of the passing moment, Clifford and Hepzibah get off the train suddenly at a solitary way station, occupied by little more than a seemingly uninhabited farm house. With the “energy and vivacity” of the railroad gone, Clifford sinks back into a state of suspended animation, leaving Hepzibah to lead him back home to Seven Gables.

After Hepzibah and Clifford's railway journey, the flight of two owls, the narrative returns "like an owl, bewildered in the daylight" to the House of the Seven Gables, to the disembodied narrator's encounter with the corpse of Jaffrey Pyncheon. Jaffrey's sudden death is a repetition of Colonel Pyncheon's in the novel's primal scene, and the narrator seems to rehearse many of the responses to it. Throughout the chapter, even when a fly walks across the dead man's "wide-open eyes," the narrator refers to and addresses Jaffrey as though he were alive. Death seems to mark the limit the narrator's understanding, to be unrepresentable except in terms of the living. Much of the chapter is, in fact, taken up with the contrast between the dead man's indifference to time and the narrator's subjection to it. The "rigid and singularly white" face of Judge Pyncheon, which "refuses to melt" into the darkness, recalls the "Dead Man's white, immitigable face" in Holgrave's speech about the burden of the past. The scene also appears as a restaging of the scene of writing in "The Custom-House" sketch.

Earlier in the novel, the Maules are said to have been able "by what appears to have been a sort of mesmeric process," to make the

“inner region” of the looking glass “all alive with the departed Pyncheons; not as they had shown themselves to the world, nor in their better and happier hours, but as doing over again some deed of sin, or in the crisis of life’s bitterest sorrow” (21). Operating as a kind of spiritual medium, the mesmerized Alice Pyncheon produces a similar scene in Holgrave’s legend. At midnight, under the spiritualizing influence of the moonlight, the narrator, like Hawthorne in “The Custom-House” sketch, also seems to be able to conjure ghosts in the “haunted verge” of the looking-glass. “Ghosts might enter here.” The narrator’s success is, however, not the result of an act of will, but, like Clifford and Hepzibah in the previous scene, of the loss of “the faculty of self-guidance.” “Indulging our fancy in this freak,” the narrator tells us, “we have partly lost the power of restraint and guidance” (281). Yet, precisely how we are to take this scene remains uncertain; it is, like the neutral territory, carefully demarcated. “This fantastic scene,” the narrator cautions us, “must by no means be considered as forming an actual portion of our story. We were betrayed into this brief extravagance by the quiver of the moonbeams; they dance hand-in-



hand with shadows, and are reflected in the looking-glass, which, you are aware, is always a kind of window or door-way into the spiritual world” (282).

Hawthorne is said to have suffered from writer’s block for almost two months during the composition of *The House of the Seven Gables*, getting stuck immediately after Holgrave takes a daguerreotype of the dead Judge Pyncheon.<sup>32</sup> Hawthorne notorious happy ending to novel has managed to please almost no one. Holgrave simply announces that he will hereafter conform himself to laws and keep “within ancient limits.” “Mechanical reproduction” as Cathy Davidson puts it, “gives way to human reproduction” (691). Like Holgrave’s renunciation of mesmerism earlier in the novel, the ending does not so much resolve the tensions in the novel as it evades them. Rather than marking the limits of human understanding, death is seen as its ground; it is a thoroughly dialectical death.

“Death is so genuine a fact,” the narrator tells us, “that it excludes falsehood, or betrays its emptiness; it is a touch-stone that

proves the gold, and dishonors the baser metal” (310). Holgrave’s daguerreotype of the dead Judge serves, because of its presumed minute fidelity, as evidence not only in the case of Jaffrey’s sudden death, but also that of the earlier death of his uncle, which it is assumed to repeat. As perhaps a final irony, the narrator, while revealing what really happened in the earlier case, concedes “that the history and elucidation of the facts, long so mysterious, had been obtained by the Daguerreotypist from one of those mesmeric seers, who, now-a-days, so strangely perplex the aspect of human affairs, and put everybody’s natural vision to the blush, by the marvels which they see with their eyes shut” (311).

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## Notes

1. There is a fairly sizable literature on Hawthorne and sympathy. See in particular Roy Males' important early essay "Hawthorne and the Concept of Sympathy"; Gordon Hutner, *Secrets and Sympathy*; and John Michael, "History and Romance, Sympathy and Uncertainty: The Moral of the Stones in Hawthorne's *Marble Faun*." Much of criticism focuses on the influence of Scottish Common Sense philosophy, which Hawthorne studied at Bowdoin. My reading also stresses the influence of Romanticism and Transcendentalism. On Hawthorne and Scottish Commons Sense philosophy see Terence Martin, *The Instructed Vision*. See also John Stafford, "Sympathy Comes to America."

2. John Bovee Dods, for instance, in a series of invited lectures to members of the United States Senate in 1850, declared that: "Mesmerism is the doctrine of *sympathy*.... In mesmerism there is a sympathy so perfect between the magnetizer and subject, that what he sees, the subject sees – what he hears, the subject hears – what he feels, the subject feels – what he tastes, the subject tastes – and what he smells, the subject also smells; and lastly, what the magnetizer wills, is likewise will of his subject" (30, emphasis in original).

3. In his influential essay, Roy Male argues that Hawthorne's concept of sympathy is organicist. Interestingly, he attributes the significance of sympathy during this period to "the striking discoveries in electricity and magnetism, and the revived conception of the universe as organic" (139). I argue, however, that mesmerism is at odds with this organicism. In *Spellbound* Tatar discusses Hawthorne's representation of mesmerism in terms of sympathy. In addition to Tatar, notable studies of Hawthorne and mesmerism include Taylor Stoehr, "Hawthorne and Mesmerism" and

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*Hawthorne's Mad Scientists*, esp. Chapter 2; C. E. Schorer, "Hawthorne and Hypnosis;" and Samuel Coale, "The Romance of Mesmerism: Hawthorne's Medium of Romance" and *Mesmerism and Hawthorne*. See also Jonathan Elmer's interesting discussion of Poe and mesmerism in "Terminate or Liquidate?" and in *Reading at the Social Limit*.

4. Nervo-vital is term used by Dods and others.

5. As Evan Carton notes, even though Hawthorne often invokes sympathy as "the alternative to mesmerism as a model of human interrelation, yet, astonishingly, it means exactly what 'mesmerism' does" (247-48). Carton cites definitions of dictionaries current in 1852:

1. The fact or capacity of entering into or sharing the feeling of another or others. Also, a feeling or frame of mind evoked by and responsive to some external influence.

2. A (real or supposed) affinity between certain things by virtue of which they affect or influence one another (esp. in some occult way), or attract or tend towards each other.

3. The correlation existing between bodies capable of communicating their vibrational energy to one another through some medium. (248)

6. Shaftesbury and Keats, for instance, both write of the "annihilation" of self in acts of sympathetic identification. In his Philosophical *Enquiry* into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful, Edmund Burke wrote that "Sympathy must be considered as a sort of substitution, by which we are put into the place of another man, and affected in many respects as he is affected.... It is by this principle chiefly that poetry, painting, and other affecting arts, transfuse their passions from one breast to another" (44).

7. Like Freud, Hegel includes not only "the effect produced by the death of beloved relatives, friend, etc." but also of certain kinds of abstractions: "Thus Cato, after the downfall of the Roman republic,

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could life no longer: his inner reality was neither wider nor higher than it" (102-3). See Freud's "Mourning and Melancholia" (1915).

8. On the implications of this exclusion, see Jean-Luc Nancy "Identity and Trembling." "It is both necessary and impossible," he writes, "for the consciousness of knowledge to be hypnotized, for the philosophical subject to know itself as having itself in another," even it "has never wanted anything else... than this knowledge of self outside self" (25).

9. In his *General Principles of the Philosophy of Nature*, one of the first American Hegelians, J. B. Stallo gave particular attention, gave particular emphasis to mesmerism's not being an advance but a regression to an inferior and passive sympathetic state. While Stallo's book introduced Hegel's philosophy to many of the Transcendentalists, I don't know if Hawthorne knew of it directly.

10. The best discussion of Hegel and mesmerism is Nancy's "Identity and Trembling." See also the suggestive remarks by Jonathan Elmer in "Terminate or Liquidate?" (119-120).

11. The subject of passivity has received surprisingly little critical attention. An important exception is Christopher Diffie's "Postponing Politics in Hawthorne's *Scarlet Letter*."

12. As I discuss in Chapter 1, however, the relation between hypnosis and the psychoanalytic transference is problematic.

13. The possibility of hypnosis or mesmerism at a distance, a kind of telepathy was a preoccupation of its advocates, including Dr. Joseph Fiske, the dental assistant who mesmerized Sophia, before her marriage to Hawthorne. See Stoehr 39-41.

14. Hawthorne seems to have seen the susceptibility to mesmerism as a "feminine trait," though one that is shared by male artists. Susceptibility to mesmerism is also often racialized in this period. In her *Keys to Uncle Tom's Cabin*, for instance, Stowe wrote that "negroes are singularly susceptible to all that class of influences

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which produce catalepsy, mesmeric sleep, and partial clairvoyant phenomena” (cited in Michaels 108).

15. The word territory suggests, as Pam Schirmeister notes, “a sharp separation or boundary between one place and another, much as the whole sketch insists on the difference between Hawthorne’s ancestors and himself, between past and present, imaginary and actual.”

16. On the implications of the term “apprehension,” see Samuel Weber, “It.”

17. Hawthorne’s rejection of the perfect sympathy of reader and writer needs to be seen in the context of theories of reading as sympathy. As John Michael notes, in his repeated association of sympathy and interpretation, “Hawthorne invokes the well-known principle of scriptural exegesis as sympathetic and like-minded reading” (159).

18. As Charles Feidelson argues “allegory was safe because it preserved the conventional distinction between thought and things” (cited in Bell 142.)

19. Poe writes in his review of Hawthorne, that when a reader encounters a truly original work of literature  
his pleasure is doubled. He is filled with an intrinsic and extrinsic delight. He feels and intensely enjoys the seeming novelty of the thought, enjoys it as really novel, as absolutely original with the writer – and himself. They two, he fancies, have, alone of all men, thought thus. They two, together, created this thing. Henceforth there is a bond of sympathy between them, a sympathy which irradiates every subsequent page of the book. (23-4)

Characteristically, and rather symptomatically, Poe also accused Hawthorne of having plagiarized his story “William Wilson” in “Howe’s Masquerade.” While the passages he cites as evidence are not very convincing, Hawthorne’s story had been published before

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Poe wrote "William Wilson." On Poe and plagiarism, see Rachman, "Es lässt sich nicht schreiben."

20. On romantic tropes of frost and freezing see Cadava, *Emerson and the Climates of History*, esp. Chapter 2; and Reed *Romantic Weather*.

21. On a veiled woman as a representation of allegory, see Barbara Johnson, "Women and Allegory." See also Carolyn Dinshaw, *Chaucer's Sexual Poetics*.

22. The phrase is David Wellbery's, from his foreword to *Discourse Networks 1800/1900*.

23. Budick argues that Hawthorne's writing, like Stanley Cavell's, assures the "uncompromised autonomy of writer and reader," their "inviolability and separateness" (211, 216). In her reading, "not knowing" becomes simply a moment that must be gone beyond to "reacquire something which has been lost," a detour on the way to knowledge. It is precisely this recuperation of the unknowable, that I see as problematic for Hawthorne.

24. "Organizing itself around otherness, difference, and absence," Michael MacDonald writes "allegory opens language to the Other even as it speaks of itself" ("Rigorous Mortis" 107). I want to thank Avital Ronell for drawing my attention to MacDonald's essay. My discussion of allegory in Hawthorne is also indebted to Tom Cohen's *Ideology and Inscription*, especially the chapter coincidentally entitled "Altered States."

25. It is worth noting that "The Haunted Mind" is written in the second person, adding to its sense of impersonality. On the romantic context of the tale, see Holsberry. See also Colacurcio.

26. On tropes of property and appropriation in the novel, see Michaels.

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27. The association between photography and death was a commonplace in the nineteenth century. After receiving a daguerreotype from Emerson, Carlyle wrote him that his image “lies imprisoned in baleful shades, as if in mockery. Doesn’t know me friend? I am dead, thou seeist, and distant, and forever hidden from thee” (Cited in West, 101). The daguerreotype was frequently used during the period to memorialize the dead. On the daguerreotype in *The House of the Seven Gables*, see Davidson and Trachtenberg.

28. On the railroad’s “Industrialization of Time and Space in the Nineteenth Century,” see Wolfgang Schivelbusche’s *The Railway Journey*. “The annihilation of time and space’ was the *topos*,” he argues, “which the early nineteenth century used to describe the new situation into which the railroad placed natural space after depriving it of its hitherto absolute powers. Motion was no longer dependent of the conditions of natural space, but on a mechanical power that created its own new spatiality” (10).

29. Budick’s reading of the passage differs from my own. She emphasizes the importance for both Emerson and Hawthorne of “the self-conscious recognition that one is occupying a point of view” (127).

30. In Preface to *The American*, James writes,  
The only general attribute of projected romance that I can see, the only one that fits all its cases, is the fact of the kind of experience with which it deals – experience liberated so to speak; experience disengaged, disembroiled, disencumbered, exempt from the conditions that we usually know to attach to it and, if we wish so to put the matter, drag upon it, and operating in a medium which relieves it, in a particular interest, of a the inconvenience of a related, a measurable state, a state subject to all our vulgar communities. The greatest intensity may so be arrived at evidently – when the sacrifice of community, of the “related” side of things, has not been too rash, it must to this end not flagrantly betray



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itself.... The balloon of experience is in fact of course tied to the earth, and under that necessity we swing, thanks to a rope of remarkable length, in the more or less commodious care of the imagination; but it is by the rope we know where we are, and from the moment the cable is cut we are at large and unrelated.... The art of the romancer is, "for the fun of it," insidiously to cut the cable, to cut it without our detecting him. (280-81)

31. Hawthorne is referring to the Fox sisters and the emerging Spiritualist movement which absorbed much of the mesmeric movement in the 1850s. After befriending the Brownings in England later in the decade, Sophia grew interested in spiritualism. Hawthorne observes in 1858 in his *French and Italian Notebooks* that the effects the mediums produced "seemed to be akin to those that have been produced by mesmerism, returning the inquirer's thoughts and veiled recollections to himself, as answers to his queries" (398).

32. On Hawthorne's writers block, see Davidson 690-91. As Davidson notes, Hawthorne had promised his publisher James T. Fields a happy ending.

**CHAPTER 3**  
**UNCERTAIN AGENCY:**  
**THE AMBIVALENCE OF SYMPATHY IN *DANIEL DERONDA***

*“The driest argument has its hallucinations.”*

*— Daniel Deronda*

The importance of sympathy in the writings of George Eliot is well known.<sup>1</sup> “The greatest benefit we owe to the artist whether painter, poet, or novelist,” Eliot wrote in “The Natural History of German Life,” “is the extension of our sympathies” (110). A picture of human life such as a great artist can give,” she argued, “surprises even the trivial and the selfish into that attention to what is apart from themselves, which may be called the raw material of moral

sentiment” (110). Eliot’s so-called “doctrine of sympathy” is the cornerstone of her humanism, and of the aesthetics as well as the ethics that underlie her fictional project.<sup>2</sup> If art does not enlarge men’s sympathies,” Eliot famously wrote her friend Charles Bray, “it does nothing morally” (*Letters* 3: 111). It is, she insisted, the only effect I ardently long to produce by my writings.” But, Eliot’s writings not only seek to generate sympathy in or to enlarge the sympathies of her readers, they also dramatize the extension of sympathy they aim to produce. Eliot repeatedly stages in her fiction moments of awakening in which characters are jolted into an awareness of otherness, forced to pay attention to what is “apart from themselves.” Eliot’s fiction typically revolves around a character’s moral education or *Bildung*. Tracing a movement that leads from egoism to sympathy, her narratives often seem to be propelled by a certain lack of sympathy, by the difference between a character’s narrow and the narrator’s more expansive sympathy.<sup>3</sup>

Such a trajectory is evident in a well-known passage from *Middlemarch*, which follows the disappointments of the early days of Dorothea’s marriage to Casaubon and of their honeymoon in Rome. “We are all of us,” the narrator declares,

born in moral stupidity, taking the world as an udder to feed our supreme selves: Dorothea had early begun to emerge from that stupidity, but yet it had been easier to her to imagine how she would devote herself to Mr. Casaubon, and become wise and strong in his strength and wisdom, than to conceive with that distinctness which is no longer reflection but feeling – an idea wrought back to the directness of sense, like the solidity of objects – that he had an equivalent centre of self, whence the lights and shadows must fall with a certain difference. (211)

Dorothea's sympathetic *Bildung*, her progression from moral stupidity and egoism to sympathy, hinges on her recognition of Casaubon's difference. The moral stupidity in which she, like "all of us" is born, "taking the world as an udder to feed our supreme selves," is a kind of primary narcissism.<sup>4</sup> It is not an originary state of unity with the mother or with the world but an already specular relation in which they are taken to mirror the self and to reflect its desires. Dorothea's marriage to Casaubon marks both a departure from and a continuation of this narcissism. What she saw "reflected" in him, the narrator tells us early in the novel, "she herself brought" (24). When she is jolted by her experience in Rome into an awareness of the otherness of Casaubon's desire, Dorothea comes to realize that her narcissistically invested image of him is a projection, an "illusion" that reflects her own desire. The recognition of difference is for George Eliot the condition for the true

act of sympathy, is what makes an ethical relation to others possible.

The extension of sympathy in Eliot's fiction is, however, a two-part process, a double movement of differentiation and reconciliation. It begins with the shock of otherness, which jolts her characters or her readers, surprising "even the trivial and the selfish" into paying attention to what is apart from themselves and from the images and idealizations in which they are narcissistically invested. This perception of separateness and difference serves as the raw material of sympathy. It enables us not only to imagine and to feel for others but to conceive of our relation to the world, to others, and to ourselves without the distortions of egoism – a relation no longer mediated by the idealizations and narcissistically invested images that, in the language of *Middlemarch*, "blot out the glory of the world."<sup>5</sup> Sympathy for Eliot offers the promise of pure and unmediated communication not only between the self and other(s) but within the self as well. When she recognizes that Casaubon has "an equivalent centre of self, whence the lights and shadows must fall with a certain difference," Dorothea overcomes, as Neil Hertz observes, "not merely her own egotism but also what

another Eliot called a 'dissociation of sensibility,' a troublesome interior difference" (*End of the Line* 85). In sympathizing with Casaubon, she conceives of his different though "equivalent centre of self" with, we are told, a "distinctness which is no longer reflection but feeling – an idea wrought back to the directness of sense, like the solidity of objects." It is no longer reflected as in narcissism but directly felt. Sympathy "wrought[s] back," it reunites idea and sense, reflection and feeling. It is an aesthetic in the precise sense of reconciling the supersensible realm of ideas and of cognition with sense perception.<sup>6</sup> A sympathetic education is for Eliot always at the same time an aesthetic education as well.

In Eliot's aesthetic of sympathy, the shock of otherness, while often painful and even traumatic, is recuperable. It does not ultimately threaten but affirms the individuality, the unity and indivisibility, of the self. To conceive of the other as having "an equivalent centre of self, whence the lights and shadows must fall with a certain difference" is to imaginatively overcome the boundaries separating self and other without dissolving them. It is predicated on the separateness and difference of self and other. Eliot's aesthetic of sympathy presumes a unique and distinctive subject,

an individual like the other in his or her very difference. What governs her aesthetic of sympathy is not a notion of fusion – much less of self-annihilation – but of *relation*. The sympathetic imagination enables the subject to place itself in relation, to see itself and to see others as parts of a greater whole. To do so, however, implies a certain distance in relation to the self as well as in relation to others. “We are able in imagination,” as William Godwin wrote, under the influence of Adam Smith, “to go out of ourselves, and become impartial spectators of the system of which we are a part” (cited in Noble 59).<sup>7</sup> To enlarge one’s sympathy is to both recognize and to transcend the limitations of one’s own partial perspective and narrow self-interests. It is to see from a broader perspective, one that incorporates other points of view. The subject of sympathy is in a sense the liberal subject par excellence. A broad sympathy for Eliot requires a certain disinterestedness, impartiality, and even – though she frequently mobilizes sympathy against it – detachment.<sup>8</sup>

Sympathy in Eliot’s fiction aspires to the condition of the narrator of *Middlemarch*, able to both feel for “poor Dorothea” or “poor Casaubon” and at the same time to see the web of relations in

which they are emeshed. The broad sympathy her fiction aims to produce is both a “wide-fellow feeling” and what she calls in *The Mill on the Floss* “a large vision of relations,” of the “unity” that connects “the smallest things with the greatest” (363). Eliot’s aesthetic of sympathy is closely bound up with her complex notion of organic form. In her unfinished essay “Notes on Form in Art,” written shortly before she began *Middlemarch*, Eliot describes her conception of form in terms that suggest both its importance to her aesthetic of sympathy and their proximity.<sup>9</sup> “Form as an element of human experience,” she writes in the essay,

must begin with the perception of separateness, derived principally from touch [of which the other senses are modifications]; &... things must be recognized as separate wholes before they can be recognized as wholes composed of parts, or before these wholes again can be regarded as relatively parts of a larger whole.

Form, then, as distinguished from merely massive impression, must first depend on the discrimination of wholes and then on the discrimination of parts. Fundamentally, form is unlikeness, as is seen in the philosophic use of the word “Form” in distinction from Matter; & in consistency with this fundamental meaning, every difference is Form.... But with this fundamental discrimination is born in necessary antithesis the sense of wholeness or unbroken connexion in space & time: a flash of light is a whole compared with the darkness which precedes & follows it... And as knowledge continues to grow by its alternating processes of distinction & combination, seeing smaller & smaller unlikenesses & grouping or associating these under a common likeness, it



arrives at the conception of wholes composed of parts more & more multiplied & highly differenced, yet more & more absolutely bound together by various conditions of common likeness or mutual dependence. And the fullest example of such a whole is the highest example of Form: in other words, the relation of multiplex interdependent parts to a whole which is itself in the most varied & therefore the fullest relation to other wholes. Thus, the human organism comprises things as diverse as the finger-nails & tooth-ache, as the nervous stimulus of muscle manifested in a shout, & the discernment of a red spot on a field of snow; but all its different elements or parts of experience are bound together in a more necessary wholeness or more inseparable group of common conditions than can be found in any other existence known to us. The highest Form, then, is the highest organism, that is to say, the most varied group of relations bound together in a wholeness which again has the most varied relations with all other phenomena. (232)

I have quoted this passage at some length in order to draw attention to the way in which, as she often does with sympathy, Eliot portrays form as both a relation or group of relations and as the development of a mind capable of conceiving of it. The passage can be read not only as a description of the notion of organic form that underlies Eliot's aesthetic of sympathy, but also (without too much violence) as an account of the extension of sympathy as she envisions it, as a progression from an initial awareness of separateness and difference to a broad vision of relations worthy of *Middlemarch's* narrator. Sympathy for Eliot, as she writes here of form, begins with the "perception of separateness" and grows by "alternating processes of

distinction & combination.” Sympathy is not for her something that one simply has, a broad vision of relations or a feeling for others, but is an always on-going process. This is why Eliot invariably writes of sympathy in terms of its growth, as a narrative of its broadening and extension.

Eliot’s formulation “form is unlikeness... and... every difference is form” does not, as Hillis Miller argues, express a vision of form as “inorganic, acentered, and discontinuous,” but specifically as organic (“Narrative and History” 468-9).<sup>10</sup> The paradigmatic instance of form in the essay is, after all, the human organism. The development of form mirrors the development of the organism – and of the mind, which for Eliot as for George Henry Lewes is the activity of the organism as a whole. Form in the essay begins as a kind of bodily ego, a perception of separateness and of wholeness and unity that derives (like Freud’s notion of the bodily ego) from the sense of touch.<sup>11</sup> The human organism is in the essay not only the originary instance of form but also the “highest example.” “The highest Form,” Eliot writes, “is the highest organism, that is to say, the most varied group of relations bound together in a wholeness which again has the most varied relations

*with all other phenomena*” (my emphasis). “There would appear to be no boundary,” as David Ferris observes, “to a logic so inexhaustibly capable of reproducing itself and precisely because it turns upon the *relation* of difference: the only limit is difference itself and that is already a relation, already the integration of yet another part to an ever increasing whole” (227). Yet, the very efficiency of her dialectical machine generates certain problems. For a virtually endless proliferation of greater and greater differences or smaller and smaller unlikenesses would eventually cease to be comprehensible, would exceed our ability to grasp it as an intelligible whole. Eliot’s fiction is punctuated by such moments of cognitive breakdown, linked to what Neil Hertz calls “the rhythm of the sublime” in her writings. The concept of organic form in “Notes on Form in Art,” however, elides the tensions evident elsewhere in her writings. Distinction seems to be naturally followed by combination, the apprehension of differences by what she elsewhere calls “the sympathy that comprehends them.”

Eliot’s conception of organic form in the essay appears to be governed by, to borrow a phrase from Freud, “the expectation of an intelligible whole.”<sup>12</sup> That “every difference is Form” means among

other things that difference can always be grasped as form, that it is not only a kind of background against which form is set apart, as light against darkness or self against world, but also always potential form. The relation of difference and form is explicitly modeled in the essay on the traditional philosophical relation of matter and form.<sup>13</sup> Difference is the raw material of form, just as in her aesthetic of sympathy it is the raw material of moral sentiment and of sympathy. In "Notes on Form in Art" Eliot circumscribes difference, distinguishing it, for instance, from what she calls "massive impression." Difference in the essay, as in her aesthetic of sympathy, presupposes a certain specular or perceptual distance. It excludes what precedes or does not take place on the basis of a subject-object distinction. Difference is, in a sense, always difference from the standpoint of the ego and begins, like form, with the subject's perception of its own separateness, wholeness, and unity. With its refusal to admit anything irreducibly other and its expectation of a unified, intelligible whole, Eliot's conception of form comes to resemble the narcissism to which her sympathy is ostensibly opposed.<sup>14</sup> What the subject finds or generates in the world apart from itself (Eliot characteristically leaves the question

open) is invariably a form that is modeled on and reflects its own purported unity. It posits, in other words, the very mirroring relation between the self and what is apart from it that the shock of otherness in her narratives of sympathy disrupts. My argument, however, is not that Eliot's concept of organic form, or the aesthetic of sympathy with which it is closely bound up, is simply narcissistic.<sup>15</sup> Rather, I want to point to a certain tension in Eliot's writings between the desire for unity, wholeness, and intelligibility and the insistence on an otherness that disrupts such idealizations, a tension in her notion of sympathy between an openness to alterity and its aesthetic recuperation, between what in sympathy threatens and what sustains the narcissistic structure of the self.

But if the (perhaps significantly) unfinished "Notes on Form in Art" elides the tensions it nonetheless makes readable, Eliot's fiction does not. In her fiction Eliot interrogates the limits of her aesthetic of sympathy, repeatedly testing it against the indifference it necessarily excludes. In *Middlemarch*, for instance, shortly before she recognizes the difference and equivalence of Casaubon's center of self, Dorothea encounters what the narrator calls "the weight of

unintelligible Rome,” against whose “deep impressions,” we are told, she has no defense:

All this vast wreck of ambitious ideals, sensuous and spiritual mixed confusedly with all the signs of breathing forgetfulness and degradation, at first jarred her as with an electric shock, and then urged themselves on her with that ache belonging to a glut of confused ideas which check the flow of emotion. Forms both pale and glowing took possession of her young sense, and fixed themselves in her memory even when she was not thinking of them, preparing strange associations which remained through her after-years. Our moods are apt to bring with them images which succeed each other like the magic-lantern pictures of a doze; and in certain states of dull forlornness Dorothea all her life continued to see the vastness of St Peter’s, the huge bronze canopy, the excited intention in the attitudes and garments of the prophets and evangelists in the mosaic above, and the red drapery which was being hung for Christmas spreading itself everywhere like a disease of the retina. (193-94)

Dorothea’s encounter with Rome is, as Neil Hertz observes, “an experience of the sublime” in the sense of the term in Kant or Wordsworth (*End of the Line* 90). Kant, as Hertz notes, uses a spectator’s “bewilderment” or “perplexity” on first seeing St. Peter’s as an example of the mathematical sublime, of the “feeling of the inadequacy of [the] imagination for presenting the ideas of a whole” (cited in *End of the Line* 91). Dorothea’s encounter with Rome represents the inadequacy, the failure of the sympathetic imagination. The “electric shock” that jars Dorothea in Rome, the

shock of otherness, is not followed by a sympathy that comprehends it or is able to render it as an intelligible whole. She has, we are told, no “defense” against its “deep impressions.” The “glut of confused ideas... check[s] the flow of emotion,” generating the very dissociation, the interior difference, that sympathy purportedly overcomes.

Rome is for Dorothea what Eliot called in the earlier essay a “massive impression.” What makes Rome unintelligible to Dorothea, however, is not simply its size, but also the loss of the differences that make intelligibility possible – most significantly perhaps the loss of her perception of separateness, of the boundary between herself and what is apart from her. Immersed in the scene, Dorothea lacks the specular or perceptual distance necessary to master her experience in Rome or to defend against it. She does not so much possess the experience as she is possessed by it. Its “images” and “forms” take “possession of her... sense” and fix themselves in her memory, returning intrusively and involuntarily throughout her later life, spreading themselves “everywhere like a disease of the retina.” Dorothea’s experience of the sublime

becomes, in its repeated possession of her, a kind of trauma. She is infected by an otherness, an unmasterable alterity within her self.

Dorothea's recognition of Casaubon, which occurs shortly after her encounter with Rome is, as Neil Hertz puts it, "quite literally, a domestication of the anxiety associated" with the earlier scene (*End of the Line* 92). It reduces the heterogeneity of Rome, its massive impression, to another equivalent center of self. Dorothea's sympathetic education is a matter not only of overcoming narcissism but also of defending against the alterity it blotted out. Yet, the fact that Dorothea continues to be haunted by her experience in Rome, that she is possessed by its images all her life, suggests that something in it remains unassimilated and perhaps unassimilable. It suggests in other words that there is something in the shock of otherness that cannot be assimilated to or appropriated by the narrative of sympathy's growth and extension. While such a shock is necessary to the sympathetic education, it is not reducible to it. There remains a disjunction between her exposure to alterity and its aesthetic recuperation.



After Dorothea's encounter with the "weight of unintelligible Rome," the narrator remarks in a well-known and often-quoted passage:

If we had a keen vision and feeling of all ordinary human life, it would be like hearing the grass grow and the squirrel's heart beat, and we should die of that roar which lies on the other side of silence. As it is, the quickest of us walk around well wadded with stupidity. (194)

This passage does not refer (at least not directly) to Dorothea's experience in Rome, but to ours as readers of the novel. It concerns the limits of our sympathetic imaginations rather than hers. As in Dorothea's encounter with Rome, the danger of massive impression is not simply a question of quantity, of the amount felt, seen, or heard, but of the loss of differences, of the perception of separateness, and of a certain specular and perceptual distance. The "roar that lies on the other side of silence" names in phenomenal or sensory terms something that is not merely phenomenal or sensory, what we might call a kind of extra-sensory perception – a theme that as we shall see recurs in Eliot's writings and is closely bound up with sympathy. The roar threatens not only the boundaries of the self, but its virtual annihilation. The stupidity that elsewhere in *Middlemarch* and in Eliot's other writings

is a figure for narcissism becomes in this passage a necessary defense, for even the quickest among us, against a more threatening alterity.

This chapter will examine the ambivalence of sympathy in the writings of George Eliot. By ambivalence, however, I do not mean simply that sympathy is both desired and feared in her writings, that it is both what enables us to overcome our narcissism and the danger that narcissism defends against – though that is part of my argument. Ambivalence also consists, to borrow a phrase from Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy, “in the coincidence of sameness and difference in the same rapport.”<sup>16</sup> “Ambivalence marks,” in Samuel Weber’s words, “the ineffaceable intrusion of the foreign, the alien, and the other into the constitution of the self and the same” (“Wartime,” 94). Sympathy is also for Eliot ambivalent in this sense. Eliot does not thematize mesmerism or hypnosis in her fiction in the same way that Hawthorne and Poe do; there are no literal scenes of mesmerism in her fiction (though as we will see, she comes close in “The Lifted Veil”).<sup>17</sup> She is, however, preoccupied with what I have called the problem of hypnosis, the problem of a kind of blind identification or mimesis in which the other is not recognized as

other, of a sociality that proceeds or does not take place on the basis of a subject-object opposition, and of its influence. While this chapter will focus primarily on *Daniel Deronda*, before turning to Eliot's last novel, I want to look briefly at her gothic novella "The Lifted Veil," a text that, early in her career as a novelist, tests the limits of sympathy's intelligibility.

**Sympathetic Clairvoyance, or  
Sympathy Becomes Telepathy in "The Lifted Veil"**

In one of her first published texts "Poetry and Prose, From the Notebook of an Eccentric," written long before she became George Eliot, Eliot describes a writer as a kind of mesmeric subject.<sup>18</sup> "Poetry and Prose" consists of a series of prose sketches (there is despite the title no poetry), which are preceded by a portrait, supposedly written by a male friend, of their now diseased author. The portrait of the eccentric author is an early attempt to describe what was to become the narrator of her later fiction. He is a figure of exemplary sympathy and of a certain detachment. "He seemed to have," she writes, "a preternaturally sharpened vision," and to be "not above, but simply out of, the sphere of his fellow men" (15).

What sets him apart is, according to his friend, “a morbid sensitiveness in his feeling of the beautiful, which I can compare to nothing but those alleged states of mesmeric lucidity, in which the patient obtains an unenviable cognizance of irregularities, happily imperceptible to us in the ordinary state of our consciousness” (15).<sup>19</sup>

In “The Lifted Veil,” written some dozen years after “Poetry and Prose,” the eccentric, first-person narrator, Latimer, has similar mesmeric lucidity and preternaturally sharpened vision. His clairvoyance is, he tells us, like a “microscopic vision, that showed all the suppressed egoism, all the struggling chaos of puerilities, meanness, vague and capricious memories, and indolent make-shift thoughts, from which human words and deeds emerge like leaflets covering a fermenting heap” (19-20). Latimer is from the beginning of the novella in the position of a writer. He assumes at first that the visions that “break in” on him are a kind of poetic inspiration, the awakening of a “poet’s nature” in him. “Surely it was in this way,” he writes, “that Homer saw the plain of Troy, that Dante saw the abodes of the departed, that Milton saw the earthward flight of the tempter” (13). But his clairvoyance, Latimer stresses, is not the

result of an “effort of will,” but is “involuntary.” It is not “prosaic effort” but “rapt passivity.” “It was,” he writes, “like a preternaturally heightened sense of hearing, making audible to one a roar of sound where others find perfect stillness” (26). Latimer hears, or rather cannot shut out, what Eliot calls in *Middlemarch*, the “roar that lies on the other side of silence.” Like “Poetry and Prose” “The Lifted Veil” describes an experience that is eccentric (in the sense of decentering) and depropriative. It dramatizes the passivity, the possession and dispossession, that is for Eliot an inextricable part of writing, but which remains concealed behind the seeming mastery of her narrators. In her “best writing,” she told J. W. Cross, “there was a ‘not herself’ which took possession of her, and that she felt her own personality to be merely the instrument through which this spirit, as it were, was acting” (Quoted in Clark 5).

But Latimer has “the poet’s sensitivity without his voice” (8). “I went dumbly,” he writes, “through that stage of the poet’s suffering, in which he feels the delicious pang of utterance, and makes an image of his sorrows” (36). Everything in “The Lifted Veil” turns on the gap, the disjunction between his exposure to alterity

and its aesthetic recuperation, between the apprehension of differences and the sympathy that comprehends them. Latimer's insight into other minds does not lead to a greater sympathy. He is unable to render his extra-sensory perceptions as an intelligible whole or to make them his own. He is, as he puts it, "too feeble for the sublime resistance of poetic production" (20). Poetic production, the imposition of form, is for Eliot a resistance, an act or mechanism of defense, a turning or troping of a threatening immediacy. Too weak for "the sublime resistance of poetic production," Latimer has no defense against the roar he "hears" or its massive impression. The words and ideas, the thoughts and feelings, of others "force themselves," as he puts it, "on my consciousness." They "break in" upon him, and he can neither appropriate them nor shut them out. They represent both an intrusion into the self and a dissociation. The "double consciousness at work in me," Latimer writes, flowed "on like two parallel streams which never mingle their waters and blend into a common hue" (32).<sup>20</sup> Latimer is affected from within by an exteriority he can neither fully appropriate nor entirely exclude.

Pushed to its limits in “The Lifted Veil” Eliot’s sympathy becomes what her friend F. W. H. Myers would name a few years after her death “telepathy” – but was at the time she wrote the story still in sympathy.<sup>21</sup> The notion of telepathy emerged out of the discourse on sympathy – and out of the purported “sympathetic clairvoyance” of mesmerized subjects and the spiritualism that spun off from and supplants it. In her depiction of Latimer’s telepathy, Eliot, as Beryl Gray notes, drew on William Gregory’s accounts of mesmeric subjects’ “sympathetic clairvoyance,” which he like many of his contemporaries strove to keep apart from (and thus uncontaminated by) the sympathetic rapport with the mesmerist.<sup>22</sup> Like mesmerism and hypnosis, with which it is as we saw in Chapter 1 closely bound up, telepathy is a figure of a certain limit of sympathy, of an excessive sympathy. Telepathy is a figure of unmediated communication, of an “excessive communicability,” as Marc Redfield puts it, no longer mediated by the senses or by consciousness. But, it is also a figure of mediation. Telepathy, as its name suggests, is a kind of tele-technology, a form of telecommunication.<sup>23</sup> “The communication of ‘felt’ meaning (*pathos*) over distance (*tele*),” telepathy, Redfield argues, “offers the fantasy of

unmediated communication, and at the same time records in its very name an irreducible difference within self presence. It promises an escape from the technology of the signifier, but in doing so it imports *techne* into the heart of pathos. For whose pathos is it once tele-pathology has begun?" ("Fictions of Telepathy" 5).<sup>24</sup> Telepathy introduces into or exposes in the seeming immediacy of feeling an unnatural technical element, a mediality at once mechanical and social. Eliot's organic conception of sympathy is inhabited in "The Lifted Veil" by a pre-subjective sociality and automatism, by something inorganic, inanimate, dead.

"The Lifted Veil" is "not a *jeu d'esprit*," Eliot wrote John Blackwood, "but a *jeu de melancholie*." Eliot began "The Lifted Veil" after the death of her beloved sister Chrissey, breaking off work on *The Mill on the Floss*, which she found she could not continue, and not returning to the novel until she had finished it. The relation between the two texts is a complex one; it is as though she could no longer sustain the idealizations and reconciliations of her novel.<sup>25</sup> "The Lifted Veil" undermines at every turn the organicism that underlies the novel and her aesthetic of sympathy. No "large vision of relations," of the "unity" that "connects the smallest things with



the greatest” animates “The Lifted Veil” (*Mill on the Floss* 363). Latimer is not, as Eliot puts it in *Daniel Deronda*, “an organic part of social life.” He remains, despite the threatening immediacy of others, cut off from them. Latimer even mocks as egotistical the notion that it is our lack of knowledge of or insight into others that limits our sympathy for them.<sup>26</sup> The organic unconscious of *The Mill on the Floss* is displaced by a passive, mechanical automatism.<sup>27</sup> “The Lifted Veil’s” work of melancholia (to use Freud’s paradoxical formulation) contrasts with the novel’s work of mourning, refusing the internalizations of mourning, its narcissistic reappropriations. Nothing, in fact, could be further from the image of unity in death with which *The Mill on the Floss* ends than the stark vision of death in “The Lifted Veil.”

Eliot’s novella has, as many critics have noted, an “obvious” similarity to Poe’s “The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar” (Royle 85) – though it has generally been dismissed as merely a “superficial affinity,” Poe lacking, according to Beryl Gray, Eliot’s moral seriousness (87-8), or limited to the transfusion experiment at the end. “The Lifted Veil” is written, as Poe would say, *in articulo mortis*, in the grasp of death. In Eliot’s tale as in “The Case of M. Valdemar”

death marks both a limit of language and inhabits it. Valdemar's "I am dead," as Derrida has remarked, is "the condition for a true act of language."<sup>28</sup> "The Lifted Veil" begins and ends with the scene of Latimer's death. "The time of my end approaches," he begins his story. "I foresee when I shall die, and everything that will happen in my final moments," he writes:

Just a month from this day, on the 20<sup>th</sup> of September 1850, I shall be sitting in this chair, in this study, at ten-o'clock at night, weary of incessant insight and foresight, without delusions and without hope. Just as I am watching a tongue of blue flame rising in the fire, and my lamp is burning low, the horrible contraction will begin in my chest. (1)

Latimer gradually shifts during his account of his prevision of death into the present tense, as though he was describing the experience of death itself:

The sense of suffocation increases: my lamp goes out with a horrible stench: I make a great effort, and snatch at the bell again. I long for life, and there is no help. I thirsted for the unknown: the thirst is gone. O God, let me stay with the known, and be weary of it: I am content. Agony of pain and suffocation – and all the while the earth, the fields, the pebbly brook at the bottom of the rookery, the fresh scent after the rain, the light of the morning through my chamber-window, the warmth of the hearth after frosty air – will darkness close over them for ever?

Darkness – darkness – no pain – nothing but darkness: but I am passing on and on through the darkness: my thought stays in the darkness, but always with a sense of moving onward.... (2)

The ellipses at the end mark a certain limit, occupying the place of Valdemar's "I am dead." (The novella ends on September 20, 1850 with another series of ellipses.) Our own death, as Freud reminds us, is "unimaginable [*unvorstellbar*: unrepresentable]; and whenever we attempt to do so we can perceive that we are in fact still present as spectators" (*SE* 14: 289 translation modified). Death cannot be represented and is available only as representation.<sup>29</sup> But, if death marks the absolute limit of identification in "The Lifted Veil," it is also, as in Freud, the origin of social feeling. "In the first moments we come away from the presence of death," Latimer writes, in what is perhaps the only instance in the story of his having a wide vision of relations, "every other relation to the living is merged, to our feeling, in the great relation of a common nature and a common destiny" (48).

The blood transfusion experiment at the end of "The Lifted Veil," in which Mrs. Archer is brought back from the dead long enough to reveal Latimer's wife, Bertha's, intention to kill him, is in a sense a rewriting of the mesmeric experiment in Poe's "Valdemar," recasting the materialist vision of the spiritual in his mesmeric revelations as the physical basis of mind. The scene has, however,

too often been dismissed as extraneous to the story. Blackwood urged Eliot to cut the scene, and more recently Terry Eagleton has complained that “the blood transfusion incident is,” as he puts it, “a piece of tawdry melodrama, a grotesque and infelicitous flaw, a *fiction*” (58).<sup>30</sup> Yet, in many ways transfusion scene dramatizes in condensed form what is at issue in Latimer’s telepathy. The blood transfusion is an image of the violation of the boundaries of the self, of a fusion of self and other, an intrusion of the other into the self.<sup>31</sup> It is in a kind of literalization of the trope of mesmeric influence. Like telepathy, the transfusion experiment also exposes a *techne* in the heart of pathos. What the experiment reveals is not the return of the immortal soul to the body, as Latimer seems to expect, not a ghost in the machine, but an effect of the machine itself. “The wretched woman’s heartstrings had been set to hatred and vengeance,” Latimer writes; “the spirit of life had swept the chords for an instant, and was gone again” (65). Eliot uses a tradition image of poetic inspiration – one she also uses in “Poetry and Prose.” Mrs. Archer’s response has, however, already been set or pre-set. “Great God!” Latimer exclaims. “Is this what it is to live again... to wake up with our unstilled thirst upon us, with our

unuttered curses rising to our lips, with our muscles ready to act out their half-committed sins?” (65). What shocks Latimer is not so much the revelation that Bertha intended to kill him, but the automatism and mechanicity that inhabits it, blurring the distinction between the automatic, reflexive unconscious and consciousness.

In his readings George Eliot, Marc Redfield has drawn attention to a remarkable appearance of what he calls her “telepathy machine” in the last of her published writings, *The Impressions of Theophrastus Such*. The passage occurs in the chapter “Shadows of the Coming Race” (the title alludes to a story by Bulwer-Lytton), which imagines a future in which machines have supplanted human beings:

Who – if our consciousness is... a mere stumbling block on the way to unconscious perfection – who shall say that those fittest existences will not be found along the track of what we call inorganic combinations, which will carry on the most elaborate processes as mutely and painlessly as we are now told that the minerals are metamorphosing themselves continually in the dark laboratory of the earth’s crust? Thus the planet may be filled with beings who will be blind and deaf as the inmost rock, yet will execute changes as delicate and complicated as those of human language and all the intricate web of what we call its effects, without sensitive impression, without sensitive impulse: there may be, let us say, mute

orations, mute rhapsodies, mute discussions, and no consciousness there even to enjoy the silence” (133)

The machines in this passage are a figure of both direct, unmediated communication – without the mediation of the senses or of consciousness – and of pure mediation, if such a thing is possible. Their “mute orations, mute rhapsodies,” and “mute discussions” are another version of the “roar that lies on the other side of silence,” pushing sympathy beyond the limit of intelligibility. The machines are repeatedly characterized in the chapter as “unconscious” or, in the quasi-Darwinian logic it develops, as an “unconscious race.” The chapter unfolds as a debate on the relation between human consciousness and unconscious mechanical processes.<sup>32</sup> The narrator’s interlocutor argues that human consciousness “will and must act as a nervous centre to... mechanical processes” (131), which are “simply extensions of the human organism” and “obey the mandates of our consciousness” (130). The narrator, Theophrastus Such, inverts this logic, insisting that consciousness only “imagine[s] itself moving its mover” (133), and that it is a “parasite” that only our prejudice gives a “supreme governing rank.” Human consciousness is not master of its own house but is inhabited, driven by an unconscious automatism and

mechanicity that it cannot fully appropriate. These unconscious mechanical “processes” are, in Eliot’s final analogy, like a language. They “execute changes,” she writes, “as delicate and complicated as those of human language and all the intricate web of what we call its effects.” The struggle of man and machine becomes, what Hertz calls in an essay on *Daniel Deronda*, “a struggle of language and consciousness” (“Some Words” 283). The machines’ “language” is radically inhuman. Its “inorganic combinations” are senseless and indifferent, without meaning or intention. It is, as Redfield puts it, “an impossible trope-machine cut off from the phenomenal world but possessed of “effects” nonetheless (“Fictions of Telepathy” 17). The language of the machines represents what in language cannot be assimilated to the human, or to consciousness or intention. What the telepathy machines figure in “Shadows of the Coming Race” is the mechanicity without which no meaning or consciousness or sympathy would be possible, but which at the same time threatens their undoing.

### **The Ambivalence of *Daniel Deronda***

“The Lifted Veil” is in many ways unique in George Eliot’s fiction. The gothic supernaturalism and relentless negativity of the novella sets it apart from the rest of her fiction – as does in a different way the heavy-handed irony of “Shadows of the Coming Race.” The anxieties it stages are seeming confined to isolated moments in her other writings, cut off from associative connection with her fictional project, a project that in many ways culminates in *Middlemarch*. For *Daniel Deronda* no longer belongs securely to a fictional project based on the extension of sympathy. *Daniel Deronda* is Eliot’s most sustained interrogation of the limits of her aesthetic of sympathy, an attempt to account for what it necessarily excludes, what I have called the problem of hypnosis, what she thematizes in Latimer’s telepathy or in the machines of “Shadows of the Coming Race.” *Daniel Deronda*, I want to suggest, revolves around the ambivalence of sympathy. It dramatizes that ambivalence in the figures of Daniel Deronda and Gwendolen Harleth. The novel is, of course, notorious for the apparent disjunction of its two plots, and there is a critical tendency to focus on one or the other. The ambivalence of sympathy is, however,



often readable precisely in the relation between the two plots. What is harmoniously reconciled for Deronda becomes traumatic for Gwendolen. What is foreclosed from one plot emerging in the other.

Daniel Deronda seems to be the embodiment of the sympathy to which Eliot's fiction aspires. In the figure of Daniel Deronda, Neil Hertz suggests, "George Eliot experiments with relocating" the consciousness of *Middlemarch's* narrator and its voice "within the framework of the novel" ("Some Words" 288). "Enlarged by his early habit of thinking himself imaginatively into the experience of others," Deronda's broad sympathy appears to be exemplary (570). He has a "keenly perceptive sympathetic emotiveness," a "receptiveness" that is, Eliot writes, "a rare and massive power" (553). Deronda is motivated throughout the novel by the desire "to understand other points of view" (224). "What I have most trying to do for fifteen years," he tells his mother late in the novel, "is to have some understanding of those who differ from myself" (692). With his broad sympathy and "speculative tendency," Deronda has, like the narrator of *Middlemarch*, a certain impartiality and detachment, his sympathetic reflectiveness giving him a kind of "social

neutrality.” He becomes, as Godwin put it, “an impartial spectator of the system of which [he is] a part.”

But Daniel Deronda is if anything perhaps a little too sympathetic, his sympathy a bit too extensive. What propels the narrative is not his learning to enlarge his sympathy, but how properly to limit it. In a remarkable paragraph that interrupts the account of his visit to the synagogue in Frankfurt, the narrator expounds at considerable length on the problem of Deronda’s “too reflective and diffuse sympathy”:

His early-wakened sensibility and reflectiveness had developed into a many-sided sympathy, which threatened to hinder any persistent course of action: as soon as he took up any antagonism, though only in thought, he seemed to himself like the Sabine warriors in the memorable story – with nothing to meet his spear but flesh of his flesh and objects that he loved. His imagination had so wrought itself to the habit of seeing things as they probably appeared to others, that a strong partisanship, unless it were against an immediate oppression, had become insincerity for him. His plenteous, flexible sympathy had ended by falling into one current with that reflective analysis which tends to neutralize sympathy. (412)

The problem is initially framed as a conflict between sympathy and judgement.<sup>33</sup> Deronda is too much in the habit of identifying with others, of seeing things from their point of view, to condemn them. He is used, we are told, to viewing the vices of others with “with pity

and understanding,” to thinking of them as “part of mixed human natures having an individual history” (412). His “plenteous, flexible sympathy” and “reflective analysis” appears to neutralize sympathy by neutralizing antipathy. “Strong partisanship” seems to depend on the determination of the enemy, on the exclusion of certain others from sympathy, on a refusal of identification.

The problem, however, gradually shifts during the course of the paragraph to a tension within sympathy itself:

A too reflective and diffuse sympathy was in danger of paralysing in him that indignation against wrong and that selectness of fellowship which are the conditions of moral force; and in the last few years of confirmed manhood he had become so keenly aware of this that what he most longed for was either some external event, or some inward light, that would urge him into a definite line of action, and compress his wandering energy. He was ceasing to care for knowledge – he had no ambition for practice – unless they could both be gathered up into one current with his emotions; and he dreaded, as if it were a dwelling place of lost souls, that dead anatomy of culture which turns the universe into a mere ceaseless answer to queries, and knows no everything, but everything else about everything – as if one should be ignorant of nothing concerning the scent of violets except the scent itself for which one had no nostril. But how and whence was the needed event to come? the influence that would justify partiality, and making him what he longed to be yet was unable to make himself – an organic part of social life, instead of roaming like a disembodied spirit, stirred with a vague social passion, but without fixed local habitation to render fellowship real. (413)

The greatest danger for Deronda seems to come from a kind of disinterested objectivity and the melancholically evacuated world it confronts. It is a form of knowledge that in seeking to free itself from a particular perspective or place has no “fixed local habitation,” that becomes “disembodied,” cut off from sense perception and emotion. Eliot’s description of a knowledge that knows everything “concerning the scent of violets except the scent itself for which one had no nostril” seems to anticipate the telepathy machines of “Shadows of the Coming Race,” which are “without sensitive impression, without sensitive impulse.” The passage is haunted by the threat of a similar loss of sense and agency. Yet, such distancing mechanisms are, as we have seen, an integral part of Eliot’s aesthetic of sympathy and the wide vision of relations to which it aspires. Eliot’s solution to the problem of sympathy’s over-performance is in this passage a characteristically organicist one: For Deronda to become “an organic part of social life,” which will, of course, be the subject of the so-called Jewish plot of the novel. The organic provides the model of a natural, and therefore justified, “partiality.” What is striking about this passage, however, is its insistence that for Deronda to become a man of action and decision,

for him to “justify partiality” requires an “external event” over which he has no control. He cannot make himself “an organic part of social life,” it depends on an unpredictable event or on the influence of some thing or some other.

“He wanted some way,” the paragraph continues,

of keeping emotion and its progeny of sentiments – which make the savours of life – substantial and strong in the face of a reflectiveness that threatened to nullify all differences. To pound the objects of sentiment into small dust, yet keep the sentiment alive and active, was something like the famous recipe for making cannon – to first take a round hole and then enclose it with iron; whatever you do keeping fast hold of your round hole. Yet, how distinguish what our will may wisely save in its completeness, from the heaping of cat-mummies, and the expensive cult of enshrined putrefactions? (414)

At issue in this passage as in the paragraph as a whole is a tension within Eliot’s aesthetic of sympathy. Deronda desire to reconcile emotion and sentiment with cognition and reflection is in many ways also the aim of her aesthetic. It appears in this passage, however, to be virtually impossible either to reconcile emotions and sentiments of living beings with the mechanisms of reflection and analysis that, to quote Wordsworth, “murder to dissect,” or to entirely differentiate them. It is no longer a simply a question of excluding certain others from sympathy, as it appeared at the beginning of the paragraph, but of distinguishing what is living from

what is dead. The paragraph moves not only toward “the most abstractly conceived threat,” as Hertz puts it, “that of the nullification of all differences” (“Some Words” 288), but also toward a series of curious images seemingly at odds with the tone of the rest of the paragraph. We can no more take hold of sentiment, Eliot seems to say (though the analogy seems oddly flippant), than we can the hole of a canon; the hole or whole is an effect of the materiality that constitutes and frames it. The image of the heap of “cat-mummies” and “enshrined putrefactions” is even more surprising. How can we distinguish, she asks, rhetorically perhaps, “what we may wisely save in its completeness” as a unified whole from “the heaping of cat-mummies, and the expensive cult of enshrined putrefactions,” from something dead and inhuman that always already inhabits it.

If a “plenteous, flexible sympathy” characterizes Daniel Deronda, Gwendolen Harleth is associated, especially early in the novel, with narcissism. The Gwendolen Harleth plot of *Daniel Deronda* is, in a sense, the narrative of an abortive sympathetic education, an always uncertain progression from narcissism to

sympathy. Gwendolen is depicted in one of the opening chapters of the novel sitting contentedly “gazing at her image” in the mirror, eventually leaning forward and kissing “the cold glass which had looked so warm” (47). Gwendolen has, we are told, “a naïve delight in her own fortunate self” (47). She is “a girl who had every day seen a pleasant reflection of that self in her friends’ flattery as well as in the looking-glass” (47). With “her inborn energy of egoistic desire” (71), Gwendolen seems confident she can “move the world without precise notion of standing-place or lever” (293). She appears in other words, at least early in the novel, to be in a state of what Eliot calls moral stupidity.

Gwendolen’s narcissism is, however, troubled from the very beginning by a certain ambivalence. Her feeling of confidence alternates with dread, her self-satisfaction with terror. Gwendolen’s narrative is punctuated by moments of self loss, by a series of shocks that threaten her narcissism and the narcissistic structure of her self, but whose relation to the extension of sympathy remains ambiguous. The first of these shocks occurs during her performance as Hermione in a tableau from “The Winter’s Tale.” At the moment when the statue of Hermione is meant to come to life, a

panel in the wall opens revealing a picture of a dead face with a figure fleeing from it. Rather than turn from death into life, Gwendolen freezes as though dead. “She looked,” we are told, “like as statue into which a soul of Fear had entered: her pallid lips were parted; her eyes... were dilated and fixed.” The shock of otherness the scene dramatizes interrupts Gwendolen’s mirroring relation to the world. But her statue-like fixity is also a kind of mimetic identification with the dead face.<sup>34</sup> It is, as the narrator calls it, an “imagined mortification.” Klesmer twice refers to Gwendolen’s performance as a “bit of *plastik*” and implies that it was “good acting,” but it was, as he no doubt realizes, involuntary. Gwendolen does not so much give it form as it is imposed on her. Her mimetic identification, her statue-like fixity is not the resistance of aesthetic production but represents a failure of defense, a failure constitutive of trauma.

The narrator attributes Gwendolen’s shock and “susceptibility to terror” to the traumatic widening of her horizon, specifically linking it to the “fits of spiritual dread” to which she is liable. “Solitude in any wide scene,” the narrator observes,



impressed her with an undefined feeling of immeasurable existence aloof from her, in the midst of which she was helplessly incapable of asserting herself. The little astronomy taught her at school used sometimes to set her imagination at work in a way that make her tremble: but always when some one joined her she recovered her indifference to the vastness in which she seemed an exile; she found again her usual world in which her will was of some avail. (94-95)

The shock of “these occasional experiences” displaces Gwendolen from her imagined central position in her world – a kind of personal Copernican revolution. But Gwendolen’s apprehension of what is apart from her narrow, self-centered world, does not lead to the recognition of a greater whole – or, the narrator complains, to any sort of religious speculation. It does not lead her to conceive of herself as part of a greater whole, but to the loss of any stable vantage point or perspective. Beyond her narcissistic illusions, there is for Gwendolen only an “immeasurable existence” in which she seems an exile, a boundless and decentered cosmos in which she has no place. It is only the appearance of some other, of some “*one*” in whose apparent unity and wholeness she sees herself reflected that restores Gwendolen’s sense of self and her narcissistic, mirroring relation to the world.<sup>35</sup> Her narcissism is in other words not only a defense against a threatening alterity, it depends on an other, on her identification with some other.

At the start of one of the opening chapters in the novel, the narrator reflects on the significance of the early childhood home, of being “well rooted in some spot of a native land,” for the “future widening of knowledge.” “At five years old,” the narrator declares,

mortals are not prepared to be citizens of the world, to be stimulated by abstract nouns, to soar above preference into impartiality; and that prejudice in favour of milk with which we blindly begin, is a type of the way body and soul must get nourished at least for a time. The best introduction to astronomy is to think of the nightly heavens as a little lot of stars belonging to one’s own homestead. (50)

While this passage ostensibly refers to Gwendolen’s rootlessness, attempting to account for her fear of the stars at night or of any wide scene, it also seems to allude to Deronda, to his cosmopolitanism and ever-widening knowledge, to his soaring above preference into impartiality. The passage brings Deronda’s problem into relation with Gwendolen’s, brings his homelessness and his paralysis into relation with hers. If Gwendolen’s terror comes from having no place beyond the narrow confines of her narcissistic illusions, Deronda’s homelessness is the result of his being at home everywhere and nowhere in particular.

It is, however, not the childhood home but the prejudice in favor of mother's milk "with which we blindly begin" that is originary in the passage. It is the very "type" of a natural, justified partiality. Deronda's attempt to justify partiality, to become an organic part of social life, invariably takes the form of a search for his mother. Late in the novel, his anticipated meeting his mother is equated with discovering "the point of view that life will make for him" (685). Unlike Gwendolen, who takes her reflection in the mirror as an image of her wholeness and unity, Daniel associates "his own face in the glass... with thoughts of some one whom he must be like" (226), that is, with his mother. His specular image is for him a sign of a constitutive incompleteness. It points to something other, something pre- or non-specular. Deronda's desire for his mother, his desire for identification, carries him out of himself – even as the figure of the mother promises to limit his identifications, to limit his sympathy.

The narrator's remarks on Deronda's association of his reflection in the mirror with thoughts of his mother are specifically linked to the scene of his reverie on the Thames and his rescue of Mirah, which they help to introduce. Rowing on the Thames at

twilight, it was, we are told, his “habit to indulge himself in... solemn passivity,” “satisfied to go with the tide and be taken back by it.” “He looked out,” the narrator continues,

for a perfectly solitary spot where he could lodge his boat against the bank, and, throwing himself on his back with his head propped on the cushions, could watch out the light of sunset and the opening of that beadroll which some oriental poet describes as God’s call to the little stars, who each answer, “Here am I.” He chose a spot in the bend of the river just opposite Kew Gardens, where he had a great breadth of water before him reflecting the glory of the sky, while he himself was in shadow.... He was forgetting everything else in a half-speculative, half- involuntary identification of himself with the objects he was looking at, thinking how far it might be possible habitually to shift his centre till his own personality was no less outside him than the landscape, – when the sense of something moving on the bank opposite him... made him turn his glance thitherward. (229-30)

Like Rousseau’s reveries adrift on Lake Bienne, to which Eliot appears to allude, this is a scene of plentitude.<sup>36</sup> It is the inverse of Gwendolen’s of dread alone under the night sky or in any wide scene. While she remains an exile in such scenes, unable to see herself reflected in them, each star seems in this passage to answer “Here am I.” Deronda’s reverie is not however simply specular and narcissistic. His identification is “half-speculative, half- involuntary.” In his reverie a speculative (and narcissistic)

identification coincides with a passive, involuntary one, projection coincides with reception, his self with what is “outside” it.

Deronda’s reverie is, however, interrupted by the sight of Mirah preparing to drown herself. It is a decisive moment in the narrative, moving him from reflection into action and inaugurating the Jewish plot of the novel. (Mordecai is similarly and as decisively interrupted in a moment of plenitude by a letter from his mother. It “recalled me,” he tells Deronda, “to the body wherefrom I had been released to mingle with the ocean of human existence, free from the pressure of individual bondage” (601).) “Perhaps,” Daniel thinks of Mirah, “my mother was like this one” (231). Mirah is a figure of identification as well as of desire for Deronda – her name even seems to suggest a mirror. If her situation lays hold of his imagination “with peculiar force,” it is because it is in many ways his situation, the search for her mother doubling and taking the place of the search for his. Her attempted suicide is, like his reverie, linked to the desire to find her mother. “Death,” Mirah says, “was the way to her” (262). Their rapport during the scene is often uncanny. Rowing down the river singing, before he begins to let himself drift, Deronda sees “a figure which might have been an

impersonation of the misery he was unconsciously giving voice to” (227). “Apparently,” we are told, “his voice had entered her inner world without her having taken any note of whence it came” (227). “The power of distinguishing outward and inward,” the narrator remarks after she is rescued, “was continually slipping away from her” (234). Mirah loss of the perception of separateness is the reverse mirror image of Deronda’s during his reverie, reflecting the threat of (and perhaps the desire for) self-annihilation that remains unacknowledged in it.

### **Coercive Types**

“Deronda’s was not,” the narrator assures us, “one of those quivering-poised natures that lend themselves to second-sight.” Though *Daniel Deronda* lacks the gothic supernaturalism of “The Lifted Veil,” the coincidences in the novel and the often uncanny rapport between characters repeatedly raise the issue of second-sight and telepathy, of foresight and thought-transference.<sup>37</sup>

“Second-sight’ is,” Eliot writes,

a flag over disputed ground. But it is a matter of knowledge that there are persons whose yearnings, conceptions – nay, traveled conclusions – continually take the form of images

which have foreshadowing power: the deed they would do starts up before them in complete shape, making a coercive type: the event they hunger for or dread rises into a vision with a seed-like growth, feeding itself fast on unnumbered impressions. (527)

Mordecai's prevision of Deronda, to which this passage alludes, is initially explained in psychological terms, as his "wishes" turning into "overmastering impressions." Deronda wonders at one point if Mordecai is a "monomaniac" and whether he is suffering from "hallucinations of thought." His "fervour of... prevision" certainly appears to be independent of any reality testing. The "ever-recurrent vision had," we are told, "the force of an outward call to disregard counter-evidence" (537). Mordecai refuses to acknowledge the difference between the "preconceived type" and Deronda, between his projection and the other – the very difference that plays such a crucial role in Eliot's aesthetic of sympathy. Mordecai "prevision" is imaginary in an almost Lacanian sense of the term. He is captivated by an image of wholeness and completeness, by the image of his ideal self. Mordecai's "visionary form" is, the text emphasizes, a product of his "imagination," that gradually takes shape "in the inevitable progress of his imagination toward fuller detail" (531), drawing on his memories of Jewish faces seen during

his travels and his repeated visits to the National Gallery in London in search of “grave and noble types of the human form” (529). The “form” or “type” he identifies Daniel with is an instance of what Eliot called in “The Lifted Veil” “the sublime resistance of poetic production.” It is, she writes in *Daniel Deronda*, “the passionate current of an ideal life straining to embody itself, made intense by resistance to imminent dissolution” (531).

Mordecai’s “visionary form” is not only a “coercive type” for him, but for Deronda as well. It also seems to have “foreshadowing power” for him, and he gradually comes to identify himself with Mordecai’s “preconceived type.” Deronda’s identity is, in a sense, fashioned by Mordecai, is formed or typed by him. Daniel is for Mordecai the embodiment not only of his “preconceived type” or of his “prefigured friend,” but also of his ideal self, of “an expanded, prolonged self.” Their relationship is one of identification. Mordecai envisions his relation to Deronda as a complete fusion, in which their souls will eventually join and become as one. He sees it as a “transference of self,” in which he will merge with and live on in him. (Their friendship – and Deronda’s “discipleship” – is marked from the very beginning by the anticipation of Mordecai’s death.)



Mordecai imagines an almost hypnotic identification with Deronda, in which he is no longer perceived by him as other, and in which his words are indistinguishable from Deronda's own. Mordecai depicts his desire for unity as a selfless love that loses itself in the other, in a greater self. But it would also constitute a kind of hostile takeover of Daniel, a nearly hypnotic control over him. "You must be not only a hand to me," Mordecai demands, "but a soul – believing my belief – being moved by my reasons – hoping my hope – seeing the vision I point to – beholding a glory where I behold it!" (557). "You will be my life," he insists. "You will take the inheritance" (557). It is little wonder that Deronda, at least initially, shrinks from Mordecai's "extravagant demand of discipleship."

Mordecai's imagined fusion with Deronda is explicitly likened in the novel to a "maternal transference of self." His "yearning for transmission," the narrator tells us, gave his "glance something of the dying mother's look when her one loved son visits her bedside, and the flickering power of gladness leaps out as she says, 'My boy!' – for the sense of spiritual perpetuation in another resembles that maternal transference of self" (553). The maternal is associated throughout the novel with cultural transmission – a transmission

often idealized as natural and unmediated.<sup>38</sup> “I think my life began,” Mirah recalls at one point,

with waking up and loving my mother’s face: it was so near to me, and her arms were round me, and she sang to me. One hymn she sang so often, so often: and then she taught me to sing it: it was the first I ever sang. They were always Hebrew hymns she sang; and because I never knew the meaning of the words they seemed full of nothing but our love and happiness. (250)

The maternal voice appears here as an unmediated communication or transmission of feeling, of the mother’s love and happiness, which she comes to share. It is a scene of instruction, of Mirah learning to and by imitating and echoing her mother’s song. The passage also seems to suggest a certain belatedness in relation to her own birth. For when Mirah first wakes up and sees her mother’s face, she has already been affected by her voice and her song, is already in her grasp or embrace. The maternal voice is, in a sense, a figure of an originary sociality, of an affection by an other that is prior to a sense of self, prior to the differentiation of self and other. Echo precedes Narcissus.<sup>39</sup> The maternal voice and the affection it generates are for Mirah anterior to any specular reflection. Hearing and feeling come before vision and reflection. “Feelings are like our hearing,” Mirah remarks, “they come as

sounds do before we know their reason” (259). They are pre-reflexive and pre-specular. As we have seen in her other writings, Eliot often associates such (potentially threatening) immediacy with hearing rather than seeing, which implies a certain distance. But, if the mother’s voice represents a pure and unmediated communication, it is also pure form or pure mediation, without, at least for Mirah, any semantic content.

A similar dynamic, which is not unlike the one we saw in Eliot’s figures of telepathy, is evident in Deronda’s visit to the synagogue in Frankfurt, when he gives “himself up to that strongest effect of chanted liturgies which is independent of detailed verbal meaning” (416). “He wondered at the strength of his own feelings,” the narrator observes, “it seemed beyond the occasion – what one might imagine to be a divine influx, before there was any vision to interpret” (417). This is another scene of seemingly direct cultural transmission, of an “influx,” that is prior and independent of reflection and cognition, that is not mediated by consciousness. The apparent immediacy of hearing and feeling are again privileged over vision and reflection. In discussing both his experience at the synagogue in Frankfurt and her memory of her mother’s song,

Daniel tells Mirah he agrees with her that “the influence of voices” (424) does not depend on the meaning of the words. The voices “impressed” him as much, and “perhaps more,” he observes, because he did not know the words’ meaning. As in Mirah’s memory of her mother’s voice the affective force of language appears to be cut off from its constative or cognitive function.

This dynamic takes on, however, a somewhat different tonality in the account of Mordecai’s instruction of Jacob Cohen – who is, before Deronda, the object of his influence. Mordecai’s pedagogical technique consists of reciting “a Hebrew poem of his own” and making Jacob “say the words after him” – a “fascinating game,” as the narrator puts it, “of imitating unintelligible words” (533). “The boy will get them engraved within him,” Mordecai thinks; “it is a way of printing.” “My words may rule him some day,” he hopes. “Their meaning may flash out at him. It is so with a nation – after many days” (533). Like the earlier scenes, this is a scene of instruction in and by the mother tongue, a scene of cultural transmission and transference. The description of Mordecai’s teaching, of his “strange printing” as it is called, draws attention to the materiality and the force of his words – the violent inscription idealized earlier as the

“maternal transference of self.” Imitation or mimesis is for Mordecai a virtual technology of material inscription, and the account stresses Jacob’s bodily “imitativeness” and his ability, like Lapidoth or Daniel’s mother, to act his own emotions. Jacob’s repetition of “unintelligible words” will, Mordecai believes, stamp or imprint them in his memory. “The boy will get them engraved within him.” It is a way not only of printing but of imprinting “coercive type.” For Mordecai hope is that reanimated the words engraved within Jacob will “rule him,” will possess him from within. Mordecai’s “it is so with a nation” links his instruction of Jacob, his “strange printing” to his aesthetic nationalism, and specifically to the revival or revivification of memory that is for him, as for George Eliot, essential to the feeling of community. The memory depicted in this scene, however, is not the internalization of feeling or of meaning, it is not in Hegelian terms *Erinnerung* but *Gedächtnis*, technical and mechanical memory, the rote memorization of meaningless words.<sup>40</sup> “Community was felt,” Mordecai asserts later in the novel, “before it was called good” (594). His declaration is, as Forest Pyle argues, “another instance of the ‘present cause of past effects’” that Cynthia Chase has taught us to read in the novel (169).<sup>41</sup> In his instruction

of Jacob, however, the feeling of community is not originary but the belated effect of a prior inscription; it is a matter of language and technics, of formation and education.

Mordecai's words make a considerably greater impression on Daniel Deronda than they do on Jacob Cohen, for whom they remain completely meaningless, without the "flash" of conviction that for Eliot characterizes aesthetic teaching.<sup>42</sup> From their initial meeting in a second-hand book store to his instruction in Hebrew and their study of Daniel's relation to Mordecai is largely mediated by writing. Their relation is, in a sense, a relation of reader and writer or reader and text. "Call nothing mine I have written, Daniel," Mordecai directs him late in the novel,

for though our Masters delivered rightly that everything should be quoted in the name of him that said it – and their rule is good – yet it does not exclude the willing marriage which melts soul into soul.... For I have judged what I have written, and I desire the body I gave my thought to pass away as this fleshly body will pass; but let the thought be born again from our fuller soul which shall be called yours. (820)

Mordecai's protocols of reading (and of mourning) are not surprisingly based on fusional identification. While quotation marks the other's words as other, Mordecai does not want his words to be recognized as other, to be distinguished by Deronda from his

own or what “shall be called” his own. His directive is a characteristic mixture of selflessness and coercion, for it seems to preclude the possibility of any resistance. Privileging the living spirit over the dead letter, Mordecai dismisses the materiality of writing as secondary and expendable. The image of his writing as the “ill-shaped work of the youthful carver” recalls the figure of engraving in his instruction of Jacob. Mordecai’s directive to Daniel depends on dissimulating of the materiality and the coercive force of his words, the impression they made. The model of reading Mordecai presents is also a form of mourning; the dissolution of the “body” he gave his thought to is explicitly likened to the dissolution of his physical body. It is based on the fantasy of an absolute mourning, on an interiorization and assimilation that leaves no trace of the other as other within the self. Death is for Mordecai the condition of absolute identification, of a spiritualized and idealized identification free from the burden of matter. But if death establishes an identity, it also introduces an irreducible alterity. Marking the limit of identification, death makes the other irreducibly other.

But, Deronda does not promise to call nothing Mordecai has written his, pointing out that such “blent transmissions,” as he calls

them, are not a matter of conscious choice. “What we can’t hinder,” he tells him, “must not make our rule for what we ought to choose” (821). Deronda in fact often resists Mordecai’s more “extravagant demand[s] of discipleship.” He “shrank,” we are told, “from having his course determined by mere contagion, without consent of reason” (567). Yet, a certain contagion nonetheless infects his relation to Mordecai, an involuntary identification or mimesis that is not governed by the consent of reason or by consciousness. “We shall not be separated by life or by death,” Deronda tells him, seeming to channel Mordecai as he informs him of his Jewish birth, “speaking from Mordecai’s mind as much as from his own” (816).

In a recent article, Amanda Anderson, noting Deronda’s resistance to “Mordecai’s vision of a complete mind-meld,” draws attention to the importance in the novel of the differences between their views, especially their views of Jewish nationalism. For Mordecai, Anderson argues, “the model for the relation to the other and the model for the relation to one’s cultural heritage are the same: absolute unity,” while for Deronda the model is, in both cases, “reflective and dialogical” (“George Eliot” 41).<sup>43</sup> While Deronda vows to “identify myself as far as possible with my



hereditary people” and says he “will call myself a Jew,” he will not, he insists “profess to believe exactly as my fathers have believed” (792). Deronda adheres instead to his grandfather’s idea of “separateness with communication,” of “a balance of separateness with communication.”<sup>44</sup> Deronda’s notion of separateness and communication, like Eliot’s aesthetic of sympathy, to which it clearly belongs, is based not on fusion identification, but on a notion of identity that maintains the separateness and difference of self and other(s), and of communities, peoples, and nations. It is in a sense an extension of her aesthetic of sympathy from the relation of self and other(s) to the relation to and between communities, peoples, or nations.

Despite their differences, Daniel’s nationalism, like Mordecai’s and Eliot’s is based on an organicist aesthetic. While Deronda speaks in terms of choice and consent, what brings about his “full consent,” as he puts it, to being a Jew – the consent that is not only of reason but of feeling – is he tells Mordecai “the gradual accord between your mind and mine” (819), and he often seems to be speaking at least as much from Mordecai’s mind in the very moment he affirms his Jewish identity. The prefigured form of the imagined

community of Mordecai's aesthetic nationalism decisively in-forms Deronda's identification with his hereditary people and his perception of himself as an organic part of a community. It allows Deronda not so much to expand his sympathy as to limit its performance and to justify partiality. The feeling of separateness prevents what Eliot calls in "The Modern Hep! Hep! Hep!," the final chapter of *Theophrastus Such*, the "premature fusion" of nations, or peoples, or races. The "spirit of separateness," which is according to Eliot "the offspring of memory," "has not yet done its work in the education of mankind" (151). Community, it would seem, like Eliot's aesthetic of sympathy, must begin with the feeling or perception of separateness. The unity of community, of a nation or people, is modeled on the unity of the self or subject. A nation or people, however, cannot be perceived or felt directly; it is a matter of mnemotechnics, of memory and inscription. Deronda's identification with his hereditary people is haunted by the contagion and suggestion, the blind identification or mimesis, and the violent inscription his relation to Mordecai both records and forecloses. Such transmission systems far from establishing a unity are what

prevents the subject, whether individual or collective, from completing itself as an identity, from being identical to itself.

Deronda's identification with his hereditary people is, like the identification with Mordecai that shapes it, both voluntary and involuntary – and it cannot in fact justify partiality if it is entirely voluntary. “What my birth was,” he insists to Mordecai, “does not lie in my will” (560). Daniel's discovery of his Jewish birth is, as Cynthia Chase has famously argued, “the present cause of past effects,” it appears to be both the cause and the effect of his growing Jewish identification. Deronda's Jewish identity is in significant respects biological and racial. Eliot shared with many if not most of her contemporaries certain Lamarckian assumptions. “It is you,” he tells Mordecai, “who have given shape to what, I believe, was an inherited yearning – an effect of brooding, passionate thoughts in many ancestors” (819). Yet Eliot herself warns in *Theophrastus Such* of the dangers of believing “that *culture* is something innate, that it is the same thing as *nature*” (80). Both Eliot and her husband George Henry Lewes stressed the overwhelming influence of language and society and the limits it invariably placed on Lamarckian explanations.<sup>45</sup> What matters in *Daniel Deronda* is the

giving of shape, rather than the inherited yearning. The Jewish plot of the novel is in many ways the story of that gift. “The spell-bound habits of inherited frames” are not so much a question of nature, but of second nature, of the formation of habits that has been associated, at least since Plato, with mimesis.<sup>46</sup> What contains mimesis in Deronda’s narrative is that, as in his reverie on the Thames, his speculative and narcissistic identifications appear to coincide with his involuntary identifications, the identity imposed on him to coincide with the one he desires, interpellation with choice.

As is so often the case in *Daniel Deronda*, the reconciliations of one plot become unraveled in the other. While in Deronda’s narrative interpellation appears to coincide with desire, in Gwendolen’s they appear irreconcilable. While Deronda’s narrative seems to contain mimesis, Gwendolen’s does not. If Gwendolen Harleth is, in Jacqueline Rose’s memorable phrase “the original literary hysteric” (116), her hysteria turns, I want to suggest, on questions of mimesis.<sup>47</sup> “What is threatening in mimesis is,” as Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe reminds us, “feminization, instability – hysteria” (“Typology” 129).

If we can point to a single moment in the text that marks Gwendolen's inscription, it is when she receives the letter from Lydia Glasher on her wedding night. The letter, which accompanies a packet of diamonds Grandcourt had originally given to Lydia Glasher, "thrust its words upon her":

It seemed at first as if Gwendolen's eyes were spell-bound in reading the horrible words of the letter over and over again as a doom of penance; but suddenly a new spasm of terror made her lean forward and stretch out the paper towards the fire, lest accusation and proof at once should meet all eyes.... In her movement the casket fell on the floor and the diamonds rolled out. She took no notice, but fell back in her chair again helpless. She could not see the reflections of herself then: they were like so many women petrified white; but coming near herself you might have seen the tremor in her lips and hands. She sat so for a long while, knowing little more than that she was feeling ill, and that those written words kept repeating themselves in her so. (406-7)

Gwendolen remains paralyzed and motionless until Grandcourt's appearance brings "a new nervous shock" and she screams "again and again with hysterical violence" (407). The letter, like the sudden appearance of the dead face in the earlier scene, seems to shatter Gwendolen's narcissistic, mirroring relation to the world. The scene explicitly moves from her seeing "herself repeated in the glass panels" (405) to her no longer seeing "the reflections of herself." She loses herself in the "so many women petrified white." Yet,

Gwendolen's petrification also suggests a kind of mimetic identification with those women. She looks, as in the earlier scene, "like as statue into which a soul of Fear had entered" (91). To petrify is to turn something organic into stone, to deaden. The passage emphasizes the violent inscription of the letter. The words "thrust... upon her" seem to possess her from within. "Those written words kept repeating themselves in her." "The words," the narrator later observes, "had nestled their venomous life within her" (478). In her close reading of this scene, Evelyne Ender draws attention to a curious reflexive construction, a "foreign body" as she calls it, in the passage: "But coming near *herself* you might have seen..." (259). The "herself" both evokes and collapses the narrator's (as well as our) specular distance from the scene.

Eliot's scene of hysteria is, of course, not without sexual connotations – however displaced. Gwendolen's movement from the corridor to the ante-room to the boudoir can, as Ender observes, be seen as a "symbolic geography of sex" like the one Freud read in Dora's second dream, complete with jewel-case. The narrator's comment earlier in the novel that Gwendolen "objected, with a sort of physical repulsion, to being directly make love to" (101), would

seem to suggest a connection between the scene of hysteria and that repulsion. The narrator even seems to allude to it early in the scene, noting with some surprise Gwendolen's "passive acceptance" when Grandcourt kisses her on the lips for the first time. Lydia Glasher's letter, however, stresses the passionlessness of their marriage:

These diamonds, which were one given with ardent love to Lydia Glasher, she passes on to you. You have broken your word to her, that you might possess what was hers.... The man you have married has a withered heart. His best young love was mine; you could not take that from me when you took the rest. It is dead; but I am the grave in which your chance of happiness is buried as well as mine. (406)

Gwendolen's both identifies with and refuses her identification with Lydia Glasher, with the woman whose place, the letter reminds her, she has taken.<sup>48</sup> The letter recalls her inscription in a system of exchange. It marks a debt that cannot be repaid. When she first met her at the Whispering Stones, it was for Gwendolen "as if some ghastly vision had come to her in a dream and said, 'I am a woman's life'" (190). Her "favourite formula" prior to her marriage was that she was "not going to do as other women did," that if she married, "she was not going to renounce her freedom," "that she was going to do just as she liked" (168). Reading the letter effectively puts an

end to Gwendolen's fantasy; she becomes like "so many women petrified white." Noting Lydia Glasher's "Medusa-apparition," as it is called, later in the novel and Gwendolen's petrification, Ender argues that "Eliot's text of hysteria overlaps in an uncanny fashion" with Freud's interpretation of Medusa, an interpretation that turns on the threat of castration (265). The mirror Lydia Glasher holds up to Gwendolen similarly cannot be looked at in the face.

"With the reading of that letter," the narrator tells us, "had begun her husband's empire of fear" (479). "Her husband had gained a mastery" over Gwendolen, which she seems unable to resist. Her prior "belief in her own power of dominating – was utterly gone" (477). Her reading the letter, however, marks not only the beginning of Grandcourt's empire of fear, but also the beginning of Deronda's "transforming influence" on her and of her sympathetic education. "Lives are enlarged in different ways," Daniel tells her, sounding as he so often does in their conversations very much like the narrator of *Middlemarch*.<sup>49</sup> "Some would never get their eyes open if it were not for a violent shock from the consequences of their own actions" (494). Lydia Glasher or her debt to her becomes the "stuff o' the conscience" to Gwendolen. But, the extension of her



sympathy and the awakening of conscience in her depend on Deronda's "transforming influence," on what the narrator calls "the infused action of another soul" (840). "It is one of the secrets in that change in mental poise which has been fitly named conversion," the narrator explains, "that to many among us neither heaven nor earth has any revelation till some personality touches theirs with a peculiar influence, subduing them into receptiveness" (484). Gwendolen's "conversion," like Deronda's in the novel's other plot, depends upon another. Gwendolen's subduction "into receptiveness," however, coincides with her submission to Grandcourt. As his domination and mastery of her increases, so does Deronda's "transforming influence." They appear to be on parallel tracks. For Lacanian psychoanalytic critics such as Slavoj Žižek, hysteria is, as Elisabeth Bronfen writes, "a paradigmatic example of a radically ambiguous relationship between the subject and the so-called Master in response to whom the subject's identity is constituted" (xii). The hysteric both radically resists interpellation and "requires the Other as an addressee" (vii).<sup>50</sup> For Gwendolen the place of the so-called Master or Other seems to both alternate and be split between Grandcourt and Deronda.

Gwendolen's ambivalent relation is evident from the famous opening of the novel:

Was she beautiful or not beautiful? and what was the secret of form or expression which gave the dynamic quality to her glance? Was the good or evil dominant in those beams? Probably evil; else why was the effect that of unrest rather than of undisturbed charm? Why was the wish to look again felt as coercion and not as a longing in which the whole being consents? (35)

Gwendolen is from the very beginning presented as the object of a specifically masculine gaze, in this case Deronda's. The "dynamic quality" of her glance and the coercive effects it generates already seem to suggest hysteria. (The word dynamic was at the time, as Blackwood complained, still a dictionary word.) Yet, despite Gwendolen's "enraged resistance" to "Deronda's gaze" and to what she takes to be his judgement of her, her performance is in many ways addressed to him. This is one reason the wish to look again is felt as "coercion." Eliot specifically uses the term "coercion" later in the novel to refer to the demands placed on Deronda by Gwendolen's increasing need of him as an addressee, her casting him in the role of her conscience. Her "uneasy yearning to be judged by Deronda with unmixed admiration... had its seed," we are told, "in her first resentment at his critical glance" (376-7). In

addition to her specularization, the opening of the novel also points to the ambivalence, “the play of various... contrary tendencies” (72) that characterizes Gwendolen throughout. She is frequently depicted as being torn between “perpetually alternating images and arguments for and against,” between “counterbalancing thoughts” and “counterbalancing desires.” The “force of impulse” seems to alternate in Gwendolen with “repulsion,” desire with disgust, temptation with dread. It is in a sense to resolve her often paralyzing ambivalence, an ambivalence that in many ways culminates in her killing and not killing Grandcourt at the same time, that Gwendolen repeatedly addresses herself to Deronda.

Deronda “transforming influence” on Gwendolen, his becoming “in some mysterious way... a part of her conscience” (468) is based on a specular identification. She comes to identify with and to internalize Deronda’s view of her – or what she takes to be his view. “She had learned,” Eliot writes late in the novel, “to see all her acts through the impression they would make on Deronda” (737). Their relationship is often linked to the figure of the mirror. During one of their conversations, for instance, Gwendolen turns from her image in the glass and looks at Deronda, who “look[s] full

at her in return” (501), as if, as David Marshall puts it, “he has taken the place of her mirror” (212). Deronda’s “transforming influence” is however, Eliot stresses, “the transforming influence of the thoughts we imagine to be going on in another” (477). It is, in other words, at least partly a matter of projection, of what she imagines to be Deronda’s judgement of her. People are, the narrator remarks, “apt to see their own anxiety or elation about themselves reflected in other minds” (607). Eliot’s rendering of the transference dynamics of their relationship, particularly during what we could call Gwendolen’s analysis with Deronda after the trauma of her husband’s drowning, often seems uncannily to anticipate Freud. Deronda is cast not only in the role of her conscience, but also as what Lacan called the “*sujet supposé savoir*,” the subject supposed to know. “It was part of his power over her,” we are told, “that she believed him free from all misunderstanding... or rather, that he should misunderstand her never entered into her mind” (504). He seems to Gwendolen “a terrible-browed angel from whom she could not think of concealing any deed” (737). She imagines a future for herself “where she would be assimilating herself to some type that he would hold before her” (867). Yet, as

the novel reiterates, Daniel does not know, Gwendolen remains very much of a question to him, and he is always uncertain what advice to give her.

But if Gwendolen's receptiveness to Deronda has its seed in her "resentment at his critical glance," it is also bound up with her resistance to Grandcourt's, for which she seems to have no other outlet. Gwendolen is increasingly subjected during the course of the novel to the critical (and invariably masculine) gaze of another: initially by Klesmer, whose aesthetic judgement of her is depicted as traumatically widening her horizon, and then alternately by Grandcourt and Deronda. Occupying despite their differences structurally similar positions in relation to Gwendolen, Deronda and Grandcourt are in a sense mirror opposites of each other. Their relation is an instance of what Neil Hertz calls the structure of "double surrogation" in Eliot's fiction, in which "the author's investment in her characters is split into 'good' and 'bad' versions, and the valued imaginative activity of the 'good' is purchased by the exiling of the 'bad'" (*End of the Line* 224). What comes to trouble *Daniel Deronda* is the proximity of Deronda's influence on Gwendolen, his "power over her," to Grandcourt's. Like Deronda's

“transforming influence” on her, Grandcourt’s apparent “mastery” of Gwendolen is bound up with a specular mode of identification.

Gwendolen and Grandcourt’s relation is one of mimetic rivalry and the struggle for mastery. “He meant to be master of a woman who would have liked to master him, and who perhaps would have been capable of mastering another man” (365). Grandcourt’s desire is the desire for sovereign mastery. His “strongest wish” is to be “completely the master” of Gwendolen, a wish made even stronger by his desire to “triumph over” her “repugnance” (346). What matters to him is not how Gwendolen feels, but that whatever resistance or repulsion she feels, she has to do what he wants or wills her to do. “Everyone,” in Grandcourt’s view, “must do what was expected of them whatever might be their private protest – the protest (kept strictly private) adding to the piquancy of despotism” (737). The “quiet massive pressure of his rule” largely psychological – albeit backed by considerable social and economic power. While Grandcourt clearly enjoys his psychical cruelty and “love[s] to feel his power” over others, he hates, the narrator claims, “to be forced into anything like violence even with words: his will must impose itself without trouble” (396). For his mastery to be complete,

Gwendolen must impose his will on herself, internalizing in a certain way his disciplinary gaze. She must learn to see herself and her actions from his perspective, to be who he wants her to be, and to assimilate herself to the type or role he puts before her. “You will fill your place properly,” he tells her, “to me and to the world” (503). “She had to be on the scene as Mrs Grandcourt,” the narrator reports, “and to feel herself watched in that part by the exacting eyes” of her husband, without any “failure in her representation” (608). Their relationship is repeatedly portrayed in such theatrical terms. When they go boating in Genoa, for instance, “the scene” is said to be “as good as theatrical representation for all beholders” – with Gwendolen looking “like a statue” (745). Even Grandcourt’s apparent indifference, “state of not-caring,” we are told, “just as much as desire, required its related object – namely, a world of admiring or envying spectators” (646).

The “sort of discipline” Gwendolen undergoes is, the narrator assures us, “as little as possible like conversion” (656) – lacking presumably the full consent of Deronda’s or of Gwendolen’s receptiveness to him. It “bends half the self with a terrible strain, and exasperates the unwillingness of the other half” (656).

Grandcourt is considerably “fenced in,” as the novel puts it, by his narcissistic and specular mode of knowing. “Want of sympathy,” Eliot writes, “condemns us to a corresponding stupidity” (658). A seeming perfect narcissist, Grandcourt comes “to believe, and not merely maintain, the non-existence of the external world” (734). “He had,” the narrator notes, “no imagination of anything in her but what affected the gratification of his own will; but on this point he had the sensibility which seems like divination” (616). To Gwendolen, he often appears “formidable with omniscience.” Grandcourt is able to divine and exploit her narcissism and her anxieties and fears and to engage her “egoism on the same side as his own” (658). But, he only sees what reflects his narcissistic investment in her. He cannot see her ambivalence or her “mixed passions” and “mixed nature.” He cannot, in a sense, see beyond the pleasure principle or the conscience taking shape in her. The limits of Grandcourt’s vision are linked to limits of theatrical representation that Eliot repeatedly underscores in the novel. “Acting,” Mirah says for instance, referring to her “opposite feelings” on seeing her father, “is slow and poor to what we go through within” (714). “Macbeth’s rhetoric about the impossibility of being



many opposite things in the same moment,” the narrator reflects early in the novel, “referred to the clumsy necessity of action and not to the subtler possibility of feeling. We cannot kill and not kill at the same moment; but a moment is room wide enough for the loyal and mean desire, for the outlash of a murderous thought and the sharp backward stroke of repentance” (72).

While Gwendolen insists, echoing the narrator, that Grandcourt doesn’t “in the least imagine what is in my mind” (744), she assumes that Daniel can. But, what distinguishes Deronda from Grandcourt, at least for Eliot, is not that through his sympathetic imagination he is able to divine what is in Gwendolen’s mind (“He could not,” as the narrator reminds us, “quite divine what was going on within her” (874).), but that he is aware of a certain difference. While Grandcourt believes he knows “the force of his own words,” Deronda is often unsure what effect his words will have on Gwendolen. The difference between them, “like a difference in native language,” made him, we are told, “uncertain what force his words would carry” (873). Their force no longer appears to be governed by conscious intention – making it both more necessary and more difficult to differentiate Deronda from Grandcourt. In his

conversations with Gwendolen, in which he often seems, as Neil Hertz notes, to mimic “the diction and imagery of the *Middlemarch* narrator” (“Some Words” 289), Daniel is repeatedly struck by the “feebleness” of his words as well their potential danger: “Words seemed to have no more rescue in them than if he had been beholding a vessel in peril of wreck – the poor ship with its many-lived anguish beaten by the inescapable storm” (672). “It was,” the narrator remarks elsewhere, “as if he saw her drowning while his hands were bound” (509). Seeing another drowning is, of course, an overdetermined image in the novel, recalling *Deronda*’s rescue of Mirah and anticipating Grandcourt’s drowning. The image of watching another drown and specifically of beholding a shipwreck from the safety of land also alludes, as David Marshall argues, to a famous passage in Lucretius and to the paradigmatic figure it had become by the eighteenth century for the experience of watching the spectacle of suffering on the stage and for a specifically theatrical model of sympathy (208-9).<sup>51</sup> Daniel *Deronda*’s response to the spectacle of Gwendolen’s suffering is a complex mixture of pity and fear. Their relation remains one of spectator and spectacle, a theatrical model of sympathy that keeps Gwendolen and her

hysteria at a distance. It maintains his separateness from the scene, sustains the unity and autonomy of his self, the sovereign mastery put in question elsewhere in the novel.

It is one of the ironies of *Daniel Deronda* that Mordecai's idealized image of the transference of self, the dying mother visited by her son, is enacted late in the novel in Deronda's meetings with his mother, the Princess Leonora Halm-Eberstein, who was also Alcharisi, "the greatest lyric actress of Europe." For the figure of Daniel's mother reveals what is foreclosed by Mordecai, exposing in the purportedly natural transmission an unnatural technicity and coercive force. The Princess is a representative of mimesis in the novel – of the preinscription and constitutive belatedness of the subject, of an originary sociality prior to any sense of self. The Princess is the bearer of the revelation not only of Deronda's identity but also of the impossibility of identity, individual or collective, to complete itself. In the background of *Daniel Deronda*, despite Eliot's explicit anti-anti-Semitism, is the philosophical and cultural stereotype, found for instance in Nietzsche's notorious aphorism "On the Problem of the Actor" in *The Gay Science*, that, as Lacoue-

Labarthe and Nancy put it, “the Jew is – like the actor, or the woman – is the ultimate mimetic being” (“From Where Is Psychoanalysis Possible,” 51).<sup>52</sup> By the time the overdetermined figure of Alcharisi appears on the scene late in the novel to represent mimesis, what Hertz calls “the mechanism of scapegoating” is already in place (*End of the Line*, 229).

The Princess Halm-Eberstein is as many commentators have noted a kind of self portrait, “a brief but intense experiment,” as Hertz puts it, “in writing herself into her text” (224). She is a figure for what Eliot called in “The Lifted Veil” the “resistance of poetic production.” Deronda’s mother marks the limit of his sympathetic imagination. When he tells her during their first meeting that “though my own experience has been quite different, I enter into the painfulness of your struggle. I can imagine the hardship of an enforced renunciation” (694), she cuts him off. “No,” she says. “You are not a woman. You may try – but you can never imagine what it is to have a man’s force of genius in you and yet to suffer the slavery of being a girl” (694). What eludes Deronda’s sympathetic identification, escapes his reflection, is specifically linked to what

the narrator calls in a well-known passage the Princess's "sincere acting":

This woman's nature was one in which all feeling --- and all the more when it was tragic as well as real -- immediately became a matter of conscious representation: experience immediately passed into drama, and she acted her own emotions. In a minor degree this is nothing uncommon, but in the Princess the acting had a rare perfection of physiognomy, voice, and gesture. It would not be true to say that she felt less because of this double consciousness: she felt -- that is, her mind went through -- all the more, but with a difference: each nucleus of pain or pleasure had a deep atmosphere of the excitement or spiritual intoxication which at once exalts and deadens. (691-2)

"But Deronda," the narrator adds, "made no reflection of this kind" -- focusing on "the purport of what his mother was saying," affected by but not noting her performance. What eludes and threatens Deronda's sympathetic imagination is a certain difference, an otherness she introduces into the seeming immediacy of feeling. Like the telepathy machines elsewhere in Eliot's fiction, Leonora's "sincere acting" imports *techné* into the heart of pathos. She exposes in the supposed naturalness and immediacy of feeling that underwrites Eliot's aesthetics of sympathy -- and in the naturalness of maternal feeling on which so much is staked in the novel -- an unnatural technical element, something mechanical and social. Her technique of "acting her own emotions" both produces those

emotions and distances them, animates and deadens. “Genius at first is,” Klesmer tells Gwendolen early in the novel, “little more than a great capacity for receiving discipline.... Your muscles – your whole frame – must go like a watch, true, true, true, to a hair” (300).<sup>53</sup> It is a matter of habit formation, of a seemingly mechanical automatism. With her “rare perfection of physiognomy, voice, and gesture,” the Princess goes like a watch.

Many of the questions raised by Daniel’s mother’s “sincere acting” also attach themselves to another character introduced late in the novel and quickly dispatched, another representative of mimesis: the gambler Lapidoth. Lapidoth, like the Princess (and like Jacob Cohen earlier in the novel), acts his “own” emotions – if they can even be called his own. While his “hysterical crying” was, the narrator observes, “an inevitable reaction in him... it was also a conscious resource in a difficulty; just as in early life, when he was a bright-faced curly young man, he had been used to avail himself of this subtly-poised physical susceptibility to turn the edge of resentment or disapprobation” (847-8). He had as a young man cried whenever his wife expected him to cry, “reflecting every phase of her feeling with mimetic susceptibility” (810). Lapidoth’s

mimesis, like the Princess's "sincere acting," is poised between "inevitable reaction" and "conscious resource," between automatic response and intentional act, susceptibility and resistance. His "mimetic susceptibility" and "subtly-poised physical susceptibility" are linked to his "passion for watching chances – the habitual suspensive poise of the mind in actual or imaginary play" (843). Gambling both produces passion (Gwendolen goes to the roulette-table in opening scene "in search" of "passion") and deadens it, "nullifies the susceptibility to other excitation" (843). "The imperious gambling desire within him," Eliot writes, "carried on its activity through every other occupation, and made a continuous web of imagination that held all else in its meshes" (858). The "web" is one of Eliot's privileged organic tropes, especially in *Middlemarch*.<sup>54</sup> The web of imagination in which Lapidoth is enmeshed however, is not the that of Eliot's organicist aesthetic, but the effect of the automatic, random and mechanical movements and turnings of the roulette wheel. It is a figure for a narrowing of consciousness, for its infection by a passive, mechanical automatism.

What Eliot allegorizes in Lapidoth is not only, as Hertz puts it, “a struggle of language and consciousness” (“Some Words” 283), but also a parasiting of consciousness not unlike the one she imagines in “Shadows of the Coming Race.” Eliot’s depiction of Lapidoth’s mechanical behavior often seem to anticipate the later work. His “unemotional memory” was, she writes for instance, “like the ocular perception of a touch to one who has lost the sense of touch, or like the morsels on an untasting palate, having shape and grain, but no flavor” (810-1). His is a purely mechanical memory, without sensitive impression or animation, “abstract and unhuman.” Like his fit of hysterical crying in response to Mordecai’s (or Ezra’s) words, however, it is also a kind of resistance. When his son issues his “terrible judgement” of him, Lapidoth spends “his usual wakefulness at night,” going over old hours at roulette, “reproducing the method of his play, and the chances that had frustrated it” (849). “Ezra did pass across the gaming table,” we are told, “and his words were audible; but he passed like an insubstantial ghost, and his words had the heart eaten out of them by numbers and movements that seemed to make the very tissue of Lapidoth’s consciousness” (849). The automatic movements and purely formal



numbers of the roulette wheel, which make up the “tissue” or web of Lapidoth’s consciousness (Eliot uses the terms as synonyms in *Middlemarch*), eat the heart out of Ezra’s (or Mordecai’s) words, neutralizing their sense and their affective force.<sup>55</sup> They are, like the telepathy machines in “Shadows of the Coming Race,” a figure for a certain mechanicity, a material, inhuman aspect of language and thought without which no consciousness would be possible, but which also resists it, escapes its mastery.

Deronda’s mother is considerably less successful at neutralizing the ghosts that haunt her than Lapidoth appears to be. She is a figure of resistance in the novel, and specifically of the “resistance of poetic production.” “It was my nature to resist,” she tells Deronda. “I have a right to resist” (699). Leonora’s rejection of the role imposed on her, the “pattern cut out” for her by her father (“this is the Jewish woman; this is what you must be”), in favor of the “myriad lives” she leads an actress can be read as converting or turning a passive mimesis into an active one. The novel, however, relentlessly insists on her ultimate failure, or at least the limitation, of such a conversion. Leonora had sought to escape her father’s “iron” grip and to free her self from all “bonds” and “ties” she could not

break, but is in the end unable to do so. At their first meeting Deronda is “afraid of the strange coercion she seemed to be under” (695). “Shadows are rising round me,” his mother tells him (691). She is haunted by “ghosts” and by the “face” of her dead father. The past for Leonora is not entirely past. She is caught, as she puts it, “in spots of memory” from which she “can’t get away” (699). “Events come upon us like evil enchantments,” Leonora says,

and thoughts, feelings, apparitions in the darkness are events – are they not? I don’t consent. We only consent to what we love. I obey something tyrannic.... I am forced to be withered, to feel pain, to be dying slowly. Do I love that? Well, I have been forced to obey my dead father. (693)

The “strange coercion” Leonora is under, which she likens to the force of illness and pain, seems to challenge the notion of consent Deronda so often evokes in the novel and the presumption of voluntarist mastery on which it is based. “I do not choose,” she insists. “I don’t consent.” But Leonora cannot not choose. Driven from within by a seemingly unconscious compulsion, possessed by the face and voice of her dead father, she becomes regardless of her intention the mere “instrument” he willed her to be, the “makeshift link” between generations of fathers and sons. “I have after all,” she realizes,

been the instrument my father wanted. – “I desire a grandson who shall have a true Jewish heart. Every Jew should rear his family as if he hoped that a Deliverer might spring from it.”

In uttering these last sentences the Princess narrowed her eyes, waved her head up and down, and spoke slowly with a new kind of chest-voice, as if she were quoting unwillingly. (726)

The coercion force to which she is subjected is specifically figured as “quoting unwillingly,” as an involuntary mimesis. What constrains Leonora, what she cannot escape is not an essential identity or a biological destiny, but an originary mimesis, a constitutive belatedness. She cannot overcome a past that is not yet past, the unfinished past of what Lyotard calls “an infancy that will have been affected without having known it” (“The Grip” 158), the remains of childhood, “the poor, solitary, forsaken remains,” in her words “of self, that can resist nothing” (699).

The coercive force to which the Princess is subjected is idealized by Deronda, given form and shape as history and culture, unified by the figure of the (grand)father and of his will. “The effects prepared by generations are likely to triumph,” Deronda tells her, trying we are assured not to be cruel,

over a contrivance which would bend them all to the satisfaction of self. Your will was strong, but my grandfather’s trust which you accepted and did not fulfil –

what you call his yoke – is the expression of something stronger, with deeper, farther-spreading roots, knit into the foundations of sacredness for all men. You renounced me – you still banish me – as a son.... But that stronger Something has determined that I shall be all the more the grandson whom you also willed to annihilate. (727)

In a gesture similar to his grandfather's, Leonora becomes in Deronda's account merely an instrument of a "stronger Something" – capitalized as though sacred but never defined.<sup>56</sup> The preinscription of the subject she comes to represent, the constitutive belatedness she cannot overcome, is both idealized and foreclosed – lest the "foundation" into which it is "knit" begin to unravel. Daniel's mother both reveals his identity and exposes its impossibility, its dependence on something other. She is both the guarantor of his identity and what must be denied or excluded to ensure its unity and self-identity. While Deronda speaks bitterly of her renouncing and banishing him, it is in many ways his mother who is renounced and banished from the novel. The "abjection" of the Princess, as Hertz pointedly calls it, the casting out of "that which could have been chaos" (*End of the Line* 232), is an attempt to establish and sustain the boundaries of the self, both individual and collective – boundaries between internal and external, between what is living and what is dead.<sup>57</sup> It is his mother's abjection, as much as

her revelation of his Jewish birth, that enables Deronda to assume his place as “an organic part of social life,” to justify partiality, and to limit his sympathy – the threatening indifference and alterity that seemed indissociable from it earlier in the novel cast in a form that can be excluded.

### **Uncertain Agency**

In his essay “Lurid Figures” Neil Hertz writes of what he calls “the pathos of uncertain agency”: “A subject is conjured up – perhaps a killer, perhaps only the discover of the corpse – who can serve as the locus of vacillation: did I do it? Or had it already been done?” (86). It is a “particular version of undecidability – between the activity or passivity, the guilt or innocence of a subject” (86). While he is referring specifically to the lurid figures in the writings of Paul de Man – and in particular to de Man’s remark in his essay on Benjamin’s “The Task of the Translator” to “kill the original by discovering that the original was already dead” – Hertz also seems to have in mind a series of scenes in George Eliot’s fiction, which he has drawn attention to elsewhere in his writings.<sup>58</sup> In “Mr Gilfil’s Love-Story” in *Scenes of Clerical Life*, Tina, in a murderous rage and

clutching a dagger, goes to kill her lover only to find him on the ground already dead of a heart attack. In *Middlemarch*, in a somewhat more complex instance, Madame Laure, acting in a play in which she kills her lover, really kills her husband, who is playing the part. "My foot really slipped," she explains to Lydgate. "I did not plan: it came to me in the play – *I meant to do it*" (153).<sup>59</sup> Intentions appears indistinguishable from mimetic susceptibility. The final scene of uncertain agency is, of course, the scene of Grandcourt's drowning, of Gwendolen's killing and not killing him at the same time. Such scenes are, what Hertz calls in "Some Words in George Eliot," "nodes of equivocation, points where... questions of agency, the basis for judgements of innocence and guilt – questions of what (or who) is active, what (or who) passive – are made to claim the reader's attention" (290). "The pathos of uncertain agency," Cynthia Chase argues in an essay that brings the work of Julia Kristeva into conjunction with Hertz and de Man, "inheres in Kristeva's concept of abjection" ("Primary Narcissism," 127). In the infant's relation to what Chase calls the "indeterminately significative marks" of maternal care, is it "the infant who *confers* on them the status of signs, or the mother?" (127).<sup>60</sup> Chase's argument

can, I think, help us to begin to read Eliot's juxtaposition in *Daniel Deronda* of the abjection of the Princess and the scene of Grandcourt's drowning, which occur almost simultaneously in the novel, Deronda moving from one to the other.

What is striking about the event of Grandcourt's drowning and its aftermath is the degree to which the question of Gwendolen's guilt or innocence, of whether she did it or it had already been done, is never resolved. "I only know," Gwendolen tells Deronda, "that I saw my wish outside me" (761). Yet, even at the end of what we might call her analysis with Deronda, the long conversations in which she tries to work through such questions, the relation between her wish and the event remains unresolved. Was it a random accident or a deliberate act? Did "her murderous thoughts" have an "outward effect?" Did they "alter the course of events?" Is it only her guilt it, as Deronda hopes, that gives "the character of decisive action to what had been an inappreciably instantaneous glance of desire?" (762). Or was that "inappreciably instantaneous glance" decisive, a momentary inaction that in effect killed Grandcourt? Eliot's refusal to resolve these questions is, I want to suggest, a refusal of the abjection that marked the earlier scene, a

refusal to locate the violence either inside or outside the subject. It points to an ethics and an aesthetics that is no longer based, as is Eliot's aesthetic of sympathy, on the differentiation of internal and external, of the self and what is apart from it – the violence of which the earlier scene records. It is an attempt to respond to what precedes or does not take place on the basis of such polarities, rather than idealizing or excluding them.

The scene of Grandcourt's drowning takes place off-stage; we, like Deronda, encounter it afterwards through its traumatic effects on Gwendolen. "Things repeat themselves in me so," she tells Deronda. "They come back – they will all come back" (840). She is repeatedly possessed by the image of her husband's "dead face," which she can neither get away from nor alter. The image of a dead face is, of course, an over-determined one in the novel, linking Grandcourt's drowning to the earlier scene in which the panel suddenly opened during her performance as Hermione and to her involuntary mimetic identification, her freezing as though dead. Gwendolen is similarly described after her rescue as looking "pale as one of the sheeted dead" (750). Her struggle to resist her desire to kill Grandcourt is figured shortly before his drowning, in an even



more direct allusion to the earlier scene, as “a white dead face from which she was for ever trying to flee” (738). “The thought of his dying,” we are told, “would not subsist: it turned as with a dream-change into the terror that she should die with his throttling fingers on her neck avenging that thought” (669). Her murderous intent, the violence directed outward, is indissociable from a kind of superegoic violence directed against herself, a violence that in many ways Grandcourt embodies.<sup>61</sup> Gwendolen is often difficult to locate in the drowning scene. “‘The rope!’ he called out,” she tells Deronda, “in a voice – not his own” (761). Who is it who calls out? In her attempt to recount the scene to Daniel, Gwendolen seems at times to occupy Grandcourt’s place as well as her own. “What can *I* do but cry for help?” she says to him, “stretching her arms to their full length upward.” “Die – die – you are forsaken – go down, go down into darkness. Forsaken – no pity – *I* shall be forsaken” (758). Gwendolen appears to be drowning, to be in precisely Grandcourt’s position, her murderous intent (“Die – die”) indistinguishable from her punishing guilt. What *I* does the curiously italicized “*I*”’s name? “Even Deronda had no place in her consciousness at that moment,” the narrator observes. “He was completely unmanned” (758).

Gwendolen can no longer see herself from his perspective. He is “completely unmanned” in the sense that he is no longer the specular other on which her self depends – though it also seems to imply the threat of a certain contagion. The trauma is not, for Gwendolen, simply an external event. Absorbed in the scene, she is unable to achieve a specular distance from it; her blind or non-specular identification is unavailable to theatrical self-representation. When she leaps into the water from the boat, Gwendolen no longer occupies the position of a detached spectator.

In the long conversations between Daniel and Gwendolen after Grandcourt’s death, trying to work out and work through the event, Eliot stages an encounter between an identification or trauma that did not take place on the basis of a subject-object distinction with an aesthetic of sympathy predicated on such a distinction. The focus, however, gradually shifts from the question of the relation of Gwendolen’s desire or intent to the event, which remains rigorously undecidable, to the transferential dynamics of her relationship with Deronda. Her trauma is, in a sense, replaced by a transference that can be assimilated to Eliot’s aesthetic of sympathy and to her narrative of its growth and extension. In her relation to Deronda,

unlike the trauma of Grandcourt's drowning, Gwendolen is in the end able to recognize her projection as a projection, to delineate internal and external, her self from what is apart from it. "Her supreme need of him" had, the narrator observes, "blind[ed] her to the separateness of his life" (867). "It had never even occurred to her to ask him why he happened to be in Genoa" (869). Unsure "what force his words would carry," Deronda tries, during their last meeting, to convey at least "the impersonal part of their separateness from each other" (875). When he tells Gwendolen that he is Jewish and plans to go to the East to work to establish a "national centre" for his people, she is jolted into an awareness of his difference. The shock of otherness leads to a sudden and seemingly traumatic widening of her horizon:

There was a long silence between them. The world seemed to be getting larger around poor Gwendolen, and she more solitary and helpless in the midst. The thought that he might come back after going to the East, sank before the bewildering vision of these wide-stretching purposes in which she felt herself reduced to a mere speck. There comes a terrible moment to many souls when the great movements of the world, the larger destinies of mankind, which have lain aloof in newspapers and other neglected reading, enter like an earthquake into their own lives – when the slow urgency of growing generations turns into the tread of an invading army or the dire clash of civil war, and gray fathers know nothing know nothing to seek for but the corpses of their blooming

sons, and girls forget all vanity to make lint and bandages which may serve for the shattered limbs of their betrothed husbands. Then it is that the Invisible Power that has been the object of lip-worship and lip-resignation became visible, according to the imagery of the Hebrew poet, making the flames his chariot and riding on the wings of the wind, till the mountains smoke and the plains shudder under the rolling, fiery visitation. Often the good cause seems to lie prostrate under the thunder of unrelenting force, the martyrs live reviled, they die, and no angel is seen holding forth the crown and the palm branch. Then it is that the submission of the soul to the Highest is tested, and even in the eyes of frivolity life looks out from the scene of human struggle with the awful face of duty, and a religion shows itself which is something other than private consolation.

That was the sort of crisis which was at this moment beginning in Gwendolen's small life: she was for the first time feeling the pressure of a vast mysterious movement, for the first time being dislodged from her supremacy in her own world, and getting a sense that her horizon was but a dipping onward of an existence with which her own was revolving.  
(875-6)

The "unrelenting force" to which Gwendolen is subjected is, as Neil Hertz has pointed out, only indirectly that of the "great movements of the world," directly it is Deronda's words. ("George Eliot's Pulse" 41) This is not, however, the first time Gwendolen is "dislodged from her supremacy in her own world," it happens as we have seen with some regularity during the course of the novel. Rather, it is the first time she gets "a sense that her horizon was but a dipping onward of an existence with which her own was revolving." It is the first time she is able to see herself as part of a greater whole, even if

“reduced to a mere speck.” What Deronda offers her is not “some type” to which she can assimilate herself, but, like Eliot’s novels, a wide vision of relations. Eliot’s aesthetic of sympathy consists not only in the shock of otherness, the recognition of what is apart from self, but its reconciliation as organic or aesthetic form. But, Gwendolen is not given a vision of an organic community or a web of relations. She does not have, like Deronda, a place seemingly “prepared by generations” as “an organic part of social life.” Her bewildered vision of “vast mysterious movements” and their violence and “unrelenting force” – another version, in a sense, of “roar that lies on the other side of silence” – is just barely a resistance to them. “I am going to live,” she repeats, “bursting out hysterically.” “I shall live. I mean to live” (879).

But the novel does not end with Deronda and Gwendolen’s break up. The final scene, following Deronda and Mirah’s marriage, is of Mordecai’s death on their journey to the East – a death that is, at least for Mordecai, another sort of marriage, “the willing marriage that melts soul into soul.” His death will be, he tells Daniel, “both a parting and a reunion – which takes me from your bodily eyes and gives me full presence in your soul” (882). It gives “full presence,”

transcending of the materiality of the body, and of language and writing. Mordecai's notion of fusional identification, his fantasy of absolute mourning, is as we saw earlier also a model of reading, based on internalization and assimilation of the other's words rather than quotation, which marks them as other. In his final words, the "confession of the divine Unity, which for long generations has been on the lips of the dying Israelite" (883), Mordecai seems to overcome his individuality and the singularity of his death, to become "the dying Israelite," as Garrett Stewart puts it "of time immemorial" (309). Mordecai's death takes place in a shift between tenses, in the gap between "it was some hours before" and "he had [already] ceased to breathe" (883).<sup>62</sup> His death is both unrepresented, and its representation is an effect of grammar and syntax. A similar irony is at work in the concluding lines of the novel: a quotation from Milton's *Samson Agonistes* that begins "Nothing is here for tears." Eliot's narrator disappears for the last time into the words of another. While the quotation from Milton can be read in terms of Mordecai's idealized mourning, "nothing is here" also points, I want to suggest, to something other.

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## Notes

1. The literature on George Eliot and sympathy is extensive. See in particular Thomas Noble, *George Eliot's Scenes of Clerical Life*, 55-91; Elizabeth Ermath, "George Eliot's Conception of Sympathy"; Forest Pyle, *The Ideology of Imagination*, 147-71; and especially Marc Redfield, *Phantom Formations*, 134-70. See also David Marshall, *The Figure of Theater*, 193-240; Daniel Cottom, *Social Figures*, 183-200; Ann Cvetkovich, *Mixed Figures*, 128-64; Audrey Jaffe, *Scenes of Sympathy*, 121-57.
2. The phrase "doctrine of sympathy is from Noble.
3. On a lack of sympathy as the condition of narratability in George Eliot, see Pyle, 157-60. See also D. A. Miller, *Narrative and Its Discontents*, 164-5.
4. The term "primary narcissism" is sometimes used to refer to an undifferentiated state prior to the distinction between the subject and the external world. My use of the term implies, however, just such a split between the subject and the external world, as does Eliot's notion of an originary "moral stupidity." On the objections to using the term to refer to an objectless state and the various uses of the term in psychoanalysis, see the entry on "Primary Narcissism, Secondary Narcissism" in Laplanche and Pontalis, *The Language of Psycho-Analysis*.
5. Neil Hertz draws attention to the significance of this quotation from *Middlemarch* in "Recognizing Casaubon" in his *End of the Line: Essays on Psychoanalysis and the Sublime*. "Egotism in her writings," Hertz argues, "is almost always rendered as narcissism, the self doubled and figured as both the eye and the blot" (75). My discussion of narcissism in George Eliot is indebted throughout to Hertz's reading of it.

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6. On sympathy as an aesthetic in Eliot, see Redfield *Phantom Formations* and Pyle.
7. David Marshall also cites this passage from Godwin's *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice*, which he calls a paraphrase of Adam Smith. Eliot and Lewes, as Marshall notes, owned a copy of Godwin's *Enquiry*.
8. On the ambivalence of the notion of detachment in George Eliot and more generally in Victorian Britain, see Amanda Anderson, *The Powers of Distance*, esp. 3-23. While Eliot often associates detachment with the distortions of abstraction, generalization, and idealization, her critique, Anderson observes, "ambiguously coexists with a certain promotion of cultivated detachment" (14).
9. Elizabeth Ermath also cites "Notes on Form in Art" in her discussion of the "close affinity" between Eliot's idea of sympathy and her idea of art.
10. While I certainly agree with Miller that there is something "inorganic, acentered, and discontinuous" in Eliot's conception of form, what she presents in "Notes on Form in Art" is ostensibly a theory of organic form, of an organic form that develops out of and reconciles "unlikeness and difference." That form arises from unlikeness and difference or that its development has no absolute end is not, for Eliot, at odds with her conception of organic form. Miller's important essay nonetheless points to significant tension in her notion of form and in *Middlemarch*.
11. "The ego is first and foremost a bodily ego;" Freud writes in *The Ego and the Id*, "it is not merely a surface entity, but is itself the projection on a surface" (SE 19, 26). "The ego," he adds in an "authorized" footnote that first appeared in the English translation, "is ultimately derived from bodily sensations, chiefly from those springing from the surface of the body. It may thus be regarded as a mental projection of the surface of the body." For Freud, we might say, the ego is form in Eliot's sense of the term, just as for Eliot form is first and foremost a kind of bodily ego.



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12. The phrase “expectation of an intelligible whole” is from Freud’s discussion of secondary revision in *The Interpretation of Dreams* (SE 5: 499). On the relation of secondary revision and the “expectation of an intelligible whole to narcissism, see Samuel Weber’s indispensable *The Legend of Freud*, 40-49.

13. In Aristotle famous definition, for instance, “matter is potentiality, while form is actuality” (“On the Soul,” Book 2, Ch. 1, 412a 9).

14. My discussion of narcissism is indebted here to Weber’s reading in *The Legend of Freud* of the narcissism of systematic thought in Freud, esp. 44-46.

15. Such an argument would in certain respects recapitulate Eliot’s own. The narcissism of certain kinds of systematic thought, of Casaubon’s for instance, or Lydgate’s, is one of the principle themes of *Middlemarch*. For Eliot a broader, less narcissistic perspective is always theoretically possible.

16. The quote is from Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy’s discussion of the ambivalence of identification in “The Unconscious is Destructured like an Affect,” which they argue “does not arise from rivalry for the *appropriation* of an object – but rivalry, if it exists, consists rather in the *coincidence* of identity and difference in the same rapport, in the competition of the other and the same” (206).

17. Eliot was, however, quite knowledgeable about mesmerism and in 1844 had even been at least “partially mesmerized” at a dinner party. On Eliot’s familiarity with mesmerism and its relation to “The Lifted Veil,” see Beryl Gray, “Afterword,” 77-88.

18. “Poetry and Prose, From the Notebook of an Eccentric” was published in her friend Charles Bray’s Coventry *Herald and Observer* at various intervals between December 1846 and February 1847. It was with the exception of a short poem the first so-called “original writing” she published. It was preceded by several reviews in the *Herald and Observer* as well as her translation of Strauss’s

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*The Life of Jesus*. As Pinney notes, Eliot returned to the same form in her last publication, *The Impressions of Theophrastus Such*.

19. Eliot uses tropes of electricity and magnetism as well as of mesmerism in describing the eccentric author. His character, she writes, “contained elements which would too probably act as non-conductors, interposed between his highly-charged mind and the negatively electrified souls around him” (15). Her friend Charles Bray, in whose *Herald and Observer* “Poetry and Prose” appeared, was a strong advocate of phrenology and mesmerism and introduced her to both subjects. In 1844 he arranged for a phrenological cast to be made of her head and was present later in the year when she was “partially mesmerized” at a dinner party. On Bray’s views of phrenology and mesmerism, see Diana Postlethwaite, *Making It Whole*, 122-139.

20. It is worth noting that the term “stream of consciousness,” which Eliot seems to be alluding to, was not coined by William James, as is often assumed, but by George Henry Lewes in *The Physiology of Common Life* (1859), which he was writing around the same time as Eliot was writing “The Lifted Veil.” On Lewes’s use of the term and its significance in Victorian psychology, see Rick Rylance, *Victorian Psychology and British Culture*, 10-13.

21. Myers coined the term in 1882 at a meeting of the Society for Psychical Research to refer to “all cases of impression received at a distance without the normal operation of the recognized sense organs” (quoted in Royle 2). A friend and admirer of George Eliot’s, Myers wrote perhaps the best known obituary of her. He was also the first person to introduce Freud’s work in England. Eliot was also close with the other founders of the Society for Psychical Research, Henry Sidgwick and Edmund Gurney, who Leslie Stephens among others believed that she modeled Daniel Deronda on. On telepathy and the Society for Psychical Research, see Pamela Thurschwell, *Literature, Technology, and Magical Thinking*. See also Janet Oppenheim, *The Other World* and Roger Luckhurst, *The Invention of Telepathy*.

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22. In his *Letters to a Candid Inquirer on Animal Magnetism* William Gregory used “sympathetic” and “mediate clairvoyance” and “thought-reading” as virtual synonyms, and he distinguished them from what he called “immediate” and “direct clairvoyance” as well as “clairvoyant prevision” (115-116, 132). The idea of telepathy combines mediate and immediate clairvoyance, as well as thought-reading and prevision – though there is already in Gregory’s time considerable slippage between them. On Eliot’s knowledge of Gregory, see Gray, “Afterward,” 79-86, and Postlethwaite, *Making It Whole*, 138-9.

23. The notion of telepathy is not only modeled on forms of telecommunication like the telegraph and telephone, but never ceases to be justified and explain by analogy to them. On the rapport between technology and occult phenomena, see Avital Ronell, *The Telephone Book*; Fredrick Kittler, “Gramophone, Film, Typewriter”; Laurence Rickels, *The Vampire Lectures*; and Pamela Thurschwell, *Literature, Technology, and Magical Thinking*.

24. Derrida makes a similar point in “Telepathy”: *Fort: Da*, *telepathy* against *telepathy*, distance against menacing immediacy, but also the opposite, feeling [*le sentiment*] (always close to oneself, it is thought), against the sufferent of distancing [*la souffrance de l’eloignement*] that would also be called telepathy” (36).

25. In a brief and insightful discussion of the relation between the two texts, Sally Shuttleworth writes: “The negativity of “The Lifted Veil” is a reflex of the idealization of *The Mill on the Floss*, revealing the dark underside of that novel which the final vision of the “daisied fields” suppresses” (79).

26. “The Lifted Veil” reads, as Charles Swann remarks, “like a very black joke” on Eliot’s desire to enlarge the sympathy of her readers. Latimer is in a position, Swann writes, “analogous to that of the reader of a George Eliot novel. He can look through the pages, as it were, to see what will happen. He has ‘direct experience of the inner state of others.’ Yet... he does not feel for others as a reader should” (47).

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27. On the organic unconscious in *The Mill on the Floss*, see Shuttleworth 51-77.
28. Derrida made the remark in the discussion following Roland Barthes's paper at the famous structuralist conference at Johns Hopkins University in 1966 (*Structuralist Controversy*, 156). Valdemar's "I am dead" also appears as an epigraph to *Speech and Phenomena*.
29. On this paradox in "The Lifted Veil," see Redfield, *Phantom Formations*, 162.
30. Eagleton made this remark in the context of a discussion of the difficulties of reconciling the transfusion scene with the conventions of realist fiction. I would argue however that "The Lifted Veil" is not realist fiction, not only because of its Gothicism, but also because of its refusal of the reconciliations that characterize "realism."
31. On the implications of the blood transfusion, see Kate Flint. "Blood, Bodies, and *The Lifted Veil*."
32. Eliot's biographer Gordon Haight suggests that the idea for "Shadows of the Coming Race" grew out of conversations while Lewes was writing the section on "Animal Automatism" in *The Physical Basis of Mind*, volume 3 of *Problems of Life and Mind* (522). Despite the title Lewes argues in *The Physical Basis of Mind* and through out *Problems of Life and Mind* against automatist theories of the mind. In a sense Lewes situates the automatic functions of mind within his organicist theory. On Lewes's opposition to automatist theories and his place in the contemporary debates, see Rylance, *Victorian Psychology*.
33. The classic formulation of the tension between sympathy and judgement in Victorian literature is Robert Langbaum, *The Poetry of Experience*, which reads the tension in the dramatic monologue. In the dramatic monologue, Langbaum argues, our sympathetic identification with the speaker, with other points of view, is "split

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off" from moral judgement and condemnation "in order to renew and refresh moral judgement" (4).

34. My reading of Gwendolen's paralysis is indebted to Ruth Leys' remarkable discussion of the paralysis of traumatized soldiers in "Death Masks." "In its petrification and immobility," Leys writes, "the soldiers' rigid masklike expression also represents the face to the dead man with whom he is sympathetically – mimetically – identified. The mask is thus also the image of the traumatic failure of defense, of the mimetic identification that defines the trauma: in short the social" (62-3).

35. In *The Essence of Christianity*, translated by George Eliot, Feuerbach writes: "A man existing absolutely alone would lose himself without any sense of his individuality in the ocean of Nature; he would neither comprehend himself as man nor Nature as Nature" (82). Gwendolen seems to experience a similar self-loss. On the influence of Feuerbach on Eliot's portrayal of Gwendolen and her relation to Deronda, see Ender, *Sexing the Mind*, 241-46.

36. Eliot's allusion to Rousseau is more explicit in "The Lifted Veil," where Latimer remarks that as a student in Geneva "I used to do as Jean-Jacques did – lie down in my boat and let it glide where it would" (9). Rousseau described his reveries on Lake Bienne in Book 12 of his *Confessions* and at greater length in the Fifth Promenade of *Reveries of the Solitary Walker*. On the importance of Rousseau for Eliot, see Witemeyer, "George Eliot and Jean-Jacques Rousseau."

37. On telepathy and foresight in *Daniel Deronda* and in "The Lifted Veil," see Nicholas Royle, *Telepathy and Literature*, 84-110.

38. As Friedrich Kittler shows in *Discourse Network 1800/1900*, the mother becomes closely associated with literacy and language acquisition around 1800. While Kittler's focuses specifically on Germany, a similar set of romantic assumptions seems to underlie Eliot's novel.

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39. On “what happens when we go back from Narcissus to Echo,” see Lacoue-Labarthe, “The Echo of the Subject.”

40. On Hegel’s distinction between *Gedächtnis* and *Erinnerung*, see Paul de Man “Sign and Symbol in Hegel’s *Aesthetics*.” In *Memoirs for Paul de Man*, Derrida discusses de Man’s reading of Hegel’s distinction in relation to mourning – a relation that is not without a certain relevance to *Daniel Deronda*.

41. On the significance in the novel of “the present cause of past effects,” a phrase from a letter Deronda receives after he meets his mother, see Chase, “The Decomposition of Elephants” in *Decomposing Figures*.

42. “The highest of all teaching,” according to Eliot, “aesthetic teaching” will, she wrote Frederic Harrison, “flash’ conviction on to the world by means of an aroused sympathy” (*Selected Essays, Poems, and Other Writings* 248, 249).

43. Anderson argues that “*Daniel Deronda* generates two distinct understandings of the project of Jewish nationalism.” “Deronda’s nationalism,” she writes, “persistently moves toward the universalist civic model of nationalism often associated with John Stuart Mill... while Mordecai’s follows the collectivist-romantic model issuing out of German idealism, and built on the more troubling model of a unified national will and a projected national destiny” (“George Eliot and the Jewish Question” 41).

Anderson’s argument in “George Eliot and the Jewish Question” is a welcome correction to the critical tendency to conflate Deronda and Mordecai’s views – as though Eliot’s aesthetic of sympathy (or the nationalism derived from it) was based on fusional identification. In her focus on their differences and on Deronda’s resistance to Mordecai and his views, however, Anderson stops short of a full consideration of their relation. She largely overlooks the coercive dimension of their relationship and the identification that makes it difficult to completely dissociate Daniel and Mordecai or their views. Daniel’s nationalism is often expressed in Mordecai’s terms – and in romantic and organicist terms. (Anderson’s own key

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term, “the cultivation of partiality,” is itself an organic trope.) Yet, Anderson never addresses the question of the relation of Mordecai “subsuming organicism” and the organismism that underlies Deronda’s nationalism or the aesthetic of sympathy on which it is based. To what extent can even the most self-conscious and reflective nationalism dissociate itself from its romantic origin? For a discussion that puts rare critical pressure on the relation between the “two Romantic inventions – imagination and nation,” see Marc Redfield, “Imagi-nation: The Imagined Community and the Aesthetics of Mourning.”

44. In steering a middle course for *Deronda*, Eliot is, Anderson argues “challenging the dominant cultural rhetoric, which associated the *extremes* with Judaism” – both law-bound traditionalism and deracinated, modern cosmopolitanism (“George Eliot and the Jewish Question,” 44). Anderson essay demonstrates the complexity of Eliot’s response to the Jewish Question. See also Michael Ragussis, *Figures of Conversion*, and Christina Crosby, *The Ends of History*.

45. Lewes wrote, for instance, in *Problems of Life and Mind*, that it would be “rash to fix limits to the specific determinations [heredity] may include; but the evidence in this direction is obscured by the indubitable transmission through language and other social institutions” (cited in Rylance 277). On Lewes’s differences with the Lamarckian theory of evolution and with Spencer’s in particular, see Rylance, esp. 277-9, 299-311).

46. In *The Republic*, for instance, Socrates asks: “Did you never observe how imitations, beginning in early youth and continuing far into life, at length grow into habits and become a second nature, affecting body, voice, and mind?” (Book III, 395).

47. On Gwendolen and hysteria, see in addition to Rose’s “George Eliot and the Spectacle of the Woman,” Evelyne Ender, *Sexing the Mind*, 229-272; and Athena Vrettos, *Somatic Fictions*, 57-80. Vrettos also discusses the revealing contemporary term “neuromimesis” – though not explicitly in relation to Gwendolen. It

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is worth noting that Sir James Paget who coined the term, which refers to the imitation of disease and belongs to the discourse on imitation, suggestion, and hysteria, was a friend of Eliot and Lewes and often their doctor as well. Paget presented a copy of his *Clinical Lectures*, in which his “Nervous Mimicry” appeared, to Eliot and Lewes, and Eliot’s notebooks for *Daniel Deronda* show she read and transcribed several passages from it. See *George Eliot’s Daniel Deronda Notebooks*, 351-52.

48. On the implications of Gwendolen’s being, as she puts it “exchanged for the woman of exchange,” see Catherine Gallagher, “George Eliot and *Daniel Deronda*.”

49. Neil Hertz notes in “Some Words in George Eliot” that in his exchanges with Gwendolen “Daniel mimics the diction and imagery of the *Middlemarch* narrator” (289).

50. Žižek discusses what he calls hysteria’s “radically ambiguous protest against the Master’s interpellation” in *The Indivisible Remainder*, 161-7. See also Bronfen’s discussion of it in *The Knotted Subject*, 238-9.

51. On the metaphor of beholding a shipwreck as a “paradigm,” see Hans Blumenberg, *Shipwreck with Spectator*.

52. Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy use the phrase in “From Where Is Psychoanalysis Possible” in discussing Freud’s response to this aspect of Nazi anti-Semitism in *Moses and Monotheism*. See also their “The Nazi Myth” and Lacoue-Labarthe’s *Heidegger, Art and Politics*.

53. In his discussion of George Eliot’s telepathy machines, Marc Redfield calls attention to a passage in “The Natural History of German Life” in which Eliot images “a universal language” constructed on “a rational basis... a language which has no uncertainty, no whims of idiom, no cumbrous forms, no fitful shimmer of many-hued significance, no hoary archaisms... -- a patent de-oderized and non resonant language, which effects the



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purpose of communication as perfectly and rapidly as algebraic signs," a language without "the anomalies and inconveniences of historical language" (*Essays*, 287-8). "The next step," Eliot writes, "will be the invention of a talking watch, which will achieve the utmost facility and dispatch in the communication of ideas by a graduated adjustment of dots. A melancholy 'language of the future!'" (288). See Redfield, *Phantom Formations*, 166.

54. In contrasting herself with the "great historian" Fielding, for instance, Eliot writes in a well-known passage:  
We belated historians must not linger after his example.... I at least have so much to do in unravelling certain human lots, and seeing how they were woven and interwoven, that all the light I can command must be concentrated on this particular web, and not dispersed over that tempting range of relevancies called the universe. (141)

In *Darwin's Plots*, Gillian Beer discusses Eliot's use of the term in relation to other contemporary discourses. On the figure of the web in *Middlemarch*, see also Ferris, *Theory and the Evasion of History*, and J. Hillis Miller, "Optic and Semiotic in *Middlemarch*."

55. On the neutral in *Daniel Deronda*, see Hertz, "Some Words in George Eliot." "Lapidoth cannot embody the neutral," Hertz writes, but his consciousness can be reduced and dispersed into the plural sameness of the automatic movements of roulette... and into the sameness of numbers that are not really numbers... but numerals marking otherwise identical segments of the roulette wheel, a final figure for the arbitrary marks without which no investment of any sort – not just no bets – would be conceivable. (295)

56. Amanda Anderson notes, Deronda's remarks to this mother directly contradicts his assertion to Mordecai that "what we can't hidden must not make our rule for what we ought to choose" ("George Eliot," 55).

57. On Kristeva's notion of abjection, see her *Powers of Horror* and "Freud and Love."

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58. In an as yet unpublished paper “Fatal Compassion,” which he gave at the English Institute in 2000, Hertz explicitly linked the scenes of equivocation between guilt and innocence in Eliot’s fiction and his discussion of “the pathos of uncertain agency” in de Man. Hertz discusses the relation between the scenes I consider below in “George Eliot’s Pulse,” 35-40.

59. The Madame Laure episode in *Middlemarch* has received in recent years a great deal of critical attention. See especially Rose, “George Eliot and the Spectacle of the Woman;” Ferris, *Theory and the Evasion of History*; and Redfield, *Phantom Formations*. In “The Strange Case of Monomania: Patriarchy in Literature, Murder in *Middlemarch*, Drowning in *Daniel Deronda*,” Simon During links the Madame Laure episode and Grandcourt’s drowning to the early-nineteenth century category of “monomania” – a term Eliot uses in a somewhat different way in *Daniel Deronda*. During’s interesting reading of the scenes tends however to simplify somewhat the alternatives the texts present.

60. “The mother is rejected as abject,” Chase writes in “Primary Narcissism and the Giving of Figure,” in so far as the gestures of maternal care are encountered as insignificant marks, material inscription.... It is to take the materiality of indeterminably significant marks as matter: as determinably and definitely mere device, mere material – lifeless, without meaning. It is to return, in short, to the metaphysical categories of matter and spirit. This has meant, always, accepting the mother as already dead. It has meant “recognizing” the merely natural nature of maternal care, and its supersession by the child’s identification with an Imaginary Father, or a patriarchal Imagination. (134) Such an abjection is, I want to suggest, at issue in Leonora’s reduction to mere “instrument.”

61. I don’t mean to imply that Gwendolen originates the violence. The scene can I think also be read as an instance of what Anna Freud named “identification with the aggressor.”

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62. Garrett Stewart draws attention to this feature in his close reading of the scene (310). My own reading of the scene is indebted to his discussion of it.

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