Université de Montréal

Narrative Mourning: Joyce, Freud, Kincaid, Derrida

par:

Nouri Gana

Département d'études anglaises
Faculté des arts et des sciences

Thèse présentée à la Faculté des études supérieures
en vue de l'obtention du grade de Philosophiae Doctor (Ph. D.)
en études anglaises

Avril 2004

In memory of my father

Ali GANA

(1933-2000)

RÉSUMÉ

Cette dissertation étudie les diverses configurations de la problématique du deuil dans une sélection de textes littéraires, psychanalytiques, et déconstructives. Les auteurs sur lesquels je travaille sont James Joyce, Sigmund Freud, Jamaïca Kincaid, et Jacques Derrida. L'introduction examine le contexte psychanalytique qui constitue le cadre initial dans lequel la question du deuil est posée, et trace les grandes lignes de la rhétorique du reste de la dissertation.

Dans mon premier chapitre sur *Dubliners* de Joyce, j'essaie de repenser la question du deuil, pas comme étant une réaction à la perte (Freud), mais comme corrélation au commencement du désir. Une telle perspective permet non seulement une critique de Freud, mais également une vision plus compréhensive de certains personnages dans *Dubliners*, particulièrement James Duffy et Gabriel Conroy. La sensibilité de ces personnages à la mortalité des objets de leurs désirs et à la nécessité d'extraire leurs substances à partir de ces objets—dans lesquels elles seraient autrement emprisonnées—a été en grande partie interprétée comme symptomatique de la paralysie. En explorant les gains *thérapoétiques* de la figure de prosopopée en relation à la question du deuil, ce chapitre essaie de tracer les grandes lignes de la poétique du deuil.

Adoptant une approche comparative, le deuxième chapitre examine les vicissitudes de la mélancolie dans Freud et Joyce. Le but ici n'est pas d'appliquer le travail métapsychologique de Freud à la fiction de Joyce mais de signaler plutôt un air familiale dans les représentations psychanalytiques et littéraires de la problématique du deuil au début de la première guerre mondiale. Les chapitres qui suivent tâchent d'articuler les configurations poétiques de l'affect mélancolique et les implications éthiques de l'écriture du deuil.

Le chapitre trois évalue l'effet de la problématique de la mémoire et de l'histoire de l'esclavage dans la fiction de Jamaïca Kincaid. En exposant les faits et méfaits de la pratique du souvenir, ce chapitre discerne les contours de la contrainte de la répétition sous la pratique triomphante du souvenir. Le but de ce chapitre est d'expliquer les composants poétiques et affectifs de la question de la représentation du trauma historique.

Le dernier chapitre établi le lien entre les récits du deuil de Kincaid et de Derrida. Le but principal de ce chapitre est d'évaluer les vertus thérapeutiques ainsi que les limites éthiques de l'écriture du deuil après la mort de l'autre. En essayant de déconstruire la loi du deuil et de la replacer dans une théorie plus perfectible de justice, le chapitre explore les possibilités entretenues par l'affect du deuil en vue d'une théorie de connectivité avec les perdus, le passé, et surtout l'histoire.

MOTS-CLÉS: deuil; mélancolie; trope; prosopopée; catachrèse; éthique; écriture; Joyce; Freud; Kincaid; Derrida.

ABSTRACT

This dissertation investigates the various configurations of the problematic of mourning in a selection of literary, psychoanalytic, and deconstructive texts. The authors on whom I concentrate are James Joyce, Sigmund Freud, Jamaica Kincaid, and Jacques Derrida. The introductory chapter examines the psychoanalytic contexture in which the question of mourning is initially posed and traces some of the important threads that make up the rhetorical fabric of the rest of the dissertation.

My first chapter on Joyce's *Dubliners* attempts to rethink the work of mourning, not as a reaction to loss (Freud), but as a correlate to the inception of desire. Such a perspective allows not only for a critique of Freud, but also for a more sympathetic approach to some characters in *Dubliners* (especially James Duffy and Gabriel Conroy) whose sensitivity to the mortality of the objects of their desires and to the necessity of extracting their substances from those objects in which they would otherwise be trapped have largely been interpreted as symptomatic of paralysis. By exploring the *therapoetic* purchases of the trope of prosopopoeia as to the fulfillment of the work of mourning, this chapter means to paint the broad strokes of a *poetics of mourning*.

Adopting a comparative approach, the second chapter lays bare the vicissitudes of melancholia in Freud and Joyce. The aim here is not to apply Freud's metapsychological papers to a selected number of Joyce's stories but rather to signal a familial air in the psychoanalytic and literary representations of the complex of mourning on the threshold of the Great War. The chapters that follow strive to articulate the poetic configurations of the melancholic affect and the ethical implications of narrative mourning.

Chapter three assesses the effect of the problematic of remembering and the history of slavery on the fictional work of Jamaica Kincaid. By exposing the uses and abuses of the cult of remembering, this chapter discerns the contours of repetition compulsion underneath the triumphant practice of remembering. The aim of this chapter is to account for the poetic (i.e., catachrestic) and affective (i.e., melancholic) components of the question of the representation of historical trauma.

The last chapter brings together the narratives of mourning of Kincaid and Derrida. The main purpose of this chapter is to assess the therapeutic virtues as well as the ethical limits of writing following the death of the other. By attempting to deconstruct the law of mourning and to ground it in an ever more perfectible theory of justice, the chapter explores the possibilities opened up by the affect of mourning in view of a theory of connectivity with lost others, the past, and history writ large.

KEYWORDS: mourning; melancholia; trope; prosopopoeia; catachresis; narrative; ethics; writing; Joyce; Freud; Kincaid; Derrida.

ACKNOWLEDGEMNTS

Were I not to run the risk of erasing it, I would have been able to acknowledge my debt. Alas!

In the realm of thought, true faithfulness is not faithfulness to solutions but to problems.

—Mikkel Borch-Jacobsen

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION: The Scope of Mourning

Go out of mourning first.

—Joyce, *Ulysses*

Thus spake James Joyce—in the imperative! The order is simple. It asks of us to go out of mourning, to move out of mourning and into something else that it holds in reserve or keeps in store for us until we have met the demand *first*. Preparatory to anything else, we are required to go out of mourning. What follows, what is about to unfold—really, its very unfolding—hinges on the fulfillment of the task to which we are assigned. Joyce's categorical imperative, we begin to realize, is also a promise of something else, of something better that is about to happen to us. A world of possibility seems to be awaiting us provided that we go out of mourning. Joyce's injunction is quite explicit about this world of possibility awaiting us, since we are asked, not to go out of mourning as such, but precisely to go out of mourning *first*. Here lies the kernel of the promise—in the primacy of the categorical imperative over any other suchlike imperatives.

Whether there are other imperatives or not, going out of mourning is preeminent among them. In the beginning, there is mourning, and there is mourning to begin with. Mourning is the condition of beginning yet going out of it is the condition of what will follow, of the very unfolding of what will follow. The promise of what will follow is identical with the condition of its unfolding. Going out of mourning, we begin to grasp also, is both the promise and the condition of what will follow. In fact, what will follow—the promise of which going out of mourning is the

condition—is nothing but the state of *being out of mourning*. Going out of mourning is then the condition and the promise of being out of mourning.

However, because it is essentially aphoristic, Joyce's sententious imperative exceeds hermeneutic mastery, if by hermeneutic mastery we mean the establishment of an essential or core meaning. It exceeds hermeneutic mastery while it preaches affective mastery. For, were going out of mourning a naturally occurring phenomenon, it would have hardly become an imperative. In other words, the logic of the imperative itself is inhabited by the suspicion of its unobtainability. Joyce's imperative is, moreover, uttered by Leopold Bloom in the bosom of Hades, and, more accurately, at Glasnevin Cemetery, at Paddy Dignam's funeral—the axis around which revolves The "Hades" episode of *Ulysses*. Set thus, within an ostensibly charged site of mourning, the imperative becomes doubtlessly all the more urgent. Yet the more urgent the imperative becomes, the more uncertain its implementation appears to be. It is this fear of unfeasibility—really, the fear of the failure of implementation—that lurks behind, at the very back, of the intransigent nature of the command. The command is therefore preceded, if not conditioned, by the possibility, if not the expectancy, of failure.

The amount of emphasis laid on the command implies, however, something else, something that has to do with the nature or "business" of mourning itself: particularly, that "mourning" is a stumbling block, a crucible—a trial of the utmost difficulty. For, so powerful a commandment—*Go out of mourning first*—can only be directed toward an equally powerful challenge. No longer are we here merely *ordered* to go out of mourning, but we are precisely *challenged* to do so. If going out

of mourning is to be framed as a challenge, does this mean that it is *beyond* our means to meet that challenge?

To the extent that *Go out of mourning first* is understood as an order or imperative, it implies that it is within our capacity to act upon or accomplish it with a certain amount of success; to the extent that it is understood as a challenge, however, it implies that it is both within *and* beyond our capacity to realize. It can be argued, I suppose, that whether going out of mourning is an order or a challenge, the promise remains the same—the state of being out of mourning. I will concede that, at first glance, one might react to a challenge in the same fashion one might react to an order, yet it is oftentimes the case that to meet a challenge one has to push to the limits of one's means; moreover, one is, more often that not, *deprived* of the means to meet the challenge. One is, perhaps, deprived of the means of going out of mourning as soon as one enters (into) mourning. In other words, the very fact of being *in* mourning might imply that one is *unable* to go out of it, that all one's psychic resources are engaged in mourning such that there is no energy left to brace the passage out of mourning; were one able to go out of mourning, one would not probably have entered (into) it in the first place. Can one then stop at the threshold, refuse or decide not to enter (into) mourning? For why should one, after all, enter into something out of which one is soon required or challenged to go? How do we enter (into) mourning? What is mourning?

The Subject of Mourning

> *I wasn't even sure that I fully understood my own central concept of 'mourning.' I was taking it from Freud, but he didn't understand it either.*
>
> —Geoffrey Galt Harpham, "The Business of Mourning"

In his epochal metapsychological essay, "Mourning and Melancholia" (1917), Freud contends that mourning is, like melancholia, a *reaction* to loss. I will come to the question of melancholia's oppositional distinction to mourning in due course; suffice it now to stress that Freud associates it with the obstruction or sabotage of the "normal affect" of mourning (251). But, let us first examine the conditions of possibility of mourning itself, that is, the ways in which the loss of an object-cathexis becomes amenable to mourning. The loss does not solely involve the death of a beloved person, but it can also involve the demise of a number of abstract ideas or principles such as liberty or democracy, as well as the loss of an era, a political regime, an economic system, a historical movement, if not history itself. Whatever the loss, the appropriate emotional response is, Freud argues, mourning. Depending on the scale or magnitude of each suffered loss as well as on the psychic wherewithal of each mourner, the duration of mourning varies, sometimes significantly, but it is not expected, on the whole, to go beyond "a certain lapse of time" (252). The processive, "bit by bit," progress of mourning toward its end is in keeping with the movement in time. Mourning is then an economy of emotional response to loss that depends on the passage of time in order for it to carry out its internal work. It is not

for nothing that Freud refers to this emotional economy as a *Trauerarbeit*, a work of mourning. Yet what is exactly the kind of task that the work of mourning performs?

To make some headway into this difficult question, let us first examine Freud's answer:

> Reality-testing has shown that the loved object no longer exists, and it proceeds to demand that all libido shall be withdrawn from its attachment to that object. This demand arouses understandable opposition—it is a matter of general observation that people never willingly abandon a libidinal position, not even, indeed, when a substitute is already beckoning at them. This opposition can be so intense that a turning away from reality takes place and a clinging to the object through a medium of hallucinatory wishful psychosis. Normally, respect for reality gains the day. Nevertheless its orders cannot be obeyed at once. They are carried out bit by bit, at great expense of time and cathectic energy, and in the meantime the existence of the lost object is psychically prolonged. Each single one of the memories and expectations in which the libido is bound to the object is brought up and hypercathected, and detachment of the libido is accomplished in respect of it. Why this *compromise* by which the command of reality is carried out piecemeal should be so extraordinarily painful is not at all easy to explain in terms of economics. It is remarkable that this painful unpleasure is taken as a matter of course by us. The fact is, however, that when the work of mourning is completed the ego becomes free and uninhibited again. (253; italics mine)

Perhaps it is too premature to concur with Geoffrey Galt Harpham, in the above epigraph, that Freud did not really understand (what) mourning (is): after all, I make no claim to understanding (what) it (is) either.[1] Let us willingly suspend our judgment in an attempt to host—in accordance with the laws of hospitality relevant to critical thought (J. Hillis Miller, "The Critic as Host")—Freud's elaborate definition. To begin with, I would point out that Freud's argument is predicated upon the *reconciliatory* process that the work of mourning initiates (and presumably fulfills), not only with regard to the lost object but also with regard to the decrees of reality—

the "hard rock" against which the mourner's fantasies of recovering the object are shattered. Here, the conciliatory is consolatory. Since Stephen Dedalus insists that "Where there is a reconciliation...there must have been first a sundering" (*Ulysses* 247), what kind of sundering, one might ask, does the loss of the object result in?

It is generally agreed within psychoanalytic theory—and object relations theory,[2] in particular—that subjectivity is a relational enterprise. I shall treat this point in some detail later when I speak about the problem of identification; suffice it for the moment to stress that love objects serve to accommodate libidinal investments and to maintain psychic balance. Once a love object is lost, it becomes obvious that it can no longer fulfill its former function—the mediation of libido. Unless the (mourning) subject proceeds to withdraw and reinvest its libido in a new object, his or her ego is left in the lurch. Lost, the object can, however, be compromised in the service of acquiring new objects; the ego becomes, once the withdrawal and displacement of libido is accomplished, no longer debilitated by the loss of the object but quite invigorated. The loss of the object comes, in point of fact, to sunder an otherwise originary capacity or freedom of choosing and picking up objects. The regaining of this freedom of attaching to other objects must come then, at least theoretically, at the expense of the loyalty to lost objects. In this respect, the reconciliatory work of mourning can be understood as nothing less than an incitement to and a naturalization of the praxis of disloyalty.

Furthermore, the reconciliation with reality—or the exercise of reality-testing about which Freud speaks—is, as it were, an attempt at exorcising the "estrangement effect" produced by the loss of the object. In other words, the mourner attempts to

make reality his *own* again after having been *alienated* from it by the loss of his or her love object. In this sense, the work of mourning becomes a "genuinely hermeneutical" (Ricœur "What is a Text?" 344) process of refamiliarization with an unchanging but repressed reality—unchanging because it has always involved death and loss; repressed because the reality of death and loss would hardly have been painted by the libidinal adventurer at the time of the adventure.[3] The refamiliarization with reality implies, perhaps inherently, the refamiliarization with the technique of repression of the knowledge of death and mortality involved in the search of new objects. In other words, while loss (of a love object) and mourning might culminate in an illuminating and epiphanic experience—in that they open up the survivor, for instance, to the utter otherness of the object of desire—the completion of the work of mourning implies a (deliberate) forgetting or nescience of the harsh knowledge earned via the experience of mourning; it involves precisely the rebirth of the illusion of life and the repression of death.[4]

There is one additional feature of the reconciliatory feat that the work of mourning performs which I should like to address here. One of the aims of the work of mourning, as described by Freud, is the severance of the libidinal relations from the lost object. While it is not clear whether the work of severance leads to the acquisition of a new object or whether the acquisition of a new object leads to the completion of the work of severance, "There are," as Freud argues elsewhere, "nearly always residual phenomena, a partial hanging-back" to earlier libidinal fixations and to lost love objects ("Analysis Terminable and Interminable" 228). In order for the work of severance to be thorough and complete, it has to be founded on a sound

basis. This sound basis is nothing other than the cornerstone of psychoanalytic treatment writ large—remembering. Accordingly, "Each single one of the memories and expectations in which the libido is bound to the object is brought up and hypercathected, and detachment of the libido is accomplished in respect of it." I cannot here illustrate sufficiently the incommensurable activities of hypercathecting and detaching, but I shall demonstrate throughout the main chapters of the dissertation the constant slippage of hypercathecting-detachment into re-cathecting-attachment: far from being a means of completing the work of severance and mourning, hypercathecting and remembering become the *conservational* forces of the work of mourning beyond a certain lapse of time.

By and large, Freud's work of mourning does not seem to me to work *at* anything except its *own* dissolution. The work of mourning is the means and the end of the completion of the work of mourning. It defines that which must be accomplished yet it is the means of accomplishing it. Going out of mourning necessitates going through mourning, yet going through mourning cannot be experienced unless it is a going out of mourning. The end of mourning is the end of mourning. Nothing else can call for the dissolution of a work for its completion. In Freud's conception, mourning cannot be experienced as such, let alone maintained or sustained. It is a work that is always at work in view of its own work. In short, it is conjured up only to be conjured away and posited only to be deposited. At the end of the "Hades" episode, while leaving the cemetery, Bloom heaves a sigh of relief: "Back to the world again. *Enough of this place*" (*Ulysses* 145; italics mine). It is prohibited to be stationed in mourning. The temporality of mourning itself is

delimited and calculated: "Good Hamlet, cast thy nightly color off," Gertrude urges her son (*Hamlet* 1.2 36). Between a sense of *getting at it* or *going out of it* and a feeling of having *had enough of it*, mourning, as a form of being in the world, is lost to us, if not largely left unexplored.

One aim of this dissertation is to offer a corrective to Freud's insistence—at least, insofar as "Mourning and Melancholia" is concerned—on the temporal constraints of mourning. A more spatial conception of mourning seems to me congenial not only to relating to lost others, to the past, to history writ large, but also to the present and to the future. Another aim of this dissertation is to loosen the therapeutic grip of Freudian psychoanalysis on the concept of mourning. Relations are built in mourning, not in response to it. Only when mourning has been repressed does its return become unbearable. The imperative *Go out of mourning first* seems to me therefore nothing less than a further repression of an otherwise indispensable constituent of relations at large. By urging the mourner to reinvest in a new object, Freud does not, in my view, proffer us with more than a momentary solution to the inevitable recurrence of mourning. For as soon as one reinvests one's cathectic energy in a new object, one simply paves the way to another outbreak of mourning. We begin to grasp that mourning has less to do with the loss of the object than with the structure of desire itself.

Mourning and the Circle of Desire

Now that my ladder is gone
I must lie down where all the ladders start
In the foul rag and bone shop of the heart.

—W. B. Yeats, "The Circus Animals' Desertion"

In "Remembering, Repeating and Working-Through" (1914), Freud tells us how precarious the work of remembering is, not because it preys on flashes of memory, on slips of forgetting, as it were, but because remembering what had hitherto been kept in abeyance may lead only to the intensification of the illness rather than to its gradual cure. On this score, it ought to be observed that the "bit by bit" tempo of remembering and hypercathecting can lead to the intensification and conservation of mourning rather than to its dissipation. It is not that Freud is unaware of the fault lines of his postulations, but, perhaps, he is only too aware. In fact, Freud's awareness of the precarious nature of the analytics of remembering is such that he has recourse to *Gerede*, to idle talk in order to overstep the collapse of his theoretical premises: "one can easily console the patient," Freud observes, "by pointing out that [the intensifications of his illness] are only necessary and temporary aggravations and that one cannot overcome an enemy who is absent or not within range" (152). Only pure sophistry can reside comfortably in such conspicuous contradictions. On the one hand, Freud would comfort his patient by insisting on the *temporality* of the aggravations and, on the other, he would point out the precise opposite: that the perpetrator of his sufferings had left the field of battle before he could wrestle it to the ground. It is in this light that I shall attempt to understand Freud's insistence on the temporality of mourning, on the one hand, and his parallel

prescription of libidinal reinvestment, on the other. It seems to me that the temporality of mourning becomes untenable as soon as it becomes an impetus for new libidinal expeditions. For, no sooner does desire take root in a mortal object than eros is agitated by the anticipation of loss.

In *Eros in Mourning*, Henry Staten argues that "As soon as desire is something felt by a mortal being for a mortal being, eros (as desire-in-general) will always be to some degree agitated by the anticipation of loss" (xi). Far from being a reaction to objectal loss, mourning runs the gamut from libidinal approach and attachment to loss. Mourning is the unconscious of desire; it is wired into the circuit of desire but does not become manifest—at least culturally and ritualistically so—only following the loss of the object of desire.[5] In the spirit of deconstruction, Staten understands mourning, not as a reaction to loss or as a process of healing from loss, as Freud would have it, but as a dialectic which structures every move in the formation of object-relations. Furthermore, at the core of this "dialectic of mourning" are not only the moments of libidinal approach, attachment, and loss, but also the very concomitant "strategies of deferral, avoidance, or transcendence that arise in response to the threat of loss—strategies by which the self is 'economized' against the libidinal expenditure involved in mourning" (xi).

Anchored in desire, mourning cannot possibly overcome the ruptures of libidinal relations, much less by inciting the mourner to strike into yet another libidinal adventure. Here lies the ultimate irony of Freud's economy of libidinal exchange, of withdrawal and reinvestment of libido, of which mourning is the driving force. What Freud offers us, in other words, is not a radical and grassroots re-solution

of the problem of mourning but a blueprint for its perpetuation. In "Mourning and Melancholia," Freud does not explicitly communicate his otherwise strongly held belief that libido is the problem, that whether or not one divests his libido from a lost object-cathexis and reinvests it in another is not the heart of the matter, but a derivative or secondary solution to a permanent problem that has to do with the inextricably bound relationship between desire and mourning. The movement of desire is structured by mourning; the movement out of mourning is predicated upon the redistribution of desire. Here lies the circle of desire and mourning: the road out of mourning is precisely the road leading back into mourning. Insofar as going out of mourning is keyed to desire—to the *transferal* of libidinal energy into yet another mortal object—it is a perpetual *referral* back to mourning. The ultimate irony of Freud's conception of going out of mourning through the exit doors of desire is that it turns into a mise en abîme, begetting the very problem it seeks to solve. Instead of overcoming mourning, it multiplies and therefore perpetuates it.

Attentive to the reiterative circularity of eros and mourning and wearied of scenes of unseasonable grief, Platonism, Stoicism, and Christianity, among others, joined forces to create and disseminate a prophylactic theory of managing mortal eros *via* the implementation of an economics of idealization and transcendence. This is squarely, according to Henry Staten, the gist of the trajectory that the whole Western tradition has followed in its hitherto contested relation to eros. If all desire has mourning at its horizon, the more radical solution than the one with which Freud proffers us would proceed by the management of desire rather than by the management of mourning. For, it is always too late to work at mourning once desire

had found route to the object. Since desire for a mortal object is, by definition, tipped toward mourning, only by winnowing out desire or nipping eros in the bud can the possibility of transcending grief be concretized.

Lacan's contention—"That the one unbearable dimension of possible human experience is not the experience of one's death, which no one has, but the experience of the death of another" ("Desire in *Hamlet*" 37)—can be located in reference/contradistinction to the Stoic tradition of philosophical wisdom. In Lacan, this unbearable dimension of death refers to the "hole in the real" left by the loss of the object—a hole that, while it "sets the signifier in motion," cannot possibly be filled, since the signifier that designates it can be "purchased only with your own flesh and your own blood," that is, only through (the mourner's) bodily dissolution (38). In the Roman Stoic tradition of philosophy, it is precisely this eventuality of the mourner's bodily dissolution, this *memento mori* effect, so to speak, that motivates the very project of transcendence, "of learning how to extract one's libidinal substance from the mortal or losable objects in which it could be trapped" (Staten 5). This practice of anticipatory withdrawal of libido from the mortal objects is a diurnal askesis among the Roman Stoics. In *Enchiridion*, Epictetus describes this askesis with remarkable clarity:

> In every thing which pleases the soul, or supplies a want, or is loved, remember to add this to the (description, notion); what is the nature of each thing, beginning from the smallest? If you love an earthen vessel, say it is an earthen vessel which you love; for when it has been broken, you will not be disturbed. If you are kissing your child or wife, say that it is a human being whom you are kissing, for when the wife or child dies, you will not be disturbed. (qtd in Staten 5)

This might seem, of course, easier said than done, yet the inevitable mortality of the object is thought to be made less of a shock if diurnally painted. While there are obvious differences between, for instance, the Stoic emphasis on auto-sufficiency and self-regulation and the Christian insistence on God's grace, the fulcrum of the Platonic-Stoic-Christian argument is, according to Staten, the mastery or attenuation of the otherwise runaway force of eros prior to object loss. For, it is vigorously ordained that "no object that may be lost is to be loved in an unmeasured fashion—that only a limited or conditional libidinal flow toward such objects is to be allowed, such that the self remains ready and able to retract its substance from the object before the unmasterable violence of mourning might assail it" (10).

By means of an "economized" engagement of several variations on two "arche-texts," Homer's *Iliad* and the *Gospel of John*, Staten's *Eros in Mourning* delivers a compelling remapping of the idealizing-transcendentalizing and religious-philosophical Western tradition of policing and controlling desire. The subsequent chapters of the book—which range from studies of the troubadour song, Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* to Lacan's *Seminars*—lay bare the sedimentations and residues of this tradition of regulating desire in the Western literary and philosophical tradition from Shakespeare through to Lacan.

Taking my lead from Staten, I shall trace—in the first chapter of my dissertation, "Horizons of Desire, Horizons of Mourning: Joyce's *Dubliners*"—the sedimentations of this idealizing-transcendentalizing tradition in such early modern texts as "A Painful Case" and "The Dead." While Staten manages successfully to

delineate the vestiges of this tradition in an early modern text, *Heart of Darkness*—and while there are dregs of this tradition in other texts of narrative modernism—I do not intend in the space of this work to arrive at generic conclusions about the reverberations of the ideology of transcendence of desire and mourning in modernist texts. My intention, however, is to get a better grasp upon the problematic of desire and mourning, not by engaging it solely on a thematic level, but by discerning underneath the thematic interest in mourning the contours of its narrative and poetic inscription. While Staten's *Eros in Mourning* offers the groundwork for a new poetics, which we can confidently call a *poetics of mourning*, it does not articulate the tropological architecture of *narrative mourning*. Parallel to my exploration of the problematic of mourning in Joyce's *Dubliners*, for instance, I delve into the construction of the tropics of the rhetoric of mourning. In this vein, I shall demonstrate the ways in which prosopopoeia, for instance, serves as a trope of narrative mourning. On this score, prosopopoeia proves a very helpful deconstructive tool, in that it calls for its own deconstruction in the very process of its application.

In contradistinction to the ideology of transcendence, the tropologic of prosopopoeia forces on the (mourning) subject both the acknowledgment of desire (as is the case, for instance, with James Duffy in "A Painful Case") and the acknowledgment of mourning (as in the case of both James Duffy and Gabriel Conroy in "The Dead"). Prosopopoeia—understood as a dialectic of personification and reification (Paul de Man)—results not only in the collapse of the ideology of transcendence of mortal eros, but also in the face-to-face rendezvous with the Other (the lost object, death), which I deem of epiphanic, if not "empiphanic," proportions,

in that it opens up the (mourning) subject not only to the radical alterity of the deceased but also to the *reality* of death, of loss and of mourning. Yet the *reconciliatory* force of prosopopoeia with mortal eros is by no means *consolatory*. It leaves the mourner with the same old demand for mourning which he can neither fulfill nor disregard. On this score, it becomes more and more clear that neither the strategy of transcendence of eros nor the Freudian strategy of redistribution of eros is commensurate with the Joycean imperative—*Go out of mourning first*. It seems that the desire for the mortal object outwits the ideology of anticipatory transcendence and finds, albeit through detours, route to the object even in a postmortem fashion, as is the case with James Duffy in relation to Emily Sinico; by the same token, the desire for a lost object might persist not only in the face of the loss of that object but also despite the acquisition of a new object, as is the case with Gretta in relation to Michael Furey (lost love object) and Gabriel Conroy (new love object).

The outcome of the transcendence or embrace of mortal eros is the same: desire persists after the loss of the object. In this respect, the contribution of Freud's conception of mourning consists, I think, in opening up the possibility for the mourning subject to hijack this lingering desire for the lost object and lavish it on a new object. Freud's economics of mourning is, after all, an economics of managing surplus libido, libido that cannot presumably be directed any longer toward the lost object. To mourn is to tame a desire that has not been sated but interrupted. It is not for nothing that Freud deems the withdrawal of libido from the lost object as key to the success of the work of mourning. Yet this is the crux of the problem: not that the withdrawal of libido from the lost object is oftentimes thwarted but that such

withdrawal does not indeed seem to be possible. For, a love object is not *external* but *internal* to the structure of the ego. Disregarding the entrapments of desire of which we have hitherto spoken, the withdrawal of libido would have been possible were the (lost) object situated outside the ego. The further afield we look, the more cognizant we become of the challenging nature of Joyce's imperative—*Go out of mourning first*. Now, after having seen the ways in which this challenge has to do with the circular logic of desire and mourning, it becomes necessary to address the topography of the (lost) object in relation to the architecture of the ego. It will become clear, once I have rounded out my argument, that the (lost) object cannot be objectified (i.e., distanced from the ego), since it must have always—and as soon as it has been approached and cathected—assumed a place in the geography of the ego. The (lost) object is no longer, to put it in a more Derridean fashion, that of which the ego can speak, but precisely that from out of which the ego speaks.

The Quandary of Identification

> *Some of the things that one is unwilling to give up, because they give pleasure, are nevertheless not ego but object; and some sufferings that one seeks to expel turn out to be inseparable from the ego in virtue of their internal origin.*
>
> —Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents*

In *Civilization and its Discontents*, Freud pursues a nowadays much discussed Hegelian theme—happiness. Disenchanted and pessimistic, as he generally is, Freud contends that "Unhappiness is much less difficult to experience." Freud singles out

three hurdles in front of happiness: bodily decay, the external world, and, most importantly, "relations to other men" (264). While I do not intend to pursue this theme of happiness, there is nothing contradictory in considering the movement out of mourning as a function of the pursuit of happiness in general. Yet, as characteristic of his overall philosophical logic, Freud always starts by training psychoanalytic solutions prior to showing how untenable they are. The fulfillment of the work of mourning is Freud's solution to the outbreak of grief following the loss of a love object. Yet this solution is, as I shall demonstrate further, most often unsuccessful, not solely because of individual incompetence, but because of the structure of the psyche itself. One can reproduce verbatim Freud's view of the impossibility of happiness and locate it in reference to the impossibility of mourning: "when we consider how unsuccessful we have been in precisely this field of prevention of suffering, a suspicion dawns on us that here, too, a piece of unconquerable nature may lie behind—this time a piece of our own *psychical constitution*" (274; italics mine).

How is it that, when one is asked to mourn, one is in point of fact asked to expel something that is nevertheless interior to the ego? An answer to this question will have to lead to the discussion of the perplexing nature of identification. Throughout his work, Freud continually reformulated his theory of identification; whether by invoking the formation or the dissolution of the Oedipus complex, Freud always tried to inventory a new language to articulate the enigma of identification more fully and more thoroughly. In "On Narcissism" (1914), for instance, he traces back the development of the process of identification to the emergence of

"autoeroticism," which he later dubs as "ego-libido" or "primary narcissism" (84). The first form of identification appears in the veneer of a primary narcissism, of an ego-libido, part of which is later transferred into an "object-libido"—the mother. Freud had not produced a full account of the transition from ego-libido to object-libido, but, in "Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety" (1926), such a transition is described in terms of a different experience of pain. In a passage that is reminiscent of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud states that this transition is first initiated by the intermittent absences of the mother—absences that are not experienced on a physical plane but on a mental one. "The transition from physical pain to mental pain corresponds," Freud concludes, "to a change from narcissistic cathexis to object-cathexis" (332). This distinction between the two experiences of pain is important insofar as it reaffirms the psychogenic—and therefore more problematic—nature of mourning.

Identification can therefore be first defined as the expression of an "emotional tie" with another person—most commonly, one of the parents or both (*Group Psychology* 134). This identification soon sparks the emergence of the Oedipus complex—a confused state of identification and libidinal attachment, in which the boy confounds libidinal object-cathexis (directed toward the mother) with desexualized object-cathexis (directed normally toward the father) and finds himself therefore locked with his father in an oedipal struggle that ends with an intensified identification with his oedipal rival and a regressive identification with his mother. It is beyond the scope of this inquiry to delve into the "gender trouble" that the oedipal struggle creates; it suffices to stress, however, the wedge that the dissolution of the

oedipal complex installs between two types of identification: the one with the father (mimetic) and the one with the mother (identificatory).[6]

In other words, what is important for us here to bear in mind is that identification is at the origin of the Oedipus complex and, at the same time, the only means of dissolving it through an intensified identification with the parent of the same gender and a correlative abandonment of identification with the parent of the different gender. We should not fail to note here also that identification, insofar as it serves to dissolve the (originary) identificatory ambivalence of the Oedipus complex, acts in an analogous manner to the work of mourning. In fact, in *The Ego and the Id*, identification is understood as a *function* of the work of mourning, in that it becomes "the sole condition under which the id can give up its objects" (368). If the work of mourning consists in the work of severance with the object, identification permits this severance to occur by enabling the interiorization of the lost object. Insofar as identification is—as is the case in "Mourning and Melancholia"[7]—a function of melancholia and insofar as it is now translated as a function of the work of severance, melancholia revolves in the orbit of mourning. In fact, it is, as Freud also suggests, "typical" of the work of mourning.

In this respect, Freud explains how his exploration of the concept of identification—and, especially, its annexation to the formation and dissolution of the Oedipus complex—allows him to correct his earlier theory of melancholia:

> We succeeded in explaining the painful disorder of melancholia by supposing that [in those suffering from it] an object which was lost has been set up again in the ego—that is, that an object-cathexis has been replaced by an identification. *At that time, however, we did not appreciate the full significance of this process and did not know how common and how typical it is.* (367; italics mine)

While in "Mourning and Melancholia," Freud suspected melancholia of a pathological disposition, he seems here to rectify that attitude by demonstrating "how common and how typical" is the melancholic procedure of setting up objects inside the ego. What is even more striking than the alleged typicality of melancholic identification is Freud's discovery of its indispensability for any envisaged work of mourning:

> When it happens that a person has to give up a sexual object, there quite often ensues an alteration of his ego which can only be described as a setting up of the object inside the ego, as it occurs in melancholia; the exact nature of this substitution is as yet unknown to us. It may be that by this *introjection*, which is a kind of *regression* to the mechanism of the oral phase, the ego makes it easier for the object to be given up or renders that process possible. *It may be that this identification is the sole condition under which the id can give up its objects*. (368; italics mine)

While Freud is here concerned with the theorization of the dissolution of the Oedipus complex, his argument is in fact haunted by the concept of mourning for which he had previously been proud to offer a commensurate and readable account. Now, it seems that the reverse is possible—that only melancholia can be accounted for with a measure of ease. Yet there is no reason not to believe that Freud's original conception of mourning is still at work here. The transition from the identification with the father and the abandonment of identification with the mother corresponds to the transition that the work of mourning is expected to effect—the identification with a new object and the abandonment of the lost one—except that in the case of the child the mother is not totally lost.[8]

Only on the condition of the interiorization of the mother—by way of a regression to an oral and cannibalistic phase—can the resolution of the Oedipus

complex become possible. In the same vein, the work of mourning cannot be accomplished unless through a melancholic identification with—or internalization and incorporation of—the lost object. Such a strategic identificatory readjustment has warranted Judith Butler to conclude that "melancholic identification permits the loss of the object in the external world precisely because it provides a way to *preserve* the object as part of the ego and, hence, to avert the loss as a complete loss" (*Psychic Life of Power* 134). Of course, Butler is here adumbrating her "never-never" theory of "melancholy gender" (138), in which a "double disavowal, a never having loved, and a never having lost" is superimposed on, for instance, an otherwise originary childhood desire for the parent of the different sex (137-8). Among other things—namely, the deconstruction of normative heterosexuality as a "foreclosure of homosexuality"—Butler deconstructs the cultural prohibition against incest by inscribing it in a site of "repudiation," "refusal," or "sacrifice of desire" for the parent of the different sex—a desire that remains "ungrieved and ungrievable" (137-8). While the deconstruction of normative heterosexuality is better theorized than the deconstruction of the cultural prohibition against incest, Butler's argument enables nonetheless my reflection on a broader conception of subjectivity in relation to ungrievable losses, losses that can neither be avowed nor grieved.

Rather than dwelling on the prohibition against incest, I mean to explore—in the second chapter of my dissertation titled, "The Vicissitudes of Melancholia in Freud and Joyce"—whether an adulterous desire, for instance, can be nurtured as well as grieved (when it is lost or frustrated) in a culture that proscribes it. In "A Painful Case," Mrs. Sinico, a married and frustrated wife, pursues a romantic

adventure with James Duffy, a loner. When their bond grew strong, and Mrs. Sinico's horizon of desire fused with his, Duffy suddenly broke the relationship, arguing that "every bond is a bond to sorrow." Mrs. Sinico is left with the impossible task of mourning a loss that cannot be accommodated in a Catholic Irish culture that proscribes its inaugurating or originating adulterous desire. That such a loss must remain unspeakable—"ungrieved and ungrievable"—leaves the mourning subject with the uneasy recourse to silence or, as is the case with Mrs. Sinico, to suicide. Reading Butler reading Freud, I investigate the ways in which an ungrievable loss can achieve suicidal proportions if rejoined by the guilt of having nurtured an adulterous desire. On a slightly different plane than that of Mrs. Sinico, Fr. Flynn, a priest absorbed in the diurnal askesis of the transcendence of mortal eros, is reborn—after the breaking of his holy vase, his ladder of transcendence, to use Yeats's metaphor—into the loss of a desire for grief he had long forsaken and repudiated. Fleshing out and nuancing Freud's theory of melancholic identification by means of Abraham and Torok's distinction between introjection and incorporation, I speculate on the affective vicissitudes of melancholia into suicide (Mrs. Sinico) as well as into madness (Fr. Flynn). That a melancholic identification should suddenly swerve into suicide or into madness signals the persistence of the violence and ambivalence characteristic of the oedipal rivalry on whose pyre melancholic identification is established.

The virtue of Freud's theory of melancholic identification is that it not only enables the ego to work through the Oedipus complex and interiorize the object-cathexis it has to abandon, but also prepares the ego to apply the same procedure to

subsequent libidinal attachments. The ego evolves on the wreckage of its object-cathexes. Melancholic identification seems to offer the proverbial formula for the success of the work of mourning, that is, for going out of mourning without being inhibited by the fear of having to reenter it again in every attachment to a new object. An exploration of this voracious emotion in relation to consumerist society may offer laudable insights into the affective mechanics of consumption. Unfortunately, there will be no space for this kind of exploration in the context of this dissertation. In fact, my aim here is not to pursue a consumerist notion of identification but a rather consuming and transformational notion of melancholic identification. The fact that melancholic identification is key to the conservation *and* the abandonment of the object-cathexis—that is, to the resolution, in the case of a boy, of the Oedipus complex and to what I call the *mournfulfilling* reconciliation (i.e., reconciliation that fulfills the task of mourning) to the loss of the mother as a pursuable libidinal object—leads to the striking supposition that "the character of the ego is," in the words of Freud, "a precipitate of abandoned object-cathexes and that it contains the history of those object-choices" (*Ego and Id* 368). Freud proceeds to lend credence to this supposition by a remarkable amplification of the scope of the ego and of the unidentifiable objects that contribute to its formation: "when the ego forms its super-ego out of the id, it may perhaps only be reviving shapes of former egos and be bringing them to resurrection" (378).

While Freud's earlier theories have been known (and, sometimes, reproached) for their concentration on the individual, it becomes more and more clear—and at least as early as the writing of *Totem and Taboo*—that psychoanalysis enables the

construction of a theory of religion (*Moses and Monotheism* and *The Future of an Illusion*) and of culture (*Civilization and its Discontents* and *Group Psychology*), that is, a theory of both individual and collective history. I do not here intend to discuss the still rampant resistances to psychoanalysis of which Jacques Derrida, among others, has spoken at length (*Resistances of Psychoanalysis* and "Let us not Forget—Psychoanalysis"). I have no intention either to conquer the many pockets of resistances to psychoanalysis, for psychoanalysis is the first to admit that there will always be remains, residues of resistances, and perhaps psychoanalysis itself is nothing but the history of those resistances, resistances whose confrontation in a psychoanalytic fashion has eventually made possible the very evolution of the technique of psychoanalysis (namely, the technique of *Durcharbeiten* or working-through). It is not for nothing that the theory of the ego itself is a theory of remains, a history of what remains (even there where there are no remainders). Freud insists that, even while "it is not possible to speak of direct inheritance in the *ego*," the ego nevertheless harbours, under the influence of the inheritable id, "the existences of countless egos" (*Ego and Id* 378).

Freud's description of ego-formation as a function of melancholy identification and of the ego as a "precipitate of abandoned object-cathexes" already places the ego within a community of egos. His further description of the formation of the super-ego on the pyre of the id's prohibited desires locates the ego in a history to which it is nevertheless belated (*Ego and Id* 376). The ego is thus not only the precipitate of its abandoned objects, but also the haunted site of "shapes of former egos" whose ghosts are resurrected in the very process of the ego's evolution. The

gothic air of this description cannot be overstressed; what is important to stress, however, is the suspicion that the ego might be inhabited not only by a plethora of residual objects, but also by a crowd of ghosts it cannot fully account for. The gothic underworld of the ego is brought to the fore in Derrida's *Specters of Marx*: "But this Ego, this living individual would itself be inhabited and invaded by its own specter. *It would be constituted by specters of which it becomes the host and which it assembles in the haunted community of a single body.* Ego=ghost" (133; italics mine).

Perhaps I should now refine the question I asked earlier: "How is it that, when one is asked to mourn, one is in point of fact asked to expel something that is nevertheless interior to the ego?" Melancholy identification has been so far advanced as a function of mourning, as a means of giving up the lost object by setting it up inside the ego through the economies of identification and consequent ego-transformation. Yet given that this operation might also involve the possibility of "reviving shapes of former egos," it ultimately *reopens* the question of mourning. The reopening of this question is provoked, not by the ego's own history of melancholy identification, but by the indirect inheritance to which the ego is subjected in the process of identitarian identification. The reopening of the question of mourning coincides with the resurrection of an object that cannot be located within the cathectic history of the ego writ large. This object is resurrected in the process of the ego's entry into a community of egos characterized by a sharable repertoire of cathectic history. It is when the resurrected object compels the *return* to the history of that object—in order to locate the ego in reference to it—that the melancholic

identification segues into a melancholic bafflement, and that the wedge is installed between the *identification with* and the *identification of* the resurrected object.

In the third chapter of my dissertation, "Still Harping on her Mother: Kincaid's Identific(a)tions and the (Ab)uses of Mnemosyne," I read Kincaid's fiction and non-fiction writing in terms of this interval between the *identification with* and the *identification of* the object. For how do we understand a statement such as this: "My history begins like this: in 1492, Christopher Columbus discovered the New World"? (Kincaid, "In History" 153) Such a statement implies, in my view, a *claim* to a history of loss—really, to the loss of history itself—that remains nevertheless unlocatable in narrative historiography. The statement invokes a date, a beginning of a presumably traumatic history, yet, in so doing, it betrays the inability to cope with the magnitude of what is invoked. Melancholy identification as a function of mourning pertains to those objects locatable in the cathectic history of the ego, those objects that the ego lived through their loss; in Kincaid, however, it is often the case that the objects invoked or claimed are locatable neither in the cathectic history of the ego nor in the wider history of the community of the egos to which the ego belongs. The demand for the identification of the object insists as long as the identification with it persists. It is not that the identification of the object is a prerequisite to the identification with it, much less that the identification with any given object presupposes its identification, or its epistemological and ontological transparency.

Would the *identification with* the unidentifiable object, however, restore it to identification? One of Kincaid's essays in *My Garden (Book)* is titled "To Name Is to Possess." The main argument of the essay is stated in the title: that knowledge of

things proceeds by naming them and that naming them is ultimately a means of possessing them. In Kincaid's fiction and non-fiction, we are oftentimes presented with a loss that cannot be repossessed except through the task of naming, but the task cannot be fulfilled because the loss exceeds the catachrestic names in which it is inscribed. In fact, catachrestic designations of the lost object sprawl untidily all over the place in response to the demand to identify the site of one's identification. The main purpose of this chapter is to offer an affective poetics of understanding the unrepresentability of historical trauma—the history of slavery, which presents itself throughout Kincaid's writings as "the wrong," the crime," or "what happened". The impossibility of articulating quite fully, beyond the maddening tropologic of catachresis, the object with which one identifies yet of which one can offer no identification stems, I argue, from the affective temperament of melancholic identification that subsides it.

In postcolonial writing and particular in Kincaid's work, to stake a claim for a lost object is to stake a claim for justice, yet the problem is that the identification of the lost object hinders, rather than makes possible, the birth of justice. Justice, if it is to come, has to come from without and not from within the history it seeks to inscribe. This seems the only way of ascertaining that justice is, in the words of Derrida, "removed from the fatality of vengeance" (*Specters* 21). Yet how can narrative (mourning) recuperate and inscribe history at the very moment it attempts to move beyond its mooring clutches? How do we reconcile the demands for inscriptive justice, for right-writing the law, with the demands of incalculable justice—the quasi-messianic justice that belongs to the future-to-come (but certainly

not to the history of which it wants to account)? Only when the recuperation and inscription of history is discontinuous with the presentist "putting on trial" of the actors in such a history—and only when narrating colonial history is dissociated with expiation—can we speak of justice as an enabling structure, as a movement beyond history, that is, as an instance, in Derrida's lexicon, of the "incalculability of the gift" (23). The narrative inscription of history (as a lost object) has to emerge from a logic it seeks to surpass. It is at this stage that one can concur with Spivak that "Literature contains the element of surprising history" (*Death of a Discipline* 55).

Let Us Raise the Threshold of Mourning

All work is also the work of mourning.

—Derrida

Chapter three investigates the possibility of situating melancholic identification not only at the level of egoic history, but also at the collective level of history. Kincaid's claim that her history began in 1492 requires that we flesh out the narrow horizon of melancholic identifications with lost object(s) such that it includes both the particular context of individual losses and the broader historical contexts which have, after all, originated in those losses. This is all the more important since individual losses in Kincaid's fiction are constantly understood in terms of the vaster historical perspective in which they are produced. The overture to my third chapter attempts to show the relevance of Freud's technique of analytic treatment—as exposed in "Remembering, Repeating and Working-Through" (1914)—to any theory of narrative mourning, since narrative mourning and analytic treatment are both

concerned with the task of tracing back a symptom (of an unlocatable loss) to a historical past—a task that eventuates, as is the case with Freud's case histories, in the *construction* of that past.

I deem it theoretically fruitful as well as analytically and critically beneficial to draw an analogy between the dyad of transference-resistance at work in every psychoanalytic situation and its proximate analog at work, at variable depths, in postcolonial narratives. One can, at least provisionally, argue that the open page of the book-to-be occupies, for the postcolonial writer, the same status as the analyst occupies in the eyes of the analysand. The transference and inscription of weighted experiences of colonial legacy are for the postcolonial writer—by virtue of being fraught with uncertainties, anxieties, scruples, inhibitions, etc.—a task as psychically taxing as the transference (dictated by the protocols of the analytic situation) of disquieting memories in the case of the analysand. The analogy is not immaculate since the transference-resistance dyad is, in the case of the postcolonial writer, triangulated by the reader or the addressee while it might remain in the case of the analysand, buried in the analyst's files unless when turned into a case history. What is important to stress, however, is that the postcolonial writer—by virtue of being the analysand in relation to the analytic narrative demand—might find himself, as if naturally, acting in a way not so dissimilar to that of the analysand in the analytic situation.

Having established the terms of the analogy, I then inquire whether the hurdle of repetition compulsion so rampant in psychoanalytic treatments is permissible in (postcolonial) narrative mourning. Freud maintains that "The main instrument…for

curbing the patient's compulsion to repeat and for turning it into a motive for remembering lies in the handling of the transference. *We render the compulsion harmless, and indeed useful, by giving it the right to assert itself in a definite field*" (154; italics mine). On this score, if the narrative rendition and inscription of colonial legacy is to grow into something serviceable, it has, perhaps, to host the repetition of insults of colonial history; it has to enact partially the structures of that history; it has, in the words of Hamlet, *to speak daggers but to use none*.

Perhaps we should understand Kincaid's narrative acts of aggression, especially in *A Small Place*, in this vein, as ways of channelling the anger fomented by an unreadable history of colonial transgressions. Ali Behdad shows that postcolonial narratives are, by virtue of their belatedness, "exercises in remembering; they bring into consciousness the repressed time of the other" (76). This time of the other can be understood as the unregistered loss of the object of melancholy identification—history writ large. They attempt, in other words, to bear witness to the foreclosed scene of imperialism. Bearing witness must then be understood as an attempt to narrate the impossible, that unlocatable thing to which we will never be able to bear witness, that which is precisely the site of the "collapse of witnessing" (Dori Laub). Bearing witness must therefore start from within the impossibility of which it speaks and of which it is an effect. Bearing witness is always thus—the impossible, par excellence. It has nothing to do with being on the spot while a traumatic event breaks out or takes place; it has nothing to do with being a witness to this and that—bearing witness must always come after the event. It is a function of telling, of narrating, of reliving and repeating. Narrative mourning is ultimately

trained on the impossibility of bearing witness to the wedge that colonialism enters in the psyche of the individual between his present and his past.

In the last chapter of my dissertation—"The Ineluctable Modality of Posthumous Infidelity: The Limits of Narrative Mourning in Kincaid and Derrida"—I reflect further on the impossibility of narrative mourning. More precisely, by staging a confrontation between Kincaid's narrative mourning of her brother, *My Brother*, and Derrida's *The Work of Mourning*, I attempt to point out the ethical limits of narrative mourning. I explore the ways in which narrative mourning—or what is called writing in general—following the death of a relative (Kincaid) or a friend (Derrida) may become the uneasy site of an ethical disquiet. If "writing," as Derrida argues in *Cinders*, "denies and recognizes its debt in a single dash," in what way can narrative mourning become possible and impossible? (30)

With Derrida, we reach the point at which we may deliberately have to raise the threshold at which we should start to act on Joyce's command—*Go out of mourning first*. It is no longer a question of going out of mourning, but rather a question of dwelling in mourning. On the one hand, "All work," Derrida contends, "works *at mourning*. In and of itself. Even when it has the power to give birth, even and especially when it plans to bring something to light and let it be seen" (143). Since the work of mourning is already there at work, in every kind of work, not exempting this one, it becomes the impossible to resolve, less so following the death of a friend or a relative. On the other hand, in recognizing the limits of narrative, we do also recognize the limits of the present work, given that "one should not be able to say anything about the work of mourning, anything about this subject, since it cannot

become a theme, only another experience of mourning that comes to work over the one who intends to speak. To speak of mourning or of anything else" (143).

With Derrida's *The Work of Mourning* we are left to stare blindly into the awesome face of "impossible mourning" which is said to suspend the mourner between two impossible choices—two infidelities: (1) to write and therefore to deny the deceased the right to speak or (2) not to write and to send the deceased from the silence of death to the silence of forgetting, the "worse than death," in Lyotard's idiom. We are left to wonder whether an ethics of impossible mourning can proffer us with a *modus operandi* and whether the practice of impossible mourning is not phantasmagorical in orientations, that is, whether or not it is amenable to application. The question is whether the very idea of doing away with therapeutic mourning can be thinkable, since it tends to affirm, in turn, the inevitability of a discourse on the impossibility of mourning to devolve—and to be anchored and grounded—in a deep-seated contentment that mourning is possible. Otherwise, how can one ever dream of mourning the very idea of clinical mourning, the idea of the possibility of mourning? In order for the very idea of impossible mourning to be possible, the clinical idea of mourning itself has to remain possible. Does not the idea of an impossible mourning take for granted the idea of possible mourning? Otherwise, who would be able to mourn Freud's theory of mourning?

In other words, we either have to assume that mourning is impossible—and abstain from exhorting people to mourn the old idea of successful mourning in favour of an ethically impossible mourning—or we have to concede that mourning is all there is, and that the idea of impossible mourning itself is built on, if not determined

by the clandestine, thwarted, or unconscious belief that mourning is eventually possible. While I believe Derrida's idea of impossible mourning is an attempt to deconstruct and to perfect the law of mourning—the law of the human—my main question remains the following: how can we mourn this idea of (clinical) mourning? How can we mourn mourning? How can we be born into impossible mourning? Is not there—in the very idea of impossible mourning, already located in its very core—a degree of possible mourning? At the same time, (why, if at all) should this idea of possible mourning be understood as a spark of affirmation?

CHAPTER ONE:

Horizons of Desire, Horizons of Mourning: Joyce's *Dubliners*[1]

Every bond is a bond to sorrow.

—James Joyce, "A Painful Case"

Mourning is the horizon of all desire.

—Henry Staten, *Eros in Mourning*

In a compelling article, entitled "*Dubliners* and the Art of Losing," John Gordon maps variations on Joyce's literary appropriation of a strange Irish habit that consists of converting accidental absences into engineered subtractions, simple lacks into suffered losses. But, while Gordon glosses over the more sedimented cultural twin of such a habit (i.e. the tendency to defuse transhistorical/individual losses into constitutive or structural absences) and attributes the alleged habit generally to a kind of hermeneutics broken loose from its historical moorage, I would rather ascribe it to a fully-fledged psychic apparatus, set in motion largely by a post-famine cultural history of successive atrocious losses. Rather than remapping the literary inscriptions of such a history—a task accomplished differently by many scholars such as David Lloyd, Seamus Deane, Declan Kiberd, to mention only a few—my interest in this chapter, as well as in the next one, branches out into a far more modest direction: to lay bare, through a close examination of a number of characters from *Dubliners*, the inscriptions of patterns of psychic engagement with loss not at the level of such a collective history but at the level of the individual, personal history. There are of course significant overlaps between the management of loss at the collective and the

individual levels, namely that working through individual losses hinges considerably on a collective expression of solidarity, such that the examination of the individual patterns of containing loss might teach us ultimately about the collective ones.

The *Dubliners* collection is peopled with characters who handle loss quite differently. The difference lies primarily in the *affective* response a given loss generates. In "The Sisters," for instance, while Fr. Flynn is deeply aggrieved by the break of his chalice, the boy narrator seems hardly saddened by the death of Fr. Flynn himself. Eveline, Mrs. Sinico, and Gretta, on the one hand, and James Duffy and Gabriel Conroy, on the other, offer a number of interesting variations on such an antithetical model of affective response to loss, established at the very outset of the collection. In sum, the difference between these two types of characters lies in whether or not a given loss arouses in them, if at all, the appropriate (i.e., expected) emotional response.

Since Freud's normative bifurcation of the affects generated by loss into "Mourning and Melancholia" (1917), the tendency has been to pry apart the affect of mourning from that of melancholia. In Freudian terms, mourning, like melancholia, originates in loss; but while mourning is supposed to liberate the mourner from the tyranny of the lost object, melancholia instantiates nothing but a submission to such a tyranny. Freud describes the task the work of mourning (*Trauerarbeit*) performs as follows: "Reality-testing has shown that the loved object no longer exists, and it proceeds to demand that all libido shall be withdrawn from its attachment to that object" (253). Although this description sounds at *prima facie* no more than a temporal mechanical operation of *withdrawal* and *displacement* of cathexes,

implicated obviously in a more global system of libidinal circulation and exchange, Freud cautions us that the path of the work of mourning towards fulfilment might be easily stalled by the survivor's unwitting attachment to, or fixation on, the lost love-object.

For Freud, then, it is incumbent upon the survivor of loss (loss of any sort: an ideal, an object, a thing, or an abstraction, etc.) to consciously proceed by *working through* (*Durcharbeiten*) the libidinal break or disarray that the loss of the love-object results in. Such a process of working through is expected to be painful, energy-consuming, and long or short depending primarily on the survivor's *will* to master the suffered loss. This is all the more so given that "people," as Freud rightly states, "never willingly abandon a libidinal position, not even, indeed, when a substitute is already beckoning to them" (253). However, Freud reassures us that, "normally, respect for reality gains the day" and when the "piecemeal," bit by bit work of mourning is completed, "the ego becomes free and uninhibited again" (253). In other words, the ego has to resignedly come to the conclusion that it has no alternative but to prostrate itself before the irrevocable verdict of reality, to let itself be commanded by it in the hope that its libidinal cathexes might eventually be re-oriented toward, and reinvested in, a new love-object.

That hope might, however, be nuanced by a struggle of two ambivalent and contending forces—"the one seeks to detach the libido from the object, the other to maintain this position of the libido against the assault"—a struggle that takes place in the unconscious and whose path to consciousness is, Freud maintains steadfastly, "blocked." This struggle coincides with the onset of melancholia, which Freud

suspects—at least in "Mourning and Melancholia"—of a pathological disposition. Seeking to offer primarily a reading that traces the *therapoetic inscriptions* of mourning in *Dubliners*, I will try to carve out my argument in the hinge between the emergence of eros, object-cathecting, loss, and the onset of melancholia, along with its vicissitudes—the entropic regressive drive into what Freud deems an infantile form of narcissism, compounded by the death drives, which can, in turn, be countered by a turn round into mania—as I shall demonstrate in the next chapter. In this chapter, by invoking the work of Freud and Henry Staten, I shall try to place the emphasis on what in a number of characters in *Dubliners* emerges as a structural incompetence, a constitutive inability to carry out the double bind of withdrawal and displacement of libido. Such an inability lies at the borderline between melancholia—including its narcissistic excesses, or recesses—and the strategies of managing mortal eros in general. In *Dubliners*, narcissism is only occasionally presented as a regression (following the loss of an object-libido) into a primary oral phase *à la Freudienne*, but takes the form more often, as it will become clear in due course, of a self-regulated, Spartan strategy of libidinal investment, exemplarily implemented by James Duffy and Gabriel Conroy.

While appropriating concepts from a Ferenczian lexicon, Abraham and Torok expound—especially, in *The Shell and the Kernel*—a theory of mourning which remains generally caught in Freud's system of affective bifurcation: they associate "introjection" with successful mourning and "incorporation" with an unsuccessful mourning or with, what Torok had originally called, "the illness of mourning." In other words, introjection, understood as a process of egoic broadening and expansion,

amounts to Freud's version of an achieved mourning, which is nothing but the accomplishment of the process of withdrawal and displacement of cathexes. Furthermore, although attentive and sensitive to conceptual nuances, Abraham and Torok's conceptualization of incorporation as the fantasy of ingesting the lost love-object is by and large very much similar to Freud's melancholia, understood as the ambivalent but sustained struggle in the ego between the forces that want to abandon the lost love-object and the other forces which, in their identification with the lost-object, want to incorporate it within the ego by devouring it ("Mourning and Melancholia" 258).

Tempting as it is, this particular system of affective bifurcation is not the norm in *Dubliners*. Joyce hardly presents us in this collection with characters who can exemplify respectively either Freud's or Abraham and Torok's conception of *Trauerarbeit* or introjection. No significant character in *Dubliners* can be said to have effectively reached the affective closure afforded by the work of mourning, not even the boy of "Araby," whose sense of shame by the end of the story intensifies, thus wreaking havoc in his erstwhile self-contained psychic balance.

Imbibing from a Homeric, pre-Platonic culture as well as from a Platonic-Stoic-Christian tradition, Joyce discreetly cloaks *Dubliners* in the veneer of the two traditions, both at one and the same time. On the one hand, we are presented with such characters as Fr. Flynn, Eveline, Mrs. Sinico, and Gretta who variably fall prey to the unbridled outbreaks of grief, actuated by the loss of a given object-libido. Such characters are always viscerally prompted to react to a loss that must have always taken them by surprise. Their libidinal attachment to the objects of their desire is not

only unconditional but also unreserved, unseasoned, and unmonitored. Such characters are, to use Henry Staten words, "not yet sedimented with the strategies of idealization and transcendence" (22)—those priceless buoys that keep the sufferer of loss afloat within the otherwise overwhelming storms of grief. On the other hand, we are presented with such unmournful and intellectually triumphant characters as James Duffy and Gabriel Conroy, who are prefigured early in the collection by the boy-narrator of "The Sisters" and the boy-narrator of "Araby".

In *Eros in Mourning* (1995), Henry Staten manages successfully to isolate, at least technically, two paradigmatic moments in the Western history of libidinal investiture. The first moment, which he situates—through a focalized reflection on the *Iliad*, and particularly on Achilles's controversial relations to Briseis and Patroklos—in Homeric times, is a moment of illimitable grief. Achilles, Staten argues, is driven into a maze of endless mourning simply because of his originary blindness to the mortality of the objects of his desire. Contrary to Freud, Staten does not treat mourning simply *qua* a process or a work of reparation, much less *qua* a reaction to loss. Like Derrida (in, for instance, *Mémoires for Paul de Man*, or in the recently published collection of *éloges*, *The Work of Mourning*), Staten understands, as I have demonstrated in my introductory chapter, mourning as a *dialectic* permeating the very incipient structure of libidinal attachment. "As soon as desire is something felt by a mortal being for a mortal being," Staten writes, "eros (as desire-in-general) will always be to some degree agitated by the anticipation of loss—an anticipation that operates even with regard to what is not yet possessed" (xi). Every

desire is therefore shadowed by the mortality of the object of desire, and really by the ineluctable modality of mourning *constitutive of every object-relation.*

Such an uncompromising state of affairs makes the libidinal adventurer think twice before squandering his entire libido on a mortal object. Such is not the case, Staten shows, with Achilles who loves with a force second only to the force of mourning that seals his heart once his object-libido is lost. According to Staten, Platonism, Stoicism, and Christianity have joined forces in the creation and dissemination of a more salubrious theory of object-relations. Staten sees such a collaborative project as the second moment in the history of the management of libidinal investment. Attentive to the mortality of all object-libidos, the fulcrum on which such a cumulative theory turned has *ab initio* been strategies of idealization and transcendence of mortal objects:

> The fundamental terms of classical problematic of eros are simple...one may love mutable, contingent beings *as such*, in which case one is subject to limitless mourning; or one may love such being as a step on the way to the true, ultimate, and unfailing object of love, in which case mourning is mastered or at least mitigated by a movement of transcendence. (7)

Although Joyce emplots these two socio-economic models of libidinal expenditure within the texture of *Dubliners*, he does not seem to show a preference for either; quite to the contrary, he seems to argue that both models serve eventually only to foster the paralysis endemic to most Dubliners. More precisely, the transcendence of mortal eros is inhabited, like Freud's whole theory of mourning, by a potentially impossible double-bind, which asks of us not only to *conjure* but simultaneously to *dispel* our love-objects. Yet, conjuration is likely to spill over into an intensified desire to unite with the lost object (once again and even on the outskirts of time)

rather than to dispel its spectral presence into forgetfulness. Although the opening story of *Dubliners* presents us with an interesting example of the insistence of desire in the presumably transcendent act of conjuration, I shall focus here, in variable length, on "Eveline", "A Painful Case", and "The Dead".

Bearing these theoretical concerns in mind, let us assess—by laying bare the affective behaviour of a selected number of characters—the resonances of such economies of libidinal investiture in *Dubliners*. There is hope that such an interpretive assessment might foster more discussions of the function of affects, and of mourning *writ large*, in the work of Joyce, and into the larger scope of modernism, in which the sedimentations of erotic strategies of transcendence loom large, as Staten himself shows in his chapter on *Heart of Darkness*—literally, one of the most notable textual harbingers of modernism.

Both Eveline and Gretta have witnessed at different stages in their lives the inadvertent and powerful return of the phantoms of the past. Eveline was on the threshold of submitting to the enthralling call of eros, and she almost eloped with Frank to Buenos Ayres. Such a would-be runaway marriage demands of her to compromise her home, including all the familiar objects "from which she had never dreamt of being divided" (37). Moreover, it demands of her to suspend *sine die* a hitherto effective vehicle of channeling mortal eros: her identification with Blessed Margaret Mary Alacoque, whose promises remind her of her own promise to her mother to keep the family together. From the outset, Eveline is fabled by the underpinning tensions between the available strategies of transcendence with which she is domestically equipped and the blandishments of apotheosizing mortal eros

with Frank in his far away home in Buenos Ayres. Given that at the end of the story Eveline was overridden by the hold of the past and by the strategies of transcendence burrowing into her whole being, Donald Torchiana was able to conclude that Eveline "highlights in Joyce's Dublin a *misguided* young woman who *denies* the sacredness of the heart, largely because of her devotion to the Order of the Sacred Heart that lies behind the *pious pretense* of Irish family life" (70; italics mine).

Although, when caught in almost the same situation, Nora Barnacle did eventually elope with Joyce, I do not think that what is at stake at the story's end is the bankrupt piety of Irish family life, much less Eveline's denial of the sacredness of the heart. The invisible forces of memory, of legacy, and of promise—which constitute the fulcrum on which the plot of the story turns—are irreducible to a mere depreciation of love in favor of a pretentious piety. Indeed, very much like Gretta in "The Dead," Eveline is from the very beginning of her tale set within a structure of conjuration of the past, of old times, of the dead, and of the departed until a street organ playing prompts her virtually to exhume her mother, her voice, and her promise. The trope that is often related to such a mental *askesis*, or exercise, is known as prosopopoeia. De Man understands prosopopoeia as a dialectic of personification and reification, in which making the dead speak "implies, by the same token, that the living are struck dumb, frozen in their own death" ("Autobiography" 78). The exhumation of the dead, in other words, implodes chiasmatically into the petrification of the living.

Paul de Man's conceptualization of prosopopoeia as a composite trope involving not only the *personification* of the dead but the simultaneous *reification* of

the living is conducive to a psychoanalytical reflection on the nature and possibility of remembering and mourning in the context of *Dubliners*. Founded on a praxis of remembering, the first move of the trope merges with the logic of cure, mourning, and survival such that one might be warranted to speak, at least provisionally, of a *therapoetics of prosopopoeia*.[2] Yet the trope is, on the other hand, inhabited by the threat of undermining the very restorative and consolatory task it is called upon to accomplish. First, I shall explore the psychic and emotional impact of prosopopoeia on the characters who—lured by its magical conjuration and restitution of the dead as well as by the promise of reuniting with them—fall prey to the trope's pretension to cure, and are thus victimized by its fundamental impotency. In this respect, I will try to articulate the protean affective turmoil in which the performative reach of prosopopoeia leaves Eveline, Gretta, Gabriel and James Duffy. While Eveline and Gretta are jolted by the prosopopoeic conjuration of the dead, Duffy and Gabriel are unsettled by an empathic involvement with respectively Mrs. Sinico's and Gretta's tragedies. Second, I shall argue that the prosopopoeic moment of remembering and mourning overlaps, in the case of Duffy and Gabriel, with the moment of empathy and epiphany—in short, with their ascendance into maturity. Simultaneously, I shall pave the way to conclude that the figure of prosopopoeia in Joyce's stories operates in such an entropic way as to thwart the fulfillment not only of the Freudian work of mourning, but especially of the de Manian prophecy that "the living are struck dumb, frozen in their own death." Hence, I contend that "A Painful Case" and "The Dead" orchestrate with remarkable clarity the impotence of the tropologic which, while conjuring and decreeing a certain vision of the end, leaves the subject (i.e., Duffy and

Gabriel) held in *automourning*, suspended in a present without potentiality: past the end, yet at the same time bereft of it.

* * *

The opening paragraph of "Eveline" sets in motion a gradual process of amassing images that figure forth the de Manian moment of prosopopoeic reversal. The evening that invades the avenue is in fact the figurative harbinger of the ubiquitous flood of the past which will further subdue the already prostrate head of Eveline. Bit by bit, Eveline grows from a passive consumer of the odour of dusty cretonne ("Her head was leaned against the window curtains and *in her nostrils was* the odour of dusty cretonne," p. 36) into an active inhaler ("Her time was running out but she continued to sit by the window, leaning her head against the window curtain, *inhaling* the odour of dusty cretonne," p. 39). By implication, Eveline evolves from a detached and machinic distillation of past childhood, forgone memories, and departed friends into a more active and elaborate engagement with the past. The reactivation of the past gains momentum when Eveline hears a street organ playing. In the very same manner, Gretta's already operative conjurative process of her past childhood romance with Michael Furey ("I'd love to see Galway again," she confides to her husband pressing him to accept Miss Ivors' invitation to the Aran Isles, p. 191) intensifies when she listens to a chance singing of *The Lass of Aughrim* by Bartell D'Arcy.

Both the street organ playing and the chance singing of *The Lass of Aughrim* act as prosopopoeic motor forces. Once these two arch-conjurations in both stories

occur, the prosopopoeic dialectic speeds irresistibly toward its destinal reificatory reversal. By virtue of its retrospective logic, prosopopoeia, as defined by de Man, is technically conducive to a *therapoetic* process of remembering and working through the past. However, in the case of Eveline and Gretta, it is more fitting to say that it has served mainly to *spectralize* both the living and the dead. Eveline is hostage to rather than host of the ghostly voice that shouts unintelligibly within her: "Derevaun Seraun! Derevaun Seraun" (40). In the same manner, Gretta is marbleized by the sudden re-emergence of the voice that screams within her that it "did not want to live" (221). Hence the incommensurability located at the very heart of the "conjure-and-dispel" double bind of clinical transcendence announced earlier. Although attentive to the potential "hypercathecting" operative in every prosopopoeic practice of conjuration and remembering, Freud nonetheless maintains that that should only be seen as a step toward the thorough detachment of libido from the lost object. "Each single one of the memories and expectations in which the libido is bound to the object is," Freud expounds, "brought up and *hypercathected*, and *detachment* of the libido is accomplished in respect to it" (253; italics mine). Yet, hypercathecting serves, in the context of *Dubliners*, as the launching pad for the ultimate prosopopoeic reversal—the petrification of the living.

Small wonder then that Eveline and Gretta are reduced to the deathliness of disembodied presences! Transfixed into motionlessness, Eveline stares blindly, eyes-wide-shut, at Frank rushing beyond the barrier while she "clutch[es] the iron in frenzy" before she loosens her grip and "set[s] her white face to him, passive, like a helpless animal," giving him "no sign of love or farewell or recognition" (*Dubliners*

41). Likewise, after listening to a chance singing of the song that Michael Furey used to sing to her during their long walks in the country side, Gretta becomes so divested of herself and possessed by Michael's image that her husband did not hesitate to drag her down to the deadness of a "symbol," a "picture"—an abstraction and an image (210).

Upon listening to the musical performance by Bartell D'Arcy, Gretta has become the site of a perturbing and unsettling memory such that Gabriel himself, still unable to attend to her crisis, nails her down to the alleged deadness of a "picture":

> There was grace and mystery in her attitude as if she were a symbol of something. He asked himself what is a woman standing on the stairs in the shadow, listening to distant music, a symbol of. If he were a painter he would paint her in that attitude... *Distant Music* he would call the picture if he were a painter. (*Dubliners* 210).

At his stage, Gabriel is unaware of the meaning of such a striking abstraction of his wife. Yet, what I find striking about this passage is Gabriel's imaginative engagement in the very activity native to the dialectic of prosopopoeic reversal—the act of defacing and disfiguring the living. That Gabriel should abstract Gretta means at least that Gretta, as a living entity, is possessed by another non-living entity, by an absent being—by a revenant. This passage then captures a fully realized prosopopoeic dialectic, an achieved prosopopoeia, in which the conferment of face upon the faceless (Michael) engenders a symmetrical stripping of face from Gretta. Prosopopoeia then has not only the animating force of de-fictionalizing the faceless, but also of fictionalizing the living face. But, Gretta is as oblivious to her abstraction as Gabriel is unaware of its full import. Meanwhile, the reader has, while giving free play to this imaginative flight, part and partial of any interpretive enterprise, to bear

in mind that prosopopoeia is, as Riffaterre explains, a fiction that, "Far from inviting visualization, let alone sensory perception," presupposes an "animating," "mock" force whereupon "no real personification need take place" (108). We are therefore by no means suggesting, as will be better clarified later, that Gretta is literally dead, much less that Michael is really back from the dead; nor are we suggesting that the figural force of prosopopoeia demands that the animated entity (Michael Furey) be fictitiously embodied by a certain ghostly revenant, let alone by a certain visible ghostly revenant. The return of the prosopopoeically-animated Other occurs not so much in narrative space as in narrative time, within and through the (de)contracting consciousness of Gretta. Thus, this return becomes visible only as an effect brought to bear on the mourning subject: the visibility of the invisible Michael correlates with the invisibility of the visible Gretta, to whom Aunt Julia declares: "—O, good-night, Gretta, I didn't see you" (*Dubliners* 212). Although Michael Furey does not really come back in the manner of the ghost of Hamlet's father demanding that he be remembered and honoured, he emerges not only as an undying flame, a voice whose words do not die, but also as an eye, seen unseen:

> I implored of him to go home at once and told him he would get his death in the rain. But he said he did not want to live. *I can see his eyes as well as well!* He was standing at the end of the wall where there was a tree. (*Dubliners* 221; italics mine)

While Gretta seems, as Sean Latham rightly observes, only to report Michael's words in "the third person,"[3] the subtle slippage from the reported speech (in the past tense) to the present (tense)—"I can see his eyes as well as well!"—and back to the reported speech implies that Gretta is virtually animated by the force of prosopopoeia, the

force of fictionalizing a face (note here that I use "eyes" as a synecdoche for "face") in the incorporeal air, there "where there was a tree," there (now and here, there and then) where no face can be searched for and be found. Who but Hamlet Jr. could reckon with his father's ghost? After all, was not his mother, Gertrude, unable to see the ghost while it was speaking plainly to her son? Who else but Gretta "can [now] see [Michael's] eyes as well as well!"? Does not that, after all, pertain to the singularity of (her) experience? How can we prove (other than by a certain *anagnorisis* of having undergone a similar experience) that no sooner does Gretta utter the seemingly empty (as empty as it looked for Gabriel himself at the beginning of Gretta's testimonial narrative) signifier "Michael" than an unbridled proliferation of image, face, speech, and "eyes as well" crop up into prosopopoeic existence—whose intensity might even exceed the so-called hard rock of the real? How can we be privy to such a spontaneous overlap between denotation and imaginative objectification, and to the singularity of every prosopopoeic summation, of every experience of conjuration and remembering? How can we accede to the unostentatious? In short, how can the shattering prosopopoeic experience be shared and communicated, be sharable and communicable?

That Eveline and Gretta become, to borrow a word from *Ulysses*, so "wrapt" (rapt/wrapped) in/by the past is the outcome not only of the prosopopoeic rupture they undergo but of their *uneconomized* libidinal expenditures after the prosopopoeic outbreak. The dialectic of prosopopoeic reversal, to which they have submitted, originates in their active conjuration and hypercathecting of the dead, without which the reificatory reversal would never after all have taken place. At length, seduced by

the trope's magical conjuration and restitution of the dead and by the promise of reuniting with them, Eveline and Gretta find themselves, while locked in the trope's uncompromising logic, unable to undergo the threat of death that, de Man insists, inhabits prosopopoeia. It follows then that prosopopoeia is actually inhabited by a fundamental performative impotence that decrees, but fails to fulfill, the end. Exposed to the prosopopoeic trap, Eveline and Gretta are suspended in the aridity of a present without potentiality: marbleized and statuified. Hence, there is more to their tragedies than a "misguided" denial of the sacredness of the heart, as Donald Torchiana would have us believe.

The affective turmoil that Eveline and Gretta experience is, it bears repeating, largely precipitated by the malfunction of their systems of libidinal management following the prosopopoeic resurfacing of their love-objects. Surely, they have *rehearsed* their positions in relation to the objects of their libidinal attachments (i.e., Eveline is on the threshold of marriage, and Gretta is already married), but they have variably failed to achieve the affective closure afforded by the Freudian work of mourning—a closure that would presumably shield them against the incidental sparkers (such as distant music) of grief. Yet, to point out to their failure of arriving at this protective affective closure does not by any means imply that such a closure is after all possible. Mourning presents itself primarily as a demand for affective closure, yet the demand is hardly dissociable from its negation—desire *writ large*.

Once loss occurs—nay, once eros is born—it is already too late to avoid the overwhelming spiral of desire and mourning. Indeed, eros seems so central to the emergence of life that the affective closure of the work of mourning can only be

painted as nothing less than a rebirth of eros, a beginning of another cycle. Even the more libidinally economized characters such as James Duffy and Gabriel Conroy prove, I shall argue, vulnerable to the intractable detours of eros in the route to fulfillment, and, by implication, to the latent structure of grief inextricably bound to it. Although arrayed in more rigorous prophylactic structures of *affective foreclosure* aimed at nipping eros in the bud, James Duffy and Gabriel undergo nonetheless, each on his own, a prosopopoeic experience that forces them not only to approximate *empathically* Mrs Sinico's and Gretta's crises respectively, but especially to recognise *epiphanically* their fundamental loneliness (James Duffy) and ineluctable mortality (Gabriel). They undergo, in other words, what I call an *empiphany*: a transactive dynamics of recognizing the irreducible otherness of eros at the very moment of its manifestation—a mysteriously tied knot between empathy and epiphany. To better understand the radical nature of this empiphanic moment, this moment of merging and generative transformation, let me first shed some light on the myths and beliefs of the former selves of James Duffy and Gabriel Conroy.

Before their empiphanic awakening, both Duffy and Gabriel deploy an ideology of transcendence that, while tentatively alive to the inevitability of affective ties, is either deliberately exiled from them (Duffy in relation to Emily), or murderously overappropriative of their otherness (Gabriel in relation to Gretta). Although Duffy is not involved in a structure of Platonizing Christianity, he nonetheless imbues from a Stoic-Platonic tradition that articulates a fundamental schism between the mortality of the flesh and the immortality of the idea. While this might come at the detriment of eros—the driving force of psychic life—I think

nonetheless that Duffy's maxim, "Every bond is a bond to sorrow" (112), attests undoubtedly to the immortality of the idea. This maxim is, in fact, the most profound statement in *Dubliners* about the aporetic nature of object-relations. Many Joycean scholars were, however, seduced by the irresistible temptation to indict Duffy for having disdained love. In this regard, Philip Herring, for instance, was able to ascertain—albeit the very title of his book is Joyce's *Uncertainty Principle*—that by the story's end, "James Duffy is *punished* by a deep longing for the love and the human contact he had earlier prided himself on disdaining" (69; italics mine). Such a conclusion is, in my view, inadvertent to the serious questions Duffy's maxim raises. It, moreover, passes over in silence not only Duffy's attempt to rehearse his libidinal investments (i.e., his libidinal approach to Emily Sinico and his simultaneous suspension of such non-symbolic investiture), but also his eventual empiphanic realization that he is *lonely*. At length, Philip Herring seems to imply that if Duffy were to reciprocate Emily's libidinal overtures, he would have been sheltered from the pain which is nonetheless constitutive, as Duffy rightly points out, of love.

By cautioning us that every bond is a bond to sorrow, Duffy suspends us between the demands of eros and the ineluctable modality of mourning, "the horizon of all desire," in the words of Staten (xi). And only through the sublimation of eros can the expanding horizon of mourning begin to shrink. By means of an *exilic attachment* to Emily Sinico, Duffy attempts to avoid both eros and mourning. He rehearses an economics of libidinal expenditure that would both pre-empt the pangs of eros and shelter him from the outbreak of grief. Indeed, Duffy wants to shore up a life in the hinge between philosophy and music, between friendship and love,

between libidinal transcendence and libidinal expenditure. Many are the references that figure forth this attempt to glidingly mediate between these virtually incommensurable demands. Although he, for instances, acknowledges the crude presence of his body, he keeps it in constant check. More importantly, by *inscribing* and simultaneously *withholding* his self in his odd "autobiographical habit" (*Dubliners* 108), he paradoxically seeks to take a line of flight that enables him to evade the very activity (i.e., writing) in which he is involved. Little wonder then that he stops at the threshold of writing and on the verge of articulation, and all he manages to pen down are nothing more than disparate sentences on a sheaf of papers. His poetics of libidinal management unfolds on the borderline between the desire to inscribe his self autobiographically and the symmetrical transcendent imperative to veil and impersonalize. He thus vacillates between self-exaltation and self-denunciation, between self-love and self-denial, and really between the temptation of eros and the mortification of mortality and grief native to it.

Such a poetics, which is *sensu stricto* a poetics of the threshold, was very much effective until decimated by an unbridled prosopopoeic outbreak. Like Gabriel, as I will show in due course, Duffy grows from a practitioner of negative conjuration of the dead Emily into a practitioner of empathic approximation of her experience. At one point, he seems, in an obviously Freudian aside, to reduce Emily Sinico to pure, unpunctuated eros—"to one of the wrecks on which civilization has been reared" (*Dubliners* 115). And he feels a particular need for sublimation, and for civilization, on whose suburbs he has nevertheless hitherto lived. At *prima facie*, he perceives Emily's death as veiling a last attempt on her part to wreak vengeance and inflict on

him the same amount of pain she suffered. But, when he engages in a focalized conjuration of her memory, not only does his anger mitigate, but also a proliferation of "voice" and "hand" pops out into prosopopoeic existence: "She seemed to be near him in the darkness. At moments he seemed to feel her voice touch his ear, her hand touch his. He stood still to listen" (117).

In a pioneering study of melancholy and mourning in *Dubliners*, Earl Ingersoll claims that at the end of "A Painful Case," Duffy—when finishing his evening meal—caught sight of "A Painful Case" in the paper beside his plate, and is thus "offered the opportunity to have Emily Sinico for dessert" (88). In other words, Duffy reacts to the prosopopoeic restitution of Emily by incorporating her within, thus violating her otherwise inassimilable otherness. The end of the story seems to me, however, to stress with remarkable clarity an empiphanic moment in which the empathy with Emily's loneliness brings Duffy's gaze to center on his own loneliness. This empiphanic structure begins when he "understood how lonely her life must have been" (*Dubliners* 116), and comes full circle at the very end of the story when he "felt that he was alone" (117). This last sentence which certainly betrays the outbreak of mourning was prepared for by another sentence: "His life would be lonely until, he, too, died, ceased to exist, became a memory—if anyone remembered him" (116). Far from cannibalistically incorporating Emily within him, Duffy is again gliding chiasmatically between an empathic approximation of her experience of loneliness, and an empiphanic cognizance of his own ineluctable death, his present loneliness, and her infinite alterity. At one point, "he seemed to feel her voice touch his ear" (117); at another, he "could not feel her near him in the darkness nor her voice touch

his ear" (117). Only through a chiasmatic*s* of proximity and distance can we understand the full surge of the dead Mrs Sinico in the expanding and simultaneously withering world of Duffy. Indeed, at the very end of the story, Emily remains near and yet far, *there beyond*, at the crossroads between the transcendence he preaches and the birth of desire he was wont to abhor.

* * *

Empiphany, being a transactive interchange between an exterior and interior gaze, does not violate the experience of the other in the process of approximating it, no more than the other's experience itself can be said to violate one's own. Gabriel's empiphanic awakening, for instance, does not only lay bare the emergence of Gretta as utterly other (after she has been hitherto tethered within the fabric of specular identification with him), but also the emergence of empathy not so much as an overappropriative knitting machine as a transactive and trans-enriching force. While Duffy's story foregrounds his reckoning with the otherness (of Mrs. Sinico, of eros, of mourning, etc.) he had always dreaded and thus kept at bay, Gabriel's brings to the limelight his recognition of the otherness he had always suppressed. By virtue of being married, Gabriel's relation to Gretta is normally animated by the foundational conjugal promise of mourning. Yet, Gabriel is presented as absorbed in peeling away every mystifying fog of mortality hanging in the horizon of his mortal bond to Gretta, and to his relatives. Immersed in the waters of philosophy, associated with a Roman-Stoic and Nietzschean practice of productive forgetting, Gabriel is spurred by a powerful illusion, masquerading as intellectual triumphalism, and thus speeds

irresistibly toward the limits of his rhetoric. More importantly, Gabriel's character is marked by the deliberate eschewal of everything that smacks of grief: "Our path through life is strewn with many…memories: and were we to brood upon them always we could not find the heart to go on bravely with our work among the living," and he adds: "I will not linger on the past. I will not let any gloomy moralising intrude upon us here to-night" (204).

Gabriel deploys a seductive and palliative rhetoric of persuasion in order not only to defuse, but ultimately to transcend, if not occlude, "thoughts of the past, of youth, of changes, of absent faces" (204). His strategy of managing mortality and transience is deeply-rooted in the Greek and Roman stoic traditions of philosophy, namely in that of Epicurus and Lucretius. Stoicism has emphatically cautioned against unreserved attachments to objects, or persons, or anything mortal, as a preventive armament against any assault of unbridled mourning in the wake of their loss. Thus, death is presented as the cessation of being, which, if rationally compromised at the outset, should foster no unexpected bouts of mourning, nor any unseasonable lugubrious wails. Indeed, in his famous letter to Menoeceus, Epicurus goes on, in a combination of both rhetoric and logic, hammering this very idea home: "Become accustomed to the belief that death is nothing to us…It does not…concern either the living or the dead, since for the former it is not, and the latter are no more" (30-31). The Lucretian argument, following from the Epicurean one, also holds that death is posthumous nonexistence akin to prenatal nonexistence (this is the core of the famous Lucretian "symmetry thesis"). Summing up his cogitation about the radical wedge that death enters between the living and the dead, Lucretius writes:

"Death therefore must be thought to concern us much less, if less there can be than what we see to be nothing; for a greater dispersion of the mass of matter follows after death, and no one wakes up, upon whom the chill cessation of life has once come" (131).

In the second of his *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen*, recently rendered by Richard Gray as *Unfashionable Observations* (formerly known as *Untimely Meditations*), Nietzsche goes even further than the Stoics and strikes an organic cord between the necessity of forgetting the dead and the past at large, and the possibility of productivity, or action: "All action requires forgetting" (89); "historical sensibility makes its servants passive and retrospective" (140). Ultimately, Nietzsche reasons that (historical) memory and the past, in general, is sickening, that his age suffers from "the *historical sickness*" and form "the memory of its chains," and that the only antidote to this fatal disease lies in "the art and power to be able to *forget*" (original italics; 163). This Stoic tradition of philosophy whose effects have rippled through the ages is appropriated, and ultimately deconstructed, in "The Dead" through the character of Gabriel. Actually, the empiphanic moment which Gabriel experiences is but the moment of dispelling the hold such a philosophy has had on his thinking—a thinking that, far from being tempered and particularized by (an) experience (*à la* Gretta), is simply indulgent in Stoicism, in the pursuance and maintenance of a rational protective buffer—a sort of *cordon sanitaire*—between the dead and the living.

One could safely posit that Gabriel is just not aware that a pseudo-theory of memory (or, what in the words of Barbie Zelizer amounts to a "remembering to

forget," p. 202) would not secure an unencumbered present. Although his strategy of transcendence would brook no *return to* the past, it remains perched on the abyss of a possible free-floating *return of* the past in the form of a harrowing and disembodied memory. Unlike the return *to* memory, which is a deliberate, transformational, and generative practice of remembering, the return *of* memory is but the eruption of hitherto latent, but unsubdued force. While the return *to* memory might be described as *mournfulfilling* (i.e., a remembering that works toward the gradual and compromising fulfillment and completion of the task of mourning), the return *of* memory is rather *mournfilling* (i.e., it fills the hitherto intellectually triumphant disclaimer of the past with a sudden outbreak of mourning that might eventually slide into a form of pathological melancholia).

Labouring under the auspices of the Roman-Stoic tradition of libidinal management, Gabriel's practice of transcendent forgetting would speed irresistibly toward its limits, where its vocabulary, concerned with prophylaxis, would fall short, as Gretta's case attests to, of precluding the occurrence of a *return-of* type of memory, followed by a focalized conjuration, culminating in a prosopopoeic outbreak. Before that occurs to Gretta, however, Gabriel had enjoyed the psychic seamlessness of a specular relationship with her (as his "object-cathexis"). No sooner does he learn that there was "a person long ago" in her life, then he is beset by fury: "A dull anger began to gather again at the back of his mind and the dull fires of his lust began to glow angrily in his veins" (*Dubliners* 219). Such anger, not yet ignited by shame, feeds on the fear of belatedness, on the erotic phobia of having been preceded to the heart of Gretta by someone else. Surely, there is a certain preemptive

power that precedence holds over, and exercises upon, belatedness, yet it is not so much the loss of this initiatory power—the power to cast long shadows—that has provoked Gabriel's anger as it is the loss of the powerful illusion that has hitherto spurred and nurtured it. Such an illusion is, moreover, predicated upon holding the other in abeyance, if not suppressing her altogether. As Eric L. Santner points out, "the narcissist loves an object only insofar and as long as he or she can repress the otherness of the object" (3).

While the other for Duffy is a threat to his strategic loneliness, the other for Gabriel is but an extension of the self, invisible as such, and thus harbouring no threat to his prolonged egoic monologism. Gabriel, in other words, seems to proffer us with an exemplary model of Sándor Ferenczi's dictum that, "In principle, man can only love himself; if he loves an object he takes it into his ego" (316). It follows from this that the narcissist's egoic monologism and specular reciprocity with the love-object is shaken at the seams as soon as the object's otherness is asserted. Gretta's otherness is inscribed in her tale of love and loss, and has gradually come into prominence as that very tale unfolded. It is as if the mark of loss, which is really the stamp of grief, were the grantor of that hitherto veiled and denied otherness.

Gretta's insurgent otherness, along with Gabriel's loss of the illusion of priority, while proffering us with objective prerequisites for a logical outbreak of melancholy (i.e., a process whereby the ego engages in containing its narcissistic loss of self-regard), will nonetheless foment no turbulence at all in Gabriel's psyche. The point is that the thrust of melancholia toward the exterior is immediately countered by an interior strategy of *affective foreclosure*. Although Gabriel is now deeply aware

of the fracture of his identificatory mirror with Gretta, he attempts firmly to elide the heightened hues of shame that come to color his face. The active engagement of containing the emotional currents that have swept his ego-narcissism adds to his conviction—which is at heart an illusion—of mastery over a situation to which he had nonetheless been forced to submit. Gabriel is still dreaming of saving face, of suturing his fissures, and of consoling his ego by sparing it the shame of admitting and displaying its festering wounds. Joyce is careful enough to use the word "instinctively," which, if translated into psychoanalytic terms, might suggest that Gabriel is unconsciously defending against the onset of melancholia.

Gabriel manifests the symptoms of what the Mitscherlichs call the "inability to mourn," which is in fact a refusal to mourn, a refusal to submit to what one is literally submitted to.[4] Precisely, the inability to mourn, if we are to hold to the Mitscherlichs' confusing concept, bespeaks the disavowal of something (here grief) that is nonetheless felt in every iota of one's being. The ego can thus be, as is the case with Gabriel, at a stage of emotional turmoil, overwhelmed with grief, anger, and incipient melancholia, but will still be categorically unwilling to live out/through its egoic injuries, and thus folds back into a state of primitive narcissism, believed to be the only remaining repository of hope, of shelter and protection of the ego. This strategy of occlusion of shame—an occlusion of what is there, of what insists on being there, on the face, there for the public eye—coupled with his self-deceptive irony and the insurgent vindictive consolatory gestures he waves to his shattered ego, enables Gabriel momentarily to contain the opening of an abysmal interval in his claustral and specular relationship with Gretta.

Gabriel's persistent refusal to evacuate his egoic stronghold is, however, as Gretta's harrowing tale unfolds, met with an immense challenge: to ward off the massive injury brought down upon his ego by the dawning discovery that not only was Gretta "great with" Michael, but especially that the latter "died for [her]" (*Dubliners* 220). It is precisely this inimitable legacy that forces on Gabriel a kind of unconditional surrender. It, in other words, pushes him to give up militating, in a spate of egoic consolation, against an unknown enemy who is neither within range, nor of the same calibre. Indeed, it is an enemy who lives in "a grey impalpable world" (223), and, more importantly, an enemy who had braved death for love: "a man died for her" (222). This immense legacy, which Gabriel would not even toy with the idea of measuring himself against, has hastened the collapse of his militant campaign to recapture Gretta within a structure of specular identification: "It hardly pained him now to think how poor a part he, her husband, had played in her life" (222). Whatever way he would turn to console Gretta back again into his ego, it would hardly prove of any consolation, especially if compared to the monumental heritage of Michael Furey.

Gabriel's whole being becomes now redefined in relation to this predecessor, Michael Furey. Such a relation which is born on the wreck of his ego-syntonic self—a self formerly wont, in its constant movement to broaden the boundaries of its domain, to introject its love-objects within—relocates him on the plane of mortal desire, that is, on the plane of desire as correlative with mourning. As Derrida belabours the matter at length in *Spectres of Marx*, being itself shadows forth "a predestined hospitality" that should never shirk the task of extending a welcome to

the enduring, spectral presence-absence of the predecessor, or the dead. To put this somewhat differently, being cannot be conceived separately from inheriting, and since inheriting veils the trace of another being in relation to whom we are, then being is necessarily being in mourning for the being from whom we received our inheritance, and eventually this mourning extends to the very being who is now defined/marked by, or identified with the duty/task of inheritance—the inheritor. Thus, as Derrida succinctly puts it: "like all inheritors, we are in mourning" (54).

Gabriel's newly formed alignment with his dispossessor/liberator of the illusion of priority as well as his relocation on the plane of mortal desire and mourning become more and more evident in his empathic entanglement with the harrowing memories of Gretta. When Gretta was fast asleep, Gabriel is proffered with the opportunity to empathically slice into her experience, and it was not long before he realized she is infinitely other: "He watched her while she slept as though he and she had never lived together as man and wife" (*Dubliners* 222). This alienating sentiment which is now borne into his mind for the first time does not so much bespeak, as most critical works on the story attest to, the end-result of a hitherto failed marriage, as it so manifestly outlines the premises of marriage itself: the affirmation of otherness and the commitment to mourning.

Gabriel's heightened empathy, however, while actuated at the behest of a newly formed alignment with Gretta (and an *a posteriori* one with Michael), knows no sense of proportion: it dilates and spills over into an *a priori* process of hetero-mourning:

> Poor Aunt Julia! She…would soon be a shade with the shade of Patrick Morkan and his horse….

> Yes, yes: that would happen very soon....
> One by one they were all becoming shades. (*Dubliners* 222-23)

Gabriel is so empathically stricken by Gretta's public expression of mourning that he projects himself into a position in which he will have to mourn the anticipated deaths of his aunts, and potentially of everyone he knows. Gabriel has now attained that stage of awareness in which he would very likely repeat, after James Duffy, that "every bond is a bond to sorrow" (*Dubliners* 112). In the wake of the empathic involvement with Gretta's inconsolable mourning of the loss of her childhood boyfriend—which is itself a premonitory glimpse of the inevitable death of Gabriel's relatives and of the task of heteromourning awaiting him—there emerges, more importantly, the empiphanic prefiguration of a drastic personal narrative of *automourning* whereby Gabriel lives *a priori* the devastating loss of his "own identity"—an identity felt to be irresistibly "fading out into a grey impalpable world" (223).

* * *

Gabriel posits his death before it occurs; he lives in the aftermath of what is yet to come, that is, in the wake of the event which is not yet one. He lives, more precisely, in the anticipation of a loss (death) whose very occurrence would inevitably coincide with his collapse as a subject capable of experiencing, or bearing witness to, it—let alone surviving it. Death presents itself as that which has not yet been experienced, and paradoxically as that which must have always been (a fact). Thus the anticipation of death is already inhabited by its very aftermath. In a rhetorically-edged article, "Fear of Breakdown," A. W. Winnicott associates (the

wish for/fear of) death with a persisting infantile "primitive agony" that has not yet been amenable to experience. Winnicott wants to draw attention to the possibility that death—as an instance of a breakdown of the system of defence organization—must have always happened near the beginning of every individual's life, but was not experienced, "because the patient was not there for it to happen to" (92). According to Winnicott, "it is the death that happened but was not experienced that is sought" (93). While this is not the space for infantilizing the (adult) compulsive pursuit/dread of death, nor for determining for sure whether or not Gabriel "died in early infancy" (93), I find Winnicott's emphasis on the death that "has already been" (90), albeit "not yet experienced" (91), very pertinent to the present discussion. For, that which "has already been" while "not yet experienced" is precisely that which is *constitutive* of being as such.

Death is what structures being, and cannot therefore be experienced by the very person who undergoes it. To experience one's death, one has, as it were, to live through/past the end, without the end. Such an experience is quite simply impossible. What is within the realms of the possible is a *relational* experience of death. This occurs following the loss of others as objects of love, friendship, kinship, or any other kind of bond. One's death, insofar as it is a constitutive loss of one's being, can only be experienced as a relational loss. Thus the experience of one's death commences in mourning; more precisely, in mourning (for) the other's death—that is, in heteromourning. What instigates Gabriel's expression of heteromourning is, moreover, not a relational loss which has befallen him but a relational loss which he

anticipates. Such anticipation wells up, it bears repeating, out of an empiphanic involvement with his wife's harrowing heteromourning.

What is easier to recognize than analyze, however, is the baffling slippage of Gabriel from a process of anticipatory heteromourning into a process of automourning, that is, from a process in which he sees all his relatives being transformed one by one into shades to a process in which he sees his soul fast approaching "that region where dwell the vast hosts of the dead" (*Dubliners* 223). To be able to see one's own identity "fading out into a grey impalpable world" is the impossible *par excellence* (223). It is much like Hamlet's impossible pronouncement: "Horatio, I am dead" (5.2: 151). Here we are obviously faring at the margins of the philosophical logic of non-contradiction, yet there is still method in such rhetoric. The point is that one's ownmost death—the impossible to experience—is presupposed by the structure that engulfs being such that a heightened awareness of its inevitability suspends the demarcating lines between its anticipation and its aftermath. Under one instigator or another, one realizes that one is born to die, and acts as if one were already dead, as if the end were at hand. Hence, the "not yet experienced," in Winnicott's words, falls under the shadow of what "has already been," so much so that one is left in limbo—suspended between an end that has *already* come and an end that has not *yet* come, mistaking the one for the other. One ends up living in an impossible realm—past the end, yet without the end. One, in other words, submits passively to a state that Jean-Luc Nancy transcribes as—"life/death"—"a suspension of the continuum of being, a scansion wherein 'I'

has/have little to do" (7). Only under such a condition can one approximate an experience of one's death, an experience of one's end.

To be able to pronounce one's death is to move from a position of relative affective passivity toward a constitutive loss (yet to be experienced) into an active affective engagement with its aftermath. One's own life becomes therefore the unfolding of a mystifying story of survival, and/or waiting for the arrival, of death. Mourning the deaths of others—heteromourning—rouses the underpinning structure of automourning. Thus every relational loss, however anticipatory, translates immediately into a constitutive loss, a flash-forward of the loss of one's own self. *The relational harks back to the constitutive*. The constitutive remains, however, the realm of the impossible to experience.

In this respect, the sadness that seals Gabriel's heart at the end of the story is the offshoot not so much of the *imminent bereavement hic et ubique* of the end as of the *immanent bereftness hic et nunc* of an end. The litany of losses—the ones past (Michael Furey and Patrick Morkan and his horse) and the ones yet-to-come (Aunt Julia and the rest)—awakens Gabriel to the transitory nature of life, and instills in him what Freud calls "a foretaste of mourning" ("On Transience" 306). Yet, what makes this story theoretically important is that mourning does not follow, *pace* Freud, from the loss of something (here Gabriel's life) that the survivor (Gabriel as survivor of his own death) cannot seamlessly forsake, but rather from the impossible occurrence *here and now* of that which is destined to occur—in short, from the impossibility of the resolve, in Beckett's words, to "finish dying" (*Molly* 7). Thus, as Hans-Jost Frey superbly contends, "What has failed to happen cannot be made up for.

Mourning envelops the emptiness from which nothing more can be expected. One mourns less for what was than for what can no longer happen now" (75). What can no longer happen now refers—let us not forget—to the prosopopoeic promise of the end, which is, as already explained, the second moment of prosopopoeia—the moment of an *achieved prosopopoeia*, a fulfillment of the end. Gabriel only allows himself to reckon wearily that "The time had come for him to set out on his journey westward" (*Dubliners* 223). But, in fact, he is suspended in the aridity of a present bereft of potentiality—a present in which he has, as already pointed out by Nancy, "little to do" (7).

Automourning structures one's relation to a loss (of the unit self, in Winnicott's terms) which, though not yet lived through, pertains to a permanent preoccupation of the mind, and is rehearsed endlessly in the imagination. This type of loss withstands no experiencing: it occurs abruptly—it interrupts, and leaves no chance for the subject to experience it posthumously. The subject has therefore no alternative but to reconcile itself to it *a priori*, beforehand. Automourning is the affective apparatus within which such a loss is painted and experienced, as it were, hypothetically, but no less acutely and tensely. This is all the more so when automourning breaks out in response to a relational loss, or in empathy with another person on his loss.

That Gabriel should have been lured and immured into such a Pyrrhically mature state of nonbecoming attests to the resonant effects of the two affective experiences with which we have been preoccupied so far: namely, the prosopopoeic and the empiphanic experiences. Indeed, to do justice to the enormity and complexity

of Gabriel's suspended-ness (really, suspended-I-ness) in the affect of automourning, one has to speak of a prosopopo-empiphanic imbrication. Actually, a complex signifying dialectical chain is started at the behest of the primal prosopopoeic gesture (extended to the dead but primarily directed in the service of the living): conjuration-empathy-conjuration-epiphany. The reason why "conjuration" is repeated twice in this nodal chaining of an otherwise dispersed and unmasterable affective inter- and intra-relations is because right at the very end of the story Gabriel recreates, or lives vicariously through, the night when Michael Furey ran to Gretta's window and threw gravel against it. The recreation, however, is so subtle as to escape the inquiring eye. What is crucial to us is not so much the imaginative recreation of the scene as the lived impact it has on Gabriel. The recreation of this scene in Gabriel's imagination goes as follows: "The tears gathered more thickly in his eyes and in the partial darkness he imagined he saw the form of a young man standing under a dripping tree." What is important is that this recreation blurs spontaneously into a prosopopoeic conjuration whose power and force is such that "A few light taps upon the pane made him turn to the window" (*Dubliners* 223). The fact is that Gabriel is so absorbed and enthralled by the fictional conjuration of Michael Furey that the lines of demarcation between his imaginative engrossment and reality (narrative reality) collapse at the seams, and the "few light taps upon the pane" are immediately confused with Michael's gravel against the window. Thus, it requires no further argument to stress how the imaginative recreation spills over into a prosopopoeic entanglement whose effect is hallucinatory in that it unsettles the distinction between the modality of the visible and the modality of the feelable.

Hallucination ensues from the empathic entanglement with the prosopopoeic tidal motion. In other words, hallucination is another name for the empathic revelation of the other in his perspicuous alterity. Empathy wields the force and effect, without which prosopopoeia becomes an opprobrious and hackneyed tropological ritual. In the context of this story, prosopopoeia does not, *pace* de Man, so much confer a voice and a face upon an absent entity—here Michael Furey—as confer a feelable presence upon an otherwise irredeemably absent entity. This presence is not, moreover, exteriorized and staged, that is, made literally available in the world of the text, but is anchored in an insurgent structure of empathy. And empathy, insofar as it is a transferential process aimed at approximating the experience of the other, secures the passage to the merged experience of *empiphany*: the *recognition* of the other at the very moment of his *revelation.*

The dialectic of prosopopoeia acts as the motor force that produces empiphany. In other words, through conjuration and peripeteia, the prosopopoeic generates both the revelation and recognition of the otherness of Gretta, and ultimately the *gathering*, rather than *alienating*, otherness of the dead. Through prosopopoeia, the topography of the dead becomes the "milieu" in which both the living and the dead tread. Prosopopoeia, briefly put, survives as an impact, an effect, which has the merit of an electric enlightenment, of empiphanic radiance. As the structure of the story attests to, prosopopoeia is not only the vessel, the barge, or the isthmus, that "gathers together" the river of the living and the river of the dead, but also the trope of maturity, of surviving dialectic.

On the other hand, the latent threat that inhabits prosopopoeia is not so much the alleged congealment of the living in their own death, as denying them *sine die* such a constitutive ending. Prosopopoeia awakens one to the ineluctability of death, to the promise of the end, all the while it censures the fulfillment of the end. This is precisely the theoretical reservation that the story registers about the performative reach of the trope. While it magnificently plots the logic of the tropological within its structure such that death boils down, in the words of de Man, to "a linguistic predicament" ("Autobiography" 81), the story reminds in the final analysis that the tropological—however illuminating and enriching—is far from offering a shelter, a cure, or even the very end (of death) that it so preciously treasures.

The strength of prosopopoeia as a trope, its performative reach on the consciousness of the survivor, is paradoxically the locus of its frailty, of its impossibility: it gathers us to the end and paradoxically sets us apart from it. Perhaps prosopopoeia is ultimately, and quite oxymoronically, the force that *gathers us apart* with the end. Indeed, the end of the story in which everything, including "the living and the dead," is levelled out by the snow such that every place looks like the next is expressive of an unfathomable sadness not, however, over the approach of the end, but precisely over its intractable recessiveness. The narrative insistence *on* the end is not so much a signal *of* the end as it is a mark of its baffling absence. At the end of the story, Gabriel, along with the reader, finds himself held in the aftermath of death, past it, yet always without it. Such a prosopopoeic scenario is enveloped by automourning, the affective fragmentary state in which one feels, in the words of Hans-Jost Frey, "that everything is over except the feeling that it is over." In other

words, while everything seems to glide chiasmically and irresistibly towards the end—"falling faintly through the universe and faintly falling, like the descent of their last end" (*Dubliners* 224)—there can be "no end in sight anymore" (Frey 76). The end is far from being fulfilled: it is only emblematically communicated in the veneer of the white snow. Automourning is precisely the inability to find the end, or as Nancy would have it, "a suspension in the continuum of being" (2002: 7). The danger of automourning is that it, in the words of Hans-Jost Frey, "exposes one to the harsh light of an ineluctable present without potentiality" (75). It is against the backdrop of such eventuality/fatality that the strategies of transcendence and idealization of mortal eros were after all conceived and implemented.

* * *

Henry Staten argues that "what motivates the classical project of transcendence of mourning is the fear not of loss of object but of loss of self" (xii). This is to say that the death of the other is, if anything, a *memento mori*. What the classical project of transcendence wants to transcend is this fear of self-loss—this very automourning that Gabriel arrives at so laboriously. I contend, however, that it is precisely this fear of self-loss that in turn complicates the very idea of transcendence itself, since this fear is expressive of an emergent desire that, in the words of Staten, "would cut the knot of revulsion from organic being that fuels the drive to transcendence" (108). This is the desire to be mourned. This is the desire that has, curiously enough, awakened James Duffy from a *transcendent* into a *desiring* form of loneliness. Loneliness is first presented in "A Painful Case" as a deliberate

abstinence from libidinal attachments, in concert with his alibi for breaking up with Emily Sinico (i.e., every bond is a bond to sorrow): "he heard the strange impersonal voice which he recognized as his own, insisting on the soul's incurable loneliness. We cannot give ourselves, it said: we are our own" (*Dubliners* 111). By the end of the story, however, we are confronted, much to the neglect of generations of Joycean scholars, by loneliness as a symptom of crisis, and more particularly as a desire for libidinal investment.

As I have argued, Duffy has gone through a prosopopoeic experience that has eventually slid into an empiphanic apprehension of his own anomalous loneliness. Such a transformationally generative experience has, in addition, left Duffy truncated, defenceless in front of the anticipatory self-loss to be parried: "His life would be lonely too until he, too, died, ceased to exist, became a memory—*if anyone remembered him*" (*Dubliners* 116; italics mine). Beneath this elegiac anticipation of his "ownmost" death—this structure of automourning we earlier associated with Gabriel—we can easily discern a deeper concern about what might be called following Adorno, Lyotard, and Derrida, "the worse than death": "the extinction of the very name that forbids mourning" (*Work of Mourning* 11). While Mrs. Sinico had ceased to exist, she "had," nonetheless, as Duffy himself admits, "become a memory" (*Dubliners* 116). It remains, however, to be proven whether he, when dead, would ascend to such a stage, where he would be remembered as a name reverberating in the ear of the other, and inciting him/her to grieve. James Duffy is horrified by the prospect that his own death might coincide with the absolute finitude (i.e., death) of

the infinite (i.e., memory), that is, with the very extinction of his name, of his memory, as a carrier of grief, and as a marker of both death and survival.

Mourning is, at least in psychoanalysis, the emotional response to the gap the loss of the other leaves in the ego of the survivor. At the end of "A Painful Case," mourning had broken on Duffy like an unbridled tidal wave, stymieing the prosopopoeic channels that had heretofore reunited him with Mrs. Sinico: "He began to doubt the reality of what memory told him…He could not feel her near him in the darkness nor her voice touch his ear" (*Dubliners* 117). The final feeling of loneliness welling up inside him must be understood in tandem with the aperture the loss of Mrs. Sinico had suddenly created in his ego. That Duffy feels bereft and lonely attests not only to his entry into a process of auto-mourning, but also to the success of eros in having sustained the cathectic ties to Mrs. Sinico despite Duffy's will-to-secession. The fissure in the ego which is occasioned by the sudden loss of Mrs. Sinico and which foments automourning can be sutured, according to Freud, only by means of severing the libidinal ties once and for all with Mrs. Sinico and initiating a new alliance with a new love object. Such is what is psychoanalytically known as a successful mourning—a mourning that always takes place at the expense of the other whose gaps come to be filled by, as it were, another other. Although the ethical issues involved here (and which I discuss in the fourth chapter) bulk large, what is important for us to realize is that the affective gap opened by the loss of a love-object will never be fully filled by the compensation that a new love object might be able to offer. After all, while married to Gabriel, Gretta has not fully worked through the void left in her ego by Michael Furey's sudden disappearance. The same applies to

Duffy in relation to Mrs. Sinico whose very name, encrypted in the droning of the train engine, forbids the affective closure of mourning, as defined by Freud. While Mrs. Sinico's memory then would live as long as someone like him heard and remembered her name, Mr. Duffy is abhorred by the prospect that, once dead, nobody would be there to remember him/his name. Such a scenario would be for sure "the worse than death" *par excellence*.

Rather than as an expression of an inability to find the end *à la* Gabriel, Duffy's narrative of automourning unfolds as a heart-wrenching pilgrimage on the outskirts of memory, on the possibility of surviving death, of being transformed—as humbly as Mrs. Sinico—into a memory. This is precisely the point at which "loneliness" as a strategy of transcending libidinal attachments is displaced by the desire to transcend death itself, that is, Duffy's desire to "bond" with an other, to exteriorize his automourning, and ultimately to implicate that other in it. The consuming loneliness he feels at the end of the story is not to be seen as "the most obvious way for him to go back to his old habits" (Baccolini 154), but as a cognizance of an "inner maw," of a "void" inside (Knapp 45), and of the rebirth, rather than the demise, of the desire for otherness.

Pouring out from an unfathomable anxiety generated by the looming threat of extinction, automourning is at heart a plea for *otomourning*, a silent call destined to fall on the keen ear of the other who would thenceforth have the duty/responsibility to honour it. Mourning, as in Freud, "is a kind of betrayal, the second killing of the (lost) object" (Žižek 658)—the first being the natural death, and the second would coincide with the passing over of such a death, such a silence, into a more lethal

silence, a silence in which no memory would be housed, nor any signs of grieving heard. It is from within this fluid emotional continuum of mourning the loss of Mrs. Sinico that Duffy plunges into automourning before he emerges on the plane of desire consumed by the passion for otherness, and by the search for a form of life after death. This desire, however, does not dare to speak its name, and takes up refuge in silence: silently it wants to extract a promise, to contract the other and commission him to remember his name, to hear-say his name, and to mourn sine die.

Since the veracity of autobiography, according to Derrida's reading of Nietzsche in *The Ear of the Other*, is archly dependent on the support and assistance, and ultimately the compliance of the other to whom the signature of what is written is entrusted, it is not hard to see almost the same procedure taking place in relation to one's death, and especially, in relation to one's own mourning, the automourning that must have always been in place since the emergence of life. And given that, according to Derrida, the "proper name" is "the name of someone dead, or of a living someone whom it can do without" (53), everything seems to hinge on the *survival* of the proper name. One survives as a name entrusted to the (ear of the) other. This is precisely the way Mrs. Sinico's survival is inscribed at the end of "A Painful Case": through the keen ear of James Duffy who was able to hear the "laborious droning of the train engine reiterating the syllables" of E-mi-ly Si-ni-co's name. It comes as no surprise, then, that Eveline and Gretta were both hurled into the abyss of sorrow when *hearing* in two different chance musical performances the encryptions of the names of their lost love objects.

That his life might drift towards the end without the assurance that he would be remembered afterwards ("if anyone remembered him," p. 116), and that his death might neither open a gap (in the ego of a love-object) nor his name forbid the closure of that gap must have forced on Duffy not only the empiphanic recognition of his own loneliness, but potentially the desire to transcend death by embracing, not loathing, mortal eros, that is, by seeking to silently and secretly ensconce his name in the landscape of an other's memory. By virtue of being both the harbinger of absence (death/transcendence) and presence (life/eros), the proper name might be indeed the only thinkable *time-space* in which transcendent eros and mortal eros are "locked," in the words of Henry Staten, "in an unbreakable embrace" (xiii).

CHAPTER TWO:

The Vicissitudes of Melancholia in Freud and Joyce

> *But what breaks the hold of grief except the cultivation of the aggression that grief holds at bay against the means by which it is held at bay?*
>
> —Judith Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power*

While the short stories that constitute *Dubliners* present us, as we have seen in the previous chapter, with a wide variety of characters who have variably experienced the pangs of loss, "The Sisters" and "A Painful Case" are unique nonetheless in their exposition of a sequential trajectory that ranges from attachment, loss, melancholia through to mania or suicide. If Joyce intuitively inscribed through the character of Fr. Flynn in "The Sisters" an interactive relationship between loss, melancholia and mania and through the character of Emily Sinico in "A Painful Case" a similar interactive relationship between loss, melancholia and suicide, Sigmund Freud would attempt to psychoanalytically articulate the psychic rationale behind the regression of some melancholics into mania and the adoption by some others of a more lethal line of flight—suicide.

This chapter seeks to expose the striking parallels between the literary inscriptions of the turn from melancholia to mania or from melancholia to suicide in Joyce's stories, and the Freudian psychoanalytic exposition of the vicissitudes of melancholia: its ultimate defusion into mania or involution into suicide. Not only will the reconstruction of Freud's struggle with the subject of melancholia, ever since his first explicit report entitled "Mourning and Melancholia" (1917), enable us to better grasp the dynamic of melancholia in relation to other psychic forces, but will also

throw some light on the yet to be unravelled mystery of both Fr. Flynn's mania and Emily Sinico's sudden suicide.

Melancholia and its Vicissitudes

Before we can square the literary inscription of melancholia in Joyce's two stories with the psychoanalytical arguments, analyses, and proposals offered by Freud, we have to return again to Freud's essay, "Mourning and Melancholia." We have now, however, to trace and elucidate Freud's concept of melancholia in relation to its originary cognate—the concept of mourning. In "Mourning and Melancholia," Freud distinguishes mourning from melancholia, all the while attributing both of them to a common origin: loss. Freud contends that although both affects originate in (a reaction to) loss, they diverge in their ways of dealing with it. While mourning is a normal affect that is accomplished once all object-cathexes are withdrawn from the lost object and displaced onto a new object, melancholia originates in an unfaltering fixation on the lost object, and culminates in a regressive process of incorporating, if not devouring, the lost other—a process which might eventually enact a primary narcissism, and which Freud suspects of a pathological disposition.

Whereas in mourning the lost object is *integrated*, in accordance with the commands of the reality principle, into the texture of the psyche, in melancholia the object is *engraved* within the psyche, and the cathectic ties with it are intensified rather than relaxed. It becomes clear that melancholia enacts nothing less than a vicissitude of normal mourning, and that Freud is perhaps justified in suspecting it of

a pathological disposition. Yet, while Freud had never fully accounted for the waning of the affect of melancholia after the passage of a certain period of time, he seems to contend that the resolution of mourning cannot take place without the passage through melancholia. "Setting up the object inside the ego," Freud suggests in *The Ego and the Id* (1923), "makes it easier for the object to be given up or renders that process possible" (368). Thus, melancholia becomes here the condition of possibility of mourning. This is one of the most puzzling conclusions that could be drawn from a reading of "Mourning and Melancholia" in tandem with *The Ego and the Id*—a conclusion on which Freud does not, unfortunately, linger. As I explain in my introductory chapter, this mournful turn of melancholia cannot be clearly accounted for since it is deeply rooted in a more ambiguous and unlocatable event—the dissolution of the Oedipus complex. What is important for us to bear in mind, however, is that melancholia is at the horizon of all possible mourning. This is to say, by implication, that whenever mourning fails, it is either that the melancholic introjection of the object has been suspended *sine die* or denied altogether by the forces, namely the super-ego, that override the ego. In either case, the lost object is, as I said above, engraved rather than integrated in the psyche. Such is loosely the affective state (known in Freudian parlance as melancholia) whose mutation, rather than resolution, into other neighbouring pathological forms like mania and suicide has relentlessly garnered Freud's analytical acumen. Being, at least provisionally, a vicissitude of normal mourning, melancholia generates, as it were, its own vicissitudes.

Already in "Mourning and Melancholia," Freud alludes to the outbreak within melancholia of what he would later baptize as the "death drive," the drive that results in the "overcoming of the instinct which compels every living thing to cling to life" (254). While during the phase of libidinal approach and attachment, the ego picks up an object, it proceeds, once the loss of that object occurs, to set it up within (the ego) such that it provokes the anger of the critical agency operative in the ego itself (i.e. super-ego). The act of relocating the lost object within the ego—which Freud loosely calls "identification," "incorporation," or "introjection"—seems, no matter how imperative it potentially is for the accomplishment of the work of mourning, to be at the origin of whatever misfortune that would later befall the whole organism. It is, after all, allegedly suspected of being at the origin of the "cleavage between the critical activity of the ego and the ego as altered by identification" ("Mourning and Melancholia" 257-58).

In *The Ego and the Id*, Freud elucidates how this act of incorporation of the lost object within the ego occurs: the ego fraudulently "assumes the features of [the lost] object" (EI 369) and forces itself upon the id as its (lost/regained) love-object in such a manner as to hijack and introvert the outward emittance of the id's entire libido. Such an illicit undertaking by the ego, while being "the sole condition under which the id can give up its objects" (*Ego and the Id* 368), is of grave consequences: it tosses the whole organism on the verge of a lethal conflict between the ego and the critical agency (or, the super-ego)—a conflict in which the super-ego might resort to drive the ego into its own death "if the latter does not fend off its tyrant in time by the change round into mania" (394).

While the loss of a given object-libido is inevitable, survival in the aftermath hinges undoubtedly on the psychic wherewithal of the individual organism of each mourner. In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), Freud makes it patently clear that the more a living organism is stimulated into affective attachments, the more it becomes capable of both dealing with (libidinal) stimuli and shielding itself against their loss once they are hyper-cathected. In Freud's parlance, an individual system that is *highly* cathected implies, by the same token, that it is highly effective not only in moderating and managing the inflowing stimuli, but also in subduing the intrusive (libidinal) stimuli by converting them into what Freud calls, after Breuer, "quiescent cathexis" ("Mourning and Melancholia" 298). In this regard, Freud postulates that "a system which is itself highly cathected is capable of taking up an additional stream of fresh inflowing energy and of converting it into quiescent cathexis, that is, of binding it psychically" (*Beyond the Pleasure Principle* 302). Following these insightful remarks, one might conclude that melancholia strikes harder in individuals whose affective systems are *lowly* cathected. "The higher the system's own quiescent cathexis," as Freud points out, "the greater seems to be its 'binding' force; conversely, therefore, the lower its cathexis, the less capacity will it have for taking up inflowing energy and the more violent must be the consequences of such a breach in the protective shield against stimuli" (302).

Shielding against inflowing libidinal stimuli proceeds by hosting any libidinal cathexes before, as it were, lulling them to sleep. This is, however, neither the affective strategy of Fr. Flynn whose attachment to the priesthood prompts him to transcend any stimulus that smacks of eros, nor is it, for that matter, the pragmatic

strategy of Emily Sinico who was doomed "to sing to empty benches" (*Dubliners* 109) after having been cold-heartedly excluded from her husband's "gallery of pleasures" (110). Actually, by virtue of multiplying and diversifying his love-objects, her husband managed to reduce her to the level of a "quiescent cathexis," an ineffectual element in the gallery of his inflowing stimuli and outflowing libidinal attachments. Consequently, while her husband accumulated the psychic resources whereby he would keep afloat within the potential storms that her death might provoke, she was not exposed to as much cathectic stimuli and libidinal exchange as would enable her to fend off the effects on her mind of the inimical stimuli that would stem from the break of her illicit romance with James Duffy.

Both Fr. Flynn and Emily Sinico are, by virtue of their low systems of cathexes, incapable of hosting new inflowing stimuli, let alone the strong and unpleasurable stimuli which might force themselves easily through their frail protective shields, thus producing, as Freud goes on to surmise (*Beyond the Pleasure Principle* 303), grave impacts on their mental organs. While some stimuli, like the blandishments of eros, provoke pleasure, some others, say the loss of an object-libido, provoke pain, mourning, or melancholia whose vicissitudinal thrust toward death—unless twisted along the round path of mania—culminates in suicide. While the former scenario pertains, I shall argue, to Fr. Flynn whose melancholy sadness and self-incriminating guilt following the loss of his holy vase have pressed him toward death until he took the circuitous route of mania, the latter pertains to Emily Sinico whose affective system is so lowly cathected that it lethally fell apart following the break of her amorous affair with James Duffy. In sum, "Owing to their

low cathexis those systems are not," to adopt Freud's own words, "in a good position for binding the inflowing amounts of excitation and the consequences of the breach in the protective shield follow all the more easily" (303).

Fr. Flynn's Melancholia—A Change round into Mania

Bearing the above theoretical concerns in mind, let us probe more closely the affective conditions of Fr. Flynn and Emily Sinico after the crises of loss that have beset both of them. Seeking to offer primarily a reading that traces the narrative inscriptions of melancholia in the two *Dubliners*'s stories, I will try to carve out my argument in the hinge between object-cathecting, loss, and the onset of melancholia and its vicissitudes. Precisely, by invoking the work of Freud, I will try to place the emphasis on what emerges, especially in the case of Fr. Flynn and Emily Sinico, as a structural incompetence, a constitutive inability to bind the mobile cathexes that threaten to dislodge their defensive systems altogether.

In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud insists that the "*Protection against* stimuli is an almost more important function than *reception of* stimuli" (299; original italics). By virtue of being a priest, Fr. Flynn is himself already entrenched in a strategy of protection and forearmament against inflowing libidinal stimuli. As Henry Staten has shown in *Eros in Mourning*, Christianity, much like Platonism and Stoicism, among others, is predicated on an ideology of sublimation and transcendence of mortal eros. Transcendence is a mode of coming to terms with the temporal presence of a loved object flawed by mortality, that is, by the solid absence

building in the horizon of its immediate presence. Transcendence is, in Staten's words, "a matter of learning how to extract one's libidinal substance from the mortal or losable objects in which it could be trapped" (5). In this respect, Fr. Flynn, is, as is potentially the case with any priest, involved in the askesis or praxis of foreclosure or desexualization of every *inflowing* or *outflowing* libidinal stimulus.

Invested in the Platonic-Stoic-Christian strategies of idealization and transcendence, which exhort him to nip eros at the very moment of its inception, Fr. Flynn has neither been able to host any inflowing stimulus nor to foster a system of high cathexis, that is, a system which would enable him to convert efficiently, and by virtue of constant exposure, any mobile cathexis into a quiescent one. Yet, while he denies himself, following the commandments of the priesthood, any libidinal attachment, Fr. Flynn lavishes his desexualized libido on the ladder of transcendence, or the imago of priesthood—the chalice. And while he is armored against libidinal attachments by the chalice (which condenses metonymically his life-task: the commitment to the priesthood), he is not armored against the possible break of that very chalice. Fr. Flynn had never painted the loss of his chalice such that he was hurled into the abyss of infinite sorrow at the moment of its loss.

When long before his death Fr. Flynn had reiterated to the boy-narrator that he was "*not long for this world*" (*Dubliners* 9; original italics), he was certainly spurred by the consoling idea of a better life in the hereafter. In the wake of the loss of his chalice, however, such an aspiration came to be undercut by a sweeping sense of disappointment, frustration, and hopelessness as if such a loss had brought in its trail the closure of the horizon the chalice first stretched open. In other words, the

conciliatory narrative of automourning that Fr. Flynn was wont to share with the boy gave way, following the breaking of the chalice, to a lethal narrative of melancholy sadness whose "deadly work" (9) had a bearing on the well-being of his whole mental organism. Here, while I agree with Donald T. Torchiana that Fr. Flynn died a natural death, that neither paresis nor syphilis—but the breaking of the chalice—was at the origin of his crisis, I nonetheless disagree, as will become clear in due course, with his conclusion that there was actually nothing wrong with Fr. Flynn (29). The inability to accomplish the ritualistic task of mourning is precisely, I shall argue, what is wrong with Fr. Flynn. Such inability, compounded with his total surrender to self-manufactured guilt, has eventually factored out the role of the life instincts. Of course, I am not here suggesting that the task of mourning qua mourning can be fulfilled; rather, I am exploring the degrees of its fulfilment, or, more precisely, the extent to which one can acquire the psychic wherewithal required for its fulfilment or the psychic wherewithal required in defence against its excesses.

While Fr. Flynn must have compromised his mortality by his devotion to the priesthood and, by implication, by his aspiration to a life-to-come, the breaking of the chalice has proven too overwhelming to brook any compromise. As his sister, Eliza, informs us in a very emphatic manner, it is the breaking of the chalice that instantiated a turning point in Fr. Flynn's erstwhile effective strategy of idealization and transcendence: "*It was that chalice he broke*... That was the beginning of it. Of course, they say it was all right, that it contained nothing, I mean. But still....They say it was the boy's fault. But, poor James was nervous" (*Dubliners* 17; italics mine). "The Sisters," presents us thus with a controversial breaking of a chalice (and

implicitly of its consecration), which, though reparable, is perceived by Fr. Flynn as a grave blunder, for which he has to suffer interminable grief.

As a sign of commitment to the priesthood, the chalice belongs normally to a system of symbolic exchange and reparation: unless it has become unserviceable, it can be—as the text of the story itself implies—repaired, regilded, and eventually reconsecrated without complications. But as a singular and ideal object—ideal in satisfying, that is, the needs of sublimated sexual instincts—the chalice cannot probably be placed within an economic system of circulation and exchange of objects-cathexes. Since Eliza establishes a firm connection between the breaking of the chalice and the onset of Fr. Flynn's crisis, I am inclined to think that the chalice is an ideal object that condenses the economy of priesthood (i.e., Fr Flynn's life-task), and as such its loss pertains to the uncompromisable *par excellence*. As Freud intimates in "Mourning and Melancholia," the loss of an ideal object is hardly amenable to the conciliatory work of mourning. What muddy the waters are the associative and connotative implications such a loss conjures up. Such implications are not dissociable from the sedimentations of the socio-religious networks of inhibitions or from the neighbouring fountainheads of guilt that architecture the psyche. In this regard, I will show how Fr. Flynn's hermeneutic uncertainty, for instance, over whether he had committed a sin when he broke the chalice has served to intensify his sense of having committed it, and has thus down-spouted as guilt. This phenomenon (which, following psychiatry, one might easily call a *guilt complex*) is not at all restricted to Fr. Flynn but extends to many other Dubliners such as Eveline, Mrs. Sinico, as well as Gretta, and shows with a remarkable clarity how

something untruthful and in excess of reality, something that contains *de facto* no guilt at all, comes to burden the mind of its creator, and at length to put his/her psychological makeup in total disarray.

This seems to me one of the strong aspects of paralysis in *Dubliners*. Feeding primarily on a persisting sense of guilt, this paralysis translates as a self-ordained punishment, a warranty to self-indictment. In psychoanalytic terms, this paralysis might be understood as the upshot of the inacceptance of loss, and especially of the conversion of loss into absence. In this respect, the loss of the chalice is not perceived by Fr. Flynn as a loss that can be adequately addressed by the various techniques of reparation the church (as also exemplified by Father O'Rourke) makes available, but as a loss that brooks no reparation, and that comes ultimately to lay bare his, as it were, originary sinfulness. The loss of the chalice translates as a loss of the priesthood, which is subsequently converted into an absence of the good, an absence of hope: "There was no hope for him this time" (D 9).

Dominick LaCapra has recently cautioned against the rampancy of psychic apparatuses that tend unwittingly to convert suffered losses into constitutive absences. "When loss," LaCapra points out, "is converted into (or encrypted in an indiscriminately generalized rhetoric of) absence, one faces the impasse of endless melancholy, impossible mourning, and interminable aporia in which any process of working through the past and its historical losses is foreclosed or prematurely aborted" (698). Joyce multiplies the adjectives that attest not only to Fr. Flynn's guilt-stricken conscience, but also to his envelopment in an overall discourse of absence: Fr. Flynn is described as "too scrupulous always," "crossed,"

"disappointed," and "nervous" (*Dubliners* 17). The fact that Fr. Flynn's description of the "duties of the priest towards the Eucharist and towards the confessional" struck the boy as so grave that he "wondered how anybody had ever the courage to undertake them" (13) bears witness to the presence in Fr. Flynn's mind of aspects of what LaCapra calls an "all-or-nothing" tendency—a tendency that hardly tolerates the role of intermediary or transitional processes such as those afforded by the work of mourning (717). Evidentially, Fr. Flynn's mind is structured in such a manner as to hardly paint any possible reparation for a given transgression (here, the breaking of the chalice) of his duties towards the Eucharist.

The perception of the loss of the chalice as an instance of the absence of hope forecloses prematurely any potential prospect for recovery. It thus coincides with the onset of melancholia—an affective process whereby the ego tries to refurbish its habitat and take control of a runaway psychic apparatus. As demonstrated earlier, the ego has no choice but to counterfeit the lost object so as to re-channel the id's outward emittance of (desexualized) libido—an action which comes to further excite the anger of an already furious super-ego.

According to Freud, the roots of the super-ego or ego-ideal strike deep in the Oedipus complex and relate to the ego's primal identification with the parents. Moreover, the super-ego, Freud intimates, stands as well for the social and moral agencies whose influences and effects are infused in the child's mind during the early years of his development. In this regard, what is puzzling about Fr. Flynn's alleged sin of breaking the chalice is that, while belittled by the ecclesiastical authorities (that is, by those who partially stand for Freud's "super-ego"), it is stubbornly maintained

by Fr. Flynn himself. Even if we see Fr. Flynn, from a now common Foucaultian perspective, as an extensive agent of the brokered socio-religious structures that have informed his psychic makeup, we cannot fail to note the excesses of his auto-surveillance and the ways in which his turn against his ego override the ostentatious expectations of the visible ecclesiastical authorities by which such a turn (against his ego) is enabled in the first place. In other words, Fr Flynn has *reacted inversely* to the socio-religious attempts (that the likes of Father O'Rouke have undertaken) to detoxify him from the exorbitant sense of guilt with which his consciousness/conscience is suffused. Such attempts served, as a matter of fact, only to produce in him an exacerbation of his illness, as if the need for illness had gained the upper hand. He exhibits what Freud technically refers to in *The Ego and the Id* as a "negative therapeutic reaction" (390). Fr. Flynn is his own "harsh taskmaster" (393).

Through Fr. Flynn, Joyce seems to me to illustrate a crisis in the Christian strategies of transcendence of mortal eros. By virtue of being a priest, Fr. Flynn is undoubtedly entitled to emit only a desexualized form of eros. His bond to the chalice is a means to an "eternal reward," as the boy's Aunt put it (*Dubliners* 16). Yet transcendent as it is, this strategy is vulnerable to the disturbances instantiated by the break and loss of the symbolic ladder of transcendence: the chalice. Once disturbed, the bond between the priest and his chalice—a bond that makes possible the economy of erotic transcendence—brings the priest into an impasse, and hurls him back into the abyss of grief which he first attempted to bypass through distanciation and

sublimation. "It was that chalice he broke," Eliza remarks, and she adds, "That was the beginning of it…*That affected his mind*" (17; italics mine).

Bereft of the enabling transcending power of his chalice, Fr. Flynn is relocated into a structure in which he is vulnerable to, rather than unencumbered by, the outbreaks of grief. Such an insurgent structure asks of him to renegotiate his relation with the lost chalice in terms of the affective closure afforded by the work of mourning. However, the last image of the priest "lying still in his coffin…solemn and truculent in death, *an idle chalice on his breast*" (*Dubliners* 18; italics mine), though sealed in mystery, implies that the priest had not really been able to work through the emotional wreck in which he was driven soon after the break of his holy vase.

How can we interpret the presence of an idle chalice on the breast of a coffined priest? Although this might simply be a mnemonic reference to the time when priests used to be buried with their emblematic objects, there is ample evidence to read it otherwise: as a symptom of Fr. Flynn's melancholia whose vicissitudinal drive towards death ("*I am not long for this world*") was subsequently countered by a change round into mania. To start with, I suggest that the presence of an idle chalice on the priest's breast attests to his utter failure to accomplish the work of mourning since he has, rather than detached and reattached his desexualized cathexes, perseveringly maintained the affective ties with the broken chalice. This interpretation doesn't of course obtain unless we assume that the chalice that is now on his breast is not a new vessel, but the very same chalice he broke. The qualification of the chalice as "idle" (i.e. unserviceable) lends credence to such an assumption. Moreover, the fact that Joyce had himself settled on putting "chalice"—

after he had formerly, in the *Homestead* version of the story (*Dubliners* 243), opted for "cross"—on the priest's breast implies that he had reviewed the tragic story of Fr. Flynn in such a manner as to center its origin around a single object: the chalice.

In melancholia, the lost object is, rather than abandoned, incorporated within the psyche. Indeed, it is the ego itself which dissembles the lost object, so as to exhort the id to direct its libido toward it, initiating thus a process that Freud conceptualized as a regression to infantile narcissism. Such a process provokes, Freud goes on to argue, the wrath of the super-ego, the agency which had hosted the id's first libidinal expedition and had ever since stood apart from, and quite at loggerheads with, the ego. Feeling usurped, the super-ego exacts its revenge on the ego by inflicting it with guilt, if not thrusting it into death altogether. It requires no lengthy argument to stress Fr. Flynn's devastation by guilt after he broke the chalice: his nervosity, along with his withdrawal from society into his confession-box, is both a symptom and an effect of his overwhelming sense of guilt. In other words, the symptom of Fr. Flynn's guilt is inseparable from its manic re-turn as self-contented laughter (*Dubliners* 18). This manic re-turn, moreover, while attesting to the operative transposition of undue guilt, is symptomatic of aborted suicidal intents. The melancholic, guilt-pressured drive toward death defuses into the horizon of mania. After all, the Hamletian death-wish expressed at the very beginning of the story ("*I am not long for this world*") tallies perfectly well with Freud's psychoanalytic reconstruction of the turn in some psychic apparatuses from melancholia, in which the super-ego becomes potentially "a kind of gathering place for the death-instinct" (*Ego and Id* 395), into mania, in which the ego

seems to unwittingly compromise its mental functioning in order not only to throw off the object but especially to occlude the destruction of the whole organism.

To better understand Fr. Flynn's slippage into mania as a counterthrust to the super-ego's drive towards death, let us quote at length from *The Ego and the Id*:

> If we turn to melancholia first, we find that the excessively strong super-ego which has obtained a hold upon consciousness rages against the ego with merciless violence...*we should say that the destructive component had entrenched itself in the super-ego* and turned against the ego. What is now holding sway in the super-ego is, as it were, a pure culture of the death instinct, and in fact it often enough succeeds in driving the ego into death, *if the latter does not fend off its tyrant in time by the change round into mania.* (EI 394, italics mine)

While in the *Homestead* version of the story Fr. Flynn is commonly described as mad, it is not hard to glean signs of his mania in the present, drastically revised story: his moping, wanderings, and hysteric or soft laughs (as when in his confession-box) are symptomatic enough of his "change round into mania."

Insofar as mania shelters the ego from the otherwise exigent self-annulment, it might be a price willingly paid in order to steer clear from the deadly embrace of the lost object, embodied in the workings of the conscientious super-ego. Yet, although thrown off, the object remains close by, flung on the chest of the priest while he is "lying still in his coffin...solemn and truculent in death" (*Dubliners* 18). As Judith Butler suggests, "Mania marks a temporary suspension or mastering of the tyrant by the ego, but the tyrant remains structurally ensconced for that psyche—and unknowable" (*Psychic Life of Power* 191-2). Mania emerges as an aggressive turn not only against the object but potentially against the socio-religious outposts congealed in the psyche, and serving to incriminate the ego under the banner of the object. Such mania remains, however, easier recognized than analyzed. The present

attempt to relate it to melancholia and to Freud's metapsychological studies of the interactive relations between melancholia and the death instinct helps to bring to the limelight the mental side of Fr. Flynn's paralysis, especially that most Joyceans have only drawn our attention to the physical or syphilic side of that paralysis.

In sum, although amounting to no more than a ghostly presence in the whole story, Fr. Flynn's character—insofar as "character" is a function of the ego's object cathexes (Freud *Ego and Id*)—is quite complex. The turn into mania as a retaliatory and defensive tactic against the thrust of the super-ego towards death remains one of the clear tasks that Fr. Flynn's ego managed to accomplish in time before it was eventually swept by natural death. Such a task proves especially wanting in the case of Mrs. Sinico whose melancholically-driven suicidal behavior after the shipwreck of her amorous cruise with Duffy attests to her submission to her harsh taskmaster, the superego, the "gathering place for the death-instinct," as Freud calls it (*Ego and Id* 395).

Emily Sinico's Melancholia—A Turn round upon the Ego

Unlike Fr. Flynn whose commitment to the priesthood had enabled him to transcend carnal desires, Mrs. Sinico is a married woman *expulsed* from her husband's "gallery of pleasures" (D 110). Although she has an institutionalized right to satisfy her sexual desires, such a right is hardly respected by the conjugation—marriage—that is supposed to grant it. While the story is partly about an aberrant marriage, it is in a more emphatic manner a critique of the premises of the constitution of marriage itself—a critique of the social disciplining of sexual desire.

Emily Sinico's case is painful not only because her desire is of a kind that dares not speak its name, but precisely because her grief must remain unresolved in view of the social and familial contestation with which it would have been met were it to be expressed on the cultural and social spheres. Both harboring an adulterous desire and failing so utterly to fulfill it, leave Emily Sinico in a position where she has not only to mourn the loss of her love-object (James Duffy) and work through the dams of shame and guilt nursed and solidified by her adulterous intent but especially to do so under the duress of loneliness, deprived of the potential solidarity of an empathic witness.

Yet since the accomplishment of the task of mourning hinges crucially on the very externalization and exposition of her guilt, that is, on the public avowal of her *loss of a proscribed desire*, neither was Emily Sinico able to accomplish mourning and sever the ties with the lost-object nor was she capable of circling the downspout of guilt, enacted by the fixation on the object. This is especially so because Emily Sinico's psychic apparatus is, after all, marked by a lack of skilful manoeuvrability of inflowing unpleasurable stimuli. As I suggested earlier, insofar as a psychic apparatus is not adept in binding mobile stimuli, its protective shield remains prone to dissolve with sudden swiftness once an onslaught from the external world falls on its cortical layer. Silent about her love, silent about her grief, and fixated on her lost object while devastated by inflowing inimical stimuli, Emily Sinico's ego becomes a battlefield between the representative of the super moral codes (the super-ego, the patrolling agency within the ego, precipitated and infused since its inception by social sanctioning) and the representative of the desire to love and to be loved (the ego as

modified by the identification with the lost love-object). The lower an individual's psyche is cathected, the slower its convertibility rate of unpleasurable stimuli from a state of mobility into one of quiescence, and thus the more susceptible it is to the chidings of the super-ego, the precipitate of the socio-cultural codes. Although its management of stimuli leaves a lot to be desired, a lowly-cathected system is not, curiously enough, as economized in its erotic adventures as a highly-cathected one. Emily Sinico is a case in point.

A close look at the tropological structure in which Emily Sinico is represented enables us to better grasp the ways in which her case is truly painful. Mrs. Sinico is described as a receptacle ("oval face," p. 109), an earthly "warm soil" (p. 111), and as an introjective and transformational force ("she emotionalized [Duffy's] mental life," p. 111). In his *Final Contributions to the Problems and Methods of Psychoanalysis*, Sándor Ferenczi defines introjection as an "extension to the external world of the original autoerotic interests, by including its objects in the ego" (316, italics mine). In other words, introjection is the process whereby libidinally charged objects are gradually included within the ego, thus enlarging and enriching it. In their re-appropriation of Ferenczi's concept of introjection, Abraham and Torok trace it back to the very early stages of childhood and to the child's entry into language, arguing that it parallels normal biological growth, in that it constantly engages the individual into assimilating and accommodating new and emerging desires. More precisely, "introjection operates," Maria Torok suggests, "like a genuine instinct" ("Illness of Mourning" 113). Insofar as it sets in motion the whole psychic apparatus,

introjection is, in the words of Nicolas Rand, "the driving force of psychic life in its entirety" (80).

It requires no lengthy argument to stress the profound schism between the strategies of introjection, pertaining to Emily Sinico, and those of transcendence of mortal eros, pertaining to Fr Flynn. No other case in *Dubliners*, however, resembles Mrs. Sinico's, neither in terms of the potential for libidinal expansion and introjection, nor in terms of the degree of frustration with which these genuine instincts are rebuked. Unshielded against the ravages of desire and unequipped with the introjective psycho-tactics of binding mobile stimuli, Mrs. Sinico's story unfolds as a relentless thrust into the abyss of sorrow. The bottom fell out of her world when Duffy recoiled in front of her desire for him. Such an end is, as I shall demonstrate, hastened by the illicit nature of her affair with Duffy, and as such by the cultural and social as well as psychic impossibility to articulate and grieve it sufficiently as to block the downspout of melancholia or to hijack the thrust of the destructive forces gathering within her (super-ego) by a change round into mania, if not by a discharge of aggression from the "psychical sphere" into the "motor sphere," (i.e., the world outside the self) (Freud "Remembering, Repeating, Working-Through").

Judging from her behaviour—intemperate habits, addiction to alcohol, crossing the railway lines late at night from platform to platform (*Dubliners* 112-13)—one can conjecture that Mrs. Sinico's life has come to be profoundly scarred by her short foray into the doomed adulterous affair with Duffy. Rather than harkening to the reality principle and severing the affective ties with James Duffy, her object-libido, Mrs. Sinico stubbornly proceeds to forcefully "incorporate" the lost-object,

James Duffy, within her ego and thereby to fantasize about introjecting the desires that that object failed to mediate, not realizing throughout the whole procedure that she was but singing "to empty benches" (*Dubliners* 109). This is all the more so since, being a married woman, Mrs. Sinico's extramarital desire is proscribed, and cannot therefore be worked- or lived-through by means of a homeopathic or public expression of grief, which is deemed crucial for its relative success. The desire to grieve, which is also a token of love, must therefore be thwarted by means of a magical manoeuvre—the secret incorporation of the lost object within the contours of the ego. As Maria Torok argues, "The ultimate aim of incorporation is to recover, in *secret* and through magic, an object that, for one reason or another, evaded its own function: mediating the introjection of desires" ("The Illness of Mourning" 114; italics mine).

Disregarding the various strategies of encryption with which Abraham and Torok burden it, what is important for us to retain from this definition of incorporation is its structural affinity with Freud's concept of melancholia. In other words, while introjection, understood as a process of egoic broadening and expansion, amounts to Freud's version of an achieved mourning, understood as a process of de-attachment from an object and re-attachment with an other, incorporation as the fantasy of ingesting the lost love-object resembles Freud's conceptualization of melancholia: the ambivalent but sustained struggle in the ego between the forces that want to abandon the lost object and the other forces that want to force it, at whatever cost, within the ego ("Mourning and Melancholia" 258). At length, even Torok's description of incorporation as an "illegal" (114) procedure is in

tune with Freud's account of the ego's cunning methods of recovering the lost object, of which melancholia is at once an initiatory force and an effect.

The melancholic is governed by the ego-poetics of simulacra, of feigning to possess what it does not, and thus brings a measure of entropy and chaos on the otherwise intact distinction between reality (truthfulness) and fantasy (falsehood). This is all the more so in the case of someone whose system or living organism is not proficient in hosting and then binding mobile cathexes. Indeed, the whole emotional enterprise beckoning at Duffy and Sinico was so novel to their impoverished and lowly cathected systems that neither of them was able to sense or feel any uneasiness about it (prior to the time) when "their thoughts entangled" (*Dubliners* 111). As the narrator of "A Painful Case" remarks sarcastically: "Neither he nor she had any such adventure before and neither was conscious of any *incongruity*" (Dubliners 110; italics mine). Yet, while James Duffy seems to have been cognizant with his lowly-cathected system and has therefore opted for a strategy of preemption of any out-flowing and introjective stimuli, Emily Sinico did not, by virtue of her introjective nature, have the qualifications necessary for the implementation of such an affective policy.

Unimmersed in the waters of philosophic stoicism and unprepared to transcend any beckoning emotional bond, Emily Sinico is not as well-placed to compromise an affective knot by recourse to a Platonic or Stoic thought as James Duffy whose initial argument holds that "every bond…is a bond to sorrow" (*Dubliners* 112). Emily Sinico is but a crude introjective force. Since in lowly-cathected systems the management of grief starts, as James Duffy is well aware of, at

the moment of inception of eros (which must accordingly be undermined by a symmetrical procedure of attenuation and sublimation), it must therefore be, as Staten rightly surmises, "too late to master mourning once the loved object is lost" (10). In other words, mourning emerges as the condition of possibility of eros, where, as a rule, the one fuses in the horizon of the other. To master mourning, one must therefore give a wide berth to the temptation of eros, but once eros has taken root, it becomes quite impossible to obviate the outbreak of mourning. While James Duffy managed to extract his substance from the entrapments of eros, Emily Sinico was already captive to the lure of eros such that when she heard Duffy's verdict, she was swept by sorrow, and collapsed (*Dubliners* 112).

Since the process of libidinal introjection in which she had been absorbed was suspended *sine die*, Emily Sinico was led—rather than to renounce the object—to maintain the affective bridges with it. In a lowly cathected organism, the ego, devastated by the sudden disappearance of the object, falls all too easily prey to the incorporative and reparative magic of melancholia. Relying on its plasticity and histrionic gifts, the ego thus proceeds to counterfeit and substitute the lost object in order to *introvert* the attention of the id, and hence the outflow of the otherwise runaway cathexes. Being positioned "midway between the id and reality," the ego, Freud propounds, "only too often yields to the temptation to become sycophantic, opportunist and lying, like a politician who sees the truth but wants to keep his place in popular favour" (*Ego and Id* 398). The incorporation of the object, or the identification with it, does not take place prior to the object loss of which it is an effect. It is, however, incorporation, not object loss, that instantiates a bifurcation

within the brokered relations of the ego. In this regard, the super-moral super-ego unleashes its aggressive potential on the cowering and cunning ego, obliging it either to renounce the object or to face death.

In the wake of this sadistic side of the special agency in the ego (i.e. the super-ego), Emily Sinico's psyche becomes the battleground of two contending forces, the one (the ego) seeks to host the id's libido after the loss of the object, the other (the super-ego) seeks to counter boldly and coercively such an illicit readjustment. As Freud had shown, the super-ego is "not simply a residue of the earliest object-choices of the id; it also represents an *energetic reaction-formation against those choices*" (*Ego and Id* 373-74; italics mine). In other words, while the super-ego is an extension of such figures as the parents, teachers, heroes, and any other self-chosen figures, it becomes—once the resolution of the Oedipus complex has taken place—quite autonomous in its object-choices, thus constraining the otherwise duplicative adventures of the ego. Moreover, unlike the ego which when it succumbs to the thrill and magic of incorporation loses sight of reality, the super-ego is very acute to the laws of the reality principle, including the socio-religious norms, and does not hesitate to use those laws to instil in the ego a pressing sense of guilt. Indeed, Freud describes the super-ego as the "germ from which all religions have evolved": it can hardly be localized, but it "answers to everything that is expected of the higher nature of man" (*Ego and Id* 376). What does not pertain to the higher nature of man is therefore experienced by the subject as pangs of conscience or as a harrowing sense of guilt.

The sadistic turn of the super-ego against the ego gains more momentum the more feelings of frustration, disappointment, and erotic vengeance are not given utterance or denied outward expression—especially when "a *cultural suppression of the instincts*," as Freud suggests in "The Economic Problem of Masochism" (1924), "holds back a large part of the subject's destructive instinctual components from being exercised in life" (425; original italics). As I have intimated earlier, the painfulness of Emily Sinico's case stems primarily from the fact that both her love and her grief are proscribed and must therefore remain closeted and socio-culturally unacknowledged. Few things are more tragic than the loss of a love in a culture marked by a lack of the adequate conventions that would otherwise acknowledge such a loss and thereby warrant the homeopathic performance of grief necessary for its reparation. As Judith Butler expounds, in a not so dissimilar context, "Insofar as the grief remains unspeakable, the rage over the loss can redouble by virtue of remaining unavowed. And if that rage is publically proscribed, the melancholic effects of such a proscription can achieve suicidal proportions" (*Psychic* 148). The preponderance in Mrs. Sinico of a melancholic disposition, neither buffered by an outward discharge of grief or aggression nor defused by any social form of solidarity and empathy, must therefore effectuate an inward turn against the ego.

While Emily Sinico can be said to have finally, and by means of her very suicide, assumed an active part in her destiny and exacted erotic vengeance on James Duffy (who will thenceforth have not only, as we have seen in the previous chapter, to grieve her death, but also to suffer the guilt emanating from the suspicion of having caused such a death), she has not prior to that final act undertaken any similar

acts although the need—disregarding whether it is socio-culturally legitimate or not—for such acts has certainly presented itself. The need, in other words, to inflict on Duffy as much pain as suffered because of his cowering recoil into his world of exquisite loneliness has been denied concretization, and must have therefore coalesced into an alliance with the super-ego in its assault against the ego. What has been barred from outward vindictive expression must ultimately refract or return as self-indictment. Establishing a zero-sum relation between the outward and the inward expressions of aggression, Freud intones that "the more a man controls his aggressiveness, the more intense becomes his ideal's inclination to aggressiveness against his ego. It is like a displacement, *a turning round upon his own ego*" (*Ego and Id* 396; italics mine).

Bit by bit, we begin to grasp the psychic rationale behind Emily Sinico's aggressive u-turn against her ego. I have yet to account for her ego's unwitting masochistic turn on itself. When the sadistic raids of the super-ego are bolstered by the suppressed need of the ego for vindictive violence, the ego is left with no alternative but to fight back against the assault. In its retaliatory frenzy, the ego might, however, take a step whereby it *unwittingly supplements* the sadism of the super-ego, and thus speeds up the process of its own diminishment. In this regard, Emily Sinico's intemperate habits such as "crossing the lines late at night from platform to platform" (*Dubliners* 114) or "going out at night to buy spirits" (115) can be read not only as effects of the evasion-reflex and as defensive measures against the persecution of the super-ego, but especially as unwitting masochistic contrivances. Thus, the sadism of the super-ego, which expresses itself through the

whips of conscience, is inadvertently supplemented, in the very process of being countered, by the flight-reflex of the ego into alcoholism and all other anti-depressive methods, including crossing the lines late at night, which would eventually bring about its death. At length, "The sadism of the super-ego and the masochism of the ego supplement each other and unite to produce the same effects" ("Economic Problem of Masochism" 425). Deserted by all protective forces, strolling in the deathly stillness of exquisite isolation, and deceived by its own contrapuntal manoeuvres, "the ego," in the words of Freud, "gives itself up," that is, "lets itself die" (*Ego and Id* 400).

Because all forces have contrived against her, Emily Sinico dies even though "The injuries she had were not sufficient to have caused death in a normal person" (*Dubliners* 114). The need for self-annihilation has, in other words, gained the upper hand. The aggression that should have found utterance against James Duffy and, by implication, against the socio-cultural mores that regulate desire and the mourning of desire is rerouted against her own ego. Nothing "breaks," as Butler rhetorically implies, "the hold of grief except the cultivation of the aggression that grief holds at bay against the means by which it is held at bay" (162). In this respect, only erotic vengeance against Duffy would have broken the lethal hold that Emily Sinico's impossible grief has laid on her psychic apparatus. Only an unashamed and public expression of her grief—be it manically or hysterically driven—would have enabled her to survive the abysmal onslaughts of conscience. The difference between Fr Flynn's case and that of Emily Sinico proves that only mania has the leverage to resolve and mediate the conflict between the ego and the super-ego, of which

melancholia is both an effect and a driving force. Yet, can we not discern underneath Emily Sinico's suicide the contours of a strategy of posthumous vengeance, especially against James Duffy who is now himself overwhelmed by the guilt stemming from the suspicion of having had a hand in such a tragic end?

CHAPTER THREE:

Still Harping on her Mother:

Kincaid's Identific(a)tions and the (Ab)uses of Mnemosyne

No later undoing will undo the first undoing.

—Joyce

Who would mourn were there nothing to be remembered?[1] What follows is an attempt to work through the manifest rhetoricity of this question by illuminating, in variable depths, two of its concomitant latencies, two possible ways of taking stock of its otherwise mystifying structure. The question *Who would mourn were there nothing to be remembered?* is formulated thus, not to ask after the one who would—in a pathetic and unpitiful style of vicarious victimhood or willy-nilly sense of martyrdom—wear a disposition to mourning, but to ask (1) after the one who engages deliberately in a process of remembrance, as it were, of things past in the name of mourning, only to discover that remembrance tightens, rather than relaxes, the hold of mourning, and (2) after the one who lays a claim to loss, to remembrance and, ultimately, to mourning there where, historically speaking, there is indeed *a nothing* to be remembered, that is, there where, in the words of Spivak, there is "no historically adequate referent" for the sake of which remembrance and mourning are undertaken, only a "catachrestic" stir (*Outside* 60). Here, I shall demonstrate how the affect of mourning originates in an insistent *identification with* an allegedly lost object whose *identification*, or location in narrative historiography, perennially eludes the mourning subject. Yet, since the work of remembrance as such works precisely at raising the threshold—or at broadening the scope and repertoire—of what can be remembered and inscribed, the claim made by this mourning subject remains a valid source of uncertainty and, consequentially, of anxiety, especially in the light of its persistent "what-if-ness" or potential veracity. After all, we gain nothing by passing

over in silence those claims to seemingly empty nothings, to unregistered memories, losses, or traumas, since it is precisely in the nature of the victim, as Lyotard contends, "not to be able to prove that one has been done a wrong" (*Differend* 8). In other words, these claims, however unrealistic or excessive they might seem *prima facie*, must be taken seriously until they brighten, or fade away, on the dawn of new finds or studies.

Who would mourn were there nothing to be remembered? is, then, a question whose economy enables me to paint the broad strokes of the argument of this chapter: after establishing the psychoanalytic importance of the work of remembrance to any (envisaged) work of mourning, I shall show the excesses of the modern cult of remembrance, not only by provisionally pointing out its catachrestic overtones, but especially by laying bare its alarming convergence—or, in the words of Derrida, "overlap without equivalence" (*Post Card* 321)—with "repetition compulsion" (*Wiederholungszwang*), rather than with working-through and mourning. Perhaps one of the laudable virtues of the question *Who would mourn were there nothing to be remembered?* is that it mockingly cements, by means of its rhetorical structure of seductive reasoning, the bond between the work of remembrance and the work of mourning, thus setting the trap into which many of our modern reflections on mourning and on remembrance fall. Everything hinges, however, on the way(s) in which we understand *nothing to be remembered.* Are we here placed in front of an unwitting void in memory or in front of an insistent memory of void? Do we inhabit, or are we inhabited by, a void? The nature of the theoretical argument will refer me to one of Freud's most pertinent papers on the

subject, "Remembering, Repeating and Working-Through," while the need to interrogate and deconstruct Freud's insights will refer me to aspects of Fanon's theory of violence and to Kincaid's whole oeuvre, and, ultimately, to *The Autobiography of My Mother* in particular. In the process, I remain reticent—in the Heideggerian sense of the term (*Being and Time* 208)—about the virtues of playing off the rigor of the theoretical texts against the insightful adhocracies of their literary counterparts, all the while I deliberately abstaining from simply applying the former to the latter.

The Cult of Remembrance

In "Remembering, Repeating and Working-Through," Freud attempts to move beyond the old hypnotic method of treatment through which the patient would be transported into an earlier situation, "which he seemed *never to confuse with* the present one, and [would give] an account of the mental processes belonging to it" (148, italics mine). Under the hypnotic model of treatment, the process of remembering, Freud gauges, "took a very simple form" (148)—a "delightfully smooth course of events" (149). In a new science ever drawn to newer challenges, never contented with the success of its methods, it comes as no surprise that the hypnotic method proves too easy a paradigm to be followed any further, too successful to be adopted any longer. In "Mourning and Melancholia," mourning, by virtue of being a "normal affect" (251), receives the same fate as hypnosis. It is as if psychoanalysis has never really been comfortable in the vicinity of its foundational motive—therapy. This trend—which, in many respects, foreshadows the strain of

deconstruction, whose debt to psychoanalysis cannot be overstressed, toward the aporetic—is worthy of a more just investigation in a separate work.

The new technique of "analytic treatment," which comes to replace hypnosis, consists in the face-to-face exchange, "in a new sort of division of labour" between analyst and analysand, in the course of which the analyst relies on the "art of interpretation" in order to locate the analysand's resistances and make them conscious to him while the analysand proceeds, once he or she reckons with the repressive propensities of his or her resistances, to relate the forgotten situations and to fill in the gaps of his or her memory without any difficulty (147). Since this new technique is motivated by Freud's courage "to create more complicated situations in the analytic treatment and to keep them clear before us" (148), it is not long before we are confronted with one of these complicated situations. While, formerly, the potential resistances of the analysand are preempted through hypnosis, they are put now, in accordance with Freud's new technique, on equal footing with the analyst's transferential inducements. Not that the analysand has become master of the analytic situation; rather, the analytic situation itself has become a real battlefield. Such is the merit of Freud's new technique—to turn the analytic treatment into a battle of wills.

Through an economy of transferential attachment, the analyst has to release the analysand from "the armoury of the past" into whose fortified fortresses he or she tends to fold back when the transference proves hostile, embarrassing or tense. By "wresting" from the analysand his or her defensive weapons "one by one" (151), the analyst ensures that he or she does not have recourse to any of them any more. The point is that—unlike in the hypnotic treatment in which the discrimination between

the remembrance of the past and the actuality of the present is sharpened rather than blurred—in analytic treatment, in which the analysand comes equipped with a license to resistance, the remembrance of the past oftentimes doubles onto the present, much to the latter's defacement. In Freud's memorable idiom, the analysand is said not to "*remember* anything of what he has forgotten and repressed, but *acts* it out. He reproduces it not as memory but as an action; he *repeats* it, without, of course, knowing that he is repeating it" (150; original italics).

While this observation—that the analysand's "way of remembering" is frequently caught within the loop of repetition compulsion—might serve to invalidate the new technique of treatment, Freud points out nonetheless that the role of the analyst lies henceforth in his ability "to keep in the psychical sphere all the impulses which the patient would like to direct into the motor sphere" (153). The analyst must, in other words, have the transferential wherewithal to participate in the memories of the analysand in such a way as to preclude their outward enactment. Elsewhere I have recast this distinction between the "psychical sphere" and the "motor sphere" as one between the "affective sphere" and the "actantial sphere," respectively. In this respect, I explored the ways in which what is discharged, sickly and sickeningly, in action (i.e., in the motor sphere) can be contained within or defused along a metonymic chain of affects (i.e., in the psychical sphere) ranging from indifference, mourning, and melancholia to what I have conceptualized as "melanxiety" (see "Remembering Forbidding Mourning"). The question to which I will come in due course is the following: where do we situate *narrative* in the light of this distinction—between the affective sphere and the actantial sphere—under whose

aegis the work of remembrance takes place, since narrative, at least in Kincaid, is inextricably related to the remembrance of infantile inhibitions, of suffered losses, of socio-cultural proscriptions, and of colonial transgressions? Does narrative offer an alternative transferential economy whereby the remembrance and inscription of pain, of injustice, and of victimization is freed from the compulsion to repeat them in the present? And by extension, can narrative act as an empathic host in whose edifying company we come to muster enough psychic wherewithal to be able to part even with the fossilized desire of redressing the past—and, therefore, with the correlative desire of inflicting (the same amount of) pain (suffered)—in the name of justice? Can narrative act as an *affective* container of an otherwise runaway *actantial* repetition compulsion?

For Freud, it is in the playground of transference that the transfer or transition from the actantial sphere to the affective sphere—from the repetition compulsion masquerading as remembering to working-through (or mourning) materializing as an impulsion to remember—is made possible. At the time he wrote "Remembering, Repeating and Working-Through," Freud had not yet formulated such concepts as "mourning" or "melancholia," and remembering—certainly not in Hegel's sense of *Gedächtnis* (mechanical memorization), but, possibly, in his sense of *Erinnerung* (internalizing recollection)—therefore amounted to (and encompassed, if we are to stick to Hegel's *Erinnerung*) working through and mourning. The new technique of analytic treatment, while not foreclosing the analysand's resistance, does not encourage it; it asks that the analyst pinpoint the working of such resistance to the analysand, preparatory to dispensing him with it. In the process, the analyst has to

play on the analysand's cathectic attachment (prerequisite to, and generated by, the analytic situation) to him—and has, whenever possible, to extract from the analysand the promise of compliance to the rules of psychoanalysis—prior to "curbing [his] compulsion to repeat and for the sake of turning it into a motive for remembering" (154).

At the heart of Freud's new technique is an unwavering counter-Nietzschean[2] assumption that forgetting, far from being productive, is in fact the handmaiden of repression: "Forgetting impressions, scenes or experiences nearly always reduces itself to shutting them off" (148). Small wonder, then, that Freud deems it a triumph worthy of celebration if the analyst "can bring it about that something that the patient wishes to discharge in action is disposed of through the work of remembering" (153). The analyst has, in other words, to turn the compulsion to repeat into a "motive for remembering" (154) or, more precisely, into an "impulsion to remember" (151). Remembering becomes thus the sine qua non for the success of the treatment, on which depends not only the cure of the analysand, but also the acknowledgement of the role of the analyst and of psychoanalysis writ large.[3]

A widening circle of post-Freudians have dwelled almost exclusively on the means whereby a *mournfulfilling remembering* can be achieved. Attentive to Freud's caution against the repetition compulsion whose round path the work of remembrance oftentimes follows—and combining the teachings of Bergson and those of the *Aufklärung*—Paul Ricœur, for example, calls for a "*souvenir veritable*," for a "mémoire critique," as well as for a "*mémoire-souvenir*" in order to overpower the "*mémoire-répétition*" (96). Ricœur might be seen to privilege a practice of

remembrance in which only deliberate and critical *returns to* memory are accepted. Any unwitting *return of* memory in the veneer of a compulsion to repeat is, for Ricœur, an irresponsible act, ensuing from a subject suffering from a "déficit de critque"—a critical bankruptcy (see 83-97). In the same vein, Simon, Rosenberg, and Eppert call for a move beyond classical practices of remembrance ("remembrance as strategic practice" and "remembrance as a difficult return") to a practice of "remembrance as critical learning." Advancing the pair "*remembrance/pedagogy*," they call for a kind of regulative, institutionalized body of "what is to be remembered, how, by whom, for whom, and with what potential effects" (2). Perhaps the sharply pragmatic tendency of Simon, Rosenberg, and Eppert is at the origin of their tenuous theoretical formulations.

In their enthusiasm for a cult of remembering against the devastating and overwhelming monster of forgetting, Simon, Rosenberg and Eppert have overlooked the kind of *return of* memory that might be produced by the *return to memory*.[4] If one is to opt for remembering to the detriment of forgetting, one should not forget to articulate the pitfalls of remembering, and to resituate the tension not between memory and an outsider (forgetting) but within the realm of memory itself and between the *return of* and the *return to* memory. One has, therefore, first to look at the possible ways that would prevent the spawning and eventual reversal of the process of *return to* into that of *return of*. Second, one has, on a par with that preventive inclination, to conceive of the ways whereby a *return of* might spill into a *return to* through a kind of disfiguring reconfiguration. In this respect, what should, perhaps, be retained from Ricœur, Simon, Rosenberg, and Eppert is the critical task

they urge us to engage in—a task all the more incumbent on the mourning subject whose hypercathecting return to memory might awaken several other, hitherto, latent memories—"*l'oubli de réserve*," of which Ricœur speaks in relation to the state of dormancy and disembodiedness in which memories live on (561).

While I am here adopting an attitude neither of "objective cynicism" (Žižek 695) nor of praise (Butler, *Psychic* 162) vis-à-vis the kind of *mournfilling remembering* of which melancholia is a product, I nonetheless think that it is time we interrogated the as-yet argumentum ad hominem: that one can remember (the past and one's traumatic losses) and can still accomplish the task of mourning. It is not a matter of defending or fetishizing the somewhat uncanny pleasures of melancholy or those of an unremitting mourning to state that one cannot have it both ways. Nor is it a matter of being pessimistic—though "pessoptimistic" (Said's notion) might apply here—but it is certainly one of suggesting that one is, whenever within the moulds of remembering, already within the contours of a gnomic mourning. To break out of the moulds of mourning—to accomplish mourning—one has, perhaps, to start by excoriating one's memory, by laying to rest the clinical myth of curative remembering. One has, in the words of Derek Walcott, to "return through a darkness whose terminus is amnesia" (5). Hamlet knows only too well the palliative magic of forgetting: "Most necessary 'tis to forget/To pay ourselves what to ourselves is debt" (3.2.92).

The (Ab)uses of Mnemosyne

While granting that rescue (or curative) hopes are frequently part of what leads people to practice remembering (with or without the assistance of psychoanalysis), I think that it is important to stress the fact that the practice of remembering is often fraught with dangers that may eventually hijack the therapeutic aims it is initially intended to serve. The dangers bulk, not only because remembering oftentimes converges (as we have seen) with repetition compulsion, but also because remembering might be used in such an instrumental way as to repress its real work. Perhaps the best way to slice into the heart of the matter is by citing this passage from *Hamlet*:

> _____Remember thee!
> Yea, from the table of my memory
> I'll wipe away all trivial fond records,
> All saws of books, all forms, all pressures past
> That youth and observation copied there,
> And thy commandment all alone shall live
> Within the book and volume of my brain,
> Unmix'd with baser matter. (1.5.53)

Here the work of remembrance that Hamlet is exhorted to perform by the ghost of his dead father is inextricably bound to the task of revenge he is subsequently asked to accomplish. Hamlet's course of action—of setting right what went wrong, of redressing a tort, and of implementing justice—is undergirded by the instrument of remembering. Remembering is remembering in view of what is to be done. Yet, what is it that that is to be done? It is nothing but a *repetition*—a killing that is to be enlisted within the abysmal and immuring gyre of revenge. While in Freud the analysand is said to repress and therefrom to remember only in the form of

reenactment or repetition of the repressed, Hamlet is asked to remember *to* repeat. The compulsion to repeat and the impulsion to remember intersect. Yet, Hamlet's matrix of remembering, because instrumentalized, is also tainted by repression.

Hamlet's willingness to commit a sheer *memoricide*—to "wipe away all trivial fond records / All saws of books, all forms, all pressures past / That youth and observation copied there"—in order to remember the commandments of the ghost alone implicates him doubtlessly within a repressive structure of forgetting. To commit this memoricide, to commit oneself to this wholesale scale of repression, implies, by the same token, that Hamlet's table of memory will indeed suffer from a "déficit de critque" (Ricœur 96), that the commandments of the ghost can no longer be interrogated by any other criterion that is not answerable to them. Located at the very core of the injunction to remember and to wreak vengeance is, therefore, the kernel of repression. In order to live up to the commandments of the ghost, Hamlet has to thrust into oblivion whatever "baser matter" that might eventually dilute the acuity and urgency of the commandments or delay their execution, if not counter-intuitively reject them. While Freud's analysand is said to repeat because he or she represses rather than remembers, Hamlet can be said to repress in view of an ultimate repetition.

In *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze succinctly and acutely parodies Freud by contending that "We do not repeat because we repress," but "*we repress because we repeat*" (105; italics mine). If we bear Deleuze's dictum in mind, it becomes clear that remembrance masks the repression that repetition (un)masks. Yet, we realize this only too late, always too late! It is not that the act of remembering does not take

place, but that it is repressed, elided and occluded *ex post facto*, as it were, with the result that the repetition of revenge in the actantial, or motor, sphere continues. While in the psychoanalytic situation the work of remembering serves to stymie the passage from repression to repetition—and the unwitting repetition of the repressed resurfaces, it bears repeating, in the form of remembering—in *Hamlet* the work of remembering comes to affirm the fearful alliance between repetition and repression. We do not repeat because we repress; quite to the contrary, we repress because we repeat.[5]

Sanctioned Repetition

> *As for we who have decided to break the back of colonialism, our historic mission is to sanction all revolts, all desperate actions, all those abortive attempts drowned in rivers of blood.*
>
> —Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*

During de-colonization, all colonized "nations" were—as they, in many respects, still are—possessed by tormented spirits; all "nations" promised, if not contracted themselves, to the fulfillment of the commandments of a nameless horde of ghosts scattered across the globe. The voices of the ghosts still speak to us, with an explosive admixture of irascibility and intransigence, through the pages of Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth.* It is as if, at least retrospectively, Hamlet were a post-colonial nation unto himself. Generations after generations of men and women who happened to be born during colonization—a colonization for which they were hardly responsible yet against which they were contracted by/from birth to combat—

gave utterance to Hamlet's passionate outcry: "O cursed spite/that ever I was born to set it right!" (2.1 56).

While Freud introduced analytic treatment—and the economy of transference—as a technique that makes possible the passage from repetition compulsion in the motor sphere into remembrance and working-through in the psychical sphere, Fanon—a psychoanalyst, philosopher and psychiatrist by training—seems, in my view, to call for the implementation of the reverse of Freud's technique. Therapy follows, for Fanon, from the *canalization* (Fanon's notion) of repetition compulsion in the service of armed struggle and not from the containment of that aggressive compulsion in the interior of the psyche, since such containment would render the colonized/the analysand docile and would thus dovetail with the colonial setup. "Discipline, training, mastering, and today pacifying are," Fanon notes, "the words most frequently used by the colonialists in occupied territories" (303). Therapy within the colonial context comes, then, only through the willing suspension of relief in its Freudian analytic understanding.

It is theoretically rewarding to trace the delicate moves that Fanon makes *en route* to the detoxification of repetition (of violence) from the kernel of compulsion. When I have rounded out my argument, it will become patently clear that the *compulsive* in Freud becomes the *compulsory* in Fanon. In "Concerning Violence," the first chapter of *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon rams home the idea that violence should be understood not only within the narrow cultural context of myth and ritual, but also within the vaster historical tide of colonization-decolonization that has spectacularly promulgated it. I will come back to the psychological and historical

reasons for this argument later, but it seems important to underscore right away that Fanon's most contentious theoretical stride occurs, in my view, in his attempt to show how *ritualistic* violence, of possession and exorcism, can be hijacked in the service of *political* violence, of decolonization and nation-building. When the repetition compulsion of violence at the level of ritual becomes—once the *moudjahidines* have laid hold of it and changed its direction— instrumental to the project of decolonization, crude repetition compulsion is toppled into sanctioned repetition.

For Fanon, if the colonial subjugation of the native was born in violence, then the native's revolt and liberation can be forged only in the smithy of a greater violence. If "positive law demands," as Walter Benjamin claims, "of all violence a proof of its historical origin, which under certain conditions is declared legal, sanctioned" ("Critique of Violence" 280), no wonder, then, that Fanon's first move is to establish the phenomenon of violence as a product of history, imported to the natives by their invaders. From a positivist, historicist, and legalistic perspective, violence can be sought only in the realm of means, not of ends. As Benjamin points out, once violence is established as a means, a criterion for establishing its validity might be made immediately available: "It imposes itself in the question whether violence, in a given case, is a means to a just or an unjust end" (277). While it might seem critically unproductive not to interrogate the catachrestic nature of the figure of justice—a task I largely set myself in the next chapter—let us assume nonetheless, perhaps in a leap of irresponsible literality this time (Spivak, *Death of a Discipline* 72), with Fanon that justice amounts to nothing less than the use of violence against

the colonizer, in view of course of an eventual independence. Justice, insofar as Fanon's argument is concerned, seems indissociable from a narrative historiography bedevilled by the runaway force of the dialectic of history, according to which colonizer and colonized come to entertain a relation of "reciprocal exclusivity" (39).

Fanon's forays into the "virtues" of violence in the project of decolonization would have been simple had he confined the spiralling circuitry of his thought to history and dialectic. Soon, however, violence becomes the common impetus that incites, in a quasi Sartrean manner, the native to move from a state of passive existence into one (in search) of essence—"the 'thing' which has been colonized becomes man during the same process by which it frees itself" (37); equally, violence becomes, from a loosely psychoanalytic perspective, the rallying cry of the primitive, of the possessed, of the inhibited, of the mentally ill— of the colonized in all his damaged fragmentary states. While it is true that the mental disorders from which the colonized suffers might be inextricably bound to the structure of colonialism of which they are indeed an effect, it remains theoretically hazardous to assert that those disorders can be dealt with only on the pyre of colonialism.[6]

The problem with Fanon's concept of violence is that it cuts through the dividing lines between symptom and cure. Fanon's analysis aims to unwind the subtle meanderings of the concept of violence, yet the urgency with which he writes—and the swiftness with which his thought on violence seeps through the whole porous network of origins, symptom, and cure—tinges the tactical exactness of his analysis with a mystifying whiff:

> In the colonial world, the emotional sensitivity of the native is kept on the surface of his skin like an open sore which flinches from the

> caustic agent; and the psyche shrinks back, obliterates itself and finds outlet in muscular demonstrations which have caused certain very wise men to say that the native is a hysterical type. (56)

The gaping wound or "sore" of the native—of which the ritualistic muscular outlets are both symptom and cure—must first be seen in terms of its historical origins: it is, after all, the settler that deposits aggressiveness in the bones of the native: "The argument the native chooses has been furnished by the settler" (84). Furthermore, given that "The settler keeps alive in the native an anger which he deprives of outlet," one can understand why "The native's muscular tension finds outlet regularly in bloodthirsty explosions—in tribal warfare, in feuds between septs, and in quarrels between individuals" (54). Fanon calls these detours into neighbourly quarrels nothing more than behavioural techniques of psychic avoidance whereby the natives try to "put off till later the choice, nevertheless inevitable, which opens up the question of armed resistance to colonialism" (54). It is not that these feuds never existed prior to colonization, but that they come to serve in the colonial context a new function—a means not only to avoid the colonizer, but also to dissipate the aggressiveness he nevertheless keeps ignited. In this respect, even the otherwise identificatory stamp of myth and magic—that is, of belonging to a community entirely under "magical jurisdiction" (55)—plays, in the colonial context, a role dissimilar to the one it normally used to play prior to colonization.

Fanon's pivotal emplacement of violence within the colonial orbit makes any manifestation of violence (whether symptomatic or curative or both) on the part of the native revolve necessarily around colonial violence. Even the sphere of the occult—in which a chain of violent actions "are repeated with crystalline

inevitability" (55)—has now, according to Fanon's cautionary advice, to be studied in terms of the ways in which it bears on and bears the impress of colonial violence. On the one hand, Fanon points out that the natives are a people for whom the colonizer is—compared to the zombies of myth, for instance, not to mention the crowd of maleficent spirits such as leopard-men, serpent-men, six-legged dogs—too insignificant an enemy for them to bother rising up against, all the more so since rising up against the colonizer is subsumable under the phantasmic intelligence that regulates the natives' lives and is thus always already taken care of by their Gods and spirits. In other words, the natives do not really need to fight against the settlers since ultimately "all is settled by a permanent confrontation on the phantasmic plane" (56). This reminds us of the kind of indifference, jubilant self-contentment and vindictive mockery with which the Ibo natives (and the elders of Mbanta, more particularly) in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* first cheered the settlers/missionaries and sold them a plot of land from the "Evil Forest" (literally, the garbage bin at the outskirts of the village, in which whatever is not condoned by the religion of Umuofia is disposed of, including men who killed themselves, twins and ogbanje, or wicked children) on which to build their shrine, believing all along that they were sending the missionaries to their fate, that the Evil Forest would finish them off, and that the Gods would finally find ample opportunity to exact their vengeance against them.[7]

On the other hand, while maintaining that ritualistic violence surpasses colonial violence—if not dismiss it altogether by handing it over to the "invisible keepers" (56) of mythic jurisprudence—Fanon harks back nonetheless to the thesis

that ritualistic violence speaks directly to colonial violence, even when it does not aim at it:

> The native's relaxation takes precisely the form of a muscular orgy in which the most acute aggressivity and the most impelling violence are canalized, transformed, and conjured away. The circle of the dance is a permissive circle: it protects and permits…There are no limits inside the circle…There are no limits—*for in reality your purpose in coming together is to allow the accumulated libido, the hampered aggressivity, to dissolve as in a volcanic eruption.* (57; italics mine)

The cathartic purchases of mythic and ritualistic violence cannot be overstated: in fact, they very aptly exemplify the promissory impetus from which myth derives its continuing appeal. The "hampered aggressivity"—that is, the vindictive violence that the colonizer keeps alive but deprives of an outlet—is finally discharged through the purificatory apertures of myth and dance. While paying tribute to the edifying dimensions of mythic violence, Fanon intones nevertheless that such violence does not exist in a balmy elsewhere, unencumbered by the unthinking machine of colonialism. The colonial condition demands that this violence—"formerly lost in an imaginary maze" (56), "canalized by the emotional outlets of dance and possession by spirits," and "exhausted in fratricidal combats" (58) or allegedly criminal activities (304)—change directions, find a new line of action, and emerge shot through with insurrection and revolt.

While the analyst in the Freudian analytic situation is required to participate in the memories of the analysand in such a way as to ascertain their inward affective containment and thus preclude their outward actantial enactment, the rebel intellectual/analyst (of whom Fanon speaks) has to participate in the native's mythic canalization of violence—a violence largely ignited by colonial memory/reality—in

such a way as to enable the native (analysand) not only to re-enact it but also to direct it toward, or hurl it back on, the colonizer.[8] It is incumbent upon the native to negotiate prudently the delicate balance between the available ritualistic patterns of canalizing violence and the new demands for national liberation. The native is asked, in other words, to keep alive the aggressive impulses and, paradoxically, to direct their ultimate eruption in the battle for liberation. "When formerly [violence] was appeased by myths and exercised its talents in finding fresh ways of committing mass suicide, now new conditions will make possible a completely new line of action" (58) and "engender new aims for the violence of colonized people" (59). This is, in my view, Fanon's most daring theoretical venture—that the compulsive re-enactment of aggression must bleed into a compulsory act of revolt against colonization. Once the mythic, fratricidal, and criminal canalization of violent impulses segues into the plan for freedom, not only do feuds and crimes decrease,[9] but even psychic pathologies such as melancholia become sites of, if not occasions for, resistance to colonialism and the melancholic, curiously enough, no longer harbours auto-destructive or suicidal intents, only hetero-destructive or homicidal ones.

In the thick of colonial coercion, myths and rituals, crimes and feuds—as well as mental disorders and psychic pathologies, including melancholia—open up, Fanon postulates, much needed outlets for the frustrated aggressivity of the natives. In the armed march of the nation towards freedom, however, these heterogeneous pathways of canalizing aggressive impulses are mapped into the project of decolonization and become thenceforth part and parcel of the armoury with which the people fling themselves against "the impregnable citadel of colonialism" (79). While the above

ensemble of pathologies decried by the colonial powers become, in the eyes of Fanon, symptomatic of the virility of the decolonization movement, the structures of empowerment of the shift-in-function of these pathologies remain shrouded in mystery. This shift-in-function is certainly a breakthrough in the understanding of the psychic forces of decolonization movements, yet it has not benefited from the theoretical elaboration that it nevertheless seems to prompt.

Bearing the Brunt of Colonial Legacy

> *That the great misery and much smaller joy of existence remain unchanged no matter what anything is called never checks the impulse to reach back and reclaim a loss, to try and make what happened look as if it had not happened at all.*
>
> —Kincaid, *My Garden (Book)*

The problem with Fanon's conception of counter-violence—or what I called, in contradistinction to Freud's repetition compulsion, sanctioned repetition of violence—and with Hamlet's matrix of remembering, at the heart of which stirs the call for revenge, is that each of them sends history back to itself; each of them falls back on mimetic and visceral reflexes and sends revenge back to revenge, threatening thereof to produce a chain of mirroring effects that is extremely hard to undo—a "nightmare" (Joyce) or an "iron cage" (Weber) of interminable reciprocal violence from which it is hard to awake or break. Is not revenge, which is pursued in the name of justice, "merely one of the snares that history and its various influences [set] for us"? (Fanon 253). Are we not, after all, warranted—not to say, *entitled*—in the words of Derrida, to "yearn for a justice that one day, *a day belonging no longer to history*,

a quasi-messianic day, would finally be *removed from the fatality of vengeance*?" (*Specters* 21; italics mine). I shall not here insist on the notion of justice, which will be the subject of a more focused examination in the next chapter. Suffice it to point out, however, that justice in a legalistic sense is indissociable from the structures of its enforcement, from the implements of justice, and therefore cannot cease to fold back into the horizon of violence. Moreover, if from a positivistic legal perspective violence is the product of history—and if the socius itself originates, as Freud's *Totem and Taboo* demonstrates, in violence—can a later violence help redress that first (originating) violence? I can but refer here—in silent reflection, unencumbered by the pressure of words—to the young Jesuit sage of Joyce's *Ulysses*, Stephen, who interjects, with a measure of prophetic gloom, that "No later undoing will undo the first undoing" (251).

Stephen's largely aphoristic statement should be taken not as an open invitation to political inaction, but as an incentive to interrupt the nightmarish dialectic in which historical consciousness is unwittingly, or willingly, caught—a tool whereby we can help Benjamin's angel regain control over its wings. Hence, insofar as it bears on the actantial, or motor, sphere—in which one has recourse to violence and revenge in order to undo immediately or belatedly a past undoing or injustice—one would willingly want to ratify Stephen's counter-intuitive conclusion. (It is worth noting in passing that, in the "Scylla and Charybdis" episode from *Ulysses*, in which he presents his algebraic theory about *Hamlet*, Stephen protests vehemently the chilling sequence of homicides committed en route to undoing the first homicide—old Hamlet's murder). Yet, insofar as Stephen's dictum bears on the

affective, or psychic, sphere—in which one is urged to remember and mourn a suffered (or even inflicted) loss (to which he or she had set a claim)—one might end up with a sense of paralytic helplessness, if not abuse, over the fact that the undoing potential of mourning is not sufficient to undo the psychic undoing it is called upon to undo—that the work of mourning cannot close the affective sundering (of colonial history) it is called upon to close. The counter-intuitive force of Stephen's axiom—"No later undoing *will* undo the first undoing" (italics mine)—lies, I think, not in merely sabotaging both Freud and Fanon, but in laying bare the conditions of impossibility that pre-figure (the conditions of possibility of) any practice—literary, theoretical, or political—whose horizon/primary material is shot through with loss, suffering, and colonial transgressions.

It is precisely this condition of impossibility—or of irreconcilability "to what happened"—that Kincaid articulates in *A Small Place*: "nothing can erase my rage—not an apology, not a large sum of money, not the death of the criminal—for *this wrong* can never be made right, and only the impossible can make me still: can a way be found to make *what happened* not have happened?" (32; italics mine). While Kincaid proceeds systematically, as this quote subtly disguises, to name the different available redemptive patterns (ranging from "an apology," "a large sum of money" to the actual "death" of the criminal) at the disposal of her interlocutor—presumably, either a descendent of the perpetrators of colonialism or, if we are to take into account the larger scope of her book, the modern perpetrator of neo-colonialism—and to subsequently wrest them from him one by one, she is incapable of *specifying* the *crime* that has, after all, incited this erasable rage. Kincaid cannot but lay a claim

to "what happened," to "this wrong" that remains either too obvious to need any further belabouring or so enormous in scale and magnitude that it exceeds the otherwise inclusive structure of language.

Almost every postcolonial writer inherits this claim to *what happened*, to *this wrong* which he has, in turn, to pass on to posterity, willingly or unwittingly—and perhaps in the form of a phantomatic (and unconscious) transgenerational haunting (see for instance Torok and Abraham). It is not that the devious psychic and material effects of *what happened* do not echo down to the present—whether in the form of inferiority complexes and bad governance or corruption,[10] of which Kincaid holds the old colonialists responsible—but that the *whatness* of *what happened* escapes the telling. Here we are, of course, trenching on a recurrent theme, if not actually a common denominator of most postholocaust, postcolonial or postmodern critical practices—unrepresentability. Yet I will not insist on the inextricable bond between silence/unspeakability and representation (Weller provides a decent account of this prolific theme)—at the origin of the *cul-de-sac* of inexpressibility/unrepresentability—or on its ethical merits (Derrida) or legal demerits (Lyotard), but I shall instead attempt to sharpen our understanding of this aporia of unrepresentability by factoring into it hitherto penumbral elements which constitute nevertheless the poetic and affective structures of its empowerment—the alliance between catachresis and melancholia.

Kincaid's evocation of *what happened* provides a useful paradigm for my discussion here. But what is the *whatness* of *what happened* that makes the naming less expressive than suggestive, less denotative than connotative? Addressing the

criminal (i.e. the "English"/"British), Kincaid responds: "You came. You took things that were not yours, and you did not even, for appearances' sake, ask first" (*Small Place* 35). At first blush, Kincaid's answer seems to provide a heart-wrenching sketch of *what happened*—pillage. Upon reflection, Kincaid seems to me to be addressing herself to a child—perhaps, one of the descendants of the old colonialists—trying to simplify for him the gravity of his ancestors' transgressions by anchoring it in a discourse of manners or good behaviour, since good manners are the first things a child learns.[11] Upon further reflection, however, Kincaid seems to me to be parodying Julius Caesar's famous and infamous maxim—"*veni, vidi, vici*" (I came, I saw, I conquered)—by appending it with a stamp of impoliteness. Kincaid seems to be saying: "of course, you came, you saw, you conquered—*only if you asked first!*"

Kincaid's account of *what happened* does not offer an exact description of *what happened*, or a reflection of *what happened*, only a reflection on *what happened*. Yet this reflection is not pursued in a purely bellettristic fashion; it ceaselessly attempts to restore *what happened* to visibility. As my epigraph shows, "the impulse to reach back and reclaim a loss" remains intact, unchecked and undeterred by the fact of being trained on the impossibility of its conditions of possibility. In the "Laws of Reflection," Derrida argues that the aim of reflection is that "it reveals to understanding what goes past understanding." Perhaps this is the motor force—the instigating challenge—that explains Kincaid's fascination with *what happened*: not that the "locus of referentiality" (Caruth's notion) is visible—it is not—but that it continues to be invisible. "Transporting the invisible into the visible,

this reflection does not," in the words of Derrida, "proceed from the visible, rather it passes through understanding." In other words, the specificity of reflection is that it produces the very object of its reflection in the process of its unfolding; it "does not *reproduce* the visible, it *produces* it" (Derrida 23; italics mine). It produces the visible, yet the visible remains caught within the pull of reflection; the visible is always what will have been visible once its production-reflection is over—disregarding, of course, the regenerative and reiterative nature of the cycle of production-reflection.

The object of reflection is not prior to its inceptive reflection—or, shall I say, inflective inception. A great measure of this inflection is implied in the "again and again" recursivity of Spivak's "responsible literality" (see note 11). The fascination of *what happened*, or *the what will have been there* of reflection—waiting the arrival, or waiting at the arrival of, reflection, as Derrida would have framed it—is that it incessantly attracts, if not demands, its production. In other words, *what will have been there*—in its hermeneutic contingency, and in the Heideggerian "againness" to which Spivak alludes—is precisely the horizon of *what will have been infused there* in the very process of being disclosed, in the *again and again* recursive stirrings. *What happened* is thus, if we are to adopt Spivak's words, "given over to a future that is not just a future present but always a future anterior. It never will be, but always will have been," which is "the most practical assurance in view of which one works on" (*Outside* 22). I might have given the impression that this is only a question of hermeneutic temporality, but, really, at the heart of this hermeneutic temporality—that which fuels it or fans its flames—is nothing less than what Judith Butler calls the

"tropological inauguration" of the object (*Psychic* 3). Of course, Butler is interested, and perhaps overarchly so, in the tropological inauguration of the subject, but I will have shown by the end of my argument that the tropological inauguration of the subject is anchored in the tropological inauguration of the object—an anchorage without anchor!

The fascination that *what happened* exerts on reflection proceeds from the impossible visibility of *what happened* prior to its production—or, more precisely, prior to its tropological inauguration. Because the reflection on *what happened* begs the question of *what happened* in the process of answering it, the reflection of *what happened* is oftentimes signalled in a language that desires expression at the same time it is scandalized by its monstrosity, much as it does in the manner of the eruditely inarticulate governess in Henry James's *The Turn of the Screw* who keeps breaking down "in the monstrous utterance of names" (78). If we bear in mind here—perhaps at the risk of making a detour—that in Freud, in Abraham and Torok, as well as in LaCapra, naming is essential to the therapeutic process (of mourning), then we can perhaps conclude that the governess's discomfiture by names stems from her abuse of the licence to be ill, to be obsessed, and to be haunted—the licence to be articulately inarticulate, or to be infinitely encryptive. At the same time, the enormity of *what happened* can be itself an ethical hurdle in front of direct expression; whatever the name, *what happened* exceeds in proportion the language in which it will be expressed such that it becomes nothing but a form of "baseness to speak" (about) it, as James's governess is well aware of (78).

Catachrestic Rumblings

> *The past, to which we were subjected, which has not yet emerged as history for us, is, however, obsessively present.*
>
> —Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse* (63).
>
> *Once the reflection on the figurality of language is started, there is no telling where it may lead.*
>
> —de Man, "The Epistemology of Metaphor" (19)

The reason why *what happened* is called thus—simply, *what happened*—is that it cannot be located in a narrative historiography, in a historical continuum, but is condemned to roam at the outskirts of history—a species of "nonhistory," in the words of Edouard Glissant:

> Our historical consciousness could not be deposited gradually and continuously like sediment…but came together in the context of *shock*, contraction, painful negation, and explosive forces. This *dislocation* of the continuum, and the inability of the collective consciousness to absorb it all, characterizes what I call a nonhistory. (62; italics mine)

In Africa, a constellation of forces—ranging, as in the case of Fanon's Algeria, from mythic jurisprudence and political commitment, to the mobilization of psychic pathologies—have combined to form what Glissant beautifully calls a "cultural hinterland" that has enabled, in turn, the structures of resistance to colonialism and its aftermath; in the Caribbean context, however, no such cultural repository could be found, since the kind of continuity on which rests the cultures of African nations had been, in the case of the Caribbean nations, brutally interrupted by the dislocatory concourse of the slave trade, colonization, and imperialism. What is worse is that this dislocation is not fused into the historical horizon of the Caribbean peoples but hangs

over it, threatening to dislodge it every time it reaches out for it. It is therefore incumbent, according to Glissant, upon the Caribbean writer to explore this dislocation, not in order to relate it to a "schematic chronology" or to a "nostalgic lament," but in order "to show its relevance in a continuous fashion to the immediate present" (64).

I cannot discuss with due justice, in the space of this work, the complexity, density and constructive potential of Glissant's patient theoretical postulations—much less interrogate them from Kincaid's perspective—but I think it is sufficiently beneficial for my purposes here to examine the ways in which Glissant's reflection on *what happened* has been inaugurated by a tropologically regenerative desire for not only naming but also possessing the *whatness* of *what happened.* In the absence of a master-narrative of historical continuity, Glissant is explicit about the paradoxical desire to possess—not *re*possess—what has never been his: "For history is not only absence for us, it is vertigo. This time that was never ours, we must now possess" (161). This desire to possess that which has never been earned, possessed or lost—that which is still an empty vacuum, an "absence"—is a signal mark not only of the melancholic affect underpinning it but also of the inventive and largely poetic enterprise of the postcolonial writer. It is not for nothing that this desire to possess announces itself as both a definitional adventure and a recuperative enterprise: words such as "shock," "dislocation," "nonhistory," "absence," "vertigo," etcetera—words in which there is literally "no lack of void" (Beckett's phrase)—have become part and parcel of what Glissant calls "the uncertain possibilities of the word made ours" (168). Not only is the desire to possess the void regenerative (and this is, of course,

the law/logic of desire in Lacan): it is equally appropriative—it possesses the void in the very process of claiming, and therefore multiplying, it. To the extent that this possession is a possession (or obsession, as in the Glissant epigraph) *by* that which has never been possessed—and to the extent that it is constituted at the interface between language and desire, between linguistic appropriation and affective incorporation, or, in other words, between a *possession of* and a *possession by*—it is the effect or product, I will argue, of a nexus between melancholia and catachresis, between affective and poetic appropriations.

It is, of course, impossible to reconstitute *what happened* when it first happened since this poses not only a chronological but also a topographical problem—a chronotopic conundrum of time and space in which one cannot possibly travel back in time to bear witness to *what happened.* This time-space conundrum, or disjunctive temporality, is perhaps aggravated if we are to bear in mind that *what happened* is of the order of the traumatic whose presence can be felt but can never be penetrated—a "solid shadow," as Kincaid would say (*Annie John* 107). Yet the conundrum might, by the same token, become insignificant if we place ourselves in a psychoanalytic perspective, in which the traumatic is said to brook no witness, it being the site of an utter "collapse of witnessing" (Freud, Laub, Caruth). It is, however—and still from a psychoanalytic perspective—what is doomed to return after a period of latency (Freud), or what is fated to haunt posterity persistently if it is allowed to travel free-floatingly across generations (Torok and Abraham). It is in this sense that Glissant's evocation of a past that has not yet emerged, but which is obsessively present, should be understood. It is also in this sense that every reflection

on the past should be understood, not as making visible the site/sight of invisibility, but rather as producing the visible, that which can be demonstrated to have been (made) invisible, or of the order of the impossible to bear witness to, let alone register.

What happened is nothing but the "nothing" of *Who would mourn were there nothing to be remembered?*—the question I asked at the very beginning of this chapter and to which I have been trying, albeit through detours, to gain a fresh entry. If *what happened* is of the order of the *traumatic*, the *dislocatory*, and the *nothing*, one is faced with the hopelessness not only of determining it—a question that will solicit our attention in what follows—but also of proving it. We are yet to acquaint ourselves with the grave psychic sedimentations of the hopelessness of this situation and with the many hurdles it unwittingly interposes in front of any envisaged transcultural or transnational (or global—if we are to follow the vanishing edge of current theory) action, yet we cannot fail to note that the gloomiest part of it lies in the resultant fermentation and dissemination of a sense of victimization to whoever inherits the *nothingness* of *what happened* and gazes at it orphically. This is a hopeless situation, more precisely, because whoever inherits it or lays claim to it cannot prove that *what happened*—being itself the space where there is no lack of void—did really happen. Worse still is that one cannot afford bearing the brunt of victimhood in case one has retreated into the muffling fog of silence about it. If we are to abide by the distinction that Lyotard makes between the plaintiff—"someone who has incurred damages and who disposes of the means to prove it (9)—and the victim—one who is not "able to prove that one has been done a wrong" (8)—we

might think of the postcolonial writer as, properly speaking, neither a plaintiff nor a victim, but one who is condemned (in Sartre's sense) to border-dwelling, tending ever so pressingly toward the threshold of plaintiffhood but always falling under the shadow of victimhood. Can therefore—to rephrase Lyotard—new referents, new expressions, or new idioms be found in order for "the plaintiff to cease being a victim"? (13).

Let us return then to Kincaid whose only response to the above question seems to brook no response at all, only fresh referrals to a chiasmatically narrowing yet widening spectrum of questions:

> What to call the thing that happened to me and all who look like me? Should I call it history?
> If so, what should history mean to someone like me? Should it be an idea, should it be an open wound and each breath I take in and expel healing and opening the wound again and again, over and over, or is it a moment that began in 1492 and has come to no end yet? Is it a collection of facts, all true and precise details, and, if so, when I come across these true and precise details, what should I do, how should I feel, where should I place myself?
> Why should I be obsessed with all these questions? ("In History" 153)

Before I eventually come back to reflect on the enormity and ambition of the first question, let me first point out that it is a definitional question. Of course definitional questions are the most common and simple questions, yet they can be particularly difficult to answer, especially when such questions refer to fields of knowledge or to discursive practices. Definitional questions presuppose the existence of the "name" of that of which they ask and demand its identification. However, what is at stake in Kincaid's first question is the very name of which it asks. The question and the name are identical: there is no name of which the question asks, only a question. The question asks after "the thing that happened," but does not dare to name it, not

because it cannot be named and even specified, but because its very name, its very specification would threaten to thrust it into oblivion. Perhaps Kincaid overemplots her fear of naming, but the question, as it is formulated, is the site of an interdiction. It is as if the conferral of a name on "the thing that happened" would irrecoverably prevent us from having access to it, to its weight and enormity. But by the same token, one is struck by the reification of the object of the question. Not to be able to produce a name for it—and to call it "the thing that happened"—makes one wonder at the outset whether one is placed in the pull of excess or inadequacy. This is of course the perfect "inscriptional space" (Butler's notion, *Bodies* 38) of catachrestic manoeuvres, of improper usages of words, abuses of some sort. A trope of disarticulation and embarrassment (Savoy "Embarrassments"), catachresis preys on blanks and on the absence of referents in order to usurp, transfer, and displace words from one context or proper use into another—so much so that the resultant word—which will of course bear the stamp of catachresis—becomes not only an evocation of an original lack but also a staging of the lack of homology between meanings and words.

Since "the thing that happened" does not have a proper name yet, it is opened up, by necessity, to catachrestic malleability, to an infinite set of propositions and appropriations, of enumerations and calculations. It is not for nothing therefore that Kincaid hastens right after she asked the first question to propose a name for "the thing that happened": "should I call it *history*?" Hence, "history" should be understood as a catachrestic inscription of "the thing that happened" but that could not hitherto be identified, only identified with. I will come back to the melancholic

import of this distinction later, but let me briefly indicate the aporia of identification operative in the first question, which is definitional, and the second one, which is propositional. It seems to me that a question such as *What to call the thing that happened to me and all who look like me?* stages a disjunction between hermeneutic grasp and affective investment. While the *identification of* "the thing that happened" has not yet been articulated, the *identification with* it seems nonetheless to be so deeply seated in Kincaid's historical consciousness that she shares it with "all who look like her". This disjunction—or, more precisely, this disjunctive relation, this *rapport sans rapport*, as Derrida would say—between the *identification of* and the *identification with* "the thing that happened" is an effect of the *melanchologics* of catachresis—a trope of transferral and appropriation, much like Freud's melancholia, in which the ego is said to latch on to a lost object it cannot fully articulate. There where there is catachresis, melancholia shall be.

In "Mourning and Melancholia," Freud does not purport to give a coherent and comprehensive account of what melancholia is, only a variation on a theme—a set of observations based on heterogeneous cases. Not infrequently, Freud is very explicit about the impossibility of homogenizing all the otherwise irreconcilable aspects of melancholia. Such expressions as "In one set of cases…" and "In yet other cases…"—along with many other variations on them throughout the essay—testify to Freud's caution against any subsequent critical temptation to emplot a master narrative of melancholia. I will be concerned therefore with an aspect of melancholia in which the melancholic is said to be consumed by an "unknown loss":

> In yet other cases one feels justified in maintaining the belief that a loss…has occurred, but one cannot see clearly what it is that has been

> lost, and it is all the more reasonable to suppose that the patient cannot consciously perceive what he has lost either. This, indeed, might be so even if the patient is aware of the loss which has given rise to his melancholia, but only in the sense that he knows *whom* he has lost but not *what* he has lost in him. (253-4; original italics)

Freud goes on to add that a melancholic of this type is not uninhibited by "the unknown loss," but his inhibition "seems puzzling to us because we cannot see *what* it is that is absorbing him so entirely" (254; italics mine). Freud insists that the melancholic "knows *whom* he has lost but not *what* he has lost in him," yet this distinction seems to me elusive, precisely because it attempts to sharpen the already blurred lines between the memory of the person lost (the "whom") and his attributes (the "what"); it purports, as it were, to distinguish between "the dancer and the dance" (Yeats "Among School Children" 92). As we move ahead into the Kincaidian text, this distinction might become useful; however, for the moment, what is important to stress is this maddening unknowability of the object of the melancholic's absorption. The inability to determine the object (or what is lost in it) collides with the inability to dispose of it in words. It is not that the melancholic is unable to speak, but that he is able not to speak. It is not so much a question of inability as one of negativity. Were the melancholic to know what has been lost or "the thing that happened"—and were he able to unlearn the catachrestic filling of the void created in him by such loss—the melancholic would have evaded, or contained, the falling shadow of the object. Yet in order for this to happen, the melancholic would have to lose the object irrecoverably, which amounts to nothing more than actually disposing of it in the literality of language, beyond and against the grain of catachresis. At the same time, perhaps because melancholia, like catachresis, is such

a state of outlawry that its seductions are irresistible. It bears repeating here that, in "Remembering, Repeating and Working-Through," Freud speaks of an abuse of the licence of being ill, only to conclude eventually that the abuse is indeed a form of luxuriating in the symptoms of the pathology (152). Is not poetic language—a language that the melancholic has a penchant for—part and parcel of this overall process of luxuriating? When "the thing that happened" is impossible to articulate, does not the articulation of that impossibility—the articulation of an impotency, a disarticulation—deliver an intrinsic luxury? There is more than one way of tracing the confluence between the melancholic of catachresis and the tropologic of melancholia; they will take shape as we progress in our analysis of the Kincaidian text.

Kincaid wants to condense—as in a dream—the sum total of all "that happened to [her] and all who look like [her]," and wants to give it a name. There is no gainsaying the urgency and the precariousness of the project. The explicit rhetoricity of the question, however, suspends its literality in the impossible. In other words, Kincaid explicitly intones that it is impossible to "call the thing that happened." Yet that very impossibility implies that Kincaid is nevertheless trying—caught, as it were, in the attempt. We are cautioned, however, that the name of "the thing that happened" will not come from memory but from the imagination: "*Should* I call it history?" In other words, it is not that Kincaid tried and was not able to remember the name of "the thing," or that a precise name for it existed already, but that its memory is itself missing and must therefore be invented. The "should"—in "Should I call it history?"—gives us an idea of not only the arbitrariness of the name

but also the necessary catachrestic invention of that of which it is the name. Moreover, at the heart of this catachrestic claim to "history"—to naming and misnaming "the thing that happened" as "history"—we can also see the amount of forgetting already insinuated in it. Speaking no longer to memory but to the imagination, Kincaid, in dubbing "the thing that happened" "history," threatens to thrust it into oblivion at the very moment when she wants to identify it and bring it to cognition. The inscriptional space of identification is sited in oblivion. The suspicion that "Something monstrous lurks in the most innocent of catachreses" (de Man "Epistemology of Metaphor 19) is not totally unfounded inasmuch as the domino effect of a catachrestic inscription is nothing less than the domestication, and therefore supplantation, of "the thing that happened" with a familiar name. At the very same time that it is instigated by the impulsion to comprehension, naming becomes thus a form of denial of "the thing that happened" much as not naming would boil down to yet another form of denial of the same "thing that happened"—a melancholic possessioning of "the thing" and a narcissistic mortification of its loss. Can therefore a new idiom be found whereby what is named cease to be named?

Now that Kincaid has dubbed imaginatively what happened "history," she can no longer arrest the spiralling play of catachresis, or the resultant *mise en abîme* of catachrestic rumblings. These are nothing more than effects of any definitional question, since any such question would carry with it the possibility of staging several propositions, which is to say the possibility of setting in motion an infinite chain of catachrestic generative transformations. As we will see in due course, catachresis itself is not exempt from this chain of mutations and metamorphoses.

Returning to Kincaid's catachrestic inscription of "the thing that happened," we might ask the following question: what does the referent "history" imply if "the thing that happened" is now inscribed as "history"? First and foremost, it implies that "the thing that happened," now baptized as "history," is finally amenable to sensemaking rather than removed from it. To call it "history" means that it can, after all, pass through understanding, be conferred a meaning, and be integrated—rather than engraved—in the historical horizon of the postcolonial subject.[12] Second, since understanding is a function of consciousness, it is presumably conducive to the fulfillment of the work of mourning. No wonder then that Kincaid's subsequent question is: "If so, what should history *mean* to someone like me?" It is worth noting here that Kincaid is extremely sensitive to every delicate move she makes along the path of rhetoric. For instance, having dubbed "the thing that happened" "history," she is now aware that it has introduced it into language and has therefore opened it up to perspectival differences and to hermeneutic appropriations. She hastens therefore to specify that she is here concerned with her perspective alone: "what should history mean to someone *like me*?" Having made that clear—despite the residual undecidability of the simile, "like me"—Kincaid cannot, however, but work within the differential nature of the referent against which she has warned us.

Her response is structured by juxtaposition and focalized by subordination. Let us examine this response: "Should it be an *idea*, should it be an *open wound* and each breath I take in and expel healing and opening the wound again and again, over and over…?" First of all, how do we understand her use of the word *idea*? Why an idea? What can it be? Is this an implicit concession that "the thing that happened to

[her] and all who look like [her]"—and which she imperfectly inscribed as "history"—can be understood? Is not the definitional-propositional impulse at the heart of the question traversed by a homogenizing impulse that purports to give, at one stroke, a name for an otherwise heterogeneous concourse of events? If we are to adopt a Benjaminian perspective, we might say that Kincaid's question encourages the formulation of an answer from a historicist perspective, in which "a mass of data" is mustered in order "to fill the homogenous, empty time" (262)—one in which, that is, "a chain of events" is collapsed, in Benjamin's famous idiom, under a "single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage" (257). While Benjamin decries this historicist perspective and calls for a materialist historiographical practice of history—in which signs of "a Messianic cessation of happening" or of "a revolutionary chance" to blast a specific era out of "the homogenous course of history" are entertained, enabled, and maintained—Kincaid's definitional question seems to invite just such a perspective. It is worth noting here that Kincaid's fiction is not "shot through," as Benjamin would have urged, "with chips of Messianic time" ("Theses on the Philosophy of History" 263); quite to the contrary, Kincaid's evocation of "the thing that happened" is subsumable under a single catastrophe—an unbridgeable gap between, in Glissant's words, "blind belief" in the "thing that happened" and "clear consciousness" of when, how, and why exactly it happened (201). Given that no archive of colonial history has been yet found/founded—and that no inventory of what happened is possible—the desire to define what happened in a single blow seems understandable but remains unchecked by the conditions of its impossibility.

If Kincaid's first definitional question conveys the sense that "the thing that happened" verges on a single catastrophe—and, as such, surpasses our ability to making sense of it, to understand it—then, her propositional question "Should it be an idea" should be seen as an attempt to make sense of the otherwise threatening senselessness of the catastrophic nature of "the thing that happened." Insofar as this proposition—as is the case with every proposition that will follow—is an attempt to restore to meaning "the thing that happened," it is inherently an attempt at mourning; it belongs to the logic of the work of mourning provided that this logic is understood as an interpretative adventure. True, mourning is a process of sensemaking and of leavetaking, yet it is set in motion by the very assumption—of sensemaking and leavetaking—of which it is the symptom and the cure. Marc Nichanian is right to stress that "*a sense* [not sense in general, but a certain sense or an assumption that it can be extracted] *is necessary so that mourning can occur*" (105; original italics). If "the thing that happened" verges on the catastrophic, is not the attempt to name it—to define and condense it in one word—also an attempt to mourn the many atrocities it involved, as it were, at one fell swoop?

The hesitations and equivocalness of the question—"Should it be an idea"—should be seen then as modalities or functions of the hermeneutics of mourning, by which I mean simply the window(s) of meaning through which mourning enters the house of fiction. The "idea" then is better understood as the muse of narrative fiction which is, in turn, the muse of mourning. Once this process is adumbrated, narrative plays off the relations between mourning and sensemaking—two activities that work in tandem and codetermine each other. Having said that, I find that the immediate

problem that presents itself in the Kincaidian text is that "the thing that happened"—that is now catachrestically inscribed as "history"—does neither seem to make sense nor to invite sensemaking, and the attempt to make sense of it becomes an attempt to make sense of the senseless. "Should it be an idea?" is a question that is not, after all, addressed to the victim but to the victor; the question, more precisely, challenges the victor to make sense of "the thing that happened." In other words, is "the thing that happened" amenable to sense, to an "idea at the back of it," as Conrad would say?[13]

By and large, to the extent that "Should it be an idea" is an attempt to apprehend the implacable void of "the thing that happened" in its totality—in other words, to the extent that it purports to define, enumerate, calculate, explain and, perhaps, prove the concourse of the events that happened as well as the sum of the atrocities, indignities, and sufferings involved—it signals the limits not only of understanding and imagining but also of mourning. For, as Nichanian rightly observes, "the limit of the imagination is also the limit of mourning" (111). Kincaid's propositional question, however, is subordinated to another more strikingly propositional as well as descriptive question—"should it be an open wound…?" I have previously suggested that Kincaid's definitional and then propositional questions do not speak to memory but to the imagination; I would like now to accentuate this characteristic, given that the propositional question—"should it be an open wound…?"—is not only definitional and propositional but also explicitly descriptive. To propose to call "history" an "idea" and then to propose to call it an "open wound" can be seen as an attempt to wrest it from the abstractions (and even pretensions to objectivity) of epistemological discourse in order to ram it home to the

psychic and affective sphere. Moreover, to trope "history" as an "open wound" is not only to emplot what would have been a historical narrative in an "extended metaphor," but also to charge us with particular "emotional valences" in the very process (White 91).

It is at this stage that the variably definitional and propositional melancholic of catachresis is extended and mutated into the rather descriptive metaphorics of melancholia. When "the thing that happened" has been catachrestically inscribed as "history," it symmetrically opens itself up to further tropological extensions, if not to further transformations and superimpositions. Since the "history" in question is not a lived experience of "the thing that happened" it cannot be retrieved from the repertoire of memory but only from the protean field of the imagination and must revolve therefore in the orbit of forgetting. Arsène Darmesteter was perhaps the first to discern the contours of forgetting underneath the structure of catachresis; such forgetting enables catachresis to multiply itself along the chain of tropological transformations and to segue eventually into other tropes (*La Vie des Mots* 63). Once "the thing that happened" is catachrestically inscribed as "history," not only is the possibility of registering a claim to it enabled but so is also the possibility of grounding the claim. To the question of whether "history" is the object of the claim or whether it is the means of making the claim, one cannot but answer that the means of making the claim are here identical with the claim. The means of laying the claim to "history" are anchored in "history"—an anchorage without anchor. In other words, not only is the claim sited in an inscriptional space for which there is—in the words of Spivak I have already used at the beginning of

this chapter—"no historically adequate referent," but it is also correlatively *cited* as a means of *siting* the claim to that inscriptional space. When the claim and the means of making the claim converge, catachresis doubles or generalizes into metaphor: the catachrestically inscribed "history" spills into the metaphor of the "open wound." Although one would not set on a task of mourning if there were *a nothing* to be remembered, one cannot help but register the tendency in Kincaid to lay a catachrestic claim to loss or, in the words of Derrida, to "the properly spectral anteriority of the crime—the crime of the other, a misdeed whose event and reality, whose truth can never *present themselves* in flesh and blood, but can only allow themselves to be presumed, reconstructed, fantasized" (*Specters* 21; original italics).

When the catachrestic rumblings intensify—or become too taxing on—the imagination and fantasization of the crime, catachresis mutates into, while it perpetuates itself in, other tropological configurations. In her work on the French surrealist Louis Aragon, Kristeva illustrates how catachresis comes to be "generalized in metaphor in order to create an image" (*Intimate Revolt* 189)—the image, here, of course, is of the "open wound," of which Kincaid speaks. Sited in an inscriptional space it cannot fully accommodate, catachresis cannot but transform and multiply itself on the infinite chain of tropological transformations. In the second chapter of this dissertation, I sought to demonstrate the ways in which melancholia—being a vicissitude of normal mourning—cannot but create its own vicissitudes such as madness and suicide, which I have addressed earlier; I can now say almost the same thing about catachresis, namely that it is a vicissitude in the proper usage of words, of names and even tropes and cannot therefore but procreate and perpetuate

the vicissitudinal gesture on which it is founded. At the same time, one realizes that this vicissitudinal tendency of the trope is but a function of the indefatigable desire to master the object of inquiry—"the thing that happened." It is in these senses combined that we should understand the tropological shift from "history" to "open wound"—that is, in the sense of the intensification of the imagination, which is a function of understanding, as well as in the sense of the aptitude of catachresis for mutation and transformation.

One concurs with J. Hillis Miller's vision—which is also César Dumarsais's (see *Les Tropes* 75)—that catachresis "poisons the anthology of tropes" (qtd in Savoy 234; Miller 176); one concedes with Spivak's more tautological conclusion that all names are misfits (*Outside* 29), but one's immediate task is to aspire for a measure of differentiation and nuancing, since without measure mourning becomes eternal melancholia. Catachresis in the postcolonial context—or at least in Kincaid's work (I have in mind specifically *The Autobiography of My Mother*)—is not so much a laudable poststructuralist game that comes to confirm our vaunted suspicion of the indeterminacy of the linguistic sign but a signal of crisis, not so much liberating as tragic. Moreover, I would like to insist that catachresis is not so much a trope of abuse and improper use as a mark of victimage, suffering—a stamp of the abused as such. This is all the more so since the available frames of reference cannot capture the feeling of being at a loss of words, the feeling of the catastrophe that colonialism weighs on the imagination.

Starting from the adhocracies of the literary—or, really, from the catachrestic poison that infests its texture—one is called upon to gauge and map the valences, the

rippling effects, as well as the temporal and spatial transports of the catachrestic rumblings that echo in every text, in every trope (Miller) and in every name (Spivak). This is not to say, of course, that Miller's and Spivak's conclusions are questionable or unjustified unless we expect creative writers and poets to use language in a tiresome and automatic way. We know only too well that creative writers want always to impregnate the words they use, each in his or her own way, with the stamp of idiosyncrasy and singularity—they will chase after other words, other names, all the more so when an exact and a proper word is beckoning at them. Catachresis does not, in this sense, so much evoke the crisis of finding the exact word but the crisis of not being able to break out of the available moulds of language, its exactitudes, and proper usages.

In this respect, there is, perhaps, nothing disruptive or surprising in the troping of "history" as an "open wound," for this figure is, by now, very common, not only in psychoanalytic discourse but in everyday whistlings of traumatic experiences—a phenomenon that reminds me of Eliot's ironic suggestion that the world will end "*Not with a bang but with a whimper*" ("Hollow Men" 59). But, perhaps because this figure has become so common a figure—so common that every "jilt" is tiresomely called an "open wound"—that we need to rehearse the wide range of its implications. I do not intend by any means to reduce the figure to an empty claim but rather to invigorate it by exploring the many emotional valences laced with it. One does not have the space here to unpack and illuminate all the affective and poetic latencies infused in this figure, but let me point out a few of its aspects that relate, at least in retrospect, to the course of our discussion so far. Let us first look at

the way Kincaid rephrases and re-clusters her series of interrogations by the end of her essay:

> What to call the thing that happened to me and all who look like me? Should I call it history? And if so, what should history mean to someone who looks like me? Should it be an idea; should it be an open wound, each breath I take in and expel healing and opening the wound again and again, over and over, or is it a long moment that begins anew each day since 1492? ("In History" 166)

If we compare this closing passage of her essay to the other opening passage cited before, we will not fail to note the excision of the following questions from the flow of her interrogations:

> Is it a collection of facts, all true and precise details, and, if so, when I come across these true and precise details, what should I do, how should I feel, where should I place myself?
> Why should I be obsessed with all these questions? ("In History" 153)

This excision is very important because it debunks the epistemological pretensions of history books (these same pretensions have also received a considerable amount of criticism in the works of Wilson Harris) and elides the questions of action, of affect, and of location ("what should I do, how should I feel, where should I place myself?"). Since "someone else's ordinary dreariness is another person's epiphany" (156), Kincaid dispenses herself with the "interest in an objective standard" of narrative historiography. She provides no response to the questions of action, affect, location and obsession, intimating thus that a response is operative in the rhetoricity of the questions and can be teased out of it. While the questions are rhetorically amplified by the anaphoric repetition of the propositional modality "should it be," they are not indiscriminately so: they prod syllogistically toward constructing "history" not so much as an "idea" but as an "open wound" whose *pharmakon*-like

(in Derrida's sense) logic of poison and cure keeps the postcolonial subject suspended between the thresholds of mourning and the shadows of melancholia.

There is no gainsaying the melancholic charge of the figure of the "open wound," whether in Freud's "Mourning and Melancholia" or in Abraham's and Torok's *The Shell and the Kernel*, but I would like to interrogate in particular the manifest experiential veracity it traffics, by exploring the counterproductive latencies that undermine its rhetorical torsion away from the crisis of signification and trauma of colonialism of which it is an effect. In addition, there is no gainsaying the fact that the illocutionary force of the figure is wheeled out as part of the poetic armature Kincaid deploys to rebut the charges of intransigence and irascibility—of rekindling old animosities and railing over long-departed colonialists (see in Simmons and Ferguson)—charges foisted on her by a number of polemicists after the publication of *A Small Place*. What interests me is that the figure of the "open wound" is staked not only as a claim to "history," but also as an avenue of functioning of that history, documenting ever more its significance (effects) rather than its signification (identification). This is what I would call the slide of catachresis into metaphor. In this respect, the figure registers, in my view, the shift from sensemaking to sensegiving—that is, from the threat, as it were, of not making sense of the "thing that happened" (which is why it is catachrestically inscribed as "history") to the threat of not giving it a sense (which is why it is captured as an "open wound")—in short, the figure registers the uncertain leap I announced earlier from victimhood to plaintiffhood. Having said that, I do not, however, wish to assess (perhaps this would be overlordly anyway) whether Kincaid has the ability to prove this "open wound,"

since the means of proving are, as it were, identical with the fiction of the proof; I would like rather to intuit the ramifications of this very unwitting impulse to prove at work in the figure of proof—the "open wound."

While troping "history" (or "the thing that happened") as an "open wound" is a manifest claim to memory, to loss and to impossible mourning, its subtle underside is nothing less than the *denial* of the very thing to which the claim is staked. It is, perhaps, the logic of the traumatic not to brook any identification and to keep therefore breaking down at the threshold of signification. Yet it is exceedingly the (postcolonial) subject's very denial of that denial—the denial of the opaqueness that "the thing that happened" builds around itself—that threatens to compromise it irremediably in the very act of disposing of it in the order of the nameable. To trope is to deny the inability to name. To name is therefore a form of repression of this inability to name. It is this very denial/repression that locks the plaintiff in the logic of the perpetrator (of "the thing that happened"). To catachretize is to repress the denial of "the thing that happened"; to trope is ultimately to repeat the repression along the chain of tropological transformations. The sociological, psychological and cultural workings of this denial/repression have been the focus of a number of studies by, for instance, the Mitscherlichs (*Inability to Mourn*) and Eric Santner (*Stranded Objects*) in the case of Holocaust denials in Germany. This denial is, of course, a function of the repression-repetition logic of which I spoke earlier in relation to Freud and Deleuze. But, in what sense then does the leap from being the victim to being the plaintiff lock the Kincaidian subject in the logic of the perpetrator?

The answer to this question is already at work in the Kincaid epigraph of the previous section, but let us refresh our memory of it: "That the great misery and much smaller joy of existence remain unchanged no matter what anything is *called* never checks the *impulse* to reach back and *reclaim a loss, to try and make what happened look as if it had not happened at all*" (italics mine). Kincaid implies, perhaps unwittingly, that the impulse to reclaim and name a loss is already sited in the denial of that loss, in making it look as if it had not happened at all. To name the unnameable is as miserable an act as the misery it wants to name, and is therefore surreptitiously caught up in the repetition compulsion of that misery again and again. In a compelling theoretical exchange with Marc Nichanian (over the Armenian "Genocide"), David Kazanjian points out—in reference to "the Armenian Genocide"—that to name the unnameable is a "denial of [the] inability to name or imagine or apprehend" (129).

What is at stake here is not merely the "impulse to reach back and reclaim a loss," as Kincaid's passionate outcry conveys, but rather the "compulsion to prove" underpinning it. The compulsion to prove that "history" is an "open wound," which is implicit in the figure, keeps alive in the subject a compulsion to repeat that the trope is at pains to lull asleep. No wonder then that each "breath" heals, even while it opens, the wound again and again. Kazanjian concludes that "The executioner that we bear in the depths of ourselves always exhorts us: Speak, say the truth, prove if you can! And we obey him incessantly" (134). Yet if the trope of the "open wound" is determined by the compulsion to repeat not only the denial of "the thing that happened," but also the opening of the wound at the very moment of suturing it,

might not that be a price willingly paid to contain at the level of affective tropology the historical violence of colonialism—a violence that would have otherwise been re-enacted in the actantial or motor sphere?

Toward a Theory of Identificance: *The Autobiography of My Mother*

> *The* violent intrusions of catachresis *and the possibility of transfers that, unwilled, subvert the very model of the controlling subject, are the gothic underside of the mastery of metaphor, the uncanny other of its own control.*
>
> —Patricia Parker, "Metaphor and Catachresis" (73).

> *All this is possible only because the reactions expressed in their behaviour still proceed from a* mental constellation of revolt, *which has then, by a certain process, passed over into the* crushed state of melancholia.
>
> —Freud, "Mourning and Melancholia" (257).

The question *Who would mourn were there nothing to be remembered?* that I asked at the very beginning of this chapter presupposes, at one level of its rhetorical structure, a relation of *complementarity* between remembering and mourning. I have already pointed out, throughout the first chapter of this dissertation and at the opening of this chapter, the many different ways in which this complementarity is oftentimes offset. Let me just repeat here, albeit in a spate of iterability, that the very structure of remembering, that which is the foundational gesture of mourning, constitutes, by the same token, its conservational force. Remembering does not so much deliver the consolation of mourning as create the repository for its conservation. There is no articulable frontier between remembering as a foundational or initiatory act of mourning and remembering as a conservational or vicissitudinal

force of mourning. In other words, there is no clear demarcation between the kind of remembering that sets mourning in motion and the kind of remembering that conserves its motion beyond a certain period of time. The injunction to remember and the exhortation to mourn, both feel, therefore, in the same way, abusive. It is to these tinctures of abuse—and to the ways in which they are staged in *The Autobiography of My Mother*—that I would like now to turn my attention.

At the level of fabula, *The Autobiography of My Mother* can be seen as a narrative mourning of the life of its protagonist, 70-year-old Xuela Claudette Richardson, whose "mother died at the moment [she] was born" (3). Set in colonial Dominica, the novel takes us through stages of Xuela's life, culminating in a more or less complete portrait. Meanwhile, the narrator draws portraits of her dead mother, her aloof father, her wicked step-mother, her jealous half-sister, and her deluded sexual partners. There is no gainsaying the persistent presence of the mother-figure in all Kincaid's fiction, whether in such early pieces as *At the Bottom of the River*, *Annie John*, and *Lucy* or in her coming of age novels such as *The Autobiography of My Mother*, *My Brother*, and, more recently, *Mr. Potter*.[14] It is precisely by tracing the continuity and mutation of the mother-daughter theme that Leigh Gilmore has been able to discern, fairly enough, in Kincaid's fiction a "practice of serial autobiography." Since the twists and turns of this mother-daughter relationship drift with no instant of stasis throughout Kincaid's fiction, autobiography—"a one-shot deal" genre—becomes a prolific theme. "That there will always be (another) autobiography means," Gilmore concludes, "there will be no last words and autobiography is a genre of last words" (96). All Kincaid's novels are, in other

words, caught up within the loop of autobiography, yet none of them is autobiographical enough, or consistent enough with the rest, as to encompass the sum total of an autobiographical master-narrative. Autobiography has, it becomes exceedingly obvious, less to do with narrative thematics than with narrative poetics. More precisely, autobiography in *The Autobiography of My Mother* is not an episode in the serial practice of autobiography, to which Kincaid is addicted, but rather a figure of narrative construction. In fact, autobiography in this novel is a fiction that begins by appealing to the facticity of autobiography; by virtue of displaying the autobiographical intent in its very title, in other words, the novel wants to hide the simulation of fiction.

Lizabeth Paravisini-Gebert suggests that "of all the characters Kincaid has created, Xuela is the least autobiographical, the most nakedly literary" (149). That the death of the mother is the axis around which revolves the whole narrative lends credence to this remark, since Kincaid's mother did not die at the moment Kincaid was born. Yet while I partly agree with Paravisini-Gebert that Xuela "is meant to be read not as a faithful representation of a flesh-and-blood woman, but as an artefact of the text" (149), I would like to entertain the idea, at least for now, that Xuela is meant to be read, in a subtly disguised and twisted manner, as autobiographical. More precisely, Xuela is a *hypothetically* autobiographical character. She is the other of autobiography; she belongs, in other words, to *what could have happened* and not to what has actually happened. Let me explain by means of an example: in *Annie John*, Kincaid's first *Bildungsroman*, Annie, the young protagonist, relates how one day,

while she was on the shore watching her mother swim and dive, her view was blocked by three ships going by, and, for a moment, she thought she lost her mother:

> After they passed out of view, I turned back to look at my mother, but I could not see her. My eyes searched the small area of water where she should have been, but I could not find her. I stood up and started to call out her name, but no sound would come out of my throat. *A huge black space then opened up in front of me and I fell inside it.* (43; italics mine)

When she finally managed to see her mother out of the area in which she usually swam, "just sitting and tracing patterns on a large rock" (43), Annie was relieved; nevertheless, she "could not wipe out of her mind the feeling [she] had had when [she] could not find her" (44). She "kept having a dream about [her] mother sitting on the rock. Over and over [she] would have the dream—only in it [her] mother never came back" (44).

If we are to adhere to the overdeterminedly autobiographical nature of *Annie John*—a view shared by critics and consolidated by Kincaid herself (see interview with Selwyn Cudjoe 401)—we might be warranted to argue that *The Autobiography of My Mother* is emplotted in such a manner as to clear a kind of psychic space for working through this most frightening infantile "nightmare" (*Annie John* 45)—the loss of the mother. *The Autobiography of My Mother* is then autobiographical not in terms of factual reality but in terms of psychic remapping of infantile trauma. Let me illustrate this twisted autobiographical nature with yet another example: it seems to me that the anti-heroic negativity of Xuela, whether in her embittered motherlessness or in her loveless sexual relations, is an instance of an "intimate revolt" (Kristeva's notion) against the cultural prescriptions of motherhood and proscriptions of what Gary E. Holcomb calls the "slut identity" (301). In "Girl," the one-paragraph story in

At the Bottom of the River, the speaker (i.e., the mother) enumerates a list of dos and don'ts to her daughter, repeating thrice the prescription against slut-hood:

> [O]n Sundays try to walk like a lady and not like the slut you are so bent on becoming [...] this is how to hem a dress when you see the hem coming down and so to prevent yourself from looking like the slut I know you are so bent on becoming [...] this is how to behave in the presence of men who don't know you very well, and this way they won't recognize immediately the slut I have warned you against becoming. (3-4)

Xuela walks the uncharted road of social and cultural interdictions. She is proud of having more than one sexual relationship, including an affair with a married man, Roland. Roland's wife calls her "a whore, a slut, a pig, a snake, a viper, a rat, a lowlife, a parasite, and an evil woman" (171), but Xuela remains totally indifferent, constantly in pursuit of pitiless pleasure, regardless of inflicting or suffering pain: "when I [open] my mouth I [can] take in volumes, pleasure and pain, awake or asleep" (100). Gary E. Holcomb and Kimberly S. Holcomb have traced the "sadomasochistic" excesses of Xuela's character in terms of the master-slave narrative dialectic, in which Xuela is said to "[alter] the meaning of pain itself from its association with colonial punishment and lust to a means of pleasuring the slave's desiring body" (975). While "pleasuring the slave's desiring body" might ultimately be an instance of the symmetrical return of the dialectic, it is also a form of staging and working through socio-cultural proscriptions of sexuality, inculcated in the slave's mind since childhood. Xuela might be the girl in "Girl" who, being so warned against becoming a slut, strives to become one: "whatever I was told to hate I loved and loved the most" (*Autobiography* 32). In the process, an intra-textual infantile prohibition is staged and worked through. To conclude this foray into the

autobiographical subtleties of *The Autobiography of My Mother*, one can say that, by being a strong and manipulative character, Xuela is perhaps the Lady Macbeth of postcolonial fiction. Not only is the fragility of Annie John and "Girl" completely compensated for in her extreme character, but so also is the frailty of most female protagonists of postcolonial literature. Kincaid shows little patience with characters who knuckle under or capitulate without a fight: "[Duras's] women are weak, they are abused, they are crumbling, and, of course, Jean Rhys—her women always crumble—even in the *Wide Sargasso Sea*" (interview with Moira Ferguson 177).

The vaporous border between autobiography and invention as well as between memory and imagination cannot be overstressed: it is in fact fiction's (acknowledged or unacknowledged) foundational gesture. My interest in the autobiographical in Kincaid is not limited to tracing its serial manifestations or hidden mutations; it strives to articulate instead the poetic and affective appropriations that the autobiographical intent effectuates but subtly disguises. The autobiographical intent in *The Autobiography of My Mother* marks the attempt to insert oneself into a personal narrative that exceeds the autobiographical framework and that must thereof appeal to the autobiographical only to unsettle it by the stir (into cognizance) of the otherness located at its very core. Autobiography is a haunted genre of discourse. How can someone *other* than the mother write the autobiography of his or her mother? More precisely, how can the autobiography of the mother be written without the mother? Unless the daughter is also the mother, the one and the other, both and at the same time, can there be such a thing as "the autobiography of my mother"?

This question has perplexed most Kincaidians so much that attempts to demystify it have either added to its whiff of mystification or simply produced a misprision (not in Harold Bloom's sense, though). Paravisini-Gebert writes, for instance, that the mother "presides over the text of Xuela's life, of the motherless and childless Xuela whose autobiography is purportedly written (if we are to trust the "My Mother" of the title) by the daughter she so adamantly refused to have" (144). While expressing a vaunted mistrust of the title, Paravisini-Gebert implies that the autobiography of the mother is actually the autobiography of Xuela ("written by the daughter she so adamantly refused to have"), but she does not discuss any further *who* that daughter might be, nor the fact that Xuela did not have any children. Paravisini-Gebert shirks the task of deconstructing the title of the novel—a task that Alison Donnell, in "When Writing the Other is Being True to the Self," willingly sets herself.

Donnell is aware that the title of the novel, *The Autobiography of My Mother*, displays "a playful but incisive disturbance in the accustomed use of language" (123). Attending to this dislocatory force of the title, Donnell goes on to argue, quite rightly, that "this work is not seeking to define itself unproblematically as a piece of life-writing which takes either herself or her mother as its subject, but as a piece which addresses the multiple imbrications of self, m/other and writing" (124). In other words, not only does the novel court speculation about its positioning on the continuum between autobiography and biography, but it also alludes to the inevitability of a collusion and conflation between autobiography and biography. While attentive to the topographical aporetics of the title of the novel, Donnell opts

finally to rewrite the "autobiography" of the title as "auto/biography," implying thus that Xuela writes concurrently the biography of her mother and her own autobiography. Donnell devotes much of her argument to rebutting Sinister Wisdom's contention that "No-one should 'speak for' or assume another's voice" (129), such that the writerly slippages—"between mothers and daughters, mothers and mothers, fact and fiction, history and literature, autobiography and biography" (127)—that are said to characterize *The Autobiography of My Mother* are reduced to the possibility of speaking for and representing an other—the possibility of speaking "as" other. Donnell's argument generalizes into an attack on the wardens of the politics of silence: "Happier within the protocols of silence than those of risk, it would appear that most feminist and post-colonial critics have been persuaded away from speaking for others" (129).

While energetically demystifying most feminist and postcolonial dogma, Donnell's argument seems, by the same token, to create its own dogma: the possibility of "restor(y)ing agency through representing an other" (130). Of course, any such "restor(y)ing" must proceed from the assumption or presupposition that agency exists *prior* to its restor(y)ing and not as an *effect* of such restor(y)ing. This restor(y)ing is in tune with the bifurcation that Donnell entered on the "autobiography" of the title of the novel in order for her to argue for the possibility of autobiography and biography to merge. In other words, Donnell's argument boils down to breaking down the compositeness of the title of the novel—*The Autobiography of My Mother*—in the sole purpose of restor(y)ing it back to its former compositeness. While the novel foregrounds its compositeness, Donnell

unmakes and remakes it in order to arrive at what she calls a "collaborative subjectivity": "In this autobiography, the 'I' looks backwards and forwards, *identifies subject* and *object*, *writer* and *teller* in an act of collaborative subjectivity which rewrites the violent individuation of the child" (133; italics mine). While this description elucidates the mechanics of the act of writing, it glosses over the affective and poetic charge with which such an act is packed. Donnell's argument, however appealing, misses the foundational catachrestic violence and affective abuse with which the very title of the novel is shot through.

The catachrestic force of a title such as *The Autobiography of My Mother* does not reside in the backward and forward identification of subject and object, writer and teller—in the way Donnell understands it—but in the very collapse of the act of identification itself. The crisis of inarticulacy that the title of the novel articulates does not brook the Manichean logic, or polar system of subject and object, in which Donnell attempts to reframe it. The "I" that, in Donnell's words, "looks backwards and forwards, identifies subject and object, writer and teller" is not prior to its catachrestic interpellation. The pairing together, if we are to abide by Donnell's argument, of "I" and "she"—or, more precisely, the violent blending of the mixed modes of autobiography and biography—does not presuppose the separability, much less the later collaborativity, of the alleged subject and object; it rather attests to the violence, tension and abuse in which "subjectivity" is birthed and continues thereby to be perpetually unsettled. Neither "I" nor "she," neither "autobiography" nor "biography," can fully account for the intransigence of the birthing of the child into her mother's death: "My mother died at the moment I was born" (*Autobiography* 3).

The shock and dislocation of being born at the moment of one's mother's death shatter subjectivity at the very moment of its initiation. In other words, Xuela is born, embraced as a subject, at the very moment the unity with her mother, on which subjectivity is predicated, is irrecoverably lost to her. As subject, she is born at the very moment the project of her subjectivity is curtailed, if not utterly abandoned:

> How to explain this abandonment, what child can understand it? That attachment, physical and spiritual, *that confusion of who is who*, flesh and flesh, which was absent between my mother and her mother was also absent between my mother and myself, for she died at the moment I was born. (199; italics mine)

The foundational embrace of the mother on the ruins of which subjectivity is inaugurated (Freud, *The Ego and the Id*) does not take place, since the mother has now to be embraced, not in her otherwise "good-enough" (Winnicott's notion) presence, but in her very absence. The famous Lacanian troping of subjectivity as lack is doubly-weighted here, given that the imaginary phase in which needs are immediately satisfied by a good-enough mother has been denied to Xuela. The primary (Freud), imaginary (Lacan), or semiotic (Kristeva) unity with the mother does not occur. Xuela, as subject, is born at the very moment her subjectivity will be irremediably shattered, at the very moment the unity with the mother can no longer be entertained, gradually and steadily, but is suddenly *forced* on her in such a manner as to become identical with "who" she is/was:

> Who was I? My mother died at the moment I was born. You are not yet anything at the moment you are born. This fact of my mother dying at the moment I was born became a central motif of my life. *I cannot remember when I first knew this fact of my life, I cannot remember when I did not know this fact of my life*; perhaps it was at the moment I could recognize my own hand, and then again there was never a moment that I can remember when I did not know myself completely. (225; italics mine)

Subjectivity is not *prior* to the mother's death—this "central motif" of Xuela's life—but is, rather, an *effect* of it. In other words, subjectivity is paradoxically enabled by the very event that threatens to preempt it. While the loss of the mother occurs at the moment of Xuela's birth, the moment of reckoning with that loss does not take effect right away, but stirs into consciousness at the threshold of subjectivity, in the subject's reflection of/on her infantile nothingness: "You are not anything the moment you are born." The subject is not prior to this loss, but coexists with it in constant re-negotiation. While I am not interested here in pursuing the notion of "melancholy gender" à la Butler in *The Psychic Life of Power*, I think that there is nonetheless ample evidence to warrant, at least in Xuela's case, the pursuance of a notion of melancholy subjectivity. The return of/to the loss of the mother marks the subject-formation of Xuela in that it foments in her, in the words of Freud in the above epigraph, "a mental constellation of revolt, which has then, by a certain process, passed over into the crushed state of melancholia." Xuela, as subject, is not prior to the psychic insurrection of loss and its simultaneous canalization into melancholia. Her memory of who she is is coextensive with her memory of her mother's loss. Xuela is, in Kristeva's well-known idiom, a *sujet en procès*—a subject in process and on trial, both and at the same time. These are the revolting trials of loss and the searing trials of melancholia, both of which inaugurate the process of subject-formation. Xuela's subjectivity cannot be presupposed separately from her mother's loss—and then arrived at collaboratively, as in Donnell's argument—since it is not prior to that loss. Subjectivity is forged in the smithy of melancholia.

That there is no moment at which Xuela can remember when she did not know this fact of her life—that her mother died at the moment she was born—implies that there is no moment at which she can remember when her life ceased to be her mother's, nor when her autobiography, for that matter, stopped being her mother's. The violence of catachresis, of displacement and transferral, at work in the otherwise unintelligible syntagm that forms the title of the novel—*The Autobiography of My Mother*—and of which speaks not only Patricia Parker, in my epigraph above, but also Northrop Frye, in his *Anatomy of Criticism* (281)—testifies to the violence of the debt wedged in the psyche of the subject at birth. For her very being, Xuela is indebted to her mother; for her, to be is therefore nothing but to be in debt.

Xuela is indebted to her mother not only for her own being, but also for her own name: Xuela is also the name of her mother. Her being and her name are one with the inheritance. In *Specters of Marx*, Derrida meditates on the structure of inheritance that constitutes being:

> That we *are* heirs does not mean that we *have* or that we *receive* this or that, some inheritance that enriches us one day with this or that, but that *being* of what we are *is* first of all inheritance, whether we like it or not. And that, as Hölderlin said so well, we can only *bear witness* to it. To bear witness would be to bear witness to what we *are* insofar as we *inherit*, and that—here is the circle, here is the chance, or the finitude—we inherit the very thing that allows us to bear witness to it. (54; original italics)

Xuela inherits the very name and the very body that will allow her, in turn, to bear witness to her inheritance: the inheritance is identical with the means of bearing witness to it. No wonder then that any account of the inheritor proceeds from an account of the inheritance and that any autobiography of the inheritor is an

autobiography of the former owner of the inheritance—hence the title: *The Autobiography of My Mother*.

The paradox of the title attests to the melancholic of catachresis: namely, the uncoupling of affective investment with hermeneutic mastery. Put differently, the paradox of the title implies the paradox of identification: namely, the dissymmetry between the *identification with* and the *identification of* the object of the autobiographical intent. The inability to identify the object manifests itself in the tasteless recourse to catachrestic travesties, to the abuse or improper use of language of which the title of the novel is an exemplum. The identification with the object is, in turn, inaugurated by the tropological enigma to which the subject is heir. "Who was I?" asks Xuela perplexedly, and adds, as if to offer an alibi for this identificatory failure, "My mother died at the moment I was born." This *identificatory collapse* does not at all impede the *identificational investment*; in fact, it sustains and invigorates it. The more the identification with her mother intensifies, the more the need for expressiveness, that is, for the identification of the mother, becomes overwhelming. It is in the spacing between the (leap of) identification with the mother and the unavailable (or yet to be produced) identification of the mother that *The Autobiography of My Mother*, as narrative, has become possible. "I had never known my mother," repeats Xuela again and again, "and yet my love for her followed her into eternity" (210). The space between identificatory collapse and identificational investment that narrative mourning cannot completely fill is not the inscriptional space of identitarian identification, for, for Xuela, "Who you are is a

mystery no one can answer, not even you" (202). This space can be called, for want of a catachresis, the space of identificance.

CHAPTER FOUR:

The Ineluctable Modality of "Posthumous Infidelity": The Limits of Narrative Mourning in Kincaid and Derrida

> I became a writer out of desperation, so when I first heard my brother was dying I was familiar with the act of saving myself: I would write about him. I would write about his dying. When I was young, younger than I am now, I started to write about my own life and I came to see that this act saved my life. When I heard about my brother's illness and his dying, I knew, instinctively, that to understand it, or to make an attempt at understanding his dying, and not to die with him, I would write about it.
>
> —Jamaica Kincaid, *My Brother*

> [W]hat I thought impossible, indecent, and unjustifiable, what long ago and more or less secretly and resolutely I had promised myself never to do (out of a concern for rigor or fidelity, if you will, and because it is in this case *too* serious), was to write *following the death*, not after, not long after the death *by returning* to it, but just following the death, *upon or on the occasion of the death*, at the commemorative gatherings and tributes, in the writings "in memory" of those who while living would have been my friends, still present enough to me that some "declaration," indeed some analysis or "study," would seem at that moment completely unbearable.
>
> —Jacque Derrida, *The Work of Mourning*

The main purpose of this chapter is to reflect on the incommensurable ethico-therapeutic stakes involved in narrative mourning by staging, as the juxtaposed epigraphs make patently clear, a confrontation between the distinct writerly impulses of Kincaid and Derrida. In an age in which the number of memoirs, testimonies and autobiographies published has tripled from the 1940s to the 1990s, James Atlas might after all be warranted to declare: "The Age of Literary Memoir is Now" (Gilmore 1-2). While this might be the case, not every memoir that is (or has been) written interrogates its own foundational assumptions, including the very activity of writing in which it is involved and of which it is an effect. While it might serve my purposes well to conjecture right away that we write (following a lived-experience of loss,

death, trauma, displacement, exile, etc.) in order to mourn—a point I will discuss in due course—it is more logistical to say, by way of an introduction, that we write in the name of justice, for the sake of justice.

I have no intention here to use the word "justice" in the legalistic or universalistic tradition from Kant to Rawls (i.e., distributive justice), in which there is always the lingering potentiality that the rights of a group of people or of one single person might readily be compromised in order for the system of justice to operate. Moreover, it is very much beyond the scope of this dissertation to pursue the veracity of certain controversial memoirs, and mull over, for instance, the scandal that *I, Rigoberta Menchú: An Indian Woman in Guatemala* has created; nor is it my purpose to bring into my discussion here memoirs of civil wars, of genocides, of holocaust survivors, of exiles, etc., although the secondary material I draw upon is inflected by just such discussions. This is not to say of course that what I propose here cannot be brought to bear on the more historical and collective narratives of witnessing and remembrance. I choose to start, however, at the level of what Freud calls "family romance," even while perfectly aware that the drama of family relations in Kincaid, for instance, is but an allegory for life under the duress of colonial rule. I believe that a grassroots reflection on narrative mourning within the intimate space of the family (and friends) is sufficiently complex to offer theoretical insights into the more inchoate narratives that bear witness to collective or/and translocal scenes of victimization and suffering in a post-colonial and global context.

My speculation on the notion of justice in tandem with the dyad of mourning and writing stems primarily from Derrida's essay, "Force of Law," in which he

contends that, unlike law, justice is an indeconstructible concept. In other words, while the law—or, to be more precise, the text of the law—is always marked by a fringe of open texture that warrants its future rewriting and perfectibility, justice is that for the sake of which the deconstruction of the law is undertaken in the first place (Gana, "Beyond the Pale"). In other words, the urgency to improve the law, to deconstruct it, is always carried out in the service of ensuring justice, of tending more towards justice, of being *more* just ("A Discussion with J.D."). While justice remains the overriding concept—that in the name of which we deconstruct, both law and justice are in point of fact indissociable in the sense that the perpetual transformation of the law is necessarily predicated upon the contingency of justice. It is in this spacing, in this interstitial disjuncture between the law and the demand for its change (a change of which a more just idea of justice is the motor force) that the concept of justice can be seen as inherently aporetic, as urgently insistent yet always inadequate to the case at hand—all the more so when what is at stake are, in H.L.A. Hart's parlance, "hard" or "penumbra" cases, cases for which we have no precedent, as opposed to "core" or "easy" cases, for which a precedent exists. This makes it, in turn, all the more urgent to reiterate that, not only must we insure (that) justice (prevail), we should also perennially raise the threshold of justice by intuiting or discerning the latencies of injustice in every presentist manifestation or application of justice. Since the demand for justice is *infinite*, the justness of justice must constitute in the final analysis no less than a *claim* to justice, or perhaps worse, a pretension to justice. The thirst for justice necessitates perhaps the deliberate endorsement of a cynically objectivist attitude of a sort that holds that every present justice is but a

future injustice. These futuristic leanings should constitute neither utopic portals nor dystopic evacuations of justice but open invitations to the theatre of infinite rehearsal, as Wilson Harris puts it.

It is from within this theatre that I intend to explore the interrogation marks—namely, the ethical pressures for an ever perfectible concept of justice—that cluster thick and fast around the question of narrative mourning, of writing oneself to mourning following the death of a relative (Kincaid) or a friend (Derrida). In the absence of a constitution, of a body of laws that would regulate the relations between the living and the dead, such a relation, such a case, if we are warranted to construct it as a case of law and justice, registers a vacuum in what Freud would call the forward thrust of civilization. It is a universal lacuna that presents itself with an abiding insistence after every single death, pressuring the mourner to invent his own laws of relationality with the dead. In the absence of precedent, and, really, because there will never be one *just* enough to be emulated, every narrative mourning must therefore engage its thematics in the process of exploring and formulating its axiomatics.

The necessity of reflecting on the rules that must govern our relations with the dead originates primarily in the contention that death—far from being an end—is precisely an interruption. In this respect, I build my theoretical assumptions on Hans-Jost Frey's largely aphoristic writings in his fairly genre-unspecific book titled *Interruptions* (*Unterbrechungen*). For Frey, to the extent that one survives it, death does not constitute an end, only a break or an interruption of that (i.e., a relation) which can no longer be completed, and must therefore live on as mourning:

> What stops in such a way that one loses it while it comes to an end is not completed. If it had been completed it would *be*. What stops without having been completed can no longer become what it would have liked to, could have or should have become. The hope of completion ends with the end. The end of hope survives as mourning. (75; original italics)

The interruption that is death ushers us into an infinite relationship with the dead. The relationship is infinite because, since it broke off due to death, it can no longer find the end, the finitude of which death is normally the harbinger. The end becomes that which is infinitely left behind, that which is irreversibly missed, and that in relation to which we are irrecoverably belated. Philosophically, mourning is the modality under which that which stops—in such a way that it can no longer be finished—survives.

Such a modality would, if translated into psychoanalytic language, bespeak what Freud conceptualizes as melancholia, as the failure to burn the bridges with the lost love-object. For Freud, mourning, it bears repeating, is only a temporal and phenomenological process of re-establishing the mastery of the conscious after the dizzying rupture introduced by the loss of a love-object. In other words, mourning is the reparative work that aims to suture the affective fissure opened up by the loss of the object-cathexis. Psychoanalytically, as well as ritualistically, then, mourning is the modality under which that which stops in such a way that it is lost is buried. Such a ritualistic, literal, and affective burial (in the sense of the withdrawal and redistribution of libidinal energies in accordance with the commandments of reality and with the economy of libidinal management) of the lost object leaves in its wake a lot of interrogation marks, a lot of ethical worries. Pre-eminent among these worries has to do precisely with the responsibility for the other which Derrida, following

Levinas, locates at the very heart of justice, and at the very heart of any *de rigueur* philosophical engagement.

Derrida does not hesitate to reject and stigmatize this therapeutically-driven mourning in favour of a more ethically-nuanced, a more heteropathically-interpellated, and a more spatially-enduring conceptualization of mourning. If mourning is the law that governs psychoanalysis and ensures its validity, it is also the law that undercuts any hope for a more just renegotiation of our relations with the dead. Any ego-syntonic and -consolatory investment in mourning is, in terms of the de-ontological ethics of Levinas, nothing but a betrayal of the other, that in the face of whom one stands humbly, now and forever. If Levinas's ethics is a journey beyond being, an ethics of the otherwise than being, it is also, as Derrida's appropriations make it clear, an ethics beyond the egology of cure which Freud's mourning institutionalizes. Psychoanalysis, labouring under the auspices of analytical couch therapy, seems in the hands of deconstruction to speed irresistibly towards its limits where its vocabulary, concerned with the pursuance of recovery, falls short of meeting the exigencies of the ethics of alterity. Ethically, mourning is the modality under which that which stops—in such a way that it leaves us while it lives on in us—is preserved in its infinite transcendence.

As my two epigraphs make clear, in what follows I shall engage writing as an *exemplum* of mourning. I have no intention here to establish writing or narrative as the *paradigm* for mourning. For, for those who *write themselves to mourning*, it seems impossible to do otherwise; for those who do not, it seems impossible to do so. That writing is a work *at* mourning means also that writing is a work *in* mourning.

The written text, what I here would like to conceptualize as *narrative mourning*, must therefore constitute a symptom of mourning even though it is the process whereby that symptom is faced, and perhaps overcome. One of the major characteristics of narrative mourning is that it tends incessantly to slip away from the theme of mourning into the affective structure of mourning from within which the attempt to grasp that theme is made in the first place. The narrative reflection on mourning is so entangled in the cobwebs of mourning that it cannot escape becoming hostage to its inflections. In other words, we witness in these texts a surprising confluence between theme and symptom. Narrative mourning is the symptom of that of which it is the theme.

To the extent that mourning is the law, to the extent that writing is the law of that law, justice is what these concentric circles of law, or *mise en abîme* of laws, are destined for; justice is what they are answerable to. To the extent that justice is that in the name of which we deconstruct the law, I propose to deconstruct the mode of deployment or application of these laws in the narratives of mourning produced by Kincaid and Derrida. Such operation—deconstruction—will have made clear the limits of narratives of mourning, namely the inadequate or disproportionate nature of those narratives vis-à-vis the infinite responsibility for the other in the name of whose justice they are produced. Narrative mourning is inscribed, in my view, in a space it cannot fully accommodate and has therefore to be done and not done, both and at the same time. For, can narrative desire carry within it, intrinsically so, the obliterating desire for silence? Narrative mourning begins, I shall argue, where its limits will have been reached.

Mourning Becomes Case History

> *As a rule intermediate links have died out and are known to us only through reconstruction.*
>
> —Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents*

While Kincaid's fiction is strongly autobiographical, her 1997 *My Brother* on the AIDS-related death of her brother is memoir proper. This memoir comes to bear witness to her brother's contraction of HIV and his steady, albeit deferred, sinking into death. Writing it, Kincaid has faced a lot of challenges and risked too much such that it is hard (for us as much as it is for her now) to adjudicate fully whether this is a literary triumph, a petty settlement of family matters, a raid on colonial history, or perhaps an ethical failure altogether. Perhaps to say that this memoir is all of these at once and none of them specifically might be the strongest possible approximation of a just characterization. I will explain what I mean by all these as I move on, but I will be mostly interested in the space of this chapter in the ethical issues that this memoir raises—or fails to raise and therefore to fulfill. While I do not purport or intend to lead a legalistic inquiry into the validity and veracity of Kincaid's factual congeries, I nonetheless think that a reflection on the ethical stakes involved in writing after the death of the other is incumbent upon any critical work. Wither the responsibility for the other in the act of mournfulfillingly writing his memoir?

Before I address this question, a number of observations are in order. Let me stress at the outset that *My Brother* can be seen as testimonial to Kincaid's brother's life and death only insofar as it is subject to the laws of historiographical and

analytical construction. As Hayden White made patently clear in *Tropics of Discourse*, writing stories (in the case of Kincaid, this is readily the story of her brother) involves necessarily a measure of "emplotment," which I understand in terms of the writer's liberty to select, foreground or background, and refract the events of what might have, objectively speaking, constituted a chronicle. Simply put, Kincaid's memoir must be first understood as a narrative construction whose form and design is inseparable from its substance (for more on this, see White and Brooks). Having said that, I do not intend to perform here a formal analysis of its structure—however unavoidable that might be—but I do find its form and content bearing a number of striking resemblances to the form and content of Freud's case histories. While it might, of course, be said to lack the manifestly psychoanalytic outlook of Freud's case histories, the scientific language of *My Brother* and its many detours into the pharmacological discourse of AIDS makes the aforementioned difference with Freud's case histories more of an echo than a difference.

I find it particularly worth exploring that Kincaid, whose protagonist in *Lucy* is referred to as "Dr. Freud," dwells on childhood memories in her very attempt to "understand" the death of her brother. As such, this memoir, this otherwise than memoir (i.e. case history), cannot escape the loop of construction and reconstruction of the past in order to exploit its latencies in the service of illuminating (the trajectory leading to) the present, or in the service of accomplishing the difficult task of mourning. Kincaid's grappling with the childhood history of her brother reminds us, then, of Freud's case histories, and of Freud's attempt to analytically arrive at the point—the primal scene (*Urszene*)—at which the patient's adult illness might have

started. Freud's work on the Wolf Man case history, "From the History of an Infantile Neurosis" (1918), relies heavily on the presupposition of a primal scene, *a coitus a tergo* of some sort, and on the technique of construction as a means of acceding to that primal scene. But it was not until years later, with the publication of "Constructions in Analysis" (1937), that Freud addresses what might be called the construction principle in psychoanalysis:

> The analyst has neither experienced nor repressed any of the material under consideration; his task cannot be to remember anything. What then *is* his task? His task is to make out what has been forgotten from the traces which it has left behind or, more accurately, to *construct* it...His work of construction, or, if it is preferred, of reconstruction, resembles to a great extent an archaeologist's excavation of some dwelling-place that has been destroyed and buried or of some ancient edifice. (258-57; original italics)

While the analyst might resemble an archaeologist in his reliance on the traces of the past, his constructions stand, in my view, at least two removes from those of the archaeologist, not only in the sense that the analyst posits a primal scene before having it, but also in the sense that his constructions rely, if we are to disregard the infinite supplementing which they receive, on traces that are themselves oftentimes more of constructions than verifiable memories. In "Screen Memories" (1925), Freud insists that childhood memories cannot be traced back to an accurate past, but are formed at the moment they are remembered:

> It may indeed be questioned whether we have any memories at all *from* our childhood: memories *relating to* our childhood may be all that we possess. Our childhood memories show us our earliest years not as they were but as they appeared at the later periods when the memories were aroused. In these periods of arousal, the childhood memories did not, as people are accustomed to say, *emerge*; they were *formed* at that time. And a number of motives, with no concern for historical accuracy, had a part in forming them, as well as in the selection of the memories themselves. (322; original italics).

Of course, we are accustomed to Freud's painstaking nuancing, to his almost impulsive hesitations, both of which combine to create a whiff of mystery that Freud would thereof feel the urge and urgency of demystifying, whether by means of supplementing his earlier theories or by branching out into new directions altogether. Freud's disquietudes about the interpretive conclusions of his analyses—and about the necessity of ever perfecting and rectifying those conclusions—derive from the unbridgeable gap between the conditions of seriality and supplementarity of his theories and his aspirations to brand on psychoanalysis the stamp of scientificity. In writing his case histories, for instance, Freud was constantly overwhelmed and distressed by the literary outlook of his otherwise scientific treaties (see Phillips). Of course, while such a worry would not (be expected) normally to weigh too much on the activity of an imaginative writer like Kincaid, it nonetheless, and quite surprisingly, ripples throughout the whole narrative, as if to register stealthily yet steadily a claim to scientificity—a claim to justice.[1]

An attentive reader would not fail to note Kincaid's adamant attempt to establish a certain logic (not exactly a scientific logic *á la Freudienne*, with a clear-cut conceptual framework, but a logic none the less) that will enable her to *understand analytically* her brother's plague with AIDS and his subsequent death. In this respect, the attentive reader will not overlook Kincaid's constant re-turn to and reflection on two defining events in her brother's infantile history: the first refers to the episode with the "army of red ants" and the second to the episode of her "brother's hardened stool." The first episode will refer us to her mother who planted

the okra trees, the safe haven of the red ants; the second will refer us to Kincaid herself who—when left by her mother in charge of her brother Devon, then two years old—immerses herself in reading and neglects to change his soiled and hardened diaper. The red ants are harbingers of bad omen; they attacked her brother when he was less than a day old: "They crawled up some okra trees that she [i.e. her mother] had planted too near the house and…went from the okra trees through a window onto the bed in which he [i.e. her brother] and my mother lay" (12). In drawing our attention to this episode, Kincaid wants to understand whether it somewhat presaged his present attack by HIV, "whether it had any meaning that some small red things had almost killed him from the outside shortly after he was born and that now some small things were killing him from the inside," and whether, one might add, her mother might be found guilty for her brother's AIDS-related death. Kincaid then adds: "I don't believe it has any meaning, this is something a mind like mine would think about" (6).

This episode might not, of course, have any immediate bearing on her brother's attack by HIV, yet the fact that it is the kind of memory that her mother would have wanted to thrust into oblivion suggests that—within the human activity of sense-making, namely the urge with which meanings are sought, and the urgency with which they insist—the episode with the red ants registers her mother's responsibility for the fatality of AIDS toward which her brother was destined after he was attacked by the army of red ants. After all, it was her mother who planted the okra trees, which then served as a military base from which the red ants mounted their attack on the less than a-day-old Devon Drew, Kincaid's youngest brother.

Guilt-stricken, her mother "tore up the okra trees, roots and all, and threw them away" (12). Her mother becomes all the more responsible for her brother's fate if we remember that in "Girl," the shortest story from *At the Bottom of the River*, she is the one who warns her daughter not to grow okra trees near the house: "this is how you grow okra—far from the house, because okra tree harbors red ants" (4).While this episode might not, in the final analysis, be taken as a prolepsis for her brother's attack by HIV, it is nonetheless thinkable since testimony *qua* testimony speaks, as Derrida goes on to argue in *Monolingualism of the Other*, precisely to the unbelievable. "For one can *testify* only to the unbelievable [...] to what must be believed all the same, whether believable or not" (20; original italics).

Whether or not Kincaid's dramatization here of a "hermeneutics of suspicion" and of a poetics of "free association"—in the service of weaving a master narrative, a relation of causality that must have determined her brother's life from the beginning—is illuminating or mystifying is no more important than the calculation of whether or not Kincaid herself had had a hand in the tragic unfolding of such a narrative, of whether or not she could be found guilty for the negligence of her two-year-old brother when her mother left him in her charge. This is the second central event in her brother's infantile history which Kincaid discusses toward the end of her memoir, as if to imply in a sigh of resignation that all her repressive energies have by then been depleted. This episode relates how Jamaica—then called Elaine—was left in charge of her younger brother, and how she soon became too absorbed in reading stolen books to be able to notice and, then, change her brother's soiled diaper. As a result of this utter neglect, the deposit of stool, which soiled her brother's diaper,

"had hardened and taken the shape of a measure of weight [signifying a pound]" (130). Reflecting on the significance of this episode and trying to retrospectively connect it, in a Forsterian gesture, to (the unfolding of) her family's future, Kincaid writes:

> And in it, this picture of my brother's hardened stool, a memory, a moment of my own life is frozen; for his diaper sagged with a weight that was not gold but its opposite, a weight whose value would not bring us good fortune, a weight that only emphasized our family's despair: our fortunes, our prospects were not more than the contents of my brother's diaper, and the contents were only shit. (131)

Perhaps it is not surprising in the least that the handmaiden of Mnemosyne (Kincaid is out of favour in her family because of the insatiable maw of her memory: "Do you remember?" is the sphinx-like riddle that any one—who wants to have access to the island she built unto herself—has to crack) can recollect and inscribe this "rememory," yet the glitteringly masochistic, scandalously lucid, and grotesquely revolting prose of this confession verges on a poetics of self-exposure, of precisely luxuriating in or enjoying the exposure of one's symptoms (as in Freud, Lacan and Žižek). Perhaps, whoever succumbs to the cruelty of memory, to its pounding weight—and to the shattering vocation of sense-making, and to the hermeneutic task of constructing and reconstructing on the shores of logic a sense of a life that is no more—has necessarily to develop a taste for enjoying his or her symptoms, for only then can the symptom, that which is necessarily humiliating, be "remade," as Kincaid herself suggests, "into art" (108).

The case-history logic of Freud is all the more important here for a very specific reason (for which Freud would have, perhaps, worried only in the case of the failure of counter-transference, which would open, more confirmedly, the floodgates

of interminable analysis, as is the case with his most notorious patient, the Wolf Man[2]): Kincaid wants to establish, directly or indirectly, the extent to which she participated in or contributed to her brother's and, by extension, to her family's later misfortune. I am not suggesting here that Kincaid is responsible—through sheer neglect—for sowing the seeds of a structure of bad lot for her brother and for her family, no more than am I suggesting that the nature of the confessional is structured by the avowal of guilt and the demand for expatiation, and that guilt must have always insinuated itself into the calculating structure of the confessional. One might contemplate, as Derrida does in *The Work of Mourning*, whether the confession and the parallel expatiation of guilt (after the death of the other to whom such confession should be made in the first place) is not an opportunistic calculation that leaves the mourner in an ethically weak position.[3] When Kincaid writes that "a memory, a moment of my own life is frozen" in the episode of her brother's hardened stool, one cannot simply slough off the latencies of guilt that run through the very fabric of this heart-wrenching image; nor would one want to free the narrative of *My Brother* completely, as Sarah Brophy seems to do, from a "compensatory guilt" in which it is nevertheless bathed (Brophy 267). Contrary to what Brophy would have us believe, the fact that Kincaid did not take care of her brother then and for more than twenty years after (since her self-willed exile, Kincaid had not gone back to Antigua until she heard about her brother's illness, that is, after an interval of 20 years) serves to foment the sense of guilt of which narrative is not only a symptom but also an effect and, potentially, an expatiatory force.

Moreover, not only is the hardened stool episode at the origin of her thenceforth troubled relationship with her mother, it is also the episode at the origin of the multiplication and dissemination of guilt: her mother has responded to her neglect of her brother by gathering all her books and setting them to fire, thus traumatising her in the process:

> What I felt when this happened, the exact moment of the burning of my books, what I felt after this happened, the burning of my books, immediately after it happened, shortly after it happened, long after it happened, I do not know, I cannot now remember. In fact, I did not even remember that it happened at all, it had no place in the many horrible events that I could recite to friends, or the many horrible events that shaped and gave life to the thing I was to become, a writer. (134)

The fluid and dizzying repetitions bear witness to Kincaid's reliving of this infantile trauma again and again. It is always the law in trauma (Freud, Caruth, Laub) that one does not attend to it while living through it: no wonder, then, that Kincaid did not even remember whether it had actually happened. This is not a case in which memories emerge, but one in which, as in Freud's "Screen Memories," they are formed and lived through for the first time at the moment they seem to emerge anew. Perhaps Kincaid's suggestive image of "a frozen moment" is a more or less adequate description of an otherwise unmappable traumatic experience. It is always the law in trauma that repetition is first time—that the traumatic situation does not allow the subject caught in it to step outside it in order to bear witness or testify to it; what cannot be experienced as it happens has recourse to the vaporous vault of the *Zeitlos*, the timeless, and is therefore destined, in a fleeting moment, to break on the seamlessness of consciousness in such a manner that it is experienced for the first time, given that the very first time could not have been remembered and located in

the past. Not that one cannot experience trauma, but that one cannot live through it and at the same time step out of it in order to arrest it under the gaze of reflection. The peculiarity of a traumatic experience is, in the words of Caruth, that "it simultaneously defies and demands our witness" (*Unclaimed Experience* 5). The eye of the victim cannot, in other words, be interpellated by the (inscriptional/transcriptional) eye of the witness, unless belatedly and after a period of latency (Freud *Moses and Monotheism*). In the same manner, Kincaid's adolescent traumatic experience—the burning of her books—could not have offered itself immediately, at the time of its occurrence, to the indexical repartition of consciousness, but must have flitted by it or slipped through it into the maw of forgetting—or, more accurately, into "*l'oubli de reserve*" (Ricœur 650). Writing it now, re-living through it now after a long latency period, is thus the modality under which Kincaid not only bears witness to it, but also experiences and works through it for the first time.[4] "The historical power of the trauma is not just that the experience is repeated after its forgetting, but that it is only in and through its inherent forgetting that it is *first* experienced at all" (Caruth 17; italics mine).

As we read on her brother's memoir, we cannot fail to feel Kincaid's relentless insertion of her own autobiography into her brother's biography. The victimization of her brother, for which she is partly responsible, is juxtaposed dialectically to her subsequent victimization, for which her mother is responsible. She is a victim, no more than her brother; her mother is responsible, no more than her. The narrative is, however, structured in such a way as to map the martyrdom of her brother into her own martyrdom. It is as if Kincaid is more worried about her auto-

topography, about her subject-positioning vis-à-vis her brother, rather than about her responsibility for writing her brother's biography. Thus, while Sarah Brophy contends that *My Brother* is "written out of the interruption of the autobiographical I" and "through self-annihilation" (274), I suggest the reverse position: that the memoir stages rather than represses the interpellative resurgences of the "autobiographical I." In other words, what starts of as a biographical narrative becomes exceedingly the scene of recurrent slides into autobiography. Given that toward the end of the narrative the slide into autobiography becomes ubiquitous, it is perhaps more accurate to suggest that *My Brother* is an autobiographical narrative written in the veneer of the biographical. Whether liminally located at the threshold of the autobiographical or under the shadow of the biographical, or vice versa, narrative mourning reaches its limits the moment it clears its inscriptional space of possibility.

This is not a matter of praising or blaming Kincaid for what she cannot help doing: writing her self into (her brother's) life. It becomes, however, a matter of ethical concern as soon as we start to get the sense that Kincaid is writing out of an egotropological concern, a concern for troping her recovery, a concern for writing as a trope of *survivance* or survival. *My Brother* is, one might think, about Kincaid's unwitting or willing location in a narrative that is nevertheless explicitly addressed to the other—*My Brother*. It is my intention in what follows to continue to register more ethical reservations on this voluntary or involuntary encroachment of the autobiographical on a scene of writing archly set in motion by the biographical. My aim is not so much to mark the limits at which writing must stop or be abandoned as

to show how those limits, which must have always been trespassed as soon as writing began, are dealt with, if at all, throughout narrative.

An "imperfect compromise between two idioms": Narrative Mourning Under Ethical Scrutiny

If you understand the other you have never encountered him.

—Hans-Jost Frey

On learning about her brother's terminable illness and dying, Kincaid decided right away to write about it. Of course, such an undertaking is a privileged one: Kincaid indefatigably reminds us that her brother cannot write, let alone write like Kincaid herself. In her most recent novel about her father, *Mr. Potter*, her protagonist revels in the knowledge that she alone, of all of Mr. Potter's daughters, can read and write. The seductive rhetoric that permeates Kincaid's fiction is that, in accepting to write about those who cannot write (here, I am not necessarily suggesting that Kincaid can be said to have adopted the role of "the native informant"—the vantage point from which Spivak, for instance, has often argued, and quite persuasively, for that matter), it is as if Kincaid had stoically and resignedly accepted to carry a burden, a weighty vocation that she was not particularly happy to carry. In her early fiction (*Annie John* and *Lucy*), we often come across references and allusions to a formless weighty substance she carries within her—a substance she can neither intake nor forsake.

Regardless of whether it is a burden, a duty, or an asset, writing, Kincaid insists, is for her a matter of life and death. In an interview with Moira Ferguson, she goes as far as to assert, "I had to write or I would have died" (176). Indeed, were one

to cite every published interview conducted by several scholars (such as Moira Ferguson, Selwyn R. Cudjoe, Frank Birbalsingh, and Brad Goldfarb, to name only a few) with Jamaica Kincaid over the years, chances are one would find variations (sometimes, within the same interview) on a now typically Kincaidian formula: writing=life. Writing is here understood in a very loose sense, but that is not the purpose of my argument: I am only concerned with writerly mourning (of which *My Brother* is of course an exemplum). While most writing is more or less undergirded by a structure of mourning, writing after the death of a relative, as is the case with Kincaid here, must be mourning proper. Kincaid does it instinctively, as if it were a matter of doing what comes naturally.

In *My Brother*, writing amounts to nothing less than an Aladdin-like magical lamp that would instantaneously concretize recovery-promises. Arrayed in the armour of writing, Kincaid sees herself a much more competent person at handling grief than, for instance, her husband: "My husband is someone I love…I would rather bad things or unpleasant things happen to me…then I don't have to worry about him. And then again, I believe that I am *better* at handling bad things than he" (100, italics mine). While in her most recent novel, *Mr. Potter*, writing is presented as a catalytic refrain—"I can read and I can write"—in a song of jubilation and intellectual triumphalism, in *My Brother*, it is mostly understood as a prophylactic recipe for self-preservation, much like the special *obeah* baths she used to take when young or the "little black sachet filled with things" she used to wear under her shirt (Cudjoe 407).

It comes as no surprise that Kincaid made the following statement when she heard about her brother's illness: "When I heard about my brother's illness and his

dying, I knew, *instinctively*, that to *understand* it, or to make an attempt at understanding his dying, and *not to die with him*, I would write about it" (*My Brother* 196, italics mine). The italicised words of this quote indicate the interrelated nodes of the following discussion on the ethical demerits of Kincaid's most endeared practice—writing—in the aftermath of her brother's death. The adverb "instinctively" implies that writing is but a behavioural praxeme in league with other instincts of conduct and self-preservation. Likewise, "to understand" and "not to die with him" are two convergent courses of action subsumable under the modality of self-preservative instincts, except that, while "to understand" conveys a will to hermeneutic mastery, "not to die with him" implies a will to repression, the repression of the death instincts writ large.

That writing following the death of her brother is perceived as an instinctive response to such an event means that mourning presents itself to Kincaid as a demand for writing. To say that mourning presents itself as a demand for writing is not, however, to say that writing satisfies that demand. In other words, the satisfaction of the demand for writing is not necessarily accompanied by the fulfillment of the demand for mourning. In *My Brother*, however, because the demand for mourning and the demand for writing converge on the pages of the book, it is normally hard to speculate on whether writing marks the persistence of an impossible mourning beyond the closure of the book or whether writing testifies to the fulfillment of the work of mourning in the very instance of confronting it on the page. We do not here need to make another detour into trauma studies or into the plethora of psychoanalytic theories that insist on the coterminous relation between writing and

mourning, for Kincaid argues with great conviction that writing, following the death of her brother, allows her to accomplish just that. How does writing which presents itself as a response to the demand for mourning satisfy mourning?

The classical—and, one must add, as timely as ever—conceptualization of mourning can be found in Freud's epochal essay, "Mourning and Melancholia" (1917). Since the reader must by now have grown familiar with Freud's main argument in that essay, it is unnecessary to recapitulate it here, except to branch out into a fresh direction which suggests that mourning is a hermeneutic enterprise. Freud insists that, while in melancholia the road to the conscious is blocked, in mourning it is opened up thanks to the mourner's dwelling in and hearkening to the principle of reality. The mourner, who is to succeed in accomplishing the task of mourning, must convert the overwhelming unconscious memories—that voluntarily or involuntarily pull him into the deep recesses of the unconscious—into consciousness. The mourner can of course count on psychoanalytic assistance; otherwise, he has to unpack the library of his memories book by book, re-reading and re-interpreting them again and again before—in a definitively parting moment—shredding them. Freud calls this a process of hypercathecting and decathecting or, in my view, of reading, interpreting and de-parting. We are here in a hermeneutic situation, in which the work of interpretation segues unnoticeably into a seamless conversion of the unconscious into the conscious and thereof into the gradual accomplishment of the task of mourning.

Writing can supplement this hermeneutic enterprise by staging its workings and orchestrating its temporal intensities and processive moments. When Kincaid

draws the connection between writing and understanding, between understanding and mourning, and between mourning and survival, she is, perhaps intuitively, alluding to this complex hermeneutic and psychoanalytic machine that knits together these otherwise different demands. Since in Kristeva's axiom "when meaning shatters, life no longer matters" (*Black Sun* 6), it is not for nothing that Kincaid insists on establishing meaning, on extracting the meaning of her brother's life by setting herself the "instinctive" task of writing (on) it. The search for meaning, for understanding what happened to her (and to her family) after the death of her brother is indissociable, it bears repeating, from the search for the affective closure of mourning. The closure would not take place unless the relationship with the dead relative is severed. And in order for the work of severance to be effective, it has to be founded on a massive work of remembering and working through. Since writing can bear the burden of the clearly "incompossible" (to use a Derridean neologism—a blending of incompatibility and impossibility) demands of the work of remembrance and the work of severance—the work of hypercathecting and subsequent decathecting—it is understandable why Kincaid instinctively seeks shelter in the soft balm of words.

Writing, we realize bit by bit, is mapped (in the manner Harold Bloom argues in *A Map of Misreading*) into Kincaid's system of defence mechanisms and becomes thus more of an instinct, as Kincaid herself is wont to say, than a function of competence and high learning. Indeed, in her interview with Ferguson, Kincaid reiterates that she is not from a literary caste or class, that she is not interested in writing as an exercise of class, only in writing as an urgent form of self-rescue and

survival (Ferguson 171). Yet the therapoetic urgency with which the demand for mourning (a demand that immediately translates as a demand for writing) presents itself is comparable only to the ethical urgency with which the demand for alterity (a demand that immediately translates as a demand for sustaining, not severing, relations with the other) demands that the demand for mourning be annulled. There is no getting round the phenomenological fact that death introduces a dreadfully asymmetrical power relation between the mourner and the deceased. Whether one should "let the dead bury the dead" or whether one should bury them by oneself, the accomplishment of the task of mourning is also the burning of the last bridge that can otherwise make possible an infinite relation with the dead.[5] Mourning is the second burial.

Through its expansive presentist and self-preservative concerns, through its inscription of an emergence from the shadow of the object (biography) onto the threshold of the subject (autobiography), and through its hermeneutic search for semantic and affective closure, *My Brother* can be suspected of actuating the second burial of its main protagonist in whose name it is written. The primal gesture of an ethics of mourning would start by letting the dead speak, by conferring a voice and a face on him, that is, by a prosopopoeic embrace—a citational immersion. Kincaid is, however, too threatened by the reificatory implications ("not to die with him") of the prosopopoeic conferral of voice that she hardly cites her brother; when she does, she puts his words between quotation marks and also between brackets, as if they were "the okra trees" in relation to the house of fiction, to the salubrious and artistic narrative Kincaid weaves.

It is not that Devon does not, much less cannot, speak, but that his language is unintelligible to Kincaid herself. In *Monolingualism of the Other* and "Force of Law," Derrida insists that the hospitability of justice requires that we speak to the other in his language. Yet Kincaid is too uncannily alienated from the language of the Island to be able to reproduce or understand it, let alone address herself in it. In this respect, most critics have expressed their dissatisfaction with the ways in which Kincaid fails to reproduce the language of the people of the island (Bernard 130). In the context of our discussion of an the ethics of mourning, this failure has a bearing on the question of justice, however persuasively it might be condoned on artistic or historical grounds, namely that Kincaid associates the uncouth language of the Island with the language of humiliation and colonial legacy. This is certainly not a question of whether the subaltern can or cannot speak but one of whether we are able to attend to what he says, whether we are able to re-produce what he says. Having said that the question is also, I think, riven with incommensurable considerations, whether artistic, political or individual, and can neither be reduced to the opaqueness of the subaltern or to the transparency of the "native informant" but remains archly subject to the exigencies or adhocracies of the act of writing.

Kincaid's whole project of writing the memoir is to understand the death of her brother, to confer a sense of wholeness and establish relations of causality between his death and his (infantile) history, yet what is there to "understand" if Kincaid insists on and on that she cannot understand the language of her brother, the language she used to speak, the language of humiliation? Unless the hermeneutic will to understanding is understood as a will to mastery, a will to (semantic and affective)

closure—and by implication as a fear of the unmasterable, a fear of the latent reificatory threat of any prosopopoeic ethical embrace, and a fear that translates ultimately as a will to repression ("and not to die with him"), a will to mourning; unless thus understood, the will to understanding, to which *My Brother* testifies, is only a *demand*; it demands fulfilment but it cannot grant it. But, when the demand for mourning translates, in an almost automated way, as is the case with Kincaid, as a demand for writing, how can we be sure that the demand for mourning is not satisfied in the process of writing? How can we be sure that the demand for writing is not subtended by the work of severance rather than of connectivity? Or can the demand for understanding—that which is a demand for writing—thwart the demand for mourning? Can writing defend against the fulfillment of mourning in the sake of maintaining the relation to the deceased or the queer subaltern, as is the case with Kincaid's brother? Can writing institute silence while breaking it? These are some of the questions that will preoccupy us as we head toward a discussion of Derrida's narratives of mourning.

We can now begin to grasp the manner in which narrative mourning must be inhabited by the guilt of which it is an effect. For what is *to write oneself to mourning* if it is not fundamentally *to write oneself to forgetting*? To write oneself to mourning means to dispose of the other in the service of the disposition to writing; the other no longer lives in me but is purged out of me into writing; the other is displaced from the interior of the mourner into the exteriority of the text: not only is its intimacy travestied but so also is its desire to be mourned—that desire to which two (or more) lovers must have always contracted each other (or themselves). Wither such a

contract in the act of writing? Does writing annul the contract to mourning (by fulfilling mourning) or reinforce it by maintaining the relationality of mourning? Are not libidinal and cathectic contracts always secret and brooking thus no public disclosure? This is the aporia: to contract oneself to mourning is one thing; to accomplish mourning is quite another thing altogether. Respecting the contract implies devoting oneself to a life task of mourning. Yet, the logic of mourning itself, its phenomenologics, demands the cooperation and empathy of a secondary witness—it demands a homeopathic public expression. For Freud, the Mitscherlichs, Santner, among others, mourning is a public performance, a socio-cultural ritual. It is, in other words, the exteriorization of mourning that is thought to make possible the interior refurbishing of the psyche. Such expression, however, will amount to nothing less than the reneging of the secret contract to interminable mourning.

In Mourning Lies my Redemption: Derrida and the Scene of Mourning

> *I believe that the activities of thought have another vocation: that of bearing witness to differends.*
>
> —Jean-François Lyotard, *Political Writings*

While the question of mourning ripples throughout Derrida's oeuvre, it is only in *The Work of Mourning* that it becomes at the center of his reflections. I say "reflection" because it is in the nature of reflection not to know *a priori* the object of its reflection; I say "reflection," also, because it is in the nature of reflection not to stop at the provisional knowledge it might reach about the object of its reflection; and I say "reflection," finally, because it is in the nature of reflection to renew, if not

repeat, its work whenever the demand for more reflection presents itself, as it surely does following the singular plural death of a friend. "Reflection," Lyotard intones, "requires that you watch out for occurrences, that you don't already know what's happening. It leaves open the question: *Is it happening*?" (*Differend* xv, original italics). Since *The Work of Mourning* consists of a collection of writings that range from letters of condolences and memorial essays, to eulogies and funeral orations—which Derrida wrote over almost two decades on a pantheon of French and American intellectuals in the event of their death(s)—it is better understood as a series of reflections that raises the question of mourning at the moment of working through it—it reflects (on) the question. Yet this body of writings reflects (on) the question of mourning in the negative (of its occurrence), as if by sidestepping or overstepping and occluding its internal workings, all the while refuting the existence of a metalanguage of mourning.

What is at stake in *The Work of Mourning* is the search for an ever-fresh and singular idiom whereby to bear witness to the singular death of each of the deceased friends, including Roland Barthes, Michel Foucault, Louis Althusser, Gilles Deleuze, and Jean-François Lyotard, to name a few. Derrida wants to steer clear of the clinical and psychoanalytic understanding of this question, and ultimately to dispel the hold such an understanding—promoted in, or disguised under, the name of cure—has come to cast over the ethics of the work of mourning. Indeed, to the initiator of the discourse of psychoanalysis as well as to his disciples, Derrida raises a fundamental question that seeks ultimately to redefine the notion, or motto, of "successful mourning." For Derrida, if the so-called successful mourning means the piecemeal

libidinal withdrawal and reinvestment of cathexes from one object to another (Freud) or the total introjection and assimilation of the other within (Abraham and Torok), then mourning has necessarily to fail, for failure alone can be apt enough to bear the name of its success.

Mourning is here carved out and elaborated in such a way as to become a deconstructive lexeme, in a league with such other concepts as *différance* and *supplementarity*. Thus, in mourning (of) Louis Marin, Derrida asserts that "whoever thus works *at* the work of mourning learns the impossible—and that [*sic*] mourning is interminable. Inconsolable. Irreconcilable" (143; original italics). And he goes on to hammer home this unsettling ethical contention:

> You will also understand, for this is the law, the law of mourning, and the law of the law, always in mourning, that it would have to fail in order to succeed. In order to succeed, it would well have to *fail*, to fail *well*. It would well have to fail, for this is what has to be so, in failing *well*. That is what would have to be. And while it is always promised, it will never be assured. (144; original italics).

Derrida tries to find, at the crossroads of philosophy and ethics, answers to the question of mourning—a question which is in fact more of a paradox that asks of us, on the one hand, to mourn *sine die* and cautions us, on the other hand, that no matter how rigorously we persevere in our work of mourning, we will not be able to obviate the ineluctable modality of infidelity. Granted that mourning is indeed interminable—and that the ethics of alterity must resist its seductive affective seal in the service of opening or keeping open the wound of connectivity to the deceased, even at the risk of narcissistic mortifications—whence the infidelity?

The championing of a kind of infinite mourning seems to follow from the recognition, the resilient acceptance, of the other's infinite alterity, of the other's

irreducible difference, as much as of his or her indigestibility. Clearly, what is at issue here is the degree to which one must incorporate the other within: although Derrida doesn't say it, one can safely conjecture that the degree of interiorization of the other inside us has to be *in proportion* to the degree to which his difference and alterity are respected. "The one who looks at us in us—and *for whom* we are—is no longer; he is completely other, infinitely other, as he has always been, and death has more than ever entrusted him, given him over, distanced him in this infinite alterity" (161).

Thus, incorporation, or the degree of incorporation to which Derrida concedes, does not encourage the assimilation and appropriation of the other under the all-engulfing *me*, but strives respectfully to allow the other his infinite alterity and irreducible contrapuntality, both of which are operative in the act of interiorization itself, in the very geometry and dissymmetry of the gaze, and in the very conjuration of the name of the dead. Already in every act of appropriation, of assimilation, of interiorization and mastery, there is a kernel, a nucleus, a grain of resistance, a contrapuntal element that aims at demastering, or at resisting the tendency to homogenize, or the penchant for devouring, the dead. The other remains, therefore, near and yet far, immanent and yet infinitely transcendent, inside and yet outside, within and yet beyond, "Far away in us" (161)—"within us but…not ours" (44). In our destinal unity with the other, we remain, Derrida provocatively contends, "Together apart" (224).

To submit to the laws of mourning, as popularized by psychoanalysis, is tantamount to dialectizing a death that Roland Barthes called "undialectical" (47).

Spotting a thought-provoking phrase—"*il n'y aura pas de deuil*"—by Lyotard, Derrida goes on exploring and disentangling all its threads and ramifications, only to conclude more emphatically than Lyotard, more laconically but no less tellingly, "No mourning, period" (218). Taking on yet another phrase about the fear of "the worse than death" in Lyotard—a phrase which Lyotard himself had previously spotted in Adorno—Derrida seems to propound that what is worse than death is precisely the suggestion that death comes to put an unsurpassable end to any kind of communication, dialogue, with the dead: what is worse than death, to be more specific, is the tendency to translate the *finitude* that death instantiates into the *finitude* of the *infinite*. Death ushers us into infinity, and from a finite relationship with the other we move into an infinite relationship with him, a relationship watched over by interiorization and infinite transcendence; what is worse than death then is the impossibility of such a readjustment, of such a renegotiation in terms of the infinite; precisely, what is worse than death is the possibility of successfully accomplishing the task of mourning, the possibility of forgetting, or burying, the name of the dead once and for all. "In the case of 'Auschwitz' [what is] 'worse than death,'…is the extinction of the very name that forbids mourning, given that this murder of the name constitutes the very meaning of the order 'die,' or 'that he die,' or even 'that I die'" (237). In order to preclude such a fatality—the end of the infinite—mourning has to continue, and the illusion of a point at which it has to be successfully accomplished has to be banished into the sanctuary of the unethical and the unfaithful.

For Derrida, the work of mourning is already at work as soon as friendship begins, if not earlier, and the interruption of death should by no means grind it to a halt: "When friendship begins before friendship, it touches upon death, indeed, *it is born in mourning*" (123, italics mine). Friendship is structured, from the outset, by a degree of *a priori* mourning, a degree of interiorization, which must have coincided, before the last death, with every previous nomination, with every instance in which the name of the friend is uttered—the name which does not only conjure the singular death of the friend whose name is called, but also multiplies it infinitely every time it is uttered, making it "singular plural": mourning will have begun as soon as the "interiority (of the other in me, in you, in us) had already begun its work. With the first nomination, it preceded death as another death would have done. The name alone makes possible the plurality of deaths" (46).

Yet, notwithstanding this altruistic attitude and unsparing loyalty to the deceased friend, Derrida is still depressingly uncomfortable with the potentially travestying implications of any attempt (whether in speech, or writing) to reckon with the deceased, any attempt to recognize and acknowledge our debt to them since any such attempt will necessarily have been born in an unbearable and tasteless act of infidelity. When it comes to determining our relationship, our bond, to the deceased, the daunting question for Derrida is: "How to leave him alone without abandoning him?" (225). This question bespeaks the intransigent paradox of mourning: whatever way you choose to go in order to remain faithful to the departed friend, you would have to perch on the edge of a vast, seemingly bottomless abyss, where the slippage into infidelity is almost ineluctable.

The danger that Derrida is afraid of in performing these acts of mourning, and in attempting to recognize the particular debt he owes to every singular person he mourns, is that such a recognition of debt may ultimately threaten to annihilate and neutralize the debt, and ultimately lift it by purporting or pretending, as it were, to have paid it back in the very act of naming, counting, enumerating, and taking stock of it. Furthermore, to acknowledge the debt in the pursuance of forgiveness is an even more travestying act; for, from whom (if not from the "without power" but not "without force") are we asking forgiveness when we ask forgiveness from the dead, and in so doing, aren't we just lured by the thought, which belies an illusion, that expatiation will follow, and aren't we in the final analysis more concerned about the *me* that has survived the death of the other rather than the we, the he in me?

We are thus, in front of all these rhetorical questions, lured into a tangled jungle of difficulties and aporias, which weigh heavily on the *conscience* of the faithful (friend). In the face of this ineluctable infidelity that the act of acknowledging one's debt to the deceased has come overwhelmingly to imply, there remain only shimmers of redemption—a redemption that the wistful consciousness cannot completely earn even through sacrifice. These narratives of mourning are, one can begin to recognize gradually, haunted by the trauma of their birth, by the trauma of their *writing*—a trauma they face, measure themselves against and, to a certain extent, obviate through a constant and indefatigable reassuring promise that they are not written yet, that they cannot be written now, and that they will be written in the future. Throughout these eulogies, time and again, Derrida insists that he does not have "the heart to relate stories or to deliver a eulogy," and that "there would be too

much to say and [it] is not the right time" (114). Thus, the act of writing, of reckoning, and of inconsolable mourning, whose flip side is a potential infidelity, has to be done and not done, and thwarted at the same time it is desired—infinitely rehearsed. To write, or not to write—only in foiling one infidelity against the other, can one redeem, albeit slightly, the ineluctable "posthumous infidelity" to which every mourner is heir. This action of writing and not writing—of fulfilling and renewing the promise of writing—has to be rehearsed, it bears repeating, on the stage of interminable mourning. Writing neither fulfills nor undermines mourning but re-stores it into eternity.

Reflecting (on) the inevitable infidelities inherent in any work of mourning (here, it is the mourning of Roland Barthes that is in question), Derrida writes:

> Two infidelities, an impossible choice: on the one hand, not to say anything that comes back to oneself, to one's own voice, to remain silent, or at the very least to let oneself be accompanied or preceded in counterpoint by the friend's voice. Thus, out of zealous devotion or gratitude, out of approbation as well, to be content with just quoting, with just accompanying that which more or less directly comes back or returns to the other, to let him speak, to efface oneself in front of and to follow his speech, and to do so right in front of him. But this excess of fidelity would end up saying and exchanging nothing. It returns to death. It points to death, sending death back to death. On the other hand, by avoiding all quotation, all identification, all rapprochements even, so that what is addressed to or spoken of Roland Barthes truly comes from the other, from the living friend, one risks making him disappear again, as if one could add more death to death and thus indecently pluralize it. We are left then with having to do and not do both at once, with having to correct one infidelity by the other. (45)

Following the death of the other, one is inevitably left to court one of these two infidelities: either to write on (i.e. cite from, repeat the words of, and confess one's guilt to) the other—and therefore "disfigure," "wound," or "reduce"—or to remain

silent and therefore "put to sleep," or "kill" the other for the millionth time. One finds him- or her-self either on the threshold of the former or under the shadow of the latter and has therefore to play the one against the other, in the hope that one might ultimately correct one through the other. Such hope must be sought in the face of its impossibility; it must be sought in the Lyotardian uncertainty of the *Is it happening?* Ultimately, the imperative to mourn translates as an irreparative performative.

There is no getting round these two infidelities, this "double wound" (44), which the death of the other pressures us into committing. While for Kincaid writing following the death of her brother is more or less a question *of* mourning, in the name of which a plethora of rescue tropes are deployed, for Derrida writing is more of a question *about* mourning rather than a question *of* mourning; it is, more accurately, a question addressed *to* mourning, to its economy and discontinuous temporality. One can here build on Lyotard's reflections on the ability to speak and the inability to speak in the service of reaching generic statements about the differences between Kincaid's and Derrida's narratives of mourning. Not to mourn is part of the ability to mourn since ability, according to Lyotard, "is a possibility and a possibility implies something and its opposite" (*Differend* 10). To be unable to mourn is not, however, the same as to be able not to mourn. The former can be seen as a deprivation and the latter as a negation. To be unable to mourn is, by the same token, not the same as to be unable not to mourn. The former is, of course, a deprivation, but the latter can be seen as an instinctive impulse of the order of "I can't help mourning!" While Kincaid is unable not to mourn, Derrida is able not to mourn.

Derrida wants to slip through the intransigencies of the Scylla of writing and the Charybdis of not writing following the death of a friend; he thus ambivalently tries to take a line of flight that paradoxically enables him to evade the very activity (i.e. duty) he is engaged in. Derrida stops at the threshold of writing and on the verge of articulation; all he manages to pen down is, as it were, nothing more than the promise of a return to writing, or so he wants to have us believe. Since writing amounts to insulting the other as much as the voluntary forbearance from writing threatens to kill him for the second time, writing can only emanate from a space in which the writing subject is at a loss to write, held into the promise:

> To go on speaking of this all alone, after the death of the other, to sketch out the least conjecture or risk the least interpretation, feels to me like an endless insult or wound—and yet also a duty, a duty toward him. Yet I will not be able to carry it out, at least not right here. Always the promise of return. (55).

That writing is a promise implies that mourning is also a promise: after all, it is only following the death of the other that a number of interrogations begin to cluster thick around the pertinence of writing as a mode of mourning. Only by asking the question *about* mourning can one decide whether or not to dwell in it, whether or not the narrative mode vehicles the ethical concerns of the mourning subject.

Narrative must question its foundational presuppositions; it must give utterance to its narrative meta-narrative; that is, it must question its own practice. As Derrida insists, we deconstruct in order to achieve justice; we deconstruct the law—that is we improve it in order to guarantee justice. So to improve the law is precisely to deconstruct eternally. What might that law be in relation to the death of the other? It is nothing but the law of mourning which, according to Derrida, has been since

Freud unjust, allowing thus an unethical privileging of the survivor over the deceased. To ensure justice, it is incumbent upon the living to deconstruct and perfect the law of relationality—the law of mourning—that gathers them together with the dead. The law of mourning, as a law of relationality, emerges therefore in the spacing between the promise (of mourning) that urges us to tend ever so pressingly toward justice and the deconstructible figures of possibility that are meant to continually flesh out the promise. That the law of mourning is a deconstructible figure of relationality with the dead implies, by the same token, that narrative—whose subsumption under the law of mourning cannot be overstressed—is also a deconstructible figure of relationality.

Narrative is the law of the law. It is governed by the law of mourning—that which is the law of relationality. To the extent that narrative functions under the jurisdiction of mourning, it cannot escape the affective refractivity that permeates mourning. In this respect, narrative can be deconstructed in terms of the affective inroads it opens up in view of an ever perfectible, ever just, relation with the dead. To be able to see, for instance, the ways in which narrative carries the potential of paying back a debt at the very moment of registering or acknowledging it does not so much despair us as entice us to demand the impossible. To the extent that the demand for the impossible opens up horizons of the possible, it is far from being a mere utopian whistling. To the extent that the deconstruction of narrative generates enthusiasm about new idioms—new ways of expression and new ways of relating to those who remain captives in our idioms—it is a laudable task.

Narrative mourning is the field of force in which the asymmetry between the living and the dead is played out in the idiom of the former. It is therefore, in Lyotard's idiom, a "case of differend" precisely because "the 'regulation' of the conflict that opposes [or gathers] them [the living and the dead] is done in the idiom of one of the parties [the living] while the wrong suffered by the other [the dead] is not signified in that idiom" (*The Differend* 9). In this respect, can Devon Drew lodge a complaint—*a cri de coeur* that would bear witness to what Douglas Crimp, for instance, calls "the terrible vulnerability" or "frailty" of being human (200), of which the stark fact that AIDS has claimed the lives of the best and most accomplished intellectuals of our times is testimony? More precisely, can he lodge this very *cri de coeur* in his sister's narrative (of his life and death), and can that *cri* survive the refractive idiom of his sister? Even if Kincaid's narrative speaks to this *cri*, it cannot justly echo/repeat it. This *cri* must finally mark the limits of the narrative's imaginative inventiveness. While it must be phrased, this *cri* cannot find utterance. To inscribe it is to mis-take its insistence for an appeal-to-framedness, an appeal-to-phrasedness. Not to inscribe it is to run the risk of thrusting it into oblivion. Narrative mourning is born in the spacing or interval between the mourning duties (Derrida) or mourning urgencies (Kincaid) incumbent upon the mourner and the continually deconstructible and perfectible laws of mourning. This narrative does well to recognize and bear witness to the differends that regulate it. But that this narrative must be bedeviled by the taint of posthumous infidelity is no more lamentable a fact than the insatiable search for a better justice.

NOTES

INTRODUCTION: The Scope of Mourning

[1] I perceive of theoretical and critical writing in very experiential and exploratory terms, for what one writes does not emerge from the back of one's mind, as if it were stored and then recovered, even though that is perhaps exactly what happens, but *feels* as if it were lived, formed and thought on the spot, in the space of the moment in which one is caught, with no foreknowledge or forethought. In *Remarks on Marx*, Foucault provides a more articulate description of what I am alluding at here: "If I had to write a book to communicate what I have already thought, I'd never have the courage to begin it. I write precisely because I don't know yet what to think about a subject that attracts my interest" (27).

[2] For a comprehensive and sharp introduction to "object relations theory," see Jay R. Greenberg and Stephen A. Mitchell: *Object Relations in Psychoanalytic Theory*.

[3] In "Thoughts on War and Death," Freud speaks of "the tendency to exclude death from our calculations in life"—a tendency that "brings in its train many other renunciations and exclusions" (79). In *Being and Time*, Martin Heidegger shows how death, the fundamental question of Being, is defused and forgotten by Dasein's withdrawal into the "idle talk" (*Gerede*) of the "they"—the "Self of everydayness" (296). Joyce's attempt in "Hades" to recreate the graveyard scene from *Hamlet* can be seen as an admixture of a harsh reminder of the *reality*—and a severe critique of the *banality*—of death in a world that has become, in the wake of the Great War, no longer cognizant of, let alone beholden to, either aspect.

[4] While mourning remains mostly an enigma in all of Freud's writings, it will have become clear nonetheless that Freud was more often than not disinclined to believe in the very possibility of mourning. In fact, mourning seems to be possible only in the realm of literature and theatre, for "There alone," Freud argues,

> the condition can be fulfilled which makes it possible for us to reconcile ourselves with death: namely, that behind all the vicissitudes of life we should still be able to preserve a life intact. For it is really too sad that in life it should be as it is in chess, where one false move may force us to resign the game, but with the difference that we can start no second game, no return-match. In the realm of fiction we find the plurality of lives which we need. We die with the hero with whom we have identified ourselves; yet we survive him, and are ready to die again just as safely with another hero. ("Thoughts on War and Death" 79)

At a later stage of this dissertation, I will ask whether the staging of death and mourning in narrative fiction can help bridge the gap between the intransigence of the experience of reality and the benevolence of the experience of fiction.

[5] While inspired by and indebted to Lacan, my reflections on the question of desire are deliberately stripped of Lacan's lexicon, not only because Lacan's conceptual armature is ostensibly opaque, but also because it threatens to hijack the forward thrust of the argument of this dissertation into endless explanatory forays of Lacan's "Phallophanies," or linguistic epiphanies—a task for which there is unfortunately no ample space here. The reader might be relieved, however, to find out that it is still possible to speak about desire, not Desire, after Lacan without necessarily having to use such formulations as "Other/other," "object *in* desire," "object *a*" (*l'objet petit a*) or even Lacan's triadic conception of Desire: the split between demand (*demande*) and need of which the voracious veracity, as I call it, of Desire is an effect. By and

large, I draw on Lacan's most common texts in English translations, especially on *Écrit: A Selection*, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, as well as on Lacan's essay on *Hamlet*, "Desire and the Interpretation of Desire in *Hamlet*." A reading of these texts makes it clear to me that Lacan's conception of Desire is indissociable from a constant graveyard whistling, a relentless retrogressive pushing toward a lost or prenatal immortality. In his essay on *Hamlet*, for instance—after having demonstrated, quite cogently, how Hamlet is uninterruptedly suspended in the (time and desire of) Other—he concludes that an object *in* desire becomes an object *of* desire only when it can no longer be possessed. Referring to the graveyard scene and to the burial of Ophelia—Hamlet's no longer possible love-object—Lacan contends that "Only insofar as the object of Hamlet's desire has become an impossible object can it become the object of his desire" (36). Emerging and reemerging in the unbridgeable split between demand and need, desire is a constant slide along the metonymic chain of signifiers. Since the object of desire remains lacking along the chain of signifiers, it can be named and embraced only when it is irrecoverably lost to the signifying system. In this sense, mourning becomes more of a linguistic interruption than a relational predicament: "The Work of mourning is first of all performed to satisfy the disorder that is produced by the inadequacy of signifying elements to cope with the hole that has been created in existence, for it is the system of signifiers in their totality which is impeached by the least instance of mourning" (38). For a critique of Lacan's conception of mourning, see Dominick LaCapra, "Trauma, absence, Loss," and Alessia Ricciardi's *The Ends of Mourning*; for a focused conception of desire as a relentless descent into the immortal world of

the non-object—that is, the world of Yorick's skull, the world of the "contentless particularity of the self-that-is-nothing," see Staten's "The Bride Stripped Bare, or Lacan *avec* Plato"; for a more contextual framing of Lacan's reconstruction of Freud's notion of drive (*Trieb*) and instinct (*Instinkt*) in terms of the triad of Desire, demand and need, see Ellie Ragland-Sullivan, *Jacques Lacan and the Philosophy of Psychoanalysis*.

[6] In *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, Freud explains two psychologically distinct emotional ties that a little boy can develop: "a straightforward sexual object-cathexis towards his mother and an identification with his father which takes him as his model" (134). Only when these two types of ties are confounded does the oedipal struggle arise. The sexual rivalry over the mother destabilizes the boy's mimetic identification with the father, since it is crisscrossed with the prohibition of incest. It is noteworthy here that identification is from the outset the playground of a number of ambivalent emotions: love for the mother (which is coupled with the interdiction of *having* her) and love for the father (coupled with the interdiction of having him) that slips into hatred as soon as the father becomes an obstacle in the way of the boy's desire for the mother. This will prove helpful when we move on to a discussion of the melancholic upsurge in which the identification with a lost object is coloured by hatred. By and large, Freud's Oedipus complex remains a problem that post-Freudians from Lacan to Butler have not ceased to interrogate. Were my focus the question of sexual identity, I would discuss the implications of Freud's theory in relation to homosexuality and to what Freud calls, in *The Ego and the Id*, "constitutional bisexuality" (371). For me the question is not,

as Butler formulates it, of "melancholy gender," but one of melancholy subjectivity—that is, of mournful subjectivity, as I shall demonstrate in chapter three.

While Freud distinguishes between the "identification with the father" (in which "one's father is what one would like to *be*") and "the choice of the father as an object" (in which one's father is "what one would like to *have*"), he avows not to be able "to give a clear metapsychological representation of the distinction" (135). Because the dissolution of the Oedipus complex cannot be witnessed, and because normative heterosexuality is not a given, sexual identity remains largely unaccounted for and therefore open to endless heterodox constructions. How is it that an originally blind libidinal identification becomes sexually bound and discriminative? How is it that identification is at the beginning and at the end of the Oedipus complex? While Freud chose to adopt the heterosexual and "more normal" (*Ego and Id* 371) version of the Oedipus complex, Mikkel Borch-Jacobsen is nevertheless right to point out the two scandals in which this complex resulted: (1) "not that there is infantile sexuality and that the child harbors incestuous and patricidal desires but that access to genital heterosexuality is not a foregone conclusion" and (2) that "the first 'emotional ties' with others," which are not oriented along lines of sexual difference, "are additionally shot through with a hate and violence that are all the more essential in that they are confounded with love" (271).

[7] In "Mourning and Melancholia," Freud had already contrasted melancholia—inconclusively so—to mourning, arguing that, while the former results in affective closure, the latter acts like an "open wound" in which egoic consolation and flights into infantile forms of narcissism occur simultaneously with the chidings of the super

agent in the ego (to be conceptualized later, in *The Ego and the Id*, as the "super-ego")—an agent that does not condone the ego's identification with and interiorization of the lost object, that is, the setting up of the lost object in the ego for the sake of calming the id's unquenched desire. Melancholia, however, as constructed in *The Ego and the Id*, is not an interminable process, but is the very condition of the fulfillment of the work of mourning itself. In other words, melancholia has become subsumable under mourning. What is common in most theoretical or critical work that discusses or applies Freud's theories of mourning and melancholia is that the discussion of the former affect is only an excuse to dwell, much as Freud himself does in "Mourning and Melancholia," on the latter one. In melancholia, the shadow of the object is said to fall upon the ego; by the same token, in most critical discussions of mourning and melancholia, it is rather ironic that the shadow of melancholia falls on mourning. In this respect, a recent collection of essays, titled *Loss: The Politics of Mourning*, perpetuates this tendency to overlook Freud's later reconceptualization of melancholia in terms of mourning. In the context of this dissertation, melancholia is discussed from within the horizon of mourning.

[8] In "The Apocalyptic Imagination and the Inability to Mourn," Martin Jay had conceptualized the "inability to mourn" as the affective instance in which a love object is not completely lost and cannot therefore be completely mourned:

> [T]he continued presence in what we might call the real world of the object whose apparent loss we cannot mourn...in the case of the collective 'loss' of mother surrogates such as the earth...There is no reality testing that permits us to let go the libidinal investment we seem to have in an object that has *not fully disappeared*..., [that] is *still around* to nurture us. (97; italics mine)

CHAPTER ONE: Horizons of Desire, Horizons of Mourning: Joyce's *Dubliners*

[1] This chapter is a slightly different version of an article of the same title I published in *Études Irlandaises*. I also draw on "The Poetics of Mourning: the Tropologic of Prosopopoeia in Joyce's 'The Dead'," in which I treat prosopopoeia as the structuring frame of the plot of "The Dead."

[2] In the context of this dissertation, I have no intention to trench on debates that have to do with the topography of prosopopoeia in relation to other tropes. Rather, I seek to explore the analytical potential (textual and psychic) of de Man's conceptualization of prosopopoeia, and at the same time I try to pinpoint its applicative limits. I, for instance, do not argue why personification and reification should be subsumed under prosopopoeia. Such an argument is already inherent in de Man's definition of prosopopoeia, which is the very definition that this chapter attempts to nuance. For a study of the controversies and debates surrounding the taxonomy of tropes, see James Paxson's, *The Poetics of Personification*.

[3] Sean Latham, A personal letter, 16 April 2002. Latham writes, "Gretta's evocation of Michael Furey does not, after all, give voice to the dead young man. His words, instead, are only reported in the third person, and they do not result in the death of Gretta and Gabriel." I contend that the voice of Michael, while not allowed unmediated presence, is the voice that, in the words of Derrida, "already haunts any said real or present voice" (*Memoirs* 26). Indeed, Gretta moves from an unwitting proclivity to embrace the dead (her visceral insistence that her husband accept Miss Ivors' invitation to the Aran Isles is evidence of that) to what Eric Savoy calls, in a

compelling article on the "necro-filial" configuration in Nathaniel Hawthorne, "a will-to-prosopopoeia" ("Necro-filia" 468). Besides, what is advanced in this chapter—as will become clearer through the concept of "automourning"—is not the literal death of Gretta and Gabriel through a prosopopoeic reversal, but precisely, pace de Man, the very impossibility of such a death (by trope). The force/injustice of prosopopoeia resides in its suspension of being in the middle of the end, right at the end which is not yet one.

[4] I appropriate the concept of "the inability to mourn" from Alexander and Margarette Mitscherlich's classic, *The Inability to Mourn: Principles of Collective Behavior*. As used by the Mitscherlichs, "the inability to mourn" is not at all analogous with what the Freud of "Mourning and Melancholia" would have diagnosed as the onset of melancholia. On the contrary, "the inability to mourn" marks for the Mitscherlichs the very instance in which a melancholic affect, however overwhelming, is frustrated. The affect is, in other words, called for by the situation but is—lest it should result in narcissistic mortifications—called off by the individual's system of defences. In this sense, the inability to mourn should not be understood as the expression of an unbroken attachment to a lost love-object (Freud), but rather as the deliberate and sustained burning of bridges with things past (the Mitscherlichs). In the context of this chapter, I use the inability to mourn in its Freudian sense in relation to Gretta, but I adhere to the Mitscherlichsian appropriation of the term in relation to Gabriel.

CHAPTER THREE: Still Harping on her Mother: Kincaid's Identific(a)tions and the (Ab)uses of Mnemosyne

[1] In the formulation of this question, I am indebted to Shane Weller whose article, "Nothing to Be Said: On the Inexpressible in Modern Philosophy and Literature,"

disentangles, in a compellingly lucid manner, the ramifications of the following question: "Who (or what) would speak were there nothing to be said?" (91).

[2] In the second of his *Unfashionable Observations*, Nietzsche avers, as we have seen in the first chapter, that "All action requires forgetting" (89), that "historical sensibility makes its servants passive and retrospective, and [that] those who have come down with the historical fever become active only in those moments of forgetfulness when this historical sensibility is absent" (140). Presumably the past draws attention to itself and thus whoever is drawn to it might eventually "lose the name of action" by giving in to "the pale cast of thought" (*Hamlet* 82). Not only that. The past is not so much at the service of life as it is at its disservice, not so much fruitful as it is troublesome and, not so much necessary for life as it is parasitical on it. By and large, Nietzsche surmises that one can readily live happily in bestial oblivion rather than perish miserably in the voracious shrine of memory: "it is possible to live almost without memory, indeed, to live happily, as the animals show us; but without forgetting, it is utterly impossible to live at all" (89). Ultimately, Nietzsche reasons that (historical) memory and the past, in general, is sickening, that his age suffers from "the *historical sickness*" and from "the memory of its chains," and that the only antidote to this fatal disease lies in "the art and power to be able to *forget*" (163, original italics). By and large, although Nietzsche and Freud putatively agree that forgetting, regardless of whether it is re-creative or repetitive, facilitates the passage to action, they diverge sharply on the diagnosis, on the treatment, and on the location itself of the illness. And while Nietzsche prescribes forgetting as a curative pill to an otherwise overwhelmingly paralyzing and unhealthy remembering,

Freud prescribes the outright and direct opposite—remembering—as a therapeutic measure against neurotic and regressive forgetting.

[3] In "Present Pasts: Media, Politics, Amnesia," Andreas Huyssen suggests that "we now need productive remembering more than productive forgetting;" consequently, Nietzsche's second *Untimely Meditation* "may be as untimely as ever" (37). Variations around the Freudian theme of curative remembering can be found in several recent studies of the Holocaust, apartheid, or even in the all the more flourishing and free-floating field of post-colonialism. Taking Freud as their starting point, some of these studies (LaCapra/Caruth) carry on within the same Freudian framework while others wish explicitly to depart from the therapeutics of remembering toward either a survival-based approach (Lloyd/ Rinaldo Walcott), or a strategic and pedagogically-minded one (Simon). On further inspection, it is worth noting that Nietzsche himself remains—in contradistinction with his own theoretical brew of productive forgetting, and somewhat to Freud's credit—ambivalent rather than decided about the absolute relevance of forgetting. In the "Foreword" to the second of his *Unfashionable Observations*, Nietzsche confesses: "I have sought to depict a feeling that has often tormented me; I am taking my revenge on it by *exposing it to public scrutiny*" (85, italics mine). Here we can sense a tension between what Nietzsche calls for and what he actually practices. He seems to be Nietzschean only in theory, but exceedingly Freudian in practice. Throughout the essay, he calls for a productive forgetting, yet the whole enterprise is announced as a revenge on a feeling that proceeds by/from remembering, re-collecting and articulating the "feeling" in a quasi-Freudian talk-cure. Therefore, Nietzsche's

declared intention/motivation debunks his theory, and attests to the necessity of remembrance as cure.

[4] Reading Simon, Rosenberg and Eppert, one gets the impression that remembering is an entirely volitional activity in which a return *of* memory is scarcely distinguishable from a return *to* memory. Indeed, the writers use "of"/"to" loosely, as the following excerpt from their text might illustrate: "Implicated in this remembrance [as a difficult return] is a learning to live with loss, a learning to learn with a *return of* a memory that inevitably instantiates loss and thus bears no ultimate consolation, a learning to live with a disquieting remembrance. On these terms, the memorial impulse *to turn to* and *return* traumatic history is an *assignment* (original italics), not simply a matter of choice" (4, italics mine). Clearly, what this deliberate assignment does not allow for is an enlightening distinction between the volitional *returns to* memory, and the free-floating and hardly controllable *returns of* memory. Memories of the 'return of' category take on a life of their own, and become, potentially, actantial agents capable of destabilizing, disrupting and inflicting, at will, the individual as much as the collective.

[5] Instead of seeing repetition as an effect of repression as the Freud of up-to *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* does, Deleuze pushes Freud's still hesitant findings to an edge: repression is an effect of repetition, and not the contrary. In other words, repetition is no longer an unconscious enactment of the repressed and forgotten, but, rather, a quite self-conscious reproduction of the yet-to be repressed once it has been repeated. Thus, repetition becomes catalytic for repression, while repression remains

the ineluctable aftermath for repetition (to go on repeating itself). In a word, repression in the Deleuzian sense is called upon only to *clean the Augean stable of repetition*. For an elaborate examination of this conjecture as well as for a move beyond cyclical repetition toward a horizontal and quasi-labyrinthine conception of repetition—of the same as much as of the different—see Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition* (96-122). Now wonder, then, that the concept of repetition discussed herein should not be confused with the Nietzschean doctrine of "Eternal Return" scattered through his writings, especially *Thus Spake Zarathustra* and *The Gay Science*. If one can speak of a compulsion to repeat the (gruesome) *same* from a Freudian perspective, one might speak of a will to repeat the *different* (i.e. the potentially better, too) from a Nietzschean point of view. As Deleuze elaborately demonstrates in his *Nietzsche et la Philosophie*, eternal recurrence is—in very condensed terms—more of a *selective* theory of *becoming* and *affirmation* of *being* through *transmutation*, *will to power* and *active* force than a regressive and passive harking back and reiteration of the same operating under a *reagent* force—a force that might haul one to the abyss. In this respect, one might find Nietzsche to have been anticipated by Kierkegaard. For, throughout his book *Repetition*, Kierkegaard hungers and despairs for the repetition of selected existential experiences, and sees the real challenge ahead of modern philosophy as residing in the will to repeat rather than in the will to recollect as the Greeks might have thought. But, while selection of the experiences to be repeated remains for Kierkegaard the starting point from which repetition will proceed, for Nietzsche, cognizant of Darwin, selection becomes the driving force, and the will to repeat is ultimately a will toward *transvaluation* and

transmutation (*Nietzsche et La Philosophie* 81; *Repetition* 125-231). Almost the same account of Nietzsche can be found in a compact way in Foucault's essay, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History." Foucault coins the term "counter-memory" to oppose "the endlessly repeated play of dominations" (150)—a practice that Donald Bouchard rightly characterizes, in his "Preface" to *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, as that of "vigilant repetitions" (9). It is worth-noting, in conclusion, that Heidegger elects, in a quasi-Kierkegaardian spirit, repetition (*Wiederholung*) as the vehicle for entertaining an *authentic* relationship with the *past*. Loosely speaking, repetition becomes, for Heidegger, not only a liberator of the pastness of the past but also a potentially liberating force of *Dasein* from the clutches of *forgetfulness*—the mode of an *inauthentic* relationship with the past—perpetrated and perpetuated by the "they" in their vulgar and "everyday" mode of existence. (See *Being and Time*, especially paragraphs 67 and 74).

[6] Here I am alluding to Jameson's succinct remark (which is itself an allusion to Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*) that, "When a psychic structure is objectively determined by economic and political relationships, it cannot be dealt with by means of purely psychological therapies; yet it equally cannot be dealt with by means of purely objective transformations of the economic and political situation itself, since the habits remain and exercise a baleful and crippling residual effect" ("Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism" 76).

[7] "'They want a piece of land to build their shrine,' said Uchendu to his peers when they consulted among themselves. 'We shall give them a piece of land.' He paused

and there was a murmur of surprise and disagreement. 'Let us give them a portion of the Evil Forest. They boast about victory over death. Let us give them a battlefield in which to show their victory.' They laughed and agreed, and sent for the missionaries, whom they had asked to leave them for a while so that they might 'whisper together.' They offered them as much of the Evil Forest as they care to take. And to their greatest amazement the missionaries thanked them and burst into song" (107).

[8] In "On the Irremovable Strangeness of Being Different," although Bhabha addresses Fanon's strategic conceptualization of violence in the reparative project of decolonization, he exaggerates the so-called "proximity" at the heart of the otherwise "irremovable strangeness" of difference between colonizer and colonized. While it is arguably true, as Edward Said has never ceased to reiterate (now, from a different topological space, perhaps—from beyond the grave, as it were) that the histories of the colonizer and colonized overlap and their territories intertwine—lending thus credence to what Bhabha calls the "historical relationality, the interstitial in-between that defines and divides them into antagonistic subjects"—it is not theoretically serviceable to water down or attenuate the historical ferocity of the encounter, about which the Fanonian text is nevertheless explicit. "The anxious struggle for the historical consciousness of freedom that eschews transcendence—or a higher unity—*derives from violence*," Bhabha contends, "*an ethics that takes responsibility for the other* in the transformation of the 'thing'" (38; italics mine). While Fanon gives up, as Sartre himself observes, on the Other, on Europe, and on its models of development and progress, Bhabha sees in the violence with which Fanon wants to

root out the colonizer an "ethics that takes responsibility for the other." We should not perhaps ask how defamiliarizing and alienating of, and how defamiliarized and alienated with, the Fanonian text Bhabha's interpretation is, but whether it is not in fact, in Umberto Eco's lexicon, an overinterpretation. Most probably so, for although Fanon's text derives its power and force from the rhetorical web into which it is weaved, I do not think that the core of Fanon's argument can be hammered in such a way as to claim, as Bhabha does, that the Fanonian text gestures toward a move beyond ontology toward an ethics *à la Levinas*.

Bhabha's text betrays a twisted form of resistance to Fanon's vindication of violence. One cannot fail to note that at the core of the admiration the postcolonial critic has for Fanon is in fact an embarrassment at the fact that Fanon furnishes him or her with a position he or she cannot live up to unless in a twisted manner, as Bhabha largely does. After citing excerpts from page 295 and specifically Fanon's heavily metaphoric sentence—"You must therefore weigh as heavily as you can upon the body of your torturer in order that his soul, lost in some byway, may finally find once more [its universal dimension]"—Bhabha asks, "Is this plot of proximity a vindication of violence?," and disclaims, "I do not believe so" (39). In Bhabha's citation, the phrase "its universal dimension," which I added between brackets, is omitted in order for him to resolve forcefully the anxiety that Fanon's text leaves unresolved into the Levinasian reassuring oasis: "This is a freedom that does not demand *universal frames* or synchronous knowledges but that will allow the silence to inscribe the raveling and unraveling between the psychic body and its political weight" (39; italics mine). Bhabha weighs heavily the body of Levinas on that of

Fanon in order for him to gesture toward an ethics without transcendence (in Levinas's more idiosyncratic terms, this would be what he calls "excendence," a transcendence of transcendence, but Bhabha does not adopt the term), which is, in my view, a far cry from the Fanonian text. When Fanon explicitly asserts that "The colonized man finds his freedom in and through violence" (86), do we gain anything by isolating phrases and sentences marked by a fringe of open texture in order to contend that Fanon does not vindicate violence? Is it not far more beneficial to *work through* Fanon's vindication of violence rather than *disavow* it?

On the other hand, postcolonial critics who reckon with Fanon's vindication of violence seem to me too distracted by the scandalizing nature of Fanon's thesis to return to Fanon's text and clarify its internal tensions. In this respect, Robert J. C. Young devotes, in his ambitious introduction to postcolonialism, *Postcolonialism*, most of his intervention on Fanon to discussing the polemics—whether inimical (Hannah Arendt) or sympathetic (Serequeberhan; Sartre)—surrounding Fanon's thesis. The few instances in which Young touches on the abstract dimension of Fanon's theory could have benefited from a more undistracted textual analysis.

[9] "There are no more disputes and no longer any insignificant details which entail the death of a man. There are no longer explosive outburst of rage because my wife's forehead or her left shoulder were seen by my neighbor. The national conflict seems to have canalized all anger, and nationalized all affective or emotional movements" (Fanon 306).

[10] Rather than "blaming the victims"—a tendency in postcolonial rhetoric of which V.S. Naipaul is the most notorious example and Edward Said the most notable critic—Kincaid lodges, by way of blaming the victors, a complaint against the British colonialists whose bad political conduct was absorbed and reproduced by the newly liberated Antiguans:

> Have you ever wondered to yourself why it is that all people like me seem to have learned from you is how to imprison and murder each other, how to govern badly, and how to take the wealth of our country and place it in Swiss bank accounts? Have you ever wondered why it is that all we seem to have learned from you is how to corrupt our societies and to be tyrants? You will have to accept that this is mostly your fault. Let me just show you how you looked to us. You came. You took things that were not yours, and you did not even, for appearances' sake, ask first. (34-35)

While Kincaid seems to puncture, or perhaps accentuate, the gravity of the scenario (whereby Antiguans mime or compulsively reproduce colonial behavior) by a prickling irony, a dramatic relief of sorts, Suzanne Gauch complains that all Kincaid seems to be interested in is a retroactive request for a mere ritual of politeness, effecting thus a "startling reduction of racism [and all colonial indignities] to a question of bad manners" (913). While *A Small Place* was not accepted for publication in the *New Yorker* because of its "distorted anger" (see, for instance, Simmons, *Jamaica Kincaid* 136), Gauch unexpectedly retrieves an underpinning, if not anger-management, strain in Kincaid toward dissolving weighty questions of racism into banal occurrences or mere aspects of everydayness.

[11] Suzanne Gauch might be right in cautioning us that Kincaid's analogy threatens eventually to dissolve the weighty problems of race and colonialism into a discourse

of mannerism. But it is impossible, if not irresponsible, to understand Kincaid literally. I think this is an instance of what Spivak means by arguing toward a readerly competence that would enable us "to learn to dis-figure the undecidable figure into a responsible literality, *again and again*" (*Death of a Discipline* 72; italics mine). "Literality," in Spivak's sense, should not be understood literally, in the sense of "literalness," but in the sense of contingently unbuilding the logic of the undecidable in order to grasp it. Nor should we understand Kincaid's account of *what happened* in terms of impoliteness as a mere dilution of the otherwise grave consequences of colonialism. Perhaps Ihab Hassan's concept of "indetermanence"—a combination of indeterminacy and immanence—is valuable here since Spivak's "responsible literality" does not refer to a meaning that will have been there, waiting at the arrival, but to a meaning that has to be forged and arrived at "again and again," perfecting in the process both the literality and the responsibility to/for it. Elsewhere, I have suggested that "indeterminacy cannot be by any means *différanced sine die*; it is in the final analysis as contingent as the call for determinacy itself. Determinacy and indeterminacy codetermine each other; hardly does the one cease to inhabit the other" ("Beyond the Pale" 325). Kincaid's constant approximation of *what happened* is a theme that ripples throughout her writing, generating competing reports that tend ever so closely toward the *whatness* of *what happened* but remain disproportionate to it.

[12] Glissant articulates with remarkable clarity the correlation between the hermeneutic task of sensemaking and the discontinuous but integrative process of mourning:

> The rupture of the slave trade, then the experience of slavery, introduces between blind belief and clear consciousness a gap that we have never finished filling. The absence of representation, of echo, of any sign, makes this emptiness forever yawn under our feet. Along with our realization of the process of exploitation (along with any action we take), we must articulate the unexpressed while moving *beyond* it" (201; italics mine).

I will come back, in the conclusion to this dissertation, to the "beyond" of mourning to which Glissant gestures at; suffices it to point out for the moment that is oftentimes easier said than done. Is it not a trait of reflection—as well as of understanding, of memory, and of thought, in general—to become entangled in the cobwebs of the object of its reflection? Glissant's remark, of course, sends back to my introduction and to Joyce's categorical imperative—"Get out of mourning first"—and refuels the question whether mourning is prerequisite to understanding, correlative to understanding or anterior to it! Must not all of these—like creation day—happen all at once?

[13] "Should it be an idea" is, in my view, an inter-textual allusion to Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, in which the "idea" that Conrad evokes remains—despite the adjectival prolixity and articulateness with which he exposes it—shrouded in mystery:

> The conquest of the earth, which mostly means the taking it away from those who have a different complexion or slightly flatter noses than ourselves, is not a pretty thing when you look into it too much. What *redeems* it is an *idea*. An idea at the back of it, not a sentimental pretence but an idea; and an unselfish *belief* in the idea—something you can set up, and bow down before, and offer a sacrifice to… (10; italics mine).

No one who has read and been marked by this passage has failed to be impressed and mystified by Conrad's recondite belabouring of the "idea." One is, in particular, very

struck by the unsettling inscription of this idea in terms of its characteristics—or, shall I say charatachrestics?—that is, in terms of the narrative of negative dialectics into which Conrad moulds it: an idea, *not* a sentimental pretence; an unselfish *belief* in the idea, *not* an idea as such; an unselfish belief *but* one that can nevertheless be set up—unselfish *but* by design; unselfish *but* you should bow down before it; unselfish *but* to which you should offer sacrifice. The play of negative dialectics follows its course unsettling any hermeneutic closure but opening the doors to new interpretive entrepreneurship.

It is impossible here to do justice to Conrad's rhetorical moves, or to deal with the plethora of *hesitant* but still accumulating and proliferating interpretations that this passage alone has provoked, but I would like to suggest, for my purposes in this chapter, that the idea that undergirds the conquest of the earth is nothing but the sense that one can either get away with it or be redeemed of it by virtue of having believed in the idea of redemption itself. At the horizon of the conquest of the earth—and of the necessary sinking into inhumanity that correlates with it and of which Sartre, Fanon, and Memmi, among others, have spoken prolifically—there is the horizon of redemption. This interpretation of the "idea" seems to me very much in tune with Kincaid's own thinking. In *A Small Place*, for instance, she argues that "People who think about these things [i.e. heaven/hell; reward/punishment] believe that every bad deed, even every bad thought, carries with it its own retribution. So do you see the queer thing about people like me? Sometimes *we hold your retribution*" (27; italics mine). Elsewhere, I have studied a recurrent feature of legal texts—the fringe of open texture—in terms of what I then called a *poetics of occlosure*, a kind

of see-saw chiasmatic flutter between a textual and intrinsic strain toward closure and an extrinsic, somewhat overlordly, interdiction or occlusion of closure (see "Beyond the Pale" 326). It has not occurred to me until now that such a poetic strategy could be a function of inflicting mourning on those who committed the crimes of colonialism—or on their current descendants, not in the sense of filiation but affiliation. Poetic occlosure is at the core of the narrative structure of the Kincaidian text, especially in *A Small Place*; its function is to open up the other to mourning and to guilt, and to deny him the sense of closure and the promise of redemption correlative with the willing sensation of grief that the reader might have entertained/assumed at the outset of the act of reading.

[14] Most of Kincaid's critics agree on the ambivalent daughter-mother relationship in Kincaid's work. This ambivalence is, most critics also unanimously agree, a staging of Kincaid's haunting indebtedness to her mother and her unfinished revolt against her; it is, in other words, the staging in fiction of the stirring into awareness of a love-hatred relationship between Kincaid and her mother before and after her self-willed exile in the United States. I will discuss the specific twist of this relationship in *The Autobiography of My Mother*; for more on its representation in earlier novels, see, among others, Alison Donnell's "When Daughter's Defy: Jamaica Kincaid's Fiction", Diane Simmons *Jamaica Kincaid* and Moira Ferguson's *Jamaica Kincaid: Where the Land Meets the Body*.

CHAPTER FOUR: The Ineluctable Modality of Posthumous Infidelity: The Limits of Narrative Mourning in Kincaid and Derrida

[1] Since her arrival to the United States in the late sixties, Kincaid must have been sensitive to the stakes involved in ransacking family history and in exposing family secrets by putting them to the use (and, allegedly, the abuse) of her art. Indeed, her family did not tarry to inveigh against her early pieces such that the then called "Elaine Potter Richardson" had to change her name into "Jamaica Kincaid" and to break ties with her family for more than twenty years. Meanwhile, Kincaid has not abstained from writing (about) her family. In an interview with Brad Goldfarb, she intimates that *My Brother* is the most honest rendition of family affairs: "I've only ever written about my family, and I've never written about them so frankly as I have in this book." My aim is to engage the ethical stakes involved in writing about family matters, especially that such a form of writing is triumphantly celebrated by Kincaid herself as a form of self-redemption and self-rescue. Writing becomes a trope of rescue to an otherwise runaway and endangered life. While this kind of approach to writing has been taken for granted by a number of feminists since Helen Cixous's feminist manifesto, "The Laugh of the Medusa," its ethical problematics remain largely unaccounted for.

[2] For an account of the failure of counter-transference and the potential interminability of analysis, see Freud's "Analysis Terminable and Interminable." For an account of Freud's obsessive returns to the Wolf Man case history, see *The Wolf Man's Magic Word: A Cryptonymy* by Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok, as well as the memoirs of the Wolf Man himself, collected in Muriel Gardiner's *The Wolf-Man by the Wolf-Man*.

[3] Kincaid is not unaware of the expatiatory function of narrative. Indeed in *The Autobiography of My Mother*, she contends that

> to describe your own transgressions is to forgive yourself for them; to confess your bad deeds is also at once to forgive yourself, and so silence becomes the only form of self-punishment: to live forever locked up in an iron cage made of your own silence, and then, from time to time, to have this silence broken by a designated crier, someone who repeats over and over, in broken or complete sentences, a list of the violations, the bad deeds committed. (60)

Silence becomes here the *conditio sine qua non* of self-punishment for wrongdoing. Breaking the silence is not only tantamount to opening up a space for performing mourning and expatiation, but also for the repetition of the transgressions again and again, much as we have seen in our analysis of the figure of the "open wound" in the previous chapter.

[4] In her interview with Brad Goldfarb, Kincaid points out that, while it was her mother who had precisely stirred the book burning episode into her consciousness again, she had not realized its magnitude and tormenting effects until she began writing about.

> Yeah. It's a brutal scene, isn't it? You know, I'd completely forgotten that incident, and then something she said around the time of my brother's death made me remember it. But it must have been a source of enormous shame that made me suppress it, and when I remembered it and began to write about it, I found it very painful. But I wanted to write it.

In "Traumatic Departures," the third chapter of *Unclaimed Experience*, Caruth suggests that the traumatic experience is devastating, not at the moment of its

occurrence, but precisely at the moment of "*waking from it*," that is, at the moment of realizing that one has survived it "*without knowing it*." It is at this stage, this "waking into consciousness," Caruth goes on to add, that reliving the experience of trauma becomes an "attempt *to claim one's own survival*...to assume one's survival as one's own" (64; original italics). Kincaid's decision to write about an experience that is not only traumatic but also shameful might therefore be understood as an affirmative decision—a claim to/of survivance or survival.

> I almost feel that one's sources of humiliation should be immediately put on public display so they lose their power. Yes, it's a humiliating thing to admit, for me to acknowledge. And it's not that I care about people knowing it or not knowing it, but more for me to acknowledge this thing in my life: that the person who brought me into the world had at one point almost extinguished my life. Those books were my life. I don't mean to overdramatize it, but it really did feel like an attempt at murder. My books were the only thing that connected me to a world apart from the cesspool I was in, and then they were just ashes. It felt murderous.

I find Kincaid's writerly impulse/logic here strikingly similar to what Kristeva had recently described—in reference to Freud, Sartre, Aragon, and Barthes—as "revolutionary writing," that is, writing which crystallizes the retrospective and introspective return to the timeless (*l'hors-temps/Zeitlos*) through the transferential experience of remembering. Only through a difficult return to the *Zeitlos*, Kristeva argues, can psychic revolt be performed. Of course, Kristeva's project is to rediscover a sense of revolt and a culture of revolt, for that matter, through the transferential experience of both writing and psychoanalysis (see *Intimate Revolt* and *Sense and Non-Sense of Revolt*).

[5] I find confirmation for this view of "mourning as a mode of connectivity" with the deceased other in Ramone Soto-Crespo's article, "Death and the Diaspora Writer: Hybridity and Mourning in the Work of Jamaica Kincaid." Soto-Crespo insists on "depathologizing" mourning so as to open it up to the vistas of "cross-cultural connections" and of "hybridity" that the diasporic writer like Kincaid is said to initiate. According to Soto-Crespo, "The hybridity of mourning enables Kincaid to relive these connections [with her brother, with her burned books, as well as with her "small place"] because by mourning her brother she mourns also a larger cultural condition" (370). In the fleshing out of his own concept of "hybrid mourning" to the history of colonialism, Soto-Crespo finds himself overtly involved in the specific tensions, delays, tactics, politics, and lacunae that jeopardize the otherwise connective force of mourning. A good deal of what passes for mourning in Soto-Crespo's reading of Kincaid does fall under the heading of melancholia and is within a hair's breadth of morphing into tension, renunciation or suspension of connection. While tending to dilute the affective forcefield of mourning—and to strip mourning of its psychological, if not pathological residues—in the service of a politics of connectivity, Soto-Crespo nonetheless imports a useful concept to postcolonial studies, a field that is terribly "Seeking new connections between things" (Ngugi wa Thiongo).

Works Cited

Abraham, Nicolas and Maria Torok. *The Wolf Man's Magic Word: A Cryptonymy*. Trans. Nicholas T. Rand. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986.

———. *The Shell and the Kernel: Renewals of Psychoanalysis*. Ed. & trans. Nicholas T. Rand. Chicago: University Chicago Press, 1994.

Abraham, Nicholas. "Notes on the Phantom: A Complement to Freud's Metapsychology." *Critical Inquiry* 13 (Winter 1987): 287-292.

Achebe, Chinua. *Things Fall Apart*. Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1986.

Baccolini, Raffaella. "'She Had Become a Memory': Women as Memory in James Joyce's *Dubliners*." *ReJoycing: New Readings of Dubliners*. Eds. Rosa M. Bollettieri Bosinelli and Harold F. Mosher Jr. Lexington: The University of Kentucky Press, 1998. 145-164.

Beckett, Samuel. *Waiting for Godot*. New York: Grove Press, 1954.

———. *Three Novels: Molly, Malone Dies, The Unnamable*. New York: Grove Press, 1958.

Behdad, Ali. "*Une Pratique Sauvage*: Postcolonial Belatedness and Cultural Politics." The Pre-Occupation of Postcolonial Studies. Eds. Fawzia Afzal-Khan and Kalpana Seshadri-Crooks. Durham: Duke University Press, 2000. 71-85.

Benjamin, Walter. "Critique of Violence." *Reflections: Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writing*. Tr. by Edmund Jephcott; ed. and with an intro. by Peter Demetz. New York: Schocken Books, 1986. 277-300.

———. "Theses on the Philosophy of History." *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*. Tr. Harry Zohn. Ed and intro. Hannah Arendt. New York: Schocken Books,1969. 253-264.

Bernard, Louise. "Countermemory and Return: Reclamation of the (Postmodern) Self in Jamaica Kincaid's *The Autobiography of My Mother* and *My Brother*." *MFS* 48.1 (2002): 113-138.

Bhabha, Homi. "On the Irremovable Strangeness of Being Different." *PMLA* 113.1 (1998): 34-39.

Birbalsingh, Frank (ed. & introd.). "Jamaica Kincaid: From Antigua to America." In *Frontiers of Caribbean Literatures in English*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996. 138-151.

Bloom, Harold. *A Map of Misreading*. 2nd ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003.

Borch-Jacobsen, Mikkel. "The Oedipus Problem in Freud and Lacan." Trans. Douglas Brick. *Critical Inquiry* 20 (Winter 1994): 267-282.

Bouchard, Donald F. "Preface." In Michel Foucault's *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*. Trans. Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon, ed. Donald F. Bouchard. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977.7-9.

Brophy, Sarah. "Angels in Antigua: The Diasporic of Melancholy in Jamaica Kincaid's *My Brother*." *PMLA* 117.2 (2002): 265-277.

Brooks, Peter. *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984.

Brush, Stephen G. *The Temperature of History: Phases of Science and Culture in the Nineteenth Century*. New York: Burt Franklin, 1978.

Butler, Judith. *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in subjection*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997.

———. *Bodies That Matter*. London: Routledge, 1993.

Caruth, Cathy. "Trauma and Experience: Introduction." *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*. Ed. Cathy Caruth. Baltimore: John Hopkins UP, 1995. 3-12.

Caruth, Cathy. *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1996.

Cixous, Hélène. "The Laugh of the Medusa." *Critical Theory Since 1965*. Eds. Adams Hazard and Leroy Searle. Tallahassee: Florida State UP, 1992.

Conrad, Joseph. *Heart of Darkness*. Ed. Robert Kimbrough. New York: Norton, 1988.

Crimp, Douglas. "Melancholia and Modernism." *Loss: The Politics of Mourning*. Eds. David L. Eng and David Kazanjian. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003. 188-202.

Cudjoe, Selwyn R. "Jamaica Kincaid and the Modernist Project: An Interview" *Callaloo* 1989 Spring; 12(2 (39)): 396-411

Darmesteter, Arsène. *La Vie des Mots*. Paris: Éditions Champ Libre, 1979.

Deane, Seamus. *Strange Country: Modernity and Nationhood in Irish Writing since 1790*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1997.

Deleuze, Gilles. *Difference and Repetition*. Tr. Paul Patton. New York: Columbia University Press, 1994. 70-128.

———. *Bergsonism*. Trans. Hugh Tomlinson. New York: Zone Books, 1988.

———. *Nietzsche et la Philosophie*. Paris: Press Universitaire de France, 1973.

De Man, Paul. "Autobiography as De-Facement." *The Rhetoric of Romanticism*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1984. 67-82.

———. "The Epistemology of Metaphor." *On Metaphor*. Ed. Sheldon Sacks. Chicago. The University of Chicago Press, 1979. 11-28.

———. "Anthropomorphism and Trope in the Lyric." *The Rhetoric of Romanticism*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1984. 239-262.

Derrida, Jacques. *The Work of Mourning*. Eds. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2001.

———.*Cinders*. Trans. Ned Lukacher. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1991.

———. *Mémoires for Paul de Man*. Trans. Eduardo Cadava, Jonathan Culler, Peggy Kamuf and Cecile Lindsay. Ed. Cadava and Avita Ronell. New York: Columbia University Press, 1986.

———. *The Ear of the Other: Otobiography, Transference, Translation*. Ed. Christie McDonald. Trans. Peggy Kamuf. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1985.

———.*Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International*. Trans. Peggy Kamuf. New York and London: Routledge, 1994.

———. "Force of Law." Eds. Drucilla Cornell, Michel Rosenfeld, and David Gray Carlson. *Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice*. N.Y. and London: Routledge, 1992.

———. "A Discussion with Jacques Derrida." *Theory & Event* 5.1 (2001).

———. *Monolingualism of the Other; or, The Prosthesis of Origin*. Trans. Patrick Mensah. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998.

———. *The Post Card: From Socrates and Beyond.* Trans. Alan Bass. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1987.

———. "The Laws of Reflection: Nelson Mandela, in Admiration." *For Nelson Mandela.* Eds Jacques Derrida and Mustapha Tlili. New York: Seaver Books, 1987.

———. *Resistances of Psychoanalysis.* Trans. Peggy Kamuf, Pascale-Anne Brault & Michael Naas. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998.

———. "Let us not Forget—Psychoanalysis" *Oxford Literary Review* 12.1-2 (1990): 3-7.

Donnell, Alison "When Writing the Other Is Being True to the Self: Jamaica Kincaid's *The Autobiography of My Mother.*" In *Women's Lives into Print: The Theory, Practice and Writing of Feminist Auto/Biography.* Ed. Pauline Polkey. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999. 123-36.

———. "When Daughter's Defy: Jamaica Kincaid's Fiction." *Women: A Cultural Review.* 4.1 (1993): 18-26.

Eco, Umberto. *Interpretation and Overinterpretation.* Ed. Stefan Collini. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1992.

Eliot, T. S. *The Complete Poems and Plays: 1909-1950.* New York: Harcourt, 1971.

Eng, David L. and David Kazanjian. *Loss: The Politics of Mourning.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003.

Epicurus. "Epicurus to Menoeceus." trans. C. Bailey. *The Stoic and Epicurean Philosophers*, ed. Whitney Jennings Oates. New York: Random House, 1940. 30-33.

Fanon, Frantz. *The Wretched of the Earth.* New York, Grove Press, 1968.

Ferenczi, Sándor *Final Contributions to the Problems and Methods of Psychoanalysis.* Trans. Eric Mosbacher and others. Ed .Michael Balint. New York: Brunner/Mazel, 1980.

Ferguson, Moira. "A Lot of Memory: An Interview with Jamaica Kincaid." *The Kenyon Review* 16, no.1 (Winter 1994): 163–88.

———. *Jamaica Kincaid: Where the Land Meets the Body.* Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1994.

Foucault, Michel. "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History." *Language, Counter-Memory,*

Practice. Trans. Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon, ed. Donald F. Bouchard. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977. 139-164.

———. *Remarks on Marx: Conversations with Duccio Trombadori*. Trans. James Golstein and James Cascaito. New York: Semiotext(e): 1991.

Freud, Sigmund. *On Metapsychology: The Theory of Psychoanalysis*. Tr. James Strachey. Ed. Angela Richards. London: Penguin, 1991.

———. *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. 1920. In *On Metapsychology* 269-339.

———. "Mourning and Melancholia." 1917. In *On Metapsychology* 245-69.

———. *The Ego and the Id*. 1923. In *On Metapsychology*. 340-401.

———. "On Narcissism: An Introduction." In *On Metapsychology*. 59-97.

———. "The Economic Problem of Masochism." In *On Metapsychology*. 409-426.

———. "On Transience." *Art and Literature*. Trans. James Strachey. London: Penguin, 1990. 283-290.

———. *Moses and Monotheism*. In *The Origins of Religion*. Trans. James Strachey. London: Penguin, 1990.

———. "Remembering, Repeating and Working-Through." *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*. Volume XII. Tr. James Strachey. London: The Hogarth Press, 1968. 147-156.

———. "Analysis Terminable and Interminable." *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*. Volume V. 211-253.

———. "Constructions in Analysis." *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*. Volume V. 257-269.

———. "Screen Memories." *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*. Volume V. 301-322.

———. "From the History of an Infantile Neurosis." *Case Histories II*. Trans. James Strachey. London: Penguin, 1991. 225-366.

———. "Thoughts on War and Death." *Civilization, Society and Religion*. Tr. James Strachey. Ed. Albert Dickson. London: Penguin, 1991. 57-89.

———. *Civilization and its Discontents*. In *Civilization, Society and Religion*. 243-340.

———. *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*. In *Civilization, Society and Religion*. 91-178.

———. "Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety." In *On Psychopathology*. Tr. James Strachey. Ed. Albert Dickson. London: Penguin, 1991. 227-333.

Frey, Hans-Jost. *Interruptions*. Trans. Georgia Albert. New York: SUNY Press, 1996.

Frye, Northrop. *Anatomy of Criticism*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973.

Gana, Nouri. "Beyond the Pale: Toward an Exemplary Relationship between the Judge and the Literary Critic." *Law and Literature* 15.3 (2003): 313-343.

———. "Donne Undone: The Journey of Psychic Re-integration in Wilson Harris's *Palace of the Peacock*." *Ariel* 32.1 (2001): 153-170.

———. "Remembering Forbidding Mourning: Repetition, Indifference, Melanxiety, Hamlet" *Mosaic* 37.2 (June 2004): 59-78.

———. "The Poetics of Mourning: The Tropologic of Prosopopoeia in Joyce's "The Dead." *American Imago* 60.2 (2003): 159- 178

———. "Horizons of Desire, Horizons of Mourning: Joyce's Dubliners." *Études Irlandaises* 28.1 (2003): 25-43.

———. Review of *The Work of Mourning* by Jacques Derrida. In *Substance* 32.1 (2003): 150-155.

Gardiner, Muriel. *The Wolf-Man by the Wolf-Man*. New York: Basic Books, 1971.

Gauch, Suzanne. "*A Small Place*: Some Perspectives on the Ordinary." *Callaloo* 25.3 (2002) 910–919.

Gilmore, Leigh. *The Limits of Autobiography: Trauma and Testimony*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001.

Glissant, Edouard. *Caribbean Discourse: Selected Essays*. Tr. and intro. by J. Michael Dash. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1989.

Goldfarb, Brad "Writing=life" (interview with writer Jamaica Kincaid). 2 Feb. 2004 http://www.findarticles.com/cf_0/m1285/n10_v27/20803794/p1/article.jhtml

Gordon, John "Dubliners and the Art of Losing," *Studies in Short Fiction* 32.3 (1995): 343-52.

Greenberg, Jay R. and Stephen A. Mitchell. *Object Relations in Psychoanalytic Theory*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1983.

Harpham, Geoffrey Galt. "The Business of Mourning." *The Southern Review* 32.3 (1996): 537-55.

Hart, H.L.A. *The Concept of Law*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961.

Hassan, Ihab. "From Postmodernism to Postmodernity: The Local/Global context." *Philosophy and Literature* 51.1 (2001): 1-13.

Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarie & Edward Robinson. New York: Harper San Francisco, 1962. pp. 279-311.

Herring, Philip F. *Joyce's Uncertainty Principle*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1987.

Holcomb, Gary E. "Travels of a Transnational Slut: Sexual Migration in Kincaid's *Lucy*." *Critique* 44.3 (2003): 295-312.

Holcomb, Gary E. and Kimberly S. Holcomb. "'I MADE HIM': Sadomasochism in Kincaid's *The Autobiography of My Mother*." *Callaloo* 25.3 (2002) 969–976

Huyssen, Andreas. "Present Pasts: Media, Politics, Amnesia." *Public Culture* 12.1 (2000): 21-38.

Ingersoll, Earl G. "Melancholy and Mourning in *Dubliners*." *Q/W/E/R/T/Y: Arts, Littératures & Civilisations du Monde Anglophone 10* (2000): 85-90.

Jameson, Frederic. "Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism." *Social Text* 15 (Fall 1986): 65-88.

James, Henry. *The Turn of the Screw*. Ed. Peter G. Beidler. New York: Bedford, 1995.

Jay, Martin. "The Apocalyptic Imagination and the Inability to Mourn." *Force fields: Between Intellectual History and Cultural Critique*. New York and London: Routledge, 1993. 84-98.

Joyce, James. *Dubliners*. ed. Robert Scholes in consultation with Richard Ellmann. New York: Viking Press, 1967.

———. *Ulysses*. Ed. Declan Kiberd. New York: Penguin, 1992.

———. *Exiles*. London: The New English Library, 1952.

Kazanjian, David and Marc Nichanian. "Between Genocide and Catastrophe." *Loss: The Politics of Mourning*. Eds. David L. Eng and David Kazanjian. California: University of California Press, 2003. 125-147.

Kiberd, Declan *Inventing Ireland: The Literature of the Modern Nation*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1996.

Kierkegaard, Søren. *Repetition*. In *Fear and Trembling; Repetition*. Trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1983.

Kincaid, Jamaica. *Annie John*. New York: Plume, 1986.

———. *My Brother*. New York: Farrar, 1997.

———. *Lucy*. New York: Plume, 1991.

———. *Mr. Potter*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2002.

———. *The Autobiography of My Mother*. New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1996.

———. *At the Bottom of the River*. New York: Plume, 1992.

———. *A Small Place*. New York: Plume, 1988.

———. *My Garden (Book)*. New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1999.

———. "In History." In *My Garden (Book)*. 153-166.

Knapp, Bettina L. "Joyce's 'A Painful Case': The Train and an Epiphanic Experience." *Études Irlandaises* 13.2 (1988): 45-60.

Kristeva, Julia. *Black Sun: Depression and Melancholia*. Trans. Leon S. Roudier. New York: Columbia University Press, 1989.

———. *Intimate Revolt: The Powers and Limits of Psychoanalysis*. Trans. Jeanine Herman. New York: Columbia UP, 2002.

———. *The Sense and Non-Sense of Revolt: The Powers and Limits of Psychoanalysis*. Trans. Jeanine Herman. New York: Columbia UP, 2000.

Lacan, Jacques. "Desire and the Interpretation of Desire in *Hamlet*." *Yale French Studies* 55/56 (1977): 11-52.

———. *Écrit: A Selection*. Trans. Alan Sheridan. New York: Norton, 1977.

———. *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*. Trans. Alan Sheridan. New York: Norton, 1977.

LaCapra, Dominick. "Trauma, absence, Loss." *Critical Inquiry* 25 (Summer 1999): 696-727.

Laub, Dori. "Truth and Testimony: The Process and the Struggle." *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*. Ed. Cathy Caruth. Baltimore: John Hopkins UP, 1995. 61-75.

Lloyd, David. "Colonial Trauma/Postcolonial recovery?" *Interventions: International Journal of Postcolonial Studies* 2.2 (2000): 212-228.

Lucretius. *On the Nature of Things*. trans. H. A. J. Munro. *The Stoic and Epicurean Philosophers*, ed. Whitney Jennings Oates. New York: Modern Library, 1957. 69-219.

Lyotard, Jean-François. *Political* Writings. Trans. Bill Readings and Kevin Paul Geiman (with foreword by Bill Readings). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993.

———. *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute*. Trans. Georges Van Den Abbeele. Minneapolis : University of Minnesota Press, 1988.

Memmi, Albert. *The Colonizer and the Colonized*. Trans. Howard Greenfeld. Intro. Jean Paul Sartre. London: Earthscan Publications, 1990.

Miller, J. Hillis. "The Figure in the Carpet." *Modern Literary Theory: A Reader*. Eds. Philip Rice and Patricia Waugh. London: Arnold, 1989. 172-85.

———. "The Critic as Host." "The Critic as Host." *Deconstruction and Criticism*. Eds. Harold Bloom, Paul de Man and Jacques Derrida. New York: Seabury, 1979. 217-53.

Mitscherlich, Alexander and Margarette. *The Inability to Mourn: Principles of Collective Behavior*, trans. Beverley R. Placzek and Robert Jay Lifton. New York: Grove Press, 1975.

Nancy, Jean-Luc. "L'Intrus." *The New Centennial Review* 2.3 (2002): 1-14.

Nichanian, Marc. "Catastrophic Mourning." *Loss: The Politics of Mourning*. Eds. David L. Eng and David Kazanjian. California: University of California Press, 2003. 99-124.

Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Unfashionable Observations*. Tr. Richard Gray. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1995.

———. *Thus Spake Zarathustra: A Book for All and None.* Trans. Thomas Common. New York: Russell & Russell, 1964.

———. *The Gay Science*. Trans. Walter Kaufmann. New York: Vintage, 1974.

Paravisini-Gebert, Lizabeth. *Jamaica Kincaid: A Critical Companion*. Westport: Greenwood Press, 1999.

Parker, Patricia. "Metaphor and Catachresis." *The Ends of Rhetoric: History, Theory, Practice*. Eds. John Bender and David E. Wellbery. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990. 60-73.

Paxson, James J. *The Poetics of Personification*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

Philips, Adam. "Making the Case: Freud's Literary Engagements." *Profession* (2003): 10-20.

Ragland-Sullivan, Ellie. *Jacques Lacan and the Philosophy of Psychoanalysis*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1986.

Rand, Nicholas T. (editor). *The Shell and the Kernel: Renewals of Psychoanalysis*. Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok Ed. & trans. (Chicago: University Chicago Press, 1994).

Ricciardi, Alessia. *The Ends of Mourning: Psychoanalysis, Literature, Film*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003.

Ricœur, Paul. *La Mémoire, l'Histoire, l'Oubli*. Paris: Édition Seuil, 2000.

———. "What is a Text? Explanation and Understanding" *Twentieth Century Literary Theory: An Introductory Anthology*. Eds. Vassilis Lambropoulos and David Neal Miller. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987. 331-349.

Riffaterre, Michel. "Prosopopoeia." *The Lesson of Paul de Man*. Eds. Peter Brooks, Shoshana Felman, J. Hillis Miller. *Yale French Studies* 69 (1985).

Rushdie, Salman. *Imaginary Homelands*. London: Penguin, 1991.

Santner, Eric. *Stranded Objects: Mourning, Memory, and Film in Postwar Germany*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990.

Savoy, Eric. "Necro-filia, or Hawthorne's Melancholia." *English Studies in Canada* 27 (2001): 459-80.

———. "Embarrassments: Figure in the Closet." *The Henry James Review* 20 (1999): 227-236.

Shakespeare, William. *Hamlet*. Ed. Susanne L. Wofford. Boston: Bedford Books, 1994.

Simmons, Diane. *Jamaica Kincaid*. New York: Twayne, 1994.

Simon, Roger I., Sharon Rosenberg, and Claudia Eppert. "Between Hope and Despair: The Pedagogical Encounter of Historical remembrance." *Between Hope and Despair: Pedagogy and the Remembrance of Historical Trauma* New York: Rowman & Little Field Publishers, 2000. 1-8.

Simon, Roger I. "The Paradoxical Practice of Zakhor: Memories of 'What Has Never Been My Fault or My Deed." *Between Hope and Despair: Pedagogy and the Remembrance of Historical Trauma*. Eds. Roger I. Simon, Sharon Rosenberg, and Claudia Eppert. New York: Rowman & Little Field Publishers, 2000. 9-25.

Soto-Crespo, Ramone. "Death and the Diaspora Writer: Hybridity and Mourning in the Work of Jamaica Kincaid" *Contemporary Literature* 43.2 (2002): 342-76.

Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. *Outside in the Teaching Machine*. New York : Routledge, 1993.

———. *Death of a Discipline*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2003.

Staten, Henry. *Eros in Mourning*. Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995.

———. "The Bride Stripped Bare, or Lacan *avec* Plato." in *Eros in Mourning*. (166-85)

Thiongo, Ngugi wa "Borders and Bridges: Seeking Connections between Things." *The Pre-Occupation of Postcolonial Studies*. Eds. Fawzia Afzal-Khan and Kalpana Seshadri-Crooks. Durham: Duke University Press, 2000. 119-125.

Torchiana, Donald T. *Backgrounds for Joyce's Dubliners*. Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1986.

Torok, Maria. "The Illness of Mourning and the Fantasy of the Exquisite Corpse" in Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok, *The Shell and the Kernel: Renewals of*

Psychoanalysis. Ed. & trans. Nicholas T. Rand. Chicago: University Chicago Press, 1994. (107-124).

Walcott, Derek. "What the Twilight Says: An Overture." *Dream on Monkey Mountain and Other Plays*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1970. 1-40.

Walcott, Rinaldo. "Pedagogy and Trauma: The Middle Passage, Slavery, and the Problem of Creolization." *Between Hope and Despair: Pedagogy and the Remembrance of Historical Trauma*. Eds. Roger I. Simon, Sharon Rosenberg, and Claudia Eppert. New York: Rowman & Little Field Publishers, 2000. 135-151.

Weller, Shane. "Nothing to Be Said: On the Inexpressible in Modern Philosophy and Literature." *Angelaki* 8.1 (2003): 91-108.

White, Hayden. *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978.

Winnicott, D. W. "Fear of Breakdown." In *Psycho-Analytic Explorations*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989.

Young, Robert J. C. *Postcolonialism*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2001.

Zelizer, Barbie. "Remembering to Forget: Contemporary Scrapbooks of Atrocity." *Remembering to Forget: Holocaust Memory Through the Camera Eye*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1998. 202-239.

Žižek, Slavoj. "Melancholy and the Act." *Critical Inquiry* 26 (Summer 2000): 657-681.

Université de Montréal
Faculté des études supérieures

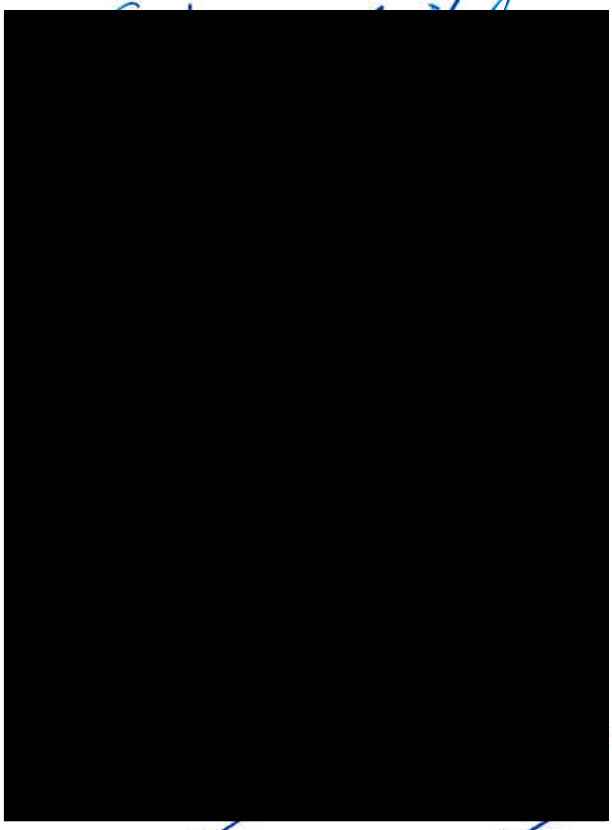
Cette thèse intitulée :

Narrative Mourning: Joyce, Freud, Kincaid, Derrida

Présenté par:

Nouri Gana

a été évaluée par un jury composé des personnes suivantes :



Représentante du doyen de la FES

Thèse acceptée le ——————————