THE CONTOURS OF DESIRE: OBSESSIONAL AND HYSTERIC DISCOURSE STRUCTURES IN UPDIKE CHEEVER AND LURIE

By

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My dissertation attempts to say something new about contemporary American novelists, about gender problematics to be found at the base of American fiction. To that end I examine the obsessional and hysteric structures in selected works of Updike, Cheever and Lurie. I also weave Jacques Lacan's psychoanalytic theory into my discussion of texts. In other words, I explore how obsessionals and hysterics have different sets of unconscious identifications with the father's name and the mother's unconscious desire, and how their particular unconscious positioning in relation to the phallus (mark of difference) structures their subjectivity, sexuality, gender roles and relationship with others. I believe only such a complex grasp of psychological and cultural theories about how selves as well as desires are serially constructed can illuminate these processes in the fictions under study.

Perhaps what marks and separates Updike's obsessionals from Cheever's and Lurie's are the twin desires to project on to women their own lack while simultaneously disavowing it, and the equally compelling desire alternately to see death as much in others as in themselves.

Updike's terms, like those of Peter Caldwell in The Centaur, lies in seeing less in woman and more in himself in schoolmidging with horror the Updikean self as non-self/death.

With Lurie the focus shifts to her ruthless subversion of the Name-of-The-Father by her hysteric heroines, who in complex ways implicate themselves in the very cultural systems that exploit them. Her works from her first novel, Love and Friendship, to The Truth About Lorin Jones, bear testimony to the joint struggle of the author and her hysteric heroines to find their identities in a culture that systematically negates and excludes them.

It is perhaps Cheever who offers the most stringent indictment of middle-class values and social mores. From The Wapshot Chronicle through Bullet Park to Oh What A Paradise It Seems, Cheever explores the desire and fear of homosexuality among cheeselonals who are dangerously poised on the borders of neurosis/psychosis. In Lacanian terms such traumas among Cheever's cheesionals are triggered by undesiring mothers and a deep crisis in the paternal metaphor.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION. MULTIPLE SIGNATURES: UPDIKE, LURIE AND CHEEVER

In the following chapters I examine, from a Lacanian perspective, the obsessional and hysteric structures in selected works of John Updike, John Cheever and Alison Lurie. The introductory chapter maps the common threads and differences running through the works of these writers. An exciting way of exploring and comparing how each WASP writer fictionalises male desire is to examine the multiple signatures embedded in the abyss of their texts. Their unconscious desire also determines the contours of their works, and it is this level of signing the text that can, perhaps, throw more light on why the particular structures of obsessionals and hysterics differ so sharply among these writers. In other words, this chapter explores how the obsessionals and hysterics have different sets of unconscious identifications with the Father's Name and the Mother's unconscious desire, and how their particular unconscious positioning in relation to the phallus (mark of difference) structures their subjectivity, sexuality and relationship with others.

First, let me explain why I chose for my project Updike's The Centaur and Rabbit, Run, Cheever's Bullet Park and Lurie's The War Between The Tates for a better understanding of the dynamics of obsessional and hysteric discourses.[1] Both in temporal and historical terms, all these novels are situated in the tumultuous sixties, a dark period of tremendous political upheaval that left a lasting scar on the social and psychic

[1] John Updike, The Centaur (New York: Ballantine Books, 1962); Updike, Rabbit, Run (New York: Ballantine Books, 1965); John Cheever, Bullet Park (New York: Ballantine Books, 1967); Alison Lurie, The War Between the Tates (New York: Random House, 1974). Subsequent references are cited parenthetically in the text.

fabric of American society. The sixties, as I indicate in my chapter on Cheever, bore the shock of the assassination of President Kennedy and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., America's debilitating and losing war in Vietnam, the civil rights movement, the sudden upsurge of interest in Oriental religions, Woodstock, the experiments with free sex, and in general, a close scrutiny and challenge of the jaded and outworn political, religious and educational institutions.

Updike's The Centaur was first published in 1962, Rabbit, Run in 1960; Cheever's Bullet Park in 1969 (the same year as Updike's Couples). The fact that Lurie's The War Between The Tates, first published in 1974, is still rooted in all aspects (historical, political, social ambience) of the sixties attests to the powerful yet disturbing impact of that dark, troubling period in American history that drew scores of creative writers to explore through their writing whether there was a method to America's madness. If the center, after all, could really hold.

I have looked at the Oedipal plot, common to all the novels under discussion, from a Lacanian perspective. The path breaking works of object-relations theorists, with a feminist/psychoanalytical orientation like those of Chodorow, Gilligan, Baker, Miller, Keyes Gardiner, to name just a few, have given us a rich and complex understanding of how our fictional gender positions are socially and culturally determined. Expanding on Chodorow's argument, Marianne Hirsch in her article, "Mothers and Daughters," draws our attention to the key factor that women's role as mother perpetuates the male/female binary gender roles:

> In studying the consequences of exclusive parenting by women for adult personality and for the gender configurations of our culture generally, Chodorow and Flax rely not so much directly on Freud but on the work of object-relations psychologists, in whose theory the pre-oedipal period is seen not as a stage through which

> infants progress instinctually . . . but as an interpersonal field of relationships internalized by the infant and therefore reconfigurative in the adult personality. The mother thus remains an important inner object throughout adult life.[2]

Coppelia Kahn in the same vein asks important questions:

> Why do women mother children as well as give birth to them? . . . And what effect does this arrangement have on gender, the way in which we define and live our maleness and femaleness? Finally, how can understanding the phenomenon of mothering extend psychoanalytic theory, and how does it lead to the reinterpretation of texts, both psychoanalytic and literary?[3]

Opposed to the dyadic interpersonal relationships of the object-relations theorists, Lacan asks us to consider the importance of the triadic interpersonal relationships for the child in the family constellation. A child's entry into language through the father's intervention as the third term is the moment of the child's simultaneous submission to the cultural order and also to the taking up of its gender position. However, the symbolic order that positions the subject's gender position is only an ordering that does so it asks subjects to conform fully to regulate and police sexual identity. The neuroses of the obsessionals and hysterics, though particular in each case, result not from the incest taboo but from the very injunction to submit to the alienating order of culture. Ragland-Sullivan sees the 'twist' in Lacan's concept of the Oedipal structure as 'new,' although

> Lacan claims evidence for it in Freud's Totem and Taboo

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[2] Marleene Sirkin, 'Mothers and Daughters,' in Signs Autumn, 1981, p 206

[3] Coppelia Kahn, "The Hand that Rocks the Cradle: Recent Gender Theories and their Implications," in The (M)other Tongue: Essays in Feminist Psychoanalytic Interpretation, ed. Shirley Nelson Garner, et al., (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1985), p 72

> and Moses and Monotheism. The function of the symbolic father--identified with law -is to attenuate the desire of the mother as primordial omnipotent other. This incest taboo, unexpectedly, does not arise from a moral horror at the idea of copulation with one's own mother, but from a turning toward the father. Both sons and daughters first identify with the mother's body, being, and desire. As they begin to splinter this identificatory mirror of illusory oneness, they are contrasted, that is, they enter into the order of language and law. The incest taboo is, therefore, not a prohibition against the mother's body per se, but an injunction to identify with the cultural order, which represents difference or otherness or individuation.[4]

Lacan's topology of the symbolic (culture), imaginary (fantasy), and real (unsymbolized yet palpable as symptoms on the body) that interlace like a borromean knot to constitute the structural identity of a given subject allows me a richer understanding of the heterogenous self than does a bedrock of binary oppositions: man/woman, body/mind, good/evil, etc. The triadic topology is important for my study since the unconscious desire produces effects on the three levels of discourse--depending upon whether the symbolic, imaginary, or real is in command.

If the obsessionals among Updike's, Cheever's and Lurie's works share the same unconscious desire to eschew castration, submission to law, how are they then different? Perhaps what marks and separates Updike's obsessionals like George Caldwell and Rabbit from Cheever's and Lurie's are the twin desires to project on to women their own lack while simultaneously disavowing it, and the equally compelling desire to alternately see death as much in others as in themselves. In fact, the obsessionals' inextricable link with the death drive accounts for much of

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[4] Ragland-Sullivan, 'Seeking the Third Term: Desire, the Phallus, and the Materiality of Language,' in Feminism and Psychoanalysis, eds Richard Feldstein and Judith Roof (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1985), p 61

the rage against women in Updike's Rabbit, Run

One could hypothesize that the obsessionals in Updike's novels are deeply informed by, though not totally dependent upon, Updike's own unconscious dynamics: his recent autobiographical book, Self-Consciousness, explains why. One could draw a close parallel between George Caldwell in The Centaur and Updike's father, John Wesley Updike: both men are denigrated in the public and private domains as mothers and some examples against them. Like George Caldwell, Updike's father in dogged all his life by crippling financial problems. For fifty years George Caldwell had been battling with the same question that his son, Peter, asks him: 'Why don't we have any money?' (p.125). Updike records in his memoirs his morbid fear of being turned out, like Peter, a 'penniless orphan':

> His cry came from the heart. He earned twelve hundred dollars a year, teaching, with no raises or job security, the entire faculty was fired in May, to be rehired or not for September. His summer vacations he spent working on construction crews or doing unusual labor for Carpenter Steel. When his hernia got too bad to allow lifting he got a job as a time-keeper on a road gang. . . . I overheard of informal loans from these school funds to make ours reach. . . . When the money ran out, the marlpan box stood empty until my father's next pay envelope.[5]

While high school teachers were 'ineffectual figures' in Berks County, Updike writes, 'My mother had been a belle of sorts, fleshily dressed by her father in his palmy period and the possessor of a master's degree from Cornell. . . .' (p.27). Updike also retains from 'earliest childhood a vision of my mother, young and still, against a background of swagged fabrics like a glamorized movie star, from the days when she

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[5] John Updike, Self-Consciousness: memoirs by John Updike (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1989), p.29. Subsequent references are cited parenthetically in the text

worked as a saleslirl in the drapes department of Reading's great emporium, Pomeroy's, and I would visit her there, . . . she seemed to me to be hiding from the global hustle led by Uncle Sam and Santa Claus' (pp 11-12) Updike is thus marked at an early age by his mother's unconscious desire that makes him an obsessional. Coupled with his father's denigration in his mother's eyes, Updike resolves, early in life, to be as different and unlike his father as possible:

> I hid a certain determined defiance: I would not teach, I would not form, I would not (deep down) conform I would 'show' them I would avenge all the slights and abasements visited upon my father-the miserly salary, the subtle tyranny of his overlords at the high school the disrespect of his students, the laughter in the movie house at the name of Updike He was, in this snug world into which I had been born, an outsider . . . his own father's failures and sorrows and early death had poured through him like rain through a broken window. And his, in turn, through me: the beating showed on his face, . . . aggravated hernia, and the varicose veins on his milk-white legs Shillington, in a sense, was where I waited in ambush to take my revenge. (p.33)

Updike's privilege in his mother's Gaze and weak identification with the Father's Name is embodied in his skin problem (psoriasis) 'At war with my skin' is the title of a whole chapter Updike devotes to his ailment in Self-Consciousness that reveals how Updike has become a 'prisoner" and 'victim of my skin ' Perhaps it is the Real that speaks as symptoms on his body and conveys, like his father's hernia, Updike's paradoxical jouissance and resentment at being close to his mother in the Real:

> My condition forged a hidden link with things elemental-with the seasons; with the sun and with my mother A tendency to psoriasis is inherited--only through the maternal line. It used to be thought . . . Psoriasis keeps you thinking. Struggles of concealment testify, and self-examination is endless. You are forced to the mirror, again and again; psoriasis compels narcissism. If we can suppose a narcissus who did not like what he saw . . . one hates one's abnormal, erupting skin but is

led into a brooding, solicitous attention toward it.
Perhaps the unease of my first memory has to do with my mother's presence; I wish to be alone with the sun, the air, the distant noises, the possibility of my hidenousness eventually going away (pp 44-45)

But the same skin problem which the Italians call 'morbus fortiorum'--the disease of the strong--also gives to Updike's calling writing, a distinctive stamp:

whatever in my timid life I have shown some courage and originality it has been because of my skin. Because of my skin, I counted myself out of many of those jobs--salesman, teacher, financier, movie star--that demand being presentable. What did that leave? Becoming a craftsman of some sort, alienated and unassuming--perhaps a cartoonist or a writer, a worker in ink who can hide himself and send out a surrogate presence, a signature that multiplies even while it conceals. . . what was my creativity, my calculated need to produce, but a parody of my skin's embarrassing overproductivity? . . . I have never cared, in print, about sickness or modesty, but agonize over typos and factual errors--'specs' on the blessedly unfleshed text . . . like a snake, I shed many skins . . . and the possibility of a 'new life' in this world or the next, had been ever-present in my mind. (pp 48-75)

Updike's signature that multiplies even while it conceals is a multivalent trope that registers word by word, page by page, book by book, Updike's phenomenal and preponderant concern with death. His 'thick literary skin' in order to deny lack and vulnerability in his own self that he would like to fantasize as transcendent and all-knowing must project lack on the countless fictional characters (men and women) from Jenkins to Ruth to Cassie to Tothero that people his novels. In one sense, all these characters stand in or become Updike's surrogate presence pointing thus to both the scribber's ink and disavowal of it. More importantly, Updike's unrelenting imprisonment in his skin--'Away from the mirror, I am hard to distress . . . I have been since early childhood

ceged with my fierce ugly skin '(p 76)--, simultaneously shields him against God exposes him to the sceptre of death Updike's uncanny writing writes so epitaph to his own funeral: ' the psoriasis like a fire smouldering in damp peat will break out and spread triumphantly, in my dying I will become hideous, I will become what I am' (p 78).

The Baroque thickness of description and the breathless urgency of Updike's prolific writing facilitated by the flamboyant suspension of punctuation, are both symptomatic effects of Updike's unconscious desire to fill the void in the Other Much the same way that Updike has no control over his skin's 'overproduction,' Updike is driven in his literary production by the desire of the Other, becoming, like his skin problem, its victim and not its author. It is this predicament dating back to his childhood that is poignantly recorded in his memoirs 'Two sensations,' writes Updike, 'stood out as peculiarly blissful in my childhood; before I discovered masturbation The first had been alluded to: the awareness of things going by, impinging on my consciousness, and then, all beyond my control, sliding away toward their own destination and destiny The second intimation of deep, russet joy, also already hinted at, is really a variation of the first: the sensation of shelter, of being out of the rain, but <u>just</u> out' (p 34)

What is this 'awareness' if not of ephemeral or disappearance/death of the subject below the bar It is the fear of nothingness, of castration, that makes Updike regress toward the 'sensation of shelter,' which is the womb = tomb shelter of the mother Caught between the 'two sensations;' Updike's novels chronicle his titanic, 'shameless,' and sometimes 'ruthless enough' struggle to come to terms with both nothingness and shelter; Like George Caldwell, who wanders forever

beneath the blank gaze of the gods, Updike wanders beneath the scorching eye of the sun, seeing masochistically his 'skin' as my 'enemy,' but the pain of sunburn gives the illusion that 'I had given it a blow' (p 56)

Perhaps Harry Angstrom in another persona of Updike in Rabbit, Run Rabbit's life seems a 'sequence of grotesque poses assumed to no purpose, a magic dance empty of belief' (p 184); and towards the end of the novel Rabbit sees his mind as an empty/hollow net 'He feels his inside as very real suddenly, a pure blank space in the middle of a drama not he doesn't know, what to do, where to go, what will happen ' (p 283) Updike in his autobiography writes in a similar fashion:

> And yet self-consciousness (which does nothing for psoriasis but make it agonizing) can be something of a cure here. The paralysis of stuttering stems from the dead center of one's being, a deep doubt therein (p 67)

In spite of all the efforts to see luck in others, Updike's obsessionals, much like himself, see the 'center' of one's being as 'dead' and empty Nothing carries home the truth better than the symptoms of the Real writ large on Updike's material body: be it psoriasis, stuttering, asthma, or simply the mundane process of choking on his food: "Whether by inherited tendency or imitated example, I also would choke now and then. My album of core moments includes a memory of crouching above my tray in the Lowell house dining hall at Harvard miserably retching at something in my throat that would not go up or down, while half-swallowed milk dribbled from my mouth and the other students at the table silently took up their trays and moved away. On the edge of asphyxia I sympathized with them, and wished that I, too, could shun me' (p 49). Updike's death and "nothingness' in the center are written and rewritten in every new novel of his, and The

Centaur perhaps, in the sustained usage of the metaphor of the diseased skin--psoriasis--paradoxically allows Updike both to embody the death-drive and also to hide from it.

Brian Tate in Luria's The War Between The Tates exemplifies a different kind of obsessional discourse structure. Brian's unconscious desire is to be left alone in his attachment to his suffering that he loves more than himself. Brian's identification in being and fantasy with the $ means that he is at home with the silence of his drives, and his actions are, thus, meant to keep out others. A good example is Brian's too violently different and contradictary responses to Wendy's first and second pregnancy, however, Brian is barred from knowing whether the lonely Pakistani engineering graduate student or Brian himself is the father of the unborn baby. This time Brian is not only against the abortion, but is only too willing to suffer the agony alone by divorcing Erica and marrying Wendy to bring up a child he may not even have fathered:

> He would have to marry Wendy. Also, he would have to do this right away, as soon as it became legally possible--before her pregnancy became so obvious as to make them a public joke. Then he would have to take her home and live with her for the rest of his life. The depression rained on steadily; Brian could feel himself bruised, knocked down, choking in the heavy muddy future. (p.343)

However, it is more problematic and frustrating dealing with the hysterics in Luria's novels. Luria's position falters and remains highly ambivalent. Precisely for this reason her signature in her texts is linked with the feminist issues. For all the rampant feminine rhetoric of Daniella in The War Between The Tates, especially in the mid-section of the novel, she settles for a marriage (her second) with Kotelchuk, a

veterinarian, with whom the only thing she shares in common is his loving care of Ken's turtles. Incidentally, he also rapes Daniella on Ken's bed. What is the point of Daniella's attack on patriarchy when she complains to Erica: "But you know, our names--yours and mine--they're just as bad. They're not real names, only the feminine diminutives of men's. Little Eric and Little Daniel" (p 21). As Erica observes rightly, Daniella's life seems to fall apart without the attention of men: "It is as if, lacking a man's love, her sense of her own value has decreased" (p.36). Erica, who makes this astute observation, is not herself above censure. The moment Brian waves the olive branch at the peace march, she willingly forgives him. All indications in the novel point to Erica's clinging up her ruins and putting her broken home in order by welcoming Brian home without harboring any rancor or anger. In the very end of the novel there is little perceptible difference in Brian's attitude that warrants Erica's softening of her earlier stance, and this reinforces, if anything, Lurie's Erica as a hysteric who is only alive when she is a suffering martyr.

In her latest novel, The Truth About Lorin Jones, Lurie emphasizes again the hysteric's insistence in sustaining the vacuous hole in the Real.[6] Polly Alter, an art historian, sets out to rewrite the true history of Lorin Jones--a famous painter in the Fifties, who had suffered abuse and oblivion at the hands of all the men in her life. In the process of reconstructing the dead painter's life, Polly unexpectedly, to her horror, sees her mirror image in Lorin Jones, and repeats in many ways the tragic patterns of the painter's life that Polly so admires. The dust jacket of

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[6] Alison Lurie, The Truth About Lorin Jones (Boston: Little, Brown & Company, 1988). Subsequent references are cited parenthetically in the text.

the novel says at the end: "The Truth About Lorin Jones is a fascinating artistic detective story and a warm, honest, and entertaining account of a modern liberated woman's adventure in the post-feminist eighties." On the contrary, the novel can hardly be taken seriously as an exemplar of a 'modern liberated woman' in the post-feminist eighties. Lorin Jones suffers the worst abuse not from her ex-husband, Garrett Jones, a famous art historian, nor from Professor Leonard Zimmern, her half-brother, who takes possession of most of her valuable paintings after her death, but from Hugh Cameron, an ex-hippie poet who hastens her death by leaving her when she is terribly ill. Polly's fidelity could not be more steadfast and staunch when she falls in love unwittingly with the same man, Hugh Cameron, who had destroyed Lorin's life.

Like Lorin's painting Aftershocks, which has a "jagged-toothed hole in the center," and which hangs on the wall at Cameron's house in Key West, Polly has vindicated the hole in the Reel in her self. Polly shows how Lorin's and her life are inextricably woven together to suffer the same fate, the same agony:

> Half an hour later the squares of the straw rug were littered with cast clothes, and their owners lay dizzy and entangled on the rumpled bedspread. Above them, Lorin Jones' last painting floated, mysterious and--in spite of the gaping hole in its center--serene. If it hadn't been for you, Polly thought blurrily, slipping toward sleep, I wouldn't be here in Hugh Cameron's bed. This bastard that you're looking for, Hugh Cameron. That's me. I mean I'm him.
> (pp 260-265)

The novel ends with Polly picking up the receiver in New York to call Hugh Cameron, and all suggestions in the novel point to her agreeing with Cameron's desire to move in with him.

Erlee Tate, Danielle, and Polly Alter had all set out to eschew castration in order to live fully in the Other Louisiana. But they all end up submitting to law. It is only in Lurie's Foreign Affairs, written four years prior to her latest novel, that we find the most memorable character, Virginia Miner, who relentlessly subverts the Name-of-the-Father to find her Other Louisiana, even if it comes with a deep personal price and loss.[7] Virginia, at fifty-four, is an unmarried, respected professor of children's literature in an Ivy League University who, nevertheless, smarts under the nasty blows of her male critic, L.E. Zimmern. Zimmern also happens to be the father of Ruth March, who is the wife of Fred Turner, an Assistant Professor of English and a colleague of Virginia. The little girl, Roo, in War Between the Tates, emerges into the Ruth/Roo character we see in Foreign Affairs.

In spite of learning from Roo that the man who had tried to ruin her literary career is none other than Roo's father, Virginia puts herself to considerable inconvenience to help that daughter and her husband, Fred, to reunite. Unable to fulfill her unconscious desire to pay back Zimmern in the same coin, it is Chuck Thompson, an unemployed sanitary engineer from Tulsa, Oklahoma, now vacationing in England (an unlikely candidate and yet the one Virginia falls in love with), who is unconsciously sacrificed to avenge the years of mortification from Zimmern's adverse criticism of her work.

> But if it weren't for her, Chuck wouldn't have died in a provincial English records office; he wouldn't have been there in the first place ("if it hadn't been for you"--she hears his voice again--"I never would've thought

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[7] Alison Lurie, Foreign Affairs (New York: Avon Books, 1984). Subsequent references are cited parenthetically in the text.

> of looking for my ancestors.') But what does it matter whether he died because of her, or in spite of her? Either way he's dead (pp 403-404)

It is noteworthy that many villains in Lurie's novels bear the last name: Zimmern. In The War Between the Tates it is Danielle's ex-husband, Leonard Zimmern, in Foreign Affairs it is L.D. Zimmern, in Truth about Lorin Jones it is Lorin's half-brother, Professor Leonard Zimmern. As with George Caldwell in Updike's The Centaur who empowers the principal of Olinger High School (bearing a similar last name: Zimmerman) in order to avoid his father's relentless Gaze, we can hypothesize that Lurie's deep-seated desire to both empower and challenge the Zimmerns in her novels carries her signature and displacement of her own anxiety about her success as a novelist in a literary world dominated by male writers and critics.

In 'No One Asked Me to Write a Novel' Lurie tells how family pressures, combined with rejection slips, persuaded her temporarily to give up writing and throw herself into a life like Erica's:

> I organised family picnics and parties and trips. I baked Scandi cookies and tuna-fish casseroles I played unobtrusively simple board games I entertained my husband's colleagues and gossiped with their wives. I told myself that my life was rich and full. Everybody else seemed to think so. Only I knew that right at the center it was false and empty. I wasn't what I was pretending to be. I didn't like staying home and taking care of little children. I was restless, impatient, ambitious.[4]

Perhaps Lurie's hysterics, from Erica to Virginia to Polly, share with her the same emptiness, 'right at the center.'

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[4] Alison Lurie, 'No One Asked Me to Write a Novel,' New York Times Book Review, June 6, 1982, 47

The challenge to male fantasy is, however, more sustained in Updike's novels. As noted in my chapter on Rabbit, Run when the narrative shifts to the voices of Janice or Ruth or Lucy, Rabbit's male fantasy collapses and he runs for cover. Similarly, George Caldwell's male fantasy is exposed by Cassie when Caldwell discovers to his chagrin that he is not as indispensable as he had thought himself to be. Cassie and Pop Kramer have, in fact, done very well during the blizzard without Caldwell's presence.

Compared with Chesver's ruthless exposure of male fantasy, Updike's writing appears genteel operating within the moral constraints and middle-class values. Chesver's hysterics not only gain their identities but also force their obsessional counterparts to come to terms with their neuroses. When Renee in Oh What A Paradise It Seems refuses to satisfy Searn's sexual demand, her body really becomes the proverbial 'carnal scapegoat' for Searn' own fears of the flesh and mortality.[9] In much the same way, Renee was an ideal earlier when Searn recreated the lost union with mother-as-flesh. Renee's denigration, as Searn throws his tantrums, cleverly points to the cultural inscription where women are arbitrarily defined by men and placed on the pedestal as an angel or condemned as a witch. Searn' outbursts place Renee not in the latter category:

> 'I've fucked you a hundred times,' he shouted, 'and if that's nothing I think you highly immoral. I've hoped all morning to see you in your blue wrapper and you've got everything on but the slip covers.' (pp 43 44)

Searn's frustration stems from his impotence and powerlessness to control

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[9] John Chesver, Oh What a Paradise It Seems (New York: Ballantine Books, 1982). Subsequent references are cited parenthetically in the text

and possess Renee in the same way as he possesses his romantic fantasies

Lemuel Sears cannot understand why Renee refuses to accept his gifts of scarves (p.13) or jewelry (p.39); fails to understand why Renee and his second wife, Estelle, cry when they pound against closed doors, and fails to understand why Renee leaves him so suddenly. As far as Sears is concerned, his feelings about Estelle are true of all women:

> She seemed, pounding on the door in the London dawn, to have come from a creature about which he knew nothing although they had slept in each other's arms for years (p.22)

The incisive insight is not peculiar to Sears alone and can be said to be the malaise that afflicts all men in the novel. The only meaningful conversation Sam Selzano is able to have with his wife is: "Where's my supper" Betsy and Henry Logee's happy marriage still leaves Betsy feeling 'unrequited melancholy or ardor"; the voice Sears hears in an unknown city during the war is a woman saying: 'I don't feel like myself anymore, Charlie" (p.98)

Interspersed with the main narrative of Sears' life told from a male stance are the lives of three women, Renee, Betsy, and Maria. They are all separate stories, and yet at some deeper level intimately intertwined to give us the "choral" voice of the community of women. On the surface level the three women have nothing in common; Renee is an established real estate agent, Betsy is a housewife whose husband works at the Post Office; Maria is another housewife whose husband closes his unprofitable barbershop and takes up supervision of the dumping in Beasley's Pond. While Betsy and Maria are neighbors who fight more often than not, Renee never comes into contact with either of them. And yet, at a deeper level,

all three women are struggling to find their feminine identity in a patriarchal world and to define themselves free from the stifling parameters, desires and commands of their men.

The break from the vicious either/or regressive pattern where women can only nurture or be the phallic woman, be passive to man's aggression, be flexible to man's rigidity, or be mature to men's culture comes for Renee after some long struggle. Soon after they meet, Renee tells Sears that she is at the 'turning point' of her affairs. The turning point of her life, when she can define herself in her own terms, comes when she emphatically says 'no' to the sexual advance of Sears (p 43). Her newly gained knowledge is further shared with her daughter at Des Moines. The mother-daughter bond is strengthened by a new layer of friendship and knowledge that Renee had learnt through her affairs with men, especially Samuel Sears.

Despite Betsy's and Matt's dislike of each other, it is the 'wind chimes' that Marie places at the back of her porch, that touches in a mysterious way a deep chord in both of them, and uncomfortably brings them both to find their true selves. Betsy's initial reaction to the wind chimes is one of disgust:

> 'The Selezens' wind chimes are driving me crazy,' Betsy said. 'I may be neurotic or something but I hate the noise they make.' (p.36)

Being steeped in patriarchal ways of life and culture, Betsy hears the wind chimes insolently tell their "dumb continuous story in a language she could not understand" (p 36). Besides, she could not 'discern what she found so troubling in the noise they made.' (p 37)

Betsy cuts loose from her cozy middle class life of contentment and sees her cause as no more solely wedded to her husband's desires. She responds to the call of her "own" voice, her own destiny:

> Her love for Henry and the children was quite complete, it seemed happily to transcend her mortality, and yet beyond this lay some unrequited melancholy or ardor. She was one of those women whose nostalgia for a destiny, a calling would outlast all sorts of satisfaction. It seemed incurable. (p 108)

Betsy breaks up the "goatsilt" when she goes on three consecutive days to Buy Rite and poisons the Teriyaki sauce as a protest against the continued destruction of Beesley's Pond. As Carol Gilligan had argued, women conceive ethical issues in "particularized," "relational ways" rather than "abstractly" as men do.[10] While Chisholm's and Sam's frantic efforts in court and at the City Hall fail to save the pond, Betsy's practical actions produce immediate political results. The news of the poisoning is fleshed by the media worldwide; and, before further damage is wreaked, the missions to destroy Beasley's Pond is halted. As Jean Baker Miller points out:

> But people are also continually straining against the boundaries of their culture--against the limiting categories given by that culture--and seeking the means to understand and to express the many experiences for which it does not suffice [illegible] for women today it is a pre-eminent factor.[11]

Whether Betsy challenges the symbolic (cultural) ordering in Lacanian terms or speaks against the "limiting categories" in Miller's terms, we

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[10] Carol Gilligan. In A Different Voice (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), p. 22.

[11] Jean Baker Miller, Toward A New Psychology of Women (Boston: Beacon Press, 1976) p. 112.

fled the women in Cheever's novels like Betsy, Marietta, Hallie, and Marla speaking the unconscious sub-texts. Their lives are in some sense 'palimpsestic,' whose 'surface designs conceal or obscure deeper, less accessible, and less socially acceptable levels of meaning.'[12] In short, in spite of predominantly androcentric plots in his novels, Cheever cannot help women's history from writing itself; cannot help them explode out of the 'Queen's looking glass' to dance in 'triumph'--'s dance left speech a dance of authority.'[13]

If the persistent question for Updike's obsessionals is 'Am I dead or alive,' for Lurie's the obsessional's desire to be left alone with his suffering he loves better than himself, then with Cheever's it is the question of repressed homosexuality. From The Wapshot Chronicle through Bullet Park and Falconer to Oh What A Paradise It Seems, Cheever's troubled exploration of male sexuality may be linked with his own 'touchy' and often traumatic relationship with his parents, and, more virtually, with Cheever's anxiety about his homosexuality.[14] Cheever grew up with an alcoholic father who lost all his money in the 1929 crash and ran a gift shop to make ends meet.[15]

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[12] Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, The Madwoman in the Attic and the Nineteenth Century Literary Imagination (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), p. 112.

[13] Ibid., p. 44.

[14] John Cheever, The Wapshot Chronicle (New York: Bantamline Books, 1954); John Cheever, Falconer (New York: Bantamline Books, 1975). Subsequent references are cited parenthetically in the text.

[15] See Susan Cheever, Home Before Dark: A Biographical Memoir of John Cheever by his Daughter (New York: Pocket Books, 1984). Subsequent references are cited parenthetically in the text.

Susan Cheever's biographical account of her father in her book entitled Home Before Dark throws some light on Cheever's unconscious positioning in relation to his Father's name and mother's unconscious desire:

> 'It seems that in my naming of age I missed a year - perhaps a day or an hour,' he wrote in his journal twenty years after he left home. (p 16)

> The family's financial disaster became a personal disaster. My father's parents were separated, and although they were later reconciled, no one in the family was ever reconciled to their new circumstances. At home there were angry fights and terrible silences. My father's parents, locked in their private agonies, hardly seemed to notice him. The unhappiness of these years cast deep shadows over the past as well as the future. (p 17)

> 'The realization that anger had driven them both out of the house, that their passionate detestation of one another had blinded them to their commitments to the house and to him traveled crookedly up through his heart like a fissure made by an earthquake in a wall, leaving on one side innocence and trust and on the other the lingering ruefulness and gloom of an orphaned spirit. He never quite escaped the chill of that empty house, and all the symbols of evil . . . (pp 17-18)

Writing about Chesver's mother, Susan mentions that Mary Liley Cheever had also been a cheery, 'make-do' sort of woman. But 'she also had her dark side: insurmountable, impatience, a stubborn desire to control' (p 18). What cuts John Cheever to the quick, however is the knowledge given to him by his mother that his conception was a drunken accident:

> But one thing that his mother told him my father understood too well. They had not wanted another child before he was born. His conception was a drunken accident between two people who no longer cared about each other. When his mother found out that she was pregnant, his father had tried to force her to have an abortion. (p 28)

Cheever's "orphan spirit" coupled with his disgust for his mother's gift shop that seemed to "pollute the clean air" and "muddle the sexes" account for Cheever's deep ambivalence towards his own sexuality. Cheever was terrified, notes Susan Cheever, that "his enjoyment of homosexual love would estrange him from the natural world, from the pure and mothering influence of his family, from the family pleasures he also loved. He had been brought up in a world and in a religion that rejected homosexuality absolutely" (p. 185). Sometimes, adds Susan, her father blamed his parents:

> Their fear of homosexuality was so great--their emphasis on the separation of sexual roles was so rigid--that his own ambivalence was ordained. Sometimes he blamed my mother. When she wouldn't give him the sexual and emotional love he needed--and she often didn't--he was forced to turn elsewhere. (p. 186)

> Although he loved men, he feared and despised what he defined as the homosexual community, the limp-wristed, lisping ones who are sometimes the self-appointed representatives of homosexual love in our culture. Men who run gift shops, sell antiques, strike bargains over porcelain tea sets. (p. 185)

In The Wapshot Chronicle, the Wapshot brothers' mother Sarah turns their father's beloved boat, the Tomax, into New England's only Floating Gift Shoppe. On a trip to the mountains with his father, Leander, Coverly reads the cookbook his mother has placed in his pack. Leander interjects in utter dismay and shock: 'Goddam it to hell,' and throws it out, "hurling more curse--license, license--as if the boy had failed away from his heart' (p. 59). As for Coverly Wapshot, the incident leaves him with a realization that he had 'failed' whole generations of Wapshots. . . " (p. 59).

Falconer centers on a tender and lucky homosexual love between Jody and Farragut, although the poignant relationship, to use Susan Cheever's

phrases is 'peppered with scatological language' (p.157). In Fairmont Jody, much like Cheever himself, keeps protesting against having anything to do with homosexuals even as he makes love to Farragut:

> 'I'm so glad you ain't homosexual,' Jody kept saying when he caressed Farragut's hair. Then, saying as much one afternoon, he had unfastened Farragut's trousers and, with every assistance from Farragut, got them down around his knees. . . . They let Farragut return to the shop between chow and lockup. Jody met him there and they made love on the floor. (p.96)

It is in his last novella, Oh What A Paradise It Seems, completed just before Cheever's death from cancer, that Cheever comes to terms with his sexuality. Lemuel Sears embodies perhaps some of Cheever's own sexual ambiguity. When Sears makes love to Edwards the elevator man, in Oh What A Paradise It Seems. It is not just Sears but Cheever as well who seems to have come face to face with "modes of loneliness" he had never known before. Cheever's signature is stitched in here as author and character, art and life, reality and dream come together in complex ways. It is Susan Cheever who sums up the man and his work in her cryptic observation: "I think it was partly his fear of his own desires that kept my father drinking, and I think his anxiety over his sexual ambivalence also kept him muzzled" (p.157).

In the next four chapters my close reading of Updike, Cheever, and Lurie explores these writers' different constructions of obsessional and hysteric discourse structures.

CHAPTER II

UPDIKE'S 'THE CENTAUR': ON APHANISIS, GAZE, EYES, AND THE THIRD TERM

Read under the Gaze, John Updike's The Centaur produces a discourse of conscious and unconscious systems that control the special privilege of narration as a manifest order.[1] In other words, the unconscious is not a haven for secret, dark meaning but a system of discourse that positions language in reference to desire. George Caldwell in his fantasy is tormented by the Gaze of the other/Other both in the sense of his mother's Gaze (with a small 'o') and the Gaze of death (with a capital 'O'). We can say that the one central signifier connected to all other signifiers in the (Lacanian) metaphoric and metonymic chains of this novel is Caldwell's morbid fear of carrying out the responsibilities of a father. In fact, the repercussions of this failure are devastating not only on his growing son, Peter Caldwell, but here for reading effects, destroying George Caldwell's standing in Olinger School and collapsing the normal functioning of the entire Caldwell family. In keeping with the characteristics of a true obsessional, Caldwell 'plays dead', and thereby embraces at once his desire and fear of death, which is a symptomatic effect of his own positioning in the unconscious signifying chain. In

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[1] Alice A. Jardine, Gynesis (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985). Jardine points to the famous American valorization of 'natural reality' over 'psychic reality,' insistence on the 'self,' and emphasis on language only as a natural, communicative function' (p. 42). In a similar vein, Robert Con Davis ('Lacan, Poe, and Narrative Repression,' in Lacan and Narration: The Psychoanalytic Difference in Narrative Theory, ed. Robert Con Davis, 1983) notes the concept of repression 'runs counter to the tradition of psychoanalytic criticism in America - based on ego psychology - which all but vanquished repression and the unconscious processes that attend it and has kept both from having any import in interpretation' (p. 938).

other words, Caldwell's death wish is meant to trick death into thinking him an unworthy candidate, while ironically his rigid identification with death shows how the stable, permanent, inorganic state of death is for him a consummation devoutly to be wished.

In chronicling the formation and subversion of George Caldwell and his son, Peter, as subjects, this study looks beyond the ostensible characteristics of obsessionals to underscore the nodal structure of obsessionals, which alone can point to the symptoms through the verbalization of the unconscious. 'One might consider,' writes Ragland-Sullivan, 'that in obsessional neurosis a minimal inscription for lack in the Other is ordered by an unconscious denial (*Verneinung*) of the importance of the signifier of the Father's Name. [illegible] *Jouissance* or the death drive underlies the fantasy protecting the obsessional from facing his guilt which hides his anxiety over his crimes against the fathers.'[2] The unveiling of the structural base of George and Peter as obsessionals necessarily means understanding the relation of obsessionals to Game, ephanisis, eyes, time and the death drive.[3]

According to Lacan, the relentless question posed by the obsessional is: 'Am I dead or alive?'[4] For Caldwell, who lives by proxy and constantly looks for an ideal father for his son, Peter, the question is

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[2] Eilis Ragland-Sullivan, 'The Limits of Discourse: Structure, Obsession and Hysteria,' in Papers of the Freudian School of Melbourne, ed. Owen Zoster (Melbourne: Bundoora Press, 1988), pp. 71-72.

[3] For more on ephanisis see Lacan's 'The Subject And the Other: Aphanisis,' in The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: W.W. Norton, 1977), pp. 216 - 220. Lacan notes that 'Ernest Jones, who invented it, mistook it for something rather absurd, the fear of seeing desire disappear. Now, ephanisis is to be situated in a sure radical way at the level at which the subject manifests himself in this movement of disappearance that I have described as lethal. In a different way, I have called this movement the fading of the subject' (pp. 207-208).

[4] See Serge Leclair's 'Jerome, or Death in the Life of the Obsessional,' in Returning to Freud: Clinical Psychoanalysis in the School of Lacan, ed. and trans. Stuart Schneiderman (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980), pp. 94-113.

the name: Am I dead or alive? Unable to resolve the conflicts between life and death, between accepting and delegating his responsibility as a father, between releasing and choking his own desire for his wife, Caldwell, like Freud's Rat Man, needs the possibility of death to resolve and deliver him from his endemic conflicts

Nowhere is the power of the Gaze that comes from a hole in the Other more pronounced than in Updike's The Centaur, where both the father and son act only replicate in turns the "classic degeneration" of the exclusive mother-son dyadic relationship. They also struggle to distort death's desire as the counterpart of self-consciousness, only to realize that death operates in an-Other register, is already elsewhere. Death only surfaces to substitute lacking in being for the father-son mirage of unity of being, held so unconsciously by conscious thought. The graphic notation of the sketches of eyes in the novel reinforces, to borrow Ragland-Sullivan's words, "the asymmetrical relationship among Gaze, eye, and knowledge: a relationship that is really one of specular lure, opacity, illusion, and trap".[5] Ragland Sullivan adds: "So essential is the Gaze to Lacan's syntax of the unconscious that he has defined consciousness as the distinctive dialectical mark of the subject both oppressed by the Inner Gaze of the Other (A) and resentful of it . . . By linking the Gaze to the earliest moments of the formation of the subject, Lacan has made it a part of the primordial unconscious system of representations, which are later reflected in consciousness."[6]

Critics of The Centaur have written primarily about Updike's use of mythic material, some praising him for re-creating the verisum myths to serve his artistic purposes, others finding the material distracting and pretentious. Donald Greiner, for instance, proposes that Peter's story

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[5] Elile Ragland-Sullivan, Jacques Lacan And the Philosophy of Psychoanalysis (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986) p. 95

[6] Ibid , p. 95

is a 'loving portrait of the father as a tired man.' Telling the tale to his silent mistress, Peter creates a hymn of praise to Caldwell, the narration that explains as much to the narrator as to the listener the glory of the intelligent, eternally curious, always stumbling man who, in sprinkling happiness on Peter's youth, enters the realm of the myth. . . . The eye-catching technical display is not meant merely to dazzle the reader, as some critics have complained, but to offer a framework that the narrator considers equal to the task of revealing the heroic properties in the life of an otherwise forgotten man."[7]

James M. Mellard similarly writes: 'The Greek myths allow Peter to discover the one *mythos* which is appropriate for him. That is art as an esthetology, as a way of expressing and containing those furthest things that trouble man.'[8] Larry Taylor focuses on the four short chapters (numbers three, five, eight, and nine) to argue his position that The Centaur combines pastoral elegy and epic: 'To this extent, the language of the four touchstone chapters is highly important. The chapters become the formal structural clues for reading the whole book. Idyll, hymn, obituary, love lyric, lament, epitaph--these recognizable forms within the pastoral elegy form give the novel its coherence, its dignity, its eloquence, as a universal statement.'[9]

Reading within the mythic framework Suzanne Uphaus sees Updike's technique as more complex than other critics would grant. 'For, in this novel,' she explains, 'Updike is demonstrating the artist's need for a framework of belief, a metaphoric vision, whether Christian or classical,

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[7] Donald J. Greiner, John Updike's Novels (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1984), p. 104.

[8] James M. Mellard, "The Novel as Lyric Elegy: The Mode of Updike's 'The Centaur,'" Texas Studies in Literature and Language 21 (Spring 1979), p. 124.

[9] Larry M. Taylor, "The Centaur: Epic Poem and Pastoral Lament," in John Updike: A Collection of Critical Essays, eds. David Thorburn and Howard Eiland (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1979), p. 123.

while he simultaneously shows the impossibility of resurrecting from the past a mythical framework, a scheme which answers to our spiritual needs."[10]

The detractors of the mythic framework are relentless in their attacks. Norman Podhoretz dislikes mythic trappings assigned to a one stuck squarely in the mundane.[11] George Steiner, although affirming that "in Mr. Updike's ability to grow rides some of the best hopes of present American fiction," is equally quick to dismiss the "allegoric scaffold" of The Centaur that "obtrudes with arty deliberation."[12]

Sensitive as Updike is to adverse criticism he answers some of the charges in an interview with Frank Gado: "There are enough books written with submerged myths; I wrote one in which the myth was overt. It jangled--the way life sometimes does. It was about a man who sees myths everywhere--that was the point. I tried to create the effect of sense eroding away; that was something that felt right to me. A much more kindly critic than Aldridge, Arthur Mizener, also complained that its Greek gods and goddesses didn't have the luminous power of, say, the gods in the Cantos. I was really quite pleased with that book[illegible]."[13]

The point here has been to do with how well Updike turns the tables against unsympathetic critics but far more to do with reading Updike's stout defense of The Centaur as a symptomatic effect of his own desire. Updike explains to Charles Samuels in the Paris Review "I have read old sages--Beowulf, the Mahinagise--trying to find the story in its most rudimentary form, searching for what a story is--Why did these people

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[10] Suzanne Uphaus, 'The Centaur: Updike's Mark Kpir," Journal of Narrative Technique, 7 (Winter 1971) p. 25

[11] Norman Podhoretz, "A Dissent on Updike, "Doings and Undoings: The Fifties and After in American Writing (New York: Farrar, Straus, 1964), pp. 251-257

[12] George Steiner, "Half Man, Half Beast," The Reporter 14 March 1963, pp. 53-54

[13] Frank Gado, 'Interview with John Updike," in First Person Conversations on Writers and Writing. (Schenectady, New York: Union College Press, 1973) p. 106

enjoy hearing them? Are they a kind of disguised blatancy? Or more likely I guess, are they ways of relieving anxiety, of transferring it outwards upon an levouted tale and purging it through catharsis? In any case, I feel the need for this kind of reassurance to the springs of narrative, and maybe my little buried allusions are admissions of it.' [14]

Critics do not have to look far to realize that the 'buried allusions' Updike has all along struggled to come to terms with are of his father, Wesley Updike. A child of the Great Depression, Updike bore witness to his father's shrinking spirit and deteriorating body as the father struggled to keep the family afloat. Two remarks of Updike speak eloquently of the desire that energizes his work on the whole, although in his interview with Eric Rhode for Vogue magazine, Updike's remark pertains to The Centaur. 'The main active force behind The Centaur would be some wish to make a record of my father. There was the whole sweep of having for fifteen years watched a normal good-doing Protestant man suffering in a kind of comic but real way.' [15] Again, 'The Centaur was to some extent motivated by the idea that my father was an economic victim, and more specifically, that public high school was a kind of baby-sitting service in which people at their most vital were caged with these underpaid keepers of which he was one, so there was some social idea that went with my psychological impression of him as a suffering man.' [16]

Given the trace of the "buried allusions" that Updike's works contend with (more pronounced in the Rabbit trilogy and The Centaur), there is the imminent danger of being seduced by the contending elegiac quality of the mythic material to draw two hasty conclusions. First, that The Centaur is a poorly veiled catalog of Updike's personal problems,

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[14] Charles Thomas Samuels, 'The Art of Fiction XLIII: John Updike,' Paris Review, 12 (Winter 1968), p. 105.

[15] Eric Rhode, 'Grabbing Dilemmas,' Vogue, 1 February 1971, p. 184.

[16] Richard Burgin, 'A Conversation with John Updike,' The John Updike Newsletter, 10 and 11 (Spring and Summer 1975), p. 7.

especially dealing with the reductive father-figure. Second, to paraphrase Greiner's position (he follows broadly several other critics), that the mythic material is an appropriate metaphor for Peter's "hymn of praise to Caldwell"--"the heroic properties in the life of an otherwise forgotten man."

Reading against the grain in order to resist a narrative that poses the transparent as self-evident, I situate the mythic material, and its relation to the novel, differently. There is a split in the center of the novel, to use Pierre Macherey's words, between Updike's need to distance himself from the personal baggage he brings to the novel by the adroit use of various myths, and Peter's marvelous exploitation of the same material to resuscitate his denigrated father.[17] In the entry of Updike's project into literary form, there is a gap, a division, that in contradictory terms pits Updike's desire against Peter's. While the reader remains trapped in the classical framework, the "mundane" narrative creates the myths of Peter's father, and Peter's father as myth. In other words, Peter's father is at once a hero and a fabrication.

A more productive way to read Otherwise is to break through the binary opposition that Greiner espouses, namely myth and man, legend and mundane, soul and body, heaven and earth, immortality and the ordinary yesterday and today, childhood and maturity, to hear the speech of the unconscious in the elidings/hesitations in the narrative itself, the dream text, and slips of the tongue. To that end, the various narrative modes, lyric, myth, elegy, pastoral, newspaper obituary, and constant shift between first and third person narrative, function not as a unifying "collage" in Detweiler's sense but as fragmented texts that allow the unconscious to speak through the holes in discourse.[18]

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[17] See Pierre Macherey, A Theory of Literary Production (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978; rpt 1985), p 94.

[18] Robert Detweiler, John Updike (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1984), pp 62-77.

Caldwell's fear of being a responsible father stems from his fear of authority/law, represented unmistakably in the novel in the looming figure of the Principal, Zimmerman. Lacan defines the third term as the mark of lack that creates gender identity around difference. But how does this repressed maternal, inscribed in the place of the Other, separate Caldwell from his son, from his wife, and ultimately from the Law (mark of difference) and castigate him with a vengeance at the end of the novel in the figure of death? To answer these complex questions, one might interpret Caldwell's positioning, keeping in mind that for Lacan the unconscious is not hidden, but is the language that speaks us as desiring subjects.

Caldwell's anxiety to destroy any mark of otherness has its roots in his own childhood. Caldwell's father, John Wesley Caldwell, a poor clergyman of a poor church in Passaic, New Jersey, died at the prime age of forty-nine, leaving the family with a 'bucketful of debts.'[10] His mother's desire was to substitute her son George Caldwell as the phallic replacement for her denigrated husband. With his own father dead when he was so very young, circumstances could not have conspired more to set up a regressive, dyadic trap between George and his mother: 'My father died at forty-nine and it was the best thing he ever did for us' (p.47). It is interesting to note both the emphasis on 'us' and the following remark that his father's death initiated 'the happiest years' of his mother's life. This suggests the immense *jouissance* the exclusive mother-son relationship promises.[11]

George Caldwell employs astute strategems to negate the third term, the mark of difference. The Centaur opens with Caldwell shot in the ankle

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[10] John Updike, The Centaur (New York: Ballantine, 1962), p. 144. Subsequent references are cited parenthetically in the text.

[11] England-Sullivan notes: 'Jouissance refers to the ecstatic sense of unity which preceded an infant's knowledge of separation from the mother, a metaphorical Garden of Eden before the dividing third term - the serpent-brings knowledge of sin' (England-Sullivan, Jacques Lacan and the Philosophy of Psychoanalysis, p. 75).

by a silver arrow from one of his students in the General Science class. The metonymic chain of signifiers that push forward the narrative are several: arrow, poison, spider, and finally, death itself in Caldwell's bowels. Far in the very repetition of the representation of death, the narrative stalls and goes over the same ground, again and again. For Lacan, repetition is a behavior begun in the past, but reproduced in the present. Unconscious messages and fictions turn around continually as if in a machine, ready to break out of the Other's fantasied memory circuit and return intermittently but repetitiously into the general game of life.

The key signifier Caldwell refuses to come to terms with is the weak unconscious positioning of his father's Name in the place of the Other.[21] Weak as the unconscious phallic signifier may be for Caldwell, it is paradoxically irreducible and holds Caldwell captive in its Gaze. As his father, John Wesley Caldwell was held captive in the Gaze of God, so is George Caldwell imprisoned in his father's Gaze.

> It was half a joke but the boy took it to heart. *All joy belongs to the Lord.* Wherever in the filth and confusion and misery, a soul felt joy there the Lord came and claimed it as his own; into barrooms and brothels and classrooms and always slippery with spittle, no matter how dark and scabbed and remote, in China or Africa or Brazil wherever a moment of joy was felt there the Lord stole and added to His enduring domain. And all the rest, all that was not joy, fell away, precipitated, dross that had never been. (p.220)

> "Christ, the only place I [George Caldwell] can go if I leave this school is the junkyard. I'm no good for anything else. I never was. I never studied. I never thought. I've always been scared to. My father studied God thought and so his deathbed he lost his religion."
> (p.196)

The drumbeat of "cover" speaks the discourse of the Other and points less to Caldwell's scholastic failures and more to how he is "scared" of his father's Gaze that never stops watching him. Umbilia in Liberata

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[21] Stuart Schneiderman has observed: "Otherness is always and irradicably outside the subject, it is fundamentally alien to him. Insofar as the discourse of the Other agitates a singular subject, it forms the Freudian Unconscious" (Returning, p.3)

himself from his father's (impotent Gaze, George Caldwell displaces his neuroses on others like Hummel, Peter Cannle, and Pop Kramer, and he punishes them as well with his verbal diatribe for his own lack in being.

Unwittingly, in the narrative 'hesitations' George Caldwell stumbles upon key signifiers from the unconscious that his symptoms cover over.[32] Interestingly enough, while he is giving a class lecture on evolution under the eyes of the supervising Principal, Zimmerman, Caldwell's discourse intersects with the unconscious Gaze of his Other. He stumbles over the key word, 'the Man.' The bell rings, thwarting his chance to complete the lecture on the evolution of the species called 'Man.' 'The buzzer rasped; hails rumbled throughout the vast building, fslntness swooped at Caldwell but he held himself upright, having vowed to finish [illegible]--called Man'" (p 40).

Caldwell's "hesitation" when he stumbles on the key word 'Man' is precisely a result of not knowing the boundaries of his own sexuality. With his father's Name as a weak signifier of the third term, the mark of difference, Caldwell needs the discourse on the evolution of man to convince himself of his masculinity, of his power to hold himself 'upright' in front of Zimmerman. Ironically enough, the frenetic verbs piled on top of each other--'rasped', 'rumbled', 'swooped'--undermine the unity of Caldwell's thought and being. They impale him on the issue of his manhood. Caldwell's desire to position his sexual identity in the symbolic order is denied because the position is already taken by Zimmerman, representing the law.

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[32] Donald Schleifer explains, "Hesitation is a complex figure, a confusion of the literal and figurative. Literally, it is a pause, a stopping place, a 'spot of time'; yet insofar as the time of discourse is relational, it is only a figure for something else: the illusion of stopping, of measuring, of self." (Schleifer, "The Space and Dialogue of Desire: Lacan, Gendman, and Narrative Temporality," in Lacan and Narration, ed. Robert Con Davis), p. 245. See also Stuart Schneiderman's discussion in Freud: "To the extent that what is spoken rarely coincides with what the ego intends to communicate, there is a splitting between ego and subject. Ultimately the subject is the the subject (suppose) of the unconscious, and it speaks most truthfully, as Freud stated in slips of the tongue and other errors showing that the ego's censorship is suspended."

George Caldwell's relationship with his son, Peter, is marked by the narrative hesitations that speak the discourse of the Other. The three day odyssey away from their rural home is also an odyssey away from the unconscious corporeal desire of Peter's mother. Ironically, George tells Vera Hummel the virtues of living new away from town: 'It gives me a chance to talk to the kid. The kid and I hardly ever saw each other when we lived in town' (pp 17-18). When they are marooned for three days in the town by the snowstorm the opportunity presents itself for George to know his son better. One such exchange between the two, the mortal dialogue of subject to subject, that Lacan would term the "only life that endures and is true,' happens thus:

> 'You've got your mother's brains, I hope to hell you don't get my ugly face. The energy needed for photosynthesis comes from the atomic energy of the sun. When that gives out in five million years or so, we can all lie down and rest."
>
> "But why do you want to rest?" His face and game quite blankless, a film had interposed between us, my father seemed flattened upon another plane and I strained my voice to reach him . . . . (p.143)

Peter Caldwell stumbles over the word "rest" that triggers the "hesitation" in narration (p.143). The father-son dialogue is overlaid by another set of relationships--that of Caldwell's with his own parents. George Caldwell's "blankless" face becomes a "confusion," a hesitation, a tremor, between the two vectors of meaning of death: literal and figurative, remarkable and unremarkable. The "film" that interposes between George and Peter is a double entendre. In one sense, since the observation is Peter's, his mother's unremarkable desire intervenes as a film/death between the father and son, undermining Caldwell's function as an effective third term. In another sense, George's desire to "rest" though it takes a heavy toll on the family, is actually a reprieve from the Other's desire, where George's father's name is a rotting corpse. Reduced to poverty by his father's "bucketful of debts," George in turn is unable to adequately provide for his family. After parting with his last penny, George makes a poignant statement to Peter that rings through

the mould of [redacted] Novel [redacted] "That cleans me out [redacted] kid You and I are penniless orphans" (p 113) The key word here is not "penniless" but "orphans" In spite of Caldwell's bravado, 'My father died at forty-nine and it was the best thing he ever did for us' (p 47), the truth of the matter is that Caldwell is cut to the quick that his father died young without establishing a bond with him, without creating the necessary wedge between himself and his mother So "penniless orphans" harks back to his life as it pragmatically and darkly looks forward to Peter's orphaned life George in taking his life repeats the classic "degeneration", and he bequeaths to his son the unpaid debt he owes his own father for his forbidden mother-son jouissance: 'Poverty [redacted] His inheritance [redacted] dank full of debts and a fable, he was passing it on Poverty the true last child of Ge" (p 219)

Caldwell's failure as a third term is unwittingly cited by Peter when his ostensible intention is to blame his mother for his skin problems:

> Psoriasis [redacted] The very name of the allergy, so foreign, so twisty in the mouth, so apt to prompt stammering [redacted] intensified the humiliation [redacted] My mother from whom I had inherited it sometimes called it a "handicap" I found this insulting After all, it was her fault [redacted] only females transmitted it to their children Had my father whose tall body sagged in folds of pure white linen my mother, my skin would have been blameless (p 45)

In Peter's speculative blurring of his father's gender positions, he is saying more than he understands George is to Peter more of a mother than a father, less of a man and more of a woman because Caldwell himself failed to receive from his father a stable symbolic subject position If George Caldwell's male fantasy cannot eradicate the weak phallic signifier in the Other, the compensation lies in the unconscious masochistic pleasure Caldwell derives in punishing Peter and himself The glove incident is a case in point Peter buys his father a pair of expensive leather gloves as a Christmas present Caldwell fails to honor the gift by not wearing them even during 'Old Man Winter's season." Peter's

question to his father, 'Why don't you ever wear them?' gets this response: 'They're wonderful gloves, Peter. I know good leather. You must have paid a fortune for 'em. When I was a kid, if anybody had given me gloves like that, I would have cried real tears' (pp. 61-62). By throwing on himself the mantle of a martyr, Caldwell strikes back at his father for failing to provide adequately for him when he was young like Peter. The Real in Caldwell's body speaks as symptoms in his acts of self-mortification. Caldwell prefers to be left alone in his attachment to his suffering he loves more than anything himself: 'The wrinkles in his skin seemed fissures: the hairs, bits of captured black grass. The backs of his hands were dappled with dull brown warts' (p. 62).

Smarting under the terrible Gaze of his own father, Caldwell hurts his son repeatedly as he impresses upon him his failure as a father, thus providing a raison d'etre to palm off Peter to every surrogate father who catches his fancy: the dirty hitchhiker, the West Alton coach Foley or Minor Kretz. The list goes on. In every one of these exchanges George Caldwell struggles to reject the effects of masculine lack that his son reminds him of. He succeeds only in recalling his own ancomerious week identification with the Father's Name. Caldwell's Father's Name is all too dead, a rotting corpse in the place of the Other. So the thirdterm that holds Caldwell in its sway is not Law but the figure of death.

Death as the mark of difference hovers over George Caldwell when he makes a proposition to the hitchhiker:

> 'Take him along!' my father explained. 'If ever a kid deserved a break, it's this kid here. My wife is shot. Time to trade in on a new old man; I'm a walking junk heap.' (p. 71)

The important exchange between George Caldwell and the hitchhiker compels close reading. Ironically, the father, the son, and the hitchhiker are all anonymous, all have weak subject positions in discourse. Peter is the object rather than the subject of discourse. Peter is never addressed personally, only alluded to with the shifter pronoun 'him' and the generic

term "kid." The impersonal, materialistic analogy between humans and automobiles cannot be missed either. George is like a used car that needs to be traded in for a new model.

Who, then, is the repressed subject of discourse that lords over the triangular relationship of the hitchhiker, Caldwell and Peter? Is it not John Wesley's Gaze that Caldwell can never escape from? Perhaps in Caldwell's dialogue with the hitchhiker, who is the object of discourse the veiled yet ever present subject of discourse is Caldwell's father. Who is Caldwell really speaking to when he tells the hitchhiker:

> "You know, mister," my father said, "You're doing what I've always wanted to do. Run around from place to place. Live like the birds. When the cold weather hits, just flap your wings and go south." (p 66)

In one sense, Caldwell's picture of himself as a 'Bum' is what his father has reduced his to. In another sense, the fantasy of being 'free' like a bird is Caldwell's deep-seated desire to be free from his father's Gaze and his insurmountable power over him. In another telling exchange between George and Peter the unconscious speaks through the holes in Caldwell's discourse: "If I had your self-confidence I would've taken your mother onto the burly-cue stage and you never would have been born" (p 158). While Peter is the reference in the conscious discourse, the meaning of the unconscious is elsewhere. It is George who unconsciously wishes he was never born to face the tyranny of the Other's devire.

From a dirty, listless hitchhiker with no calling in life, to Coach Foley, Caldwell's choices of surrogate father are indiscriminate and arbitrary:

> 'You've met my son, haven't you, Bud? Peter, come over here and shake this man's hand. This is the kind of man you should have had for a daddy.' (p 111)

Not long after Foley, Minor Kratz becomes the obvious choice to act as Peter's father.

> " There isn't a man in town he thinks more of than Minor Kratz. You're a father to that boy and don't think his mother and I don't appreciate it." (p 258)

Once again notice that Peter is referred to with an impersonal pronoun "he," George Caldwell himself with the shifter pronoun 'I', and Cassie with the term mother The collusions of their positions in discourse masks a chatterbog of the familiar relationships that ought to exist between them… In the whole dialogue only Miner Kretz has a name… a calling, a symbolic position

The crux of Caldwell's problem is raised by Peter in a few pointed, wrenching questions:

> ' … Really, Daddy, I'd think you'd have more sense once in a while What do you see in those bums? Is it my fault I was born so you couldn't be a bum? Florida… … Really, Daddy, what do you think about when you babble like that?' (p 72)

What does Caldwell think about when he babbles like that? Peter provides the answer again without being aware of it Peter refers, again and again, to Caldwell being in a "different plane," holding a dialogue with an 'invisible audience…' On several occasions Peter observes: 'my father seemed fletcher upon another plane and I strained my voice to reach him', 'he had a way of not speaking to her, [Cassie] but performing in front of her, as if there was an invisible audience at her side'; 'he gave no sign of hearing me; his communion was all with himself'; 'He puzzled me His upper half was hidden from me I knew best his legs' (p 281) Isn't Caldwell's dialogue in a different plane with his father's invisible Gaze?

The important point is Caldwell's egotistical & better father for Peter is that it is not his son but his own brittle self that Caldwell unconsciously desires to trade off To Caldwell any other form of slavery than to his father's Gaze is welcome The repeated ritual of finding a better father for Peter thus both refers to and covers over the key signifier in the unconscious that Caldwell refuses to come to terms with: namely, his abandonment not by his mother… but more crucially, by his father in his formative years [3]

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[3] 'In Lacan's dialectical context,' notes Ragland-Sullivan, 'Desire emanates first from the moi & thrust toward recognition of/from/about/to the Other(A) Who am I? What am I of you? The space between the moi and

George Caldwell's relationship with Hummel further highlights his struggle to repress the lacks in his life. Hummel, as yet another mirror-image, is not only another ego for him but also a convenient other on whom to displace his unconscious desire to triumph over his father's Gaze that has suspended and paralyzed Caldwell, to borrow Peter's words, over a "canyon of time." By freezing his image in Hummel, Caldwell imaginarily wishes to hold in equilibrium the unconscious Gaze that controls and masters the image, while trying to avoid "being seen," being controlled, being mastered. To recalcate such a division and hole in being, Caldwell thus sees himself only as the active, autonomous subject, while Hummel, his mirror-image, remains passive and frozen:

> As they walked toward each other, Caldwell experienced a mocking sensation of walking toward a mirror, for Hummel also limped. He looked hunched, pale, weathered; the recent years had diminished the master mechanic. (p.12)

Having established such a distinction between Hummel and himself, there is, nonetheless, once again the hesitation in narration, when the tremulous flicker of the prose points to something deeper, more sexual in the Hummel-Caldwell relationship than meets the eye. Hummel's 'form becomes almost womanly with quiet woe and Caldwell becomes marvous' (p.16) Is it nervousness on the part of Caldwell because of the father's Gaze that makes him unable to stand betrayal, or is it nervousness in attempting to defy the embraces of his mother's unconscious desire imposed on him?

The answer, far from being a simple either/or, points rather to the complex dynamics of Caldwell's relationship with both his parents. Consumed by a heavy sense of guilt because of the immense mother-sex jouissance afforded by the untimely death of his father, Caldwell's

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the Other (A) is, therefore, Desire, a space that widens throughout life. ... An alien Desire resides at the center of one's being. Desire whose context is repressed. Lacan views aggression more logically as a dialectical response to the quest to know the Other via others at whom aggression is aimed in a displaced manner when narcissistic recognition is withheld." (Englund-Sullivan, Jacques Lacan, pp. 76-77)

unconscious desire empowers his dead father's Name in the place of the other to control, manipulate, and finally, destroy his life. Caldwell's resurrection of the father's Case assumes the omnipotent power of God, forever watching him:

> Then we now, Caldwell stood on that spot of ground alone and puzzled. And now, as then, climbed the stairs with a painful, confused sense of having displeased, through ways he could not follow, the God who never rested from watching him (p.29)

The pernicious effect of such empowering of the father's Name can be seen in Caldwell's masochistic desire to replicate the pattern of his father's life in all the negative ways possible. Throughout his life, Caldwell is dogged, like his father before, by severe financial problems. Peter's question to his father 'Why don't we have any money?' receives this puzzling response from his father: "I've been asking myself that for fifty years. The worst of it is, when I write them a check it'll bounce because I have twenty-two cents in the bank" (p.125). With Hester Appleton, Caldwell ran organ intelligently the imperative to stay alive in order to bring food on the table for his family: ' . . . if I were to kick off now, he and his mother would sit out there in the stinks and try to eat the flowers off the wallpaper. I can't afford to die' (p.148). Caldwell once seems to make a conscientious decision not to 'double cross' Peter the way his own father did: 'My old man went and died before he was my age. . . and I didn't want to double-cross my own kid like that' (p.189). And yet, like his father, who died at forty-nine, George Caldwell leaves his family in an less misery when he takes his life at fifty: "A little bronze mat his face at the cliff-edge. His will, the perfect diamond under the pressure of absolute fear, uttered the final word. Now. . . Chiron accepted death' (p.222).

Between Caldwell's will to knowledge and his actions, between idea and sense, falls the shadow of his father: His actions are no more under his control and free will than his life. Cassie's desire to install

confidence in her husband by pointing to his achievements that are in sharp contrast to Caldwell's father's failures, falls on deaf ears. Peter records his mother's futile vote of confidence for his father:

> 'Your father was a disappointed man,' my mother told him. 'Why should you be disappointed? You have a wonderful son, a beautiful farm, an adoring wife--' (p.47)

George Caldwell is an obsessional onanist who only be constantly reminded of one thing: 'Mr. Caldwell's young manhood was troubled by the permanent death of his father and by America's participation in the First World War' (p.131). The summation of Caldwell's life is a blank as he unconsciously sees his integrity only in following his father's failed footsteps: "Things never fail to fail. On his deathbed his father's religious 'eternally forgotten ?' (p.149). Caldwell, much to the chagrin of his son, Peter, tells in a moment of despair: 'Don't worry about me, Peter. Fifty years is a long time; if you don't learn anything in fifty years you never will. My old man never knew what hit him, he left us a Bible and a bucketful of debts' (p.144).

Torn between fidelity to his imagination of his father's Gaze whose slavish object Caldwell has become, and the forbidden yet comforting jouissance of his mother's Gaze, Caldwell scapegoats his wife Cassie for his dilemma. Next to Caldwell's repetitive unconscious desire to see his father in-law Pop Kramer fall from the stairs, it is Cassie that Caldwell wants to see frequently on the stage. To Hester Appleton, Caldwell makes the following confession: "I should have put her on the burly-cue stage, she would have been happier there. I shouldn't have married her, I should have just been her manager. But I didn't have the guts. I was brought up so that as soon as you saw a woman you half-way liked the only thing you could think of to do was ask her to marry you" (p.146). More than once, George Caldwell continuing the usual destruction of his own self-esteem, tells his son:

> 'Your mother's a real femme. Peter. If I'd been any kind of man I would have put her on the burlesque stage when she was young.' (pp.57-58)

Once again, Caldwell is turmoured by the key work "sex." In his conversations with Peter, it is clear Caldwell doubts the efficacy of his gender role. Perhaps Caldwell's unconscious desire to display his wife, Cassie, on stage, and thus reduce her to an object, neatly displaces his own terror of being a perpetual object held in thrall by the desire of the Other in his unconscious signifying chain. Moreover, the fantasised framing of Cassie within the script of the burlesque stage accommodates two contrary positions for Caldwell--fear and desire of sex, fear and desire of death--within a unity of thought. For Caldwell, his position as non-participant observer holds in equilibrium the contrary ideas in a mental image that can still leave him whole, inviolate, and in control. Caldwell's desire, though aimed at the body of Cassie here, blocks off knowledge of the Other, and it wants not to know the unconscious in order to maintain the killing jouissance.

In Lacanian terms, there is something Real in Caldwell's aim to sustain his jouissance--oral or anal--and relates to his subject positioning on the slope of the death drive.[24] Since sex and death are fundamentally linked, can we hypothesise that George Caldwell's later fear of female sexuality and his ambivalent reaction to the mark of difference that makes him a 'man' originates with his simultaneous desire and revulsion for his own mother? George Caldwell's conversation with his wife, Cassie, is quite revealing in the present context:

> "Don't kid yourself, Cassie. My mother made life a hell on earth for him. She are that man raw." (p 47)

Perhaps a fear of knowing the precise boundaries that differentiate him from his mother explains Caldwell's discreet avoidance of sex. Vera

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[24] Raglund-Sullivan notes that 'Unlike the post-structuralist deconstructionist, however, Lacan does not dispense with notions of the Real or the true. Instead, he separates truth from consciousness and knowledge and places it on the side of the Real in structure and unconscious discourse, and linked to intersubjectivity and Desire. He shows "truth" peaking out in language through syncopations, contradictions, reperitions, implied questions or doubt and other such verbal or textual aporia.' (Raglund-Sullivan, Jacques Lacan, p 98)

Hummel, emerging with just a towel wrapped around her body in the locker room, has this perceptive comment for George Caldwell: 'You don't like women' (p 24), and his own wife in one of her desperate moments cannot help saying in front of her young son:

> 'If there's anything I hate,' my mother said, half to me, half to the ceiling, while my father bent forward with one of his rare kisses, 'it's a man who hates sex.' (p 56)

George Caldwell's failure to resolve his Oedipal conflict could mean that his sexuality is overly burdened by an Other's desire in his own unconscious. Unable to fill up lack by naming his own desire away from the strapping Gaze of his father, and away from the killing jouissance of his mother's unconscious desire, Caldwell's consequent weak position in the social domain and in his male gender identity came from a constant presence of anxiety.

Perhaps the same fantasy to blind his father's Gaze makes Caldwell repeatedly fantasize Pop Kramer's falling dead from the stairs: 'I can't get it out of my head that Pop Kramer is going to fall down those stairs. If I live I'm determined to put up a banister' (p 158). After three days of absence from home, due to car trouble and the blizzard, Caldwell's pointed question to his wife is: ' Pop hasn't fallen down the stairs yet, has he? . . . You know I didn't mean that, I hope he doesn't too' (p 159). Much as Caldwell tries to make death an object in Summel or Pop Kramer, neither of the men die for him, just as Caldwell wishfully thinks that putting up the banister would shore up his own life more than that of Pop Kramer, who is yet another double for Caldwell.

On the contrary, Peter's grandfather and his mother have managed well without Caldwell's presence and assistance:

> 'We've had a wonderful time,' my mother said. 'Dad's been sawing wood and this evening I made some of that dried-beef soup with apples Grammy used to make when we ran out of food.' (p 213)

In spite of the extenuating circumstances of the last three days when Caldwell and Peter are stranded by the blizzard, Caldwell remembers to

bring home for Cassie an "Italian sandwich" while he blissfully forgets to buy the Sun for Pop Kramer. The unconscious act of forgetting is Caldwell's denial of his surrender to his father's Gaze: "Hell no, Pop," bellows Peter's father. "I forget. I don't know why. It was insanity" (p.213).

Forgetting is Caldwell's defense mechanism to close off the discourse of the Other that gives him the unpalatable truth that Caldwell lives to reproduce the "eternally forgotten" fate of his father. To Peter, his father seems to be "dazed that the world had gone on without him" (p.213). Caldwell tells Cassie when he refuses to give her a helping hand on her farm. Cassie urges her husband: "Work with your hands, George. Get close to nature. It would make a whole man of you" (p.216). What stops Caldwell from becoming a "whole man" is not his failure as a teacher, or his emptiness on the farm, or even the fact that he is easily dispensable. What Caldwell finds difficult to come to terms with, and what also accounts for his not being a man on his own terms, is his own conscious desire. The empowering of his father's Name in the Other now exacts a heavy toll from him. His homecoming shows with stunning clarity how the lives of Wesley and George Caldwell, father and son, (and later Peter) hold a mirror to one another, suffering in turn the same fate. The homecoming betrays once importantly the dire consequences both for themselves and their families when they function as weak third terms, the mark of difference. That Zimmerman finds Caldwell easily replaceable is not as important as the fact that Caldwell's ultimate fate cannot be any different or freer than his father's: "The school would survive; with so many of these veterans returning, the teacher shortage is not what it was during the war" (p.196). On the other hand, Caldwell paradoxically cannot survive without his father's Gaze, which supplies the cues to his life, nor can he live in peace under his Gaze.

Caldwell's conversation with Pop Kramer can as well be his putative complaint to the omnipotent Other: "Jesus Pop, when I was a kid, I never

had any sleep at all That's why I'm in agony now' (p 49) Caldwell does not want the same 'agony' to be visited upon his son, ' You go to sleep, Peter We got you up this early this morning. I hate to do that. I've been trying to catch up on sleep since I was four years old Can you go to sleep?' (p 125) Caldwell's lack of sleep is a bodily symptom in the Kaul that tells the unconscious truth His immense involvement with his mother is always troubled by the hounding 'blank gaze' of his father who occupies in the place of the Other the voice and stature of the Gods It is this curse to be the Wandering Jew 'beneath the blank gaze of the gods' that unconsciously compels Caldwell to have his verbal duels with Pop Kramer that 'sounds like murder' to Cassie. Much as Caldwell tries to condemn his anxiety of his father's gaze on Pop Kramer the very literariness of his speech is the locus of the Other 'Say, that man has a temper! He is really and truly sore about my not bringing home a newspaper He's a powerhouse, Cassie; at his age I'll be dead for twenty years' (p 215) What is a 'powerhouse' is not the grand old Pop Kramer of Caldwell's fantasy but the voice of the Other where his father's Name is a monarch of all he surveys: 'Must he wander forever beneath the blank gaze of the gods? The pain in his tissues barked and tore like a penned pack of dogs Set them free My Lord, set them free' (p 219)

Caldwell's fantasy makes Zimmerman, the school Principal into a mythic figure to counterbalance the power of his father's Gaze There is, however, a striking difference While the power given to Zimmerman by Caldwell is tangible, Caldwell's father's Gaze is not visible to his naked eye and yet exerts tremendous influence over his life Whether it is Caldwell's nervousness during Zimmerman's class visitation or his fear that the missing basketball tickets, masterminded by none other than Zimmerman and Reverend Marsh, would be finally attributed to him Caldwell's fear is largely imaginary, which allows Zimmerman to exploit him indiscriminately When Peter confronts Zimmerman with the knowledge

of the missing tickets, the Principal suddenly sings a different and more conciliatory tune:

> 'He's just had to have stomach x-rays but what he is more worried about is a little strip of basketball tickets he can't find.' Zimmerman quickly blurts, 'Tickets?' to Peter's surprise this seems to have scored. The principal's wrinkles are shadowed forth at the sway tilt of his head, he seems old. (p. 181)

Caldwell is amazed to receive Zimmerman's compliments for his excellent teaching when he was expecting lectured the sack: 'You've resolved on favors,' Zimmerman says. "You're a good teacher" (p. 187). Why then does Caldwell hold Zimmerman in such awe and fear? Caldwell in his fantasy hands Zimmerman the same power to rule him that he gives to the father's Name in the place of the Other. Caldwell fails to see, as Peter rightly points out, that Zimmerman is just a 'befuddled old lech who doesn't know what he is doing. Everybody sees that except you. Daddy, why are you so—" (p. 192).

It is not the fear of his father's Gaze, invisible yet forever watching over Caldwell, that forces him to seek surrogate father-figures who are at once visible and malleable, at once feared and admired. The same Zimmerman that Caldwell dreads now was once liked by him: 'He had liked him. Caldwell had instantly liked Zimmerman, whose heavy uneasy allusive ways reminded him of a cryptic school friend, a seminary roommate of his father's who used to come visiting now and then on a Sunday and who always remembered to bring a little bag of licorice for 'young Caldwell'' (p. 151); in the same manner Kessel, whose face is womanly, is also a 'master of his trade.' Caldwell says to Dedman: 'I never had a better friend in this town, and I was in worse shape than you are' (p. 156). Pup Kramer too occupies the space of the father figure in Caldwell's sporadic enthusiasts: '[illegible] I'm wild about Pup Kramer. He's the nicest man I ever knew. I worship that man' (p. 58). None of these men fill in the black hole in the Other for Caldwell. His father's Gaze lurks in Caldwell's

unconscious until his unconscious desire for death becomes simultaneously a means to embrace and rid the father's Name in the Other

As Caldwell's counsels clearly shows, his refusal to recognize his death desire at the place of the signifier in the Other is only made possible by his conscious latching on to the symptom, so this case fantasizing death as the counterpart in his consciousness The metonymy for death thus becomes a substitutive metaphor Once death is reduced to an idea in the consciousness, death can be manipulated, trapped and mastered

Caldwell's desire to have his leg looked at by Hummel rather than by a doctor, as would have been expected, makes a lot of sense Caldwell may be thinking imaginarily The removal of the erect--both a stand-in for death and a symbol of sexual difference--by Hummel not only removes death from their midst but also vindicates their dyadic relationship reminiscent for Caldwell of the mother-son symbiosis: 'Though he looked like a toy-rent toy, it was scarcely an exaggeration; the pain in his ankle felt pointive and foreshaken after Hummel's radiant attentions' (p.20) Again, Caldwell whips his student, Dalfendorf twice on the hare shoulder, acting as if the act of flogging Dalfendorf with the same theft that struck him bore an overt sense judgement of him It is as if he were flogging the very death of death

However, death can be represented only as an absence in the Symbolic In the Lacanian process of naming, it is already elsewhere Caldwell's terror of death comes precisely in death's being unnameable, unobjectifiable and unfixable: 'I could not make out its form only feel myself, me if in my sleep I had swallowed something living that now woke within me, its restless weight of dread' (p.40) The site of the unbearable anxiety is the Real for Lacan Death whose 'form' he cannot make out, which remains unsymbolized in the Real, undermines his autonomy, his power to enclose death in an agreeable form like an Egyptian mummy/mommy In order to get around the elusive nature of death, Caldwell

skillfully objectifies death, makes (impossibly) death a totemic presence, an imaginary object in Hummel, his double. Seeing death--like his own--in the mirror-image, the same and yet different, Caldwell thinks he can control, master and finally subdue death:

> Hummel was pathetic. Caldwell decided as he walked away ... Hummel was dead and depressing. Sniffing the point on matter-of-factly for poison, through (p. 19)

We observed earlier how Hummel's body may be seen as a maternalized sexual object for Caldwell. By pushing our interpretation of Caldwell's projection further, Caldwell's seeing death more in Hummel (who is also a father-figure for Caldwell) rather than in himself may be another subtle way to wish the death of his father's Gaze, whose judgement always insists in his unconscious.

The metonymy for death that acts a little like a metaphor works best when Caldwell objectifies death in his own body. So it death as a spider: "The damn bile! I've caught their damn hate and I feel like a spider in my large intestine" (p. 42), he it death as poison: "I can feel it in me like a riot of poison; I can't pass it" (p. 42). he it the object death as totemic presence: 'I'm carrying death in my bowels' (p. 46); Caldwell's primary concern is to contain, control and master death as an object within himself. In Lacan's view, for obsessionals the death issue usually concerns masculinity. It is interesting that here the metonymic chain of associations for death is located in the lower part of his body--intestine, bowels, ebbing body--creating the topography of a container/bowl that both holds death and has the power as well, like the bowels with feces, to flush out death. The metaphoric substitutions for death with spider, poison, hate and arrow are misrecognitions of death in the Real (the Lacanian void), which cannot be symbolized, although the Real can be felt palpably in the body. Caldwell's fetishistic enshrining of death as phantom presence "rejects" yet points to the structural play of jouissance.

In Lacanian terms, Caldwell's rejection of death by the repression of the third term denies law and, paradoxically, does not give Caldwell the own desire the space to live away from the crumbling unconscious desires of his parents. And yet the opposite pull, the desire for death, is equally strong in Caldwell: 'You don't need me Canada. You'd be better off with an ox the dump' (p.47) In Caldwell's imprisoning death as an object in his body, the Real is embedded in the Imaginary and intersects the Symbolic as a narrative. Both are interlacing of the three Orders--Symbolic, Imaginary, Real--can be shown in Caldwell's fantasised pregnancy where death becomes the fetus he gives life and nurturance to in his womb: 'Astronomy transfixed him, at night sometimes when he lay down in bed exhausted he felt that his aching body was fantastically huge and contained in its darkness a billion stars' (p.34).

Caldwell's 'aching body' collapses the distinction between mother and son, signifier and signified. The subject and object come together in Imaginary identification as One, initiating thus, even before Caldwell's death in the Real, the symbolic death of Caldwell. Caldwell's death at the end of the novel, where the Real loses with the Imaginary and Symbolic, could be read in one way as Caldwell's failure to break out of the mother-son dyadic relationship. Death as Law--the end of desire--returns with a vengeance to break the regressive bond to claim Caldwell's life.

Another subject representation in the text produces a different reading of Caldwell's death. If the constant 'hesitation' in the narrative is any indication, the third term marks Caldwell's identification with death itself--the mark of lack. Lacan argued that timing is itself unconscious.

The Centaur is filled with references to time. Glancing at his clock, Caldwell says 'My goose is cooked' (p.57). More often than not, Caldwell is hurried by being always far behind the racing clock. If he is late for his class, he is also late in keeping his doctor's

appointment " ' Too late, too late,' my father said. Too late, too late.' He looked at the clock and said, 'Jesus, I'm not kidding--I'm late.' I told Doc Appleton I'd be there at 4:30'' (p 87). Always a slave to time but never in pace with it, Caldwell is 'too late' for action, and all he can do is catch up with his backlog of obligations. Such a delay in action assures Caldwell that death must be deferred until his unfinished tasks are accomplished. The narrative stalls are Caldwell's strategems to procrastinate, to suspend time by denying its tick as a signpost of difference. Caldwell thinks to be imaginary that he has thus avoided being at the back end call of the Other's time. Paradoxically, such a freezing of time and a suspension of becoming mean anti-action which welcomes death in the invasion of the very Other Caldwell is trying to shield against. Caldwell says of Zimmerman, 'I can hear him laughing every time the clock ticks' (p.102). The devastating irony is that it is the clock that laughs at Caldwell and forces him to submit to its order. When Caldwell and Peter return home after their three-day odyssey (the whole novel covers three days) the red electric clock is 'thrown all out of right time by the power failure but running gamely nevertheless' (p.213). In one sense the discriminated clock foreshadows Caldwell's death. In another sense, Caldwell's desire to be freed from the yoke of time seems only possible by embracing death.

Such a vindication of freedom, of triumph, of life in death, comes when George Caldwell says 'no' to the smart Pop Kramer prepares for him. Caldwell rejects 'nature,' which accordion to Pop Kramer 'is like a mother; she rom-forts and thee-thees with the same hand' (p.216). To George Caldwell Pop's nature is like 'garbage and confusion and the stink of skunk' (p 216). In becoming death--like himself rather than being consolum of death. Caldwell is no different from Empedocles, who as Lucre

seye, 'by throwing himself into Mount Etna, leaves forever present in the memory of men this symbolic act of his being-for-death'[25]

At one level, his son Peter Caldwell, is a mirror-image of his father, and reinforces his father's sense of being a misfit in the public domain. At another level Peter and his father are not simply doubles but rivals. George Caldwell considers Peter to be better than himself, smarter, and more likely to succeed. In that sense, the positions of father and son are reversed. Peter also struggles to prove himself more of a man than his father (as in the scenes with the car trouble and the car chase). The father is a rival whom he must beat. And yet, at the same time, he is embarrassed by his father's signs of weakness and wishes that his father was more of a man, more of a father. He fears his father's death yet wishes for it, then feels guilty, as if he were killing his father.

Lacan's rewriting of Freud crucially links the father's 'no' to the mother-son symbiosis with the child's simultaneous entry into the symbolic order of language. This order paradoxically demands concrete human beings to give up their myths of a unified self and identity for the reward of being named to occupy his/her specific, and yet always unstable, subject position in language. Peter's unconscious desire to shield himself in the Other jouissance of the mother-son relationship arises because his comfort of a unified identity suffers fragmentation and loss in his entry into the symbolic order of language. Peter as subject in discourse constantly vacillates below the castrating bar of the phallic signifier.

What remains an Oedipal subtext in George Caldwell's relationship to the Lacanian Gaze becomes the manifest text in Peter Caldwell's relationship to his mother. The replication of the family 'novel' is facilitated by the father being the 'double', the mirror-image for the son. As Johnny Dedman points out: 'Hey Peter. With you and your father

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[25] Jacques Lacan, Ecrits: A Selection, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: W.W. Norton, 1977), p. 104

standing up there against the light for a second I couldn't tell which was which" (p.162) But Peter Caldwell's place in the theater of identity is far more complicated, as his relationships both with his mother and father remain ambivalent and tortuous Ragland-Sullivan points out that the mother (or first caretaker) is the first 'real Other" for the child, its 'primordial unconscious voice.' [6] The question to ask, then, is what does the (m)Other want of Peter? With her husband carrying out the extreme art of "perversion"--exhibitionism, whereby George "shows" himself to be denigrated rather than he "shown" what he is--Cassie's desire is to have her son as the phallic substitute.

However, the son's desire to take up the forbidden position is thwarted, as we deduce from his actions. Given his father's own repression of the term for sexual difference, Peter's identification with a denigrated father keeps him from thinking of himself as a masculine man Peter exaggerates his skin problem (psoriasis) to remain trapped in the 'comforting" dyadic and infantile relationship of mother and son. Instances proliferate of Peter's desire to stick to his mother and to shut out the external world he is afraid will judge him harshly because of his skin problem Given the father's desire to refuse his own responsibility by giving his son away to every surrogate father that crosses their paths Peter's sense of self and shelter comes from the first real Other: mother

> My mother came back into the kitchen, bent over me and poured the smoking water into my cup. I snickered up to her conspiratorially; my father was often a joke between us (p 32)
>
> Her voice was so often expressive of what I wanted to hear that my own brain sometimes thought to her voice's indeed, as I grew older, now and then, usually in instances of excitement, I hear her voice issue from my mouth. (p.41)
>
> 'O K , don't you either; You're a good woman ' What a thing to say to your mother! , It makes his brain itch, the peculiarity of talking to her over the

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[6] Ragland-Sullivan, Jacques Lacan and the Philosophy of Psychoanalysis p 289.

> phone, where she becomes, incestuously a simple female voice with whom he has shared secrets (p 161)

To maintain such a regressive mother-son relationship, Peter Caldwell has to perform two contradictory functions: shame his already denigrated father to justify taking his place for the mother, and insertha his father incorrectly as the powerful father within the Imaginary in order to gain his own identity from a sense of maleness. Peter shames his father by reporting the near crash of his electric clock by his mother; by his verbal duel when he questions his father's integrity in equating himself with the hitchhiker: 'Really, Daddy, I'd think you'd have more sense once in a while. What do you see in these bums? Is it my fault I was born so you couldn't be a bum?' (p 72)

The equally compelling desire to see his father strong motivates Peter to sing the most lyrical eulogies to his father; in empowering his father in his fantasy, Peter also empowers himself. He triumphantly says that his father is irreplaceable:

> In these days the radio carried me into my future, where I was strong: [illegible] Among these images which the radio songs rapidly brushed in for me the sun blank space was the canvas I was so beautifully, debonairly, and preciously covering. I could not visualize my work, but its featureless radience made the center of everything as I rattled my father in the tail of a comet through the expectant space of our singing nation (p 63)

> Understand that to me my father seemed changeless. In fact he did look younger than his years [illegible] Once I had stood beside his knees on the brick wall leading to the grape arbor of our house in Olinger and felt him look level into the tops of the horsechestnut trees and believed that nothing could ever go wrong as long as we stood so (p 53)

> Once a student had had my father, he did not forget it, and the memory seemed to seek shape in mockery being Caldwell's son lifted me from the faceless mass of younger children and made me, on my father's strength alone, exist in the eyes of these Titans (p 95)

Is it genuine praise or more likely Peter's resistance to face lack in the Other that his father reminds him of? Fearing the horrific loss of his self in submission to symbolic castration, Peter empowers his father, who

is "changeless" in his fantasy, to stand by him in order to rinse off the gaping hole in the Other. Because of Peter's fear of ambivalence in language, his reverse remains a "blank space" that is too terrifying unless covered over so "beautifully, debonairly and preciously" with his body. Peter averts his gaze from the 'featureless radiance' in the center of his canvas, the mark of absence and emptiness, by simply carrying his father in his fantasy 'in the tail of a comet through the expectant space of our singing nation' (p 63).

Peter's horror of the the fissure and splitting of himself in language makes him see his father as another mother-figure to shelter him from the world of differences... the world of asymmetrical sexual relationships. The Reel in Peter's body is unvocalized language mercilessly reminds him that there is no safe haven even in his body, which is only whole in the imaginary. Peter fantasizes excising any part of his body as long as the "irreducible locus" of his "kingdoms of the self" is shielded and nurtured by his father's maternal body:

> He employs him Inlaurs to meditate upon the phenomenon of extreme physical discomfort. There is no surviving simplicity in it ... when the tip of the nose, the chin, and the scalp itself are removed from consideration, not entirely annihilated but departed, as it were, to a remote foreign to the very limited remoteness of the irreducible locus, remarkably rampart and aloof, which alone remains of the more farflung and ambitious kingdoms of the self... (pp 197-198)

Ironically enough, Peter empowers his father not to strengthen the third term, the mark of difference, but to solicit his complicity in regressing into the Other jouissance of the maternal relationship. Peter seeks the womb-like shelter from his father:

> The sometimes seem to arrive from a great distance outside himself where his father, now walking beside him and using his body as a shield against the wind for his own, pulls down upon Peter's frowning head the knitted wool cap he has taken from his own head... (p.198)

Throughout the novel Peter with maniacal repetition "Cloves to the Center of the sphere." Regardless of whether it is the "center" of Alton

or his 'canvas' or the 'secret the world holds at its center' with reference to Penny. the more Peter struggles in vain to close off the absence and nothingness in the center, the more the center as himself space closes in on him. The more Peter seeks amplification of his 'sense of self,' the more the self dwindles and disintegrates. It is in the slippages in his own narrative that the Other discourse tears itself:

> Alton distended. Her arms of white traffic stretched river-wide. Her shining hair formed on the surface of the lake. My sense of myself amplified until. lover and loved, seer and seen. . close to the center of the sphere, and outmuscled time and tide. I would triumph. Yet the city shuffled and winked beyond the window unmoved, transparent to my penetration, and hurt dismissed dwindled me terribly. Hurrying so if my smallness were so many melting crystals which would vanish altogether if ont gathered swiftly. I partially redressed and got into the bed nearest the wall, the cold sheets parted like leaves of marble, and I felt myself a dry seed lost in the folds of the earth. (p. 127)

The narrative swerves when Peter tries to empower himself by conjuring up the town Alton in feminized metaphors which resist Peter with his own petard. Since for an obsessional the sexual member takes on the meaning of his being, Peter's sexuality ritualized in relation to an esthetically feminized other (Alton) shows how Peter s penis/phallus bears the weight of his 'confused masculine/feminized identity.' Peter's extreme anxiety about the 'smallness' of his member emanates from the Reel in his body and impales him on the ritual issue of his gender. Peter cannot outmuscle 'time and tide,' cannot exercise his manhood, so Alton remains 'transparent to my penetration.' Instead, Peter's dry seed is too impotent to procreate and is summarily rejected by mother-earth.

Peter's anguished call to his father not to reduce him to an orphan is also a wimpish call to the Other not to disperse and divide Peter's fragile self in/through language:

> 'There s nobody else like you in the world.' He is shouting because his father has clenched his fists on the steering wheel and is resting his forehead on its

> backs. It frightens Peter to see his father's silhouette go out of shape this way. He wishes to call him to himself but the syllable sticks in his throat unknown. (p.194)

The pulls of his desire are contradictory: on the one hand to see his father dead so that he could have his mother's exclusive attention, and on the other, the contrary wish that his father be very much alive to mark the difference that is disturbingly encapsulated in Peter's dream-text:

> In that way we have in dreams, where we are both author and character, God and Adam. Peter understood that inside the town hall there had been a trial. His father had been found guilty, stripped of everything he owned, flogged, and sent forth into the world lower than the baboon. From his pallor plainly the disgrace would kill him. In his drama Peter shouted, 'No! You understand! Wait!' (p.159)

Peter in his fantasy closes the gap between signifier and signified, creator and created, when he declares himself "author and character, God and Adam." In the same breath we see Peter both legislating his father's death and being the envier to present his death. In order to empower himself, Peter, like Freud's Father of the primal horde in Totem and Taboo, wishes for his father's death only to be able to resuscitate him as more powerful than he really is:

> What endures, perhaps, more indelibly in the minds of his ex-students (of whom this present writer counts himself one) was his more-than-human selflessness, a total concern for the world at large which left him, perhaps, too little margin for self-indulgence and satisfied repose. To sit under Mr Caldwell was to lift up one's head in aspiration. Though there was sometimes [illegible] confusion, there was never any confusion that indeed "here was a man." (p.133)

The biggest triumph for Peter comes when he fights for his father with Zimmerman, the Principal and emblem of authority. Peter unwittingly exposes Zimmerman's involvement in the scandal of the missing football

tickets However much George Caldwell is resurrected in the Imaginary Order by Peter, his father still holds a place of 'absence' in the Symbolic.

Peter's squirmy uneasiness about the physical side of his father reinforces the point: "I was shy of entering, for fear of finding my father undressed" (p 180) It is the mental fear of castration, of submitting to the Law that says 'no' to the mother-and dyadic trap that produces the unconscious revulsion in Peter to touching his father: "How it occurred to me he had had an 'attack' and the inexplicable behavior of the car was in fact an illusionistic reflection of some breakage in himself I was about to touch him--I never touched my father --when he looked up with a smile of satin on his bumby and shattered urchin's face" (p 115)

Unwilling to submit to the law (subject division undergone in the Name-of The-Father), Peter paradoxically becomes an inadequate phallic substitute for the mother: "But my guilt could not be eased, I could not go to her, for of her own will she had placed ten miles between us, and this rejection on her part made me vengeful proud, and indifferent: an inner Arab" (p 167) Reacting to his mother's rejection of him, Peter says "There was a vulgar side to my mother which apparently enjoyed mealy slippery Italian sandwiches and to which my father had, I saw jealously, more access than I" (p 113) In order to derive his absent phallic signifier, Peter relates to women as "littlemen," perhaps validating Otto Fenichel's equation of girl=phallus [7] Peter fails, however, to receive the phallus from his other mother-surrogates Fran Veta Hummel to Penny to his Negro mistress, the desire that insists in the unconscious is still to see his mother in them All these women give Peter not the phallus, but the womb-like shelters

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[7] Cf. Lacan's discussion in 'On a question preliminary to any possible treatment of psychosis' (Sheridan, Ecrits). p. 207

> And there was that in Fanny which now the dream made vivid to me, what I had hardly felt before a sheltering love, she would sacrifice for me. (p 44)
>
> As a baby wishes to be put to bed my hand wished to be between her thighs. (p 92)
>
> Mrs. Hummel and I were still in the kitchen. It would be a power and I believed I would charm it with her (p 207)

Foiled by his father and rejected by his mother, Peter's dream-text betrays his desperate need to identify with the female phallus in Fanny in the metonymic chain of Peter's desire, Fanny becomes a tree or phallic power:

> This was it, yes: and in the dream it didn't even seem strange. She became the tree. I was leaning my face against the tree trunk. certain it was her. The last thing I dreamed was the bark of the tree, the crusty ridges and in the black cracks between them tiny green flecks of lichen. Her. My Lord, it was her, help me. Give her back to me. (p 43)

If we recall how Peter's "dry seed" is too impotent to fertilize the mother earth, it stands to reason why Peter both desires and is threatened by Fanny as the phallic power/tree trunk. In Fanny's metamorphosis into a tree there is, therefore, the horrific interchange of identities. Peter's obsessional concerns with his skin problem become Fanny's by displacement: "the last thing I dreamed was the bark of the tree, the crusty ridges and in the black cracks between them tiny green flecks of lichen. Her" (p 43) Instead of the phallic power, Peter sees in Fanny his mirror-image, only absence, castration, and incompleteness: 'This then is the secret the world holds at its center: this innocence, this absence, this intimate curve subtly springy In its sheath of silk' (p.184). In the intersubjective mirroring, Peter's sense of self is received from the field of the other, in this case Fanny. Peter doggedly struggles not to come to terms with himself as a "subject" of 'lack.' Besides, the ghostly figure of the father intrudes upon the scene already framed in the Gaze of the (m)Other as the third term:

> He hides from her in her, fitting his face tighter against that concave calm; yet even here, his face held

> in the final privacy, the blunt probing thought of his father's death visit him Thus he betrays her (pp 184-185)

The subject-pronoun 'her' is a stand-in for a double: both Peter's mother and Penny. Peter unsuccessfully tries to avert his mother's Gaze by 'hiding from her' in Penny's 'concave calm.' But even in this 'final privacy' Peter is rattled by the visit of the blunt probing thought of his 'father's death,' that admonishingly reminds him of his exclusive jouissance with his mother; and the consequent unpaid debt to his father. It is the mother's Gaze that transmits the unconscious message of the 'lack' in Penny. We return to the omnipotent or phallic mother:

> Peter rarely takes his eyes from the game but hardly sees it, so possessed is his inner eye by the remembrance of pressing his face into the poignant absence between Penny's thighs (p.190)

And yet, the slippages in Peter's narrative brilliantly capture his own center as non-self, as absence that is ruinatiously mirrored in his double, Penny. That is why Peter, in spite of experiencing the concave calm between Penny's thighs, 'looks away from her through the window beside them,' and distracts himself with the mundane fact that 'it's snowing' (p.185). Nonetheless, Penny is a woman and in her sex no different from Peter's mother. The discovery of 'absence' in Penny also means an absence in Peter's mother, a thought that completely shatters Peter's notion of his mother as omnipotent/complete: 'Frequently at this moment, my luxurious space of freedom all before me, I thought guiltily of my mother, helpless at her distance to control me or protect me, my mother with her form, her father, her dissatisfaction — '(p.187). In the mirroring of 'lack' in Penny in the intersubjective field, Peter also discovers the illusory, falsified nature of the 'power' of the phallus.

As Lacan explains: 'There is no subject without somewhere, ephemeris of the subject, and it is in this alienation, in this

fundamental division, that the dialectic of the subject is established.[28] If we recall England-Sullivan's point that 'Not only is the mother the first real Other and never completely separate from the child, but she is also its primordial unconscious voice' (p 288), then Peter's lack of being as a subject of enunciation is first learnt through the field of (m)Other, the primary, 'maternal' signifier. She passes on the view of his father's inadequacy. For Lacan:

> The subject appears first in the Other, insofar as the first signifier, the unitary signifier, emerges in the field of the Other representing the subject for another signifier, which Other signifier has as its effect the aphanisis of the subject. Hence the division of the subject--when the subject appears somewhere as meaning, he is manifested elsewhere 'fading,' as disappearance.[29]

Thus for Peter the fleeting moment of epiphany or revelation of absence between Penny's open thighs is also the shocking moment of discovering the sexual subject as aphanisis, fading in the very process of enunciating itself:

> Who of all these pressed into this bright auditorium would dream what brimming darkness he had blun-lipped, eipped? The memory of it is a warm mask upon his face, and he does not dare turn his face to him lest for fear she will see herself there, a ghastly heard and cry out in horror and shame, every pore in her nose vivid (p 190)

Peter's triumphant note when he nips the 'brimming darkness' in Penny turns into a sudden contempt when the female phallus he attributes to her shows absence in its midst. 'Every pore' in Penny's nose is a hole that harks back to Peter's dream-text, where once again Peter displaces his lack and skin problem on Penny: 'The pores of her nose showed. She was unnaturally still, something was going wrong' (p 43). The key signifier in the passage that harkens back to other 'signifiers' of loss and shuffles everything 'out of all identity,' is the 'ghastly heard.' Peter

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[28] Jacques Lacan, Four Concepts, p 221.

[29] Jacques Lacan, Four Concepts, p 218.

does not 'dare turn his face to his love' for fear not of Penny seeing 'herself there" but for fear he will see himself there. The mature displacement backfires and the irreducible key signifier "ghostly beard' compels Peter to confront his own lack: ' the little proofs of my sex were contracted into a tense cluster . I hated being hairless, I felt defenceless in the locker room where, scurrying to hide my mantle of spots, I saw my classmates had already donned an armor of fur' (p.45) Peter is 'defenseless' in hiding his spots hopelessly anxious about his gender position, and most of all in spite of the absence it reminds him of, troubled to see the ghastly beard--the famale phallus--in Penny and not in himself Penny's 'horror and shame' is actually Peter's projection of his own horror and shame On another occasion, Peter watches the reflections of the swimmers on the water's surface He realizes how the image is constituted only to be remarked with disappearance, with loss:

> The reflection of the bleachers across the pool . made on the rattled water a figment that for split seconds seemed a bearded face. Shattered again and again, the water yet wrought with the quirkiness of crystalline reaction to recompose itself (pp 109-110)

The cutting edge of letters divides Peter into the conscious and unconscious signifying chains- composing and decomposing the illusory image of his self/gender, like the 'bearded face' on the water's surface Such an oscillation of anchor and rootlessness culminates for Peter in the acute 'terror of words' (p 206) Peter, like all of us, is already marked by death, alienation and lack in and through language

This explains Peter's terror of words, the terror of death he sees in his father that reminds him of his own alienated 'ego'- It is interesting to note how Peter condenses all the knotty, unresolved problems into his Negro mistress, she is just as resourceful a scapegoat as Janice was for Rabbit in Updike's Rabbit, Run Peter's fear of and for his mother, the relentless unequivocal Gaze of the Other, the terrifying dispersal and fading of the subject--all initiated by the Symbolic Order

of language that enters us could not have been better mastered and manipulated in the Imaginary than in the figure of the Negro mistress. The key signifier in the lyrical outcry "When you walk naked toward the bed your feet toe in so if your ankles were mansclad to those of someone behind you," is 'mansclad,' which cracks open the slave history of his mistress, and makes Peter a own mother in the 'doubling' of his text (someone behind you), his slave now, under his control, like the Negro mistress.

Such an astute displacement is still disturbed by Peter's father's Gone. With his Negro mistress Peter again represses his sexual difference when he seeks to make "yin and yang, a person between us" (p 201). What frustrates Peter's narcissistic desire to become "One" with his mistress by becoming a Negro with a "wiped-up shoe-polish face taut as a drum" is the shadow of his father. Peter cannot "quite make that scene" because he is "my father's son" that intervenes like a "final membrane" to restrain him. Notwithstanding Peter's father remains a weak signifier of the third term (mark of difference) and fails to give Peter the confidence both to seek his identity and loss, presence and aphanisis in his works of art. Peter's canvases are "earnestly blasted" and he grows "frightened" in straining to say the "unsayable thing" (p. 201). Peter's "earnestly blasted" canvas is a feminized imagery that in one sense is a figure of Peter's reluctance to give up his privileged closeness to his mother. Peter's relation to his mother repeats his father's closeness with his own mother. In that vein, Peter is "my father's son." In another vein, since the father's name is figuratively dead in the place of the Other, Peter's works of art are powerless to be born.

Imprisoned as father and son are by the desire of the Other, the crucial question to ask is, does Caldwell's sacrifice save Peter? If the reader is seduced by the classical framework, the answer is obviously in the affirmative. Grammar, for instance, concludes: "A born may indeed be a king, but he is also George Caldwell. What he has given his son are

the pleasures of the past, the example of love, and the mythic vision necessary to probe the inconceivable through the metaphors of art."[30] On the other hand, if The Centaur is read against the grain, the metonymic amusement for Peter to escape the Gaze of the Other leads from Cassie to Penny/Pandora's box to the black mistress to mothlogness. Being already the phallus for the mother, Peter becomes the 'littlemas' looking hopelessly for the phallus in Penny, black mistress, and Vera, who dash his desires. Unable to come to terms with the lack within him, Peter's self-loathing is also projected on to Penny and the black mistress, who are degraded as stupid and whore-like. The 'classic degeneration' thus runs in the family from the grandfather and father to the son, Peter.

George Caldwell refuses to submit to the Law in order to re-create the jouissance of the mother-son symbiosis. Updike's novel, like the hieroglyphic glass-dome, proliferates with 'doubles' or mirror-stage structures. In keeping with the structural configuration of an obsessional, Caldwell holds his unconscious in equilibrium by the mirage of the doubles. Put another way, the contrary ideas, life and death, far from cancelling each other are held in balance by Caldwell's conscious thought that in order to deny the knowledge of the unconscious makes such knowledge as knowable, controllable, and part of consciousness. The doubles for George Caldwell (such as Hummel, Pop Kramer and his own son) lack George Caldwell, and in turn Peter Caldwell, in a binary opposition that rallies active against passive, mother versus father, public versus private, jouissance versus castration. In fact, insofar as the lethal Gaze of the Other holds both George Caldwell and his son captive, they are committed to the subversion of the Name-of-the-Father.

It is no accident that the graphic notation in the sketches of the eyes in the novel almost transmit a message like a cryptogram. The stress is not on the biological eyes, which always misrecognize, but on the

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[30] Donald J. Greiner, John Updike's Novels (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1984) p 118

nonvisual Gaze of the Other, being seen rather than seeing. The Gaze continues to haunt George Caldwell like a 'pennad pack of dogs' till he accepts lack. Ragland-Sullivan points out: 'Lacan's phallic signifier points to a jouissance beyond desire that links human subjects to unconscious unconclusion and to a death drive.' [31] To sum up Caldwell as subject in process/trial, I borrow the words of Stuart Schneiderman: "Not only does the obsessional not forget the dead, not repress them, but he is too solicitous of them, anxious about the satisfaction of death's desire. This is why his ultimate encounter will be with death itself; as much as he fears this encounter, he knows that this is the one that counts" (p.147) [32]

To summarize, in Updike's The Centaur an Oedipal text can be read radically (Otherwise), since the textual surface is the Other of language. In the very process of producing such a text, the accompanying repressed components are the unconscious writing agencies (like the narrative slippages, the dream-text, nonsense, and symptoms on the body) that both reveal and censor. In embodying the third term (mark of difference) in the figure of death, George Caldwell liberates himself from the Negative dialectic of master and slave, the subject in trial/process, by submitting to the master: death--"the one that counts." Such a release also means that desire cannot be fulfilled. The personal release for Caldwell comes not without a heavy cost. George Caldwell's weak identification with the father's Name makes Peter in turn occupy a weak position in the symbolic order. There is no easy answer to Peter's troubling question: "Was it for this that my father gave up his life?" (p.201). After the unusual swimmeet, Peter is confused whether it is his father or himself who had asked

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[31] Ellie Ragland-Sullivan, "Seeking the Third Term: Omsire the Phallus, and the Materiality of Language," in Feminism and Psychoanalysis, ed. Richard Feldstein and Judith Roof (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989), p. 46

[32] Stuart Schneiderman, Jacques Lacan: The Death of an Intellectual Hero (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1983), p. 147

the question: "What does it feel like to win?" (p 110) The question though asked by Caldwell, could as well come from Peter's mouth Peter's cryptic answer is the crowning irony that frames the scrap-books of the Caldwells "Jesus I ii never knew." Peter's subject position in process/trial will continue until he himself can retrieve the symptomatic significance in the unconscious, as his father does, in his own way, by embracing death Alton to Olinger to Cassim's farm is the contextual space of The Centaur, where the Caldwells are subtly tested against the bourgeois values of material advancement, nuclear family, individual freedom and achievements, and, like George Caldwell's Buick, never 'fail to fail' (p 145).

CHAPTER III

SYMPTOMS OF THE BODY: OBSESSIONAL AND HYSTERIC DISCOURSE IN UPDIKE'S "RABBIT, RUN"

Alison Lurie in a recent article in The New York Review of Books takes a position popular among Updike's scholars: 'The premise of most of Updike's work is that men are in the world to do, and women simply to be. He genuinely loves not only women's bodies, but their hearts and souls. What he is uncomfortable with is their minds. Why, he seems to be asking, should creatures so complete and perfect in themselves want to argue or have political opinions?'[1] Lurie's attack, popular as it may be, misses the crucial point that the demeaning position of women in Updike's novels reflects largely the fantasies of male characters who project onto women their lack while simultaneously disavowing that projection. In Lacanian terms, 'The Woman' does not exist, as she is a mere 'symptom' for the man.[2] In Rabbit, Run Updike ceaselessly examines male footsteps that define the woman as the negative of man, but which seek at the same time to find authority and truth from the woman as the Other. It is in the narrative swerves, when the narrative shifts into Ruth's awareness, then into Janice's, that we find Updike's ruthless use of the subversive trope to expose the male fantasies.

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[1] Alison Lurie, New York Review of Books, May 12 1988, p 4

[2] See the Introduction to Feminine Sexuality: Jacques Lacan and the Ecole Freudienne, ed. Juliet Mitchell and Jacqueline Rose (New York: Norton, 1983), p 48. Rose explains: 'As the place onto which lack is projected, and through which it is simultaneously disavowed, woman is a "symptom" for the man. . . . It means not that women do not exist, but that her status as an absolute category and guarantor of fantasy (exactly The woman) is false.'

The temporal framework of Rabbit, Run opens with Rabbit Angstrom, a Negligible demonstrator in 'five-and-dime stores,' running away from responsibility, and it ends with another escape. Janice Springer is pregnant with Rebecca when Rabbit runs away to live with Ruth. He meets Janice again at the hospital after Rebecca is born. The brief reconciliation with Janice and her family is breached again when Rabbit blames Janice at the funeral for Rebecca's death and is last seen running for cover from his family responsibility. The narrative space between these two repetitive scenes enacts, principally, Rabbit's inexorable oedipal fantasy. The extreme manifestation of Rabbit's denial of female presence involves the unconscious killing of his own baby daughter. The demon of the Other's desire in Rabbit's unconscious desire, but it is Janice (already enslaved in the Other), who carries out the unspeakable demand. In her intoxicated state Janice can do little to save her baby from drowning in the tub.

The structural dynamic of the plot in Rabbit, Run depends upon the kinship structure of the dramatis personae. The Springers and Angstroms are nuclear families and the unconscious dynamics that inform the relations between the sexes, as well as within the marriage of Rabbit and Janice, entail each of their Oedipal constellations. It is crucial to examine how Rabbit and Janice are oedipally constituted as subjects in discourse to better understand the ramifying effects on them as adults. This chapter will focus, therefore, on Rabbit Angstrom and Janice's oedipal structuration within the psychoanalytical thematics of unconscious desire, sexuality, male fantasy, subjectivity, death, and jouissance. All these thematics form an ensemble with language.

The identity structures of Rabbit as an obsessional and Janice as

a hysteric are constituted in discourse through Updike's narrative. Much like Freud's case histories, the narrative contains Rabbit's dream text and Janice's symptomatic discourse. That Rabbit is precociously marked by his mother's unconscious desires can be inferred from Rabbit's relationship with other women. Rabbit desires certainty in the form of his inability to choose between Janice or Ruth, since he cannot affirm his mother's desire other than to cover up his own lack, and more primarily, he has a death-drive. All of these are characteristic neurotic symptoms of Rabbit's particular obsessional structure. Conversely, in order to understand Janice's particular subject position as a hysteric, the onus falls on the reader not to be trapped in her conscious speech, which is a misrecognition, but to listen instead to what the text does not say--the Other scene. Although it is true that it is Rabbit's irresponsible actions that generate the whole situation leading to the tragedy of Rebecca's death, which is also a death of a piece of Janice herself, we miss the point of the novel if we fail to see the vital link between Janice's unconscious subject position in the Other and her unspeakable suffering. On the surface where Rabbit is always caught in frenetic actions, Janice is enticingly and aimed to her T.V., where Rabbit seeks quick sexual gratifications, Janice prides in self-denial, where Rabbit is a spectator. Janice is an alcoholic. It is only the underside of Janice's narrative that speaks her real history.[1] By her complicitous

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[1] See Pierre Macherey, A Theory of Literary Production (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978), p. 84. Macherey writes, "Thus it is not a question of introducing a historical explanation which is stuck on to the work from the outside. On the contrary, we must show a sort of splitting within the work: this division is its unconscious, in so far as it possesses one--the unconscious which is history, the play of history beyond its edges encroaching on these edges. . . . Once again it is not a question of redoubling the work with an unconscious, but a question of resonating in the very gestures of expression that which it is not. Then,

enslavement in the Other, Janice is potentially active in being inactive. She is paradoxically master of her destiny in being the slave to the Other's--Rabbit's--desire. In allowing Rabbit to go west from and live with Ruth, in accepting him back without acrimony, and finally in allowing herself to be bullied by Rabbit to go back to the kettle when she had already kicked the habit, she in fact participates in active actions driven by her unconscious placement in the Other's/Rabbit's desire.

Rabbit, Run is couched in the present tense, for Updike's narrative is a performance in which the symbolic as an ordering is disturbed by the speech of the unconscious. The narrative points not only to the limits of representation and sexuality but also to the symptoms that result precisely because any sexual position taken in language by the biosexual subject is bound to be unsatisfactory. For Lacan there is no pre-discursive reality. Shying away from any biological determinism of sexual identity, Lacan inscribes subjectivity and sexuality in language. In other words, the subject's identity and sexuality are simultaneously constituted in both registers of language--conscious and unconscious--that split the subject in and from each other. If the symbolic assigns all subjects to line up on one side or the other of the divide, the unconscious calls such an ordering into question by disturbing sexual identity. Read through a Lacanian lens, the dialectical space of Rabbit, Run contends with two inseparable subversive tropes: jouissance (what escapes in sexuality) and signifiance (what shifts within language). These tropes point to the resistant fedings in language where both subjectivity and sexuality falter and fail. If Janice, occupying the

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the reverse side of what is written will be history itself.

space of the hysteric refuses to submit to the symbolic ordering imposed on all subjects and falls ill, Rabbit as her phallocentral counterpart struggles to eradicate sexual difference itself by claiming off the knowledge of the unconscious. The more Rabbit writes over women's body to avert sexual Otherness, the more Woman as the Other asserts herself.

First, let us examine in the light of Lurie's comment the demeaning of women as dumb whores in Rabbit, Run. Rabbit denigrates women in the novel, especially when he objects Ruth to oral sex, or attempts brutal anal sex with his wife, Janice, not long after she delivers Rebecca. In the same fashion Rabbit's ex-coach Tothero looks at women as monkeys, and the Reverend Eccles treats his wife with disdain. All the men--Rabbit, Tothero, Eccles--seek to empower themselves by denigrating women. But their gender position, as men defined against women, is constantly disturbed by the subject splitting in discourse. The unconscious constantly undermines their 'macho' claim to manhood, and just at the moment when they feel their gender position secure, both their sexuality and unified subjectivity drifts, falters, and fails. Examples abound in Rabbit, Run. Is Tothero a man, or a woman, or merely another mirror-image of Rabbit's mother?

> With the rattling tongue of a proud mother Tothero watches him [Rabbit] dress.[4]
>
> Rabbit dislikes manipulation but he had liked Tothero. Next to his mother Tothero had the most force. (p. 21)

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[4] John Updike, Rabbit, Run (New York: Random House, 1960), p. 51. All subsequent references to this work will appear, parenthetically, in the text.

When Mr. Angstrom - Rabbit's father, fails to function as the third term to distance Rabbit from his mother, Rabbit by conversion symptom becomes the cause of the problem. Rabbit, by the same token, in mirroring his father's failure to stand in for law, sees in him less of a man and more of a woman:

> The old man isn't angry but he looks at Harry like there isn't anything there. His weary hunch and filthy fingernails annoy his son; it's as if he's willfully aging them all. Why doesn't he get false teeth that fit? His mouth works like an old woman's. (p. 211)

There 'isn't anything' in either the father or the son, as the law fails to inscribe them away from the exteriority of the extramural body. In Roth's description of Rabbit, it is her unconscious discourse that speaks through the gaps to undercut Rabbit's male gender identity: 'He's beautiful for a man, soft and uncircumcised lying sideways in his fleece and then like an angel's sword, he fits her tight ... she feels like next to nothing with him and that must be it, that must be what she was looking for. To feel like next to nothing with a man' (p. 138). The repetition of 'next to nothing' points beyond Ruth's hysterical position that keeps her lack a lack to Rabbit's own relation to the phallus as 'nothing,' as missing. The reference here is not a reductive one to the penis, for that part of Rabbit's anatomy 'fits' Ruth 'tight.' The reference is to the phallus as the mark of difference, as referring to law, which Rabbit is unable to effect since he himself hasn't received it from either his father or anyone else in the family constellation. In another instance, Rabbit responds to Eccles' question as to why his marriage is estranged: 'I told ja. There was this thing that wasn't there' (p. 125). Rabbit is referring to 'this thing' as saying more than he knows. The sexual

impasse is confronted by Rabbit all the time no matter how well it is camouflaged in words like 'this thing' or 'nothing' or simply 'isn't anything.' In the repeated assault on Rabbit's sexuality Updike is pointing to the symptomatic moments in discourse when Ruth sexuality and subjectivity flounder and fail:

'The imaginary economy,' Lacan explains, 'only has a meaning and we only have a relation to it in so far as it is inscribed in a symbolic order which imposes a ternary relation.'[5] The persistent denial of the 'ternary relation' that the symbolic order imposes on the imaginary explains further why Rabbit strongly identifies with Tothero--'You and I are two of a kind' (p. 50)--, and with Eccles--'he [Rabbit] is grateful to Eccles for not fleeing from him' (p. 122). Both men, like Rabbit, have problems dealing with the otherness in women. As Tothero explains to Rabbit: 'Do you realize, Harry, that a young woman has hair on every part of her body?' Tothero goes on to demean women as monkeys in order to deny sexual difference: 'Do think about it. They are monkeys, Harry. Women are monkeys' (p. 54). Eccles too is threatened by the sexuality of women. Lucy, from the position of the other, exposes the crux of her husband's problem. Eccles sees in Rabbit his mirror-image, and consequently, as Lucy puts it:

> 'You love him. That's sickening. Oh I think that's sickening, Jack. Why don't you try loving me, or your children?' 'I do.' 'You don't, Jack. Let's face it, you don't. You couldn't bear to love anybody who might return it. You're afraid of that aren't you? Aren't you afraid?' (p. 245)

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[5] Jacques Lacan, The Ego in Freud's Theory and in the Technique of Psychoanalysis (New York: Norton, 1989) p. 296.

Feminist critics who take strong exception to Updike's construction of women in discourse fail to look beyond the images of women in the text which merely reflect woman as symptom of man. If woman is defined against the male, and so negative to man's positive, what Updike's Rabbit, Run achieves is the incredible feat of exposing the very categories 'man' and 'woman' in discourse as fictional, arbitrary impostures. Updike's construction of man and women when read through the critical lens of Lacan can explain how Updike consistently sets up the sexist categories in discourse only to undermine and subvert their false consistency.

Serge Leclaire in 'Phila, Or the Obsessional and His Desire' writes: 'A veil, transparent and impenetrable, separates the obsessional subject from the object of his desire. . . . It appears to us now that what is primordially at the center of the sanctuary is the unsatisfied desire of the mother, as it appears in her communication with the child. . . . To make a really good obsessional, it is necessary that the child be marked, . . . by the indelible seal of his mother's unsatisfied desire.'[6] At the center of Updike's Rabbit, Run, Rabbit's mother is found as unromantically desiring. She constantly denigrates her husband in order to "mark" Rabbit with the indelible seal of her unsatisfied desire. Rabbit is asked unconsciously to function as the phallus for the mother because she fails to find satisfaction in her husband. Significantly, Rabbit visits his parental home only twice in the novel, and what is more, he actually

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[6] Serge LeClaire, 'Phila, or the Obsessional and His Desire,' Returning to Freud: Clinical Psychoanalysis in the School of Lacan, ed. and trans. Stuart Schneiderman (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980), pp. 114-119. For an illuminating account of obsessional and hysteric discourse structure see also Ellie Ragland-Sullivan, 'The Limits of Discursive Structure: Obsession and Hysteria,' Papers of the Freudian School of Melbourne, ed. Ornce Zentner (Sundenea Press, 1985), pp. 69-80.

speaks to his mother only once in all that temporal space. This indicates Rabbit's massive repression of his failure to relinquish his special bond with her whose detrimental effects are clearly evidenced in his being less of a man in his relationship with Janice, Ruth, and Lucy. Rabbit's first visit, to pick up his son Nelson, is hardly a happy homecoming. Rabbit eavesdrops on the domestic hiss, and he is immediately shot with a pang of jealousy to see his own usurp his place in the 'high chair':

> He walks back as far as the lit kitchen window and steps onto the cement without the scrape of the shoe scraping and on tiptoe looks in one bright corner. He sees himself sitting in a high chair, and a quick odd jealousy comes and passes. It is his son. (p 25)

Rabbit beats a retreat, leaving his son in "this home" which is 'happier than his,' but not before he is troubled by the contour of desires within the economy of the family. What Rabbit observes is an inordinate closeness between his father and his sister, Miriam, while his mother is isolated and alienated from their intimacy: 'Pop and Mim smile and make remarks but Mom, mouth set, comes in grimly with her spoon. Harry's boy is being fed; this home is happier than his, he glides a pace backward over the cement and rewalks the silent strip of grass' (p 26)

The Oedipal scene is fraught with all the consequences of Mrs. Angstrom's unconscious desire. The Real speaks through the language of Mrs. Angstrom's body, and shows the lack of bonding between her and her grandson: 'but, Mom mouth set, comes in grimly with her spoon.' The said relationship is brought home again when Rabbit's mother dashes all hopes of her grandson becoming a great basketball player like her Harry (Rabbit):

> 'He can't Earl,' Mom interrupts, and Rabbit is happy to hear her voice, thinks the ice has broken, until he

hears what she says 'He has those Springer hands.' Those words spoken as hard as steel, strike a flurry of sparks off Rabbit's heart (p 211)

Mrs. Angstrom's verbal attack destroys less the morale of the little boy than Rabbit's function as Law. Nelson's identification is with the body of the Springer family rather than with submission to the symbolic castration of language, the order of exchange. It is through the objects of the Real--her various spunk and body--that Mrs. Angstrom communicates her unconscious desire to deny her son the ability to function as Law or to have access to other women. The one time when Rabbit does not speak with his mother in the novel is punctuated by more meaningful silences between those three words:

> Whenever the issue wobbles over toward his mother's feet he has to get it; Nelson won't. The silence makes Rabbit blush, for himself or for her he doesn't know. (p 211)

Between Rabbit and Nelson, between father and son, comes Rabbit's mother's "silence." It is also the "blush" that migrates/mediates between Rabbit and his mother, and it destabilizes Rabbit's function as law by exposing Rabbit's unconscious identification with a weak signifier for a father's name. The problem stems from Rabbit's own father, who functions in relation to him as Rabbit functions in relation to his son:

> When his father comes home it isn't much better. The old man isn't angry but he looks at Nelly like there isn't anything there. His weary hunch and filthy fingernails annoy him some, it's as if he's willfully ogling them all. Why doesn't he get false teeth that fit? His mouth works like an old woman's. It shouldn't matter what size hands Nelson has. Now he discovers it does matter; he doesn't want the boy to have his mother's hands, and if he does - and if Mom noticed it he probably does - he likes the kid a little less. And he admires this, her willingness to have him

> hate her, so long as he gets her message. But he rejects her message: he feels it pushing at his heart and rejects it. He doesn't want to hear it. He doesn't want to hear her say another word. He just wants to get out with a little piece of his love of her left (pp. 211-12)

Rabbit's repetitive rejection of his mother's 'message' only results in the eternal return of the repressed. Rabbit's failure to free himself from the gaze of his mother, whose unconscious position simultaneously desires and rejects Rabbit as her phallus. When the Springers hold Rabbit partly responsible for the death of baby Rebecca, Rabbit's mother alone comes to his defense by believing, in spite of stark evidence to the contrary, that her son is innocent:

> 'Rossy, what have they done to you? She asks this out loud and wraps him in a hug as if she would carry him back to the sky from which they have fallen.' (p. 258)

Yet the same Mrs. Angstrom, like the rest on both sides of the family also rejects Rabbit at Rebecca's funeral: 'So soon that among the heads even his own mother's is horrified, blank with shock, a wall against him, who asks him what have they done to him and then she does it too. A suffocating sense of injustice blinds him. He turns and runs' (p. 272).

The key to Rabbit's rejection by his mother lies in deconstructing the semantics of his name.[7] Why does Mrs. Angstrom call her son Rabbit?

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[7] See Text Book: An Introduction to Literary Language, eds. Robert Scholes, Nancy R. Comley, and Gregory L. Ulmer (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988). According to the French philosopher Jacques Derrida, there are at least three ways in which an author signs a work. The first dimension or register of signing is the signature 'proper', the second registrar refers to what is commonly called 'style -- the imitable idiom of the artist's work'. The third register of the signature is the most complex, involving the heraldic placement of the name in the depths of the text. See also Self-Consciousness: Memoirs of John Updike (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1989). Updike's self-conscious play with names and naming in Rabbit, Run carries the mark of the writer, the need out of which the text has grown. In his Memoirs, Updike mentions that, 'Updike was an unusual name, savoring of high expectations and good self-regard, it was also something of a joke, used more than once in Hollywood movies

The play with the dilatory speech of the proper noun gives us the other noun 'ass' and the homonymical hy - he - Rabbit. Rabbit is like the small dull but obstinate, who receives tacit permission from his mother to chase 'ass,' much to the consternation of Rabbit's father. However, since Rabbit has already been marked by his mother's gaze, the beguiling consent is paradoxically no consent at all; the freedom to have other women actually imprisons Rabbit in his mother's unconscious desire. 'Sassy' in its acoustic insinuation also refers to Rabbit as 'sissy.' That he should be called Rabbit, which signifies the animal's promiscuous sexuality, gives Rabbit the ironic reputation of a play-boy/Bunny that is incommensurate with his desire or lack. In other words, the more Rabbit fantasizes to 'fuck' other women to prove his manhood, the more he pathetically struggles with the shadows of his self.

Robbit is asked unconsciously to function as the phallus for the mother (which she ultimately rejects as well) because she fails to find satisfaction in her husband. She tells her husband in a moment of frustration the unpalatable truth: 'I didn't want you- you wanted me- Or wasn't it that way?' (p. 134). Angstrom, without even a show of challenge, is only too willing to agree with her: 'Yes of course it was that way.' What further divides the Angstroms is the husband's working class status as a printer:

> The front door has opened with a softness she alone hears. Her husband comes into the kitchen wearing a white shirt and a tie but with his fingernails outlined in black; he is a printer. He is as tall as his wife but seems shorter. His mouth works self-deprecatorily over badly fitted false teeth. (p. 152)

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for comic minor characters, winning howls of local laughter in the movie house on New Holland Avenue' (pp. 27-28).

To Rabbit, his father is not a source of strength and inspiration. He embodies everything weak that Rabbit sees in his own self:

> His father, fresh from work, lo in an ink-smeared blue shirt and, when his face lapses from applauding his grandson, looks old: tired and grizzled. His throat a loose bundle of chords. The new teeth he got a year ago have changed his face, collapsed it a fraction of an inch. (p. 25)

It is not the deficiency of the biological father that is invoked by Rabbit here, but his function as law, as the Name-of-the-Father. That the function can be taken up by someone other than the biological father is ironically revealed when Angstrom with shattering irony unconsciously appeals to Rabbit, his son, to function as law and give him the stability in the Symbolic order he could not himself give his son. Angstrom nostalgically dredges up of memories of Rabbit's past glory as a basketball player--"From about twelve years old on," Angstrom says, "he was at that night and day. I put a rope up for him out back; the garage wasn't high enough"--or his hopeless desire to give dignity to his vocation by enlisting his son's support in his work--"He won't come work in the print shop because it'll get his fingernails dirty"--Mr. Angstrom looks up to his son for the third term.[9] To his chagrin he finds the dyadic trap of mother-son that Mrs. Angstrom fiercely guards. Powerless, Angstrom waits to be empowered by Rabbit who himself has a weak

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[9] For an in-depth analysis of the complex way in which the Lacanian third term functions see Ellis Ragland Sullivan, "Seeking the Third Term: Desire, the Phallus, and the Materiality of Language," Feminism and Psychoanalysis, eds. Richard Feldstein and Judith Roof (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989), pp. 48-64. Ragland-Sullivan explains, "Between the imaginary and the symbolic phallic effects are felt as the limits of anxiety and the reasons of guilt. One could go farther and argue that the symbolic order in itself a third term that functions to smash imaginary fantasies and symbiotic collusions, opening the door to the play of retaliatory aggressivity in language, whether one refers to disagreements, derisions, or annihilative tactics" (p. 63).

identification with the Father's name. 'The old man isn't angry but he looks at Harry like there isn't anything there' (p 152). Angstrom takes out his frustration by the verbal thrashing of his son: 'Mel's become the worst kind of Brewer bum. If I could get my hands on him, Father, I'd try to thrash him if he killed on in the process' (p 152). As Angstrom is to his son Robbit, so is Rabbit to his son Nelson. We see the re-enactment of the same history, the same search for the third term in the son by Robbit the father. The scene after Rebecca's death is poignantly graphic when Robbit sucks out Nelson for his protection rather than the other way around: 'Robbit pulls him up into his lap. He's heavier and longer than he used to be. . . . He wants to get off his father's lap but Harry holds him fast with a kind of terror. . . . It is himself he is protecting by imprisoning the child' (p 251).

Perhaps the most iconographic scenes, when Mrs. Angstrom is framed several times near the sink washing clothes, speak the discourse of the Other through the objects of the Real--the gaze, the void and pain on the body. When Eccles omits Mrs. Angstrom for the first time concerning Robbit's desertion of Janice, she is seen emerging from her washing at the sink: 'She rose to the door wiping suds on her red forearms and returns with him to a sink full of bloated shirts and underwear. She plunges at these things vigorously while they talk' (p 148). When Robbit pays his mother a visit, she is again framed like an icon at the sink. 'This mother's head arched down and screwed spectacles glittered bitterly. Their disapproval niche him whenever she turns from the sink' (p 210). In either case, Mrs. Angstrom's face is conspicuously averted from her audience, an action which marks at once not only her pride and shame in her class position but also her torment and pain in being trapped in the

gaze of the Other

It is Angstrom and Mirlam, father and daughter, as Eccles astutely observes, who conspire against Mrs. Angstrom and unconsciously expose her unsatisfied desire as an impossibility, as a demand that the Other as lack will never fulfill. Once again it is the silent body of Mrs. Angstrom that registers the pain of alienation and loss:

> Eccles looks over at Harry's mother and is jarred to see her leaning against the sink with soaked cheeks gleaming under the glasses. Is she crying because she thinks her husband is speaking the truth, or because she thinks he is saying this just to hurt her, in revenge for making him admit that he had wanted her? Eccles sees that it is his height; their bodies, the beautiful girl's and the weary man's, are the same. They have the same narrowness, a durable edge that Eccles knows after seeing the wounds open under Mrs. Angstrom's spectacles, can cut. (pp. 154-55)

Rabbit, who just "lives in his skin" as Ruth rightly observes, cannot see the "wounds" that open under Mrs. Angstrom's spectacles, and he frets over what he did to earn her "disapproval" that "nicks him whenever she turns from the sink" (p. 154). Rejecting Rabbit as her "phallus" and yet unwilling to let go her possession of him, Mrs. Angstrom's sympathy for Ruth goes beyond her concern for Ruth's plight to her own unconscious desire not to lose Rabbit at any cost. While Mrs. Angstrom sees Rabbit's relation to Janice as husband within the institution of marriage as an erosion of her hold on him, Ruth poses no such threat. The relationship is not defined by a strict social contract:

> Then he [Rabbit] thinks it's that she's disgusted he slept with Ruth, and committed adultery; she's getting religious as she gets older and probably thinks of him as screwed twelve years old anyway, but out of a clear sky she explodes that by asking him abruptly, 'And what's going to happen to this poor girl you lived with in Brewer?' (p. 210)

If Rabbit's subject position in discourse is to "please mama," Mrs

Angstrom's affirmative and silent pursuit of her working-class status is enough to dissuade Rabbit from following the footsteps of his father.[9] As Mr. Angstrom complains about his son to Eccles: 'Then he comes back from the Army and all he cares about is chasing suss. He won't come work in the print shop because it'll get his fingernails dirty' (p. 152). And yet, Mrs. Angstrom's assumption of her working-class status is more ambivalent than a simple embarrassment at her husband's position. The same status becomes a source of pride in defending her son against the upper middle-class Springers. She has a blind faith that her 'good boy wouldn't hurt anyone' (p. 85), and she denies to Eccles that her son had deserted Janice: 'She thinks it's all an illusion your wife and I have, that you've deserted. She says you're much too good a boy to do anything of the sort' (p. 99). Mrs. Angstrom's desire for her son is too blinding for her to face the fact that Rabbit may have some share of blame in his estrangement from Janice:

> Unaware that it is the strength of her own desire that marks Rabbit,

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[9] Several critics, including Margaret Morgenroth in her book Safe At Last in the Middle Years (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), have taken the position that Harry Angstrom is essentially an autobiographical character. In an interview by David Kaufman, Updike responds: 'A reasonable character like that is a mix of somebody you are in a way, of somebody inside you have access to, and of somebody who you're not. I've been re-reading the 'Rabbit' books, by the way, and I'm struck by how much more honest they really are about what it's like to be an American male than my autobiography. [illegible] Really, there's so much more passion and truth in fiction' (Lunside Books, April 1969, p. 43). My position is that the 'Rabbit' books are not autobiographical, although deeply informed by Updike's unremarkable desire. Harry Angstrom's dislike of his father's profession as a printer is not dissimilar to Updike's dislike of his father's teaching profession. 'All those years in Shillington, I had waited to be admired, waited patiently, [illegible] I hid a certain determined defiance. I would not march, I would not form, I would not drop down; I would 'show' them, I would avenge all the slights and abasements visited upon my father. [illegible] He was in this smug world into which I had been born, an outsider' (Updike's Self-Consciousness, p. 33).

Mrs Angstrom sees in Janice a daunting rivel Janice s middle-class upbringing and her father's wealth are factors which contribute to the bad blood between the two families When Rabbit leaves Janice for Ruth, Mrs. Angstrom blames Janice squarely for the rift

> 'Ahout as shy as a snake,' she says, 'that girl These little women are poison Mincing around with their sneaky eyes getting everybody's sympathy Well she doesn't get mine; let the man weep You talk about tarts; they don't become ivory-white saints in my book just by having a marriage licence That girl wanted Harry and got him with the only trick she knew and now she's run out of tricks ' (pp 150-153)

When the Springers hold Rabbit partly responsible for the death of baby Rebecca, it is Rabbit's own mother who alone comes to his quick Defense believing, in spite of stark evidence to the contrary, that her son is innocent:

> 'Harry, what have they done to you?' She asks this out loud and wraps him in a hug as if she would carry him back to the sky from which they have fallen (p 288)

Given the charmed circle of the mother-son relationship that puts a curse on Rabbit's own desire, the crucial questions to ask concern the Oedipal effect on Rabbit's subjectivity, his relationships with women, and his response to the metaphysical issues of life knowledge and death, these questions are of concern especially in the context of Rabbit being, in the words of Leclaire, 'neither the possessor nor the master of his sex.'[10]

According to Lacan, a signifier represents a subject for another signifier In the case of the unconscious, the signifier is not a need to call, or address the other because of the subject's lack, but rather

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[10] Serge Leclaire, 'Philo, or the Obsessional and His Desire,' p. 123

the signifier merely makes the discourse of the Other its counterpart, thereby closing off knowledge of the unconscious and the lack. The key to Rabbit's subject position in discourse is his central concern that "everything seems natural that is outside of his questions" (p. 183). Why are Rabbit's "semantics" of paramount importance to him if not to ward off the anxiety of the otherness and sexual difference that women constantly confront him with? As Jacqueline Rose points out:

> The Other Crossed through ($) stands against this knowledge as the place of division where meaning falters, where it slips and shifts. It is the place of significance, Lacan's term for this very movement in language against, or away from, the positions of coherence which language simultaneously constructs.[1] (Rose, p. 75)

The scene of sports perhaps is one place where Rabbit feels mastery and perfection of body control, where there is the illusion of no object dependence on Otherness. Rabbit's triumph occurs every time he makes the 'high perfect hole,' and then 'nothing' in the calm 'flat world' scatters such for him:

> The last quartet of a basketball game used to carry him into this world: you rose not on the crowd thought for the sake of the score but for yourself, in a kind of idleness. There was you and sometimes the ball and then the hole, the high perfect hole with its pretty skirt of net. It was you, just you and that fringed ring, and sometimes it came down right to your lips it seemed and sometimes it stayed away, hard and remote and small . . . what you had already felt in your fingers or even in your arms as you braced to shoot or for that scatter in your eyes. When he was hot he could see the separate threads weave into the strings looping the hoop. (p.40)

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[1] Jacqueline Rose, "Feminine Sexuality: Jacques Lacan and the école freudienne," Sexuality in the Field of Vision (Thetford: The Thetford Press, 1986), p. 75

The erotically feminized language of Rabbit to describe his feats in sports--"the hole," "pretty skirt of net," "the strings looping the hoop"--is his adroit strategy of privileging his mastery of the game that contains the feminine hole/skirt of net rather than the "high perfect hole" determining Rabbit's perfection of the game. In other words, the taxonomy of the basketball game controls the woman's body as text, even as Rabbit's text is undermined by woman's body as the other. What Rabbit wants to hear loudly is: "It was you, just you and that fringed ring, and sometimes it came down right to your lips it seemed. . . ." The emphatic you underscored several times in the passage tries to drown the impact of the opposite strain in this dialectic, the pull of force against the male fantasy, the feminine other that belies Rabbit's control and mastery: "sometimes it stayed away, hard and remote and small . . ." (p 48)

The golf sessions with Eccles allow Rabbit to experience tremendous exhilaration of mastery as he hits the golf ball to "nothingness," into the vanishing hole. The moment of triumph is also the moment of heart-wrenching doubt for Rabbit. The question precisely is whether Rabbit is dead or alive. Rabbit's narrative hesitation foregrounds the issue of death, which he tries to repress unsuccessfully:

> In avoiding looking at Eccles he looks at the ball, which sits high on the tee and already seems free of the ground. Very simply he brings the clubhead around his shoulder into it. The sound has a hollowness, a sloglessness he hasn't heard before. His arms force his head up and his ball is hung way out, lonely pale against the beautiful black blue storm clouds, his grandfather's color stretched across the east . . . It hesitates, and Rabbit thinks it will die, but he's fooled, for the ball makes his hesitation the ground of a final leap: With a bite of whalebone has taken a last bite of space before vanishing in falling. 'That's it' he cries and, turning to Eccles with a smile of aggrandisement, repeats, 'that's it.' (p 126)

The dialogue between Rabbit and the ball is so intensely narcissistic that it dismisses the function of the ground as the third term by manipulating the other (ball) solely in terms of the immediated, transparent, unified self: ', he looks at the ball, which sits high on the tee and already seems free of the ground.' Rabbit's male fantasy that collapses the other in the self, the signifier in the signified, is facilitated by his present-tense narrative which gives the illusion of always having a 'touch with objects,' an illusion of the metaphysic of presence. Rabbit's hesitation in narrative itself becomes the ground, 'the ball makes his hesitation the ground of a final leap,' and the ball the figure that rides on it. Having hit the ball into the hole with a sound that has a 'hollowness/singleness,' Rabbit is able to plug the hole in the Other, the anxiety of coming to terms with differance. However, Rabbit's euphoric 'That's it' is clouded in the metonymic chain by the third term, and this time in the figure of his grandfather, who cannot be obliterated as Rabbit was obliterate all the women, including his mother, into the hole/nothingness of home: ' the mild grey sole sky is his grandfather waiting upstairs so that young Harry will not be a Fenwambi . and his ball is hung out, lunarly pale against the beautiful black blue of storm clouds. his grandfather's color stretched dense across the east' (pp. 124-26).

The grandfather who "waits upstairs" is Rabbit's father figure. The ball becomes 'lunarly pale' when the grandfather intervenes like the beautiful black blue of storm clouds. Rabbit's crisis lies in making his demand for love a demand that identifies itself with a paternal metaphor. In other words, the grandfather's 'No' in the Symbolic in relation to Rabbit's mother becomes a literal 'No' in relation to all other women as

well because Rabbit has taken his ideal ego to be a 'no.' Instead of being castrated by the Symbolic order of language that allows the unconscious to speak the subject, Rabbit is threatened by his grandfather as the figure of castration. Sperm, thus, is one arena where Rabbit in a cavalier fashion thinks he can reject Otherness but is instead painfully confronted by it.

Rabbit is ideologically living, but unconsciously he is identified with death. The master signifier that dictates Rabbit's life is the 'No' of his grandfather that is diametrically opposed to his mother as unconsciously desiring. The point is not how Rabbit is traumatically torn between the compelling two forces, but how the two forces produce the same paralyzing effect on Rabbit. Whether it is the master signifier of the grandfather whose 'No' Rabbit abides by or Rabbit's trap in the gaze of his mother, the end result is the same: Rabbit's desire is frozen, and he cannot love other women.

Rabbit's being trapped in a double-bind can be best illustrated in his relation to Ruth and Janice. The first incident happens at the top of a cliff in the company of Ruth. Rabbit is mortally shaken as he looks down the unfathomable hole of 'exploding heads of trees' and urges Ruth to protect him by putting her 'arm around me' (p.108). The doubling of the mother-sex symbiosis in the protective embrace of Ruth is inexplicably vitiated the moment Rabbit asks the terrible question: 'So it is in an access of security that he asks, voicing like a loved child a teasing doubt, "Were you really a whore?"' (p.108). Rabbit's startling question can be read in two ways. Is it the mother's gaze that thwarts Ruth from taking her place as the surrogate mother? Or is it the grandfather's 'No' taken literally to kill Rabbit's desire for Ruth? Read either way, Rabbit

reseats exposing himself as weak before Ruth when his actions are effects of his own unconscious desire he has no control over.

The dream text of Rabbit in which his mother, his sister Miriam and Janice figure is another example of Rabbit's losing under his mother's gaze. In the dream Rabbit comes to the defence of his sister when his mother calls her a "tart." The dream quickly drifts into the triangular relationship of his mother, Janice and himself. As Rabbit essays to explain to Janice about his mother and her "getting at him," he discovers to his horror the corporeal body of Janice melting into his hands:

> He repents, numb at heart, about his mother, that she was just getting at him but the girl keeps crying, and to his horror her face begins to slide, the skin to slip slowly from the bone, but there is no bone, just more melting stuff underneath; he cups his hands with the idea of catching it and putting it back, so it drips in lumps into his palms the air turns white with what is his own scream. (p 85)

Rabbit's unconscious speaks here from the locus of the Other Trapped in his mother's gaze... the only way Rabbit can disavow the sexual difference of Janice is through liquefying the materiality of her body. The drive of Rabbit's discourse that displaces lack on Janice leads him as well to see his mirror image in her, to face the horror of his own mind as an empty vat, and to see in Janice's imagined death his own death:

> His life seems a sequence of grotesque poses assumed to no purpose, a magic dance empty of belief. There is no God; Janice can die: the two thoughts come at once... in one slow wave... He feels underwater, caught in chains of transparent slime, ghosts of the urgent ejaculations he has spat into the cold bodies of women. His fingers on his knees pick at persistent threads. (p 134)

'Urgent ejaculations' are Rabbit's euphemism and metaphoric substitution for the 'semen' that Rabbit has spat into the mild bodies of women. The splitting of the word 'semen' allows us to 'see' perhaps into the hollow/empty net that is Rabbit's mind. In another Lacanian sense the literariness of Rabbit's language itself speaks the unconscious truth. What Rabbit is capable of is only 'urgent ejaculations' that emasculate him in exploding the myth of control over his own body.

In Rabbit's relation to Janice, Ruth, and Lucy, the modus operandi is to write over the woman's body Rabbit's own 'sensation' in order to deny both sexual difference and woman as desiring subjects. However, the place of the significance in the Other always undermines Rabbit from any position of certainty from any relation of knowledge to his psychic processes and history. In Updike's description of the scene of Janice's coming to bed with Rabbit, it is the Other scene that intervenes Rabbit's

> whole stomach stirs at the fierce sight of her breasts, braced high by the tension of their milk, jutting from her slim body like glossy green-veined fruit with coarse purple tips [...] But he feels a difference between them and when they first loved, lying side-by-side on the borrowed bed, his eyes closed, together sucking the filmy sideways descent into one another. Now she is intermittently careless, walks out of the bathroom naked, [...] a machine, a white pliant machine for fucking, hatching, feeding. (p 216)

The key words in Rabbit's sex act with Janice in the past were 'eyes closed', which blocked off not only the otherness of Janice but also the gaze of the other. But now Janice's 'nakedness' as the scene of the Other comes to trouble Rabbit's certainty and unity of being. She is immediately denigrated as a 'white pliant machine for fucking, hatching, feeding,' in order for Rabbit to regain his authority and control. As

Lacan points out "for the soul to come into being, she, the woman is differentiated from it ... called woman and defamed."[12] Also, Rabbit's phallic jouissance when he fucks Janice with "eyes closed" is different from the Other jouissance of Janice. Rabbit's phallic jouissance lies in making contrary ideas one, in erasing Janice's sexual difference through his thought process, and finally in establishing his illusory control over her by getting on "top" of her while making love:

> In bed he imagines he can feel its difference in her flesh. There is that feeling of her body coming into his hand, of fitting his palm, that makes a welcome texture. ... He rubs her back first lightly, then roughly, pushing her chest against him, and gathers such a feel of strength from her plumpness that he gets up on an elbow to be above her. ... After Ruth, she is mysterious, a sullen weight whose chemistry is impervious to ideas impregnable to their penetration (pp. 227-228)

Ironically, instead of disavowing sexual difference, Rabbit's thought process constructs the sexual asymmetry between Janice and himself over so acutely: "After Ruth, she is mysterious, a sullen weight whose chemistry is impervious to ideas ..." That Ruth should be privileged here comes as no surprise. In Rabbit's awkish love for and yet dominance of Ruth we see his desperate need to fend off dependence by loving a degraded whore-object. Rabbit is only romantic with strict dualism. He deludes himself in rating Ruth so high, because he thinks she is all flesh turned into "essence" by the mediation of his mind, whereas Janice's body and mind threaten him so much that he has to call her dumb every time he is challenged by her: "He is a good lover. He relaxes into the warmth

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[12] Jacques Lacan, "A Love Letter," Feminine Sexuality, eds. Juliet Mitchell and Jacqueline Rose, trans. Rose (New York: W. W. Norton, 1982) p. 156.

of the bud and pulls the bow on his pajama waist. . . . . The unnaturalness, the reminder of her wound, makes his confidence delicate, so he is totally destroyed when her voice--her thin, reeping, dumb-girl's voice--says by his ear, 'Harry: Don't you know I want to go to sleep?'' (p 228).

Lucy too is 'undone' only in Rabbit's masturbatory thoughts that--far from establishing his phallic power over her, express his phallic impotence. It is not Lucy who is undone but his own thoughts that 'die' with their own limits of representation, much the same way as his erect penis 'slacks' after its consummation with the 'diamond standing on its head.'

> . . . she sits spread like two white gates parted--what a slow chest you have and here and here and here. He rolls over and the dry sheet is the touch of her anxious hands, himself tapering tall up from furred velvet, ridges through which the thick vein strains, and he does what he must with a slight knowing bend to stop the high hurrah and make himself slack for sleep. A woman's sweet froth. Wells her. Recess through the diamond standing on his head and comes out on the other side wet. How silly . . . the lips lose. Lucy undone. (p 214)

Thus for women, the question of their jouissance is always elsewhere, but for Rabbit, as the words of Stuart Schneiderman, the sexual act is 'transformed in its entirety to the thought process. This process involves being, for it is only in being the phallus, in identifying with it, that the obsessional can produce a phallic jouissance while arriving at the conclusions of a chain of thoughts through a unification of contrary ideas.'[13]

In yet another scene, Janice becomes the total object of Rabbit's fantasy, elevated into the place of the Other and made to stand for its

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[13] Stuart Schneiderman, Rat Man (New York: New York University Press, 1986), p 112.

truth: 'He thinks Mine, my woman, but then she turns and her smeared frantic face blots out his pride of possession. She becomes a liability that painfully weighs the knot below his chest' (p 262). Once again Rabbit's efforts to write over Janice's body is frustrated by the Other crossed through, where meaning falters, slips, and shifts. Just when Rabbit thought Janice was 'Mine, my woman,' the place of the significance asserts itself and 'blots out his pride of possession.' The pivotal verb is 'turns,' that brings in the materiality of Janice's body--'smeared frantic face'--to disturb the control of Rabbit's dry, cerebral thinking.

In Rabbit's relationship with Lucy, the tension is between Rabbit's inexorable body of thought which he writes over Lucy's body and the language of Lucy's body as the place of the significance that subverts such a move. The object or cause of desire that supports Rabbit's fantasy in relation to Lucy is predominantly scopic. Rabbit imagines that, aided by his biological eyes, he can fix on image of Lucy in his mind that would deny the undermining of subjectivity and sexuality by the unconscious:

> He flatters himself that her true attention radiates backward at him. Against the dour patchwork of subdued hoods, stained glass, . . . her hair and skin and hat form simply, their differences in tint like the shades of brilliance within one flame . . . and she stands and faces him, it is anticlimactic to see her face, with its pointed collection of dots--eyes and nostrils and freckles and the tight feint dimples that bring a sarcastic tension to the corners of her mouth. (pp 219-220)

The anticlimax for Rabbit is not because of the discrepancy between his idea of Lucy and Lucy in the flesh, but how the phallic jouissance in constructing Lucy in his thoughts to guarantee power, control and manipulation is disturbed by the materiality of Lucy's body in discourse--a 'collection of dots, eyes, nostrils and freckles.' Rabbit

touches on the power of his scopic drive that goes beyond the parameters of the relationship it turns on without, however, losing in the least aware of it: "That she wears a facial expression at all shocks him slightly; the luminous view he had enjoyed for an hour did not seem capable of being so swiftly narrowed into one small person" (p 220) Here we have a good example of how asymmetrical the jouissance is between the sexes. While Lucy's jouissance is elsewhere and always in excess, Rabbit's fails to correspond to that of Lucy by the very nature of its being phallic and different. Much as Rabbit in the vein of an obsessional credits the power of his thoughts to control and signify passing, Rabbit unwittingly realizes the limits of representation, the limits of meaning. In the words of Lacan, when Rabbit's thoughts about Lucy do not match her one to one, it is symptomatic of how 'meaning indicates the direction in which it fails."[14] In other words, Rabbit's phallic jouissance is in excess of the economy of his discourse that also constitutes it.

Both occupies the place of the Other in Rabbit's fantasy to act as the guarantor of truth. Projecting unconsciously his lack on to Ruth, Rabbit is looking for the essence of Woman to fill his own hole in the Real, which at the same time he disavows. The mind/body split symptomatic of the obsessional's either/or construction of ideas is clear when Rabbit wants not Ruth's body but "her. her."

> Ruth tenses at his threat to bite, and her hands shove at his shoulders, but he clings there, his teeth bared in a silent exclamation, crying out against her smothering throat that it is not her body he wants, not the machine, but her: her. (p 77)

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[14] Jacques Lacan 'A Love Letter," p. 150

It is in the narrative swerves, when the narration voices Ruth's or Lucy's or Janice's consciousness of man's inability to love, that we find the most pronounced testimonial not only to women's possession of their own minds but also to their dauntless undermining of male fantasy. It is Ruth who sees through Rabbit's intense narcissism that must reduce the Otherness of women to sameness in order to guarantee the unity and invincibility of his own being:

> For the thing about him he didn't mind her getting up when he was asleep and crawling into the cold bathroom just so long as he didn't have to watch anything or do anything. That was the thing about him, he just lived in his skin and didn't give a thought to the consequences of anything. Tell him about the candy bars and feeling sleepy he'll probably get scared and off he'll go, him and his good clean pizza and his cute little God and his cute little minister playing golf every Tuesday. (p.139)

Yes, Rabbit lives in his 'skin' and all that matters to him is 'What's inside me. That's all I have' (p 182). Ruth is facilitating Rabbit to squash his male fantasy makes him confront not the locus of his speech as an emanation out from the unitary, egotistical 'I' but from the Other. Ruth occupies the space of the analyst and compels Rabbit to embrace the hole in his desire. He must use his so-called freedom in his phenomenal thought process as really Rabbit's tragic enslavement to words to fill his lack in the Other. It would not be altered even if 'Tothero told him they were not going to meet two girls but two goats, and [that] they were going not to Brewer but to Tibet' (pp 51-52). 'What's inside' Rabbit, as Ruth discovers, is the Real of his discourse, unsymbolised yet tattooed on his body as a 'pure blank space':

> He feels his insides as very real suddenly, a pure blank space in the middle of a dense set. I don't know, he kept telling Ruth; he doesn't know, what to do, where to go, what will happen, the thought that he doesn't

> knew enough to make him infinitely small and impossible to capture (p 283)

Rabbit's narcissistic thoughts, which at one time gave him the illusion of anchor against the onslaught of Otherness, now decenter him as a 'blank' subject in discourse. His mind as an empty vat 'infinitely small and impossible to capture'

Pointing to the incompatible jouissance between the sexes, Lacan makes the following observation: 'the jouissance of the woman does not go without saying, that is, without saying the truth,' whereas for the man 'his jouissance suffices which is precisely why he understands nothing.'[15] The counter movement of Janice's jouissance does not go without saying the 'truth' about Rabbit. The immediate context may be Rabbit's attempt to have oral sex with Janice when she is hardly recovered from giving birth to Rebecca. Janice thwarts Rabbit's attempt with a sharp rejoinder:

> She turns over on her back into the center of the bed and explains out of her dark face, 'I'm not your whore, Harry.' (p 229)

The statement transcends its signifying context to tell the truth about Rabbit: he can only desire women who are either another surrogate or whore-objects. When he sees the desiring subjects as women, Rabbit cannot love, and he avoids desire at all cost.

It is, perhaps, Lucy's narrative that brings home Rabbit's predicament. During their walk back from the church to Lucy's home, Rabbit empowers himself by rebuffing Lucy's overtures to him: 'You're a doll, but I got this wife now' (p.225). Much as Rabbit credits himself for emerging triumphant from this war between the sexes, he returns to his

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[15] Jacques Lacan 'Les non-dupes errent': Le Seminaire XX 7, p 16.

apartment 'clever and cold with lust' (p.224). Once again, when Rabbit thought he came off strong, it is Lucy's jouissance that calls Rabbit's bluff.

In Rabbit's intersection with Janice, Lucy and Ruth, therefore, the symptom writ large in his discourse is the failure of Rabbit to release his own desire. What intervenes as a 'glass' or 'fog' between Rabbit and the woman is the mother's unconscious desire that has precociously satisfied Rabbit. Thinking too precisely on the event, Rabbit has lost the name of his own desire:

> As her a sensation of touching glass . . . he always thinks when they meet again he will speak firmly, and tell her he loves her, or something as blunt. . . . but in her presence he is numb; his breath fogs the glass . . . but between that preparedness and his everything reasonable intervenes. (pp.221-222)

Between Rabbit's thought and action, between Rabbit and woman he desires, the intervention is the mother so unconsciously desiring. Freud points out: 'A boy's mother is the first object of his love, and she remains so too during the formation of his Oedipus complex and, in a sense, all through his life.'[16] Again, Freud adds, 's marriage is not made secure until the wife has succeeded in making her husband her child as well and in acting as a mother to him.'[17]

Rabbit is comfortable with Janice only when her nursing of Rebecca creates a scopic field where Rabbit can take Nebucco's place in metaphoric substitution: 'The union of breast and baby's face makes a globular symmetry to which both he and Nelson want to attach themselves' (p.215).

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[16] Sigmund Freud, New Introductory Lectures, in the Standard Edition XXII, p.118.

[17] Sigmund Freud, New Introductory Lectures, pp. 133-34.

The maternal scene also represents the mirror-stage structuration of Rabbit's subjectivity and his inability to step out of the specular fascination of the dual relationship that denies the third term. But the mirror image is a mirage, a false image, as it creates aggression at the same time as narcissistic identification. Rabbit sees in Rebecca/himself(?) suckling the breast of Janice the impossibility of fulfilling the contradictory rules of attraction and repulsion. If the union of breast and baby's face makes a 'globular symmetry' that denies difference and consequent anxiety, the breasts have also 'thick nipples' that function like a 'weapon.'

With Ruth, too, the relationship re-creates the mother-son symbiosis:

> He becomes frightened and begs Ruth, 'Put your arm around me.' (p.108)
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> Her accepting his watching her flatters him, shelters him. They have become domestic. (p.86)

Rabbit's imprisonment in his mother's desire is best epitomized in the Rumi of his body. Rabbit's sleeping posture re-presents his sustenance in the womb of his mother. His impossible unconscious desire to return to the 'origin' is also his tomb: 'Thus curled over one edge, he draws backward into sleep like a turtle drawing into his shell' (p.191). It is interesting that such a return to the womb = tomb should be enacted in Lucy's home where Rabbit sleeps for a night. It is, after all, Lucy who poses the most daunting challenge to his imposture of maleness by positioning herself as a desiring subject. Rabbit, who was flamboyant enough to slap Lucy's 'sassy ass' (p.112) when she is not looking, cannot sustain his ardent passion later:

> She is trying to make him feel foolish and sissy, just

> because he's going to go back to his wife. It's quite true, he doesn't act the same he doesn't feel the same with her, either; he's lost the nimbleness that led him so lightly into tapping her backside that day. (p. 194)

The counterpart of Rabbit's obsessional discourse structure is Janice's hysterical one. Drawing attention to the hysterical structure in discourse, Ragland-Sullivan explains:

> Lacan taught that in hysteria the analysand (and analyst) is confronted with an unconscious declaration made by the subject of desire (usually female) to cling to her suffering in order to assure the Other of its predominance. In order to guarantee herself that she is [ ]. Lacan delineated the structure of hysteria as a placing of oneself in the Other in order to make oneself the object of alien desire. . . . A hysterical subject is defined, then, as one whose complicitous slavery frames her (his) life.[18]

Janice's unflagging fidelity to the Other's desire is her fidelity to Rabbit's unconscious desire. Instead of functioning as Law, the third term that severs the mother-daughter/Janice-Rebecca symbiotic relationship, Rabbit functions as death itself. The gendered killing that Rabbit unconsciously desires becomes Janice's burden to carry out. Her position as a hysteric could not have been more abominably conducive to kill a part of herself in order to remain the object of alien desire.

How does Janice's complicitous slavery to her suffering frame her life? To understand how Janice is both imprisoned and liberated by the unconscious jouissance in the Real of the Other, we must begin with the Oedipal effect on Janice as she is constituted as subject in discourse. In studying the particular hysterical structure of Janice, I call

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[18] Ellie Ragland-Sullivan, 'Dora and the Name-of-the-Father: The Structure of Hysteria,' Discontented Discourses: . . . Feminism/Textual Intervention/Psychoanalysis, eds. Marleen S. Barr and Richard Feldstein (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1989), p. 214.

attention to the other side of the relationship of the daughter, namely to the father, as equally important as the mother's place in the family constellation. In other words, I stress the structure of alliance between Janice's mother, father and herself, especially in relation not only to an Other jouissance of the mother, but also to the Name-of-the-Father, the phallic signifier.

'The Oedipal Complex,' writes Serge Leclaire, 'gives an account of the evolution that, little by little, substitutes for the mother, taken as the central and primordial character, the father, as principal and ultimate reference.'[19] Felman writes: "The Oedipus drama mythically epitomizes the subversion of the mirroring illusion through the introduction of a difference in the position of a Third: Father, Law, Language, the reality of death, all of which Lacan designates as the Other, constitutive of the unconscious (otherness to oneself) in that it is both subversive of, and radically ex-centric to, the narcissistic, specular relation of self to other and self to self."[20] The Oedipal evolution for Janice, the only child of the Springers, is arrested by the role of the mother as unconsciously desiring. Mrs. Springer's unsatisfied desire in relation to her designated husband means that Janice is asked to be always the "phallus that pleases Mama." Interestingly, Mrs. Springer is an important character in the novel while Mr. Springer remains a shadowy figure. Apart from Janice's telephone conversation with her ideal father when Rabbit fails to show up at her father's lot, Mr.

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[19] Serge Leclaire, "Philo, or the Obsessional and His Desire," p. 121.

[20] Shoshana Felman, Jacques Lacan and the Adventure of Insight: Psychoanalysis in Contemporary Culture (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1987), p. 185.

Springer shows little interest in Janice, and [illegible] a force to be reckoned with

Although it is true, as Lacan points out, "To speak of the Name-Of-The-Father is by no means the same thing as invoking paternal deficiency (which is often done)," the point to bear in mind is that the father still stands for a 'place and a function.' Insofar as Janice's father fails to function as "prohibition and law," he is a weak function of the third term.[21] In Rebecca's death, nothing could be a more telling and a more punishing proof of Mr. Springer's weak positioning in the Symbolic than the third term functions as death and not as law. Janice's tragedy occurs not because of too much but too little intervention of the third term in distancing her from her mother's desire

Janice remains an ideal and saintly figure by exposing her father and mother for their abandonment of her even while her unconscious desire conspires with them to remain unloved. In the Oedipal evolution of Janice, the problem is not Janice as the father's object of desire but the very lack of such a traffic of desire. My position differs significantly from that of Gallop and Irigaray, who see the function of the Name-Of-The-Father in constative rather than performative terms.[22] The constantive function gives law a quasi content but the performative merely indicates the process of the subject's entry and position in language. Far from being tattooed by the desire of the father, in Gallop's terms, Janice

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[21] Jacques Lacan, 'Les formations de l'inconscient,' Bulletin de Psychologie, p. 8;

[22] See Jane Gallop, The Daughter's Seduction: Feminism and Psychoanalysis (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1982); Luce Irigaray This Sex Which is Not One trans. Catherine Porter (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1985)

experiences only cold neglect from him:

> . . . They were married and she was still little clumsy dark-complected Janira Springer and her husband was a ramshackle lunk who wasn't good for anything in the world Daddy said and the feeling of being alone would melt a little with a little drink It wasn't so much that it dissolved the lump as made the edges nice and rainbowy (p 232)

Janice's plight then read within Gallop's constative sense, is due to the father's name, which is a seduction that only reinforces patriarchy Gallop notes: "Patriarchal law, the law of the father, decrees that the 'product' of sexual union, the child, shall belong exclusively to the father, be marked by his name. Also that the womb which bears that child should be a passive receptacle with no claims on the product, the womb itself possessed as a means of (re) production "[25] In Janice's particular subject structuring, the problem is not the father as desiring but the very lack of such trafficking of desire that would acknowledge Janira's demand for recognition Irigray and Gallop's reading of the father's law for the constative (content) rather than the performative value can be very misleading in situating the relationship of Janice to her father Gallop claims 'Paternity is corporeally uncertain, without evidence But patriarchy compensates for that uncertainty with the law that marks each child with the father's name as his exclusive property "[26] Although Janice is marked by her father's name and remains so even after her marriage to Rabbit, she is hardly her father's exclusive property The truth is otherwise It is the mother

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[25] Jane Gallop, The Daughter's Seduction, p 71; Luce Irigaray, Speculum of the Other Woman trans Gillian C Gill (Ithaca Cornell Univ Press, 1985), p 16

[26] Jane Gallop, The Daughter's Seduction, p 77

who possesses her through her desire by denigrating her husband Mr Springer's name, therefore, is not possession but dispossession. It is not law as prohibition but law as impotence that secretly allows the mother-daughter destructive bond.

The father as law is so ineffectual in Rabbit, Run that Janice has to employ cunning strategies to create her own ideal father in order to sustain her ideal ego. It is the object a, in this case the voice of the father as desiring object, which is reified to become ideal and omnipotent for Janice. Mr Springer's simple inquiry about Rabbit's failure to show up at the lot is magically transformed by Janice into the figure of the ideal father by the reification of Springer's voice:

> Her love for her father flows toward him through the silent wire. She wishes the conversation would go on forever. She's heard him say the word 'lot' a million times. It seems; he says it like no other man; it's dense and rich from his lips, as if all the world is reconstructed in it. All the good things of her growing-up, her clothes, her toys, their house, come from the 'lot.' (p. 239)

In spite of the seductive lure of the materiality of language, especially with reference to Mr Springer's "dense and rich' enunciation of the word 'lot,' the fact remains that Janice's euphoric skillfully hides the incessant, repressed superego message that tells through her body--the hole in the kneel she fills with alcohol--she is no better to her father than her clothes, toys, and the world of the 'lot' that does not include her. Mr Springer's guilty admission to Rabbit of his neglect of his daughter comes too late, and without much remorse:

> 'Reverend Eccles and Becky and I have had a talk. I won't say I don't blame you because of course I do. But you're not the only one to blame. Her mother and I somehow never made her feel secure, never perhaps you might say made her welcome, I don't know.' (p. 252)

If the hysteric's demand for love is that she remain lacking, Janice cannot find a more suitable candidate than her mother to satisfy her erotic jouissance. Willing to be the "little man" for her mother, Jackie is in a conflictual context that at once negates on the one hand, domesticity, mothering, and the filial notion of nurturing in order to remain in the orbit of the mother's desire. On the other hand, Janice's tragic predicament lies in wanting to name her own desire without losing faith in the Other's/Rabbit's demand that wants nothing less than the killing of the baby daughter. Put another way, Janice is caught in the crossfire between her mother's desire and the Other's desire that frustrates any easy submission to her mother's demand for love.

Rabbit's first consecration with Janice in the novel is confrontational. He finds that his son, Nelson, has been left in the care of his mother while Mrs. Springer and Janice had gone out shopping.

> Rabbit asks, "Where's the kid?" "At your mother's." "At my mother's? The car is at your mother's and the kid's at my mother's." Jesus. You're a mess." (p.15)

On the surface, there seems nothing unusual in Mrs. Springer's arrangement to facilitate her shopping with Janice. A closer look, however, tells a different story. Janice is "dull," plain, and most crucially a "disappointment" to Mrs. Springer because she is not a "little boy" that she unconsciously desires to compensate for her denigrated husband. Mrs. Springer refers to her husband perfunctorily in the novel, and as Eccles rightly observes, it is she who is in control of the family. Mrs. Springer is "thoroughly meshed into the strategies of middle-class life," and in the words of Eccles her "ability to create uneasiness is a settled gift" (p.140). Eccles's visits to the Springers to bring about a

reconciliation between Janice and Rabbit are marked not only by Mr Springer's absence but also by the total omission of his name in Mrs Springer's conversation with Eccles It is also noteworthy that much as Mrs Springer mothers her grandson, Nelson, she describes him as a "missy" to Eccles (p.143) This betrays the unconscious truth that she regrets Janice is her daughter and not her son. Mrs. Springer's ambivalence toward Nelson is further authenticated when she seemingly complains to Eccles about Janice not being a responsible mother, even as she vicariously enjoys mothering her grandson to cover up her own past abandonment of her daughter. The context is Janice's routine rendezvous with her friend, Peggy Fosnacht, to go to the movies while her son is left in charge of her mother: 'Why, she came around here so much that I had more charge of Nelson than Janice did, with these two off to the movies every day like high-school girls that don't have the responsibility of being mothers" (p 209)

Driven by the same unconscious desire of the Other that made Mrs Springer abandon her daughter in the past, she wants Janice in turn to repeat the same history and be a martyr by neglecting her son As Janice remarks much later in the novel:

> . She doesn't know why she should think of Mother's neighbors except that all the time when she was home Mother kept reminding her of how they resented and there was always that with Mother the feeling that she was dull and plain and a disappointment, and she thought when she got a husband it would be all over, all that She would be a woman with a house of her own And she thought that when she gave this baby her name it would settle her mother but instead it brings her mother against her breast with her ' (pp 230-31)

Held mutually in thrall by the unconscious jouissance of the Real, a hole in the Other, Mrs. Springer and Janice fantasize in the imaginary

that their shopping tokens--her mother a 'Liberty scarf' and Janice's bathing suit--can somehow deny Janice's pregnancy and more importantly call her exclusive rein as mother into question. After Janice delivers her baby, Mrs. Springer once again hovers over the scene to subvert Rabbit's function, however putative, as law. Using Rabbit's heartless desertion of Janice during her pregnancy as a legitimate ground for reprimand, Mrs. Springer wastes no time in dampening any idea Rabbit may have of mending fences with the Springers: 'If you're sitting there like a buzzard young man hoping she's going to die, you might as well go back to where you've been living because she's doing fine without you and has been all along' (p.185).

Dr. Crowe's request to Rabbit to allow Mrs. Springer to see her daughter first is symptomatic of how the unconscious emits messages in conscious discourse. Dr. Crowe asks: 'Is it all right if her mother sees her for a moment? She's been on our necks all night' (my italics, p.187). Perhaps the slip of the tongue in Dr. Crowe's speech that makes mother plural--'mothers'--delivers an important unconscious truth that he is unaware of. Mrs. Springer's unconscious desire to once again deny Janice the pleasure of mothering finds its fulfillment when Janice, in keeping with the masochistic drive of a hysteric, names her baby after her own mother--Rebecca June Angstrom. In imprinting her mother's name on the baby, Janice also imprisons her in the mother's identity. Consequently, the trio--Mrs. Springer, Janice and Rebecca--are all merged in the killing jouissance of the shadow of the mother. Who is Rebecca's mother? Janice or Mrs. Springer? Or both? As Michele Montrelay explains: 'This Shadow, what is it, if not the absolute Shadow within any detached and thus visible shadow: this feminine substance of jouissance that makes for the

stuff of the Other, envelops it, and develops it to infinity? In the Shadow where a woman gets lost, there is also her own mother, 'absent' and resi... At the moment of giving birth, the real mother is encountered...[25]

Why does Janice's ideal ego submit to the Other's desire at the cost of loss to her own identity? Why does a hysteric like Janice, with the full knowledge of the trappings, perversely allow Rabbit to dominate and dictate her life? If Janice in her fantasy believes that her being equals the Other's desire, how do the symptoms written over the body structure her subjectivity? To answer these complex questions one must examine the power of masochistic pleasure that Janice derives in throwing on herself the mantle of martyr/saint/victim/*belle ame*, which in keeping her lack a lack also guarantees that she *is*.[26]

Janice's relationship with her daughter (mother?) Rebecca vividly dramatizes, with all the inexorable movement of a Greek tragedy, the disjunctive struggle between the fantasies of Janice, as revealed through the languages of the symptoms on her body, and the desire of the Other, where unconscious truth resides. The symptoms of the body tend to the brittle ideal ego of Janice do not want to face the unconscious truth. And yet, since the symptoms are themselves the effect of the unconscious on the body, the inextricable linking of the two systems of languages, conscious and unconscious, inevitably leads to Rabbit's desire as the

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[25] Michele Montrelay, 'The Story of Louise,' Returning to Freud: Clinical Psychoanalysis in the School of Lacan, ed. and trans. Stuart Schneiderman (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980), p. 27.

[26] I am indebted to Eliis Ragland-Sullivan for the phrase 'martyr/saint/victim/belle ame,' in general, my emphasis on the hysteric in this chapter owes much to the work of Ragland-Sullivan.

desire of the Other that does not want the good of the subject(s)--Janice and baby Rebecca.

Unwilling to see Rabbit as her enemy because she must be ruthlessly true to the Other's desire in order to feel paradoxically that she is alive, Janice imaginarily scapegoats her mother for all her problems. Janice allows her fantasy to draw strategies to make peace with her. Janice's body is the index of the several layers of meaning that her fantasy plays out by naming her baby Rebecca after her mother. The Imaginary and the Real come together when Janice fantasizes that naming would assure a literal metaphoric substitution, making the baby Rebecca the mother that she can control and manipulate instead of being controlled and manipulated by the desire of the mother. Also, by a further reversal of roles, by becoming a child herself to the baby Rebecca as mother, Janice plays out once again the agony of being abandoned by both her mother and father. A hysteric, as Lacan points out, not only never buries the past but always relives the past in the present.[8]

Drunk after several glasses of whiskey, Janice's free association grapples with an unpalatable truth from the superego: "That was what made her panicky ever since she was little this thing of nobody knowing how you felt and whether nobody could know or nobody cared she had no idea" (p. 232). To her mother, Janice is nothing but "dull and plain and a

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[8] See Stuart Schneiderman's excellent work, Jacques Lacan: The Death of an Intellectual Hero (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1983), p. 147. Schneiderman writes, "For the hysteric the dead remain alive, as living memories sometimes as people who are remembered, . . . but also as repressed memories that are reinverted into flesh, one might say, in what are called conversion symptoms. This is what happened in Breuer's case of Anna O., especially since her hysteria dated to the arrest of her father's death. The arrest may or may not be repressed and forgotten, but the reminiscence remains alive in attacking some part of the body as a constant reminder of what was and is no longer."

disappointment' (p 230)[illegible] to her father, 'she was still little clumsy dark-complexted Janice Springer' (p 232). Given her abandonment at home Rabbit with his astute thinking, which is an obsessional's forte, remarks about Janice to Eccles at the golf course: 'She can't stand her parents any more than I can. She probably would've married me if she hadn't been in such a hurry to get away from 'em' (p 125)

The scenes of Janice nursing her baby Rebecca crystallize the love-hate relationship between Janice and her mother. The Imaginary, Symbolic and Real lace together like a Escromman knot to situate Janice's subjectivity when she imaginarily thinks that the process of symbolization, the act of naming the mother's desire through baby Rebecca as the medium would allow her to arrest the metonymic movement of desire of the mother. Lacan taught that the *objet a*--the breast, feces, gaze, voice--are desire objects that constitute the primordial liming of the subject around which matrices of meaning are later constructed. When Janice in nursing Rebecca 'thrusts the thick nipples like a weapon into the blind hintured mouth' of the child (p 216), we see the function of the conversion symptom. The breast turns into the phallic weapon that, rather than promoting the much needed mother-child symbiosis at this hopelessly dependent stage of the child's life, marks instead the severance of nurturance, the cut in the mother-child bonding. If the hysteric's demand of love is that she remain lacking, the nursing scene fulfills for Janice that demand to the cutting edge of the letter. So tenacious is the bond/bind between Janice's ideal ego and the Other's desire (Rabbit's) that her conscious will to feed the child is thwarted by the Other's desire that does not wish for the good or health of the

child. "I'm dry," she says, 'I'm dry. I just don't have anything to feed her" (p 225)

In symbolizing her deep frustration in not being able to feed a hungry child, the Symbolic and the Real lose together for Jenice. Lacan pointed out that although the Real is unsymbolized it can be traced as symptoms in the body. But where the symbolic and the Real lose together is also the site heavily threaded by the Imaginary Order. Janice goes "dry" only when Rebecca with "birdy quickness' applies her "blistered mouth' to her nipples. When Janice is not feeding the child, her breasts swell with the pain of excessive milk:

> She's been walking around patting the baby until her wrists and ankles hurt and poor tiny Rebecca is asleep with her legs around the breast that still has all its milk in it. (pp 252-53)

Janice laments once again the untaken milk in her breasts after the death of Rebecca: "I've got my milk back,' Janice says, "and every time my breasts sting I think she must be in the next room' (p 256)

In short, Janice's unconscious desire is to hurt Rebecca the same way as she was hurt by her mother. In her fantasy, Janice condenses her mother into the child, instead of seeing Rabbit's failure as the third term. She at once avenges both Rebecca and her mother, hurts them both by refusing to submit to the rule of mothering. Unable to crack the glass shell of fantasy that equates her being with the Other's desire, Janice must in order to guarantee that she "is," carry out the desire of the Other to the last letter. Inescapably caught in Rabbit's desire, only the unconscious drowning of her own child in the bathtub secures Janice the symbolic death of Rabbit's desire and with him the relentless quest of the Other's desire.

The titanic struggle is fought simultaneously on two levels. In the conscious register, Janice thinks keeping her mother at arm's length would help to cover up her multiple problems: her excessive drinking, Rabbit's second desertion of her, and the hungry baby's ceaseless crying. Besides, her mother's absence helps Janice to heal the wounds of being 'dull and disappointing,' of which her mother's presence constantly reminds her. At the unconscious level, however, even without Rabbit's physical presence, he has been and is tormenting her through his unconscious desires:

> 'Stay away, Mother. He'll be back tonight.' She listens and adds, 'And stop crying.' Her mother says, 'yes you say stop when you keep bringing us all into disgrace.' The first time I thought it was all his fault but I'm not so sure anymore. Do you hear? I'm not so sure-'
>
> Panicked with the double idea of not disturbing Nelson and of concealing Harry's absence, she runs to the crib and nightmarishly finds it covered with orange mess. 'Damn you! damn you," she moves to Rebecca, and lifts the filthy thing out and wonders where to carry her. She takes her to the armchair and biting her lips unpins the diaper. 'Oh you little shit,' she murmurs, feeling that the sound of her voice is holding off the other person who is gathering in the room. (p 241)

Imprisoned by the eliminating desire of the Other, Janice's discourse is symptomatic of her denial of her complicitous role in Rabbit's unconscious desire, to which it simultaneously refers. In the lacing of the Imaginary and Symbolic Orders, Janice symbolizes her hatred for baby Rebecca and her mother at once, when in fact her unconscious hatred really doubles on both her mother and Rabbit. Just as Janice's father's failure to function as law necessitated that Janice uphold him unconsciously as an ideal father, Rabbit too is a denigrated and failed husband/father who

must be unconsciously upheld by Janice even when he gathers in the roses as the specter of death:

> There *is* another person in the apartment who knows but it's not Harry and the person has no business here anyway and she determines to ignore him and continues setting lunch with a slight stiffness operating in her body (p.248)

If the "orange mess" is the child's first sacrificial response to her mother's demand for love (the child's giving away a part of herself), Janice, true to her characteristics of a hysterical whose demand for love is that she remain lacking, treats the shit not as the child's object of desire but literally as shit. The baby becomes, metaphorically, shit -- the object a.

Unable to find the subject position of a mother as unconsciously desiring, since Janice is already alienated in her mother's desire, the child's shit through the conversion symptom becomes shit = mother. The dense materiality of Janice's language--Janice's voice that alternately "murmurs" and "moans" and the "orange mess"--reveals her alienated subjectivity through the lacing of the Symbolic, Imaginary and Real Orders. Janice's frustration in the Symbolic is tempered in the Imaginary when Rebecca's shit becomes mother which again is sliced through by the Real. The mother-child symbiosis (Janice-Rebecca) is the site where the unlettered message in the body speaks. In the polyphonic evocation of voices here, it is difficult to extricate Rebecca from Janice from Mrs. Springer. Who is really speaking here -Janice? Rebecca? or her Mother? The mute message written over the bod(y)ies in the Real is that Janice is literally shit to her father and mother, a message she is unwilling to recognize and displaces on to the baby. She sees the message, ironically,

as a representation that simultaneously covers over and reflects in her abandonment. Far from giving Janice the mastery over her mother's desire, representation and object substitutions only reveal her anxiety. The language is never free from the unsettling discourse of the unconscious on which paradoxically it depends.

Thus, the crushing weave of fantasy, discourse and false identities create for Janice at the conscious level the mirage of naming, nailing and final mastery over her mother's desire: Rebecca = shit = mother is the chain of metaphoric substitutions that validates such a control. But as Jacqueline Rose points out, 'Lacan's statements on language need to be taken in two directions--towards the fixing of meaning itself (that which is acquired on the subject), and away from that very fixing to the point of its constant slippage, the risk or vanishing-point which it always contains (the unconscious).'[28]

Although Janice's discourse represents her mother's desire, it is not identical with it. Consequently, Janice's failure to hold off the 'other person who is gathering in the room' is her failure to situate her desire in any place other than the Other's desire. Janice's fantasy that she is only when placing herself at the service of the Other's desire seems carrying out the ultimate act of sacrifice that ratifies her notion of keeping her lack a lack. The Other, which does not want the good of the subject, completely takes over for one brief moment when Rebecca drowns in the bathtub, marking at once the triumph of Janice over Rabbit and her perverse surrender to his unconscious desire. 'The water wraps

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[28] Jacqueline Rose, Feminine Sexuality, p. 43

around her forearms like two large hands; under her eyes the pink baby sinks down like a gray stone" (p 243)

In unconsciously killing Rebecca, Janice imaginarily kills the mother's desire that thwarts her efforts to name her own desire. The death of Rebecca, as the other hand, vindicates Janice's mother's desire that Janice not mother in order to remain her exclusive possession. However, the third term shatters Janice's fantasy that imprisons both Janice and her mother in identificatory myths of the mirror-stage. It is in the gap when Rebecca fades as a subject forever that the third term asserts itself as the mark of difference. The third term as death, not law is exercised when baby Rebecca as Imaginary mother to Janice (dyadic trap) is removed from her to allow Janice for the first time to position herself, however tentatively, as a subject capable of naming her own desire, her own identity. In reconstructing her desire away from her mother, Janice also loses a vital part of herself--an object a--in the death of Rebecca, a child of her own flesh and blood: "Her sense of the third person with them widens enormously, and she knows, knows while knocks sound at the door, that the worst thing that has ever happened to any woman in the world has happened to her" (p 244)

Janice's perverse triumph comes in stoically clinging to her pain in order to expose the guilty parties. As Mrs. Angstrom says to Eccles, "to hear her father-in-law talk she is the worst martyr since Joan-of-Arc" (p 150). Janice's role as martyr is best written on her body, which she punishes ruthlessly. If Janice stoically bears Rabbit's desertion, Rabbit's failed attempt at anal penetration again valorizes Janice - shit - hole:

> He scrunches down and fits himself between her buttocks, just as they kind of grip. It's beginning to work

> steady, warm… when she twists her head and says over her shoulder, "Is this a trick your whore taught you?"
> The smell is dark and raw and soft and deep, and she thinks maybe a sip will cure her insomnia. Makes her sleep until the scratch at the door awakens her [illegible] and she can say Come to bed, Harry, it's all right, du me, I want to share, I really want it, really. (pp 229-234)

Janice futilely hopes to fill the hole in the Real with alcohol: "I just out of television-watching habit she goes into the kitchen and makes herself a little drink, mostly ice cubes, just to keep sealed shut the great hole that is threatening to pull open inside of her again." (p 237) Remnants of the veld and traumatic pain which are in the head and speak poignantly through the body, Janice must imaginarily mark her release in systematic destruction of her body. As Charles Melman observes: "The only jouissance that remains for the alcoholic is to bite down on the very life of this body, on the object that bears witness to this life in procrastina."[20]

Janice's extreme measures of self-denial are also ways of mastery over her chaotic life:

> She had thought things out and was resigned to her marriage being finished. She would have her baby and get a divorce and never get married again. She would be like a kind of nun she had just seen that beautiful picture with Audrey Hepburn. (p 235)

The way in which Janice constructs her identity as process in discourse reveals her position as cipher, especially in the metonymic chain of puns on the word nun = nunc = hole. The abyss of the text is clearly stencilled with Updike's signature. The male fantasy that

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[20] Charles Melman, "Essay in Clinical Psychoanalysis: The Alcoholic," in Returning to Freud, ed. and trans. Stuart Schneiderman, p 238

ducinrea woman - hole is only possible in the light of Rabbit - penis - god. Janice becomes a sieve to god the father In keeping with Janice's becoming the object of ellen desire is also her internalization of her inferiority that Rabbit ceaselessly posits It is little wonder Janice privileges Nelson over Rebecca and identifies herself with the 'nothingness' between Rebecca's legs: 'In the living room Rebecca is lying naked in the funny armchair with her belly puffing out sideways to yell and her lumpy curved legs clenched and red; Janice's other baby was a boy and it still seems unnatural to her, between the girl's legs, those two little buns of fat instead of a boy's triple luminous ' (p 242).

Janice's apocalyptic address over Rebecca's dead body is punctuated with the shrill cry of the name "Father, Father," who appears too late, bearing not the fruit of life but the seeds of death:

> she seems to be clasping the human of a vast
> third person whose name, Father, Father, beats against
> her head like physical blows (pp 243-44)

Before 'buggering' her in bed, it is Rabbit who coaxes Janice to have a drink when she has already given up the bottle In fact, Rabbit who has little knowledge in mixing drinks, makes her a stiff one Rabbit generates the whole infanticide situation by first getting Janice intoxicated, then buggering her in bed, and finally running away from home and responsibility the second time when he cannot have his "way" with Janice

The culmination of Janice's role as martyr/saint symbiotically unites of the also destruction of her body with the final death of Rebecca: "She lifts the living thing into air and hugs it against her sopping chest. Water pours off them onto the bathroom tiles. . . . Through

her wild heart bathes the universe in red, no spark kindles in the space between her arms, for all of her pouring prayers she doesn't feel the faintest tremor of an answer in the darkness against her" (p 243-44). In fact, this is the baptism that Rebecca never has. She has instead a perverse baptism. Janice's jouissance lies in taking a "bite down on the very life" of her body that bears witness to her life in procreation. Rebecca's death, thus, epitomizes the death of a place of Janice herself.

Rabbit's frustration thus reaches its nadir for two reasons: first, his dismal failure to name his own desire; second, the others' failure to release his desire for him. The gulf across which Eccles crystallizes Rabbit's failure to acknowledge lack that could subsequently give rise to desire. Rabbit's rhapsodic monologue has the Balzacian thickness of representation, when sentences with the suspension of punctuation pile on each other with a breathless urgency as he substitutes his failure to putt the ball in the hole with the woman and her blankness between the thighs. In swift metaphoric substitutions, Rabbit's fermain becomes Janice = Ruth = Mother = Texas = where = home = hole = death. Thus Rabbit's construction of woman in discourse is purely a symptom of his fantasy:

> In his head he is talking to the clubs as if they're women. Thin irons, light and thin and yet somehow treacherous in his hands, are Janice . . . Oh, dumb, really dumb. Screw her . . . Dirt stubs fat: with the woods the "she" is Ruth . . . the bush is damn somebody, his mother . . . the khaki color of Texas. Oh you moron go home. Home is the hole. (pp. 123-124)

Lacan taught us that the phallic jouissance of man is on the slope of the death drive. Death is a theme of abiding interest and enigma to Updike and runs through his major works. In The Centaur George Caldwell suffers the illusion that by the symbolization of death he can control and

subdue death. Caldwell fails to reduce the irreducible signifier death into the signified until he consumes death himself to gain his pyrrhic victory. Like Caldwell, Rabbit deals with the signifier death in two ways: projection and introjection. Projection is played out in the dual imaginary register, whereas introjection initiates the triangular relationship among inside, outside, and Rabbit.

As Shoshana Felman explains: "Introjection, says Lacan, is always a linguistic introjection, in that it is always the introjection of a relation. Since meaning an element relates to a system--language--and not simply to one, who becomes yet another element in the same system, the Symbolic is the differential situating of the subject in a *third position*; it is at once the place from which a dual relation is apprehended, the place through which it is articulated . . ."[20]

Rabbit's fear of death is also cruelly connected to his conscious disavowal of lack with which the unconscious torments him. When Rabbit denigrates Ruth by forcing her to take his penis in her mouth, or when he forces Janice to have anal sex with him soon after her delivery, Rabbit's need to empower himself by humiliating women simultaneously disavows lack and makes the most abject admission of it. Such an abuse of women is related to Rabbit's problem in coping with death. This time, death is played out not in the (dual) imaginary register but the (triangular) Symbolic that constitutes a relation between inside, outside (Ruth), and Rabbit:

> Still the body under the covers and the frizzy crescent of hair peeking over the top edge of the blanket don't move . . . I've killed her. It's ridiculous: such a thing wouldn't kill her, it has nothing to do with

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[20] Shoshana Felman, Jacques Lacan and the Adventure of Insight (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1987) p. 115

> death; but the thought paralyses him from going forward to touch her and make her listen. (p.178)

As with Ruth before, Rabbit fears the death of Janice and Rebecca and incorporates the linguistic relation as a sign of his own death:

> So in certain that as a consequence of his sin Janice or the baby will die. His sin a conglomerate of flight, cruelty, obscenity, and conceit, a knick clot embodied in the entrails of the birth. Though the bowels twist with the will to dismiss this clot, to retract, to turn back and undo, he does not turn to the priest beside him, but instead reads the same sentence about delicious fried trout again and again (pp 182-3)

Whereas Freud would interpret Rabbit's repetitive reading of the line 'delicious fried trout' as symptomatic of the death-drive, Lacan would see in the compulsion to repeat the drive that says Rabbit 'is' alive. It is only an obsessional like Rabbit who can hold together the contradictory and enculling opposites death and life in the same breath, in the same thought process. Yet what belies Rabbit's certainty of knowledge is his very need to repeat the introjective process, a routine that manifests loss rather than command, alienation rather than possession of self. This time Rabbit fears the death of his son, Nelson, in his sleep:

> The child's sleep is so heavy he fears it might break the membrane of life and fall through to oblivion. Sometimes he reaches into the crib and lifts the boy's body out, just to reassure himself with its warmth and the responsive fumbling protest of the tumbled limp limbs (p.212)

Once again the linguistic incorporation accommodates life and death in one stroke. The 'child's sleep' is introjected by Rabbit as the sleep of death, but when Rabbit 'lifts the boy's body out' to "reassure himself

with its warmth, there is the assurance of the heat of life for both father and son.

The linguistic introjection for Rabbit, however, is not progressive. On the other hand, Rabbit constantly vacillates between the modes of projection and introjection, between the trap of specular fascination in the imaginary and the anxiety of castration in the symbolic. In his relationship with his mother, the projective mode dominates, necessitating the imaginary death of either his mother or him. In the dual mode for Rabbit, mother = Rabbit:

> but with his mother there's no question of killing him they're not even in a way separate people he began in her stomach either he or his mother must die (p. 226)

Failure to constitute himself from his mother as 'separate people' lures Rabbit into the either/or dual register in spite of the break against it by Rabbit's spasmodic thinking in the introjectic mode. The same metaphoric substitution that sees blackness between Ruth's thighs leads Rabbit to equate her and his old couch, Tothero, with death. At one time, Rabbit placed Ruth in the place of the Other to stand for its truth and begged her to 'Put your arm around me.' When Ruth in Rabbit's fantasy fails to occupy the place of the Other as truth and knowledge, she is immediately denigrated to stand for death.

> Ruth at the swimming pool; the way she lay in the water without weight. . . . him looking up her legs at the secret hair and then her face lying beside him huge and yellow and still; dead. No. He must blot Tothero and Ruth out of his mind both remind him of death. (p. 213)

Perhaps the two key signifiers in Rabbit's dream text pose the crucial question: can he distance himself from his mother as 'separate

people?' Rabbit dreams of two perfect disks in the sky, "identical in size" moving towards each other until the pale one eclipses the stronger disk to become "one circle pale and pure" before his eyes. The dream concludes when the "cowslip swallows up the elder."

The key signifiers here are the "cowslip" and the "elder." Rabbit interprets the cowslip as the moon, and the elder as the sun, and the drama just witnessed as figuratively explaining the "lovely life eclipsed by lonely death." For Freud, dreams were always wish fulfillment. Following Freud's direction, the simple explanation of the dream text would be the triumph of the mother's unconscious desire as moon over the sun/son, that is, the triumph of lovely death over lovely life. But the dream understood in Lacanian terms is not wish fulfillment but always an enigmatic question posed by the dream. The crucial question is posed, therefore, beyond Rabbit's mother's unconscious desire to Rabbit's subjectivity. The dream produces in Lacanian terms a radically different reading. The point of the dream is not to worry over why the stronger "dense white" disk is "eclipsed" by the "pale" sun. In other words, interpretation must shy away from the metonymic (which is a misrecognition) content of the dream, the narrative trap, to pry open the structure of Rabbit's enunciation itself. Here what strikes the reader is Rabbit's relentless eradication of difference in the process of constituting the dense and pale disks as "One."

Lacan's revisionary writing on feminine sexuality is a crucial key to reading Updike's Rabbit, Run radically Otherwise. Janice and Rabbit, occupying the structural spaces of the hysteric and obsessional, in their different ways challenge, disturb and expose the impasture of the normative sexuality, which is strictly an ordering that constitutes them

as man and woman in discourse. When Janice appears for her daughter's funeral in her mother's mourning clothes, she at once embodies her mother's unconscious desire and reconstructs her own desire for the first time away from her. Since Janice's mother's black dress is for mourning, the dress signifies the death of her mother's desire to create space for Janice's own figuring in discourse.

Nowhere is the import of the third term more tragic than in Updike's Rabbit, Run, where the price Rabbit pays for his failure to function as law is the death of his own daughter. This failure, in other words, is one of Rabbit's sexuality and his subject position as father in the family constellation of Janice (mother), Rebecca (daughter), and himself. Rebecca dies not because of the physical absence/presence of Rabbit as biological father. She dies because instead of functioning as law, Rabbit functions as a child himself who wishes to cling to Janice's breast when Rebecca is fed (p. 215). What separates Rabbit from his daughter and his desire for her is the "glass": "Rabbit looks down through the glass with a timidity in the very act of seeing, as if rough looking will smash the fine machinery of this sudden life" (p. 202).

Is this timidity in the very act of seeing not due to the Other's gaze that Rabbit is always locked in? Is it not his mother's unconscious desire that leaves him stunted as a kid rather than a mature man? Rath at one point says more about Rabbit than she realizes: "In these damn undergarments you do look kind of like a rabbit. I thought only kids were those elastic kind of pants: (p. 188). Rabbit's function as a third term, thus, is not as law but as death itself. It is the third term that severs Rebecca from Janice and Rabbit but not before she tattoos both with the indelible seal of certification for having failed her. Rebecca carries

with her to the grave her father's last name, Angstrom, not as a sign of the father's seduction, in Jane Gallop's sense of the term, but as dead letters too impotent to function as law. Similarly, she also carries her grandmother's name Rebecca, to the grave, making it also possible for her mother to speak henceforth in her own voice. Ruth who wails Rabbit to the mask of death he conveniently projects on others: "You're Mr. Death himself. You're not just nothing, you're worse than nothing. You're not a rat, you don't stink, you're not enough to stink" (p.279)

What is more, Ruth further eliminates Rabbit's precarious subject position as father. Ruth's unconscious desire, speaking from the place of the Other, is anti-phallic and refuses Rabbit the relation of the father to her unborn child unless he divorces Janice to marry her: "You divorce that wife you feel so sorry for about once a month, you divorce her or forget me. If you can't work it out, I'm dead to you, I'm dead to you and this baby of yours is dead too" (p 281) Forced by Ruth to make a decision between two compelling options, Rabbit runs for cover, betraying the obsessional's impossibility to make up his mind. Rabbit stays in doubt by suspending action, which is anti-action leaving thereby both the options at once open and closed to him

CHAPTER IV

CHEEVER'S 'BULLET PARK': FAILED FATHERS (UN)DESIRING MOTHERS, AND ORPHANED SONS (IN)BETWEEN

Frank McConnell characterized the sixties in American history as 'the age for the apocalyptic imagination,' reflecting 'the nightmare politics of the decade--the feeling that the Kennedy and King assassinations and the long national disgrace of Vietnam had finally delivered us (Americans) to a reality that can only be confronted in terms of surrealism and the comedy of the irrational.'[1] George W. Hunt, pursuing the same argument, writes: 'For sensitive people, 'unreality' was the watchword in a country gone mad, and our novelists were the articulate messengers of the bad news . . . For them the common assumption was that the times were out of joint and cursed spites impossible to set right, so for the 'thereness' of reality, no 'there' existed.'[2] John Cheever's Bullet Park was composed and published during this dark and bitter period of American history when Americans of all ages were 'undergoing emotional and psychic displacement.'[3] That Bullet Park represents the quintessence of the times can be attested by the comment of the book itself: 'To look into their faces you would have thought they had lost their grail, their cross, their anchor.'[4]

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[1] Frank D. McConnell, Four Postwar American Authors (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), pp. xii, xxvi.

[2] George W. Hunt, John Cheever: The Hobgoblin Company of Love (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1983), p. 151.

[3] Ibid., p. 150.

[4] John Cheever, Bullet Park (New York: Bantam, 1967), p. 239. Subsequent references are cited parenthetically in the text.

In 'La science et la verite,' Lacan calls the 'phallus nothing other than the point of lack it indicates in the subject.'[5] The human tragedy that afflicts male and female characters in Chauvet's Bullet Park emanates from an utter failure to come to terms with lack in themselves. When the struggle for male bonding fails, as in the case of Eliot Nailles, Tony, his son, is scapegoated for Nailles' anxiety about his sexual identity. Nailles tries ludicrously to fill the lack in his relationship with his son by offering Tony all the material comforts when Tony needs instead his emotional support. Paul Hammer, a bastard, struggles to find the signifier of the Name-of-the-Father, and ends up being a dangerous psychotic. Hammer's mother, Gretchen, is a hysteric, with a reckless philanderer for a lover, who after airing her son refuses to take up his social position as a husband to her.

If, as Lacan claimed, all subjects who are not psychotic possess an unconscious set of identifications with a signifier for the Name-of-the-Father, then a given subject's unconscious position toward the phallic (masculine) signifier may well occasion intense narcissistic or aggressive responses at the ego level. Eucumen Nailles' father occupies a denigrated place in the Other. Nailles' unconscious position toward the phallic signifier results in aggression against his own son Tony when Nailles tries to kill him with a putter. Hammer, his double, is ashamed of his bastardy, and he seeks to empower himself by carrying out his mother's unconscious desire to kill 'some young man' in order to 'wake the world.' In light of Hammer's father being a 'male caryatid' and his mother being a 'crazy old woman,' Nailles' relationship with his father remains

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[5] Jacques Lacan, 'La science et la verite,' Ecrits (Paris: Seuil, 1966), p 877

'touchy,' and Hailles finds no escape from his mother's Gaze. The preoccupation of Chesver in Bullet Park, therefore, appears to be with failed fathers, (un)desiring mothers, and orphaned sons (is) between.

The constant play with names in Bullet Park again reaffirms the necessity for characters to take after the signifier for the Name-of-the-Father in order to find one's place in the social domain and, more importantly, to constitute sexual difference. It is not only Gretchen who feels the urgent need to change names: 'Gretchen detested her name and claimed at one time or another to be named Grace, Gladys, Gwendolyn, Gertrude, Gabriella, Gisella, and Gloria' (p.146). Paul Hammer suffers in the social register as well because of his illegitimate origin, and he tries in vain to change his name from Paul Hammer to 'Robert Levy' (p.171). Hammer must even call his illegitimate father his uncle to avoid social strictures.

Critics who have written on Bullet Park have been more willing to condemn the book than grant Cheever any critical acclaim. Benjamin DeMott faulted Bullet Park for its flimsy structure, and pronounced it a novel marked by "carelessness, lax composition and perfunctoriousness."[6] Pearl Bell in the New Leader found its episodes little more than 'rough notes for a short story'; Anatole Broyard pronounced it a Gothic novel in which Cheever 'appears to be almost helplessly carried away by the flood tide

[6] Benjamin DeMott, 'A Grand Gathering of Some Late 20th Century American Weirdos,' New York Times Book Review, April 27, 1969, pp.1, 40-41.

of his imagination' and in which his 'palette seems to have nothing but screaming colors'[7]

The less harsh critics were just as tentative and chary in their praise of the book. For example, John Leonard claimed Bullet Park was 'Cheever's deepest, most challenging book' and possessed 'the tension and luminosity of a vision'[8] John Updike admits that the novel does 'hold together but barely, by the thinnest of threads' and that the 'tender, twinkling prose has an undercurrent of distraction and impatience," but he concludes with the observation that Cheever 'maintains his loyalty to the middling and the decent, but increasingly speaks in the accents of a visionary.'[9] Staunch support for the book comes from George W Hunt, who takes the critics to task for misreading the 'tone of the novel badly -- admitting, however, that it was easy to do so'[10] Hunt writes: 'The dream emblems and the arch structure are cues toward appreciating the novel ...the arch image thus captures nicely the dialectical polarity and mutual interdependence, not only of the symbolism and images in the novel but also of the central characters Nellies and Hammer, at seemingly opposite ends of the spectrum, are actually conjoined in action and 'stress' through

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[7] Pearl K Bell, 'Tahar of Notes,' New Leader May 26, 1969, pp 11-13; Anatole Broyard, 'You Wouldn't Believe It,' New Republic April 26, 1969, pp 36-37

[8] John Leonard, 'Evil Comes to Suburbia,' New York Times April 29 1969, p 43

[9] John Updike, 'Suburban Man," Sunday Times (London), September 14, 1969, p 62 Updike's review is reprinted in his essay-review collection Picked-Up Pieces (New York Alfred A Knopf, 1975)

[10] George W Hunt, John Cheever, The Hobgoblin Company of Love, p 154

Tony, the central wedge; and the three together constitute the novel's characterological arch."[11]

As the plot summary will indicate, Cheever's Bullet Park is perhaps the "tidiest of all his creations." Cheever depicts the apparently serene and quiet life of the Nailles family, in which the father, Elliot Nailles, his wife Nellie, and his son Tony, all live happily together until Tony for no explicable reason feels sad and refuses to get out of bed. Part one of the book is devoted to their lives and Nellie's success in curing her son's sadness through the ministrations of a Swami whose technique involves the ritual repetition of optimistic chants. Part two is Paul Hammer's narration in the first person of his bastard life, and his desire to seek his identity by fulfilling his mother's unconscious desire to sacrifice a suburbanite on the altar of Christ Church in order to wake up the world. Part three brings the three main characters, Nailles, Hammer, and Tony together in a dramatic confliction. Before Hammer could burn Tony on the altar, Nailles arrives in time to rescue his son. The Nailles regain their serene life while Hammer is committed to a mental asylum. The novel ends, as it began, with everything as "wonderful, wonderful, wonderful, wonderful" as it had been.

Nailles' positioning in the uncertainties under the lethal influence of his mother's Gene conditions Nailles' tangled relationship with Tony, his son, and Nellie, his wife, and Nailles' mother whom he visits every Sunday at a nursing home. She has suffered a stroke four months earlier, and has since "never quite regained consciousness" (p. 25). And yet, "inert," "uncomprehending," and unsolicited as Nailles' mother is, she

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[11] Ibid., p. 158

still has over Neilles 'an immense emotional power' (p 26) What reinforces his mother's strong hold over him is Neilles' unconscious weak identification with the signifier for a father's Name. Neilles' father we are told, 'had been a crack shot, a lucky fisherman, a heavy drinker and the life of his club' (p 27). Neilles' attempt to find his subject/gender identity in the symbolic through male bonding receives a rude shock when his father rejects the roommate Neilles brings home:

> He admired his roommate and presented him proudly to his father at the railroad station, but the old man raked the stranger with an instantaneous look of scorn and rejection and gave a perceptible shake of this head at the incredible bad taste his son had displayed in the choice of a companion (p 27)

To make matters worse, like George Caldwell in Updike's The Centaur, Neilles' father loses no opportunity to denigrate himself. The rather 'touchy relationship' between father and son is further complicated when Neilles' father embarrasses him in front of the people at the club:

> When he began to order the dinner Neilles saw that his father was very drunk. He joked with the waitress, made a grab at her backside and spilled his water. Everyone in the restaurant was amused but Neilles who had he possessed a pistol, would have shot his father in the back. (p 27)

Such a patricidal urge is strongly supported by Neilles' mother, whose unconscious message to the son is to subvert the Name-of-the-Father (in this case a weak one) and recreate the jouissance of the exclusive mother-son relationship. Like Peter in Updike's The Centaur, who narcissistically empowers his denigrated father in the imaginary to empower in turn his own self, Neilles ardently wants to "love" his 'old man' only because he could then love his own image in the mirror. The Real in his body shows the symptoms of his rage against his father, however, when Neilles rushes to the toilet and leans on a washbasin to

retch; 'It was the only way he had to express his grief' (p 28). Neilles' mother, therefore, becomes the only source of emotional and moral support for him. 'His father went on up to his room and Neilles was greeted by his mother's faint, pained, knowledgeable and winsome smile' (p.28)

Neilles' rage is, nonetheless, also against his mother. Imprisoned by his mother's Gorn and resentful of it, Neilles even unsuccessfully attempts to snuff out the life in her. It is the fear of his mother discovering her son is a 'matricide' that stops Neilles from pressing the pillow to her face and ending 'her pain in a few minutes' (p.28). Unable to free himself from his mother, unable to put an end to her excruciating pain which is also his, Neilles uses, paradoxically, his wife as a shield against his mother as well as a conduit to reinforce the mother-son bond. Similarly, Neilles uses his son, Tony, to displace his ambivalent, tortuous relationship with his own mother and father.

First, let us construct the father-son configuration. Both Neilles and Nellie zealously, and often detrimentally compete for the love of their only son. At the conscious level, Neilles' compulsive need to redress his own distant and 'touchy' relationship with his father prompts him to be overly protective, zealous and concerned about his son's welfare. The 'generous' material goods such as the tape recorder and the expensive clothes that Tony is showered with are meant to allow the boy to enjoy all the comforts the Neilles' father could not provide his son.

What is more difficult to understand is Neilles' contradictory desires to see the sick Tony very much alive to keep his own death at bay, and the opposite desire to allow (even unconsciously desire) his son's death. Such violent contradictions embody, perhaps, Neilles' mother's and even his own death. Two important scenes in Ballet Fork reveal Neilles'

desire that is different and conflictual in the two registers of language--conscious and unconscious. The first scene unfolds in the dining room when Nellies shouts up the stairs to his son to join the family for breakfast: "Breakfast's ready, Tony" (p. 24). Nellie has to remind Nellies that Tony is at the Pendletons' and (in fact) it was Nellies who drove him over to the airport on his way to the church:

> "Oh yes," said Nellies, but he seemed bewildered. He never seemed quite to understand that the boy was free to move in and out of his house, in and out of his orbit and his affections. Knowing that the boy was away, having in fact driven him to an airport and put him on a plane, he would then return home and look for him in the garden. (p. 24)

Nellies' lapse of memory at once reverts to and covers over his unconscious desire to murder his own son in order to exclusively possess Nellie who functions more like a mother figure to Nellies than a wife. At the unconscious level, however, Nellies' solicitous concern about his missing son reflects his need of his son's love to protect and empower himself.

The second scene, repetitive in nature, draws attention again to Nellies' frantic search for his son at three in the morning after he had earlier driven him himself to the railway station:

> At three in the morning Nellies woke. He got out of bed and started down the hall towards Tony's room. He felt very old. As while he slept he had put down the dreams of a strong man - snow-covered mountains and beautiful women - in exchange for the anxieties of some decrepit octogenarian who feared that he had lost his false teeth. He felt frail, wizened, a shade of himself. (p. 88)

In spite of his deep concern and fear, at the conscious level, that his "only and dearly beloved son" had been set upon by "thieves, perverts, prostitutes, murderers and dope addicts" (pp. 88-89), Nellies' unconscious desire, bewildering as it may be to his understanding, wants the worst

scenario he paints of Tony to come true. On the other hand, Mailles cannot help entertaining his countradictory desire to see his son ellve as he feels "frail, wizened, a shade of himself" without him. In fact, "without his son he could not live. He was afraid of his own death" (p 89).

Why and how is Mailles driven by the Other's desire to kill his own son? Mailles' pent up rage against his father, who had failed him and his mother, and in whose Gaze Mailles is still locked, finds a convenient outlet in his acts of aggression against Tony. Mailles' failure to function as Law in relation to his son converts to impotent rage. When Mailles sees the poor grades of this eight-year-old son, he orders Tony to drastically reduce his long hours in front of the television. Mailles takes on an adversarial position to intimidate his son, using brute force instead of gentle persuasion:

> Tony had been threatened before but either his father's intervention or Mailles' forgetfulness had saved him. At the thought of how barren, painful and meaningless the hours after school would be the boy began to cry. He [Mailles] went to the foot of the stairs and shouted: "You come down here, Sonny, you come down here this instant or you won't have any television for a month. Do you hear me? You come down here at once or you won't have television for a month." (pp 71-72)

Not satisfied with his peremptory order to his son, Mailles' desire to assert his impotent power takes a step further. He hurls his son irreparably by throwing the T.V. set out the door:

> Then, straining, he picked up the box again, kicked open the screen door and flung the television out into the dark. It landed on a cement paving and broke with the rich, glassy music of an automobile collision. (p 74)

Mailles' bouts of aggression aimed at the T.V. set displace his actual aggression aimed against his son, whom Mailles unconsciously

desires to have no place under his roof. Ironically, Neilles' jealousy of Tony's rivalry which challenges his sexual authority in relation to his wife, only results in bringing the mother and son closer to each other:

> "Don't look, don't look,' Nellie said to Tony and she pressed his face into her skirts [illegible] Nellie led Tony up the stairs to her bedroom, where she threw herself onto the bed, sobbing. Tony joined her. Neillas closed the kitchen door on the noise of the rain and poured another drink. Fifth, he said. (p. 74)

Nine years later, when Tony is seventeen years old, Neillas' unconscious desire to kill his own invades his symbolic discourse. What triggers the violence in Tony's sudden announcement that he wants to leave school since 'he wasn't learning anything' (p. 113). If Neilles' father could not rise above being a 'crack shot, lucky fisherman,' neither does Neilles make a mark in his life. By putting his faith in his own and coercing him to 'do something useful,' Neillas wishes to remedy and fill his own lack in the public domain. When Tony refuses to follow the course of 'straight-limbed sons' and speculates instead about becoming arbitrarily a 'thief or a saint or a drunkard or a garbage man or a gas pumper or a traffic cop or a hermit,' Neillas loses his 'patience, my woolly blanket' (pp. 115-116). When Tony, in unequivocal terms, makes his father face up to his own lowly profession--pushing mouthwash--Neillas' reaction is swift and callous and beyond his understanding. The abrasive remark has the right corrosive edge to spark Neilles' long-submerged, unconscious wish to see his own son's death. This death carries the death of his mother's Gaze with it. Having displaced his mother's hold on Neillas onto his own son, he finds the opportunity to put an end to his trial:

> Then I lifted up my putter and I would have split his skull in two but he ducked and threw down his club and ran off the links into the dark [illegible] What I wanted to

> do then was to chase after him and take another crack at him with the putter. I was very angry. I couldn't understand how my only son, whom I love more than anything in the world, could make me want to kill him (p 114)

It is the motif of death that bears out the conflicting desires of Nellies in relation to his son. References to death in various forms--natural, suicidal, or by tragic accident--are perhaps as frequent in the novel as heavy drinking among the characters. As in George Caldwell's penchant to make death a totemic presence in Rummel and Pop Kramer, we see Nellies displacing the reified notion of death as phantom presence in various 'others.' First it is the man sucked under the train, then it is Charlie Stuart at the church, followed by his own mother and sick son, and finally, in spite of all his astute displacements, Nellies sees death in himself in one of his dollarless dreams: "When he saw that the congregation was intact he realized that the funeral must be his own" (p 55). Unable to control and subdue death as presence in his mother, Nellies makes his son the consonient scapegoat. Nellies' morbid fear of death, he thinks impossibly in the imaginary, cannot bother him if he can somehow spell the death of death. Such an opportunity to fulfill his unconscious desire comes, as we noted earlier, during the headlong clash between father and son at the miniature golf course.

In order to empower himself, Nellies also has an equally strong desire to see his son allve. If Nellies feels 'frail, weakened, a shade of himself' without Tony, he also finds narcissistic 'sanctuary' in his false love for Tony. Like George Caldwell with Rummel in Updike's The Centaur, Nellies establishes a relationship with his son which is for from platonic: "There was between the two men preparing to speak but still silent, that sense of sanctuary that is the essence of love" (p 33).

There is something patently cloying and self-preserving in Mailler profferred love for his family: "The love Nellies felt for his wife and his only son seemed like some limitless discharge of a clear amber fluid that would surround them, cover them, preserve them, and leave them insulated but visible like the contents of an aspic' (p 24) What is this sanctuary if not the displacement of Nellies' Other's desire onto an other that is younger and well within his capacity to manipulate and master? Nailles' imprisoning of Tony in the orbit of his false love assures Nailles in the imaginary, perhaps, of control over his mother's Gaze. In Neilles' fantasy, control over Tony equals triumph over Mother's Gaze.

Keeping Tony from growing up in Nailles' unconscious desires so that Tony could be perpetually his boy, while he could be perpetually his young father. Neilles' delusional fantasy in the imaginary associates death with old age, and being young, for Nailles, keeps the scepter of death away. When Tony prefers to do his homework rather than help his father in cutting wood, Nailles sees the epitome of innocence in the boy - something he lurches on to morbidly: "The word 'homework' touched Nailles - it seemed to mean innocence, youth, purity, simple things - all lost in the bed of a sluttish war widow" (p 92) Arresting Tony's growth assures Naillies of his complete power over him and demonstrably vindicates his manhood. Naillies also throws away the pictures of naked women he finds in Tony's room and he has Tony lie to his mother about where he spent the night. It is not so much worrying over his son's slow progress in class as his fear of losing him that catalyzes the destruction of the T V set. Nailles gloats over the fact that his son finally prostrates himself to his manly power:

> 'Oh Daddy, Daddy," Tony cried. "Don't, don't, don't,' and he fell to his knees with his hands joined in a

> supplicatory position that he might have learnt from watching some melodrama on the box (p.73)

The first chink in Naillac' armor of paternal authority comes when Mrs Hubbard becomes Tony's love object As far as Tony is concerned, inviting Mrs. Hubbard over to dinner is aimed at disconcerting his mother, whose desire for Tony comes only next to that for her husband Tony's message in the tape recorder clearly shows his oedipal rivalry with his father:

> "You dirty old baboon, you dirty old baboon." As long as I can remember it seems to me that whenever I'm trying to go to sleep I can hear you saying dirty things. You say the dirtiest things in the whole world, you dirty, filthy, horny old baboon. (p.37)

During this routine clandestine eavesdropping on his parents' making love, Tony ardently wishes that his mother was fast asleep rather than responding to his father's amorous overtures The repetition of "asleep" twice in the paragraph accentuates Tony's desire that what he wished were literally true

> The boy wondered if his mother would have fallen asleep and if he would be spared the carnal demands, encouragements, exclamations and chases that he heard so often from his parents' bedroom He hoped his mother had fallen asleep (p 33)

But for Naillac the presence of Mrs Hubbard in a sexual context that changes his equation with his son has other serious meanings Because he has failed to keep Tony the innocent boy any more, Tony's presence suddenly threatens his manhood And what is more, at the unconscious level, reliving his own dislodging of his father to draw his mother's exclusive attention, Naillac sees in Tony's teasing behavior the repetition of the familiar mother - son conspiracy His brief reverie at the dinner table summons in him an urgency to reassert his rightful,

authoritative place in the family circle:

> The sexual authority that Neillus imagined as springing from his marriage bed and flowing through all the rooms and halls of the house was challenged. There did not seem to be room for two men in this erotic kingdom. His feeling was not of a contest but of an inevitability. He wanted to take Willie upstairs and prove to himself, like some old rooster, that the exception was still his and that the young prince was busy with golden apples and other impalsent matters. (p.94)

Besides, Neillee' weak identification with the significs for the father's Name produces extreme anxiety about his own sexual identity. A case in point is when Neillus picks up Tony at the police station after Tony is charged for verbally threatening his French teacher, Miss Noe. Neillee' dense silence as Tony narrates the incident to his father covers over Neillus' function as a weak signifier in the place of the Other. The narrative slippages price open the looming crisis of the paternal metaphor:

> Neillus had no counsel, advice, censure, experience or any other paternal qualities to bring to that crazy hour. He understood the boy's deep feelings about being dropped from the squad and he seemed to have shared in his son's felonious threatening of Miss Noe. (p.85)

When Neillus shares in Tony's felonious threatening of Miss Noe, he also displaces his own rage against his mother for imprisoning him in her Gaze. Reminded by Tony, then, of his predicament, all Neillus can focus upon driving home is the masochistic pleasure he derives in abjectifying death, away from himself, in others. Nature becomes, if not a stumbling chunk as it is for George Caldwell, a harbinger of death: "I love to see leaves blowing through the headlights. I don't know why. I mean they're just dead leaves, no good for anything, but I love to see them blowing through the light" (pp.85-86)

Another instance that links Neillee' acute anxiety about his sexual

identity with the crisis in the paternal metaphor happens thus Tony refuses to get up from his bed and complains of feeling 'terribly sad' (p 39) It is Nailles' rage to kill his son with the putter that brings on this crisis Instead of apologizing to his son, Nailles' visit to his son's room is merely a flimsy pretext to unravel his own sexual anxiety In fact, physically attracted to his son, Nailles yet fights to repress his homosexual tendencies When Nailles sits beside Tony's bed, the conversation, always a monologue on his side, veers around homosexuality, something that Nailles is attracted to And deeply repulsed by:

> 'And homosexuality You read a lot about that these days and it bothers me I wish it didn't exist ' (p 55)

Nailles in his tedious monologue goes on to relate to his son another homosexual encounter

> Before I joined the Chemists Club I used to have to pump ship in Grand Central and I almost never went into those cloakrooms without getting trouble Once when I was going up the stairs this guy came along and took my arm I had on a Brooks suit and a Locke hat and Peal shoes and the minute I had all this stuff on was to make my intentions clear So I walked away from him I didn't hit him I didn't see his face I've never seen any of their faces (pp 55-66)

In spite of the peculiarly self mocking and yet self-righteous narrative, the denial and howl of "never" like that of King Lear's cannot be missed The discourse of the Other speaks through the gaps Nailles fails to 'hit' the stranger for his sexual overtures because he is attracted to him The key phrase is 'I didn't see his face ' Why is Nailles afraid of seeing the stranger's face or the faces of other homosexuals in Grand Central? Is it not because of Nailles seeing his own mirror image in others? Nailles' tormenting ambivalence in not knowing whether he is a man or a woman and his unwillingness to come to terms with his repressed

homosexuality leave traces in his symptomatic speech that speaks the unconscious truth:

> 'I don't, as a matter of fact, have as much freedom and independence as I'd like myself. What I wear, what I eat, my sex life and a lot of my thinking is pretty well regimented and there are times when I like being told what to do. I can't figure out what's right and wrong in every situation.' (p 65)

Neilles' repressed homosexuality also accounts for the fact that he is reluctant to touch his son. It is a sense of guilt or deep repression that accounts for this shy behavior?

> Love was deflatingly what Neilles felt and where a more demonstrative man in another country would have embraced his son and declared his love, Neilles would not. Neilles lighted a cigarette and coughed. (p 33)

Tony's sadness, in fact, commences after his father wants to kill him. He realizes his father's love for him is unreal. Tony poignantly says to his father: 'The only reason you love me, the only reason you think you love me is because you can give me things' (p 115). Neilles gives things to his son when Tony wants love, he subdues him with authority when Tony wants to receive the love from his father. What Neilles' father was to him, Neilles is in turn to his son, a weak phallic signifier. Consequently Tony too, like his father, suffers from severe anxiety about his sexual identity.

Tony tells his father in a moment of frustration: 'Maybe I'm queer. Maybe I want to live with some nice, clean fagget. Maybe I want to be promiscuous and screw hundreds and hundreds of women. There are other ways of doing it besides joined in holy matrimony and filling up the cradle' (p 115). Tony's rage against his indifferent father is not without reason. Neilles is closer to his dog, Tessie, than he is ever to his son. His conversation with Tessie is intimate and quite ironically,

at an intelligent human level: 'Neillee spoke to the old bitch with a familiarity that could seem foolish. He wished her good morning and asked her how she had slept. ... He invited her to have a piece of toast, talked with her about the editorials in the Times and urged her, like some headmaster, to have a good day when he left for the train' (pp. 22-23). Neillee is appalled when Hammer suggests to him to shoot the old bitch but Nellies' mask of piety drops, and he proves himself to be no less callous when he wants to kill Hammer for his ill advice: 'The contemptible callousness of his new companion, the heartless brutality involved in the thought of murdering a beloved and trusting old dog, provoked a rage in Neillee so towering and so pure for a moment he might have killed Hammer' (p. 232). It is Tony who sees through his father's mask to the empty man within: 'He had no way of judging his worth as a father' (p. 88).

Tony's relationship with his father and mother, respectively, further highlights Tony's weak positioning in the symbolic order. Tony receives mixed and contradictory signals from his mother. On the one hand, Neillie's stout defense of her son against his father's threat (be it throwing the T.V. away or nearly killing him with the putter), and her crying when Tony brings a rival home in the figure of Mrs. Muhherd, are both symptomatic of her desire for the son, with the unmistakable unconscious message to subvert the Name-of-the-Father, to re-create the mother-son symbiosis. On the other hand, only Neillie leaves no stone unturned to cure Tony of his illness and restore his rightful place in the Symbolic Order. From Dr. Mullin, to the psychiatrist Sronsen, to the 'Scummuhuletory' specialist, finally to Swami Rutuole's magical power,

Nellie does everything in her power to push Tony away from her into the world where he rightly belongs.

Nellie's conflict between keeping Tony privileged in her Gaze and her desire to let him go is perhaps succinctly conveyed as she climbs the flight of steps to Rutuola's house: 'Her instinct was to turn and go, her duty was to climb the stairs, and the division between these two forces seemed like a broad river without bridges' ... seemed to give her some insight into the force of separateness in her life" (p 125) In sharp contrast, Tony's father either stifles him with too much mawkish love or too much material comfort. Caught between the two extremes, Tony has never learnt to locate his Symbolic structural position that 'lens,' as Lacan would say, should have erected.

Nellie seeks the help of the guru, Swami Rutuola, who lives above Payton's funeral parlor, to cure Tony's madness. Unlike Nellie, whose love for Tony is self-centered, Rutuola wins over Tony with his disarming frankness and charm. By recounting the humble and poor beginnings of his life, Rutuola erases the illusion of his moral superiority: "I was born in Baltimore," Rutuola says; "to poor people, but the hardships of my race are well known so I won't bother you with them' (p.129). Rutuola admits to other weaknesses as well. When he was fifteen years old he was beaten by his father for stealing a bicycle. He develops a limp at the "reform school in Livertown," where Rutuola is sentenced for six months for his crime, in order to avoid being beaten by rough gangsters in the prison. Once when he forgets to put on the act, Rutuola is beaten so savagely by the gangsters that he loses the sight of his left eye.

Having recounted the darker side of his life, Rutuola describes how he turns over a new leaf after leaving the prison cell. In sharp contrast

to Mailloux, who preaches what he fails to practice (for instance, he tells Tony to give up his addiction to the programs on T V while he cannot give up his own addiction to drugs and alcohol), Rutuola goes back to the same father who had beaten him once to learn from him the useful trade of carpentry. This trade eventually helps Rutuola to give up his job as a janitor at New York Central Station and pick up his father's profession again with his cousin Mr Forehan.

In Lacanian terms, Rutuola's chronicle of his life to Tony, moving as it may be, still leaves the teller and the listener trapped in symbolic codes and imaginary identifications. The brutality of Rutuola's father matches that of Tony's, especially when Mailloux attempts to kill him. What infuses confusion in Rutuola's narcissistic narrative that Tony identifies with is the Real, which operates as Ragland-Sullivan points out, "on the side of lawlessness and chaos."[12] The moment of epiphony when Tony unwittingly retrieves the key signifier (lack) in his unconscious he has long resisted to come to terms with happens thus. Rutuola relates the peculiar habit of thousands of people he noticed while he worked as a janitor. They would invariably write profusely on the toilet walls. Rutuola stumbles upon an unconscious truth of human nature:

> 'They hated to have the writing erased as if it seemed to be some part of them. They'd carve their messages in the wooden doors with their knives. You couldn't put them down as freaks because there were thousands of them and it gave me a very deep insight into how lonely and horny mankind is.' (p.138)

It is the lack in being or ephenisis that entry into language initiates that terrifies thousands of people in Rutuola's story. The only

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[12] Ragland-Sullivan, "Seeking the Third Term: Desire, the Phallus, and the Materiality of Language," in Feminism and Psychoanalysis, eds Richard Feldstein and Judith Roof (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989), p 40

way to deny lack or loss is to live in the fantasy and beguile ourselves that by leaving carved messages in the wooden door with a knife we also guarantee permanence and fleeing of being, language and meaning. Tony's sadness begins because everything that is dear to him and irrevocably associated with his being in his fantasy is taken away from him. If his father takes away the T.V. set that fills the hole in the Other, Tony's being dropped from the football squad further threatens his fragile identity. Having never learnt how to cope with loss, Tony's sadness is the looming symptom of his morbid fear of symbolic restriction in language.

Just as Peter Caldwell's identification with a weak signifier for the Father's Name (and consequent unsuccessful separation from the mother's body) initiates his 'terror of words,' Tony's fear of his father's rage and anger drives him first to take refuge in his mother's shirts (when eight years old), and nine years later, in the womb-like shelter of his bed. When his father fails, it is Butucis who restores Tony to the Symbolic Order of language to assume his gender identity. By initiating the Fort! Da! discourse, that is, through language learning to cope with mother's loss and symbolic retrieval, Butucis teaches Tony to accept the 'loss of the object.' In the 'murder' of the thing through symbolization he finds both his dynamic freedom and alienation from self, and the gaze of the mother.

In the constant repetition of lines like, "I have a girl I love who had gone on an errand but who will return" (p 137), Tony learns to constitute both presence and absence in language. More importantly, Tony substitutes and transfers the force of his mother's unconscious desire with 'a girl I love.' In other words, as Lacan would say:

> Fort! Da! It is precisely in his solitude that the desire of the little child has already became the desire

> of another, of an alter ego who dominates him and whose object of desire is henceforth his own affliction [13]

Tony gradually positions himself in the signifying chain, substituting without fear the girl with a series of other metaphors - an apple tree, clean clothes, love. Rutuole fills in for Tony's father the position of the third term (mark of difference), and situates Tony in the Symbolic Order of language to cope with his fleeting presence and absence, aphanisis and death in language. Whereas Tony's father unsuccessfully asked him to cope with luck in the other with material things, it is Rutuole who teaches Tony to fill in the hole in the Other with language. When Tony feels "like myself again," the Swami and Tony 'go down together' to meet his parents. It is noteworthy that Tony's exuberant remark carries a double message. Tony attributes his quick recovery to Rutuole, who is his father figure, and not his own father, who in failing his son also failed himself:

> 'I really hated, Daddy,' Tony says. 'I'm still weak but that terrible sadness has gone. I don't feel sad any more and the house doesn't seem to be made of cards I feel as though I've been dead and now I'm alive.'

The Hallies-Hallie relationship reveals their crucial positioning in the Symbolic, Imaginary, and Real Orders. There is something synthetic, eutectic, and ridiculously strained in Hallies' 'monogamous' relationship with his wife. The heart of the matter is that Hallies had 'fallen in love with Hallie the first time he met her and the success of his marriage was not an affair of the heart--it was a matter of life and death' (p 107). As in the case with Hallies' relationship with his son,

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[13] Jacques Lacan, 'Function and Field of Speech and Language,' in Ecrits: A Selection, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Norton, 1977), p 154.

he uses his intimacy with them for his own survival. This accounts also for his failure to make love to other women. Neillee finds his "domesticated organ" seeking only the "thighs of Nellie." Always dogged by the mysteriousness of life, Neillee quickly places Nellie in the dark face of his own unconscious and makes her both the source and key to the ineffable, "visible world":

> The landscape that he beheld when he raised her nightgown made his head swim. What beauty; what incredible beauty. Here was the keystone to his love of the visible world. (p.24)

Nellie also becomes a convenient scapegoat, as the Negro mistress is for Peter Caldwell in Updike's The Centaur, but with a major difference. Nellie is not degraded like the Negro mistress. Nellie becomes the object of desire for Neillee both to shield him from the tormenting Gaze of the mother and the very amiable demure source to recreate it. Such a source of access to and denial of the mother is possible as Neillee's false vision of Nellie is already jaundiced by the Gaze of the (m)Other. When Neillee holds Nellie in his arms as she briefly falls asleep, the subject-object distinction is blurred, and in one stroke, Neillee sees her as "his child, his goddess, the mother of his only sex" (p.187). Besides, Neillee experiences the Symbiotic oneness that rids him of the torture of separation, alienation and loss of self and mother that the entry into the Symbolic Order legislated. "Holding her he had experienced oneness" (p.187).

It is Neillee's weak positioning in the Symbolic that reduces him to depend slavishly first upon his wife, and later his son, for his sheer survival. What is even worse, he needs to see them as utterly defenseless and dependent upon him in order to resurrect his own threadbare identity:

> He had to get into the city to fend for Nellie and his son. If he could not get into the city they would be defenseless and he imagined them as besieged by enemies - cold, hunger and fear - refugees from a burned city (p. 121)

So even after Tony is brought back into the stream of life by Gutwoman, Maillou continues to make his 'cruel pilgrimage into the city' dependent totally upon drugs to see him through the day.

Nellie's unconscious subject position as a hysteric can be gleaned from her fidelity to the Other's demand that wants her to go through the ritual of self-denial and mortification rather than self-fulfillment. Her interactions with Maillou and other men substantiate the point. Tethered to a stifling, monogamous relationship with her husband, Maillou, the yearning call of the other for Nellie is not so much sexual freedom as how to relate to her own jouissance, which is always in excess. In Encore Lacan deals with female jouissance, which he defines as not-everything in the phallic function. Lacan says: 'There is no woman not excluded by the nature of things that is the nature of words, and it must be said that if there is something that they themselves are not complaining about plenty at the moment, it is precisely that--simple, they don't know what they are saying, that's the whole difference between them and me--'[14] Since for Lacan, explains Monique David-Menard, 'the word is death to the thing;

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[14] Jacques Lacan, Le Seminaire, book 20: Encore (Paris: Seuil, 1975), p. 34.

woman's jouissance appears to be beyond discourse: there is always something that escapes discourse in her."[15]

In her encounter with Bullock, the house guest at a club, Nellie experiences the "throes of the most profound sexual attraction of her life" not because of him but in spite of him since Nellie's jouissance is always something "that escapes discourse in her." Later with another philanderer, Bob Harmon, it is her menstrual cramp that stops short her sexual adventure:

> When she disappeared she was quite pale and shaken and said that she would have to go home. He seemed if anything, glad to see her go. So her chastenness, preserved by a fish, a cunny nose and some spoiled sturgeon eggs was still intact, although she carried herself as if her virtue was a jewel--an emblem--of chastity, discipline and intelligence. (p.110)

It is the Real that speaks through Nellie's body. Chained to the Other's desire, Nellie's menstrual cramp seems to forbid her from seeking quick sexual gratification. What Nellie eventually as her excessive sexual appetite that the sight of the nude man on stage provokes in her is actually her rejection of the phallic power that is made possible through her jouissance which belongs to her alone, "to that her that does not exist and signifies nothing."[16] And yet as David Menard points out, "Feminine jouissance exists only when it still supposes to the desire of a man for whom language and discursive jouissance are the same thing."[17]

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[15] Monique David-Menard, Hysteria From Freud to Lacan: Body and Language in Psychoanalysis, trans. Catherine Porter (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989), p.187.

[16] Jacques Lacan, Le Seminaire, book 20, Encore, p.189.

[17] Monique David-Menard Hysteria From Freud to Lacan, p.189.

So while the nude man on stage distances his [illegible] it is Nellie who alone experiences the excess of it:

> If these were merely the facts of life why should her eyes be riveted on his thick pubic bush from which hung like a discouraged sad unmettered flower his principal member (p 35)

Unlike men, who are shielded by the very gender-structure they are in, Nellie in being a woman is precisely "not-everything" in the phallic (symbolic) function. In withdrawing the signifying space of her body from Ballard, which her cramps conveniently reinforce, Nellie is also calling into question the impostote of the phallus that needs women to empower itself. It is the male Gaze (Ballard's?) in Cheever's narrative which derisively sees Nellie's chastenese when thwarted from having sexual commerce with her as a jewel or an emblem of hat 'character, discipline and intelligence" (p 110). The omie Gaze in grudgingly greeting Nellie intelligence and discipline, gieriogiy omits Neilie's own hysteric subject position that alone is responsible for her rituals of self-denial and sacrifice. Neilie feels alive in the imaginary only is bequeathing hat body to the Other's desire that wants from her nothing iese than her chasteneese.

Lacan states quite clearly that "a subject, as such, does not have very much to do with jouissence."[18] Therefore, Nellie experiences jouissence at the moment when language fails. 'felie away from its signifying function.' It is in Nellie's nattetive swerves, when she frustrates Neilles' phallic function, that she experiences the mystical jouissence, the 'something more' beyond the parameters of language.

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[18] Jacques Lacan, Le Semineire, book 20, Encore, p 36

'Lacan's prudence,' David-Menard rightly observes, 'in not spelling out this something more is explained by the point he seeks to reach: 'this more' can only be an experience of nothingness... that is... a mystical jouissance, an ecstaticism of the body in the sense of a signifier of which women would be the theater.'[1] When Neillen lurches to Nellie's side of the bed, she makes it clear that he is unwelcome:

> His procreative usefulness was over--she thought--but his venereal itch was unabated--he scratched himself while she watched--and she wondered if there weren't some massive obsolescence to the overly sexual man in his forties; some miscalculation in nature that left him able to populate a small city with his unwanted progenerative energies. Later, when Neillen lurched over to Nellie's side of the bed she didn't actually kick him but she made it clear that he was unwelcome (p.93)

So what burns in Neillen's 'consciousness with a lingering incandescence' is not her repressed sexuality but her jouissance that belongs to her, to that her that does not exist and signifies nothing in the Symbolic Order of language. Like the response of a child beaten by more powerful parents, Neillen feels 'frustrated, angry and indignant,' after Nellie pours cold water on his amorous advances. So sleeps alone in the guest room.

The skirmishes with Nellie bring to Neillen's mind a man named Harry Pile he had grown up with. The story Neillen relates about his friend says less about Harry Pile and more about Neillen himself:

> Now Neillen had no use for men who were afraid of women. He had grown up with a man who suffered from this terrible infirmity. His name was Harry Pile and Pile had been afraid of women all his life. Pile had begun quite naturally with his mother--a large, big breasted, impetuous woman who fired out contradictory commands, broke her husband's spirit and threshed her only son with a thorny walking stick. (p.89)

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[1] Monique David-Menard, Hysterie From Freud to Lacan, p.188

When Harry Pike's first wife, a 'beautiful young woman who gave him three daughters,' runs off with an Italian waiter, Pike chooses for the second wife a woman 'so preternaturally demure, wistful and shy that he seemed to had outmaneuvered his fears but she turned out to be a heavy drinker and another source of anxiety' (p 100). Pike's fear of women extends from secretaries to receptionists to strong women approaching him on the sidewalk. When he dies in his thirties his almost last question to Neilles is: 'Do you think God will be women?' (p 101)

In spite of Neilles' assurance to himself that unlike Pike he is not afraid of Neilla, the contrary remains the irrefutable fact. Moreover, as pointed out earlier, Neilla at once reverts over and refers back Neilles' imprisonment in his mother's Gaze much the same way as Pike's wives refer him back to his mother's Gaze. Both Pike and Neilles remain victimized by their mothers' Gazes that parallel George Caldwell's imprisonment in the Gaze of his father who forever watches him in Updike's The Centaur.

Paul Hammer in some sense the double of Elliot Neilles, is a bastard, with a weak third term to give a structural position in the Symbolic Order. Neilles makes the following mental note after the priest introduces the Hammers to him: 'The stranger evidently anticipated the unwanted union that the sameness of their names would enforce in such a place' (p. 20). Hammer's obsessional discourse continuously asks the question: Who am I? The neurotic structure, as Stuart Schneiderman points out, reveals a person who does not know what she or he wants.[*] The tragic

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[*] See Stuart Schneiderman, Jacques Lacan: The Death of an Intellectual Hero (New York: New York University Press, 1983). The chapter entitled 'Theory of Obsessional Neurosis,' is especially useful (pp 49-115).

story of Paul Hammer in a nutshell is: 'I was born out of wedlock--the son of Franklin Pierce Taylor and Gretchen Shurz Oxencraft, his one-time secretary' (p.143) Hammer's father 'did not mean to marry' his mother Hammer discovers his birth was not desired by either of his parents: '... Gretchen had been dogged by bad luck, and while she had been well equipped with birth control material her bad luck overtook her again She discovered some after the preparations that she was pregnant' (p 148)

Deserted by his (un)desiring mother at the age of three, shunned by his failed father, Paul Hammer is left to the mercy of nannies and Taylor's Grandmother: 'When I was three years old I was visited by my father's mother She was delighted by the fact that I had a head of yellow curls; She offered to adopt me' (p 145); The grandmother fills in the function of Hammer's surrogate father and mother until the relationship turns sour when Hammer is about twelve years old Hammer becomes jealous to find his grandmother excited by the arrival of Lord Pemwright, an English Earl, for dinner. With the help of a waitress, Olga, Hammer manages to put into one of the oysters on Pemwright's plate the 'phony pearl' he had bought at Woolworth's The Lord's response at the discovery of the pearl upsets the grandmother:

> 'I shall have it set and give it to my wife,' said the Lord. 'But it's my pearl,' Grandmother said 'This is my house These are my oysters The pearl is mine.' (p 150)

After receiving back her pearl, the grandmother sends Hammer to his room and since then 'things between us were never the same' (p.16E)

When the grandmother dies while Hammer is in his junior year at Yale, he has no place to go for Christmas: 'I was terribly lonely in the empty building and felt that my illegitimacy was a cruel injustice.

Everyone else in school had at least one parent while I had none it seemed that my father could at least buy me a beer on the Christmas holidays' (p 161) Taylor's wife directs Hammer to the Ritz, where apparently his father spends several days partying away from his wife Hammer finds him father in a 'polesexed, drunken slump, naked. Around his neck he wore a chain of champagne corks--seventeen--which I guessed some friend had put there after he had stoned out' (p 162) Hammer's rage against his denigrated father does not lead to murder. Hammer instead becomes charitable and leaves his naked father to slump in peace In sparing his father's life, Hammer is also keeping intact a piece of himself he sees in his father: 'He was my father, the mother with some calibrations of my heart, vitals, lights and mind; and how far could a man go with such a creature? I could kill him I could shame him and I could forgive him but I had to do something so I settled on an uneasy brand of forgiveness and went away' (p 163) Like Peter to George Caldwell. Hammer in effect all 'his father's son,' no matter how illegitimate Like Peter again, Hammer wants to be left alone to nurse his pain, which becomes a measure of his stoic dignity.

Hammer's next stop at Kitahuhai to see his mother ends in disappointment as well His mother is equally cold to him: 'Since I have no legitimate father I may have expected more from her than she could give but I always found her to be disappointing and sometimes discouraging' (p 158). After her initial euphoria, Hammer's mother settles into her own hysterical world, where she suffers luck in order to be faithful to the Other's desire Gretchen is disturbed herself and needs to constantly talk to herself to cure her malaise: 'Now three times a week, I lie down on my bed and talk to myself for an hour. I'm very frank The therapy

seems to be quite effective and, of course, it doesn't [illegible]
(pp. 167-168).

In the course of their conversation, Hammet also finds out that his mother had visited Los Angeles without making any effort even to call him:

> "I didn't know you'd been home," I said. "Well I was," she said. "I didn't call you." "It doesn't matter," I said. (p. 166)

Rejected by his father and mother, Hammet launches on his tedious journey, frantically searching without success for the elusive place called home: "I went back to my room and parked, the only one of a male catatyld holding up the three top floors of the Mercedes Hotel and a crazy old woman. I left her a note saying that I had suddenly gotten restless. To appear and disappear did not seem to me a dirty trick. I had the feeling that she was so wrapped up in her own eccentricities that she hardly noticed my going" (p. 168).

Hammer's adult life is dogged by a severe identity crisis because Franklin Pierre Taylor is a weak signifier of the Father's Name. Hammet tenderlessly letches onto key signifiers to represent the original loss of his mother. Hammet's repeated reference to signifiers like "snow capped mountains," "a fortified town," "Elysian fields," and most of all, "yellow rooms" fail to comfort Homer to live with loss. The signifiers ironically, reinforce Hammer's nostalgia for the womb-like shelter he unconsciously desires. When melancholy at "oxford"--a form of deepair--strikes him, Hammer, on several occasions, takes recourse to hiding his face in the blanket of darkness, which is at once a refuge from his obsessional neurosis and a protestant reminder of it:

> "I would wake feeling healthy and full of piano, to be crushed by the oxford while I chewed or drank my first cup of coffee. . . My best defense my only defense, was to cover my head with a pillow and summon up those

> images that represented for me the excellence and beauty I had lost..." (p.172)

> Then I returned to my apartment, undressed and got back into bed again, pulling the covers over my face. I hated the light of day, it seemed to be the essence of my refard...as if darkness would lessen my frustrations...as if the night were a guise of forgetfulness (pp.173-174)

> My refard had followed me around the world and I was still drinking heavily. Lying in bed in the Eden one morning with a pillow over my face I summoned up Kilimanjaro and its ancient villages, the Elysian Fields and the fortified town (p.179)

Increasingly, the Symbolic in Hammer's discourse is overlaid with the Imaginary. Hammer thinks that a room with "yellow walls" would solve the problem of his refard:

> If I could not change my habits I could at least change my environment and I thought that if I found such a room with yellow walls I would cure my refard and my drunkenness. (p.177)

Hammer's obsessional search for the yellow rooms takes him from Chicago to New York to Rome to New York again. In the process Hammer checks in and out of a dozen hotels until he stumbles upon the room with yellow walls for the third time on his way to the house of Charlie Masterson, an old cellmate who now lives in Pennsylvania.

Hammer's interest is not in Doris Emmison, who owns the house, but in the room itself with the yellow walls: "But it was not the woman but the room I wanted--square, its lemon-yellow walls simply lighted--and I felt that if I could only possess this I would be myself again, industrious and decent" (p.183). Hammer's dogmatic persistence to possess the womb-like shelter of the yellow rooms is symptomatic of his tortuous, ambivalent relationship with his mother. On the one hand, the peace of the yellow rooms represents the symbiotic oneness of the mother-son

relationship that Hammer unconsciously desires. On the other hand, the yellow rooms are also Hammer's unsuccessful attempt to escape his mother's unconscious desire that, in order to subvert the Name-of-the-Father, wants Hammer to kill a "decent man."

Given Hammer's rage against his father for having deserted him, his mother's unconscious desire is also too closely Hammer's as well. Perhaps Hammer's imaginary escape lies in the yellow rooms and the surroundings of Emminon's house. The erotic feminized metaphors attributed to nature bring in simultaneously Hammer's mother's presence in the yellow rooms and also de-sexualizes her power to control him:

> As soon as I stepped into the yellow room I felt that peace of mind I had coveted when I first saw the walls in a walkup near Pennsylvania Station. I sat in a chair by the window feeling the calm of the yellow walls centers me. Outside I could hear the branch, some slight bird, moving leaves, and all the sounds of the night world seemed endearing as if I quite literally loved the night as one loves a woman, loved the stars the trees, the weeds in the grass as one can love with the same order a woman's breasts and the apple core she has left in an ashtray. (pp 184-185)

In order to possess the yellow rooms, Hammer tries to make himself indispensable by offering to mow the grass in Emminon's back yard. Hammer becomes so possessive of the yellow rooms that he evokes a convincing argument not to fall in love with Emminon. 'I could have made a pass at her but if we became lovers this would have meant sharing the yellow room and that was not what I wanted' (p 187). Hammer's conscious speech belies the fact that Emminon has become a mother-figure for Hammer that precludes any other form of relationship. Hammer never breaks in when Emminon is out of town to regain the womb-like shelter of the yellow room. It is curious that the clandestine visits by two of Emminon's lovers, while Hammer is alone in her room, evoke him uneasy and robs him of some of the magic of

the yellow room. Is it not seeing Emmison as a woman who is the object of desire for other men, that destroys Hammer's image of her as a chaste mother-figure? His quick departure early next morning from the yellow room and her house that had restored Hammer previously is quite uncharacteristic: 'All of this left an uneasy end in the morning I cleaned up the place, emptied the ashtrays and drove back to New York' (p.190).

Little does Hammer realize that his present of a case of bourbon to Emmison for her kindness in letting him spend the night in her yellow room thinly disguises his unconscious desire to kill his surrogate mother. As was the case with Neillee in relation to his mother, Hammer is, being close to his mother, powerless to kill her. But Emmison in his unconscious thinking appears a convenient substitute. Hammer exploits Emmison's weakness for liquor: 'She was, I saw, one of those serious drinkers who prepared their utensils as a dentist prepares his utensils for an extraction. With all of this within her reach she settled down and I poured the drinks' (pp.190-191).

Emmison's efforts to glean more facts about Hammer's life is cut short with Hammer's candid confession. Hammer says, 'I'm a bastard,' and ends with a sad refrain: 'Mostly lousy, I guess. I once I would have enjoyed a set of parents' (pp.192-193). The key signifier in the unconscious Hammer struggles not to come to terms with is his illegitimate birth. Cut to the quick, Dora Emmison is scapegoated for his problems and asked to die for Hammer in the place of his mother he is too impotent to kill. Just as his conscious mind stops Emmison from taking the fatal drive to the Helmsleys' party--'I think it would be better if you didn't go' (p.193)--, so the desire of the Other wants Emmison to keep her

appointment with death: "I heard her swear and a moment later I heard the noise of falling glass, and why is this sound so portentous, so like a doomcrack hail? I spent the night at a motel in Biesville and telephoned the turnpike police in the morning. She had lasted about fifteen minutes' (pp.194-195). With the death of Dora Emmison, Hammer is able to buy the house, and at least for a while in his fantasy keep his refard at bay 'If I dreamed at all my dreams were of an exceptional innocence and purity I had no longer any need for the mountain, the valley and the fortified city' (p.196)

Hammer's relationship with Maristta Drum, who later becomes Mrs Maristta Hammer, further reinforces the point that, like Dora Emmison before her, Maristta is asked to take over as Hammer's surrogate mother Hammer is not drawn to her person: "She was not beautiful--not yet--,' but to the fact that he sees a white thread on one of her shoulders. Perhaps Hammer's unconscious equation of the white thread with the 'exceptional innocence and purity' in his dreams makes him fantasize the white thread on Maristte's shoulder even when it is not there: "It would be a lie to say that there was always a white thread on her clothing--that even if I bought her a mink coat there would be a white thread on it--but the white thread had some mysterious power as it were a catalyst that clarifies my susceptibilities It seemed like magic and when she picked the thread off her coat and dropped it on the floor, the magic remained' (p.202).

Hammer's unconscious desire for 'exceptional innocence' in his relationship with Maristta is a double bind that nostalgically looks back to the innocence of the mother-son symbiotic Oneness as it refers forward to his repressed homosexuality, engendered in no small measure by his

father's Gaze It is significant that Hammer chooses to propose to Marietta Drum after a 'loud crack of thunder ' a moment of weakness for Marietta as she is mortally afraid of thunderstorms; In giving Marietta protection in his arms, Hammer recreates the excclesiatic mother-son relationship with a sharp difference Hammer takes on the role of the protective mother to shield the helpless Marietta as child: ' [illegible] hat when the carts of thunder rolled, when the assassin's knife struck home, when governments fell and earthquakes blasted the city walls she was my glory and my child" (p.214) If you recall that it is the real in Hammer's body that speaks as symptoms when he is victimized by his cofard - 'my hands had begun to shake terribly' (p 176)--it comes as no surprise that Hammer reinforces his moi narcissism by making love to Marietta when she is herself trembling from her fear of the thunderstorms

> She was trembling then and I took her in my arms and we became lovers before the storm had passed over my land. 'That felt good ' she said, 'That felt very good That was a nice thing to do ' (p 212)

Hammer empowers himself as the maternal other to Marietta and ironically, seizes the moment to propose to her:

> 'I've never had it better ' I said 'Let's get married ' (p 212)

When Marietta Drum becomes Mrs Marietta Hammer six weeks later, she is asked, and she rightly refuses; to take the place of Hammer's mother; Hammer's love is set for Marietta but a piece of white thread, which is a symptomatic effect of the key signifier in the place of the Other that Hammer latches onto in his hopeless quest for the lost jouissance with his mother:

> We do not fall in love--I thought--we re-enter love, and I had fallen in love with a memory--a piece of white thread and a thunderstorm My own true love was a piece of white thread and that was no- (p 214)

Hammer continues to live in his fantasy, which paradoxically is also a healthy screen against facing his unpalatable unconscious truth that he has been abandoned by his parents (perhaps more cruelly than Jenics Angstrom in Updike's Rabbit, Run) until Marietta's discourse of the Other compels Hammer to come to terms with his obsessional neurosis. When the narration partly shifts to Marietta's voice, Hammer the obsessional, like the Emperor with no clothes, is ruthlessly exposed. If Hammer's behavior during the thunderstorm is any indication, his altruistic protection of Marietta is actually, like that of his alter ego Malina, Hammer's egotistical protection of his own self. Hammer's rebuff when Marietta refuses to act as mother happens thus:

> I sleep naked and I went down the stairs into the kitchen naked. Marietta stood in the center of the floor wearing her wedding ring and nothing else. When I embraced her she pushed me away angrily and said: 'Can't you see that I'm eating. Leave me alone, leave me alone! Can't a person get something to eat without being molested?' (p 213)

> ... while I, looking at Marietta, would remember the number of places I had been rebuffed. In the motel in Stockbridge she had locked herself in the bathroom until I fell asleep. ... In Chicago she kicked me in the groin. In Easthampton she defended herself with a carving knife. Her menstrual periods seemed frequent and prolonged and on some nights she would get into bed and cover her face with a blanket before I could get undressed. (p 216)

Rejected by his wife and forced to sleep alone, Hammer indulges in masturbatory voyeurism to sublimate his physical needs. Hammer becomes a prisoner of his memories and his imagination and falls into the habit of inventing dream girls who come to him in bed, sometimes singly, sometimes in doubles, to make love to him. From his dredging of memories of a girl he had known in Ashburnham, Hammer's fantasy progresses to

include an imaginary Chinese with a "voluptuous backside," a vivacious Negress, and a "fat woman with red hair" (p 215). The different women that Hammer's fantasy conjures up serve one goal for him: the imaginary women, as his mother should have done, "calmed me, they let me sleep and when I woke in the morning I was moderately hopeful" (p 215)

Marietta cracks the glass shell of Hammer's fantasy when she has the yellow walls repainted pink. With the key signifier--yellow room--in the imaginary gone, Hammer telescopes within three weeks into his catatonia:

> I could have pretended but my obsession with yellow had begun to seem absurd. Surely I had enough character to live with a normal apartment and I let the painter go ahead. Two or three weeks after the painters had finished I woke with the catatonia. I suffered, on going out of bed, all the symptoms of panic. I had known, to change the pace of my life and on Friday we flew to Rome. (pp 216-217)

Marietta turns around the signifier's piece of white thread on her shoulder" to stand for Hammer's repressed homosexuality and not for exceptional innocence as he visualizes in the imaginary. Hammer fails to come to terms with his own father, whose own gender position in the symbolic remains blurred. Taylor, the only paryatid, is Hammer's ideal father only in the imaginary:

> In Munich he posed, out of vanity of pleasure, for the architectural sculptor Fledepuß who ornamented the facade of the Prinz-Regenten Hotel. The fact that he was always known as my uncle was overcome by my feeling that he held on his shoulders the Prinz-Regenten, the better suited of the Mercedes and the Opera House in Salzburg that was also banned. He seemed very responsible and I loved him. (pp 149-150)

Hammer denigrates the same father in the Symbolic and Real as Taylor's function as a third term (mark of difference) is weakened by his own ambivalent subject position in the Symbolic. In posing as a nude

caryatid Hammer's father is asking, like his son the same question: Am I a man or a woman?

> He was lithe, really lithe, but this unseasonable litheness seemed to be obscene. He looked, buried into his bed liquor, like the faded figure of some Icarus or Ganymede that you might find painted on the wall of some old-fashioned second-rate Italian restaurant, flyspecked and badly drawn (p 162)
>
> I began to wonder seriously if the ubiquity of my father's head and shoulders carved in limestone had not been crippling, but if it had been what could I do? (p 176)

Hammer's strange narrative as he relates homosexual encounters with male partners assumes a certain moral rectitude as Hammer is seen merely to react to the sexual overtures initiated by other men However, Hammer's language reveals more than he understands Hammer's friendship with a homosexual stranger at Wentworth is a case in point In order to evade the issue of his own homosexuality, Hammer narcissistically attributes to the stranger what he himself experiences:

> In the late winter I went South to Wentworth to play some golf An amiable man in the bar the night I arrived suggested that we pair off since our scores seemed to be about the same. . . . . He kept bumping into me and touching me. I was not repelled but I did not want to invest my sexuality in a one-night stand with a stranger at Wentworth and I left in the morning (p 256)

What stands out in Hammer's reconstruction of the event is that he was 'not repelled' by this stranger's advances Hammer is obviously attracted to the man and yet he uses the specious excuse of the 'one-night stand" to avoid coming to terms with his homosexuality

Hammer s weekend relationship with Maggie Fowler's teenage son from her first marriage, although insinuatingly perverse, also poignantly constructs Hammer's rage against his father for having deserted him during

his childhood years. Once again Hammer's narrative implies the boy's need for him is more imperative than his desire for the boy. The truth flies in the face of Hammer's own admission: "He (Maggie's son) was the child of her first marriage and evidently spent most of his time with his father or away at school" (p.207). Hammer's jealousy of the boy's close relationship with his father leads narcissistically to the interchange of identities where Hammer plays the role of the protective father to the forlorn and lonely boy: "He held my hand on the walk--an unusual attention for a boy his age--and I guessed that he was lonely, but if I explained his conduct by this I must have been lonely myself because I enjoyed his company" (p.207). Hammer's narrative perversely mirrors his own candid love for Maggie's boy that Hammer had all along so sorely failed to receive from his own father: "I didn't see much of him on Sunday but I seemed aware of him--his footstep, his voice, his presence in the house. But I definitely felt something like love for him during the few hours we spent together (pp 207-208).

Paul Hammer's obsessional discourse soon deteriorates and functions on the slope of psychosis that foreclosures law. Carrying out his mother's aberrant desire, Hammer wants to crucify a man, for, as his mother says, "nothing less than a crucifixion will wake that world" (p.155). In trying to kill Tony, Hammer both fulfills his mad mother's desire and also rejects both his parents for their cruel neglect of him in childhood. Since Tony is the product of Nailles and Nellie, legitimate father and mother, such a killing of the offspring would be a displaced rejection of Hammer's own illegitimate parents who brought Hammer into the world

To vindicate his rage against his father, Hammer appropriately tells Rotwelo, the only man who cares Tony at his sickness, his plan to kill Tony:

> 'I am going to kill him,' Hammer said. 'I am going to burn him on the alter of Christ Church ' (p 235)

In trying to kill Tony, Hammer unconsciously wants to kill his bastard self, to injure for good the signifier for the Father's Name, which he never received from his own father Ironically, the most powerful and seductive disembodied passage in Bullet Park is addressed to 'you' the reader. Through a series of rhetorical questions the reader is seductively drawn not to submit to law, the symbolic castration but to break against it The biting sarcasm is seeing Hammer as a 'nice man,' who would promptly challenge the law in his attempt to kill Tony, is lost upon the reader as he/she is unwavered to sympathize with Hammer, who is virtually reduced to an orphan by his parents Where the Father's Name fails to give Hammer a decent public face in the Symbollr, Hammer seeks to empower himself by killing his victim, Tony, for his excellence:

> Have you ever committed a murder? Have you ever known the homicide's ambiguous feeling of rightness? Conscientious men live like the citizens of some noisy border country familiar with a dozen national anthems. their passports fat with visas, but they will be incapable of true and allegiance until they break the law. (p 233)

Hammer is stepped in the sick of time by Neilles, his alter ego whose unconscious desire had also been to both see his son dead and alive Neilles' failure to execute his deep-seated unconscious desire to kill his son as he had failed to kill his mother earlier does not, however, nip his desire in the bud The desire persists in the unconscious and almost sees its fruition in Hammer, Neilles' double, who unwittingly carries out

his desire. Mailise' response to the knowledge from Rutusin that his son is in danger is a crucial pointer to his unconscious deep involvement in the symbolic act of murder. Mailise remains unruffled by Rutusin's news but his peculiar behavior gives him away:

> Mailise felt, from Rutusin's voice, that Tony was in danger but he did not run to his car and did nothing else hurriedly. When he got to the church he recognized Hammer's car. In some way he had expected this. He pounded on the locked door. Hammer was sitting in a front pew, crying, the red gasoline tank was beside him. Mailise lifted his son off the altar and carried him out into the rain. (my emphasis, pp.241-242)

Hammer feels in the Real the ultimate pain of the disintegration of the self. Hammer realizes the ultimate unflinching truth of what it means to be treated as an orphan in the Real, without the submission to the signifier for the Name-of-the-Father: "I seemed merely to have scattered my guts and vitals a third of the way around the world" (p.164). For Lacan the discourse of fiction has the structure of truth. Hammer's psychosis is the extreme embodiment of it.

To conclude. E.M. Forster, in Howard's End says "Death destroys a man, but the idea of death saves him."[21] Mailise and Hammer, as the coupling of their names suggests, are doubles who carry out the idea of death a step further. Functioning on the slope of the death-drive and yet unwilling to die, Mailise and Hammer betray extreme measures of narcissism and self pity when Tony is scapegoated for their problems and even asked to die for them. It is Ines Mailise's closeness to his mother and more his 'touchy' relationship with his father and his repressed homosexuality that account for his unbridled rage against Tony. By the same token, Hammer,

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[21] E.M. Forster, Howard's End (New York: Vintage Books, 1921), p.239

his double, faced with the shame of his illegitimate birth, seeks to empower himself by injuring the signifier for the Father's name by immolating Tony in the chancel.

As the narrative swerves in Bullet Park indicate, neither Nailles nor Hammer empower themselves by subverting the law. To Marietta her husband remains a lonely man, a 'henpecked doormat' and an 'empty gin bottle' (p. 53-54). Nellie sees in her husband 'some massive adolescence to the overly sensual man in his forties' (p. 99). The final picture of Cheever's Bullet Park remains dismal and disturbingly bleak. Nailles, who is a 'shade of himself' without the mothering love of Nellie and Tony, cannot make the pilgrimage to the city, his workplace, without being heavily drugged. Mr. Heathcup cannot 'stand it any longer' and shoots himself. Dora Emmisor lasts only 'fifteen minutes' once she drives on the highway under the influence of alcohol. Mrs. Cretchen, Hammer's mother, sends the talking sure to maintain what shred of sanity she is left with; and her son ends up in a mental asylum. It comes as no surprise that Cheever's pivotal and serious concerns in Bullet Park seem to be with failed fathers, (un)desiring mothers and the tragic fate of orphaned sons (in)between.

CHAPTER V

RE-VISIONING COLONIAL DISCOURSE: ALISON LURIE'S "THE WAR BETWEEN THE TATES"

Critics have, by and large, limited their focus on Lurie's "adultery plot," claiming that this abiding pattern that weaves through all her novels is both her limitation and her virtue. For instance, Katherine M. Rogers argues: "Although Lurie uses this adultery plot in Love and Friendship, The Nowhere City, Real People, and The War Between the Tates, it does not become boringly repetitious any more than Austen's marriage plot does."[1] John W. Aldridge, however, is not so sympathetic. He thinks Lurie's "adultery" plots wear thin, especially in the context of the post-pill era, which has virtually deflated whatever steam is left in her fictional world that banks largely on illicit liaisons within the academic community.[2] Sara Sanborn, in the New York Times Book Review misses the savage irony of The War Between the Tates when she praises Erica and Brian for the wrong virtues, namely, their courage to stand their ground against the onslaught of alien cultures. She enthusiastically mentions "How [Erica and Brian] learn to know their own characters better--without losing character altogether in the alternative culture offered them--is the matter of the novel."[3] For John Leonard the book is "annoying" at

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[1] Katherine M. Rogers, "Alison Lurie: The Uses of Adultery," in American Women: Memory, Identity, Family, Space, ed. Mickey Pearlman (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1989), p. 113.

[2] John W. Aldridge, "How Good Is Alison Lurie?" Commentary 59 (January, 1975): 79-81.

[3] Sara Sanborn, New York Times Book Review, July 28, 1974, 1-2.

heat, since for him the metaphor of the Vietnam War fails to work in the novel and simply "weighs a ton."[4]

Limiting the wide scope of Lurie's novels to such narrow, parochial themes hardly does justice to the author's daring vision and the sheer energy and power of her imagination. What Bharati Mukherjee sees as her unique advantage in America, where she can simultaneously be assimilated into its currents without compromising her ethnic identity as the 'other,' could as well be said of Alison Lurie:

> That training, in our ethnic--and gender--fractured world of contemporary American fiction, allows me without difficulty to 'enter' lives, fictionally, that are manifestly not my own. Chameleon-skinned, I discover my material over and across the country, and up, and down the social ladder.[5]

Drawing heavily both from her own personal experiences and keen sense of observation of the multi-cultural world of the Corinth community, Lurie in The War Between the Tates offers us a vignette of life that is of peoples and not just of people. To use Mukherjee's words, 'Chameleon skinned,' Lurie enters 'fictionally,' with ease and fluency, into lives that are manifestly not her own. The thrust of the novel, thus, is not adultery, but Lurie's capacity to use the variegated American scene, teeming with different cultures, as her fictional material with some disturbing, false notes. The more troubling aspect of Lurie's The War Between the Tates is the "insertion" of White characters, Wendy and Zed in the Eastern discourse; an insertion which only on the surface challenges and explodes the myth that one must be Indian and brown in

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[4] John Leonard, New Republic, August 17/17, 1974, 24.

[5] Bharati Mukherjee, 'Immigrant Writing: Give Us Your Maximalists!' New York Times Book Review, August 28, 1988, 29.

order to naturally possess such an identity But the fact is, Wendy and Zed are patently false, ersatz East at best, not the real thing [b] What is then, Lurie's politics is manoeuvering a re-configuration of colonial discourses? Lurie can only subdue the recalcitrant veins of the Eastern discourse to reaffirm bourgeois values by dismissing characters like Wendy and Zed, who are themselves such false and poor representations of the Third World that they give Lurie the raison d'etre she needs to dismiss them at the end of the novel

So once again the premise Lurie holds out by expanding the scope of the novel from constructing the moral war between the Tates into a tenarious engaging war between contending and conflictual discourses (First and Third Worlds) dies at the end of the novel when the narrative switches back to the niggardly provincial, domestic squabbles of the Tates. With such a smooth rounding off, Lurie loses much of the political edge of the novel

In spite of Lurie, it is the unconscious of the novel that ceaselessly works against the site(s) of subjectification The Tates take it upon themselves with a missionary zeal to re-inscribe Wendy and Zed in the Western discourse, while Zed and Wendy are so less frustrated by their failure to "appropriate" the Third World discourse In other words, the Eastern discourse because of its very subversive nature CANNOT be contained within the ideological boundaries of the Western novel, and Lurie's narrative more than ever demonstrates the expulsion of discourses that fail to promote capitalistic interests

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[b] I am indebted to David Levarenz for this suggestion

Briefly Lurie's plot concerns the crises in the lives of two families, where both husbands have deserted their wives and children for younger women. Brian Tate leaves home when Erica Tate discovers his clandestine affair with Wendy Gallagher, a graduate student in psychology. When Wendy becomes pregnant, Brian bullies her to have an abortion; When Wendy becomes pregnant a second time, and decides to keep the baby, a cloud of mystery hangs over who the real father of the baby is. Is it the lonely Pakistani Engineering student that Wendy offers herself to during Christmas vacation, or is it Brian? When Wendy leaves for the commune in California with Ralph, Brian is left with no option but to sneak back to his wife and children. Parallel to the main plot runs the subplot with a closely related turn of events. After his divorce, Leonard Zimmern leads a bohemian life in a flat in New York, while his ex-wife Dahlelle copes with bringing up two daughters, Rae and Celia, all by herself. After several "indiscriminate" flings, she settles on Dr. Bernard Rotelchuk, a veterinarian, and marries him. Skirting the main plot is the sub-text of the novel, occupied by the subculture group--mainly Wendy and Zed. The Kriehe Bookshop, located in 'obscure downtown,' is the hub and disseminating core of the Eastern discourses. The store is owned by Sanford Finkelstein, a Harvard Ph.D in Philosophy, who now prefers to call himself Zed. Erica Tate, being herself very lonely after the desertion of her husband, discovers her old friend Zed from the Harvard days. She tries unsuccessfully to make love to him in order to bring him back into the world. Soon after, Zed leaves Corinth to find "God," who has eluded him so far.

Erica's obsessional neurosis stems from the sacrifice of his being to the Other's desire. Erica is born with all the advantages: 'the son

of a well known professor, nephew of anthers and icemakers, grandson and great-grandson of ministers and judges, healthy, handsome, intellectually precocious, well-loved, well-educated ' hrian, nevertheless, is haunted by the voice of the Other that like some 'evil fairy' flew through the delivery room and whispered over the cells: 'He should be a great man ' The key to understanding how hrian doshas all hopes of the Other's desire for him to be a "great man" lies in studying Hcian's particular obsessional structure in relation to a signifier for the Father"s Name

'The phallus object of desire or mark of lack,' Ragland-Sullivan explains, 'is the result of the castlonship between Symbolic castration and the Name of the Father for each subject. . . . One might consider that in obsessional neurosis a minimal inscription for lack in the Other is ordered by an unconscious denial (Verneinung) of the importance of the signifier of the Father's Name the phallus and penis are weighed into a neopharmatic fantasy for the obsessional only where the sexual member takes on the meaning of his being-'[7] For hrian, the sexual member not only takes on the meaning of being but aims the only measure of his public stature, or lack of it. Erian"s affair with Wendy is motivated by his unconscious desire to climb off lack in the Other, much the same way as his futile efforts to control his children are symptomatic of his inadequate identification with a Father's Name:

> He did not realise that he was already becoming addicted to Wendy . . . and that he was planning to increase the dose partly because he needed to quiet the anxiety that he was in every sense . . . including the most private, a small man. . . . Eciss could not judge it any more than she

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[7] Ragland-Sullivan, 'The Limits of Discourse Structure: Obsession and Syntesis,' in Papers of the Freudian School of Melbourne, ed Ascan Zentner (Sundowns Press: 1988), pp 71-74

> could judge his professional competence, since having known no other men, she had no means of comparison [8]

The implied author's coupling of the size of Brian's penis and his 'professional competence' in the same sentence implies that the correlation connotes failure for Brian. In fact,

> Brian's most inward belief is that all these defeats and his size are connected, that his appearance is the objective correlative of a lack of real stature. . . . It was felt everywhere that he was in every sense a small man, not suited to authority over anything beyond a small department (p 33)

Much before Brian's 'authority' at the professional level is tested his symbolic role as representing law is severely undermined by his defiant adolescent children Jeffrey and Matilde. When Brian returns home to pick up a few of his belongings after being driven out by Erica he is already a stranger to his children. Brian's order to his son, Jeffrey to lend a hand in the housework meets with a stinging rejoinder:

> Finally his son looks up. 'Wouldja stop persecuting me, okay?' he asks in a tone of deep grievance. 'I'll do it later.'
>
> 'I didn't leave any mess!' Jeffrey slams his comic down on the sofa. 'Why do you always blame everything on me, huh? If there's any crap in the kitchen, it's Muffy's crap. Why doncha ask her to clean it up?' (pp 179-180)

Brian's effort next to discipline his daughter, Matilda, meets with no better success. When Brian refuses to give Matilda permission to go to her friend Elsie's slumber party, her rebuttal is equally unnerving to Brian:

> 'I don't have to do what you tell me,' she declares. 'You're not my boss.' As if to prove this she squats down in her black skirt and restarts the phonograph (p 182)

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[8] Alison Lurie, The War Between the Tates (New York: Random House, 1974), p 46. Subsequent references are cited parenthetically in the text.

Even with his intimidating voice and gesture, Brian fails to function as law and is quick to scapegoat Erica for his failure "Erica is responsible for this insurrection; not her hands it He turns and leaves the room" (p 152) A great admirer of George Kennan's early writings, Brian believes in separate 'area of operations' for Erica and himself, with the domestic chores, including the supervision of the children, as Erica's exclusive domain Erica's unconscious desire to place things in neat pigeonholes is evident here Brian scrupulously averts the gaze of the Other that might through the cracks in his master discourse reveal his unconscious weak positioning vis-a-vis the phallus--the mark of lack Brian blames him impotence in dealing effectively with his children on his small size again

> As he walks about the kitchen waiting very impatiently even for Erica Brian thinks how unfair it is that he should be insulted as he has just been by his children and threatened--yes, even physically threatened there was that in Jeffrey's voice and stance It is not beyond the bounds of possibility that one day Brian Tate will be the smallest person in his family (p 134)

Already discomfited by the fact that Erica is "nearly three inches" taller than him, Brian desperately tries to assert his identity and being Unwilling to face the fading of his subject position behind the phallic signifier, Brian demands that Erica refer to his penis not as 'that thing' but by its 'real name':

> 'My cock my prick, my penis for God's sake,' he had shouted at her once 'Can't you call it by its right name?' No she couldn't She didn't like any of those words; she never thought them in her mind and she couldn't say them. (p 59)

The penis becomes the index of Brian's power relations with Erica The 'deadly struggle' between Brian and Erica is thus 'between his will to enter and her will to deny the invasion so long as possible so that

the occupation might be so short as possible. His main weapons in this battle are force and persuasion; Erica's fuse and delay' (p. 70). The welding of the phallus and penis into a "holophrastic fantasy' gives Brian a sense of being and presence which denies actual aphanasis of the subject behind the phallus as mark of lack.

Perhaps Brian's relationship with Wendy can explain further his need to dominate and control through his master discourse in order to close up the lack that is the unconscious. Wendy's blind devotion to Brian on the conscious level, reinforces his brittle ego formation:

> He thought that he hadn't realized before how small she was, how childlike. He towered over her not only intellectually and chronologically, but physically. A pleasant sensation. (p. 45)

Brian's observation of Wendy as 'small' and 'childlike' are qualities that could not have been more conducive to an obsessional desire to avoid desire at all cost. In sharp contrast, Erica poses a problem for Brian because she is "elegantly dressed, extraordinarily pretty; she was president of the Arts Club, and editor of the literary magazine, and one of the most popular girls in her class--always surrounded by admirers and friends' (p. 58). "But like an expensive library book,' Brian reminds himself, 'Erica had to be used with care and returned on time in perfect condition' (p. 45). Besides being 'completely undistinguished," Wendy is a 'born follower, a true believer, and if he, Brian, forbids her to follow and believe in him, she will find other and less scrupulous teachers, other and false gods.' Here is a classic example of the mind/body split for an obsessional in which Brian uses the weapon of his thoughts, always so overskill, to counter his body. While outsiders 'might not appreciate the extent of his altruism in screwing Wendy Gahaghan, if they heard of

it," Brian has counted the affair that 'meant nothing' to him as "one more there in his martyr's crown' (p. 48). Erica's agonizing summary of her husband's sordid affair says more than she realizes, and points to the pathetic overreach of Brian's thoughts to diagnose his body:

> He expressed regret, pain at having troubled her--but all as if he were apologizing for having come home with dirty clothes. He had walked into a bog by mistake, and got mud on his shoes, and socks, even on his pants--a nuisance, but they could be sent to the cleaners: Brian himself was not muddy, in his opinion. He did not realize that he had betrayed not only Erica, but himself, that he had become permanently smaller and more ordinary. (my emphasis, p. 58)

For Brian then, desire equals knowledge to the extent that the body is subsumed by the mind. It also means that Brian does not communicate with others, but with himself and himself alone: 'As a rule he declines to pick up hitchhikers not as a precaution against robbery, but because he prefers his thoughts to their conversation' (p. 215). Always using knowledge to gain mastery and still uncertain of its efforts, Brian's burning desire is to bring the unlissible Wendy under the yoke of his knowledge, to colonize her mind. While waiting for Wendy to show up at the Frick Museum, Brian ironically muses about how he could fill in the lack in Wendy with his erudition, as if her mind were a tabula rasa: 'In these high, airy rooms is the concentrated essence of everything lacking in her background and education--a sample of what he will show her next summer when they go to Europe' (p. 287).

What Brian had not bargained for is the irreducible Otherness that Wendy represents, both in terms of her sexual difference and her cultural subject position in the Eastern discourse. If her language of clothes, which is a combination of Native American and Indian styles, is at odds with Brian's WASP aesthetics, Wendy's imbibing of Hindu philosophy and

ethos is even more disconcerting to Brian as it threatens his positivistic Western knowledge:

> She dressed usually in Indian style, but--like his children whose thmy were small--confusing the Eastern and Western varieties She wore, indiscriminately, paisley bedspread shifts, embroidered velvet slippers, fringed cowhide vests and moccasins, strings of temple bells, cowrie shells beads, sandals, and leather pants very loose in the ankle and tight in the seat In spite of all this paraphernalia, she never looked like either sort of Indian (p 38)

> The appearance in town earlier this year of the Krishna Bookshop--an outlet for texts on Eastern religion, a center for lectures on astrology and yoga--was at first a matter for academic curiosity and amusement Too many students began spending too much time there Sitting about for hours drinking herbal tea and wasting their limited funds on intellectual trash encouraging each other in escapism and fuzzy thinking, absorbing bogus ideas and bringing them back to clutter up Erlee's and other professors' seminars By now, the Krishna Bookshop has become a matter for serious annoyance (pp 61 - 62)

Caught as Brian is in the blinding specularity of his own thoughts Wendy's otherness is the Imaginary order of affect produces intense narcissism (where difference is reduced to sameness) or aggression (whereby difference is annihilated) Unwilling to see Wendy as constituting herself in another cultural order Brian has to posit something "inherent," "natural" both to Native Americans and Indians that she simply does not possess 'In spite of her paraphernalia," Brian asserts, 'She [Wendy] never looked like either sort of Indian' (p 38)

One way Brian copes with Wendy's otherness is to brand her as 'dumb' in the same way as Jemlee and Ruth are dumb for Rabbit in Updike's Rabbit, Run Examples proliferate where Brian takes upon himself the task of enlightening Wendy's mind Because according to Brian "Wendy was intelligent enough, but her mind was not scholarly' (p 38), he must take

her on his trip to Europe to fill her mind with 'everything lacking in her background and culture' (p 207) In the same fashion, Brian imagines he can erase Wendy's otherness by changing the way she dresses:

> When they are abroad next summer... or even this weekend here in the city if she feels well soon enough -he must take Wendy shopping ... He is aware that here are not only ridiculous but unbecoming... The heavy leather brooms and tans of her American-Indian get-up, the dirty yellows and reds of the East Indian prints, are suited to women of a darker complexion Wendy ought to wear roses, creamy white, lavender... like French girls whom she resembles; also her clothes should fit rather than hang Something might be done with her hair, too (p 210)

In all the instances cited, Brian fixes Wendy's image to designate and to control the other movement in language--that which subverts such a fixing, such an ordering Lacan calls the countermovement in language signifiance The sub-text, then, is Brian's unconscious desire to fill the black hole or lack both in himself, which he refuses to come to terms with, and in others, like Wendy and Erica It is no surprise that he is elated to find Erica a virgin when he marries her 'He felt awe and gratitude to Fate for having, as it were, signaled his importance by saving this special treat for him' (p 68) Is it not awe because he will fill the hole he wishes to close off? Conversely, given Brian's fantasies attached to his phallicism, is it not gratitude because he can plug the hole with his penis? Similarly, it is Brian's unconscious desire to fill in Wendy's mind with his knowledge to screen off the lack in the Other It also betrays Brian's intense narcissism that wishes to see a secure image of himself in Wendy that thinks, acts, and behaves the way he does Brian refers to Wendy in his private thoughts as a child, perhaps his brain-child: 'He hadn't realized before how small she was, how childlike' Again, 'For Brian too was in pain ... to see Wendy look

every day more like a child who is beaten every day to sit in his office and know that this child is waiting outside his door or somewhere else in the building' (p. 58-60).

Serge Leclaire writes with reference to the obsessional and his desire: 'He does not feel any resemblance between himself and those who have women - he isn't there yet, . . thus he revolts, protests, and argues his superiority, his intelligence, but nothing is does, he feels good, he is not yet grown up,' and he feels himself to be neither the possessor nor the master of his sex.[1] When Wendy fails to keep her appointment with Brian to have the abortion done in New York, he calls her mother, only to be treated not as a 'grown up' man but as someone closer to Wendy's age: 'He has never met Mrs. Gahaghen, and does not want her to hear his voice too often. Also he feels uncomfortable because when she does hear it she responds as if he were Wendy's age, rather than only two years younger than she' (p. 215).

At the level of the complex social construction of discourse, Edward Said's comments on the Western perception of Orientalism are useful. Said sees the West's power of representation, in every context, giving the West the upper hand:

> . . . it is a method of controlling what seems to be a threat to some established view of things . . . The threat is muted, familiar values impose themselves, and in the end the mind reduces the pressure upon it by accommodating things to itself as either 'original' or 'repetitious' . . . The orient at large, therefore,

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[1] Serge Leclaire, 'Philo, or the Obsessional and His Desire,' in Returning to Freud: Clinical Psychoanalysis in the School of Lacan, ed. and trans. Stuart Schneiderman (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980), p. 115.

> vacillates between the Want's contempt for what is familiar and its shivers of delight in--or fear of--novelty [10]

> ... the terms they employ in the timeless eternal; they convey an impression of repetition and strength. ... For all these functions it is frequently enough to use the simple copula is.[11]

Imprisoned in the reflexive mirage of his speculer thinking, Brian uses aggression to fend off the irreducible, Symbolic otherness of the Eastern discourse. By casting aspersions on Eastern discourse as 'intellectual trash,' 'bogus ideas,' 'primitive music,' Brian always may fear of shaking the foundations of his scientific Cartesian Cogito.

Nothing can be more devastating for Brian's predilection to order, fix, and dictate the events of his life than not to know that Wendy was pregnant without his knowledge, without his first assimilation of the fact as "visible event."

> How can Wendy have become pregnant? Supposedly, she is on the pill; 'what it means that it happened' therefore is that she has lost her balance and ravishingly, stupidly, fallen off the pill. Next he is angry at his own stupidity, for not having foreseen this, prevented it, then again at her for not having told him, for having been so stupidly heartbroken.
> (my emphases, p. 104)

The ambiguous note that Wendy leaves for Brian with the key phrase "I have to cope now" (p. 184) makes him imagine the worst scenario for himself and Wendy:

> If Wendy has already leaped into one of those deep fatal cracks in the landscape, there is nothing to be done. Brian thinks as he stands on the library steps panting and sweating, though it is a cool, cloudy day.
> The sweat recurred at greater length with a recent photograph in the student paper, read with

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[10] Edward Said, Orientalism (New York: Random House, 1978), pp. 58-59.

[11] Ibid., p. 72.

> breakfast next day by everyone; by Linda Sliski the expansion of her consciousness into that of others many others, expanding circles of others (p 106-07)

Interestingly enough the steps of the library are not just a symbolic backdrop but a shattering irony as the magisterial survey of Brian's knowledge is of so small either to contain the scandal or to give him the slightest clue as to what Wendy's designs are and where he himself stands in the jigsaw puzzle of events.

Like the frustrating image in the mirror that betrays our lack of outer control, Brian displaces his guilt and incompetence to deal with the escalating situation of his own sinking onto the Krishna Hookahey--the corrupting source to be blamed for Wendy's destruction as well:

> Wisdom of the Sufi. Psychic Self-Defense. The Book of the Dead. The information that Wendy usually comes here in the afternoons, something she has concealed from him, is to Brian another proof that the demons of irrationality and self-destruction have their claws into her deeper than he knew if she does destroy herself, this place must bear the guilt. (p. 112)

Bakhtin explains that "the novelistic plot serves to represent speaking persons and their ideologies/ worlds."[12] All discourse, for Bakhtin, "lives on the boundary between its own context and another, alien context."[13] Brian's exclusion of the otherness of Eastern discourse could be interpreted in the Bakhtinian sense as the dialogic struggle between the dominant Western discourse to subjugate the 'weaker' Eastern discourse, and the latter's negation, inversion and relexicalizing of the norm' discourse and its claim to universality. The challenge to Brian's determination to short the baby comes from Wendy's use of the Eastern

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[12] M. Bakhtin, The Dialogic Imagination, ed. M. Holquist; trans. by C. Emerson and M. Holquist (Austin: University of Texas, 1981), p. 291.

[13] Ibid., p. 284.

discourse that gives an alternative perspective on the whole issue:

> "The thing is you know," she continues "with the I Ching lots of times you get an answer that's really hard to connect to your personal situation; it's all about the emperor and the great stream. But this was so right on. Increase! I mean, that's what I'm doing, right? And the Judgement said, get this:
> The satisfaction of the people in consequence of this increase is without limit." You understand? That means it's going to work out really fine for everybody."
> (p. 223)

Undeterred by the relativistic Eastern discourse of Wendy, Erlen uses the arsenal of his personalve Western knowledge of reason to coerce Wendy to accept the only option open to her: abortion.

> "You don't really believe that kind of superstitious crap. Linda might, her head's so fucked up, but not you. The truth is you just haven't got the courage, or the integrity, to stand by your decision." (p. 224)

Wendy succumbs to Erlen's power of representation and has the abortion. It is a striking blow to Erica as well: "For over a month she had been a romantic and moral heroine; now, with one stroke, he had turned her into a character in a cheap novel. . . . As she had crashed after she was left in the empty house with the news that Wendy was not going to have her baby" (p. 227).

Talal Asad draws our attention to the structures of power--political, economic and social--that enable the First World to dominate the Third. Perhaps, Erlen's enjoyment of a carte blanche in his relation with Wendy (first he impregnates her and then bullies her to destroy the baby) may be explained in Asad's construction of the power relations between the two worlds. Asad points out

> The point is that "the absolutist claims of enlightened Reason" are in effect an institutionalized force and that as such it is by definition committed to advancing into and appropriating alien territory, and that its opponents (whether explicitly relativistic or not) are by definition defensive. . . . A recognition of this

> well-known fact reminds us that industrial capitalism transforms not only modes of production but also kinds of knowledge and styles of life in the Third World. And with them, forms of language.[16]

As pointed out earlier, Brian's only way to cope with desire, which he must do on a subconscious level at all costs, is to equate desire with knowledge. Since Western languages produce and deploy desired knowledge more rapidly than Third World languages, Brian has greater ability to manipulate Wendy to subjugate her weaker discourse. Brian and Wendy speak the same language; they do not however, speak the same discourse.

My brief detour into the polemics of Said, Bakhtin and Asad suggests some of the complex power relations that underpin the Brian-Wendy affair. These theorists also explore the relation of 'scientific realism' to theories of social construction and representability that help to explain how the unequal distribution of discourses force Wendy to accept her position in the weaker discourse, and work painfully, to destroy her baby. The missing link, however, is the gap between institutions and language, and more crucially, the role of unconscious desire that produces the social inequities, the desire to dominate in the first place.

A Lacanian reading of The War Between the Tates moves beyond the question of how the power relations are socially constructed to an unleashing of the unconscious speech of the text that alone can shed some light on why the characters behave the way they do. From a Lacanian perspective the anatomy of the power structures is itself fictional and no more true than the categories 'Man' and 'Woman'. Languages, for Lacan,

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[16] Talal Asad, "The Concept of Cultural Translation," Writing Culture, eds. James Clifford and George E. Marcus (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), pp. 145-158.

ers not inherently 'high' and "low" any more than they are inherently patriarchal or matriarchal More importantly, as Laran reminds us, the unconscious is not in us, we are in the unconscious, and the unconscious speaks us

When Wendy functions on the steps of the Symbolic rather than the Imaginary for Brian, she occupies the position of the analyst, and permits Brian to name his unconscious desire Wendy does not provide the answers or orient Brian's unconscious desire She merely functions as the Other, which is akin to the maxim of the lotus in Indian philosophy, which is in water but not of it Brian's murder of his unborn baby can be interpreted as his unconscious desire to take revenge on both his mother and father Perhaps Brian is so privileged in his mother's eyes that he cannot get the same recognition in the outside world "He has entertained these fantasies as often as Wendy has, and more foolishly--for she will presumably have children someday, but he will never be famous or free He will have to sit in this room office until he retires. Legally and financially bound to Corinth University and three people toward whom he feels almost nothing but obligation: a woman who hates him and is having a nervous collapse, and two revolting (in both senses) adolescents"
(p 182)

The revenge is also against the Imaginary father for not functioning adequately as the third term to distance Brian from his mother so that he could have a more secure anchor in the Symbolic order of substitutive exchange Third, the revenge is also against his own adolescent children, who by defying him have questioned his credentials to assertion as law For Brian, they have become real "monsters" that the Halloween mask does not hide but simply embodies

In his conscious discourse Brian fantasizes that his parents' "affection" is conditional upon "good behaviour," an assertion that contradicts his privileged upbringing:

> What amazes him most is that this discovery has come so late, for instance that he could have lived forty-six years without knowing what it is to be loved. His parents' affection, was always conditional on good behavior; as was that of his other relatives and his teachers, from nursery to graduate school (p 208)

Brian says once that he understands. The unconscious truth that speaks though the gaps is that since his desire was precociously satisfied by his mother, he cannot desire other women, and therefore true enough he has "lived forty-six years without knowing what it is to be coolly loved" (p 208). Neither can Brian give nor receive a woman's love without jeopardizing his brittle ego curve.

What further contradicts Brian's contention that his parents' "affection" was conditioned on good behaviour is his interpretation of Veronese's painting titled "Allegory of Vice and Virtue" at the Frick Museum. Brian's reading here two different and contradictory meanings at the conscious and unconscious levels:

> It seems to him that the features of the handsome youth who is rising from his seat beside Vice into the embrace of laurel crowned Virtue (but looking back over his shoulder) might be his own at an earlier age. Virtue, who is somewhat taller than the young man, wears an expression of calm and loving solicitude. Though he has evidently sinned with plump blond Vice, she intends to take him back; she wraps her blue mantle around him forgivingly and protectively (p 211)

At the conscious level, Brian identifies with the "young man" and hopes Erica would stand for "Virtue" and forgive his sin against Wendy who is the "plump, blond Vice." At the unconscious level, however, lies the central paradox. Brian simultaneously gets revenge against his mother

via Erixe, who very much mothers Erian, for being protective and forgiving enough to make him less of a man, while masking at the same time the very forgiveness and protection from Erica/mother for his present mess

Erian's efforts to rescue Dibbin, his colleague, from the claws of the angry feminists whose actions he himself engineered is a minor tour-de-force that leaves Erian with the mess fate he had consingly designed for his arch-enemy The scene is a stunning and apocalyptic one that underscores Erian's ultimate sacrifice of his being to the Other's desire 'He should be a great man,' spoken over the crib, comes true with a shattering irony While Erian helps Dibbin to escape from his second floor office with the help of a rope he is himself held hostage by ravaging feminists Erixe's comments on his plight bear close scrutiny:

> Previously, generalizing from his mother and Erixe--whom he now realizes to be exceptional--he had believed them to be essentially different from men: weaker and less rational, but also gentler finer more sensitive The two hours he spent imprisoned in Dibbin's office were a revelation For worse the aggression, the coarseness, the brutality It ranges from the hurt queries of former favorite students and female relatives (including his mother and aunt) to ugly postcards and think letters from angry feminists, shouting and cursing him--sometimes in language far stronger than that of the Oldsmobile salesman Because of the story is Time, where Erian's name was irritatingly qualified by the adjectives 'small, square-jawed, recently separated' they often remark that it is no wonder his wife threw him out Another frequent theme is the supposed insignificant size or absence of sexual organs.
> (pp 314-317)

Apart from Erian's sexist statements--woman as "weaker" and 'less rational'--which only betray the aggression of an obsessional who has lost his power to control, what the sub-text reveals is the coupling of Erixe's mother and Erixe with the connective conjunction "and" The connective is not accidental Erixe unconsciously builds a shrine to his mother a

sacrum sanctorum space which Erica is compelled to share as well. Unlike the rest of the women, who are coarse and brutal, Erica's mother and Erica are too 'exceptional,' 'fimer,' 'gentler,' and sensitive to be tarnished by Brian's desire. Having thus sacrificed his being to the Other's desire, Brian fulfills the prophesy spoken over his crib by gaining national attention the wrong way, by his notoriety. By unconsciously avenging his mother for making his life in the public world pale in comparison, Brian is also intricately linked to his unconscious suffering jouissance or death drive.

Nowhere is the unconscious denial of the signifier of the Father's Name more insistent and the consequences more crucial than in The War Between the Tates. Names and naming become important to show Brian's unconscious weak identification with the Father's Name. 'As soon as [something] can be named,' Lacan informs us, 'its presence can be evoked as an original dimension, distinct from reality. Nomination is an evocation of presence and maintains presence in absence.'[14]

> it is by nomination that one makes objects submit with a certain consistency. . . . The [naming] word does not respond to the spatial distinction of the object but to its temporal dimension. . . . [The] appearance of the object] which [lasts] a certain time is recognizable, strictly speaking, only by the intermediary of the name. The name is the time of the object.[15]

Furthermore, for Lacan, the naming process is the site for something more than mere correspondence with the Logos: it is also the site where the Symbolic order intervenes, for 'naming constitutes a part by which two

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[14] Jacques Lacan, Le Seminaire: Livre II, Le moi dans la theorie de Freud et dans la technique de la psychanalyse (Paris: Seuil, 1978), p. 297.

[15] Ibid., p. 202.

subjects agree at the same time to recognize the same object."[17] Besides Erica, the two subjects who agree to recognize Jeffrey and Matilda as 'monsters" are the dividual selves of Brian himself. It is significant to note that Brian never addresses his children as 'monsters' and yet he harbors the notion in his mind. The rhetorical figure of antonomasia--taking a common noun for a proper noun or a proper noun for a common noun--works here as a double-edged irony. In naming his children with the noun 'monsters' that functions as a proper noun, Brian implicitly denigrates himself as a signifier for a father's name, and this is symptomatic of Brian's weak 'symbolic relation' to his children (pp. 178-182). Moreover, if as Lacan points out, 'the name is the time of the object,' the timing/naming of the object (Jeffrey and Matilda as nouns rather than as persons) works differently at the unconscious levels. The cause of timing is ceaseless and Brian's denigration of his children has less bearing on their 'reality' as children and more to do with his own violent reaction to the internalized Other that wants Brian to be a "great man."

Failing to either silence or live up to the voice of the Other, Brian's weak relation with his children is symptomatic of his larger problem of simultaneously disavowing and accepting the Symbolic castration in language. That is, the lack-in-being and loss when death enters us as a condition of language. "It is the dead Father," Lacan reminds us, "who constitutes the law of the signifier."[18]

> So when we wish to attain in the subject what was before the earlier articulations of speech, and what is primordial to the birth of symbols, we find it in death,

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[17] Ibid., p. 202

[18] Jacques Lacan, Ecrits: A Selection, p. 217

> from which his existence takes on all the meaning it is in effort as a desire for death that he affirms himself for others and no being is ever evoked by him except among the shadows of death [19]

When Wendy discusses possible names for the child before the abortion, Brian's nonchalant, abrasive answer once again shows his denigration of himself as the Imaginary father, while keeping intact the unconscious pact with the real father's jouissance or the death drive:

> Wendy tried recently to talk to him about names She wanted to give the child a unique meaningful name; among those she and Linda liked, she said, were Laurel and Lavender Or if it was a boy, perhaps Sage— 'Why not Spinach or Cabbage?' Brian had scoffed (p 194)

Calling Wendy's unborn child 'spinach or cabbage' or Jaffray and Matilda "monsters" situates Brian in a classic binary contrast of as obsessional where his identity as autonomous alive, whole and in control is reinforced by reducing others like his own children to something less than human It is the same unconscious desire to deny giving up the position of the phallus and becoming subject to the Law that drives Brian to grow his sideburns, hobnob with the very youth culture he rails against, and stir dissonance and upheaval in Dibble's class by encouraging the students in their radical feminist rhetoric

Brian's regression is not so much into infantile sexuality in the Freudian sense as a challenge to the very ordering, conditioning, and limiting of freedom that the Symbolic order imposes, with the educational State apparatus as the most powerful and pernicious tool, and of which, paradoxically, Brian himself is a prime perpetrator and victim Radical and revolutionary as Brian's flamboyant actions may seem at first glance,

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[19] Ibid , p 105

his unconscious desire is to suffer the jouissance or death drive of the dead Father, who constitutes the 'law of the signifier'. It is the same Brian, for instance, who rescues Bikkie from the angry feminists, as he is also overly anxious to win the approbation of the Acting Chair. Brian's ambivalent and hypocritical subject position in the Symbolic, where he oscillates between opposition and abject surrender to the Law, is further compounded by his ironic desire to 'appropriate' the discourse of the 'youth culture' while still maintaining his prerogative to condemn Wendy for her lack of proper education and cultural sophistication.

The more Brian tries to colonise and belong to the belligerent youth culture, the more he is rejected by its opaque Otherness: 'But three months later a student organization published a guide to freshman courses illustrated with caricatures of faculty members. In this guide, Brian appeared as a very small man attached to a very large moustache. Over the Christmas vacation he shaved it off' (p 128). Once again, the sad but humorous attempt to be part of the youth culture he hardly fits into underscores Brian's lack of a personal voice. On the one hand: 'Why, he asks himself wearily, is he speaking of foreign policy instead of hoping to make it? Why does he still discuss other men's theories instead of his own?' (p 31). On the other, Brian's social posture as a 'swinger' is a convenient ploy to close off the unconscious message that points to the lack in him.

Brian's unconscious jouissance that he consciously clings to, much to his own detriment, is also a scream over the 'crimes' against the 'fathers'. Wendy functioning once more on the slopes of the Imaginary and Symbolic, becomes for Brian both the other and Other. Brian's wish that Wendy shed a few pounds 'around her middle' before the Peace March

reveals startling news that Brian is least prepared for. When Wendy becomes pregnant for the second time, the chauvinistic Brian, who communicates not with others but himself, discovers the fact only when he is told about it, only after Wendy is four months pregnant. Brian attributes his lack of knowledge of Wendy's condition to her deceit and cunning, which is a direct consequence, according to Brian, of Wendy's fascination with the subaltern culture [20]

Lurie's heavy-handed irony in loading Wendy's voice with all those clichés of the 60's works in complex ways to re-situate the colonial discourse (Native American and Indian) and withdicates her subject position as white and privileged in the social formation. This formation also gives her the ideological false consciousness that however much she forays into the weaker alien discourses her race and class will always remain inviolate. Nonetheless such a power structure is ruthlessly subverted by Lurie, as Wendy's false position in Third World discourse is always in relation to the dominant discourse that Brian exemplifies, and subsequently Wendy's position readily becomes a site for exploitation and subjectification. A case in point is how easily Wendy becomes the scapegoat other for absolving Brian of any wrongdoing:

> Brian gave a sigh of exasperation at these Counterculture histrionics. Wendy had managed to conceal her condition so far by wearing loose clothing.

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[20] The term 'subaltern' maps the exploitation of the 'silenced' masses of men and women in the Third World and Lurie's 'epistemic violence' in the novel is because she becomes the informant for First World intellectuals interested in the voice of the Other. But as Gayatri Spivak points out, 'one must nevertheless insist that the colonized subaltern subject is irretrievably heterogeneous.' See also Gayatri Spivak's 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' in Marxism and Interpretation of Culture, eds. Cary Nelson and L. Grossberg (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988)

> entebly the garment she had on then: a huge, heavy, tent-like poncho made out of an old red blanket with orange and black zigzag designs.
> (My emphases, pp. 350-51)

Wendy's elaborate rituals to keep Brian in the dark about her pregnancy, like flushing her birth-control pills down the toilet, and inserting series of "unnecessary tampax into herself", for the five days of every month, seem to invite, on the surface, Brian's rage and censure.

Much as Wendy's conscious Eastern discourse rings false the unconscious of her text in spite of herself is an explosive terrain that shatters the age certainty of both Wendy and Brian. Wendy's sub-text, which she is unable to mourn, forecloses Brian's desire (and Wendy's as well) to know who the father of the child is. Is it the lonely Pakistani graduate student that Wendy offers herself to as a Christmas present or Brian? That is the question.

The enigma that haunts the text is Brian's altruism in being willing to marry Wendy in her present state when any knowledge of the baby's father is denied to him, as opposed to his earlier tormention of Wendy's first baby he fathered. If the reader is locked within the narrative of the classical text, certain broad-based conclusions can be easily drawn. First Brian's noble decision marks a turning point in the development of his character, more so because the baby could be a bastard. Like the characters in Jane Austen, we see an emergence of a mellower and more sober Brian, which is also in keeping with the organic evolution of the plot. But once we break from the linear narrative that reduces us to domesticating and appropriating the text, Brian's unconscious motives begin to speak through the abyss of the text.

In spite of Brian's efforts to negate Wendy's 'counterculture histrionics,' the movement within language (signifiance) that goes against the grain of Brian's desire to fix blame on Wendy haists Brian with his own petard. For an obsessional like Brian to be in command of all the options that paradoxically allow for all possibilities and no possibility at all is the only ideal condition. In the present situation, however, nothing can be more shattering to Brian's ego than not knowing if he fathered Wendy's second baby. Why then does he still speculate about marrying Wendy? Perhaps Wendy holds the key to the enigma.

At the unconscious level, Wendy's position as the Other reveals shockingly that as much as Brian may rationally protest against being the father of a bastard, his unconscious desire wants him to commit the "crimes" against the "fathers." Brian's unconscious desire is to be left alone with his suffering, which alone revers over his deep sense of guilt and debt to the Real father's jouissance:

> Because of his own religious duty, he would still have to wed Wendy, knowing that she had deceived him in every sense. There was also a good chance of his becoming the butt of savage irony that having paid over a thousand dollars to have his own child destroyed, he would have to bring up as his the child of a wog graduate student. Very likely it would be brownish in color and interested in machines. (p 353)

When Wendy leaves for the remains in California with her friend Ralph, an ex-Chicago film maker, to raise her unborn child away from the 'hangups and shitty mental sets' of academia, she signs as the analyst, as the lack in the Other, permits Brian to name his own unconscious desire. Brian, thus, wants to marry Wendy not because he cares for her any better now, nor is he driven by his desire to give his name to the unborn baby. Marrying Wendy, and, in all probability, fathering a bastard authenticates

Erica's unconscious desire to injure the Father's Name as his retaliatory measure for being enslaved in the Other's desire to be a "great one" and yet being powerless to live up to it.

Having sacrificed his being to the Other's desire, Brian is exiled from establishing a strong identificatico with the signifier of a Father's Name. Unwilling to come under the full sway of the Symbolic castration, (the eclipse of the subject behind the phallus), Brian is figuratively recreated by the belligerent "young Amazons," who convert his lack in the Other into a totemic presence:

> In a week rather less as news of this striking photograph was seized upon by the editor of the Corinth Courier and reproduced across four columns on page one. It was almost a classic image of the women's liberation threat at once comic and symbolic: a small middle-aged man, his face expressing fear and outrage, being wrestled to the floor by long-haired young Amazons. (p 316)

At the limits of Brian's unconscious obsessional structure one finds the gaze of the mother; at the limits of Erica's unconscious hysterical structure one finds the void. Erica clings to her symptoms in order to decoy Oedipal truths that can appear once the imaginary myths are smashed. The effective symptoms of her complete neurosis are hatred of her mother and her own children, unconscious desire to terminate the pregnancy of Wendy, and most of all the sacrificial glorying of herself in the Other in order to become the object of alien desire. In short, Erica's demand for love is that she remain lacking. "In Lacan's hands," explains Ragland-Sullivan, "hysteria becomes a masochism that drives a subject with the unconscious goal of remaining unsatisfied as the necessary condition of 'being'."[21]

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[21] Ragland-Sullivan, "Dora and the Name-of-the-Father? The Structure of Hysteria," in Discontented Discourses, eds. Marleen S. Barr and Richard Feldstein (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1989) pp 218-219

In order to understand Erica's structuration one must examine her unconscious positioning vis-a-vis the phallus--the mark of lack--and the Oedipal efforts on her. In candid terms, Erica describes her primal scene that allows her no easy exit from the family novel:

> Like Dick and Jane in the reader, she lived with her Daddy and Mommy and her baby sister and her dog Brownie in a nice house in Larchmont (p. 22)

Daddy's psychically libidinal investment in Erica, his daughter, to compensate for what he lacked in his relationship with his wife, means that Erica is already marked by the precocious knowledge of being privileged:

> For forty years she has had a happy relationship with mirrors. She regarded them with delight from the beginning, the walnut-framed oval mirror in the front hall, to which her father held her on their's closet door by metal clips which rattled as if with applause as, aged seven or eight she paraded before it in Lana Turner's late 1950's finishing and wedges (p. 256)

Erica's appearance in her mother's clothes only further marginalizes the mother so that Erica can be her father's sole unconscious object of desire. Having organized her desire around the Father's Name, which is inscribed in the Other, Erica's fidelity to this Name only implies that she unconsciously identifies and sacrifices her being and body to the lack in the Other. Much as Erica imaginatively thinks that she has had a 'happy relationship' with mirrors, her statement covers up the unconscious truth. Her relationship with the mirror has been a phantom, the shadow of hysteria that the emptiness and suffering in her life will subsequently beat out.

In adult life, Erica's unrepressed knowledge of the incestuous bond with her father comes to haunt her so she has difficulty entering the

exchange order of the Symbolic signifying chain. Erica's symptom speaks loud when she is unable to mention Brian's penis by its name:

> She knows words for the other difficult parts of the body: 'behind' for ass and 'stomach' for belly, but there was no word for that thing ... she avoided looking at it directly and never touched it unless she was specifically requested to do so. (p.69)

The first crack in the idyllic world of Erica appears at the age of ten, when Daddy withdraws his gaze, removing at once the master signifier that had shored Erica up against slipping into the black hole of the Real. Erica's father's departure to Canada for good and her mother's consistent lies to hide the fact from her children accentuate Erica's sense of alienation from both parents.

> Things began to change in 1940 when Daddy motivated perhaps as much by restlessness as by political sympathy enlisted in the Canadian Army. He revelled in Larchmont in the following years, but less and less often ... Even now Erica is not absolutely sure that it had not been Lena's idea, or at least her secret intention. (p.22)

Faced with a denigrated father who is cold, ineffectual and irresponsible, Erica's unconscious savoir preserves the power of an Ideal father in order to give her luck in the Other and her subtle suffering a raison d'être. Having positioned herself in the Other, Erica's sacrifice of her body and being to the omnipotent authority of the Other is worthwhile as long as the Ideal father is simultaneously the author and protector against the perils of life:

> "All through high school, whenever I was unhappy or felt my life was unjust, I had fantasies of how he would come to rescue me. Or sometimes I imagined how I would go to England or France or Canada to find him, and we would have a romantic reunion." (p.282)

Erica's fantasized father is also the 'handsomest man in the world' till her trip to Canada pours cold water on her expectations. Erica finds her father to be 'tired,' 'worried,' and 'not very successful or well-educated.' Erica is less welcome at her father's new home, and when she cuts short her visit by two days, 'they were very relieved, and even friendly' (p. 283). All along, what Erica's Imaginary myths fail to come to terms with is the repressed suppress message that says she is 'no-body' to her Daddy. It is only when Lol functions as the Other to Erica's discourse that Erica breaks out of the spell of her narcissistic narrative to voice the unconscious truth: "I hardly ever saw my father after he went into the Canadian Army; so I not only preferred him, I thought of him as an Ideal hero. . . . I lay awake, and I thought that the reason my father never came back to rescue us all these years was, he didn't want to. He didn't want the responsibility of children. He was really more or less of a child himself" (pp. 282-284).

Growing up with the trauma of an absent father who takes away the Real of the Case around which the hysteric turns, Erica's problem is compounded by a hysterical mother, whose unconscious desires to remain unsatisfied lead to the abandonment of her daughters:

> The hours after school which she and her sister Marion spent in the cluttered back room at Mamon's, because Lena did not trust them alone at home and could not afford a sitter, were among the worst she had ever passed. . . . Marion did not mind going into the showroom to be displayed like a dress to some favorite customer, being introduced to them as 'Marianne.' But for Erica it was shameful, hideous, to have her name called out in Lena's penetrating phony-foreign voice; to try to pretend not to hear, finally to be dragged, or pushed from behind by Lena's assistant, . . . 'Veyez this great overgrown child; so jolie, but I can do nothing with her!' Lena would cry--mock despairing, fake--while Erica glanced rapidly around the room to see if the worst thing of all had occurred and some girl she knew was there watching the scene. (pp. 24-25)

Ashamed of her denigrated mother, who works in a store Erica in slum at an early age disconcertingly confronted with the Otherness of her mother's desire Lena Farber relentlessly works against the Logos of her mother-tongue by using foreign words as tools not to supplement her lack but simply to evacuate the very ordering of the Symbolic:

> As time passed, Lena Parker's preference for the foreign increased and spread, . . . Lena replaced first her own and her children's clothes, then her books and furnishings and finally her friends with those of alien origin. She began to sprinkle her professional conversation with French phrases ('Magnifique!' 'Mais non!') and ended by speaking English, even at home, with a foreign intonation (p 23)

The strong overlay of the Imaginary on the Symbolic order of language gives Lena Farber the illusion (Lacan's misrecognition) of somehow eschewing castration. Ironically enough Lena Parker is 'doubly castrated': first by her submission to her mother tongue, second, by her dallying in foreign languages. The alien discourses bring with them the cultural myths and codes that belong to them, and Lena Parker's strategy to subvert the Symbolic in her mother tongue with other alien discourses only results in further enslaving her within the law, and in further perpetuating her alienation from the very core of her being.

Lena Farber thus resides close to the void in the Real by eschewing castration--submission to the Symbolic law. The brunt of the efforts of Lena Parker's complicitous slavery to the Other's desire is borne most by her daughters. Since as a hysteric Lena represents herself to others as a subject who lacks, her dullcats balance in the mutual game of life is only possible when she is spurred by the recognition and gaze of men. Erica too, at this early stage of her formation, sees herself as desired like her mother. Unlike Lena, who have to struggle, in Lacan's view, to

identify away from the mother in the name of a father who is not an idea but the very source of prohibition, the feminine structure undergoes no such prohibition. "The daughter can be a little mother' from the start," explains Ragland-Sullivan for 'her identification with her mother' is 'approved by mother and father alike.'[22] Lena exercises her sexual power when she offers herself and her daughter, Erica, wantonly as sexual objects to gratify the sensual desires of her male clientele:

> But, after all, Daniella's open dislike of men is better than what Erica had grown up with: the lies and subterfuges with which her own mother tried to cope with the same situation, the desperate playacting, the fainting and flattery--Erica frowns, staring out into the empty yard (p 22)

> Visitors praised Lena to her daughters for the marvelous way she managed, and called her a remarkable woman; meaning among other things one about whom remarks are made. Erica hated these remarks, and the men who made them. They were mostly foreign too, often from obscure stamp-album countries like Guatemala and Estonia, refugees from what her mother called The Fascist Persecution ; and one from Albania who smelled of onions tried to hug her [Erica] in the corner behind the piano (p 24)

Erica with valid reasons, therefore, consciously sets out to become "as much unlike her mother as possible' and 'avoid and suspect everything and everyone foreign," without realizing that unconsciously she identifies strongly with her mother and also with Wendy Gehaghen, Daniella, and Zed--all hysterical characters whose surface manifestation Erica strongly disagrees with.

Erica's tortuous relationship with her children highlights, perhaps, the fact that her unconscious identification with her mother runs deeper

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[22] Ragland-Sullivan, "Seeking the Third Term: Desire, the Phallus, and the Materiality of Language,' in Feminism and Psychoanalysis, eds. Richard Feldstein and Judith Roof (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989), pp. 40-41

those she knows. Jeffrey aged fourteen, and Matilda, who is two years younger than her brother, are passing through the rebellious adolescent stage of their lives. The conscious hatred towards her children stems from Erica's unconscious <u>savoir</u> to lock the siblings in her gaze, while given her hysterical position to remain unsatisfied, she must simultaneously reject their love: 'In her whole life she cannot remember disliking anyone as much as she can sometimes dislikes Jeffrey and Matilda. . . . Her dear Muffy and Jeffs were still there, somewhere inside the monstrous lodgers who had taken over their minds and bodies, as in one of Jeffrey's science-fiction magazines' (p 8)

Erica sustains her being as 'ideal' by her self-persecution, by playing the role of the suffering martyr. When her children rebel, Erica is quick to take the whole blame on herself. Erica's conversations with Daniella reveals more than she intended: 'It is just that I don't know how to cope with them. And i know it's my fault if they're difficult. . . . Well, because I'm their mother; I must be doing something wrong--Oh, I know I am. This morning, for instance. They were late for school and they started shouting at me, and I shouted back at them' (pp 19-20) Without a whimper of protest, Erica takes on the stoic role of the injured sufferer: 'What Daniella said is true. Erica thinks, it is better for men. Brian has an important job, he makes decisions, he uses his knowledge, he gives lectures and writes books and votes at meetings for or against add iles on the floor on top of graduate students and gets up again. But for her there are no decisions, only routines. All she can do is endure' (p 37). Erica invites blame on herself for deserting Daniella's youngest daughter, Calla, with whom she once spent so much time, but who is now neglected by her older sister, Rae, and by Erica's daughter, Matilda: 'She

has been deserted by Ron and Matilda, who no longer play with her or each other. And because they don't play together, Danielle and I must when they are in school. Therefore I, who once saw Silly nearly every day, have in effect also deserted her" (pp. 82-83).

Erica's conscious discourse allows her to take the blame on herself for her children's misdemeanor that thinly disguises her failure to kill her unconscious desire to have "marvelous" children. Subjected to her unconscious fantasy, Erica is painfully alienated from her children, who fail to measure up to the Other's demand. Perhaps, Erica's unconscious desire to remain locking is inextricably related to her unflagging fidelity to the Father's Name, which is palpably inscribed in the Other as lack, that allows her not only to be the suffering martyr but also to eschew castration: submission to the Symbolic law. The repercussion of Erica's unconscious position in relation to the phallus is somewhat more adversely felt than by her children Jeffrey and Matilda. When Brian is asked to leave home, the onus of bringing up the children falls to Erica. Erica is asked to be both the mother and father, both the nurturer and the law. Given Erica's own weak identification with the law in the Symbolic, her children's defiance of her is not so much exploitation of a weak authority as unconscious resentment at not having a master signifier to look up to, the signifier for the Name-of-the-Father. The trembling question for Matilda and Jeffrey is their absent father and their mother's unwillingness to give them a satisfactory answer.

Erica parries Matilda's question of when Daddy will be back. "When Matilda asked how long Dad was going to be gone, she had her answer ready ("I can't say mom. It depends on a lot of things...)" (p. 189). The

mother-daughter dialogue ends on a sour note when Erica refuses to give in to Matilda's demand for a T.V. set:

> "Anyhow what about majority rule? It's two against one now, because Jeffrey wants T.V. too. Oh yeh? ... You always give us the bullshit about fairness and democracy, but you don't mean it. ... phony. ... mean. ..." She continued in this manner for some time, becoming first whinily insistent and then abusive, finally referring to her parents as "senile freaks." (pp 190-191)

Matilda's imaginary fantasy of filling the lack in her with material possession denies a repressed superego message telling her that she is "nothing" to her father in the same way Erica was "no-body" to her Daddy. Although Erica imaginarily thinks that her old dislike for her mother is "now being dreadfully revenged through Jeffrey and Matilda," the unconscious message one hears in Erica's discourse reveals a more sordid truth. Just as Lena Parker's "secret intention" was to ensnare her husband, Harold, to flee from her so that she could live close to the void in the Real, so Erica's unconscious masochistic drive keeps her life empty by setting Brian scot free. Erica wants her children too to suffer the same void with her. Jeffrey's explosive exchanges with his mother, like those of Matilda, displace rejection by the father:

> [Jeffrey]: "But what's the hassle then? How come you won't work it with Dad?" Jeffrey continued in the hip speech he has begun to affect. "I mean, he says everybody sometimes, but he's not basically such a bad rat."
>
> [Erica]: "Please don't interrupt me, Jeffrey. I'm telling you something now. I was saying that when two people have differences, they may not know right away whether--"

[Jeffrey]: 'Oh, fuck it,' Jeffrey exclaimed. He turned and left the kitchen loudly, and Erica did not forgive him as she had forgiven Matilda (pp 190-191)

Erica's jouissance that links her to the Other's desire blurks on the one hand, the continuing though weak strength of a signifier for the Father's Name for Jeffrey and Matilda. On the other, Erica unconsciously wants the children not to grow into adults. Erica's symptomatic discourse speaks her unconscious savoir when her aching nostalgia is for Jeffrey and Matilda to return to 'beginnings' to assume their dependence and childlike innocence with the omnipotent mother, where the desire, voice, and material responsibility oil rumes from the other--mother. Erica expresses her desire to Danielle that reveals more than she knows: 'I want to go back to where we belong, back to when we were first here, and you need to bring Ree and Silly over to play dolls' tea parties with Muffy' (p. 238).

A strikingly poignant moment in the novel occurs when Erica collects the shredded pieces of Matilda's 'dollhouse' which becomes a polysemic symbol reverberating with multiple meanings:

> Erica sinks onto Matilda's beaded rug. Beside the beautiful Colonial dollhouse which Matilda has turned into a broken home--as if one weren't enough for her. This whole house is a broken home now, she thinks--as if some stupid teenage giant walking over the world has picked it up and then, losing interest, flung it aside. Like Matilda, she doesn't want to play with it any more but it is all she has (p 231)

The epiphany in the last line--'Like Matilda she doesn't want to play with it any more, but it is all she has'--shrinks the mark of time and represents Erica not as a mother but as the child daughter whose denigrated father withdrew his gaze while the mother abandoned her. Even the broken doll house fails to comfort Erica now, but she still clings to

it for "it in all she has"--a broken home symbolizing a lonely martyr bearing her pain in silence. It is little wonder Erica fantasizes that she can keep her children as children, by arresting the wheel of time and the third term from breaking the blissful dyadic trap, and that she can also somehow prevent the gender asymmetry and sexual impasse between the sexes:

> Against our will we are dragged through time, by time. Eventually Matilda will become a woman and be restored to her; but Jeffrey will grow into a man and join the enemy. Because men are the enemy. (p. 231)

Through Zed, who occupies the place of the Other, Erica names her unconscious desire. She realizes that "against our will" we are externally "dragged through time," and she must not fight to exclusively possess her children. She realizes, painful as the irreversible fact may be, that Jeffrey and Matilda also have lives to live independent from hers, and they must be allowed to find their own values and identities no matter how much that makes "her dear Muffy and Jeffy" "strangers" if not monstrous lodgers at home:

> But the real change is that they have become strangers. Their names, their faces, their bodies, their values, their gestures, their tastes and opinions--all are unfamiliar. They are no longer amputated overgrown versions of her children, but two young people Erica hardly knows. In a way it is a relief that nothing now remains to remind her of her best beloved, lost Jeffy and Muffy. (p. 367)

Spelling her unconscious desire makes Erica see the common bond with her mother where even she consciously set out to be unlike her. The eternal return of Erica's repressed childhood through her relationship with Jeffrey and Matilda and her husband Brian, forces Erica to come to terms with her void in the Real, an empty position suffered by Erica a

mother all along in spite of her deceptive cheerful front:

> Like Lena Parker, her mother, Erica lets an armful of crumpled wash slump toward the floor, and stands there for twenty-eight years, ever since she was twelve, she has been running away from Lena Parker and everything she represents. Now she has circumnavigated the globe and run back into her mother's arms. She too has a husband who has ambiguously left home; she too can loudly justify herself, and claim more freedom of choice than she really had. (p.22E)

Erica's apocalyptic observation apparently answers the enigma the hermeneutic code introduces at the beginning of the novel, the enigma being Erica's hatred for her children and her desire to "become as much unlike her mother as possible" (p.25). The metaphor of "circumnavigation" as the recording of "twenty-eight" years for Erica to inevitably "run back into her mother's arms" seemingly ties the loose ends of the puzzle, with the linear narrative drive circumnavigating one full circle to solve the mystery. However, what breaks such a periodicity is the narrative pattern of wholeness that gives the illusion of "total" meaning to Erica's void in the Real, where her situation is not dissimilar to her mother's, Lena Parker. For Lacan, it is through language, the Symbolic order of culture, that we constantly fill in the void in the Real, the hole in us, even as language paradoxically points to it. Although the Symbolic order, thus, gives us the illusion of skirting the void by latching on to words, the illusion is healthy and prevents what would otherwise be the terrifying discourse of the Other, the discourse, in other words, of the psychotic.

Lena Parker's evaluation of the Symbolic order in her mother tongue with the alien discourses was meant not so much to fill in the void as to painfully confront that very void, the hole in the Real. In the same fashion Parker's display of Erica to her male clients in demeaning ways

undermines both Erica's and her mother's sense of self-worth, underscoring once again Parker's unconscious desire not to love or be loved. Reverting to the destruction of her own self-image as a child, Erica, perhaps, builds unconsciously the 'marvellous' image of her own children which they cannot fulfill. Erica makes sure her unconscious desire by its very impossible demand will give her a raison d'etre not to love her children and consequently fulfill the Other's desire to remain lacking.

It is a tacit bond among the community of women that spans across three generations and already gives Erica at once the deep strength and the utter desolation of living close to the void, a void that even Matilde, when she becomes a woman, must come to terms with, and in her turn be returned to her mother.

> As she spoke she looked at her daughter and felt, for the first time in months, a deep rush of natural sympathy--not so much maternal as simply female. Like Erica--or Daniella--or Wendy--Matilde would grow up, fall in love, have children, and be disillusioned by some man. (p 190)

Erica's discovery of Brian's affair with Wendy collapses the cool mastery of her life. Yet with astounding resilience Erica rebounds to regain her mastery in two ways. First, Erica's control lies in making Brian 'own' his guilt and betrayal. Erica gains her second mastery in sustaining her being as 'ideal' (saint, martyr, victim, bella donna) by surrendering herself to the Other's alien desire, which alone guarantees her that she 'is'.[23] Besides asking Brian to move out, Erica makes no tangible effort to change the course of Brian's irresponsible, juvenile behavior because the desire of the Other does not want the good of the

[23] I am indebted to Ragland-Sullivan for suggesting Erica's unconscious position as the ultimate martyr.

subject. Erica's unconscious savoir plunges her into the black hole of the Real for Brian to 'see' his guilt and for herself to gain control and mastery, even when the paradoxical latch is the rim of the void:

> He has shamed and bullied her; he has managed to make it appear that wanting to hire a housekeeper and take an ordinary part-time job, something thousands of women in America do, is selfish and reprehensible. She sees her ladder being pulled up out of the moral hole. If Brian is not guilty she is as deep in the wrong as ever, and she will be is even deeper if she accuses him falsely. Though she does not yet quite put it to herself in these words, she wants him guilty. (pp.92-93)

Erica accomplishes both her goals: her title to martyrdom by allowing nothing to fill in her lack, and making Brian lie in the bed of his own making. When Wendy shows up at Erica's doorstep, Erica is civil instead of showing animosity, kind instead of being cruel, even when she knows Wendy has turned her world upside down. Erica treats Wendy to breakfast, cooks an egg for her, and arranges for her to stay at Danielle's until Brian can arrange for the abortion in New York. Erica fits the description of a saint that takes Wendy by surprise:

> "How come you're so good to me?" she asks. "I mean," she adds, since Erica does not at once reply, "considering what I did to you, it really kind of zaps me out, all this." (p.154)

Erica's reply skirts the issue of her unconscious desire:

> "But you didn't do anything to me," explains Erica sitting across the room in Leonard's former desk chair and rotating it toward the bed. "Well. Partly because I think women have to stick together. Like Danielle said yesterday: we're all members of an underprivileged majority, and if we can help each other we ought to." (p.154)

The signifier egg that Erica prepares for Wendy, as the metonymy of desire, shows the conscious face of Erica to the world as she thinks of the other egg/embryo growing in Wendy's womb. Erica's altruistic stance

in wanting the abortion to remove the impediment in Wendy's crucial phase of her graduate studies seems on the surface too convincing to quarrel with:

> The stove brightens to a grainy vermilion. Erica melts butter into a frying pan and breaks two eggs into it. The golden, nourishing, domed yolks quiver against each other and come to rest, surrounded by the thin, gluey viscuous whites: like oceans. Meanwhile upstairs at the top of the house in the spare room, floating in a bowl inside Wendy, there is something similar. . . . Wendy is pregnant, and every moment, even now while she lies unconscious overhead, she is becoming more pregnant. And the more pregnant she becomes, the more dangerous an operation will be. (pp 151-52)

When Wendy proposes to 'go through' with her pregnancy, Erica's unconscious murderous desire speaks through the cracks in her speech:

> 'Go through with it? But what on earth for?"
> Erica forgets to modulate her voice. (p 155)

The alacrity with which Erica wants the termination of the pregnancy is revealed again in her anxious speech:

> 'I know I don't have to do it,' Erica interrupts back. 'But I want to do it.' She smiles kindly. 'And I think I should call now, this morning, because it is really better not to lose any more time and make an appointment for you.' (p.155)

Still not convinced by Erica, Wendy doggedly pursues the speculation that the child might possess half of Erica's genes to make oil the difference in the world:

> 'And then it hit on that maybe I wasn't important, but here, inside me . . . there was somebody that had half Erica's genes, and maybe it was destined to be as brilliant as him, maybe a great genius. And years from now some night when everybody else was asleep they could be sitting up at some university working and studying. Only if I got off that wall on the wrong side they would never get the chance. . . . Not only Erica, you know, but all those judges and people in New England history that he's descended from, I mean, his kids might

> grow up to be important people, maybe very brilliant great human beings." (pp.156-57)

Erica's conscious face acknowledges the chagrin and disappointment of her own childrm fathered through Brian as "one more reason why someone else (Wendy, for instance) should try to reproduce Erlen's valuable genes" (p.157)

But the voice of the Other would settle for nothing less then Erica's complicitous role in the murder of Wendy's unborn baby. Erica's fantasy that she could fake pregnancy to scotch the scandal and save the faces of the family and Wendy seems on the surface a brilliant though far-fetched tour-de-force:

> . . . the Yates are part of a small town community. Is she going to pretend to be pregnant, buying phony maternity clothes, wearing an ever-larger pillow under her skirt for the next six months? Could she successfully fake a confinement and appear to go into the hospital, so that none of her friends suspect how admirable, noble, etc. she is being? . . . Those who know the family best may be surprised that the Yates went another child after two such evident failures (p.162)

Noble as Erica's conscious motives are the offering of her being and body to the voice of the Other as a sacrificial lamb is evident in her fantasized pregnancy. The fantasy reveals her unconscious desire to totally evacuate her being, and murdering Wendy's baby is another proof that nothing must fill in Erica's lack. The fantasized pregnancy also reveals how, at the unconscious level, Erica's identification with Wendy is complete so that the murder of Wendy's child is also the murder of her child--the death of a piece of herself that might have loved her children as Matilda and Jeffrey and not through the destructive gaze of the Other. The abortion of Wendy's baby destroys the possibility of gratifying

vicariously Erica's fantasy of marvellous children that she could not have with Brian. Once again, when Erica imaginarily sought liberation from the desire of the Other with the abortion of Wendy's baby with Brian's 'valuable genes,' she finds herself instead ensnared deeper in the Other's demand. Could we not perhaps read the compliciteous slavery to the Other's desire as Erica's simultaneous fidelity to the Father's Name, who is inscribed in the Other, as well as her only possible way of striking back against such abject submission to the Other by the murder of Wendy's baby?

Erica's relationship with Zed further stencils her unconscious desire to live as lacking. A hysteric "represents herself," Ragland-Sullivan points out, 'as a subject who lacks, who does not know, but who can find a representative in an alternate ego (a double).'[24] Zed, whose own unconscious subject position is that of the hysteric, becomes an appropriate 'alternate ego' for Erica in which she sees her own lacks. Erica displaces her latencies, ambivalences and aggressions on Zed as the other. But Zed's hysterical position is also very conducive for him to function as the analyst/Other for Erica. By keeping his own lack a lack, Zed refuses either to fill her lack or provide the incentive to fuel Erica's narrative drive. Functioning more like the proverbial Lacanian cut, Zed

allows Erica to leap out of her sickening family novel and face her bitter unconscious truths.[25]

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[24] Ragland-Sullivan, 'The Limits of Discourse Structure: Obsession and Hysteria,' p. 76.

[25] For more on Lacan's 'short sessions' see Stuart Schneiderman, Jacques Lacan: The Death of An Intellectual Hero (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983), pp. 129-156. Strert Schneiderman notes: 'The ending of the session, unexpected and unwanted, was like a rude awakening,

Erica relishes her power as saint and martyr and offers herself to the ascetic Zed to 'restore him to his right place in the world' (p 267) The double-entendre in Erica's offer has an ironic ring Her generosity and unconsciousness to fill Zed's lack merely displace the emptiness in her own life as she resolves clues to the hole in the Real:

> It was her duty to give it to him--to convince him that her friendship and charity were real. Nor would here be a shallow, soup-kitchen kind of charity: she did not mean merely to fill a temporary need. But to deconvert Sandy, to bring him back into the world in every way and show him that it was real and good, so that he would give up his pathetic empty asceticism (p 322)

> Now that he was, in both senses, going to receive the present of his life, it should be under the best possible circumstances and in the most attractive gift wrapping It must happen in her own house; for hotels were sordid, and the Krishna Hookshop grungy and cold--and when there was no chance of interruption Therefore she waited until the children had gone to Connecticut with Orlen for spring vacation, and the place was empty. (pp 322-23)

Zed's impetuous and failure to respond to Erica's love are a chilling, ironic reply to her offer Instead of filling Zed's lack, Erica merely sees in the other the shocking mirror image of herself that starkly reveals the empress Erica as wearing no clothes The several attempts at making love that Erica initiates in order to "deconvert" Sandy and dfecstrouely:

> Next the clumsy straining, the blasts of distress and failure Renewed effort, renewed failure Then Sandy pulling away, sitting back between her legs, his face reddened, saying, "It's no good " ; ; But it was not better next time It was worse At the mere sight of Erica naked at night in a university office (her children were back from vacation, but she had a key to the building where she worked) Sandy cringed and shrank in every part Her laughter was more almost hysterical as she told Sandy that he must have made a mistake

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like being torn out of a dream by a loud alarm (One person likened it to coitus interruptus.)"

> Obviously he did not want her or love her. (pp. 324-25)

Insofar as a hysteric's jouissance has less to do with the sex act but more with being looked at, it seems inevitable that Erica should condemn Zed in her mind as his loss of fervor collapses Erica's "sexual power," her charm to be "looked at." Her disgust at Zed is a double-edged sword that impales her as much as the pathetic Zed. As is true in the relationship between Brian and Wendy, Erica in arrogating the power of naming Zed in derogatory terms also names herself, voices her own depravation.

> And what made it worse was that she had brought it on herself, by trying to make love to somebody so ugly and peculiar and hopeless [ ]. She wanted to scream, to hit him, to beat his bald head and stamped shoulders with her fists. She was shocked by this impulse, however, and at once suppressed it, reminding herself that Sandy was not only her old friend but a pathetic, unhappy person who deserved pity. (pp. 325-26)

Erica's ambivalent love and hate for Zed do not cancel out each other. Rather, they co-exist to promote diligently Erica's desire to bring Zed back into the world which he had given up, in Erica's own words, for the so-called "pathetic empty asceticism." It is transparent Erica's world is defined in Western terms that blatantly exclude and negate the Eastern discourse. Like Brian with Wendy, Erica's mission is altruistic only on the surface. Her ulterior motive is to colonize Zed's mind and give herself the power she lacks by showing Zed the alleged superiority of Western discourse. Lurie's scathing irony lies in making Erica, who herself as a hysteric remains lacking, try to bring Zed back to the benefits of Western culture when all the resources and power of the Western discourse have not made Erica's life any more meaningful or secure.

Erica is only alive when she is spurred by the gaze of male recognition. First it is her father, when Erica was only ten years old, then Brian, and finally Zed, all succeed in slowly chipping away Erica's certainty by withdrawing their gaze(s). From having once a "happy relationship" with mirrors, when her father 'held her up as laughing baby,' to seeing herself in the mirror as a 'woman she scarcely recognizes,' Erica's world has come crumbling down: 'For over twenty years she, Erica, was one of the incarnations of the goddess. Now the spirit has departed from her' (p 252). Suddenly, Erica has grown old: 'Close up against the glass, Erica looks as if she had walked into a spider's web' (p 257). The sacrifice of her body to the Other's desire has taken its heavy toll, and through the meditation of the unsymbolized Shai, her body becomes the symptom, the site to read her tragic story.

To cap it all, the three men in her life by their desertion signify what Erica represents to others: her lack of being. When Erica feels pity for Zed, she regains her strength in her brittle position in the game of life, through projecting her own self-pity on Zed. Erica resorts to the same recourse of pitying Wendy and Daniella that skillfully covers up her own lack of mastery. The harsh yet poignant drum beat of 'Never, never,' that recalls King Lear's five times 'Never' aptly frames Erica as the 'unaccommodated' woman:

> Erica feels like weeping for Daniella who has been so beaten about and exploited by men--and by her own dependency on them. Gripping the cold wheel with her driving gloves, she promises herself that she will never, never let herself be so exploited. In spite of herself her eyes begin to fill with tears. Never, never (p 241)

The 'tears' in Erica's eyes speak the symptom which is at variance

with her conscious denial of pain. The same pity gushes out for Wendy that hides the fact that Brian has without even the pretense of an apology simply deserted her, and in the words of Leonard, Brian's father-figure, "traded in a forty for a twenty."

> Erica has always been a good winner: generous, modest, charming. (She is a less good loser, but fortunately she has seldom since childhood been in that position.) She realizes that she does not wish to cause Wendy any more pain than she is obviously suffering now--that she is in fact sorry for her. (p. 131)

Finally, when Erica offers herself to Zed, her unconscious position is simultaneously that of the self denying saint and victim. Unable to repress the traumas of her childhood--the withdrawal of her father's gaze and the obscene display of Erica as the "great overgrown child" by her mother to her male clientele--Erica's sacrifice of her body and being to Zed once again represents the scars of childhood that will simply not go away. Her never-ending sacrifice merely authenticates Erica's steadfast loyalty to the desire of the Other, even when the price the Other exacts is the very core of her being: her self-respect and identity.

Erica's relationship with mirrors, a running motif in the novel, is privileged in a way to give the power, control and volition to the image, while Erica in her own words merely is "turning into her." As she relates to Zed:

> "What I saw in the bathroom," she says abruptly. "In the mirror picture. It's not just the drug. I keep seeing her anyhow--where, this awful old woman. Only it's me. I'm turning into her. I'm forty already. Isn't that horrible?" (p. 336)

All along Erica had strenuously worked to smother Zed's otherness by reducing him to the familiar Western image. In the words of Said, Erica reduces the "pressure" upon her mind by "accommodating things to

itself as either 'original' or 'repetitious'." In Lacanian terms, Erica's diary-scene reveals something more. Where Erica had doggedly sought difference with Zed to set herself apart as superior, she now finds in the mirror image of Zed a stunning sameness she at once loves and hates:

> 'You know, I just had a flash,' she tells him. 'A sort of vision, really. Inside my head. You were in a painting, I mean. The painting was of you, all along, only I never realized it. It's by Boucher: a man in togged clothes, starting on a journey, and he looks like you.' (p. 343)

Inside Erica's head, there is a sensation of expanding light. The word 'yes' forms in her mouth, but as she begins to voice it she looks at Zed, into his pale eyes with their enlarged dark pupils, and there she has a final, subjective vision. It is double and achromatic, like a stereopticon slide. Reflected in the center of each eye she can see the tiny figure of Sandy going away on the Path, and she herself, just behind him, also dressed in dirty colorless rags. They are walking slightly uphill to the right, away from the house and the people, toward a dim, cold, misty blankness beyond the edge of the frame. In a moment they will both pass out of the picture into this void.
(my emphasis, pp. 343-44)

Lurie's scorching irony here once again doubles upon itself. On the one hand, Erica, seeing herself being edged out of the picture into the anonymous void with Zed, reduces the representation of Eastern discourse to blankness and powerlessness, finally too impoverished to pose a challenge to the hierarchical Western discourse. On the other hand, Lurie's inversion is more pungent. Given the gloss and terse certainty of Erica, her aphanisis or vanishing as a subject reduces the Western discourse to the level of the Eastern discourse. By shattering the hierarchy and de-mystifying the cultural superiority of Erica, Lurie exposes the dynamics in the power relations of social formation inside out like a reversed glove.

Like the Lady of Shalott, who is cursed to see the world, including her Camelot, only as shadows in the mirror, Erica too is cursed by the desire of the Other to be locked in identificatory myths of the family novel, where she functions as a mere puppet to the ventriloquist's command. Ironically, in trying to restore Zed to the world where he belongs, Erica sees her own image in the other, both captivating and chastising, like the world of shadows for the Lady of Shalott. But when Zed functions as the Other (with a big 'O'), the mirror cracks 'from side to side' allowing Erica, unlike the fate that awaits the Lady of Shalott, to leap through the glass-dome--look in the Other--and set herself free.

The crucial moment when Zed compares himself to the trapped fly and becomes the fact that "there's nobody to open the screen" relays a message to Erica that is the discourse of the Other. In Lacan the sender of the message is the Other: Erica sees in Zed as the Other the analyst unwilling to desire for her. However, in naming the root cause of Zed's suffering, Erica also through transference-love stumbles upon her malaise, the root cause of all her suffering, and names her unconscious desire without being quite aware of it.

> 'But Seedy, I don't see -' Erica frowns. "Why shouldn't you have let the fly out?' Zed does not answer.) 'It was kind of you, if it was suffering -' (my emphasis p 333)

Zed's silence is the silence of the analyst unwilling to speak for Erica, unwilling to name a new desire. Erica sees in a trapped fly the desire of the Other that does not want the good of the subject. 'It was kind of you, if it was suffering.' The 'you,' if the message always comes from the Other, refers both to Erica and Zed. Erica's unconscious desire to have 'marvellous' children in order to love Jeffrey and Matilda locks

her in an impossible demand that makes her suffer her impotence to love her children as they are. Only when Erica names a new desire to kill her unconscious desire for perfect children, does she open up the space for both her children to have their own identities free from the smothering demands of Erica's unconscious desire and for herself to speak from a new position that is not chained to the destructive power of the Other's desire:

> But the real change is that they have become strangers. Their names, their faces, their bodies, their voices, their gestures, their tastes, and aptitudes--all are unfamiliar. They are no longer monstrous overgrown versions of her children, but two young people Erica hardly knows. In a way it is a relief that nothing now remains to remind her of her beloved, lost Jeffu and Muffy (p.367)

On the surface, Danielle and Erica could not be more different. Erica leads a life of abstinence till she offers herself to Zed; Danielle, on the other hand, has a series of "indiscriminate flings" soon after her divorce. Erica tenaciously keeps her life a lock, while Danielle seems never short of imagination to amuse herself. Nonetheless, Erica and Danielle's lives are predicated by similar contours of events: both are deserted by their husbands, only in the latter case it is a permanent divorce. Both have to cope with rebellious children, with the effect of the loss of the signifier for the Father's Name having a profound impact on the two broken families.

Although Danielle denies her own lack of attention to her children because of her reckless 'flings', there is no mitigating the fact that it is Leonard who initiates the crisis in the paternal metaphor:

> it is self-evident, at least to Danielle's self, whose fault it is that of their father, who has deserted them and given them neuroses, so that now Roo prefers animals

> to people, including her former best friend Matilde Tate, and Celia, ego slight, has become shy and withdrawn (p 19)
>
> Celia, of course, is only eight--a sensible, anxious child, not old enough to become an alien: And Ron, though now thirteen, still scorns adolescent culture and is interested only in her animals (p-74)
>
> But since Leonard left, Celia has declined to be held by anyone; she reads to herself and bathes herself (p 89)

To add salt to the injury, Leonard's withdrawal of his gaze from his two daughters is followed by denying them the recognition and relationship of a signifier for a father's name: 'Another was his request that Celia and Ron should call him 'Lennie' instead of 'Dad'' (p 81) Like Brian, Leonard has little tolerance for children: 'Yuk, he never liked living with children - I think that's the real reason he left' (p 85)

In spite of the structural difference between Erica's and Danielle's particular hysteria, they share the common feature of unconsciously positioning themselves in the place of the Other- mark of lack Danielle's hysteria becomes a masochism that drives her with the unconscious goal to remain unsatisfied by ironically allowing her body and being to be abused by a chain of 'unsuitable men' As Erica observes:

> 'First, directly after Leonard moved out there was a period of stunned despair This was followed by several months of flagrant and indiscriminate wholehavler with an overlapping series of unsuitable men--This period was especially hard on Erica who found it difficult to hide her disapproval when she dropped in on her friend and found some man she hardly knew--or worse, knew quite well -in a position of temporary intimacy' (pp-121-22)-

Danielle next substitutes one form of hurting her body with another For nearly a year she lives without having anything 'to do with lovers or men, or any of that garbage . . ' (p 122): When she finally meets the

veterinarian Dr. Barnard Ketelchuk, it is not to supplement her lack with his love, but only to adhere to the value of the Other that wants the shaming and contamination of her body. It is the Real, though unsymbolised, that speaks poignantly of Danielle's unconscious position as victim and martyr when she is raped by Ketelchuk on Roo's bed. By forcing himself physically on Danielle in her daughter's bed, the veterinarian also establishes symbolically a psychically incestuous liaison with the daughter, Roo. As for Danielle, her unconscious savoir hurts both her daughter and herself by the sacrifice of her body in Roo's bed:

> He had hardly been in the house ten minutes when, as Danielle put it "he practically raped me on Roo's bed with six gerbils watching. I fought him off as hard as I could at first. . . . it wasn't as easy, he must weigh about two hundred pounds . . . but then it occurred to me that he had probably saved Puma's life, and if he wanted sex that badly, why should I make such a fuss about it? So I stopped fighting him and lay there, and it was just like nothing was happening. The only thing I thought was, Well, at least I've still got that lamp inside me, I won't have puppies." (p.235)

The key phrase that is already disturbed by unconscious truth is 'it was just like nothing was happening.' Having bartered her body to the Other, Danielle in body and being has become 'nothing,' feels nothing and becomes an automaton to be manoeuvered at will by the desire of the Other.

For all the radical feminist statements that punctuate her speech, Danielle lives close to the void in the Real. Even after the trauma of the rape, Danielle continues not only to take the whole blame on herself but also allows herself to be exploited in a way that implies her body and being does not belong to her any more:

> 'Yah, I know. But when he came over last night, after you'd gone. Hell, you know, what happened before, it was partly my own fault. . . but when he saw me with my hair down and barefoot, and only what he called my

'mightie' on, he lost control of himself— It never occurred to me I wasn't dressed properly ; ; you know all these ladies in Greekdale who want to marry Harnie and keep having him to dinner with elaborate food, ; Well there we were ; So it happened again '
(p 238-9)

It is the conjugation of capitalism and education as an ideological tool that reproduces the class differences and alienating effect between Danielle and Ketelchuk even as the very function of ideology is also to cover over the conditions of their real existence with false consciousness Blind to the class difference created by her superior education Danielle unconsciously lives closer to the void in the Real in opting to marry Ketelchuk, however much she allows the utopia of their sexual compatibility to deny her loss and pain Lurie brings about an unsatisfactory closure in sliding the unbridgeable differences between Danielle and Ketelchuk in terms of class, religion, and education— In doing so, Lurie upholds the bourgeois values of marriage, nuclear family and moral integrity even as the sub-text challenges such a smooth ironing of the jarring surfaces

Danielle deludes herself into thinking Ketelchuk is the balm to heal all her past 'injustices' and 'hurt by life,' when his presence is a persistent reminder of the difficulty of transcending the class wars created by the same capitalistic system that falsely promises to abolish it. Danielle's final conversation with Erica during the Peace March is

to be read not for what the text ostensibly says but for the Other scene, the void that lurks beneath the misleading euphoria:

'He asked me again just last night I'd been reading an article in Glamorhood about marriage contracts so I told him I'd marry him on certain terms-' She grins: 'I said, first, I had to keep my job I wanted separate

> book accounts and I'd pay half the housekeeping expenses and do the cooking but I wouldn't touch any of the cleaning or laundry—he'd have to do it himself, or hire somebody And I said I had to have three weeks' vacation by myself every year, with no questions asked afterward " (p 361)

"I can't figure out why I didn't say yes anyway " Danielle continues, descending the grandstand "I think probably it was a kind of mind set You get into the habit of being angry and hurt by life, and then when something good happens you can't accept it because it doesn't fit the pattern You really have to make a big effort to stop branding over the past and all your injustices." (pp 361-62)

That Barnie is not Jewish poses no problem, nor does his lack of elite education On the contrary, Danielle romanticizes the unequal romance to privilege Katelchuk over Lennie's useless vocation of "picking apart other people's books" (p 362) Such a glossing over of differences in class, religion, and education clearly structures the brittle fortress of Danielle's fantasy that denies her real pain in her shallow relationship with Katelchuk. As a matter of fact, Danielle's fantasy is, paradoxically, what keeps her alive Danielle's deaf ear to the unconscious truth that she is betrothed not to Katelchuk but to the void in her strengthens her belief in "something good" resulting from this relationship.

Wendy's particular hysterical structure involves her identification with two master signifiers and the appropriation of her voice alternately by Brian, whom she blindly adores, and Zed, who positions Wendy in the Eastern discourse. For Brian, whose desire equals knowledge, Wendy becomes a clean slate (tabula rasa) to imprint his knowledge on and thereby deny his own lack:

> But, glancing at her again as she spoke, at her lank lemonade blonde hair parted in the middle Indian style

> and descending smoothly over her cheeks like the fingers of a wigwam, he realised that Wendy like the squaw or Hindu maiden who affected to be, would never do anything he did not advise--because his approval was more important to her than her education (p 40)

Wendy is equally drawn by Zed's voice and uses his knowledge in the Eastern discourse to share up her precipitous suspension on the edge of the void:

> "Well, what Zed said convinced me I was going at it all wrong. I've been trying to replace one selfish personal desire with another just like it. Even if I could do that, I wouldn't be getting anywhere. I'd still be caught in the whirlwind. What I've got to do is to reach the end of desire." (p 54)

The surrender of Wendy's voice to Brian culminates in the horrific murder of her unborn baby. Instead of smarting under the blows of Arlen's cajoling and bullying Wendy sees the baby only as an obstacle in Brian's desire to write 'The Book'. Keeping her look a look like her counterparts, Erica and Daniella, Wendy povitions herself unconsciously as the victim/martyr that allows her to take the full blame at the conscious level for her pregnancy, while at the unconscious, her "persecuted" look levels the guilt at Brian:

> "But it was my fault really. For months I kept coming around to his offing, and he always wasn't having any. He tried to help me get over it, he was beautiful about it, and so patient and intelligent. But I couldn't. I just cried all the time and kept saying how I was going to have a nervous breakdown if he didn't leave me." (p 127-28)

> "I hate leave town." Wendy gasps, swallows. "Not just on account of what's happened, but if I stay I know I'll

> hassle Brian and keep him from working on The Book. That's the really heavy thing." (p 128)

> He [Brian] recalls with a pang how small, soft and young Wendy looked, hunched on the Zimmerman grotesque Victorian sofa, her eyelids drooped and her face was the weary, flattened face of child refugees in news

photographs (pp 172-73)

Wendy's second pregnancy dramatically shifts the power relations in her favor vis-a-vis Brian as the other. She insists Brian with his own petard when the father of the unborn baby remains a mystery both to Brian and Wendy. Being unable to tell whether Brian or the lonely Pakistani Engineering student is the real father of her unborn child is a striking blow to Brian's already weak identification with the Name-of-the-Father. In terms of Wendy's own unconscious desire, she corrects to the limits, where Erica and Daniella fall short of, the hysteric's desire to eschew castration--submission to the Symbolic law--by opting to give birth to a fatherless child, a child without a signifier for a father's Name.

Perhaps Wendy's mother's incessant nagging that Wendy should marry a stable, responsible man, who could take care of her, backfires when Wendy chooses to lead a perilous life. Wendy's letter to Brian recalls what she wishes her mother knew: "Mother? I thought, what if I told her Don't worry Ma I have already taken your advice and I am seeing a professor. Oh good Wendy are you seeing a lot of Sir. Oh yeh I am and Ma I am seeing his face and his arms and his legs and his ass and his cock..."(p. 27). Unconsciously reacting against her mother's lack of faith and confidence in Wendy, which in adult life she embodies in her inability to speak in her own voice, the new image of Wendy although reckless, points to her gaining her own identity, even when it comes with a heavy price:

> "I couldn't ever deserve a kid like this baby... It's really heavy, not like some guy you're not even related to. I know already I'll never leave Sir; I'll always belong to him completely (pp 359-60)

She loved Brian, but she just couldn't hack the idea of

> marriage, or of living in Corinth the rest of her life Also, she didn't want her baby to be brought up here ... "if I stay here and get into this academic life style, he's bound to pick up some of the hangups and shitty mental sets " (p 354)

> Like one day he said to me, 'Could you bring me the newspaper? It's either a) on my desk, or b) in the bathroom? I told him "Please don't talk to me in outlines, okay? Only he didn't hear me " (p 358)

Unlike Wendy, Zed is candid about the falsehood of his subject position in the Eastern culture Recalling his conversation with Mona Mean, the T.V. star in California Zed confesses to Erica "I tried to tell her I was a spiritual freud but she thought that was just holy humility" (p 342) Zed's efforts to appropriate, domesticate and control the Eastern discourse are rebuffed by the limits of his own representation, much as Erica's relentless bid to bring Zed back to the Western world of positivistic rationality is thwarted by the collapse of her discourse, which shows sameness between contending discourses (East and West) where difference was diligently sought Zed's functional position as the mirror-image (other) for Erica is stunningly appropriate, as she too is no less false in the Western discourse; she too prepares a face to meet the faces that she meets

Erica's absurd yet poignantly comical situation is revealed through several instances; her using her daughter's elaborate make-up before Danielle's party to appear younger than she is, her losing battle to keep Brian's departure from home at her demand from becoming public knowledge, and finally, her painful hiding behind the facade to declare her life as normal when Brian had irreparably destroyed her happiness Several times Erica constructs a narrative of Zed's subjectification in Western discourse by Imaginarily merging his physical and intellectual attributes

as being mine and the same. His pants flapped around his legs, his socks sagged, so did his untidy hair. [illegible] It was t as surprising that he should end up out of a job involved in Eastern mystical nonsense. But it was a little sad' (p.123). Yet the same Erica, failing to re-mould Zed's identity, is unconsciously pointing to the limits of Western discourse to control Zed even as she consciously misrecognizes the false brilliance of Zed: 'You're really brilliant, do you know that, Sandy? [illegible] I never saw anything like that. How come I am not brilliant like you?' (p.339). Erica's own deconstructive remark collapses her earlier constructed hierarchy in discourse.

While the students as Zed's disciples fan his ideal ego, it is Erica as the other who makes him see in the mirror the weaker side of his personality. Zed verbally lashes at Erica when he cannot physically perform. It is his way of fantasizing to fantasies in order to deny the unconscious truth that his demand for love is that he remain lacking:

> 'Then you'd have a few who didn't suffer at all--whom everything always went right for--who were young, rich, beautiful, healthy and happy. And you'd scatter them around the world to discourage the others, to remind them every day, every hour, of what they are missing.' Sandy's voice was harsh. 'That's what people like you and Erica are for.' (pp.326-27)

Zed would alternately use Fate/Karma as the scapegoat for his physical failings: 'I figured out a long while ago, anything I really wanted I couldn't have. It's my destiny' (p.326).

Mired in the mirror image, which is a misrecognition, Zed is able to name his unconscious desire to remain fatherless when Erica unconsciously positions herself as his analyst. As Lacan says, 'the order of the law [which the father represents] can be conceived only on the basis of something more primordial, a crime.' Zed's crime lies in negating

the importance of the signifier for a Father's Name when he changes his name from Sanford Finkelstein to Zed. The latter name bears no other significance than being the 'last letter of the alphabet.' Zed's not wanting to be a father reinforces his unconscious goal to remain unsatisfied and eschew castration: 'Creating beings who resemble you physically--that's the lowest form of immortality. It's a joke--a pretty bad joke, sometimes' (p.285)

Relevant to Zed's hysterical subject position is what Erica remembers for the hundredth time in his washing. She thinks of something Daniella said about Sandy: 'that he is not only nice but too nice to be a man' (p.322). Zed's disastrous failure to make love to Erica shakes his confidence and pride to the roots. But she also sees to the Other makes Zed come to terms with his unconscious truth that nobody can help him to 'get to god,' and that the Path to serenity is not by consciously pursuing the goal.

> 'Only it doesn't work. I can detach myself from the world all right, but I can't get to God. I'm stuck in the middle. I'm like that fly, only there's nobody to open the screen.' (p.333)

Zed steps out of the system, becomes a renunciate to find god, but this time without hoping for an other to lift the screen to set him free like the fly. Zed's failure to inscribe himself securely in the Eastern discourse that sees the world as Maya is in another sense a stinging rejection by the Symbolic order of that discourse. Because of Zed's 'double exclusion' (the Western discourse fails to subjugate him and the subaltern discourses mercilessly call Zed a bluff), Zed among all the hysterics in the novel lives closest to the structure of the unconscious. His jouissance is related to the Other, while for an obsessional like

Asian, his jouissance has no such direct access to the unconscious

This brings us to the key question: how does Lurie's mongrel text radically depart from the model of a bourgeois novel that privileges individualism, moral progress, liberal humanism, without at the same time breaching faith with it? Put another way, how does Lurie re-vision the colonial context of The War Between The Tates that compels us to read radically? Otherwise, with a different gaze, a different discursive practice from JanMohamed's "manichean opposition" between the 'putative superiority of the Europeans and the supposed inferiority of the native'?[26]

Alison Lurie's The War Between The Tates is a mongrel text in which the hegemonic Western discourse jostles, collides and interacts with the subaltern Eastern and Native American discourses in order to re-vision the colonial context in a radical new way. The archetypal structure of the colonial narrative usually involves a Western protagonist who adventures into the uncharted 'alien' soil, to classify, fix, and order, the so-called exotic images for later consumption of readers back home. From Conrad's Heart of Darkness to Forster's A Passage to India to V.S. Naipaul's Guerillas, all fall into this category of 'commodifying' the native by collapsing culture into nature, whereby the native's individuality and subjectivity are denied. The native to the Western mind has no signifier for the Father's Name, but merely becomes a generic object that can be exchanged for any other. Roland Barthes draws our attention in Mythologies to the endemic repression of difference in Western tradition: 'Faced with anything foreign, the Established Order

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[26] Abdul R. JanMohamed, 'The Economy of Manichean Allegory: The Function of Racial Difference in Colonialist Literature,' in Race, Writing, and Difference, ed. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), pp. 78-106.

knows only two types of behavior, both of which are mutilating: either to acknowledge it as a Punch and Judy show, or to defuse it as a pure reflection of the West. In any case, the main thing is to deprive it of its history."[27] Given the twin inevitable facts that we cannot escape the binary model of our thinking--for instance, knowing white only by knowing its opposite black--and the historical and ideological determinants of Western narrative, how does Lurie position her corrective strategies to subvert the ossifying, outmoded dualistic contrast between East and West as is the case the case in several colonial fictions?

It is in the corrective swerves, whose burden is carried by the hysterics in the novel, that Lurie points to the break from the ideological determinants of Western narrative. When Wendy knocks over Brian's "stack of three-by-five cards" not once but twice 'with the fringe of her red wool poncho" (p 157), she silently but effectively poses the question of the Western discourse's claim to be unified, autonomous, and the sole bearer of scientific truths. The same Native American 'poncho " one may recall, is what both hides and reveals Wendy's pregnancy, which an obsessional like Brian is unable to see through.

It is ironic that, like Leonard's model of the "transparent Man," Brian's understanding is limited to things that are concrete, tangible, and readily 'visible.' Yet Brian cannot see Wendy's obvious pregnancy, nor hear her ask him not to speak to her in 'routines.' More importantly, denying Brian either the definitive knowledge or possession of her unborn baby, which Brian does not know whether he fathered or not, brings about

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[27] Roland Barthes, Mythologies, trans. Annette Lavers (New York: Hill and Wang, 1972), p 96.

the ultimate crisis in the discursive and material practices of the West in the novel.

Brine had all along pursued the relentless routes to colonize Wendy's mind, to force her to conform to his standard and knowledge. Brine thus tries to civilize the "savage" in Wendy at the discursive level, which at the material level plays havoc with her body as his material prerogative to exploit. Nonetheless, when Wendy leaves for California to start afresh, it is Brian who needs the safe retreat of Erica, his surrogate mother. Nailed to the ignominious fate he had designed for Bibbie, the tail expectation of "The Book" gone awry, the sacred Peace match painstakingly undertaken to please Bill, the erring Cheir and another father-figure for Brian all snowballs to pass the verdict that Brian has ironically fulfilled the command spoken over the crib: "He should be a great man" (p. 31). Lurie thus savagely reverses the expectations of progress and triumph of a typical bourgeois novel. By stepping out of the system to live in the world but not of it, Zed, on the other hand, poses the origins of the illusory nature of progress and attachment that men like Brian espouse.

The diction of the novel too is preponderantly militaristic. Instead of the usual spatial metaphors that distance and divide the First World ("in here") from the Third World ("out there") and that permit myriad simplistic fables of the natives to be imparted for domestic Western consumption and amusement, Lurie positions the Third World in the very backyard of the wealthy world of Corinth to initiate the guerilla skirmishes both at the material and discursive levels. Lurie collapses the romantic spatial distances between the First and Third Worlds with the image of the Krishna Bookshop, the nuclei of the Eastern discourse that

prospers in the very backyard of the Corinth community--the loci of the novel. The war between the children of the Tetas and their parents is also predicated in terms of power relations between the First and Third Worlds. From Brian's point of view: "For nearly two years, he would point out, the house on Jones Creek Road has been occupied territory. Jeffrey and Matilda have gradually taken over, moving in troops and supplies, depleting natural resources and destroying the local culture" (p.96).

Whereas from the children's point of view: "Brian and Erica are the invaders: the large, brutal, callous Americans. They are vastly superior in material resources and military experience, which makes the war deeply unfair; and they have powerful allies like the Corinth Public School System. In spite of their innate superiority and their wish for self-government, they remain dependent on Erica and Brian Tate's investments. . . . They refuse to negotiate, and retreat into the jungles of their rooms on the third floor, where they plan guerilla attacks" (p.96-97).

And yet the weakness of the novel lies in bringing about a ringing closure by a quasi-happy ending. Brian's pleasant exchanges with Erica at the Fence march potentially promise that he is going to set his home in order, which nothing in the novel prepares the reader for. When Wendy leaves Brian high and dry, his only option seems to be to return sheepishly to his wife--his surrogate mother Danielle turns into Ellie Kotelchuk and the novel, by and large, is bathed in a somber twilight of forgiving and forgiveness. The central characters occupy once again the center stage, namely, the Tetas and Danielle's new household, while Wendy and Zed, positioned in the marginal Eastern discourse, are flushed out of the text.

The unconscious of the novel, however, resists such a closure. The

Peace march initiated by Brian with all the fanfare to regain his shred of dignity is scything but peaceful. The pyrotechnic display of slogans--'Burn your bras,' 'Pussy power,' "Make Love, Not War/ Gay Power for Peace,' 'Ho, Ho, Ho, Chi Minh/ NLF is going to win!"--makes a savage mockery of Brian's peace efforts.

Adam Sachechild, in a different context, poses a provocative question that might as well apply to Lurie. "In the 19th century,' Hochschild argues, 'some of the pathbreaking novelists brought their readers an awareness of how wealth and poverty cumulated in London or Paris or Saint Petersburg. In our time, isn't the basic confrontation the one between the Third World and the First?'[20]

It is significant that this novel ends with the appearance of two marginal characters and the question posed by the little boy to his mother:

> 'Mommy?' he asks. 'Mommy, will the war end now?'
> (p 372)

The war of the little boy's question that rings through the novel is fought on several fronts--between the sexes, between contending discourses, between opposite cultures--and produces an ironic gloss to the quasi-happy ending, especially in the context of the current Peace march. The thrust of Lurie's The War Between The Tates compels us less to tally the scorecards and declare the winners and losers, the heroes and the villains, the good and the bad characters. It is less important to squabble over whether Zed, as Erica believes, is 'an ostrich, hiding his head from the world in the sands of mysticism' (p 363), or feel more

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[20] Adam Sachechild. 'When Worlds Divide.' Mother Jones, May 1988, p 49.

reinvest that Erica re-centers the world that Zad leaves behind. The positions of Erica and Zad, from a Lacanian perspective, give only the illusion of power to the Real lack of being:

Lurie's re-visioning of the colonial context lies in staging the dualistic contrast of the two cultures--West and East--not for the power of representation of the Western discourse to annihilate the Eastern counterpart, but rather to use the very irreducible alterity of either discourse to function as the Other for naming the unconscious speech of the other. Lurie's oscillation of the divergent cultures urges not judgment but merely a hearer ear to the speech of the unconscious in order to unlock, in the words of Chasseguet-Smirgel and Bela Grunberger, 'the desire to knowledge of the species. In all aspects of our behavior and activities. It should be remembered that was the view of the founder of psychoanalysis, however much one may disagree.'[2] Only such an understanding of the unconscious knowledge takes us beyond deconstructing the power relations in discourses, beyond answering the little boy's question to his mother, to the desire of the Other that makes the alienated man and woman in The Way Between The Tides, without their knowledge or free will, act the way they do.

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[2] Janine Chasseguet-Smirgel and Bela Grunberger, Freud or Reich? Psychoanalysis and Illusion, trans. Claire Pajaczkowska (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), p. 30.

CONCLUSION

To summarize, my exploration of white male psychology within the New Yorker literati led me toward more aggressive Lacanian readings of how each writer--Updike and Cheever--fictionalizes male desire. The inclusion of Alison Lurie in my study further illuminated my understanding of contemporary WASP fiction in exciting new ways. Lurie's femaleness, I suggest, gives her more access to a language of difference and Otherness within WASP discourse. Lurie's other *jouissance*, particularly, manifests itself on the body (male and female), where the Real speaks in another register, a counter discourse to the symbolic. The Lacanian perspective, as my close readings of the novels indicate, is a key to steering clear of the manifest order of the text which is in Lacanian terms a misrecognition, in order to probe upon the Other scene where unconscious truths reside. My work with desire as a problematic--undercutting simplistic opposition--as a function at work in culture and in texts, placed me in the position of being a man from the Third World who could speak to the same breath about gender issues and cultural differences. In other words, only a complex grasp of psychological and cultural theories about how selves as well as desires are socially constructed can illuminate these processes in the fictions under study.

With Updike the obsessional's unconscious desire was intricately linked with death. Updike's pessimism becomes a metonymy of the writer's desire, "a worker," in his own words, "in ink who can hide himself and

send out a surrogate presence, a signature that multiplies even while it conceals.'[1] Put another way, Updike's relentless 'pumping of words' gives him the comfort only in the imaginary of filling the frightening dark hole in the Real. Ironically, Updike's narcissistic prose style with his penchant to establish as universal, unified Western Subject with a will to knowledge fails, as Updike cannot close the gap between signifier and signified, self and other, conscious and unconscious discourses. In fact, Updike's terror, like that of his protagonist Peter Caldwell in The Centaur, lies in seeing lack less in women and more in himself, in acknowledging with horror the Updikean self as non-self/death, a center that is blank like the empty basketball net.

Like a snake sloughing off its skin, Updike with each novel at once seals his death in print and renews his life to repeat the ritual of dying. Like a true rhesomimesol, Updike is biologically living but unconsciously identified with the presence of death. The closing lines of Rabbit Is Rich speak alike for Updike and Rabbit: 'Another nail in his coffin. Mle.'[2]

With Lurie the attention shifts to her ruthless subversion of the Name-of-the-Father by her hysterical heroines, who in complex ways implicate themselves in the very cultural systems that exploit them. Perhaps her works, from her first novel, Love and Friendship, to her most recent one, The Truth About Lorin Jones, bear testimony to the joint struggle of the author and her hysteric heroines to find their identities

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[1] John Updike, Self-Consciousness (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1989), p 45.

[2] John Updike, Rabbit Is Rich (New York: Ballantine Books, 1981), p 437.

in a culture that systematically negates and excludes them. Unlike Updike and Chesever, who in sharply different ways preoccupy themselves with transsexual issues, Lurie's The War Between the Tates seemingly deals with transsexual neurosis, and Erica seemingly occupies the center of the novel.

Lurie's real story is what it feels like to be an undesirable woman. Erica Tate, in that respect, is the perceptive female center of the novel. While Erica, in keeping with the symptoms of a hysteric, keeps her lack a lack, she also subverts the Name-of-the-Father when she reduces both Erica and Zed to small men. Erica's project to write "The Book" remains a frustrated dream much the same way as Fred Turner's project on John Gay in Foreign Affairs. What is more troubling, however, is Zed's rejection by Erica that ironically mitigates her crusades against patriarchy, since Zed is only biologically male and occupies a hysteric (female) subject position in discourse. In rejecting and reducing Zed to a small man Erica rejects her mirror-image, and with it, her new found (although void) female sparm: 'At the mere sight of Erica naked at night in a university office Sandy sagged and shrank in every part. Her laughter was sour, almost hysterical, as she told Sandy that he must have made a mistake' (p. 325). Erica's willingness to make peace with Brian augurs well for the peace and financial health of the family but does little to improve her status in it. Lurie's ringing 'reassurance' therefore, upholds bourgeois values that Zed rightly sees as Erica's pride and weakness: 'But Sandy's idea of a non-Santa Claus God who had no toys in his bag, but was watching Erica all the time to see whether she was doing the right thing without thought of reward--that bothered her' (p. 329). Erica's failure in her mission to bring back Zed into the Western world can be read as her

reinforcement in turn of the very capitalistic system that in collusion with patriarchy has reduced women like Erica to second-class citizens.

In Foreign Affairs Lurie again problematizes the female writer's access to the symbolic order of language. Virginia Miner is cut to the quick by the adverse criticism of her works in The Atlantic by Zimmern, a powerful and respected male critic. Instead of challenging Zimmern, Vinnie scapegoats and unconsciously desires the death of Chuck Mumpson, the very man she loves. In spite of Virginia Miner's conscious solidarity with Chuck's humble origins, her unconscious rejection of him reinforces, as did Erica Tate before, the twin forces of capitalism and patriarchy that have marginalized her recognition in the literary world. Vinnie's stout defence of Chuck against the assaults of Berkie Mumpson, Chuck's daughter, comes too late, only after his ashes are scattered over his ancestral plains in South Leigh:

> 'Poor old Dad.' Gin daughter sighs and reaches for the last watercress sandwich. 'Mom was right. It was pathetic really, him chasing around the country looking for ancestors.'
>
> 'I don't see that,' Vinnie says a little snappishly. 'Why shouldn't your father have been interested in his genealogy? A great many people are.'
>
> 'Sure, I know. Like Mom: her side of the family is real distinguished. She's descended from a whole lot of judges and governors.'
>
> 'I guess Dad thought if he went back far enough he might find somebody he could be proud of too. Professor Gilson told me he was looking for months, all over the country, but all he ever came up with was a lot of farm workers and this old hermit.' (pp. 407-408)

Vinnie takes back to the States the coveted picture of Chuck Mumpson's ancestor--the hermit of South Leigh--that Chuck wanted her alone to have. In doing so Vinnie seems to carry imperishably, in spite of her

unconscious rejection of Chuck a piece of him always with her. Such a mystification by Lurie obscures and covers over the "Other scene" where subjects like Chuck Mumpson and Zed are both created and rejected by the hierarchical and capitalistic society.

Lurie's critique of the collaborative function of capitalism and patriarchy in underpinning the exploitation and exclusion of female subjectivity from the symbolic order raises the same bogey of questions that Shoshana Felman had in 1978 in relation to Irigaray. Felman asks Irigaray: 'Is she speaking the language of man, or the silence of women? Is she speaking as a woman, or in place of the (silent) woman, for the woman, in the name of the woman?'[3] Within the symbolic order, I suggest Lurie is simultaneously speaking the language of man and the silence of women. Lurie's novels from Love and Friendship to The Truth About Lorin Jones all meticulously adhere to the masculine 'respect for form' at the syntactic level through a hypergrammatical correctness. For example, Lurie is self-conscious about models and genres and her novels are enclosed in literary conventions. In The War Between the Tates the epigram comes from a male writer, Jorge Luis Borges, just as The Truth About Lorin Jones is framed by a quotation from Shakespeare's Hamlet. If The War Between the Tates includes the literary convention of letters, Foreign Affairs has several epigrams from John Gay. Although Lurie's savage irony in using male writers as frames for her novels only to subvert their claim to truth cannot be missed, the nagging question that looms beyond the irony is whether Lurie is not as well, like her hysterics who masochistically suffer their pain, pointing to the insurmountable

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[3] Shoshana Felman, 'Women and Madness: The Critical Phallacy,' in Diacritics, Winter 1975, p.3

difficulties women face as artists, painters, and scholars in a capitalistic marketplace dominated by male virtues and traditions.

In sharp contrast to Updike's obsessionals who are locked in and fearful of their mother's unconscious desire, Cheever's obsessionals have to contend with undesiring mothers. Neilles' ambivalence towards his sexuality, unlike that of Updike's George Caldwell and Rabbit Angstrom, stems from his rage against his undesiring mother and denigrated and weak father. Neilles' 'fear' of Neilis hides his anger at his undesiring mother but comes out, nevertheless, in the double's (Hammer's) subplot. Neilles is to Neilis what conversely Updike's Janice is to Rabbit: shit. Neilis makes Neilles feel like a "Hairy Pile" of shit, or a gross ugly penis. Neilis can so warp grace from her memory the "venereal itch" of the overly sensual man that is her husband than she can the words printed on the picket signs, 'Fuck and Frirk,' and the actor's pubic brush and his "unwatered flower" (p. 31). Given the alienated economy of his desire, Neilles unconsciously yearns for the father-son homoeroticism. Much as he may protest in his conscious discourse to his son and others against his fear and disapproval of homosexuality.

Since a part of puberty is to have boys uniform they grow to manize hairiness, Neilles' resentment in discovering his son's sexual commerce with Mrs. Gubbard also shows his unwillingness to allow Tony to grow into a man. Where Neilles sought to empower himself as mother/father to his little boy, Mrs. Gubbard intervenes to split his desire for his son.

Neilles' double, Hammer, plays out a different variation of his unconscious desire and fear of homosexuality. The fantasy structure played out by Hammer is the reversal of Updike's George Caldwell in The

Centaur. Where George Caldwell resurrects in the imaginary the Father's Gaze in defence against his mother's unconscious desire, in Bullet Park we see Hammer carrying out his mother's desire to crucify a man on displeasing and defending Hammer against his passive desire to be crucified/loved by a father/man. Hammer's violence against Tony when he tries to kill him in the church reverses his homoerotic yearnings, which themselves defend Hammer against his narcissistic rage at being undesired by his mother. Ironically, in following his mother's violent bidding he also passively allows his mother to nail him.

In Falconer Farragut receives life sentence for killing his brother, Eben. Farragut's rage against his undesiring mother, who as Farragut recalls 'might have yanked her breast out of his mouth in order not to be late for her bridge game,' is aggravated by his indifferent father who 'having written Farragut's name with his cock, had tried to erase the writing' (p.45). And yet the name Farragut is oddly enough the one and not Eben who thwarts his father from committing suicide: 'Oh, Daddy,' said Farragut, 'you shouldn't do this to me in my formative years' (p.64). That Eben is scapegoated and killed for Farragut's father's failure to love his youngest son (Farragut) points to the strong homoerotic bond that Farragut seeks with his father to defend against his rage against his undesiring mother. Farragut's homosexual relationship with Judy in the prison recreates what Farragut desired and missed in his relationship with his father's homoerotic bonding. Farragut plays out the same, except reversed, paternal/protective role with Judy as he narcissistically did with his own father in his fantasy to deny the harsh truth that he was 'unwanted/killjoy' to his father.

Whereas George Caldwell indiscriminately palmed off his son, Peter,

to surrogate fathers as he thought himself unworthy to fulfill the paternal role. Ferragut's father tried to have his son's 'life extinguished as he dwelt in his mother's womb' (p 53) As opposed to the gendered killing (female) in Updike's Rabbit, Run, the symptomatic effect of Cheever's undesirling outhere in that the male gender (Tony in Bullet Park and Ferragut in Falconer) are asked to die

Of the three authors, perhaps Cheever offers the strongest indictment of middle-class values and social mores Deeply troubled all his life by his anxiety over his sexual ambivalence, Cheever tries to make sense of his painful, fragmented life by putting his thoughts on paper 'He used to say,' notes Susan Cheever, that 'I write to make sense of my life '[4] From 'The Swimmer' and 'The Country Husband' and scores of other stories to his five fine novels Cheever's writings are not just 'to make sense of' his life but also of the seamy, dark side of middle-class America that can be summed up in the words of Chisholm's in Oh What A Paradise It Seems

' [illegible] its wanderings, its dependence on acceleration, its parasitic nature' or the ironic closing lines of Bullet Park: 'Tony went back to school on Monday and Nailles--drugged--went off to work and everything was so wonderful, wonderful, wonderful, wonderful as it had been '[5]

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[4] Susan Cheever: Home Before Dark (New York Pockets Books, 1984), p 11

[5] John Cheever, Oh What A Paradise It Seems (New York: Ballantine Books, 1982), p 75. John Cheever Bullet Park (New York: Ballantine Books, 1967), p 243

Finally, John W. Aldridge's rhetorical question, "How good is Alison Lurie?" can be extended to read: how good are Updike, Cheever, and Lurie?[8] A Lacanian perspective converts the readerly text of these WASP writers into writerly ones by focussing attention not on the ostensible meaning of the realist texts (which is always a misrecognition for Lacan) but what the texts fail to say, the subtext as the sight of unconscious truths. Reading through a Lacanian lens offers us new knowledge of not only how subjectivity, male fantasy and sexuality are so differently constructed by these WASP writers but how much of these writers in their unique ways, critique WASP culture that they are part and parcel of. With Updike, in spite of the swift currents of his think Heisegian prose, the signifiance (what shifts within language) points to his feverish attempts to close off the hole/lack in the Other in order to assert the unity and coherence of the Subject. The more the obsessionals in Updike try to close off lack in the Other the more they are confronted by the horrific Updikean hole/emptiness in the center of their being.

In sharp contrast to Updike, Cheever's obsessionals are constituted by undesiring mothers and indifferent fathers. The obsessional's fear of homosexual desire in Cheever's novels is both rage against undesiring mothers and narcissistic preservation of oneself. With Lurie the focus shifts to her hysteric heroines who subvert the Name-of-the-Father and call into question the repressive predominance of "logos" over writing, on the privileged status of the present and consequent valorization of presence.

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[8] John W. Aldridge, "How Good is Alison Lurie?" Commentary, January 1975, pp. 79-81.

Lurie constitutes the feminine subjectivity of her hysteric not in the symbolic order of language, to which they remain exterior, but in the Lacanian Reel, unsymbolized and yet palpable as symptoms on the body of the hysterics. The hysteric's *jouissance* in Lurie's novels, always in excess and breaching the boundaries of language, ceaselessly subverts the symbolic order and points to the myriad ways women are excluded or asked to take subordinate positions in the social, cultural and economic life of the WASP community. From Erica Tate to Polly Alter, Lurie's heroines, in order to succeed in a man-made world, reinforce the very twin forces of capitalism and patriarchy they also work against, and become at once the victims and the virtuous, at once the silenced and the vocal. Finally, read from a Lacanian perspective, Updike, Cheever and Lurie, although very differently, break against the tyranny of the metaphysical logic of dichotomous oppositions that dominate Western philosophical thought--presence/absence, being/nothingness, truth/error, same/Other, identity/difference, etc --to give us insights into the heterogeneous world of WASP culture which is at once brilliant and disturbing.

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BIOGRAPHICAL DATA

I was born in Vishnampetai, Tamil Nadu, India. My grandfather recorded the exact time of my birth (27 September, 1953) by looking at the heavenly constellation and he turned out to be more accurate than a Swiss watch. I was the eighth and last child in the family and grew up being very privileged in the eyes of my mother. I studied at Loyola High School, Jamshedpur (from 1963 - 1966), which was run by Catholic priests. I completed my schooling at St. Campion High School, Trichy (1967-1971). I attended Banaras Hindu University from 1971-1979, where I completed both my B.A. and M.A. in English literature. I was hired as an Assistant Professor at Kumaon University, Nainital, in the Fall of 1979. I worked there for three years before commencing my master's at the University of New Brunswick in English, with a specialization in commonwealth literature. I came to the University of Florida in Fall 1985 to begin my doctoral program. I was hired in a tenure-track position at the University of New Hampshire beginning Fall 1989.

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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August 1990

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