Observing Women: Doris Lessing, Christa Wolf, Marguerite Duras

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Abstract
This dissertation uses a model of observation derived from Michel Foucault's "Discipline and Punish" to examine the relationship between writing and seeing in each of the writers discussed. The disciplinary model of the Panopticon, as Foucault outlines it, constructs a neutral observer, a figure supposedly "without qualities" but nevertheless implicitly male, in part because Western tradition has always constructed men as observers and women as objects of observation. But what happens when a woman takes up this observational position and attempts to become the subject of her own gaze? In "Prisons We Choose to Live Inside", Doris Lessing explicitly develops a theory of the writer as observer. Close reading of moments of observation in "Particularly Cats", "Going Home", "African Laughter", and "The Fifth Child" shows that Lessing's model of observation assumes she can freely take up a "neutral" position of observation without addressing the history of that position, whether in general philosophical terms or in terms of the particular experiences which allowed her to assume that position. In contrast, Christa Wolf is quite conscious of the structures of observational power in which she would construct herself as an observer. If the figure of a woman observing a woman observing which appears in "Kindheitsmuster", "Kassandra", and "Was bleibt" allows her to depict how the gendering of power controls and contains alternative perspectives, it does not allow her to overcome the structures of that power. Finally, Marguerite Duras' active manipulation of women's passive position in "Le boa" and "L'Amant" breaks the structures of disciplinary observation and allows her to construct a nondisciplinary woman observer. Duras also creates women, however, who are unable to transform the passive position of waiting which war compels them to occupy. This one position, which appears in "Hiroshima mon amour" and "La Douleur", is not susceptible to the transformation from passivity to activity with which Duras' figures otherwise construct themselves as observing women.

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DORIS LESSING, CHRISTA WOLF, MARGUERITE DURAS

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for dhs: an observant woman

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ABSTRACT
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This dissertation uses a model of observation derived from Michel Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* to examine the relationship between writing and seeing in each of the writers discussed. The disciplinary model of the Panopticon, as Foucault outlines it, constructs a neutral observer, a figure supposedly "without qualities" but nevertheless implicitly male, in part because Western tradition has always constructed men as observers and women as objects of observation. But what happens when a woman takes up this observational position and attempts to become the subject of her own gaze? In *Prisons We Choose to Live Inside*, Doris Lessing explicitly develops a theory of the writer as observer. Close reading of moments of observation in *Particularly Cats, Going Home, African Laughter*, and *The Fifth Child* shows that Lessing's model of observation assumes she can freely take up a "neutral" position of observation without addressing the history of that position, whether in general philosophical terms or in terms of the particular experiences which allowed her to assume that position. In contrast, Christa Wolf is quite conscious of the structures of observational power in which she would construct herself as an observer. If the figure of a woman observing a woman observing which appears in *Kindheitsmuster, Kassandra*, and *Was bleibt* allows her to *depict* how the gendering of power controls and contains alternative perspectives, it does not allow her to overcome the structures of that power. Finally, Marguerite Duras' active manipulation of women's passive position in "Le boa" and *L'Amant* breaks the structures of disciplinary observation and allows her to construct a nondisciplinary woman observer. Duras also creates women, however, who are
unable to transform the passive position of waiting which war compels them to occupy. This one position, which appears in *Hiroshima mon amour* and *La Douleur*, is not susceptible to the transformation from passivity to activity with which Duras' figures otherwise construct themselves as observing women.
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Introduction

Women at the Window

[...] I found myself back at my old post, at a back window, watching the lively social life that goes on around the native quarters and in the sanitary lanes. I went around Harari, the African township which, if squalid, is gay and noisy and vital—and I went there as a white person whose very appearance freezes the spontaneity and the gaiety.

Doris Lessing, *Going Home*¹

So stand ich also, wie jeden Morgen, hinter der Gardine, die dazu angebracht worden war, daß ich mich hinter ihr verbergen konnte, und blickte, hoffentlich ungesehen, hinüber zum großen Parkplatz jenseits der Friedrichstraße.

Christa Wolf, *Was bleibt*²

Quand l'étang est glacé, il y a des enfants qui viennent patiner et qui m'empêchent de travailler. Je les laisse faire, ces enfants. Je les surveille.

Marguerite Duras, "Écrire"³

The trope of the writer as observer appears throughout the history of the novel. Henry James, for example, understood the writer in the house of fiction as "the watcher at the window"; this "watcher," as Ian Watt writes, was a figure of James' belief in "the necessity for the author's objectivity and detachment."⁴ Similarly, but from an entirely different perspective, Mikhail Bakhtin described this trope of observation as fundamental to novelistic narrative as such:

The novelist stands in need of some essential formal and generic mask that could serve to define the position from which he views life, as well as the position from which he makes that life public.

And it is precisely here, of course, that the masks of the clown and the fool (transformed in various ways) come to the aid of the novelist. [...] At last a form was found to portray the mode of existence of a man who is in

life, but not of it, life's perpetual spy and reflector; at last specific forms had been found to reflect private life and make it public.\(^5\)

The perspective of the "perpetual spy and reflector" who exists as a "metamorphosis of tsar and god" (DI, 161), penetrating public and private space in order to make it visible, produces, for Bakhtin, the liberating effect of laughter and parody, overcoming the rigid conventions of social life and literary forms. If the development of the authorial position is understood following such a model, then the "watcher at the window" is one who, through the use of these masks of power, is able to expose society's conventions to critique. As an observer, such a writer is a social critic who breaks down social boundaries through a subversive representation of those boundaries.

However, the model of authorship suggested by the figure of the observer has two sides; Peter Stallybrass and Allon White develop quite a different history of authorship by using the example of Ben Jonson, who continually "defines the true position of the playwright as that of the poet, and the poet as that of the classical, isolated judge standing in opposition to the vulgar throng."\(^6\) This position of "opposition" might be a position of observation, but it is observation for the purposes of pure negation, for the erasure of that which it observes: "Jonson was attempting to dissociate the professional writer from the clamour of the marketplace and to install his works in the studies of the gentry and the libraries of the universities" (SW, 76). This type of observation exists not to criticize conventionalized social hierarchies but to support them; it emerges "in opposition to the theatre and the fair" (SW, 77), not out of it as does the observation associated with the mask of Bakhtin's clown and fool. This writer is also a social critic, but one who would reinforce social boundaries rather than break them down.

\(^5\)M.M. Bakhtin, "Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel" (1937-1938), The Dialogical Imagination, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist, Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981, p. 161. Further references to The Dialogical Imagination will be included in the text with the abbreviation DI.

\(^6\)Peter Stallybrass and Allon White, The Politics and Poetics of Transgression, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986, p. 67. Further references will be included in the text with the abbreviation SW.
Because of the fool's mask, Bakhtin's "watcher" is part of the scene and apart at the same time; Jonson's "watcher" stands over the marketplace looking down judging "the vulgar throng." The former observes, but from within the scene; the latter is more likely to be a "watcher at the window" than one participating in the fair. This tension exists within the trope of the writer's observational position, between Bakhtin's authorial mask emerging from a distancing within societal spaces and Stallybrass and White's discussion of an authorship based on "the social and physical separation of the observer" (SW, 119). Thus, the position of the observer contains two moments, both of which derive from the history of the position itself: a moment of emancipation, which affirms and celebrates experience, breaking down social boundaries, and a moment of repression, which transforms experience into the epistemological truths of libraries and universities, reaffirming the distinction between private and public by contrasting the quiet of the aristocracy with the "clamor of the marketplace," radically separating the world of the "author" from the world of the "hack."7

In this brief discussion of the trope of the observer, I have managed to avoid using any pronouns to refer to the observing author.8 As my epigraphs show, however, I would have to use the compound pronoun "he or she" to refer to that observer: Doris Lessing, Christa Wolf, and Marguerite Duras, the three women who are the focus of this study, all figure women writers as observers, even as "watchers at the window." By doing so, however, they foreground a second tension in the trope of the observer: its gendering. The title of one section of Laura Mulvey's essay "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" neatly captures this gendering of observation: "Woman as Image, Man as Bearer of the Look."9 She continues: "In a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split

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7 "Hack" is Jonson's term for a writer who plays to the popular audience (SW, 67).
8 Except when citing Bakhtin and the summary of Jonson's position in Stallybrass and White.
between active/male and passive/female."¹⁰ Thus, women are not only not observers, but also objects of male observation: the play between the emancipatory and repressive moments of the gaze conceals a further moment of repression, in which the subject position of the observer is not available to women and women are made into objects for male visual possession.

Within such a gendered structure of observation, the occupation of the observer position by a woman is never unproblematic. However, neither is "the woman observer" a monolithic figure: although the figure of the "woman at the window" often appears in their texts, Lessing, Wolf, and Duras all approach observation in different ways and in different social contexts. In my epigraph from Lessing, her position at the window figures a desire intensified by her Jonsonian distance from the "African laughter" which she sees in the township of Harari.¹¹ She would be a Bakhtinian clown, but in racially segregated Southern Rhodesia, the observational position available to Lessing is always already contained and controlled by the political differentiations of colonial society, written not only on the black skin of the Africans but on her own white skin as well. Similarly, the observational position figured in Wolf's Was bleibt is also always already contained by the political structures of Wolf's society: the woman writer figures herself as an observer but becomes herself an object of observation, not the object of a sexualized gaze but of political surveillance, by the East German secret police. Here, the objects of her observation are themselves observers, and the social and political context puts the power of observation firmly on the side of the police observers rather than on the side of the writer. In contrast, if Duras' "surveillance" of children skating on the frozen pond next to her house is inscribed with the possibility of an assertion of control, she nevertheless firmly rejects the application of that control. Duras rehearses the disciplinary reactions of a mother to children, even or

especially to children who are not her own, without, so to speak, moving from rehearsal to performance, that is, to a censoring of the children which would protect them from the danger of the pond and allow her to continue working, that is, writing. Whereas Lessing and Wolf both remain contained within the structures of observation within which they write, Duras begins to resist the power of this "surveillance."

As my use of the word "surveillance" suggests, the model of observation underlying my discussion of these "observing women" derives from Michel Foucault's *Surveiller et punir*. According to Foucault, the modern prison began to emerge in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries as part of Enlightenment projects combining a search for knowledge and a desire to control. One of the central features of such projects was the production of visibility for the purposes of "examination," an observational process which had, and not only in its formalized educational and medical forms, three primary features:

1. *L'examen intervertit l'économie de la visibilité dans l'exercice du pouvoir.*
2. *L'examen fait aussi entrer l'individualité dans un champ documentaire.*
3. *L'examen, entouré de toutes ses techniques documentaires, fait de chaque individu un "cas."*

In premodern power structures, the "economy of visibility" emphasized the spectacle of the holder of power as an object of observation for those over whom he had power. Examination reverses this model: the holder of power, the examiner, remains invisible and unobserved; it is the examinee, bereft of power and situated within a "field of documentation," who is *made* visible and thereby *disciplined* through observation. The individual becomes a "case" with a "case history" and as such the subject of a narrative. The "ideal form" of this system of observation, this "mechanism of power," is a prison, Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon, a "pur système architectural et optique" consisting of a ring of separated cells whose center is an observation tower from which an observer can see

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12 Michel Foucault, *Surveiller et punir: Naissance de la prison*, Paris: Gallimard, 1975, pp. 189, 191, 193. Further references will be included in the text with the abbreviation SP.
into each of the cells without being seen by the occupants of the cells (SP, 207). Thus the observer in such a model need not even be there for the effects of observation and the power of the "observer" to be felt by the "observed" figure. The description of the individual becomes "un moyen de contrôle et une méthode de domination" used to control marginal figures through the possibility of description and narration: "[...] l'enfant, le malade, le fou, le condamné deviendront [...] l'objet de descriptions individuelles et de récits biographiques" (SP, 193). Finally, this shift in the "economy of visibility" is marked by a transformation in the dominant type of narrative: "[...] le passage de l'épique au romanesque [...] s'inscrit lui aussi dans la formation d'une société disciplinaire" (SP, 195). The historical coincidence of the development of disciplinary observation and modern novelistic narrative is thus not coincidental: novelistic narrative is, in fact, intimately related to this "panoptic" observational discipline.13

However, as my discussion of the Bakhtinian and the Jonsonian observer shows, the relationship between writing and observation is not simply a matter of historical development from the epic to the novelistic, from either repression to liberation or liberation to repression. Rather, moments of liberation and repression always exist simultaneously, as do "epic" and "novelistic" or "spectacular" and "disciplinary" moments. Neither does this simultaneity conceal a hidden narrative of historical progress or regress, in which one element is historically archaic and the other marks the truth of the present and the future. That is, the elements should not be read as being "nonsimultaneous" (ungleichzeitig) in Ernst Bloch's sense, in which, in Bloch's example, archaic elements of precapitalist society continue to exist and have an influence on capitalist society but are nonetheless anachronistic.14 The epic and the novelistic, the spectacular and the disciplinary, and

repression and liberation all exist simultaneously, and their history does not produce a narrative of progressive or regressive development. This simultaneity constitutes a palimpsest of possibilities available to a given writer at a given historical moment, a palimpsest, however, which is not completely under the control of the writer. Each element of the palimpsest brings with it its own history, so that a writer may don a mask thinking that it belongs to the Bakhtinian clown, only to discover that he or she has become a Jonsonian judge disciplining the "throng." This palimpsestic simultaneity also appears in Bakhtin's "Discourse in the Novel" (1934-1935): "[A]t any given moment, languages of various epochs and periods of socio-ideological life cohabit with one another" (DI, 291).\footnote{Bakhtin almost avoids producing a narrative of historical development from his reading of the "dialogization" of language, but not quite: "[A]t any given moment of its historical existence, language is heteroglot from top to bottom: it represents the co-existence of socio-ideological contradictions between the present and the past, between differing epochs of the past, between different socio-ideological groups in the present, between tendencies, schools, circles and so forth, all given a bodily form" (DI, 291). Unlike Bloch, Bakhtin does not clearly ascribe certain aspects of the present to the past, but an implicit development from the past to the present still slips into his discussion, especially when he is privileging Rabelais over later developments in the history of the novel. See the discussion of Rabelais in "Forms of Time and Chronotope in the Novel," as well as Rabelais and His World, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984.}

The dialogization of language is a mark of the simultaneous presence of multiple perspectives ("specific points of view on the world"—DI, 291), multiple observational positions, even in those positions, like that of Foucault's panoptic observer, which would seek to make themselves unitary, unique, and authoritative. Each observational position is internally dialogized and has external dialogical relationships with other observational positions. Further, the referential world is itself a palimpsest of possible references and allusions, a world already marked by the traces of the many observational perspectives from which it has been described. Thus, I do not understand the writers I am investigating in purely "disciplinary" terms; rather, observation appears in their work as a sorting out of palimpsestic references to both disciplinary and spectacular structures of power, as well as to both "premodern" and "modern" forms of narratives.
Of these three writers, Lessing is the one who most explicitly understands herself as an observer. In her essay collection *Prisons We Choose to Live Inside*, Lessing explicitly develops a theory of authorial observation intended to provide a model for individual emancipation in modern society. Neglecting both the gendering of observation and the tension between emancipation and repression in the history of observational positions, she bases this theory on an image of an ideal social scientist as a paradigm of unbiased observation. The observation of other species by biologists becomes a paradigm for human self-observation, but Lessing's own observation of animals in *Particularly Cats* reveals the tensions of this paradigm: the construction of a neutral position both depends upon an assertion of control over the observed object and produces a corresponding desire for that object. This play of control and desire reads the object in terms determined by the observer's self-construction as observer. Furthermore, Lessing's depictions of African landscape and of her complicated relationship to whites and blacks in Africa show how her construction of herself as an observer is contained and controlled by the political structures of colonial racism even at those moments when she would most actively resist it. In both her observation of animals and in her analyses of colonialism and its effects, Lessing is finally unable to overcome the aporias of her construction of an observational position for herself. These aporias of observation reappear in another form in Lessing's novel *The Fifth Child*, in which "neutral" positions of observation break down when scientific and parental observation are both unable to name, and thus unable to control, the difference represented by Ben, the "fifth child" of the novel's title. Finally, Lessing's model of observation assumes she can freely take up a "neutral" position of observation without addressing the history of that position, whether in general philosophical terms or in terms of the particular experiences which allowed her to assume that position. I have borrowed a phrase from
Lessing herself to identify that history, a "history of contradictory emotions"\footnote{Lessing, \textit{African Laughter}, p. 125.}, the very emotions which the construction of the neutral observer position seek to suppress.

In contrast to Lessing, Wolf is quite conscious of the structures of observational power in which she would construct herself as an observer. However, Wolf's awareness of the gendering of power allows her to \textit{depict} how those structures control and contain alternative perspectives, but not to overcome them. The figure of this depiction is a woman observing a woman observing. Thus, her reading, in "Ein Modell von der anderen Art," of a Neolithic statue of a woman she sees in a museum in Athens marks both her desire to envision a society in which women are not the objects of a sexualized, objectifying gaze and her awareness of the burden of the history of that gaze. The distance between herself and the world represented by the statue is too great to overcome. Confronting a similar distance in her autobiographical novel \textit{Kindheitsmuster}, Wolf constructs a narrator unable to overcome the distance between herself and her childhood, between her adult commitment to East German Socialism and her childhood commitment to National Socialism. By narrating her life in the second and the third person, the narrator is able to produce a set of points of contact between herself and the child she once was; the price of this strategy is, first, to make complete identification with the child impossible, and second, to assert her disciplinary control over the child at precisely the moment when she would free the child from such control. In \textit{Kindheitsmuster}, Wolf depicts her narrator's inability to free her adult self from the authoritarian structures of obedience which she is ashamed of in her childhood self; in \textit{Kassandra}, the figure of the Trojan prophet Kassandra allows Wolf to construct a narrative of such liberation. If both Wolf and her figure refer to the possibility of constructing an alternative history, a women's history which would both run alongside and displace the male "mainstream" of history, the narrative Wolf actually writes is
nonetheless not the narrative of that alternative. Rather, Kassandra's autobiographical monologue traces her own lengthy development from identification with a childhood image of Troy and Trojan power to a final resistance to the instrumentalization of women which becomes part of Troy's military strategy. Kassandra achieves the disidentification which remains beyond the reach of the narrator of Kindheitsmuster, but this disidentification remains unstable and must be repeated in the moment of narration itself. The narrative thus produced, rather than providing an alternative to the narrative of power and patriarchy which establishes Trojan political authority, remains subject to the structures which determine that authority. Wolf's story Was bleibt provides a less mythical version of the same story of identification and partial disidentification. The narrator of Was bleibt is a writer who understands writing as observation but finds herself the object rather than the subject of panoptic observation: the secret police have begun to observe her. Finding herself in the position of disciplined object of observation problematizes her relationship both to the society in which she lives and to the observational position she has constructed for herself as a writer. Wolf found herself strongly criticized for the publication of this story of secret police surveillance after the East German secret police had ceased to exist, as if the story made a false claim that Wolf had been a dissident. However, the story does not present a dissident but rather a writer who is working through the problem of her continuing identification with a political system that has apparently begun to criminalize her. The figure of the woman observing a woman observing does not allow Wolf to overcome the tensions involved in observation, but it does allow her to depict them clearly.

If Lessing's failure to account for the history and gendering of observation leaves her subject to the "contradictory emotions" which surround her construction of herself as an observer, Wolf's understanding of the historical position of women as objects of observation and of the implications of discipline for the subjects and objects of observation allows her to construct representations of the tensions of observation but not to overcome
those tensions. In contrast, Duras actively assumes the passive position of women as objects of observation and thereby transforms that position, becoming in the process the subject of a nondisciplinary gaze. Duras' female characters, in the absence of other possible models for women, construct themselves as the objects of a male gaze in order to be able to understand themselves as actors in a world which would otherwise only allow them to be objects. In "Le boa" (1954), an adult narrator recounts her experiences in a pension for girls in Saigon during the 1920s, recalling how her observations of the women in her life combined with her observation of a boa at the Saigon Zoo to lead her to construct herself according to her fantasies of a prostitution stripped of its economic basis. In the events narrated in the story, these fantasies remain unrealized, and the girl is unable to escape from the passive position which her mother and the directrice of the pension provide for her. However, the text does imply the girl's escape from this passive position in the adult narrator's very ability to narrate the story; her narrative manipulations of her childhood position generate the activity which is otherwise missing from the girl's life. If the transformation of passivity into activity only appears here in the act of narration itself, Duras' later, more explicitly autobiographical text L'Amant (1984) figures a slightly older adolescent's active experimentation with the positions available to her. She constructs herself as the ambiguous, androgynous object of an anonymous male gaze and, through her love affair with the young son of a Chinese millionaire, is able to escape from the limiting positions which colonial French society otherwise offer her. By manipulating the constraints placed upon her by those positions, Duras' girl produces a new position for herself in which she is the subject of her own gaze. Even as Duras' observers escape the limits of a gendered and disciplinary observation, their self-construction as observers marks a new limit on observation as such: the invisibility of death. Thus, in the screenplay Hiroshima mon amour (1960), the central trauma in the life of an anonymous French actress took place on the last day of World War Two, when she held the body of her lover,
a German soldier dying of a gunshot wound, and was unable to identify the moment when he died. This invisibility, the invisibility of the moment of the death, is doubled in Duras' texts by the invisibility of deaths which take place elsewhere; two different deaths resulting from World War Two figure this invisibility: the death of Duras' brother Paolo in Indochina and the potential death of her husband Robert in a German concentration camp during the last year of the war. Even though Robert ended up returning from his imprisonment by the Germans (he had been active in the Resistance), Duras' volume of war memoirs *La Douleur* (1985) shows how, during the time when she was waiting for his return, the continuous possibility of his death paralyzed her. In her descriptions of such "unseen deaths," Duras creates women who are unable to transform the passive position of waiting which war compels them to occupy. This one position is not susceptible to the transformation from passivity to activity with which Duras' figures otherwise construct themselves as observing women.
Chapter One  
A History of Contradictory Emotions  
Doris Lessing

1.1. Spivs

Literature is analysis after the event.  

_Doris Lessing, The Golden Notebook_\(^{17}\)

Many critics have celebrated Doris Lessing for bringing a complex awareness of women's experience to contemporary fiction. As Claire Sprague and Virginia Tiger put it, Lessing "has [...] spoken directly to a whole generation's experience, teaching it about private pain, public chauvinism, the divisiveness inherent in even the most radical causes."\(^{18}\) Elizabeth Wilson, meanwhile, dubbed Lessing and Simone de Beauvoir "Cassandras of women's experience, an experience that was everywhere silenced, concealed and denied."\(^{19}\) While Joanne Frye, like Wilson, remarks on some stereotypical representations of women in _The Golden Notebook_, she also emphasizes "the sheer wealth of experience drawn from women's lives" and, after filling four pages with a discussion of those experiences, concludes that "the list of distinctively female experiences is long and could go on."\(^{20}\) Lessing herself underscored the importance of a woman's perspective in her 1971 preface to _The Golden Notebook_, writing that she "assumed that that filter which is a woman's way of looking at life has the same validity as the filter which is a man's way" (GN, 11). Even in an essay outlining the many difficulties of Lessing's novel sequence _Children of Violence_, Nicole Ward Jouve grants that "so many women identify

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with her heroines" because those heroines' lives represent "specifically female kinds of experience." 21 Many of Lessing's novels offer what Jouve calls a "documentary" truth (MM, 130), a clear and precise portrayal of social worlds in which readers find representations which remind them of experiences of their own. Jouve points out further, however, that for Lessing this documentary truth is not an end in itself, but a means to a different end, to moral and epistemological "truths" which in fact supersede the experience that grounds them. If Lessing's Anna Wulf writes that "literature is analysis after the event" in order to privilege the event over the analysis, Lessing's work nevertheless ends up displacing event in favor of analysis, of the lessons one can learn from experience.

The tool which produces Lessing's vivid and detailed representations of experience is what Jouve calls a "continuous cool observer's detachment" (MM, 98). 22 That tool, however, serves not only to represent but also to control experience. A scene from Lessing's "documentary" In Pursuit of the English (1960) neatly figures this play of representation and control. 23 Newly arrived in London after growing up in Rhodesia, the first-person narrator, identified as "Doris" only on the last page of the book (IPE, 223) 24, talks with her friend Rose about "Bobby Brent," a con man:

[S]he said: "You talk like he's an animal in a zoo."
"If you went to a new country, you'd like to meet new kinds of people, too." She didn't reply. I persisted: "Well, wouldn't you?"
"What makes you think I'm going to any new countries?" she said, with resentment. We walked on a while in silence. Then she forgave me. She put her hands around my arm again, squeezed it, and said: "Well, never mind, it takes all sorts. I've been thinking. The reason I like you, well—apart from being friends now, it's because you say things that make me think." (IPE, 68)

21 Nicole Ward Jouve, "Of mud and other matter—The Children of Violence," in Notebooks/Memoirs/Archives, p. 106. Further references will be included in the text with the abbreviation MM.
22 If Jouve is describing Martha Quest here, Lessing's description of observation in Prisons We Choose to Live Inside shows that this phrase can be applied to Lessing's own self-understanding as a writer.
23 Doris Lessing, In Pursuit of the English: A Documentary (1960), London: Grafton, 1989. Further references will be included in the text with the abbreviation IPE.
24 Thus, in what follows, I will refer to the narrator of In Pursuit of the English as "Doris"; the name "Lessing" will refer to the author of this and the other books I am discussing.
Doris has already begun to treat the con man she calls "Mr. MacNamara-Ponsonby-Brent" (IPE, 68) as a worthy object of observation, a new species offered up for purposes of taxonomy: "It had by now occurred to me that he was what they referred to as a spiv" (IPE, 48). If this taxonomy of the "spiv" first involves fitting him into a category determined by a societal "they," the narrator continues by contrasting him to figures from her own experience:

But he was not in the least like any of the rogues and adventurers I had known in Africa. They had all had a certain frankness, almost a gaiety, in being rogues. Mr. MacNamara had nothing whatsoever in common with them. His strength was—and I could feel just how powerful that strength was, now I was recovering from my moment of being mad—his terrible, compelling anxiety that he should be able to force someone under his will. (IPE, 48)

In order to control the threat represented by the con man, Doris first uses a colloquial term to categorize him. The source of this term is not clearly identified—are "they" people in England or in Africa?—but the term definitely is not her own. In order to categorize the con man further, she contrasts "spiv" with other, similar terms which refer to people she has had to confront previously, "rogues and adventurers." Finally, this contrast allows her to articulate the terms of her experience with "Mr. MacNamara." What had been a battle between her will and his becomes, in her recounting of the experience, a battle between her "madness"—the moment when she had succumbed to his will—and her reassertion of an implicit "sanity." Within this narrative of her experience, Doris becomes her own "spiv," controlling herself as the "spiv" had just controlled her. From this position of self-control, she is confident that she will be able to control both the con man and her later reactions to him. Rose, however, immediately marks the position Doris is assuming: the objectifying perspective of one observing an "animal in a zoo." This perspective allows her to "cage" the con man, so to speak, and reinforce her own position of observational detachment both from him and from herself.
As Jouve puts it, "the narrator's interest is treacherous, is exploitative, is novelistic" (MM, 133). However, Jouve's citation of the passage ends with the remark about the zoo; Rose's further comments about the narrator reveal the other side of this novelistic observation, its purpose: to make her audience think. As Lessing puts it in her 1987 essay collection *Prisons We Choose to Live Inside*, the writer provides an "other" perspective, here that of a "friend from another culture [who] will enable us to look at our culture with dispassionate eyes."25 In *In Pursuit of the English*, the narrator figures herself as just such an observer, but the "dispassionate" observation which triggers Rose's thoughts is not as purely positive as Lessing would have it be in the essays: the stimulation of Rose depends on the objectification and control of the threat represented by the "spiv" and, further, by her own temporary "madness."

Throughout the essay sequence, Lessing figures the observer in these "dispassionate" terms, neglecting the tension between exploitation and emancipation inscribed in her own representation of the observer at work as well as in the history of observation. For Lessing, (self-)critical observation provides a means of containing the "primitive" behavior which emerges even within the most "civilized" societies or individuals. For example, the "dreadful public elation" caused by wars "comes from an older part of the human brain, of the human experience, than the decent, humane, rational part, which passes resolutions condemning war" (PWC, 10). In her novel *Kindheitsmuster* (1976), Christa Wolf makes a similar reference to the "prehuman" in a discussion of self-transformation: "Was heißt: sich verändern? Die unkontrollierten Reflexe des vor-menschlichen Stammhirns beherrschen lernen, ohne sie durch brutale Unterdrückung bösertig zu machen?"26 Thus, for Wolf, an assertion of control over "prehuman reflexes" for the purpose of self-transformation runs

25Doris Lessing, *Prisons We Choose to Live Inside*, New York: Harper & Row, 1987, p. 33. Further references will be included in the text with the abbreviation PWC.
the risk of triggering the violence of those reflexes. A similar need to control and transform
the threat represented by "reflexes" which produce a- or antisocial action permeates
Lessing's Prisons essays. The means of this control is observation, which Lessing figures
in three ways: (1) a division of the self either into an observing ("rational") and an observed
("primitive") part, or into an older and a younger self; (2) a separation from groups of
certain individuals as observers, such as writers or social scientists; (3) a construction of an
absolute outsider, such as someone living in the future, that "friend from another culture,"
even "a visitor from another planet" (PWC, 44). Each of these perspectives helps the narra-
tor of In Pursuit of the English understand her encounters with the con man and Rose: (1)
her characterization of herself as momentarily mad allows her to interpret her experience;
(2) she both assumes the position which the spiv had first occupied and constructs herself
as an observer who would produce a taxonomy of experience through detached
observation; (3) she uses the contrast between her experiences in Africa and her experience
with the con man to interpret both him and her reaction to him. The narrator internalizes
perspectives which are not her own in order to control her situation, but the primary
perspective she internalizes is precisely the one which had just threatened her, not that of
the detached observer but that of the manipulative spiv. If Lessing's own narrator-observer
follows the observational procedures she privileges in her essays, that observer does so
only by internalizing the kind of dangerous perspective which Lessing otherwise criticizes.

However, the difficulties of Lessing's model are not just a matter of execution. First,
she neglects the history of detached observation. Lessing's essays recall Foucault's "birth
of the prison" in more than just their title: her emancipatory model of observation
corresponds to the model of panoptic observation Foucault derives from Jeremy Bentham.
Foucault's model, like Lessing's, combines images of imprisonment and observation with
issues of writing, but with significantly different emphases. The disciplinary power of
observation, which Foucault emphasizes and which Rose in In Pursuit of the English notes
immediately in the narrator's observation of "Bobby Brent," is absent in Lessing's discussion. Her model of an observation which would free us from the "prisons we choose to live inside" neglects the historical relationship between observation and imprisonment, in which observation is not what frees but what imprisons in the first place. Further, the very terms Lessing uses to figure the observing subject and the observed object—"civilized" and "primitive"—were part and parcel of the colonialism of which she has, throughout her life, otherwise been so critical. This language, like the term "spiv," brings with it a history which Lessing fails to address in constructing her model of observation. Again, Lessing would assume control by taking over the position which she criticizes. Finally, as in Foucault, observation in Lessing has no gender. This is all the more interesting as her figuring of a radically external observer as a "visitor from another planet" recalls a figure already used by Virginia Woolf in *A Room of One's Own*: upon reading a daily London newspaper, "[t]he most transient visitor to this planet [...] could not fail to be aware, even from this scattered testimony, that England is under the rule of a patriarchy."27 Here, the first thing the extraterrestrial would notice upon getting its hands on a piece of writing is the gendering of human social structures. Lessing's extraterrestrial, if it happened to read her essays, might not even be aware that human life is so largely determined by the binary division of the sexes. Thus, in the *Prisons* essays, Lessing, a writer otherwise so concerned with issues of history, language, and gender displaces all three in favor of a timeless model of observation.

A certain sense of history does remain in the essays, despite Lessing's effacement of the history of observation. The basic figure in the opening essay, "When in the Future They Look Back on Us," is the term which Anna Wulf criticizes in *The Golden Notebook*:

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"after the event." The analogy is quite explicit: "the future" will read "us" as "we" read "the past":

And people to come will marvel at it [our contradictory behavior], as we marvel at the blindness and inflexibility of our ancestors.

I spend a good deal of time wondering how we will seem to the people who come after us. This is not an idle interest, but a deliberate attempt to strengthen the power of that "other eye," which we can use to judge ourselves. Anyone who reads history at all knows that the passionate and powerful convictions of one century usually seem absurd, extraordinary, to the next. There is no epoch in history that seems to us as it must have to the people who lived through it. (PWC, 6)

Thus, we construct ourselves as the ones who "see," in contrast to our ancestors, who were "blind"; then we construct, by historical extension, our descendants who will be able to "see," in contrast to their "blind" ancestors, that is, not only us but our ancestors as well.

If one iterates this model through a number of generations, history progresses from blindness towards enlightenment, and each generation appears to itself to have overcome the blindness of the previous one. What keeps this model from being a simple narrative of enlightened progress is the self-criticism implied in seeing oneself as "blind" in comparison with one's descendants; there might be no enlightenment whatsoever, only a progression from one blindness to another.

Lessing uses the figure of the "future" as a thought experiment which produces this "other eye"; a similar temporal distance appears whenever she uses phrases like "people of my age" or "looking back over my life" (PWC, 6, 42). Precisely such a division of the self which internalizes this "other eye" appears as a threat at one point in The Golden Notebook, when Anna Wulf describes her fear of "that Anna who will read what I write. Who is this other I whose judgement I fear [...]" (GN, 312-313). This "other eye/I" will not be able to understand what Anna writes precisely because of that temporal distance which Lessing values in Prisons; in the production of a critical perspective, the perspective of the experience being lived through is in danger of being lost. Lessing's own frequent later comments on her books reproduce this tension. On rereading Going Home (1956) for
a new edition in 1982, she provides such an "other eye/I" for her earlier self, criticizing remarks she had made about Communism in both 1956 and for an earlier reprint in 1967:

    I wonder how it was possible that I held such views. I tend to minimise both what I believed then, and for how long I believed it. [...] Looking back, I say to myself that ideally I would like to have been a communist for let's say two years, because of what I learned about the nature of power, power-lovers, fanatics, the dynamics of groups and how they form and split, about one's own capacity for self-delusion.  

As with the narrator of In Pursuit of the English, Lessing's "looking back" perspective allows her to control and discipline her earlier "madness," in this case, her "own capacity for self-delusion." If this perspective would "minimise" the strength and duration of the beliefs she now finds embarrassing, Lessing nevertheless does draw something positive from her rereading: she reconstructs from her experience a different, "ideal" experience which would still have allowed her to reach the proper conclusions. That is, she privileges the conclusions over the experience, retaining, however, enough of the experience to ground the conclusions. Although she does retain this trace of the experience as a basis for the conclusions, the ultimate risk of such a "long-term" perspective is to erase experience, to strip away the content of life and leave only the form, the various patterns into which experience can fit itself.

    Again, critics of Lessing have argued that experience is precisely what Lessing tries to rescue from its erasure in such patterns in general and in literature in particular: with respect to "after the event," Molly Hite writes that literature "invariably falsifies by refusing to acknowledge that 'after the event' is only one perspective."  


earlier self as "deluded" or "mad." Similarly, Linda S. Kauffman argues that *The Golden Notebook* represents the subversion of "analysis-after-the-event."30 Both Hite and Kauffman argue that this critique takes place through the form of *The Golden Notebook* as much as anything else; for Hite, the irreconcilability of the two possible endings of *The Golden Notebook* does not allow the perspective of "after-the-event" to have any authority. For these critics, the perspective Lessing privileges in *Prisons* and demonstrates in the postscript to *Going Home* has already been undermined by her own literature, through which she resists the totalizing authority of certain forms of literature. In the preface to *The Golden Notebook*, Lessing goes so far as to erase the book itself, in two ways. First, she describes the book as a "wordless statement," meant "to talk through the way it was shaped" (GN, 13). This emphasis on the form negates the words which make up the text's content. Then, at the end of the preface, Lessing again privileges a book's lesson over the experience of reading:

> The book is alive and potent and fructifying and able to promote thought and discussion only when its plan and shape and intention are not understood, because that moment of seeing the shape and plan and intention is also the moment when there isn't anything more to be got out of it. [...] Then perhaps it is time to throw the book aside, as having had its day, and start again on something new. (GN, 21)

Once the text's "wordless statement" is understood, the experience that went into writing the text, the experience of reading it, and all the text's words vanish into its "wordless statement," the epistemological truth the text contains: in this case, according to Lessing, "that we must not divide things off, must not compartmentalize" (GN, 10). This is the threat which Anna Wulf articulated in terms of an "other I"; the paradox of Lessing's work is thus her simultaneous assertion of a refusal to compartmentalize and her privileging, in the *Prisons* essays, of precisely such self-division.

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Thus, the model of observation Lessing presents in the Prisons essays has a number of tensions. First of all, its dependence on "analysis after the event" tends toward an erasure of experience. Further, in her construction of the model, Lessing neglects the history of observation, the history of the language she uses to construct the model, and the gendering of observation. Finally, her construction of an "other eye" ends up, paradoxically, erasing not only her own experience but her own representations and transformations of that experience, the books she has written. Lessing's assertion of her own very powerful will becomes a means of controlling aspects of her own experience which are threatening to her; she becomes her own "spiv," internalizing the threatening position which confronts her and transforming it through narration and renarration. Rather than being directly emancipatory, however, the observer constructed around such a gaze remains caught in the tensions between emancipation and exploitation which are both internal to Lessing's particular model and part of the history of observation as a whole.

These tensions appear in each of the works which I will analyze in the rest of this chapter, works which have not been extensively studied by Lessing's critics. By centering on these works, I will not be claiming that their apparent marginality is illusory; rather, it is the very marginality of these texts which makes them interesting. Here, a slightly different Lessing might appear than the Lessing one finds in studies of The Golden Notebook or Children of Violence. For example, Judith Kegan Gardiner suggests that, in Particularly Cats, Lessing "leaves unprocessed chunks of ideology lying exposed in her prose."31 It is this "unprocessed" character which makes such texts as Prisons, Particularly Cats, Going Home, and African Laughter interesting for my study: the tensions in Lessing's model of observation are "lying exposed" in them in ways that they are not in Lessing's novels. If I will finally turn my attention to one of Lessing's novels, The Fifth Child, which was

published in 1988, that novel has unfortunately remained marginal to Lessing criticism, although it is to me the most interesting work in her entire oeuvre. By analyzing the problematic boundaries between the natural and the human in Lessing's autobiographical texts, I will generate a set of tools for the analysis of observation in The Fifth Child. These relatively "unprocessed" texts, "unprocessed" either by Lessing or her critics (and, in the case of Particularly Cats, by both), will allow me to trace the figure of observation through a central aspect of the model which Lessing develops in Prisons: the basis of that model in her understanding of science. Biology, anthropology, geology, and medicine all serve at various times in these works as models of observation: of animals in Particularly Cats, of the African landscape and of Africans in Going Home and African Laughter, and finally of children in the novel The Fifth Child. In both science and in Lessing's writings, the interplay of observation and experience produces a desire for immediacy which appears as the desire to experience experience rather than observe it. In both cases, however, the position of observation which generates this desire was constructed precisely in order to control the threat which that immediacy represents. Thus, Lessing's representation of animals, the African landscape, and Africans reveals both how she came to construct herself as a detached observer and the desires which that self-construction produced. Because animals and landscape mark the very boundary between the "primitive" and the "civilized," the "wild" and the "domestic," which observation is meant to police, observation of both becomes the site of this play of control and desire. Further, Lessing's observation of Africans in Rhodesia and Zimbabwe reveals how the political geography of her biography delineates the observational position which she is able to occupy. If these autobiographical texts mark Lessing's own observational aporias, The Fifth Child depicts the effects of such aporias on a family whose parents self-consciously construct themselves as "observers." The doctors to whom they take their difficult fifth child, Ben, claim that he is "within the range of normality," but the family's members remain unable to reconcile
Ben's puzzling appearance and monstrous behavior with their dream of an ideal family. Ben overwhelms their ability to police the boundaries between the social and the asocial, the wild and the domestic, the primitive and the civilized. If Lessing's observer is a "spiv" who asserts control over such boundaries, Ben's parents become the victims of their own "terrible, compelling anxiety" when they are confronted with a child who does not conform to their desires, does not submit to their construction of him as a predictable object of their observation, does not, in the final analysis, allow them to "force him under their will."
1.2. Cats

[...] les brefs intervalles où notre espèce supporte d'interrompre son labeur de ruche, à saisir l'essence de ce qu'elle fut et continue d'être, en deça de la pensée et au delà de la société: dans la contemplation d'un minéral plus beau que toutes nos œuvres; dans le parfum, plus savant que nos livres, respiré au creux d'un lis; ou dans le clin de l'œil alourdi de patience, de sérénité et de pardon réciproque, qu'une entente involontaire permet parfois d'échanger avec un chat.

Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Tristes tropiques*

Even before privileging writers as observers, Lessing appeals to the sciences as a model of dispassionate observation. Specifically, the social sciences provide a guarantee of detachment which allows them to police the boundaries which she would control:

The sciences in question [...] are about how we function in groups and as individuals, not about how we like to think we behave and function, which is often very flattering. But about how we can be observed to be behaving when observed as dispassionately as when we observe the behaviour of other species. (PWC, 5)

However, the observation of the behavior of other species is rarely if ever "dispassionate"; it is always subject to the human context in which the observation takes place. When the objects of observation are people, and the observer should observe "as dispassionately as anthropologists are supposed to when they examine the habits of a primitive tribe" (PWC, 31), the possibility of such detachment vanishes altogether: as Marianna Torgovnick has shown, not only are anthropological observations permeated by the *psychology* of the individual anthropologist, but anthropology itself developed as part of the colonialist *politics* of late nineteenth-century Europe. In Torgovnick's terms, the former produces a

34See Marianna Torgovnick, *Gone Primitive: Savage Intellects, Modern Lives*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990. Further references will be included in the text with the abbreviation GP. Torgovnick discusses the anthropologist's desire in chapter 5, "The Many Obsessions of Michel Leiris," chapter 11, "Remembering with Lévi-Strauss," and chapter 12, "Physicality," on Bronislaw Malinowski and Margaret Mead. As for the political role of anthropology and other sciences, Torgovnick points out that in the late nineteenth century, "many of the sciences—zoology, botany, and ethnography—were conceived as useful because they 'could help provide better information about countries to be taken over, the dangers they concealed, the resources they offered, and any customs of their inhabitants that would be useful to know in
"rhetoric of desire" in which the "primitive" fulfills psychological functions for Western fantasies of wholeness and origin; the latter generates a "rhetoric of control" which expresses a will to domination also visible in Lessing's images of control of the primitive self through self-observation (GP, 245). If the "documentary truth" of particular cultures was of interest to this "colonialist" anthropology only insofar as it provided information for such control, even central figures of what one could call an "anticolonialist" anthropology are not necessarily interested in the particular characteristics of the cultures they study: when the rhetoric of control is apparently absent, the rhetoric of desire remains as a force erasing particularity. Thus, Torgovnick suggests, for Claude Lévi-Strauss, "the 'truth' about any particular group is often quite beside the point" (GP, 219). Lessing's assertion that "literature is a branch of anthropology" relates her model of writing to Lévi-Strauss's vocation (PWC, 75); in reverse, his description of the process of understanding recalls the iterative quality of Lessing's construction of historical perspective:

Tout effort pour comprendre détruit l'objet auquel nous nous étions attachés, au profit d'un effort qui l'abolit au profit d'un troisième et ainsi de suite jusqu'à ce que nous accédions à l'unique présence durable, qui est celle où s'évanouit la distinction entre le sens et l'absence de sens: la même d'où nous étions partis.35

The desire for a return to origin produces images of destruction, in which the iteration of analytical observation breaks down the very structure of differentiation and distancing upon which observation depends, destroying not only the object of understanding but understanding itself. Even the process of destruction disappears in the search for origin: "It all depends [...] on 'unhitching' from our own societies (and ultimately from all societies, including those we use to 'unhitch' from our own) to get to that essence embodied in the lily and the cat" (GP, 223). Lessing herself exchanges looks with cats in her book


35Lévi-Strauss, Tristes Tropiques, p. 493.
Particularly Cats, concluding on a note similar to Lévi-Strauss' in Tristes Tropiques:

"Knowing cats, a lifetime of cats, what is left is a sediment of sorrow quite different from that due to humans: compounded of pain for their helplessness, of guilt on behalf of us all." 36 Lévi-Strauss, the anthropologist, turns from the observation of people to the observation of cats, lilies, and minerals, in the process aestheticizing zoology, botany, and even geology. In contrast, Lessing uses models of social science to construct a poetics of observation, a "scientific" aesthetics whose moral positionings reveal her "rhetoric of control"; while her observation of cats sometimes appears to escape this rhetoric, it remains subject to an anthropomorphizing rhetoric of desire.

As his observation of cats shows, Lévi-Strauss' work is indeed permeated by the "nostalgie de l’origine" which Jacques Derrida identified. 37 The object of Lévi-Strauss' nostalgia is, whether animal, vegetable, or mineral, "nature." As Gernot Böhme suggests, the term "nature," in European philosophical tradition, marks the desire for "eine ursprünglich gegebene Ordnung." 38 The "nature" which becomes the site of human nostalgia for origins, however, the "nature" which surrounds contemporary humans, is not an example of such an "originally given order"; rather, it is itself "bereits ein soziales und historisches Produkt." 39 This nostalgia for an original order beyond human social and historical intervention is central to Lessing’s observation of cats. In order to construct herself as an observer, Lessing distances herself from the objects of her observation, not only her cats but her mother as well. This distancing allows her to control her relationship to those objects, but it also turns them into enigmas whose opaque qualities generate a

36 Doris Lessing, Particularly Cats and More Cats (1967), London: Michael Joseph, 1989, p. 145. This quotation comes from the two extra chapters ("More Cats") written for the 1989 reprint of the book. Further references will be included in the text with the abbreviation PC.
desire to penetrate the enigma, to understand them, and to return to a perceived original moment of immediate relationship to them. The boundaries which the observer creates in order to become an observer become the sites of a desire to eliminate those boundaries.

The observation of animals involves the location of borders between nature and civilization, wildness and domesticity, animals and humans. These borders are especially problematic in the first chapter of Particularly Cats, on Lessing's childhood cats in Africa, but even the main body of the text, eight chapters on "grey cat" and "black cat," the two cats she had when she published the book's first version in 1967, is obsessively concerned with the boundaries between "nature" and "domestication." In a 1966 interview in which Lessing says she had just written "a short book to please myself about my two cats," she also mentions having bought a cottage in Devon.40 Two chapters of Particularly Cats are devoted to a summer spent at that cottage. The city cats' first encounter with the country provides a series of opportunities for Lessing to speculate about "nature" and the cats' "natures," as when grey cat first encounters an overgrown country garden "full of birds and mice":

Grey cat crouched at the edge of this little wilderness, whiskers, ears, tail at work—listening and feeling. But she wasn't ready yet to accept her own nature. [...] She was, in short, disorientated; she was not anywhere near herself; there was no sense in her instincts. (PC, 83)

Lessing finds "sense" in a necessary connection between the cat's "nature" and the "little wilderness"; grey cat's "instincts" may be confused by this world entirely new to her experience, but those instincts are "her own nature," "herself." All she has to do to adjust to the new setting is "accept" that nature. As grey cat slowly adjusts to her surroundings, Lessing notices that it is observation which is the tool of that adjustment: for example, grey cat's careful observation of a group of ponies which were in the garden after the gate was left open. This leads Lessing to reflect on feline observation in general:

Cats will watch creatures, activities, actions unfamiliar to them, for hours. [...] But what are they seeing? [...] What, for instance, does grey cat see when she watches, for half an hour at a time, the way motes move in a column of sunlight? Or when she looks at the leaves moving in the tree outside the window? Or when she lifts her eyes to the moon over the chimney pots? (PC, 92)

If grey cat's encounter with the garden marks her problematic relationship to "her own nature," her patient observation of the ponies, motes, leaves, or the moon seems an unproblematic part of that nature and of the nature of cats in general. Whereas Lessing could interpret the "sense" of grey cat's disoriented reaction to the "little wilderness" with relative certainty, that certainty dissipates into speculation, as here, whenever she sees the cats' behavior as unproblematically "natural": their behavior is "readable" only when it is not entirely "natural" but rather is marked by their domestication, that is, by their relationship to humans. Thus the pure "nature" of the cats' perceptions remains enigmatic, while the adulterated reactions of a domesticated cat to a first encounter with a rather tame English "wilderness" are transparent to the human observer.

The discourse on "nature" in Particularly Cats develops primarily across this distinction between "wild(er)ness" and domestication, between an "originally given" nature and a "social and historical product." In the main body of the book, the lives of the cats in London, the emphasis is on the effects of domestication on the cats' "natures." While a cat can have a nature, the description of grey cat's reaction to the garden shows that cats can also be part of nature. Thus, domesticated cats can "go wild," as grey cat seems to be doing once she overcomes her disorientation:

She was out of the house all day; then day and all night—she was away two, three days at a time. It is at this point, on the farm in Africa, that we would have said: Grey cat is going wild. And we would have taken steps, fussd over her, locked her up, reminded her of her domestic nature. But probably, in highly populated England, going wild is not so easy. Even on Dartmoor there must always be the lights of a house gleaming somewhere not too far off. (PC, 99, italics mine)
Clearly, the relationship between the "domestic" and the "natural" is slippery, if one can speak of a cat's "domestic nature." However, in their study of animals in zoos, Bob Mullan and Garry Marvin point out that "domestic animals have been morphologically and psychologically shaped by man to suit his needs—they are very much cultural products."41 Thus, the house cat's "domestic nature" is not a complete paradox: as the dizzying variety of types of cats shows, the "natures" of domestic animals, and especially of pets, have been profoundly shaped by human intervention. Similarly, England's highly cultivated countryside is itself an example of "domestic nature"; the image of the "lights of a house" marks the thorough permeation of the countryside with human presence. In such a landscape, the boundaries between wildness and domesticity are to a large degree always already effaced, and it becomes unnecessary for Lessing to enforce grey cat's "domestic nature."

In contrast, the African landscape becomes the site of a struggle over such boundaries. Lessing's family must strongly assert English domesticity in order to keep "house" cats from "going wild." This need to assert a human relationship to the house cats was emphasized by the presence of various kinds of wild cats:

Wild cats mated with our cats, lured peaceful domestic pussies off to dangerous lives in the bush for which, we were convinced, they were not fitted. Wild cats brought into question the status of our comfortable beasts. (PC, 3)

The wildness of these cats reveals the instability of domesticity, which needs to be protected against those "mindless" natural forces whose control Lessing outlines in Prisons. The relationship of the domesticating presence of human beings to the ambiguous "nature" of cats reveals how such control functions, through the assertion of a visible presence and the enclosure of the cats; they are observed and imprisoned. An example of this instability follows; Lessing shoots a wild cat sitting in a tree near the family's farm house, then pauses while preparing to dispose of the corpse:

41 Bob Mullan and Garry Marvin, Zoo Culture, London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1987, p. 4. Further references will be included in the text with the abbreviation ZC.
But something bothered me about this cat. I bent to look at it. The shape of its head was wrong for a wild cat; and the fur, rough as it was, was too soft for wildcat fur. I had to admit it. This was no wild cat, it was one of ours. We recognized it, that ugly corpse, as Minnie, an enchanting pet from two years before who had disappeared—taken, we thought, by a hawk or an owl. (PC, 4)

Minnie's physical appearance marks an ambiguity in the term "wild": one sense of wild has to do with a way of living; the other sense has to do with the shape of the cat's body. Mullan and Marvin have analyzed the ambiguities of this term, claiming that it is "a cultural category rather than a zoological classification" (ZC, 2). In the case of Lessing's "wild cats," however, there is a biological difference involved: a cat can live like a wild cat and still not be a wild cat. The apparent oxymoron "domestic nature" marks an important distinction between cats which are "genetically" domestic and those which are "wild." Thus, there are not two categories of cat, "wild" and "domestic," but rather three: two types of "house" cats, whose lives either do or do not correspond to their "domestic nature," and the third type of cat, the truly "wild" cat, whose "nature" is not at all "domestic." The further example of a cat which, having gone wild, later returned to the family to be a house cat again, points to the double permeability of the boundary between wildness and domesticity; this boundary is flexible, however, only for cats with such a "domestic nature." 

Now, although "house" cats have a "domestic nature," that nature does not necessarily correspond with human assumptions as to what that "nature" is; in Devon, both black cat and grey cat have to be "persuaded [...] into the belief of what we take for granted, that a hearth and a cat go together" (PC, 86). The cats' responses prove that this association is

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42 For that cat's story, see Particularly Cats, 108-113.
43 Mullan and Marvin also point out that the existence of the category "wild" is inseparable from the category "domestic": "In a sense it is only because we have culture and have domesticated animals that we can have wild animals at all" (ZC, 4). Further, the distinction between a "house" cat and a "wild" cat implies more than just a distinction of "location," between house and wilderness, "it also implies character. Because the animal is not closely linked to a man or subject to his control, 'wild' is often taken to mean 'dangerous'" (ZC, 4). The assertion of human will involved in defending a cat's "domestic nature" is thus a means of challenging the threat which "wildness" represents.
not "natural" but learned; each cat has to overcome a perhaps more "natural" fear of fire in order to recognize the pleasures of the warm hearth. The association "hearth/cat" thus proves to be contingent upon the cat's domestication. Lessing describes grey cat's adaptation to the fire in detail:

Grey cat came closer, sat on the hearthrug, and watched the flames, ears back, tail twitching. Slowly, she, too, understood that fire behind bars was a benefit. She lay down and rolled in front of it, exposing her creamy belly to the warmth, as she would in sunlight on a London floor. She had come to terms with fire. (PC, 87, italics mine)

If a cat's "nature" appears double because of a play between an enigmatic nature and a legible domesticity, its "domestic nature" is a "second nature," the result of an active process of adaptation rather than an "expression" of instincts. Lessing figures this learning process by the use of a simile ("as she would in sunlight on a London floor"), which functions vertically or paradigmatically, in that a present but uncomprehended element is understood by comparison with an absent but known element, part of an implicit background of known information which can be used to interpret new information, which can then correct that background and be assimilated into it. Thus, the human association of cat and hearth is both changed and confirmed by the cats' responses to the hearth: while their initial reluctance to sit near fire undermines the "naturalness" of this association, their eventual recognition of the pleasures of "fire behind bars" reaffirms the stereotype, albeit with the caveat that cats must first learn that cats and hearths "go together." But if the simile is Lessing's, it is also grey cat's. The stretching is perhaps too "passive" a figuration to claim that it is more than merely Lessing's interpretation of the scene, but grey cat elsewhere actively manipulates her own implicit background in order to communicate, using the "eloquent language" of her "food habits" (PC, 31) to express her distaste for the food Lessing offers: "[...] she goes to black cat's saucer, turns her back on it, and scratches imaginary dirt over it, saying that as far as she is concerned, it is excrement" (PC, 72). In itself, like stretching in the sunlight, a cat's covering of its excrement has no
particular meaning. The "natural" gesture is not enigmatic, but simply meaningless, but in the absence of dirt and excrement, or before another source of heat and light, it becomes an abstract and significant symbol, translating between contexts and producing meaning by manipulating the paradigmatic background.

*Within* a given scene, a simile provides a meaningful paradigmatic connection between two different images; the repetition of images *between* two different scenes produces a horizontal or *syntagmatic* connection. Thus an image which appears in Lessing's catalogue of questions about what grey cat "sees" had already appeared in the opening chapter in Lessing's childhood observation of hawks flying over the farm in Africa:

> There was never only one bird. Two, three, four birds circled in a bunch. Why just there, you'd wonder? Of course! They were all working, at different levels, the same air spiral. A bit further off, another group. Careful looking—and the sky was full of black specks; or, if the sunlight caught them just so, shining specks, *like motes in a shaft of light from a window*. (PC, 3, italics mine)

When grey cat patiently watches "the way motes move in a column of sunlight," the observed animal remains enigmatic, and a litany of unanswered questions mark the enigma. Here, the one question in the passage is easily answered, and the answer generates the image which connects the two passages. Within this scene, the simile, the paradigmatic connection with an already familiar phenomenon, marks the production of knowledge, acting as a point of contact between the observed hawks and the motes which Lessing herself must have watched as a child. By finding a point of contact between the new image and an already known image, Lessing, like the cats when faced with the hearth or a herd of ponies, assimilates the new information into the background of what she already knew, which though not narrated is implied by the presence of the simile. The image of the motes also acts as a syntagmatic connection or *narrative* point of contact *between* this African
scene and the later image of grey cat's watching. Nevertheless, the image marks an important contrast: here, the motes appear as a figure, part of a process of knowledge production; in the observation of grey cat, the figure has been literalized and has become a model of the enigmatic. There are no similes in the later passage, only questions; Lessing makes no points of contact between the observed cat and other knowledge which she already has, and is thus unable to interpret grey cat's observation of the motes. The absence of figurative language thus marks an absence of meaning.

Although the syntagmatic connection does not produce a paradigm for interpretation of grey cat, the narrative repetition of the image does open up possibilities for textual interpretation. The repeated image represents the child and cat both as observers and as objects of the adult's observation, with the important distinction that the child's thoughts, unlike the cat's, are known. Describing the "cat country" where she lives in London, Lessing effaces this distinction, marking both children and cats as enigmatic to adult observers:

Cats thrive here. There are always cats on the walls, roofs, and in the gardens, living a complicated secret life, like the neighbourhood lives of children that go on according to unimagined private rules the grown-ups never guess at. (PC, 26)

In Particularly Cats, despite this continued insistence on what cannot be known, the adult's perspective on the objects of her observation gives the narrative a certain omniscience. Only once, in the Rufus chapters, does this near-omniscient perspective itself become an object of active observation, when Lessing describes herself following Rufus' journeys through the neighborhood: "I watched him through binoculars, till I lost him in the shrubs" (PC, 136). This unobserved, almost "extra-discursive," position controls the text's various discourses, despite the inability to penetrate many of the cats' enigmas, by determining what will and what will not be considered enigmatic. The displacement of the "motes"

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44 Thus, the paradigmatic connection deserves to be called a narrated point of contact; then the syntagmatic use of the paradigm stands out because it is a narrative point of contact which is also narrated, that is, explicitly referred to.
image from the figurative to the literal marks this control by transforming what was a tool of knowledge-production when used as an analogy into a "pure" image of the enigmatic, generating not knowledge but that litany of questions which marks a different kind of certainty, the certainty of what cannot be known. If Lessing often asserts that the objects of her observation are enigmatic, it does not make her an unreliable narrator: she retains control of the unknowable by defining it as essentially unknowable.45

However, insofar as this observer position works itself out in a text, it makes itself observable, and insofar as that observer theorizes how one observes, her tools become instructions for interpretation. If I have here begun to use structuralist rhetoric to describe the text's functioning, I am not merely "colonizing" the text with intentions foreign to it; Lessing herself develops an implicit theory of figuration in Particularly Cats. This theory provides a paradigm of paradigms, a model of how what Lessing calls "matching" functions. For Lessing, one cat, which died of pneumonia when she was eleven, represented "Cat":

And for years I matched cats in friends' houses, cats in shops, cats on farms, cats in the street, cats on walls, cats in memory, with that gentle blue-grey purring creature which for me was the cat, the Cat, never to be replaced. (PC, 13, my italics)

If the similes examined above are part of a rhetoric of control centered on a will to knowledge, this model of matching is part of a rhetoric of desire based on the absolute absence of Cat, from which its paradigmatic quality derives. "Cat" cannot be re-placed but only dis-placed onto representations, other cats, which inevitably prove insufficient. Nevertheless, the application of the paradigm does provide a temporary alleviation of the sense of loss Cat represents, one which, however, only reactivates the loss through the very process of re-placing it:

45 As she put it shortly after writing Particularly Cats: "I don't think we understand nearly as much as we think we understand about what goes on" (Howe, p. 435).
After a certain age—and for some of us that can be very young—there are no new people, beasts, dreams, faces, events: it has all happened before, they have appeared before, masked differently, wearing different clothes, another nationality, another colour; but the same, the same, and *everything is an echo and a repetition*; and there is no grief even that it is not a recurrence of something long out of memory that expresses itself in unbelievable anguish, days of tears, loneliness, knowledge of betrayal—and all for a small, thin, dying cat. (PC, 11, my italics)

Each moment of matching with the model thus repeats the original experience of grief which, for Lessing, the death of Cat represents, even as it does re-present the lost model. The paradigm inevitably brings with it the associations surrounding the original experience; these associations displace and overwhelm the specifics of the new context and reinforce the privileging of the *original* experience. Thus, when the paradigm functions as part of a rhetoric of desire, it blocks the production of immediate access to the new by re-placing new elements with paradigmatic figures which bring their own associations with them. The play of repetitions and representations surrounding Cat becomes, in its very insistence, a tool for the interpretation of Lessing's production of the enigmatic.

The recurrence of these moments of grief is only described, not narrated, but one explicit example of such "matching" does appear, in the context of grey cat's first heat:

She was six months old, fully grown, from *the point of view of nature*. She was so pretty then, so perfect; more beautiful even than that cat who, all those years ago, I swore could never have an equal. Well of course there hasn't been; for *that cat's nature* was all tact, delicacy, warmth and grace—so, as the fairy tales and the old wives say, she had to die young.

Our cat, the princess, was, still is, beautiful, but, there is no glossing it, she's a selfish beast. (PC, 34, my italics)

This example complicates the paradigm in several ways. First, because Lessing refers back to her earlier discussion of Cat, this one point of contact functions both paradigmatically, between the absent Cat and the present grey cat, and syntagmatically, between two distinct sections of the text. Further, while Lessing begins as if she would replace the paradigm with grey cat, at least in the question of beauty, she quite promptly reasserts Cat's privileged position by appealing to the special qualities of "that cat's nature." Finally, this
reassertion of Cat's paradigmatic position also depends on a cultural paradigm, fairy tales, which, unlike the private paradigm represented by Cat, can remain unnarrated, part of an assumed cultural background. However, such codes, once appealed to, bring with them a whole field of associations beyond those to which Lessing is explicitly referring ("the good die young" is one possible reading of Lessing's allusion). As Jack Zipes has argued, fairy tales perform quite specific cultural work; the folk tales from which Charles Perrault and the Brothers Grimm adapted their tales often celebrated "a young girl's coming of age," marking "the arrival of puberty and initiation into society," but they also acted as "warning tales," providing information about the specific dangers young peasant women had to face in medieval times.  

In producing the literary versions with which we are familiar today, Perrault and the Brothers Grimm actively transformed the tales, seeking "to 'colonize' the internal and external development of children in the mutual interests of a bourgeois-aristocratic elite" (11). This cultural paradigm is quite explicitly paradigmatic, providing models against which children can be measured and, more importantly, measure themselves. This moral control of children, of the readers of fairy tales, is doubled by the representation of control within the tales, which encode "socially accepted ways of viewing women, sexuality, and nature" (53, italics mine). Lessing's appeal to fairy tales thus serves a double purpose: explicitly justifying the reassertion of the controlling paradigm, it implicitly reinforces not only the description of grey cat's "puberty," not only the text's discourse on "nature," but also the rhetoric of control, now explicitly marked as a control of desire and a desire to control, and as part of the functioning of paradigms. Women, sexuality, and nature are objects of this control in fairy tales, and in Particularly Cats as well.

The application of the paradigm in this passage produces several other syntagmatic associations which confirm the importance of this traditional grouping of themes. First of

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all, when Cat died, Lessing was eleven, either in or about to enter puberty, which reinforces the shared position of the cats and Lessing as a child as objects of the adult Lessing's observations. Further, "fully grown" here has a specific connotation: grey cat's "nature" is implicitly defined in reproductive terms. This possible reduction of "nature" to reproductive capacity becomes quite explicit when Lessing has grey cat neutered; the taxi driver helping her bring the cat back from the clinic claims it is "not right [...] for us to steal their real natures from them [cats], to suit our convenience" (PC, 55). If, in one sense of the word, the entire process of domesticating animals steals their "nature" from them, this "convenience" marks only the last gesture of that process, an extreme of the bodily alteration which is a fundamental part of domestication. Before submitting grey cat to this extreme, Lessing consulted several veterinarians, asking what the best procedure is:

All three, with emphasis, insisted the best thing was to have the whole lot out. "The whole job lot," said one; exactly the same phrase was used to a woman friend of mine by a gynaecologist. "I'll get rid of the whole job lot for you," said he.

Very interesting. (PC, 53)

If the first example conflates a cat's "nature" with its reproductive capacity, the second connects female cats and women under a scientific gaze. The doctors' casual remarks expose a double colonization of the bodies of animals and women which repeats the colonization of children's bodies enacted by fairy tales (which itself only reinforces Lessing's observational collapsing of cats and herself as a child). This fairy tale collusion of themes and images remains largely unanalyzed in Lessing's text. Here it is worth recalling Gardiner's suggestion that Lessing here "leaves unprocessed chunks of ideology lying exposed in her prose" (GV, 119). If the text also contains "unprocessed chunks" of a critique of ideology, such as this "very interesting" which gestures toward the implications of the doctors' remarks without discursively developing them, the absence of that development is not accidental, not merely an aspect of what Gardiner calls the text's
"carelessness" (GV, 119). The insistence on the enigmatic qualities of these objects of observation makes such an explicit critique impossible.

If the problem of the enigmatic appears so consistently in a tracing of the functioning of the paradigm, that association is also not accidental. The moment of production of the paradigm in the text is also the moment of production of the enigmatic, of a "paradigmatic enigma," so to speak. This moment of double production exemplifies Lessing's construction of a totalizing narrative which closes over its own gaps even as it marks them. Further, the doubled moment is itself doubled, appearing both in the pages dedicated to the paradigmatic Cat and in the immediately preceding discussion of Lessing's mother's role on the family farm in Africa "as regulator, arbiter, balance between sense and the senseless proliferation of nature" (PC, 8), specifically, her disposal of unwanted kittens. The mother's temporary refusal to play this role finally forces Lessing and her father to kill numerous cats, several deformed by inbreeding, one weekend when Lessing's mother is away. In this context Lessing first introduces the paradigmatic Cat:

I was angry over the holocaust of cats, because of its preventable necessity; but I don't remember grieving. I was insulated against that because of my anguish over the death of a cat some years before, when I was eleven. I said then over the cold heavy body that was, inexplicably, the feather-light creature of yesterday: Never again. But I had sworn that before, and I knew it. When I was three, my parents said, I was out for a walk with the nurse, in Tehran, and in spite of her protests, had picked up a starving kitten from the street and come home with it. This was my kitten, they said I said, and I fought for it when the household refused to give it shelter. They washed it in permanganate because it was filthy; and thereafter it slept in my bed. I would not let it be taken away from me. But of course it must have been, for the family left Persia, and the cat stayed behind. Or perhaps it died. Perhaps—but how do I know? Anyway, somewhere back there, a very small girl had fought for and won a cat who kept her days and nights company; and then she lost it. (PC, 10-11, italics mine)

The loss of a cat provides a point of contact between two stories, a memory and a story told her by her parents. Again, after first calling the paradigm into question, Lessing reasserts the paradigm. She marks the parents' story as enigmatic (and incomplete) by examining its possible endings, then distances herself from the events by summarizing the story in the
third person, and, finally, in the following paragraph ("everything is an echo and a repetition"), generalizes the paradigm as a model of grief, even its origin. The text then continues with the detailed narrative of Cat's death, concluding with the definition of "matching." The complete story of Cat replaces the fragmented story told by her parents; the certainty of death replaces a generalized loss. The totalized narrative encompassing both stories completes itself by staging its own incompleteness, opening up an enigma but then closing the gap with an interpretation of the gap's essential uninterpretability. Thus, the paradigm displaces and re-places the enigma, fixing it within a larger context where its uninterpretability is under control.

Lessing thus twice privileges the paradigmatic story of Cat by questioning that privilege so as to be able to reaffirm it. These gestures are not, however, completely identical: when "matching" grey cat and Cat, Lessing privileges her childhood experience as a fairy tale, marking a certain distance from the events with that allusion. In contrast, as she substitutes her Cat for the cat in Persia, she devalues a "fairy tale" (the story her parents told her) and marks her distance from it with the summary sentence in the third person. This fairy tale relates the child's gesture of self-affirmation, claiming the kitten as hers against the parents' refusal. However, the parents' mediating position as tellers of the tale frames that affirmation ("they said I said"), diffusing its strength by making it the parents' story rather than the child's, a story whose endings remain necessarily ambiguous. The tale thus only appears affirmative; Lessing's distance from it marks its ambivalence. Two further points of contact between the two stories suggest further why Lessing claims the later story as paradigmatic and frames the earlier as enigmatic. The image of sleeping with the cat appears not only in the parents' tale but also in the tale of Cat: "I was sick that winter. [...] The cat, a bluish-grey Persian, arrived purring on my bed, and settled down to share my sickness, my food, my pillow, my sleep" (PC, 11). This story of the Persian Cat thus includes one of the central images of the tale of Persia; this slippage from Persia, Lessing's birthplace, to
the Persian cat in Africa is another point of contact between the two stories. Thus, although the parents' story contains an image of the child's self-affirmation, the later story provides an image of affirmation which not only is free of parental mediation but actively negates it, suppressing Lessing's birthplace in the suppression of the cat in Persia and thereby providing her with a paradigmatic narrative of her independence from her parents. Gardiner has argued that *The Golden Notebook* can be understood as a "self-originating child"; in *Particularly Cats*, Lessing stages herself as "self-originating" in this repeated gesture of claiming and affirming her paradigm.

This self-affirmation is not jubilant; the point of contact between these events and the "holocaust of cats" is grief. The work of grieving involves memory and control. In two of these cases, the emotion involved in death or loss is forgotten; only the memory of Cat includes the memory of anguish. On the one hand, this forgetting itself appears contingent, but on the other, it follows from the construction of the paradigm, which controls other experiences of grief either by marking them as enigmatic or as a mere repetition of the paradigm. As suggested above, the story of the "holocaust of cats" shares the narrative structure of the paradigm's construction, questioning the validity of the paradigm in order to reassert it. If this gesture is, in its other appearances, a narrative strategy used to control and order the narrated events, the "holocaust of cats" presents that control as both a narrative strategy and as the central theme of the narrated events. In *In Pursuit of the English*, the enigmatic object of the narrated gesture of control which grounds the narrator's authority is "Bobby Brent"; here, that object is Lessing's mother, doubly marked as enigmatic, by Lessing's litany of questions which try to "read" her actions and by her association with nature, analogous to that of the cats. "Nature her element," she controls its

encroachments on the family's domestic space with a certain violence, not only drowning kittens but also killing snakes, "diseased fowl" and white ants (PC, 7). Thus, if she is part of nature, she is also involved in its active domination. Lessing "naturalizes" this moment of control and self-control as her terms slip from being to having: "Farm work for the man; housework for the woman [...] It was her work, too, because a nature claims the labour that goes with it" (PC, 6-7, italics mine). As nature shifts from being something the mother is part of to being something she has, Lessing essentializes both the social construction of a gendered division of labor and the specific constructions her family improvised in adjusting those cultural stereotypes to the distinct conditions of colonial Africa. If her father says of nature that it "is all very well, if it is kept in its place" (PC, 7), Lessing's gesture of essentializing her mother's "domestic nature" puts her in her place. This framing of the story of the "holocaust of cats" outlines the family's structure, which the story calls into question and then reasserts: the mother acts as the active and violent dominator who makes the colonial enterprise possible on a day-to-day basis, reinforcing the unstable boundary between wildness and domesticity. By not fulfilling this role for the year before the "holocaust," she forces Lessing and her father to share her daily experience of violence, its horror amplified because its usual diffuseness has been compacted into a single event. When Lessing's mother returns from her weekend away, she says nothing to her husband and daughter, but only to the one surviving cat, her favorite, spared from the massacre:

 [...] she sat a long time stroking and talking to it. Then she came out to the verandah. There sat my father and there I sat, murderers, and feeling it. She sat down. He was rolling a cigarette. His hands were still shaking. He looked up at her and said: "That must never happen again."
And I suppose it never did. (PC, 10, italics mine)

The father's remark reasserts the family structure which the mother's refusal called into question: she will henceforth return to her role, which her husband and daughter themselves refuse, as the family's designated "murderer," the active authority over nature. That authority, however, is framed by the father's, which places her there; her self-
affirmation, her moment of resistance against her position in the family, is brought under control. Lessing's framing of the story repeats her father's gesture, displacing any grief over the "holocaust" onto the general anger at her mother which she felt at the time. The presentation of this anger marks an important temporal discrepancy which reveals the active construction of the mother as enigmatic:

At that time I was in combat with my mother, a fight to the death, a fight for survival, and perhaps that had something to do with it [the daughter's "cold hard anger"], I don't know. But I now wonder, appalled, what sort of breakdown in her courage had taken place. (PC, 7-8)

The teenager actively distances herself from her mother; the later narration of the events cannot overcome that distance which was essential to Lessing's production of herself. The enigmatic became enigmatic so that Lessing could assert her independence from her mother and her emotions, constructing herself as the "detached observer" she later privileges as the controller of nature and emotions. This construction takes place as an active separation from origins through the application of a rhetoric of control; the rhetoric of desire which then appears marks the loss of that origin as a desire to return to it.

Rather than being "about" cats, this book, as Gardiner suggests, is about "Lessing's difficult and contradictory attitudes to motherhood" (RSL, 103), attitudes displaced onto the cats. If the book's "essential contradiction" is that "maternity both defines a female's identity and separates one from one's true nature" (GV, 119), that contradiction is represented in two distinct ways. With the cats, it is a question of being and having. Thus, when black cat is "on heat," she is a "singleminded force of nature" (PC, 66); if impregnated, she remains in this state through the kittens' gestation, birth, and education until the last kitten has been given away. Then, she "rushes all over the house" until "a switch is turned somewhere—black cat has forgotten what is upsetting her. [...] She might never have had kittens" (PC, 107). When no longer a "force of nature," black cat can have her own nature: "she becomes what she really is, her real self when not tugged into fussy devotion by
motherhood." (PC, 120-121) Simone de Beauvoir's discussion of the biology of female mammals succinctly summarizes this "switching": "La femelle est la proie de l'espèce."48 Her body is the site of a "conflit entre ses intérêts propres et celui des forces génératrices qui l'habitent" (62); "de la puberté à la ménopause elle est le siège d'une histoire qui se déroule en elle et qui ne la concerne pas personnellement" (64-65, italics mine). This conflict within black cat appears between Lessing and her mother, each representing one pole of the opposition: the mother with her essentialized "domestic nature," the pubescent daughter separating herself in order to "coincide with herself" (69). If the mother-daughter combat externalizes black cat's internal contradiction, it represents not only Lessing's assertion of herself against her mother but also her own unnarrated internal confrontation with the "impersonal" biological processes Beauvoir describes. The teenager's conflict with her mother and the small girl's struggle with her parents mark transitional periods which produce a certain detachment which is not at all dispassionate; the memory of these conflicts, however, erases the passion while retaining the primary moment of self-assertion which becomes the "impersonal" detachment which Lessing has increasingly valued from the 1960s onward. Beyond cats and beyond motherhood, Particularly Cats is the story of the production of this detached narrative position and of the enigmatic but controllable objects observed by the anonymous figure who assumes this position.

By adding two chapters in 1989, Lessing further complicated this text's temporal structures; the time separating the added chapters and the original text is almost as long as that between the events in Africa and London in the original text. Despite this temporal distance, the narrative tone of the added chapters is not too different from the rest of the book, though Lessing does appear more concerned now with issues of human-feline communication than before. However, striking images of feline "language" are present in

the first version; new is the interpretive gesture with which the book now concludes, the summarizing statement of a lifetime of observing cats which I cited at the beginning of this section. In keeping with the implicit circularity of such a closure, each ending recalls a different part of the book's opening chapter. The 1967 text concludes with an image of black cat, following the contrast between her "real" and "maternal" selves: "I stroke her back; it arches slightly. She lets out a half purr, in polite acknowledgement to the alien, then gazes ahead into the hidden world behind her yellow eyes" (PC, 121). The enigma of black cat's "real self" stands in sharp contrast to the legibility of the "fussy devotion" of her motherhood. Lessing's combat with her mother thus appears as the attempt to maintain her own "hidden world" free of her mother's "alien" influence. But the image also marks the mother herself, whose refusal to play her role can be seen in terms of her own assertion of a "hidden world," a "real self" distinct from her "domestic nature." If this ending reemphasizes images of opacity, the new conclusion presents, as Lessing tend the aging and ill Rufus, a moment of legibility:

Once, when he was asleep I stroked him awake to take his medicine, and he came up out of sleep with the confiding, loving trill greeting cats use for the people they love, the cats they love. But when he saw it was me he became his normal polite and grateful self, and I realised that this was the only time I had heard him make this special sound—in a house where it was heard all day. This is how mother cats greet their kittens, kittens greet their mothers. Had he been dreaming of when he was a kitten? Or perhaps even of the human who had owned him as a kitten, or a young cat, but then had gone off and abandoned him. It shocked, and hurt, this ultimate sound, for he had not made it even when he was purring like a machine to show gratitude. During all the time he had known us, nearly four years, several times nursed back to health, or near-health, he had never really believed he could not lose this home and have to fend for himself, become a cat maddened by thirst and aching with cold. His confidence in someone, his love, had once been so badly betrayed that he could not allow himself ever to love again. (PC, 144-145)

There are many points of contact between the two endings: the stroking of a cat, the sound it makes, its "politeness." However, black cat's "half a purr" is "polite acknowledgement of the alien"; Rufus' politeness, his return to his normal behavior, replaces the "trill
greeting," marking its singularity, its unmechanical quality, in contrast to his grateful purring. Though Lessing can only speculate about the details of the story behind this trill, its general content is clear and perfectly repeats Lessing's loss of her paradigmatic Cat, with the roles of human and cat reversed: Rufus, it appears, lost the human he loved and swore "never again." Further, the trill is part of a basic moment of communication between mother and child; the lost love appears unequivocally as a displacement of a lost connection to the mother. If the first ending stresses the mutual distancing of mother and daughter, their desire to be mutually enigmatic and retain their "hidden world," the new ending reveals the opposite desire to overcome that distance in a moment of shared communication. In 1967, *Particularly Cats* was a book about the negation of origin; in 1989 it became, through a moment of "involuntary understanding" exchanged with a cat, a representation of the desire to return to that origin where "the distinction between sense and the absence of sense" is erased.

This problematic relationship to origins marks both Lessing's observation of cats and Lévi-Strauss' representation of his anthropological project. The three principle enigmatic objects of Lessing's observation in *Particularly Cats* are the mother or the maternal, the cats or the natural, and childhood. Each of these is a symbol of a lost origin: the mother as birthplace and symbol of what Gardiner calls "the silent suppressed childhood memory of maternal plenitude that cannot be fully expressed in the paternal realm of symbolic discourse" (RSL, 12); nature as a space "au delà de la société"; childhood as a lost world of extrasocial existence with different rules which distinguish it from the adult world. If the temporal discrepancy within *Particularly Cats* marks Lessing's shift from a rhetoric of control which seeks to put the enigmatic in its place to a rhetoric of desire which would uncover its meanings, it does not overcome the initial production of the enigmatic through the assertion of distance. The "analysis after the event" of the temporal discrepancies in *Particularly Cats* may produce a position of detached observation, but it also reveals the
production of that detachment as an active suppression of what is to be observed. Thus, even in a text "about" animals, "literature is a branch of anthropology," but the anthropology it is part of is structured by the desires it seeks to repress.
1.3. Myth Countries

Enfin, le modèle de Philadelphie.

Michel Foucault, *Surveiller et punir* 49

In the first postscript to *Going Home*, "Eleven Years Later," Lessing insists that, "in politics, [...] the realities tend to be rooted in geography" (GH, 306). This insistence on geography is consistent with Lessing’s own personal realities, which have been so strongly determined by her various locations: first, a colonial living in Rhodesia who desired nothing more than to go to England; then, a resident of England "prohibited" from returning to the country in which she lived until she was thirty.50 The depiction in *Particularly Cats* of the landscape of her upbringing and early adulthood already begins to outline the centrality of this geography in Lessing’s self-construction as a narrative authority. The more detailed representations in *Going Home* and *African Laughter* of the farm of her childhood both add to this picture and reveal how this narrative authority depends on the construction of the farm as a "myth-country" (AL, 35) beyond the control of that authority. Further, in both of these texts, Lessing’s representations of native black Africans, though not in themselves racist, mark her own inability to escape the conditions of the position of observation constructed by white colonial society. The color of her skin restricts her ability to construct her observer position only according to the dictates of her desire. Thus, both Lessing’s narrative authority and her observational position are constrained by the geographic "realities" of her experience. If this geography is finally unified in *African

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49Michel Foucault, *Surveiller et punir: Naissance de la prison*, Paris: Gallimard, 1975, p. 126. Further references will be included in the text with the abbreviation SP.

50Lessing discusses her prohibition in both *Going Home* and *African Laughter*. The first edition of *Going Home* concludes with a note about how she found out about her prohibition: "A few days ago I had a letter from a relative in Southern Rhodesia saying she had met and talked with Lord Malvern [then the Prime Minister of Southern Rhodesia] at a party. He said: 'We prohibited this woman for her own good; and in any case, what she doesn't realize is that she was made a prohibited immigrant years ago, and we only let her in this time by accident'" (GH, 297). Her representation of her prohibition is more personal in *African Laughter*: "I was already a Prohibited Immigrant in 1956 but did not know it." (Doris Lessing, *African Laughter: Four Visits to Zimbabwe*, New York: Harper Collins, 1992, p. 11. Further references will be included in the text with the abbreviation AL.)
Laughter, that unification nevertheless remains subject to the contradictory desires which surround Lessing's "myth-country." However, Lessing's discussion of "myth" in African Laughter goes further than her own personal "myth-country." As in Prisons, science provides a model for overcoming "myth": both geology and psychology appear to provide narratives which might overcome the tensions generated by the construction of "myth-countries." As Lessing uses them, however, these sciences are themselves cultural "myth-countries" which are subject to another set of tensions, the same tensions between emancipation and exploitation which appear in Lessing's model of observation.

The problematic relationship to origins which appears in Particularly Cats appears in Going Home and African Laughter as well. In Going Home, the Rhodesian farm on which Lessing spent her childhood is a near-perfect symbol of a lost origin: "[...] that first house crumbled long ago, returned to the soil, was swallowed by the bush [...]" (GH, 37). In one of the few analyses of this text, Jenny Taylor has suggested that this "archetypal collapse of the house on the veldt" is "not so much absent [from Going Home] as invented and reinvented [...] through the overlapping replacement of memory and desire."\(^{51}\) However, this process of reinvention and replacement marks not only a moment of desire but a moment of control, in which Lessing once again asserts her narrative authority. Just as she did not remember the cat in Persia, Lessing never saw her house "die"; rather, in the year following its abandonment, she was told about it:

> The rains were heavy that year, beating the house to its knees. And we heard that on the kopje there was no house, just a mound of greyish, rotting thatch, covered all over with red ant-galleries. And then in the next dry season a big fire swept up from the bush [...], and there was nothing left of the house. (GH, 55, italics mine)

As soon as human control is absent, the "senseless proliferation of nature" overwhelms the domestic; further, Lessing does not control the story of that decay. Her mental

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reconstruction of the house is thus a double reassertion of control, over nature's power and over her loss of a story which she needs to claim as her own:

For a long time I used to dream of the collapse and decay of that house, and of the fire sweeping over it; and then I set myself to dream the other way. It was urgently necessary to recover every detail of that house. For only my room was clear in my mind. [...] When I was working to regain that house from its collapse, I used to set myself to sleep, saying, 'Now you will dream of that room, or that tree, or that turn in the road.' Over months, I recovered the memory of it all. And so what was lost and buried in my mind, I recovered from my mind; so I suppose there is no need to go back and see what exists clearly, in every detail, for as long as I live. (GH, 55-56)

At first, Lessing's uncontrolled dreaming follows the story she was told, then her mental reconstruction of the house puts her in a position of narrative authority. By producing a mental "geography" to which she can return at will, Lessing replaces the exigencies of historical and political experiences with her own "urgent necessity." If her realities are "rooted in geography," that geography is both a mental and a physical landscape, a domain of memory as much as a particular place to which she could conceivably return. In fact, during the visit recounted in Going Home, she did not return to the farm; her insistence on their being "no need" to do so appears at least as "urgently necessary" as remembering the house had been.

The loss of control produces the overwhelming need to recover the image of the lost origin; this need to reproduce the immediacy which the house represents, however, predates Lessing's departure from Rhodesia. Living in the colonial city Salisbury, under the influence of a different "urgent necessity," had already broken her connection to the African landscape:

Before I left home seven years ago I used to walk endlessly at night along the streets, tormented because there was a barrier between me and the steady, solemn magnificence of those skies whose brilliance beat the thin little town into the soil. I saw them, but I was alien to them. This barrier is the urgent necessity of doing the next thing, of getting on with the business of living; whatever it is that drives us on. (GH, 37-38, italics mine)
This "urgent necessity" undermines immediacy, producing a desire to break through a "barrier" to return to a position of direct connection with nature. The text continues with the temporary disappearance of that barrier and the return of immediacy, of a sense of connection with the physical environment:

But on that first night there was no barrier, nothing; and I was effortlessly and at once in immediate intimacy with the soil and its creatures.

It was only so the first night; for at once habit took over and erected its barriers; and if I had had to fly back to England the next day, I would have been given what I had gone home for.

For to stand there with the soft dust of the track under my shoes, the crickets talking in my ear, the moon cold over the bush, meant I was able to return to that other house. (GH, 38)

Lessing's "going home" does not signify the return to the house in which she grew up; "home" means the African bush, whose feelings and sounds are those she associates with a childhood imprinted by this immediate relationship to nature. The rediscovery of this immediacy overcomes the barrier of "urgent necessity" not through another assertion of control, but through its relinquishment: "immediacy" is not the result of a careful penetration of that barrier, but rather the unconscious, "effortless" forgetting that the barrier even exists. This forgetting does not remain unanalyzed; the figures Lessing uses dissect the disappearance of the barrier, moving beyond the mere assertion of this "immediate intimacy" to a depiction of its conditions. The figure of the connection moves from her shoes to her ear to the bush itself, that is, from a technological product which, although it is metonymically associated with her body, is also an explicit barrier protecting the body from its environment, to an actual part of the body, marking her perception of her environment, and finally to the bush itself, to an "immediacy" beyond the barrier which the shoes or "habit" might have represented. It is this immediacy which is that "other house," the mental "Africa" to which Lessing, overcoming an exile which is at first neither political nor physical, but psychological, is thus so briefly able to return, even though she did not actually return to the farm on the trip described in Going Home.
Lessing had no further chance to "go home" until 1982, the same year in which she wrote the second postscript to Going Home. This trip is the first of the "four visits to Zimbabwe" of the subtitle of Lessing's recently published African Laughter. However, Lessing only returned to the site of her childhood house during her second trip to Zimbabwe in 1988; during the 1982 trip, the resistance she felt in 1956 recurs, first appearing in a conversation with her brother:

As he mentioned the farm, a silent No gripped me. In 1956, I could have gone to see the farm, the place where our house had been on the hill, but I was driving the car and could not force myself to turn the wheel off the main road north, on to the track that leads to the farm. Every writer has a myth-country. This does not have to be childhood. I attributed the ukase, the silent No to a fear of tampering with my myth, the bush I was brought up in, the old house built of earth and grass, the lands around the hill, the animals, the birds. Myth does not mean something untrue, but a concentration of truth. (AL, 35)

Conflicting desires surround this "myth-country," this "concentration of truth": to return or not to return. This passage reduces the moment of nonreturn to the image of not being able to turn the wheel. In 1988 Lessing actually does make a trip "home," but only by having a friend drive the car, by relinquishing her usual position of control. Finally, Lessing cannot use technology to return to that "other house"; rather, she must surrender herself to that technology as to a necessity beyond her control. Thus, the representation of the "myth-country" in Going Home and African Laughter shows how Lessing constructs that space as a source of control and of her own sense of authority; she cannot control the return to the site of the house in her usual way precisely because her modes of reasoning and thinking out her action are constructed around the very process of controlling the space of desire which the house represents. The desire to return to this origin is obstructed by the very desires which led her to construct this "myth-country" as her origin, as the (unoccupied) center from which she observes the world.

The "concentration of truth" of the "myth-country" involves the physical environment of Lessing's childhood—the bush, the house, the land, the animals, the birds—an
environment she often opposes to that of England. *Going Home* begins by setting up a contrast between the "cold, damp, remote" sky of England and the sky of Africa, where "the sun is a creature of the same stuff as oneself" (GH, 9); this physical connection to the "stuff" of the environment is lacking in England. The house is also part of this "stuff," "made direct of the stuff of soil and grass and tree" (GH, 38). This material connection to "stuff" does not, however, erase the distinction between nature and domesticity; if anything, the house becomes the site of a continual reassertion of the domestic against nature's "senseless proliferation." The thatched roof becomes "the home of a dozen kinds of a creature not human" (GH, 47), and even Lessing's own room, the only part of the house which remained "clear in [her] mind" before her dream reconstruction of the house, is infiltrated by frogs, rodents, and insects:

I am frightened of all these creatures or rather, of touching them by accident in the dark, or putting my foot on one; but if you live in a house which is full of them, then your area of safety contracts within it to the bed. I never went to bed without taking it completely apart to make sure nothing had got into the bed clothes; and once safely in, with the mosquito net tucked down, I knew that nothing could fall on me from the roof or crawl over me in the dark. (GH, 48)

The house itself blocks the immediate connection to the environment, and within the house the construction of domesticity, of an "area of safety," continually reasserts the presence of the boundary or barrier between the wild and the domestic. The immediacy of the bush is to be kept in the bush; the domestic space, whether it be the farm, the house, or Lessing's room, even her bed, is constructed as a defense against that immediacy. Transformed by time and memory, the strategic constructions of Lessing's childhood, produced in order to control the slippery boundaries of her landscape, develop into impermeable barriers and become sites of desires for the immediacy which is thus lost.

If Lessing would wall herself off from the threat represented by animals, the construction of the room's walls further emphasizes the ambiguities of domesticity. The beginning of this discussion is once more cast in terms of the contrast between Africa and London:
Walls are by nature and definition flat; and having lived for so long in London, when I hear the word wall I see a flat surface, patterned or coloured smooth.

But the wall that faced my bed was not flat. (GH, 51)

Similarly, the floor of her room was "not at all the flat and even surface of convention" (GH, 53). Yet in order for her to consider walls to be flat "by nature and definition," Lessing must forget what the word "wall" signified in her childhood: an uneven surface concealing interesting depths:

Sometimes, because of the age of the wall, a bit of mud had fallen out altogether and had had to be replaced, much to my regret, for the exposed poles showed themselves riddled with borer holes and other interesting matters. (GH, 51)

The repair and whitewashing of these gaps in the wall would nearly efface all traces of the wall's decay, yet, in the case of "a mouse-nest in the space between the two poles," those traces remained: new whitewashing did not take place, "so that there was a brown patch on my wall" (GH, 51). The varied surface of the wall thus becomes a palimpsest of the history of its production; each of the stages of this history involves the incomplete effacement of the process of that production, incomplete because this wall never reaches the state of complete smoothness which a wall in London has "by nature and definition." The production and maintenance of the conventional surface of domesticity requires the erasure of the process of production and maintenance itself; in the African environment, that erasure remains unsuccessful, and domesticity's ongoing struggle with the "senseless proliferation of nature" remains visible.

For someone who lives with them for years, these physical traces of the production process become part of the body of memory, as familiar and legible as a part of the body itself: "I knew the geography of that wall as I knew the lines on my palm" (GH, 51). The image of the house as a body reappears a few pages later in the description of the rains which "beat" the abandoned house "to its knees"; thus, the house is associated both with
the bush and with the body, all of which appear to be made of the "same stuff as each other." Sigmund Freud also uses an image of a part of the body to describe the functioning of memory:

Es ist mir oftmals gelungen, durch psychoanalytische Behandlung die fehlenden Stücke des Kindererlebnisses aufzudecken und so den Nachweis zu führen, daß der Eindruck, von dem ein Torso in der Erinnerung verblieben war, nach seiner Ergänzung wirklich der Voraussetzung von der Gedächtniserhaltung des Wichtigsten entsprach.52

The remaining fragment (Torso) of an incompletely remembered experience appears as a body with limbs missing; the reconstruction of the memory literally re-members that body, as Lessing's re-membering of her house moves out from the "torso" of her room to reconstruct the entire house and farm around it. This process of reconstructing the bodily memory of childhood experience involves the reading of traces which have been incompletely effaced by the processes of domestication (for example, whitewashing) which control and order the body and its environment. The brown patch left behind on the wall after the mouse-nest was filled in is not the best example of this, because the repairing of the wall remained incomplete; however, even the original whitewashing of the entire wall left behind a trace readable when the morning sun shone in the window:

The grain of the wall, like a skin, was illuminated by the clear light. There were areas of light, brisk graining where Tobias the painter had whisked his paint-brush from side to side; then a savage knot of whorls and smudged lines where he had twirled it around. What had he been thinking about when his paint-brush suddenly burst into such a fury of movements? There was another patch where he had put his hand flat on the whitewash. Probably there had been something in his bare foot, and he had steadied himself with his hand while he picked his sole up to look at it. Then he had taken out whatever was in his foot and lifted his brush and painted out the handmark. Or thought he had. For at a certain moment of the sunrise, when the sun was four inches over the mountains in the east, judging by the eye, that hand came glistening out of the whitewash like a Sign of some kind. (GH, 52)

The African sun is "the same stuff as ourselves"; its presence allows Lessing to read the traces of the body left behind in the wall, more specifically, the traces of the producing body. These traces are analogous to those on the body of the reader (the palm of the hand, the grain "like a skin"); this analogy marks the persistence of the effaced elements of memories as being on the body, the body of the house but also Lessing's own bodily memory as well. The traces which this process leaves behind appear as "Signs," stimulating the desire to penetrate the (not quite) even surfaces the effacement produces, and stimulating, in Lessing's case, the speculative production of narratives from the reading of a single sign. This desire, driven by bodily memory, produces a narrative position which seeks to penetrate a surface in order to read that which the surface conceals, a position which would reproduce the lost sense of immediacy which that bodily memory represents. As always, however, the presence of such desire is marked by the desire to control, by the attempt to produce "the flat and even surface of convention."

The entire process of the production of this desire to read beneath the surface stands under the sign of the control producing that surface, a control involving not only the narrative gestures with which Lessing produces her authority, but also, and perhaps more importantly, the control represented by the entire process of colonialism itself. It is, after all, a black worker applying the whitewash which reinforces the English domestication of the African "stuff." The domesticating force of colonialism would whitewash the violence of its own production; this violence, however, leaves traces behind, the "savage knot of whorls and smudged lines," which can be read by those attentive to its signs. Again, such traces become the source of a desire, a desire to read the fragments left behind by the process of production in order to return to a prior origin. The image of the African is thus another of the many images of such origin which permeate Lessing's work: mother, childhood, nature, Africa itself. In each case, these images are produced as objects of desire by the process of control which initially domesticates them, renders them
nonthreatening. Thus, throughout *Going Home* and *African Laughter*, the native Africans appear as a symbol of possibility, just as the African landscape does:

[...] in thinking of the future rather than the bitter present, I believe I am one with the Africans themselves, who show their superiority to colour bars by their joyfulness, their good humour and their delight in living. [...] I long for the moment when the Africans can free themselves and can express themselves in new forms, new ways of living; they are an original and vital people simply because they have been forced to take the jump from tribalism to industrial living in one generation. (GH, 18)

As with the African sun, which becomes an object of desire at the point when Lessing feels a barrier between it and herself, the Africans with whom she identifies in thinking about the future, this "original and vital people," provide a space for the articulation of Lessing's desire for new possibilities, for something that will break away from the old patterns of Europe. They only provide such a possibility, however, insofar as their own culture has already been destroyed, or at least threatened with destruction, by European models; for Lessing it appears that if the Africans had not been forced out of "tribalism" and into modern modes of industrial society, they would not be so interesting, such a symbol of possibility. The new which she desires erases not only the old patterns of Europe, but the old patterns of Africa as well.

As the title suggests, the Africans' "good humour and delight in living" is a central theme of *African Laughter*; for Lessing, Africans continue to represent an alternative to European models. If *Going Home* begins by contrasting the African sun with the English sun, *African Laughter* begins by contrasting the Africans with the first appearance of the English "Pioneer Column" led by Cecil Rhodes: "[I]t is on record [that] they [the natives] laughed at the sight of the white men sweating in their thick clothes" (AL, 3). The radical cultural distance of this image was a permanent feature of Lessing's childhood, reappearing throughout *African Laughter* as the distance of white Rhodesians, from the laughter, the community, of the black Africans. In an image which she earlier used in the story "The
"Pig," Lessing recalls the aftermath of the arguments which would take place on "pay night" between farmers and their workers:

The man [the worker] would shake his head, take the money and walk back to the little crowd which received him with sighs, sympathy, shakes of the head and then marvellously they might laugh, warm, irrepressible, infectious. Hearing that laughter the farmer might sit staring at the farm workers, his face a history of contradictory emotions. My father, for instance, who, contemplating 'the system,' might conclude with his characteristic testy exasperation at the ways of the universe, 'Bloody farce, that's all it is. I mean, it's a farce. What else can you call it?" (AL, 125)

The entire problematic of control and desire, the "contradictory emotions" which dominate Europe's relationship to its others, appears here as marks on the face of the father, the farmer who controls the lives of the Africans. The laughter which had mocked the arriving colonists, with their clothes which were inappropriate in the African landscape, returns to mock the white Rhodesians at precisely the moment when their domination of the colonial social structure, their authority, is being reaffirmed. The Africans who laugh appear as Bakhtinian clowns opening up the possibility of other narratives, other stories than those which the holders of power tell themselves. The social barriers of her colonialism, written on the white surface of her body, distance Lessing from this carnival laughter, placing her into that other position which authors have traditionally assumed, that of the "watcher at the window." Unlike Ben Jonson, however, Lessing does not take up this position in order to reconfirm social barriers; rather she is forced into it by the social barriers she would resist:

I found myself back at my old post, at a back window, watching the lively social life that goes on around the native quarters and in the sanitary lanes. I went around Harari, the African township which, if squalid, is gay and noisy and vital and I went there as a white person whose very appearance freezes the spontaneity and the gaiety. (GH, 159)

This watching is not an attempt to control and organize the disorder of the observed; observation here marks not control but desire, even as the effects of the social control of the whites would make themselves felt if Lessing were to try to join the "gay and noisy and vital" carnival. Unlike the Bakhtinian clown, who can penetrate the marketplace crowd and
participate even while observing, Lessing cannot, in this social context, become one with this crowd, despite her desire to do so.53 Watching the black workers on a coffee farm in Zimbabwe, Lessing finds herself again listening to "the low soft sound of African talk, African laughter" (AL, 134). Hearing several workers singing, she asks "the Coffee Farmer" to translate for her:

"They are singing, Here we are, as usual, working away, while white people stand watching us. But never mind, quite soon it will be Saturday and we'll have a party and get drunk." (AL, 134)

The song marks the blacks' role as objects of the whites' observation in terms of both control and desire, the whites' control of African labor and their desire to share in that "African laughter." That laughter represents another version of the lost immediacy which Lessing recovered ever so briefly in the bush outside of Salisbury, this time however not a connection with nature but a sense of community which she never felt with the white Rhodesians among whom she grew up. Lessing's distance from that laughter does temporarily disappear during her 1989 trip to Zimbabwe (the third of African Laughter's four) when she participates in a seminar for rural women:

During one workshop a terrible story was told of cruelty, of official stupidity. The whole room was laughing, forty or so people. I said to the man next to me, "Why are you laughing? That's a terrible story." "That is why we are laughing," he said. (AL, 364)

This laughter plays its carnivalesque role to perfection, transforming the "terrible story of official stupidity" into an occasion for laughter over official ridiculousness, in the process displacing official authority. Even at this moment when Lessing shares in this laughter, however, she re-marks her distance by separating herself from the group and asking why

53Lessing continues: "[...] basically it has nothing to do with colour. If I were in a white country where the people had not yet been exhausted and confined by industrialism I would still be looking out of the window and envying them" (GH, 160). While this may be true, her own texts reveals that 'it' does have something to do with color, for in In Pursuit of the English she is able to immerse herself in working-class London without much notice being taken of her class difference, an immersion which allows her, at least temporarily, to participate in the carnival, rather than remain only "at the window."
they are laughing. Once she is no longer at the "Training Centre" where this workshop took place, she finds herself back in her usual position, the "watcher at the window" again:

A team of black men are working in Ayrton R.'s swimming bath, which has developed a crack. I am listening to the talk and laughter as I have done half my life, from outside, not part of it. But in the Training Centre I was part of it, and never thought about the colour of anyone's skin. (AL, 373)

Yet, as her question shows, Lessing remained an observer even inside the carnival, taking up the position she constructed for herself, which the society in which she grew up constructed for her. The primary "surface of convention" which finally determines this position is and always remains the surface of the body itself, the "whiteness" of Lessing's skin.

Lessing's position of observation thus bears a double relation to her various "myth-countries": on the one hand, the "concentration of truth" around the farm and the farmhouse necessitates the construction of observational distance as a means of controlling the emotions which the farm represents; on the other, her myth of carnivalesque African community reveals how the social structures of Rhodesian society forced her into that position of observation by creating the blacks as objects of desire. Lessing's "mental Africa" is thus constructed as a means of containing the various worlds from which she is exiled, whether psychologically, politically, or socially, or even through her own choice, because of her desire to live in England. All the elements of this "mental geography" come together in a passage of African Laughter in which she reflects on the significance of her "Prohibition":

I did not want to live in Southern Rhodesia, for if its climate was perfection, probably the finest in the world, and its landscape magnificent, it was provincial and tedious. I wanted to live in London. What this Prohibition amounted to was that I would be prevented from visiting relatives and friends. They, however, might visit London. These rational considerations did not reach some mysterious region of myself that was apparently an inexhaustible well of tears, for night after night I wept in my sleep and woke knowing I was unjustly excluded from my own best self. I dreamed the same dream, night after night. I was in the bush, or in Salisbury, but I was there illegally, without papers. "My" people, that is, the whites, with whom after all I had grown up, were coming to escort me out of the country, while to "my" people, the blacks, amiable multitudes, I was invisible. This went on for months. (AL, 12)
Rhodesia represents nature, London culture: exile means first and foremost the loss of
nature. But Lessing's psyche is itself split by her prohibition: although in Going Home she
claims an ability to control her dreams, all her "rational considerations" here cannot control
the emotions of that loss of nature, of the bush which represents that "other house," and of
what she here names "her own best self." The terms of her exile slip from political and
social to psychological considerations, and then, in the dream, back again. The dream
repeats the tension between nature and culture within its representation of the Rhodesian
landscape, first between the world of the bush and the world in which one needs "papers,"
then between the two worlds of Lessing's "people," the people she grew up with who have
now exiled her, and the "amiable multitudes" of the blacks, whose community she desires
to join. This one barrier, the color bar with all its implications, does not and cannot become
an object of Lessing's control; even as the dreamer breaks the laws of the country, the
gesture remains ineffectual as long as the social barriers between the two "peoples" still
exist. In this dream, Lessing cannot reconstruct a narrative in which she controls the play
of desire around the lost origin; the geography of her psyche becomes the site where
Lessing enacts and re-enacts the loss of one of her landscapes, of the world of possibility
which that landscape and its original peoples represents.

This dream, recounted early in African Laughter, marks the "separation of landscapes"
which has been Lessing's "fate" (AL, 305) as irreconcilable, but it also sets up the narrative
possibility of a moment when these landscapes may be reconciled. This reconciliation of
landscapes takes place when Lessing finally returns to the site of her childhood farm. The
narration of this return is extended over many pages, as if the form of the narration were
repeating the delaying tactics the return itself was subject to. Lessing begins with some
general remarks about "myth-countries":

And now it was time to stop being childish. I had to go back to the old
farm. To make sure that the driving wheel would finally be turned on to the
right road, I was not going to be behind it. This business of writers' myth-
countries is far from simple. I know writers who very early build tall fences around theirs and afterwards make sure they never go near them. And not only writers: all the people I know from former dominions, colonies, or any part of the earth they grew up on before making that essential flight in an away from the periphery to the centre; when the time comes for them to make the first trip home it means stripping off new skin and offering exposed and smarting flesh to the past. For that matter every child who has left home to become an adult knows the diminishing of the first trip home. (AL, 301)

Each of the three basic positions of observation which Lessing uses in Prisons as metaphors for observation in general appears in her reflections on returning to the myth-country. At first, she marks her behavior in not returning as "childish," separating her reasoning about the experience from her emotions about it as a gesture of overcoming those emotions. At the end of the paragraph, the image of the child returns in her broadest generalization that any child who has left home has constructed a "myth-country" for itself, which must be confronted at the moment of return. Secondly, as she did in the first discussion of "myth-countries," she associates her reluctance to return with her profession; the writer as observer requires an unobserved and perhaps unobservable space as center from which he or she conducts the rituals of writerly observation. Thus, as in Foucault, the moment of absolute observation depends on an element of absolute concealment. Finally, she generalizes to include "not only writers" but all colonials and then even anyone who has lived in two or more cultures, those who, by virtue of their exile, take up the position of "kindly friend from another culture," creating those moments of cultural difference which Lessing privileges because they produce the possibility of critique. Thus, this paragraph passes through not only the various stations of Lessing's construction of observation but also the different stations of Lessing's life, although not necessarily in chronological order; further, each successive generalization distances her experience even as the paragraph concludes with the image of the child with which it began. The self-criticism of her own "childishness" finally appears as an ineluctable result of her own construction of herself as writer and exile and "child who has left home to become adult";
the difficulty of returning to the "myth-country" is no longer simply a result of her failure to
turn the wheel but is universal, the result both of unconscious psychic divisions and of the
conscious, strategic self-divisions which are necessary for the production of oneself as a
writer, as a figure at the cultural center rather than its periphery, and as an adult.

Even as Lessing speaks of the general exile all humans inevitably face, the exile from
childhood, she nevertheless reasserts the radical particularity of her own childhood,
representing that distinction in terms of contrasting narrative modes, one associated with an
implicitly European normalcy, the other with her own "exotic" African upbringing:

A child's world is full of enormities, every neighbour or uncle or auntie
or the shopkeeper on the corner is easily transferable to the world of fairy
tales or of comics, but once grown up, she or he goes home to find they are
just people after all. And that is the point, finding oneself so diminished
because those powerful arbiters are. But [...] in the District, Lomagundi,
they were all outsize and fit for tales and epics, because the white farmers
lived at distances from each other, and everything they did was visible, and
everything they said, too, because those were the days of the district
telephone lines when there might be up to twenty farms on one line. [...] It
was as if they all lived on stage, every characteristic or event enornified by
storytelling: the word gossip is surely suitable only for small streets and
crammed populations? And the Africans assisted this by their custom of
giving the whites names, like those in epics: Angry Face, The Woman With
(AL, 302)

The narrative mode of "a child's world" is that of fairy tales or of their contemporary
equivalent, comic books; the "transfer" which takes place between the figures of those
narratives and the adults with whom the child lives inevitably leads, in the "small streets
and crammed populations" of an exhausted Europe, to the "diminishing" of which Lessing
speaks: in the industrial world of twentieth-century Europe no more space exists in which
individuals can become epic figures. This generalized "child's world" only exists in
Europe, however; in colonial Africa, distance and space lend the figures an epic aura, an
"enormity." Three factors produce this world of "tales and epics": the physical distance
between the farms, the technological reduction of that distance by the telephone line, and
the insertion of those figures into the narratives the Africans tell each other. These factors

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combine to position the colonialists as figures in a pre-modern narrative, the "epic" narrative of which Foucault speaks, in which the central figures are "on stage" like kings or their narrative representatives, the courtly hero. In Africa, Europeans otherwise invisible except in narratives of bureaucratic discipline insert themselves into another type of narrative, escaping "diminishment" by the narrowness of the industrialized world. The colonialists desired to escape the "prisons" of such cultural discipline by escaping into a world of natural freedom, even as they undermined their own escape by using the technology of that discipline to domesticate and control the world of their desires. Thus, the very technology which, in combination with the distances of the African landscape, produces them as epic figures also begins to destroy that distance, to reduce that world as well to one of "small streets and cramped populations," a world of gossip whose narrative mode is not the epic, but its reduction, the fairy tale.

Lessing's return home appears in this context as a reduction of distance, its collapse in the face of the colonization of Africa by European technological modes: "it was distance, what had happened to distance, which was the real theme of my return to the farm" (AL, 305). In Lessing's childhood, trips from the town of Banket, "the Station," to the farm always became "interminable journeys in child-time" as Lessing's father's old car struggled along the primitive roads of Southern Rhodesia in the 1920s and 1930s. In contrast, in 1988, the journey to the farm takes place on "good smooth urban roads" which remain "ininitely far from the bush and the past" (AL, 306); technology reduces the distance to the farm by reducing the time it takes to get there. One arrives "long before memory and dream landscapes say is possible" (AL, 307). Again, even in Lessing's childhood, the technology which would eventually lead to this reduction was already in place in a "primitive" form; by the time of her return to the farm, the European domestication of that landscape had been completed. Here, the role of the automobile, and thus of technology, is intimately connected to the production of Lessing's "dream landscape," of her "myth-country": only
by *not* driving the car is she able to "go home," only by renouncing the control which is a fundamental element of the technology which, she then discovers, has dramatically altered her human relationship to that landscape.

When Lessing finally does return to the farm, she still makes one last attempt to control her experience of her childhood landscape. She would choose the time of her return so that the bush would be "in its lush and luxuriant aspect, the rainy season landscape" (AL, 304); the problem being that, in 1988, Zimbabwe was suffering from a drought:

> I did not want to see the old farm thinned by dryness and dimmed by smoke from bush fires: a harsh and denuded thing is the bush before the rains have come, like a literal depiction of a state of mind I was afraid of though I had dreamed it often enough. Isolation. Being excluded. Exile from the possibilities of the world outside the farm. (AL, 304)

Even here, however, Lessing cannot control the terms of her return; the drought continues, and her actual return to the farm takes place in just this "harsh and denuded" landscape.

Lessing once again generalizes the terms of her failure of control:

> On that day I was driven by Ayrton R. to the District, everyone was worried about the rain. [...] Tucked away at the back of our minds is the notion that our new weather sciences should be bringing the weather to heel: that when we say the Inter-Tropical Convergence Zone the words should be enough to force the masses of warm wet air that rise off oceans and forests into the right place so they may clash with the high pressure areas south-east near Mozambique. [...] Everyone was thinking "a drought," but no one was saying it, yet: superstition. If you say "drought" then that makes it real. (AL, 304)

If she cannot control the landscape by returning only during the rainy season, she can position the landscape's uncontrollability in a more general human failure to control nature through *naming*. The scientific naming of the weather pattern which produces the drought is as unable to bring the rain as the "superstitious" refusal to use the word "drought." If naming does not allow Lessing to control the landscape of her return, it does, however, produce the reconciliation of her landscapes, a reconciliation which, like that moment of immediacy in *Going Home*, is involuntary and unexpected:
Separation of landscapes has been my fate. But, a few days after I returned to London in this trip in 1988 I saw a weatherman point to the weather map on television and remark that the Inter-Tropical Convergence Zone over Southern Africa was influencing the air masses, hot and cold, to the north of it, and they in turn were shaking and shocking the weather in our skies, the skies of England. I sat on my London sofa, the curtains drawn tight to keep out December, and the certain and immutable walls that had kept my inner landscapes apart vanished in a chart of rivers of wind and oceans of air, the two worlds joined more swiftly than Concorde can do it, or those machines still being evolved which one day will travel from London to Harare, London to Tokyo, in a couple of hours. (AL, 305)

The point of contact between her experience in Africa and her experience in England, the phrase "Inter-Tropical Convergence Zone," collapses the "certain and immutable walls" which had separated Lessing's two landscapes. This collapse is not the result of the elimination of the color bar in Zimbabwe, nor is it the result of the collapse of distance because of technological advances, whether those of today (the Concorde) or those of some dreamed-of future ("machines still being evolved"). The "Inter-Tropical Convergence Zone" is a natural process which humans can name, but which nevertheless remains beyond human control, if not beyond human desire. If Lessing is only able to "go home" by renouncing her technological control of her situation, by renouncing her narrative control, this reconciliation of her two different "homes," her two landscapes, is beyond all possible technological intervention or narrative assertion. The technology which would connect those landscapes and the science-fiction narrative in which that connection takes place are both secondary to the reading of those two landscapes as made not "of the same stuff as oneself"—for at the moment of reconciliation Lessing is excluding herself from both those landscapes, cuddled in the "area of safety" of her London sofa—but of the same stuff as each other, a nature which is re-marked as radically separated from humans.

That nature can be read, however, by the observational structures of science, in this case, by the science of meteorology. It is this reading which makes the reconciliation of Lessing's landscapes possible; however, if this reading is beyond complete technological control, a certain technological writing on nature is not only possible but already realized:
It was on this trip that I understood, in my own self, in my bones and my blood, how this had happened once, long ago, in Europe. Big towns were so far off that people might go there once in their lives, or they knew people who had. [...] And then suddenly, happening with a generation, good roads, coach travel, and the world shrunk. What had been out of reach was within touching distance. The rough tracks that had followed paths discovered by the necessities of walking, of getting somewhere on foot, paths that wound and hesitated and curved and detoured around hillocks and searched for shallow places in rivers they disappeared, were swallowed in grass and then in scrub and then in trees. This revolution has still to take place in some countries of Africa. It has still to happen in some parts of Zimbabwe, for you can speed to the end of the tarmac and see before you the sandy bumps of a bush road whose course was determined by feet walking a path. The car that was speeding straight through the infinite variations of the bush has to slow and match itself to a walker's landscape. (AL, 308)

The production of walking paths in a pre-technological landscape involves the reading of the particularities of that landscape and the adaptation of the path to the landscape; in contrast, the tarmac road imposes its own pattern onto the landscape, adapting the landscape to the needs of the road, not vice versa. In Europe, this process is so nearly complete that even the traces of the earlier paths have been obliterated; in Africa, the palimpsest of two different technologies, of two different types of human intervention in the landscape, can still be read: the colonizing technology must adapt itself to the vagaries of a technology which has not yet leveled the "infinite variations of the bush." Lost to domestication and control of the landscape, these "infinite variations" become an object of desire for a lost world beyond human influence:

Well every day there are more people everywhere in the world in mourning for trees, forest, bush, rivers, animals, lost landscapes ... you could say this is an established part of the human mind, a layer of grief always deepening and darkening. (AL, 318)

Human imposition upon the landscape at first produces a layered landscape, captured by Lessing in the image of the car driving down the bush road; the complete domestication of the landscape leaves no traces behind in the landscape itself, but it does leave a trace behind in the mind of the domesticator. The completion of the process of control, of
domestication, of "writing" on the landscape, produces a desire for a reading of the landscape which would precede that writing. Yet that writing and that reading are intimately connected: the description of the landscape represented by the unifying vision of meteorological science is inseparable from the inscription of human patterns upon the landscape. Science is thus a process of naming and renaming which produces its own palimpsestic "myth-countries"; their relationship to the historical palimpsestes produced by other kinds of human interpretation is never innocent, as the representation of geology in African Laughter shows:

The Umvukwe mountains are part of the ridge [on the eastern side of Zimbabwe], but the name was heard wrong, the real sound is Mvuri, and anyway, these days they are called the Dyke. I have been hearing the Dyke, the Dyke, in so many conversations, not realizing it only meant those mountains I spent so many years of my young life staring at, for it turns out this chain of mountains are considered to be the end bit (or one of them) of the Rift Valley, which as we all know, threatens to split Africa in a billion years or so. [...] It is hard to imagine an idea more attractive to myth-making than this one, so casually proprietary with units of a million years, as is the way of those arch myth-makers, the geologists. (AL, 174)

The names Mvuri and Umvukwe mark the human history of this landscape; the geologists, "those arch myth-makers," produce another "myth-country," replacing the politically charged narratives of colonialism and liberation with another narrative, one whose grand temporal range dwarfs the landscape's human histories and dissolves their threat. As such, however, that narrative is itself political; this reading would erase all traces of human influence on the landscape, not in order to produce an immediate relation to nature, but rather to escape the implications of the doubly-named mountains, the conflict between the white colonialists and the black colonized. Thus, both meteorological and geological observation, "natural sciences" which ought to be completely free of political and social motivation, are, as processes of naming and narration, implicated in the very social structures which they are meant to escape.

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These scientific names and narratives follow from the human reception of the landscape, a reception determined by an observational desire, the desire to describe the observed object as a regular form. In both the meteorological and geological examples from *African Laughter*, the perception of form produces a narrative which replaces a previous formal reading; this replacement *rewrites* the landscape. This rewriting appears to follow from the scientific process of observation and description; that process itself, however, follows from the initial desire to perceive the repeated and repeatable patterns which science would describe. Even those sciences with the longest-term perspectives thus carry within themselves the traces of the human *production* of form; thus, the reading of paleontological traces becomes a reading of the traces of human desire, specifically, of the desire for form:

I have on my mantelpiece a small slice of rock, once clay, and in it a fossil fish that was blithely swimming along when some cataclysm sunk it in choking ooze. The label says that this little fish, *Dapalis Macrurus*, is thirty million years old, a matter for awe, but the clay that surrounds it must be thirty million years old too, but no one slices it up and sells ancient clay to sit on people's mantelpieces with labels that say, This rock is thirty, or three hundred million years old. Clearly, for awe, we need a form, the outline of a fish as delicate as a skeleton leaf; or the Dyke, which we can see dividing the landscape, a visible announcement of extreme age; we need upthrusts of granite which we gaze at and think, Here we touch the archaic, here is real antiquity [...] (AL, 183)

Even as Lessing describes the relationship between the perception of form and awe of the "archaic," she produces a narrative, the hypothetical cataclysm, which will explain the production of the archaic trace, much as she reads the "Sign" left behind by Tobias in the whitewash of her bedroom wall. The image of the archaic thus functions less as a paradigm of age or of narration than as a paradigm of form as such, revealing the human tendency to perceive only that which takes on noticeable form, that which can be read as a clearly differentiated sign which stands out from an undifferentiated background. Lessing's reading of the paleontological and geological traces in terms of pure form leads her to find a point of contact between those traces and the human psyche; the scientific reading of the landscape produces a metaphor for psychological processes:
I am shown a piece of stone that has the outline of a leaf impressed in it. The leaf is like the little fish on my mantelpiece, its form obstinately preserved, through so many thousands of years. The fish, the leaf, make me think of something that happened in the 1960s, in London. For some reason, I forget why, a group of people got into the habit of meeting most evenings, to sit around my big kitchen table, to talk and drink wine. We were old, and young, and from various parts of the world. We played this game: every person who sat down was given a drawing block, and different coloured pencils. We doodled. I don't know how this game began. I found a heap of these drawings recently, and at once knew who had drawn what. We each had a characteristic style, and themes that repeated night after night, week after week. Some of us got desperate, trying to escape this cage of necessity, that made us produce the same patterns, no matter how hard we tried to change. (AL, 405-406)

These doodles are a sign of the unconscious psychological production of form; this production of form, or at least its "obstinate preservation," appears as an inescapable psychic "cage of necessity," an essential element of the mind. The juxtaposition of such human psychic repetition with fossils, with images of the archaic, further connects with her discussion in Prisons of the functioning of "an older part of the human brain," a part beyond conscious control. Against these patterns, Lessing would set her model of observation, of scientific observation; however, that model of observation appears itself as no more than a systematization of the very desire to perceive, produce, and reproduce forms which observation would try to overcome.

The pattern of these patterns duplicates that of the production of the paradigm in Particularly Cats: a pattern is called into question and then reasserted. However, in the cat stories, the reassertion of the paradigm was under Lessing's conscious narrative control; here, the pattern reasserts itself and strips the individual of any possibility of narrative authority. In both cases, the pattern defines a personality, in Particularly Cats as the active production of identity, here as its passive representation: even many years later the doodles are immediately identifiable according to each individual's "characteristic style." Against such a passive paradigm, Lessing and her friends struggled in vain to produce conscious new forms; she and her friends are unable to escape their unchosen prisons. Indeed, in
Lessing, the "new" rarely appears to be a product of human volition, as Anna Freeman, a prototype for Anna Wulf in *The Golden Notebook*, complains in "Play with a Tiger":

> But imagine. Anything can come in tigers, unicorns, monsters, the human being so beautiful he will send all of us into the dust-can. But what does come in is a nice, anxious little girl from Philadelphia.\(^{54}\)

The play's plot motivates this contrast between a tiger and the "girl from Philadelphia," between an image of possibility and its banal realization: Anna is talking to her American lover Dave Miller, who has made precisely such a girl pregnant. As Molly Hite points out, since this girl's pregnancy precedes the play's representation of the possibilities of the new, "the debate over freedom from conventions is thus framed by a context of entrapment."\(^{55}\)

Although, as Hannah Arendt wrote in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, "with each new birth, a new beginning is born into the world, a new world has potentially come into being," each potential new world is always controlled and channelled by the laws and institutions of the existing world:

> The laws hedge in each new beginning and at the same time assure its freedom of movement, the potentiality of something entirely new and unpredictable; the boundaries of positive laws are for the political existence of man what memory is for his historical existence: they guarantee the pre-existence of a common world, the reality of some continuity which transcends the individual life span of each generation, absorbs all new origins and is nourished by them.\(^{56}\)

Thus, the new is always already contained within the frame of the old. In "Play with a Tiger," "Philadelphia," as the symbol of this frame, represents the *end of play*, even the end of the play, as the potential for the new is absorbed by the "common world." This reassertion of the sociocultural paradigm, which closes off the space of possibility which Anna and Dave have been trying to keep open, does not appear as a positive gesture of

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identity production but as the loss of individuality in a banal society, as the production of an "organization man." Dave finds himself, so to speak, drawing the same doodle that he has tried so hard not to draw.

To further emphasize this point, each of Anna's lost futures is itself a sociocultural paradigm of possibility. The tiger, another cat, a part of nature, contrasts with Philadelphia as an image of human society. Hite associates the tiger with William Blake and thus understands it as "the beginning of an attempt to create a mythology in order to avoid being enslaved by another man's."57 However, it is the unicorn which actively opposes a mythological image to a post-Enlightenment world represented by Philadelphia, that world which contains the powers represented by mythological narratives by re-writing them as fairy tales. The image of "monsters," the dystopian threat represented by the new, leads to the construction of systems of law which will contain that threat, but Anna would have the new even if is a monster. Finally, Anna concludes with a messianic image, not so much Christian as Marxist, as the "new" human being emerges to send "all of us," including that banal girl from Philadelphia, to the proverbial "dust-bin of history." Thus, Anna's futures are as culturally programmed as the Philadelphian present, "absorbed" by that present, which already contains the articulation but not the realization of utopian possibility as one of the cornerstones of its ideological structures. The gesture of questioning the paradigm is part of the cultural paradigm Philadelphia represents.

This image of Philadelphia connects with both Lessing's representations of Africa and the image of "prisons we choose to live inside." In the beginning of Going Home, Lessing sees Salisbury from the air:

Salisbury was a wide scatter of light over spaces of dark. To fly over it is to see how fast it is growing not vertically, save for a few tall buildings in its centre, but outwards, in a dozen sprawling suburbs. [...] A few years ago [...] it was only a small patterning of lit streets in a great hollow of

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57Hite, "(En)gendering Metafiction," p. 497.
darkness. Now the regular arrangements of street lighting all these cities are laid out on the American plan, with streets regularly bisecting each other confine the veld in sparkling nets of light. (GH, 35)

In this image, a certain urban geometry domesticates the African wilderness, organizing it according to the "American plan." The traces of this plan can still be seen when flying over the "Old Northwest" or over the Great Plains; large portions of the United States were divided into neat squares derived from the grid-like pattern used in the planning of Philadelphia. If Lessing sees Africa as being covered by a pattern which is not appropriate to the local history and geography, a pattern written upon, rather than read from, the landscape, she herself nevertheless occasionally reads the landscape as having no pattern of its own: "Because it is so empty we can dream. We can dream of cities and a civilization more beautiful than has been seen in the world before" (GH, 14). Lessing's projection onto that "empty" space differs from the construction of Salisbury only in this desire to be new, "more beautiful" than anything previously known; Salisbury appears too much like a repetition of the old world, of British style, and of its transformation in the new world, in the United States. Instead of the beautiful new city, or new human being, one finds once more only the American plan, or Philadelphia.

Following Arendt, this "American plan" appears as a specific version of the general human tendency to "hedge in each new beginning," to control the threat represented by the monstrous possibilities of the new. Ideally, the continuous social reproduction of "the flat and even surface of convention" leaves no traces behind, no marks upon the faces of the "hedged-in" individual, no legible "history of contradictory emotions." This conflict written on the face of the a white farmer in colonial Africa marks the continuous need to reproduce a social order against "natural" threats to its stability: bodily memory, biological reproduction, "the senseless proliferation of nature." Each new threat which must be contained makes this process of domestication legible: in Lessing at one extreme in her personal production of her bed as a domesticated area, and at the other in "the American
plan," this geometric model for the occupation and control of landscapes and their inhabitants. Foucault's "model of Philadelphia" provides a point of contact between these two "geographies": the panoptic organization of the prison in Philadelphia is one of three models of prison construction which existed in the late eighteenth century:

Enfin, le modèle de Philadelphie. Le plus célèbre sans doute parce qu'il apparaissait lié aux innovations politiques du système américain et aussi parce qu'il ne fut pas voué comme les autres à l'échec immédiat et à l'abandon; il fut continûment repris et transformé jusqu'aux grandes discussions des années 1830 sur la réforme pénitentiaire. (SP, 126)

The geometry of visibility at the heart of this model corresponds to a temporal "panopticon" as well: "La vie est donc quadrillée selon un emploi du temps absolument strict, sous une surveillance ininterrompue [...]" (SP, 126). This rigid "gridding" is a mental version of the urban grid of the streets of Philadelphia (or of Salisbury); if this represents on the one hand the liberating possibilities of the American Revolution, at least by association, it represents on the other hand a certain "gridlock," the inescapable banality of the "anxious little girl from Philadelphia." For Lessing, "Philadelphia's" former position as a cultural "myth-country," its representation of a utopian possibility, has been lost; "Philadelphia" represents precisely the containment of possibility, the "hedging-in" of the new. This is the "prison we choose to live inside," but the model of observation which Lessing opposes to this self-imprisonment is itself the model according to which these prisons function. Finally, her assertions of narrative authority do not escape the prisons she describes because her model of observation reproduces the paradigmatic surfaces of convention which it is intended to overcome, and the structure of the narrative which produces a "myth-country" determines the structure of any narrative which depends on the authority which the myth-narrative produces.
1.4. A Monster

The dark background of mere givenness, the background formed by our unchangeable and unique nature, breaks into the political scene as the alien which in its all too obvious difference reminds us of the limitations of human activity—which are identical with the limitations of human equality. The reason why highly developed political communities [...] so often insist on ethnic homogeneity is that they hope to eliminate as far as possible those natural and always present differences and differentiations which by themselves arouse dumb hatred, mistrust and discrimination because they indicate all too clearly those spheres where man cannot act and change at will, i.e., the limitations of the human artifice.

Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*\(^{58}\)

Lessing's *The Fifth Child*, published in 1988, is at first glance a parable in which, as Kauffman puts it, "familial discord allegorizes social doom."\(^{59}\) David Lovatt and Harriet Walker meet in the middle of the 1960s, discover that they have similar dreams of family life, then proceed to marry and fulfill their dreams: their large house becomes a gathering place for their extended family during holidays and summers. After the birth of four wonderful children (Luke, Helen, Jane, and Paul), this happy fulfillment is interrupted by the birth of their fifth child Ben, whose disturbing difference undermines the extended family's happiness. In Arendt's terms, the "mere givenness" of this child does not fit into their ideal; this "new beginning," unlike their earlier children, cannot be "hedged in." When Ben is three, the family places him in a special institution, a shadowy place from which he is not expected to return alive. Despite her relief at finding the family healed by Ben's departure, Harriet finds herself unable to bear the thought of Ben in the institution and brings him back home. The last third of the novel details the disintegration of their family after the return of Ben from the institution: the other children go to live with grandparents or to boarding schools, leaving David and Harriet alone in their house with Ben as he grows up and eventually becomes the leader of one of the many groups of youths who drift

\(^{58}\)Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, p. 301.

\(^{59}\)Kauffman, *Special Delivery*, p. 137.
around the edges of contemporary urban society. The family's disintegration mirrors the social disintegration represented by the inassimilable who live outside societal structures.

However, this interpretation of the novel uncritically accepts the "givenness" of Ben's illegibility. The family's failure to assimilate Ben is not incidental to their domestic ideal; rather, as with Lessing's "myth-country," this ideal is subject to the conditions of its production: if Ben appears to be a "monster," his monstrosity is an expression of the family's understanding of itself as the exclusion of the monstrous. Insofar as the "monstrosity" which the family would define itself against is part of the social structure of their own England, the text does perhaps constitute an allegory of "social doom," but this reading too strongly separates the representation of England and the representation of the family. The relationship between family and society is not one in which the family "represents" some elements of social construction; as Foucault suggests, the family is itself a social institution, and one which plays a primary role in the process of disciplinary normalization:

[...] (il faudra un jour montrer comment les relations intra-familiales, essentiellement dans la cellule parents-enfants, se sont "disciplinées," absorbant depuis l'âge classique des schémas externes, [...] qui ont fait de la famille le lieu d'émergence privilégié pour la question disciplinaire du normal et de l'anormal) [...] (SP, 217)

The family is the privileged site of socialization in the middle-class society in which the Lovatts live, a "cell" producing a disciplined individual subjectivity rather than the space into which such a subject escapes from social pressures. "Mere givenness" does not emerge from the private to be disciplined by the public, as Arendt claims, but is first disciplined by the private sphere itself. The "parent-child cell" itself, and not merely "positive law," serves to "hedge in each new beginning"; when this "hedging" fails, as it does in The Fifth Child, a "monster" such as Ben appears. Such a monster, however, is still a product of "the disciplinary question of the normal and the abnormal"; in fact, Ben's "monstrous" body becomes the focus of the repressed tensions of the Lovatts' familial dream.
Although they want to escape the society of observation, the Lovatts' dream of an ideal family itself depends on the architecture of discipline: David is in fact an architect, and when they meet, Harriet works for "a firm that designed and supplied building materials." The house they find in which to fulfill their dreams, "a large Victorian in an overgrown garden," is "full of space for children" (FC, 8): the four bedrooms on each floor appear to be waiting to be filled with children and guests. For David and Harriet, the spatial form of the house is completely legible, a physical image of their dream. This architectural logic creates a deceptive certainty: the layout of a Victorian only implies "space for children" if one ignores the presence of servants in a Victorian household. This type of household developed from "the final refinements of domestic privacy" established in the eighteenth century and represented, as Ian Watt argues, in the novels of Samuel Richardson: "separate sleeping quarters for every member of the family, and even for the household servants." David and Harriet's justification of their dream on historical grounds thus represses a central part of the history of the domestic structure within which they understand their dream, a structure whose conditions of possibility no longer exist, partly because David and Harriet are not rich enough to have servants, and partly because a servant class, such as the one which worked for Victorian families, no longer exists. As Adrienne Rich points out, it is the provider of "building materials," not the "architect," who pays the price of such a repression of history: the women of middle-class communities of the fifties and sixties "were expected to fill both the part of the Victorian Lady of Leisure, the Angel in the House, and also of the Victorian cook, scullery maid, laundress, governess, and nurse." In The Fifth Child, the mother must replace the missing servants

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60 Doris Lessing, *The Fifth Child*, New York: Vintage, 1988, p. 4. Further references will be included in the text with the abbreviation FC.
62 Adrienne Rich, *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution*, New York: Norton, 1976, p. 27. Further references will be included in the text with the abbreviation OWB.
implied in the house's architecture, while the father concerns himself with the ideal design of the family and not with its material realization.

The reading of the text as an allegory for society risks neglecting the role of the maternal and the material in the text by centering on the attempt to exclude Ben from the family and on the family's later definition of itself on the basis of that exclusion. The material realization of David and Harriet's ideal, however, depends if not always on the exclusion then at least upon the concealment of the maternal body and its materiality. When Harriet speaks of "scapegoats" (FC, 117), she is not referring to the blaming of Ben for the family's collapse, but the condemnation of her as the one who bore Ben. The maternal body which produced the monster appears monstrous itself: Harriet's guilt derives as much from Ben's birth as from her prevention of his death. As Rich suggests, this responsibility is consistent with the special position of the mother in the "parent-child cell":

Patriarchy depends on the mother to act as a conservative influence, imprinting future adults with patriarchal values even in those early years when the mother-child relationship might seem most individual and private [...] (OWB, 61)

It is not parents who socialize children, but rather mothers, at least in the Lovatts' society, in which the mother-child "cell" is marked by the model of disciplinary observation which brings structures of socialization and normalization into the most private spaces. The private becomes a scene of reading and writing in which the child reads the mother to understand how to fit into social spaces, and the mother both reads the child to understand its needs and "writes" upon the child by disciplining its body. It is the mother who is responsible for any failures in this scene of writing: "Under the institution of motherhood, the mother is the first to blame if theory proves unworkable in practice, or if anything whatsoever goes wrong" (OWB, 222). In The Fifth Child, however, the failure of this reading and writing, of the practical application of the ideal, follows from the initial
misreading of the "Victorian" house, is in fact contained within that reading itself, which erases the materiality both of the maternal body and of the body to be disciplined.

If the suppression of the materiality of bodies, of "building materials" in favor of "architecture," is central to the Lovatts' dream, that is part of a more general suppression of nature and the natural in the production of their domesticity. If the center of the dream is the house, the "overgrown garden" is a liminal area which both is and is not part of that center. In fact, the figure of the garden is useful for analyzing The Fifth Child because it appears in the opening pages of the novel and reappears in many different contexts through the course of the text. References to the Lovatts' garden—or to other gardens, both metaphorical and literal—provide points of contact between otherwise apparently unconnected scenes; these points of contact break down the discourse of radical difference which the family creates around Ben and draw attention to the problem of the representation of that difference both by the novel's characters and in the novel's language. In the course of the novel, both Ben and Harriet become associated through such repetitions not only with "nature" but with the specific image of the garden itself. Harriet is first introduced as appearing "more at home in a garden" (FC, 4), while Ben in the garden looks like "a squat little gnome" (FC, 71), a fairy creature itself "more at home in a garden." Through these associations, these two bodies, especially Harriet's, themselves become liminal spaces which are both central and peripheral to the dream. The association of these particular bodies with the garden is not, however, exclusive; both David and the other children are at various times associated with gardens. In fact, the terms the characters use to justify their understanding of Ben as a monster are all terms which they could, and sometimes do, apply to themselves. The other characters thus implicitly share in Ben's "monstrosity"; the bodily difference which he represents and which the family would suppress thus appears as the negation and projection of the inassimilable aspects of their own bodies onto the figure of the monstrous fifth child. If the novel is an "allegory of social doom," that doom is not a result of "familial
discord" but of a family's, and hence a society's, incapacity to handle the "monstrosity" of its members.

The Lovatts' reading of their house as "full of space for children" is not the first moment of reading in the text; in fact, the novel's first sentence is a representation of reading, a traditional moment of love at first sight: "Harriet and David met each other at an office party neither had particularly wanted to go to, and both knew at once this was what they had been waiting for" (FC, 3). In this scene, in which Harriet appears to David to be "more at home in a garden," David and Harriet set the immediate certainty of their reading of each other against the "mere givenness" of their meeting. According to Mikhail Bakhtin, "the chronotope of meeting" often serves "as an opening, sometimes as a culmination, even as a denouement (a finale) of the plot." 63 A certain logic follows from the meeting as such, a result of the formal and abstract relationship of time and space in the moment of meeting, "an inseparable unity of time and space markers" which "gives to the chronotope of meeting an elementary clear, formal, almost mathematical character" (DI, 97). In novels which begin with a man and a woman meeting, the driving force of the narrative is often a set of obstacles which must be overcome before the anticipated marriage. Here, David and Harriet are married by page nine or ten at the latest; the wedding itself, of such great importance in other novels, is not even mentioned. Rather than a set of obstacles, their story, which they themselves understand as a story, is driven by the tension between the accident of their meeting and the intentions of their dreams. This first moment of meeting casts the narrated events as a story in three distinct ways: first, the moment fulfills the previous dreams of Harriet and David, the stories they had told themselves about their future spouses. Then,

63 M.M. Bakhtin, "Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel" (1937-1938), The Dialogical Imagination, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist, Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981, p. 98. Further references to The Dialogical Imagination will be included in the text with the abbreviation DI. Bakhtin defines the "chronotope" as follows: "We will give the name chronotope (literally, 'time space') to the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature" (DI, 84).
the recurring variations on "looking back afterwards" that appear throughout the novel show that David and Harriet experience their life together as a story. The first of these variations begins the novel's second paragraph: "At this famous office party [...]" (FC, 3). Finally, the traditional role of the chronotope of meeting in literature places this novel in a given narrative model; the combination of this chronotope with the title produces the narrative's basic tension, the wait for the promised "fifth child." The narrative of The Fifth Child develops as a manipulation of a set of literary motifs, a manipulation which takes place not only within the narration but within the narrated events themselves.

In their moment of meeting, David and Harriet locate themselves within the stories they have told themselves and will now tell each other. This merging of their stories depends on their mutual legibility to each other ("both knew at once"); however, the entire meeting is charged with indeterminacy and illegibility. This uncertainty already appears in the second sentence, an explanation of "what they had been waiting for":

Someone conservative, old-fashioned, not to say obsolescent; timid, hard to please: this is what other people called them, but there was no end to the unaffectionate adjectives they earned. They defended a stubbornly held view of themselves, which was that they were ordinary and in the right of it, should not be criticised for emotional fastidiousness, abstemiousness, just because these were unfashionable qualities. (FC, 3)

After the colon, the second sentence adds a second voice, of "other people"; the list of adjectives appears as the object of an argument between two views of the normal, what Bakhtin calls "a dialogue between points of view" (D1, 76). In this case, one dialogue is based on the trends of the time, the other on a reading of tradition. In the third sentence, David and Harriet turn the negative force of the adjectives others use to describe them into qualities to be defended, positioning themselves as simultaneously ordinary and exceptional: against their time, they can view themselves as exceptions, while asserting at the same time their normalcy in terms of their "old-fashioned" ideas. The image of David and Harriet is immediately ambiguous, grounded in the tension between two definitions of
the normal; the "traditional" side on which they position themselves, however, is itself doubled: the moderation of abstemiousness contradicts the excess of the motif of "love at first sight."

The "contemporary" side of the dialogue between points of view also appears doubled: "Most people were dancing, packed close because of lack of space, couples bobbing up and down or revolving in one spot as if they were on invisible turntables" (FC, 3). If the dancers do not look human but mechanical, they also appear emotionally ambiguous to David and Harriet, two of the "observers" (FC, 4) standing along the wall: "Both had reflected that the faces of the dancers [...] could just as well have been distorted in screams and grimaces of pain as in enjoyment" (FC, 4). The mechanical dancers' expressions of pleasure appear indistinguishable from expressions of suffering; in these first paragraphs of the novel, the body is already subject to a technological ambiguity and an emotional indeterminacy. The former marks a boundary between what is human and what is not; the latter, however, is an uncertainty in the body itself explicitly connected to a moment of reading by David and Harriet. The body becomes the site of a certain illegibility, an uncertainty which continues in the introduction of Harriet:

From across the room—if one saw her at all among so many eye-demanding people—Harriet was a pastel blur. As in an Impressionist picture, or a trick photograph, she seemed a girl merged with her surroundings. She stood near a great vase of dried grasses and leaves and her dress was something flowery. The focussing eye then saw curly dark hair, which was unfashionable ... blue eyes, soft but thoughtful ... lips rather too firmly closed. In fact, all her features were strong and good, and she was solidly built. A healthy young woman, but perhaps more at home in a garden? (FC, 4)

The dancers efface Harriet, but Harriet also effaces herself. This self-effacement is first figured in aesthetic terms by the "lens" of Impressionism and then in technological terms by the more literal lens of photography; the image of an effacing nature then replaces this double image of human production. Yet this nature is also a human product, both technological (the dried grasses) and aesthetic (the printed dress). Because of these
technological images, Harriet's "merging with her surroundings" appears as an active erasure of the presence of her own body, a construction of herself as a person "without qualities" who merges with the position she occupies so as to be indistinguishable from it. This self-effacement is also that of the disciplinary observer; as such, however, it can be undone by that very process of observation, as here by the eye, another kind of lens, whose focusing can still trace the outlines of Harriet's body. This eye is implicitly David's; after he describes Harriet, he proceeds to inscribe her into more appropriate surroundings, which, however, only render her more ambiguous: her new position, "at home in a garden," hovers between the domestic and the natural. The "pastel blur" of Harriet's body, destined to be the ultimate center of the Lovatts' domestic dream, is already marked here by this association with a garden as a site which is not entirely domestic.

Harriet's reading of David reproduces the simultaneous certainty and uncertainty of his reading of her: he appears "judicious," "serious," and "contemplative," a picture of thoughtful control, yet nevertheless not "solidly planted: he seemed almost to hover [...]" (FC, 4). In David, Harriet sees herself, and vice versa:

She knew his look of watchful apartness mirrored her own. She judged his humorous air to be an effort. He was making similar comments about her: she seemed to dislike these occasions as much as he did. (FC, 4)

Everything depends here on the accuracy of the image the mirror produces, yet Harriet judges David's age incorrectly, and David's image of Harriet is blurred. "Both had found out who the other was" (FC, 4); however, "who the other is" simply replaces the blurry and hovering quality of their appearance with the unambiguous fact of their occupations: David and Harriet work, respectively, in the design and construction of the human artifice, David with the blueprints, Harriet with the materials for that construction. The "architectural" mirror of their respective jobs replaces the blurred mirrors of their mutual observation; this architectural logic anticipates the certainty with which they read the architecture of their
house. This certainty of the "human artifice" displaces and effaces the uncertainty of the body in the moment of "love at first sight."

That uncertainty, however, marks the Lovatts' story with the tensions of Harriet's self-effacement and David's rootlessness. These tensions within each of the figures are doubled by a basic tension between the two figures: they share an ideal of family, but the basic gesture of Harriet's ideal is positive, deriving from her own experience, while the basic gesture of David's is the negation of his experience. Where David's ideal of a wife involves the negation of his one love affair ("she was what he did not want in a girl"—FC, 5), Harriet's understanding of her virginity involves the construction of herself in terms of a positive ideal:

She had not thought of herself as a virgin, if this meant a physiological condition to be defended, but rather as something like a present wrapped up in layers of deliciously pretty paper, to be given, with discretion, to the right person. (FC, 5)

Harriet's image of virginity negates the physical aspect of sexuality; she becomes the architect of her own image, again an image of being contained and surrounded, the product of a certain technique. However, this active self-fashioning discounts the physiological, material aspects of maternity in favor of the preparation of this constructed image. This self-assertion fits Harriet's sexuality into a "Victorian" position aptly described by Luce Irigaray: "A certain tendency to activity may [...] be recognized in women insofar as that activity prepares for sexual functioning [...]."64 Harriet's "activity" is thus contained within a traditional model of femininity, wrapped, as it were, in a pretty package. This positive understanding of an ideal of sexuality is doubled by Harriet's positive understanding of her ideal of family, which develops directly from her own upbringing: "many of her friends had divorced parents" and were "disturbed"; in contrast, Harriet "had always known what she wanted" (FC, 7). Her ideal of domestic happiness is a

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continuation of her childhood: "Harriet's parents had taken it for granted that a family life was the basis for a happy one" (FC, 7). Thus, Harriet constructs her domestic ideal by asserting her own experience as a positive value and negating the experience of her friends.

The experience which Harriet would negate is also David's, whose parents divorced and both remarried; he, too, would negate this experience: his life will "annul, absolve, cancel out all the deficiencies" (FC, 13) of his parents' lives. Thus, unlike Harriet's, David's ideal would erase his own experience. However, this negation of his past is not total; David's dream not only rescues one part of his experience but develops from it. He lived with his mother Molly and stepfather Frederick in "a large shabby house in Oxford":

His room in this house had been his home—was, in his imagination, his real home now, though soon, with Harriet, he would create another, an extension and amplification of it. This home of his was a large bedroom at the back of the house overlooking a neglected garden; a shabby room, full of his boyhood, and rather chilly, in the English manner. (FC, 7)

This room becomes a positive value for David as the negation of the rooms he would receive when visiting his father, bunks on yachts or "a room [...] in a villa in the South of France or the West Indies" (FC, 8). David thus grounds his dream in the image of "a room of one's own," a powerful literary and cultural motif which emerged in the eighteenth century as a fundamental part of bourgeois subjectivity. For Bakhtin, the Sentimental novel produces "a specific-temporal zone of Sentimental pathos associated with the intimacy of one's own room"; further, the difference between this private space and the public spaces it is contrasted with is "not a matter of scale, but rather of a special organization of space" (DI, 397). In David's "organization of space," the stability of the room in his mother's house replaces the uncertainty of the rooms his father provides, which produce not privacy but anonymity; that stability remains ambiguous, however, not only because it is determined by a tension between England and its exotic "elsewheres" but primarily because the room was only his because of his parents' divorce. Domestic failure is thus the source both of his desire to produce his own domestic order and of the inspiration, his room, for
that dream of order. David's later willingness to sacrifice Ben to fulfill the dream emerges from this initial sacrifice of his own experience in the moment of the dream's construction: in contrast to Harriet, who would assimilate Ben, David would expel him from the family. The ambiguities of the dream's construction generate these antithetical responses to the "fifth child."

The "neglected garden" anticipates the "overgrown garden" which surrounds the Victorian the Lovatts buy. In addition, the relationship between that garden and David's room, the basis of his dream, contrasts with his interpretation of Harriet as being "more at home in a garden." If this phrase intimately connects Harriet's domesticity to the garden of their future house, the "neglected garden" of David's childhood marks his domesticity as being separate from all that the garden might represent. David's dream "overlooks" the garden in two senses: the garden is visible from the room which is his dream's center, but the dream also "overlooks," that is, neglects, the garden. This neglect extends to all aspects of the dream which, in the course of the text, are associated with the garden, the first of which is, in David's first gaze at Harriet, Harriet's body itself, the ambiguous "pastel blur" with which the novel begins.

Not only David's "room of his own" but also the house and the town in which the Lovatts find their house, a "smallish town with an atmosphere of its own" (FC, 8), provide traditional literary backgrounds for their dream and the narrative of The Fifth Child. The representational center of what Bakhtin calls the "family novel" is "the ancestral family town house" (DI, 232). If David and Harriet's house is not "ancestral," they would nevertheless have it play the stabilizing role which such a house plays in the family novel:

The novel's movement takes the main hero (or heroes) out of the great but alien world of random occurrence into the small but secure and stable little world of the family, where nothing is foreign, or accidental or incomprehensible, where authentically human relationships are re-established, where the ancient matrices are re-established on a family base: love, marriage, childbearing, a peaceful old age for the in-laws, shared meals around the family table. (DI, 232)
Such a house overcomes chance, even the accident of meeting, by creating, through a process of exclusion, a space with a particular relationship to time, establishing order through repetition and reinforcement of the known and exclusion of the foreign or accidental. Just as the opening of *The Fifth Child* contains a condensed version of a romance novel in which all obstacles to the marriage of the destined couple have been removed, it also contains a condensed family novel, as David and Harriet escape the "world of random occurrence" and enter into this fully foreseeable world founded upon the stability of their home.

In Bakhtin's typology of chronotopes, the "family novel" appears as a possible variation on the "idyll" (DI, 229). The idyll is based in a "little spatial world" completely isolated from the rest of the world, producing a "unity of place" which blurs temporal boundaries by bringing together all the different stages of life, birth, childhood, adulthood, old age, death, into one space (DI, 225). Another version of such a "little spatial world" is the chronotope of the "provincial town": "the locus for cyclical everyday time," in which "there are no events, only 'doings' that constantly repeat themselves. [...] Here there are no 'meetings', no 'partings'" (DI, 247-248). Such a town provides an "inside" against the "outside" of the chances of history and the pressures of the capital city; it is marked off as a space within which the predictable can be fostered within a certain set of givens, overcoming the "dark background of givenness" by lighting it up with predictability and repetition. While Bakhtin adds that this cyclic time "cannot serve as the primary time of the novel" (DI, 248), precisely because nothing novel happens in it, this is the time in which David and Harriet's dream can realize itself; at least formally, their dream is a story in which nothing happens, in that everything is foreseen. The time of the fulfillment of the dream develops in tension with the novelistic expectation symbolized by the title: alongside the repetitive time of newborn children and seasonal family parties, which will fill their house and fulfill their dream, runs the narrative time which waits patiently for the birth of
the fifth child, of the certain disruption of the foreseeable which it will represent. The threat which finds its realization in Ben itself represents a literary motif, another variation on the idyll, "the alien force [which] intrudes into the cozy little world of the family, threatening it with destruction" (DI, 232). Thus, the "accident" of Ben is foreseeable, but only at the level of the representation, and not at all within the represented story, in which Ben represents not the foreseeable but the absolutely unpredictable.

It is in this context that the image of the garden in The Fifth Child takes on significance. If the introduction of Harriet and the description of David's childhood room use this image in an apparently harmless way, the introduction of the Lovatts' house begins to transform the image of the garden into something more threatening. At first, the image remains harmless:

[...] a large Victorian house in an overgrown garden. Perfect! But for a young couple it was absurd, a three-storeyed house, with an attic, full of rooms, corridors, landings. ... Full of space for children, in fact. (FC, 8)

Given where the exclamation stands, it is clear that the house's perfection for the dream has less to do with its layout than with its lot, which is perfect for both of them, as an extension of David's "neglected garden" and as a space in which Harriet can be "more at home in a garden." The tension in the image of the house and the garden is not immediately associated with the garden itself; rather, the tension first seems to be economic: "Even with David's quite decent salary, and Harriet's, the mortgage of this house would be beyond them. She would work for two years, commute with David daily to London, and then ..." (FC, 9). Discipline is thus the most important part of the realization of their dream; the predictability of their own actions becomes an essential ground of the dream's fulfillment. The ellipsis in Lessing's text marks a would-be ellipsis in David and Harriet's story, the time of their self-discipline, during which they would defer their desire for a family in favor of the acquisition of the house. They proceed, however, to "fill" this ellipsis, so to speak, closing the gap in the story even as they assert that there should be a gap: they have a baby

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immediately. In the scene preceding the conception of this baby, they inspect the house which they have just purchased:

On the afternoon the house became theirs, they stood hand in hand in the little porch, birds singing all around them in the garden where boughs were still black and glistening with the chilly rain of early spring. They unlocked their front door, their hearts thudding with happiness, and stood in a very large room, facing capacious stairs. Some previous owner had seen a home as they did. Walls had been pulled down to make this a room that accommodated nearly all the ground floor. [...] [T]hey went across the bare boards that soon would have rugs on them, and then slowly up the stairs where old-fashioned brass rods waited for a carpet. On the landing, they turned to marvel at the great room that would be the heart of their kingdom. They went on up. The first floor had one large bedroom—theirs, and opening off it a smallish room, which would be for each new baby. There were four other decent rooms on this floor. Up still generous but narrower stairs, and there were four more rooms whose windows, like the rooms below, showed trees, gardens, lawns—all the perspectives of pleasant suburbia. And above this floor was an attic, just right for the children when they had got to the age for secret magical games. (FC, 9)

The house's emptiness contrasts with the fullness of the room at the office party. The contrast at the party between domesticity and nature reappears here in the contrast between house and garden; that nature is itself divided into the beautiful image of birds singing and the threateningly "black and glistening" boughs. The empty house contains no images of nature whatsoever; it is a pure architectural form, a pure expression of the human artifice, which they can fill completely with their dreams. The pure visibility of their "kingdom" appears at every stage of their movement through the house: in the ground floor, the space cleared by the pulling down of the walls; on the landing, the view of the empty room; on the first floor, the anticipation of "each new baby" in the small room off theirs; on the second, the reassuring view of domesticated nature; in the attic, a clear open space for children to escape into an ideal of "magical" childhood. The layout of the Lovatts' house provides an ideal structure of "cells" in which the children can be observed by parents already identified as observers. The center of this space of pure visibility and predictability is the master bedroom:
They slowly descended the stairs, one flight, two, passing rooms, and rooms, which they were imagining full of children, relatives, guests, and came again into their bedroom. A large bed had been left in it. It had been specially made, that bed, for the couple they had bought the house from. To take it away, so said the agent, would have meant dismantling it, and anyway the owners of the bed were going to live abroad. (FC, 9-10)

The bed, and also the openness of the family room, both derive from earlier owners of the house; just as the dream as story takes over a set of literary models, the architectural grounding of the dream continues to take over other people's constructions. The reading of the house in terms of a future realization of their dream depends on how others already "wrote" the house; as they lie on the bed, the reading of the house's past is displaced by a reading of their future generated not by the house itself but by the image of the spring garden projected into the house:

There Harriet and David lay down side by side, and looked at their room. They were quiet, awed by what they were taking on. Shadows from a lilac tree, a wet sun behind it, seemed to be enticingly sketching on the expanses of the ceiling the years they would live in this house. They turned their heads toward the windows where the top of the old lilac showed its vigorous buds, soon to burst into flower. (FC, 9-10)

In the space for pure dreaming, the shadows of the lilac tree on the ceiling become another pattern onto which they can project their desires. As the trace of a fertile nature penetrates the center of domestic desire, the master bedroom, the discipline necessary to the grounding of their dream goes, so to speak, "out the window": they make love, without contraceptives, Harriet "at the height of her fertility" (FC, 10). After they silently make love several times through the course of the afternoon and evening, Harriet finally speaks: "Well, that's done it, I'm sure":

He laughed. A loud, reckless, unscrupulous laugh, quite unlike modest, humorous, judicious David. Now the room was quite dark, it looked vast, like a black cave that had no end. A branch scraped across a wall somewhere close. There was a smell of cold rainy earth and sex. David lay smiling to himself, and when he felt her look, he turned his head slightly and his smile included her. But on his terms; his eyes gleamed with thoughts she could not guess at. She felt she did not know him. ... "David," she said quickly, to break the spell, but his arm tightened around
her, and he gripped her upper arm with a hand she had not believed could be strong, insistent. This grip said, Be quiet. (FC, 10-11)

David's ambiguity fully realizes the tension between the Lovatts' "judiciousness" and their tremendous impatience; the startling laugh, his unreadability for Harriet, his gleaming eyes, and his unexpected strength all later come to be associated with Ben. At the same time, the bedroom turns into a cave, filled with images of undomesticated nature; the positive images of a "vigorous" garden whose traces in the bedroom figure their future are displaced by the "scraping branch" and the "smell of cold rainy earth." The proliferation of the "overgrown garden" thus begins to take on a different connotation, of a sexuality which brings the unpredictable materiality of the body into the heart of the foreseeable domestic world, transforming the master bedroom into a womb-like space. As they continue to have children, David's cheerful repeated joke—"something progenitive about this room" (FC, 18); "it's a baby-maker" (FC, 32)—represses the role of sexuality in the reproductive process, displacing reproduction onto the space of reproduction, making of the room a magical space which generates children according to its own logic, an expression of the architectural logic of the house as a whole.

If the garden thus plays a central role in this conception scene, penetrating their domestic space with the "senseless proliferation of nature," it nevertheless remains "mysterious and hidden from them, not yet theirs" (FC, 11). The catalyst of desire thus remains outside the fulfillment of desire; desire and the body, though central to their ideal, cannot find direct expression in the terms of that ideal. However, if they cannot articulate their relationship to desire and to the garden which symbolizes it, they can speak about the economic discipline which they have just sacrificed to their desire, as Harriet asks: "And how are we going to pay for it all if I am pregnant?" (FC, 11). If the dream is already dependent on the room which David received from his mother and stepfather, it now becomes dependent on the second marriage of his father James as well: although James
agrees to "assume responsibility for the mortgage," the money is actually mostly his wife Jessica's (FC, 14). Without this money, only available because of the very divorce which his dream would negate, David and Harriet would be unable to afford the house. This dependence on their parents is not only economic: when Harriet needs help during her pregnancy taking care of the large house, her mother Dorothy comes to say "indefinitely" (FC, 14). Thus, not only Harriet but Dorothy as well must replace the servants who are implied by the house's architecture and whom the Lovatts could not afford even if a servant class still existed in contemporary England. These two, James and Dorothy, have, long before Ben's birth, already begun to pay the economic and the physical price, respectively, for the fulfillment of their children's dream.

Through the course of the novel, the "mysterious and hidden" garden continually impinges on the Lovatts' experience of their domestic idyll. As a figure of the unstable boundaries of domesticity, the garden plays a central role in three different scenes: an evening discussion among David, Harriet, and Dorothy during Harriet's first pregnancy; another evening, during Harriet's pregnancy with Ben, in which David improvises a story to tell the children; and in the scenes preceding Ben's institutionalization. In the course of these scenes, the garden's representation of a threat to the domestic idyll is slowly displaced onto Ben's body. In the first of these scenes, the first piece of furnishing which David and Harriet have bought for themselves reinforces the understanding of their house in terms of Bakhtin's discussion of the "town house" (and recalls the "big kitchen table" in Lessing's own house in 1960s London):

The kitchen was already near what it ought to be: the great table, with heavy wooden chairs around it—only four now, but more stood in a row along the wall, waiting for guests and still unborn people. [...] Jugs were full of flowers from the garden where summer had revealed a plenitude of roses and lilies. They were eating a traditional English pudding, made by Dorothy; outside, the autumn was establishing itself in flying leaves that sometimes hit the windowpanes with small thuds and bangs, and in the sound of a rising wind. But the curtains were drawn, warm thick flowered curtains. (FC, 15)
"Nature enters the drawing-room world of private individuals only as picturesque 'remnants'," writes Bakhtin (DI, 144); these domesticated fragments of nature, the flowers from the garden and the flowery curtains, recall the "dried grasses" and "flowery dress" which introduced Harriet. The represented domesticity contains these "remnants" but is itself surrounded by a different, threatening nature; the representing model of the idyll, however, provides a narrative architecture which contains and controls that nature, surrounding the threat textually in the same way that those first images of a domesticated nature surrounded Harriet's body, allowing her to "merge with her surroundings." This instability of the boundary between house and garden sets up a scene of the general instability of boundaries. This general instability begins with Dorothy's critique of David and Harriet's impatience: "You two go on as if you believe if you don't grab everything, then you'll lose it" (FC, 15), to which David responds:

"Everything could very well be taken away," said David, stubborn. The enormity of this, something that came from his depths, as both women knew, was not lessened by the News, which was blasting from the radio. Bad news from everywhere: nothing to what the News would soon become, but threatening enough. (FC, 16)

While he had been exceptionally patient before he met Harriet, David now seems to have to claim his dream immediately, as in the conception scene, in order to stabilize it before this "threat," represented here not only by the radio but by the weather images which set this scene up, can prevent the production of the safe enclosure which the dream of a family requires. Here, the issue is not the dream itself, but its application: Dorothy criticized their haste, not the ideal itself, and David defends that haste. However, when Dorothy asserts that "sometimes you two scare me," Harriet takes this as a more general critique of the dream:

Harriet said fiercely, "Perhaps we ought to have been born in another country. Do you realise that having six children, in another part of the world, it would be normal, nothing shocking about it—they aren't made to feel like criminals."

"It's we who are abnormal, here in Europe," said David.
"But if you were having six [said Dorothy] [...] and if you were in another part of the world, like Egypt or India or somewhere, then half of them would die and they wouldn't be educated, either. You want things both ways. The aristocracy—yes, they can have children like rabbits, and expect to, but they have the money for it. And poor people can have children, and half of them die, and expect to. But people like us, in the middle, we have to be careful about the children so we can look after them."

(FC, 16)

For a third time the dream must be based on what it would otherwise exclude or negate; what had sprung from the heart of Englishness, the "shabiness" of David's childhood room opposed to the exotic elsewhere of his rooms with his father, suddenly is justified by an appeal to non-English social structures. Dorothy's critique of this appeal rewrites the spatial difference between England and "another part of the world" as a difference of social class, marking the moderation of the English middle class against both a Third World "other" and the English aristocracy. In the light of this discussion, the form of the Lovatts' dream can be summarized thus: David and Harriet construct a set of centers, of "insides," for the dream, each opposed to a specific "outside," but in each case the "inside" is dependent on that which frames it: the room which is the model for the dream depends on his mother's second marriage, the house depends on his father's second marriage and on the previous owners, the town depends on the city where David works and can make enough money for them to live the life they want to live, and England depends (or at least depended) on its colonial elsewhere for its wealth and geopolitical authority, but their vision of their family finally negates England and Europe in favor of such an exotic elsewhere. This dependence on the negated may appear accidental to David and Harriet; however, each of these dependencies extends and develops the tension between the accidental character of the chronotope of meeting and the intentional character of the idyll, a tension already marked in the novel's opening paragraph, where this "dialogue" between chronotopes is doubled by the "dialogue" between the voices of tradition and iconoclasm. This chronotopic dialogue remains "outside the world represented, although not outside the
work as a whole" (DI, 252), yet its traces are felt both in this initial doubling of voices and in David and Harriet's understanding of their life together in narrative terms. Just as the fixed boundaries upon which David and Harriet's dream depends blur, the boundary between representation and the represented in the novel which tells their story also blurs.

Despite this blurring of the boundaries which make the Lovatts' idyll possible, the dream is actually fulfilled in the ensuing pages and years. Over the course of seven years in which the Lovatts have four children, their house becomes the focus of an extended family which celebrates a long series of "family parties" (FC, 18), at Christmas and Easter and during the summer school holidays. If certain threats to this idyll exist, such as an economic downturn, increasing violence in their little town, and the birth to Harriet's sister Sarah of a child with Down's syndrome (FC, 21-22), the fulfillment of the dream is clearest in the Lovatts' success in providing an alternative family for a cousin of David's, a schoolgirl named Bridget, whose difficult family life recalls the disturbances of David's own childhood. The Lovatts' "real family life" compensates for the inadequacies of her own home, her "unhappy, or at least complicated, family background" (FC, 28). The dream thus fulfills one of its principal purposes, overcoming the complications of David's own family background. David and Harriet read their own reception of the dream in Bridget's response to their domestic idyll; Bridget is "clinging fast to this miracle of a family":

Rather, in fact, as Harriet and David did. Both more than once—seeing the girl's face, reverential, even awed, always on the watch as if she feared to miss some revelation of goodness or grace the moment she allowed her attention to lapse—saw themselves. Even uneasily saw themselves. It was too much ... excessive ... Surely they should be saying to her, "Look here, Bridget, don't expect so much. Life isn't like that!" But life is like that, if you choose right: so why should they feel she couldn't have what they had so plentifully? (FC, 31)

Bridget's fascination with their family acts as a mirror for their own fascination, which involves an attempt to capture and interpret every detail of their experience; this exhaustive attention is possible because of visibility which the house's architecture constructs. This
mirroring might already appear unstable, given its resemblance to the Lovatts' ambiguous "mirror" reading of each other at the "famous office party." The insistent reading of the dream's fulfillment marks the continued presence of the insecurity which the Lovatts have felt from the beginning. Against this insecurity, they set the idea of choice, of conscious construction of "the human artifice"; however, this choice is immediately offset by the reassertion of accident, the monstrous productivity of the "dark background of mere givenness": "Even before the crowd gathered before the Christmas of 1973, Harriet was pregnant again" (FC, 31). This accident does more than produce a fifth child; it undermines the sense the Lovatts have that they control their situation. While Harriet had been accidentally pregnant once before, with Helen, her second child, Helen is a "normal" child whose accidental character is later forgotten, while Ben's accidental quality, their sense of losing control, is not forgotten but rather amplified by later developments. In the face of this loss of control, David repeats his joke about the master bedroom: "It's this room, I swear it's a baby-maker!" (FC, 32); this reassertion of the magical force of their master bedroom (and, by extension, of their house's architecture) might be an attempt to reduce their dismay, but it is also a sign of the logical force of the narration asserting itself: the structure of the house demands that more children be born, but more importantly, the novel's title demands it; the novel can now enter into its "real" subject, the position of the fifth child with respect to this family. If the Lovatts' assertion of choice appears to them to be undercut by this accident, in the narrative of the novel and in the architecture of the Lovatts' dream, this accident is anything but accidental.

Because she is not so successful at self-concealment as she had been, Harriet's pregnancy with Ben reveals the domestic necessity of concealing the biological process of reproduction. Because the physical strain on Harriet, "pale and unsociable," is so visible, the Christmas party breaks up "rather earlier than usual" (FC, 37-38). The very symbol of
the dream's fulfillment, Bridget, herself leaves, having discovered Harriet overwhelmed by the difficulty of her pregnancy:

The enraptured schoolgirl, Bridget, found Harriet lying down, her hands pressed into her stomach, tears running down her face, moaning from some pain she did not specify—and was so shocked she, too, wept and said she had known it was too good to last, and went off back home to her mother, who had just remarried and did not really want her. (FC, 38)

While all Harriet's pregnancies had been "difficult" and she had always been tired out by them, the pain and exhaustion of this pregnancy are the first to be explicitly narrated; the revelation of the maternal body to Bridget coincides with its narrative revelation and marks the dependency of the dream on that concealment. David's jokes mark the displacement of biological reproduction onto an architectural process of domestic production; Bridget's discovery of Harriet marks the failure of that displacement. If the family parties continue for some time after Ben's birth, the dream's future is already clouded by its failure to continue to provide Bridget with the alternative domestic space which she so sorely needed.

During this pregnancy, concealing her condition becomes Harriet's obsessive concern; during her seventh month, "she planned her day for one thing: that she would seem to be normal between the hours of four, when Helen and Luke ended school, until eight or nine, when they went to bed" (FC, 42). One evening during that month, when the family sits around the table and David tells the children a story, this concealment is given both architectural and narrative form: "Happiness had returned and sat at the table with them—and Harriet's hand, unseen below the level of the table-top, was held over the enemy: You be quiet" (FC, 43). In this scene, the second of the scenes with the "mysterious and hidden" garden, David's storytelling is explicitly part of the family idyll, an event which takes place every Friday and Saturday, when the children are allowed to stay up late. However, the idyll, which had seemed secure, a completed project, must be reproduced all over again in the face of the threat which this pregnancy represents, and this reproduction requires the suppression of the presence of the pregnant mother's body. Already, the
possibility of happiness for the family depends upon the exclusion, or at least the concealment, of Ben; however, their comfort depends as well on a further exclusion:

Here, enclosed in the hospitable kitchen, it was warm and steamy with the smell of soup. Outside was a blustering night. May. The curtains were not drawn. A branch stretched across the window: a spring branch, full of pristine blossom, pale in the twilight, but the air that beat on the panes had been blasted down south from some iceberg or snowy field. (FC, 43)

The "pristine blossoms" recall the flowers of previous scenes, whether the spring buds on the lilac tree which corresponded to Harriet's fertility in the moment of "taking possession" of the house, or the cuttings and the printed flowers on the curtains in the first detailed image of the kitchen, or the first image of Harriet at the "famous office party." These flowers are outside the domestic space and part of an ambiguous nature which is simultaneously beautiful and threatening; inside the kitchen, that nature is completely repressed in a scene of "hospitable" domesticity. The story which follows repeats this construction of the domestic as the absolute exclusion of nature in the construction of an "area of safety." David begins with a boy and a girl who "set off one day to have an adventure in the forest," where, in true fairy-tale fashion, the animals of the forest interact with them (the birds sing for the children, who sleep protected by a "friendly deer"), and they find "a bush covered with chocolate sweets" and "a pool made of orange juice" (FC, 43-44). This forest is a nature devoid of threat contrasted to a "real" nature:

"Do the birds sing to us?" enquired Luke doubtfully, frowning. [...]  
"When we are in the garden and the birds sing, are they singing to us?"  
"Of course not, silly," said Helen. "It was a magic forest."  
"Of course they sing to you," said Dorothy firmly. (FC, 44)

By asserting a possibility of communicating with the birds, or at least of being communicated to by them, Dorothy's firmness reduces the distance between the "magic forest" in which the story's children have their adventure and the garden in which the Lovatts' children have theirs. The discrepancy between a magical nature and the threatening nature of the garden is blurred. However, another threat appears as the context of the
narration once again intrudes, recalling the radio in the earlier scene: "The television was on: a professionally cool voice was telling about some murders in a London suburb" (FC, 44). This professional voice is juxtaposed to David's, "tonight the storyteller's voice" (FC, 44); this juxtaposition mirrors the contrast between the two kinds of nature, real and magical, but there is no blurring of the two voices: Harriet turns off the television. The magical storyteller's voice is able to continue speaking only through this censorship of the everyday; David continues with the chocolate bush and the orange juice pool, but he then proceeds to naturalize the magical images he has been using:

"Suddenly the little girl found she was alone. She and her brother had lost each other. She wanted to go home. [...] She bent over a pool wondering if it would be orange juice, but it was water, clear pure forest water, and it tasted of plants and stones. She drank, from her hands. [...] She bent over the pool to see if there was a fish who could tell her the way out of the forest, but she saw something she didn't expect. It was a girl's face, and she was looking straight up at her. It was a face she had never seen in her whole life. This strange girl was smiling, but it was a nasty smile, not friendly, and the little girl thought this other girl was going to reach up out of the water and pull her down into it."

A heavy, shocked, indrawn breath from Dorothy, who felt this was too frightening at bedtime.

But the children sat frozen with attention. [...] "Phyllis—that was the little girl's name—had never seen such frightening eyes." (FC, 44-45)

The collapse of distinctions between the television's world and the domestic world's magical narrative, repressed by Harriet's turning off of the television, reappears in the "disenchantment" of the forest in David's story, which brings together contrasting images into one hybrid image: the girl and her mirror double, the classic Doppelgänger threatening the little girl's identity even as David promptly gives her a linguistic identity by naming her. The children's fascination with the narrative stands in stark contrast not only to Dorothy's maternal censorship but to Harriet's understanding of the story as well:

David had stopped. Apparently for inspiration. He was frowning, had an abstracted look, as if he had a headache. As for Harriet, she was wanting to cry out, "Stop—stop it! You are talking about me—this is what you are feeling about me!" She could not believe that David could not see it. [...] "I know what happened," said Dorothy firmly. "Phyllis decided to leave that nasty pool at once. She ran fast along a path until she bumped into her
brother. He was looking for her. They held each other's hands and they ran out of the forest and ran safely home." (FC, 45)

Dorothy's firmly asserted ending of the story represses every image of the story, magical or realistic, threatening or friendly, except for that of a "safe home." In the course of the story, both the "others" of the protected domestic space are effaced, the ambiguous nature which both surrounds and is contained by the story, and the society whose violence is extending into the suburbs, the otherwise idyllic towns. Both within the story and within the larger narrative of The Fifth Child, the production of a "safe home" depends on an explicit negation of everything that is not domestic, including, in Harriet's reading, the mother with her doubled body. Nevertheless, Dorothy's erasure leaves behind a trace, an irrepressible remainder:

"Who was that girl in the pool, who was she?" demanded Helen, looking from her father to her mother.
"Oh, just a magic girl," said David casually. "I have no idea. She just materialised."
"What's materialised?" asked Luke, saying the word with difficulty.
"It's bedtime," said Dorothy.
[...] "What is materialised, Daddy?" Luke anxiously persisted.
"It is when something that wasn't there suddenly is there."
"But why, why is it?" wailed Helen, distressed.
Dorothy said, "Upstairs, children." (FC, 46)

Just as she had effaced the distinction between the magical nature and the Lovatts' own garden, Dorothy's renewed assertion of the domestic further effaces the distinction between the story and its context; in both, nothing should be left but domesticity. In both, however, something else is left: the image of Phyllis' double, displaced onto the word "materialization." These displacements justify Harriet's reading of the double as herself: her pregnancy "materializes" Ben. Her own body becomes the site of production of a threat to the domestic space, whose safety is only maintained because something "merely given" is kept under the table even as the story begins: the "materialization" of reproduction, itself part of the magical logic of the novel's own narration. Thus, this story explicitly allegorizes
the novel, while providing the alternative happy ending which Harriet's rescuing of Ben from the institution precludes.

The interaction of the everyday garden and the magical forest in the process of telling David's story reappears as an interaction of the domestic and the wild or magical in passages surrounding Ben's institutionalization when he is three years old. After long discussions by the adults of the extended family, a decision is finally made to send him to an institution. During the last of these discussions, the adults observe Ben, and he watches them watching him:

[...] he looked at them all staring at him. Again he seemed to be trying to understand them. He went into the garden, where they could see him, a squat little gnome, poking with a stick at the earth. (FC, 71)

Ben creates a space of illegibility within the space of reading which David and Harriet's dream had previously constructed. Throughout the novel, attempts are made to name this illegibility, to fix the threat Ben represents with a word or a narrative which will make that threat comprehensible and thus controllable. Here, the word "gnome" would identify what is different about him; this identification reappears, in another moment of mutual uncomprehending observation, when he returns inside—in the interim, the adults have made the decision to institutionalize him:

Ben came in from the garden and stood watching them, in his usual position, which was apart from everyone else. He wore brown dungarees and a brown shirt, both in strong material. Everything he wore had to be thick, because he tore his clothes, destroyed them. With his yellowish stubby low-growing hair, his stony unblinking eyes, his stoop, his feet planted apart and his knees bent, his clenched held-forward fists, he seemed more than ever like a gnome.

"She is crying," he remarked, of his mother. He took a piece of bread and went out. (FC, 73)

Ben's movement from the house to the garden contrasts with the movement of the two children in David's story, who move into a magical world full of adventure but, when it turns into a more "natural" nature, return "safely home" in order to escape from the threat of that nature. Further, at a moment when the other children might be expected to comfort
their crying mother, Ben, from his "observer" position, remains purely factual in his observation of Harriet. This disconnection between child and mother emphasizes that Ben cannot be socialized or socialize himself within the institution of the family. To the family's adults, the only solution appears to be the removal of Ben from the family for the sake of their threatened domestic ideal, of their "safe home."

Just as an institution has been found for Ben, on the evening before he is to be taken away, Harriet first fully realizes "that Ben was not expected to live long in this institution, whatever it was" (FC, 74). This realization is immediately followed by a scene with Helen and Luke in the garden:

Children's voices rose sharp and distant from the dark winter garden. On the same impulse, David and Harriet went to the window and pulled back the heavy curtains. The garden held dim shapes of tree and shrub, but the light from this warm room reached across the lawn to a shrub that was starkly black with winter, lit twiggy growths that showed a glitter of water, and illuminated the white trunk of a birch. Two small figures, indistinguishably unisex in their many-coloured padded jackets, trousers, woollen caps, emerged from the black under a holly thicket, and came forward. They were Helen and Luke, on some adventure. Both held sticks and were prodding them here and there into last year's leaves. (FC, 74-75)

First of all, the parents, literally "watchers at the window," position themselves as observers of the wildness of their children; the pulling back of the curtain allows the children and the garden to be observed from the safety of a constructed domestic space even as Ben's imminent institutionalization has reasserted the construction of that space by negation. Then, the children so observed become visible because of the light shed upon them from inside the house, which reaches out into the "dark winter garden" to reclaim the domestic from the "dark background" of nature. Finally, the play of these two "unisex" creatures might appear no different than that of the "squat little gnome": they are, just he was, digging around in the earth, apparently aimlessly. However, it becomes apparent that Helen and Luke, in contrast to Ben, do have a goal: they would themselves reclaim the domestic from being overwhelmed by the "senseless proliferation of nature":

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"Here it is!" Helen's voice rose in triumph, and the parents saw, emerging into the light on the end of the stick, the summer's lost red-and-yellow plastic ball. It was dirtied and squashed, but whole. The two children began a fast stamping dance around and around, the rescued ball held aloft in triumph. (FC, 75)

Just as the children emerge from the (wild) darkness into the (domesticated) light, they recover the lost ball from under the leaves which had covered it: in winter, they search through the remnants of autumn for a trace of remembered summer. This discovery of the lost ball of summer is explicitly connected to the departure of Ben through the children's dance, because of their reaction the next day to being told that Ben has been taken away and will not be coming back: "The children danced about, unable to help themselves [...]" (FC, 76). Thus, the "squashed, but whole" ball from a lost past implies a memory of a time before Ben; his departure temporarily brings this time back, and "the family expand[s] like paper flowers in water" (FC, 76). As in the introduction of Harriet, the images which capture the family's response to Ben's departure are not natural: the ball is recovered from its concealment by nature, and the paper flowers in the simile are not real flowers but human constructions. Whatever nature these images represent is already domesticated, and the nature which Helen and Luke find in the garden, while perhaps not domesticated, is at least domesticaatable:

Then, suddenly, for no obvious reason, they came racing up to the French doors. The parents sat down on a sofa, facing the doors, which burst inwards, and there they were, two slight, elegant creatures, with flaring red, frost-burned cheeks and eyes full of the excitement of the dark wilderness they had been part of. They stood breathing heavily, their eyes slowly adjusting to reality, the warm, lit family room and their parents sitting there looking at them. For a moment it was the meeting of two alien forms of life: the children had been part of some old savagery, and their blood still pounded with it; but now they had to let their wild selves go away while they rejoined their family. Harriet and David shared this with them, were with them in imagination and in memory, from their own childhoods: they could see themselves clearly, two adults, sitting there, tame, domestic, even pitiable in their distance from wildness and freedom. (FC, 75)

At first unreadable by their parents, returning into the house "for no obvious reason," the children begin, however, to make the transition from "some old savagery" to the "reality"
of "their family"; their ability to make this transition makes them once more "legible" for Harriet and David, who can share their adventure with them only at the point where they cross the border between the adventure world and the domestic world. Helen and Luke's representation of "some old savagery," although it connects them with Ben, also distances them from him, because they are not only able to tame that savagery, they want to tame it:

Seeing there parents there alone, no other children around, and above all, no Ben, Helen came to her father, Luke to his mother, and Harriet and David embraced their two adventurous little children, their children, holding them tight.

Next morning, the car, which was a small black van, came for Ben.

(FC, 75)

Helen and Luke domesticate themselves. Their smooth reintegration into a social space contrasts sharply with Ben's difficulties with such integration: their socialization takes place within the intimate sphere of the family; they accept, and are capable of accepting, their position in the family, which they themselves understand in terms of an exclusion of Ben. As for the domestic cats in Lessing's Africa, the boundary between wildness and domesticity is, for Helen and Luke, permeable, but for Ben, who is more like a "wild cat," it is not. Ben is institutionalized primarily because he doesn't make, or at least only clumsily makes, the transition between being an "adventurer" and being a "little child."

Helen and Luke’s "adventure" is finally a fragment of nature which is always already domesticated through their willing acceptance of a relationship to the domestic. If they experience the "old savagery" within themselves in order to return to domestic space and share the experience with their parents, Ben's "savagery" seems to exist in and for itself, separated from all domesticity.

After Harriet has rescued Ben from the institution, she is, however, able to find a method controlling Ben, which might be called "extra-institutional socialization." After Ben has overcome the physical effects of the institution, she finds someone to look after him, an unemployed youth named John who had first come to help clean up the garden:
For a few days he cut hedges, dug up a couple of ailing shrubs, sawed off a dead branch, mowed the lawn. Ben would not be parted from him. He crouched at the French doors, waiting for John to arrive; then followed him around like a puppy. John did not mind Ben at all. He was a big, shaggy, amiable youth, good-natured, patient: he treated Ben in a rough-and-ready way, as if Ben were indeed a puppy that needed training. (FC, 91)

Harriet then asks John and his mates to take care of Ben during the day, because Ben is not "suitable for ordinary nursery school" (FC, 91). Just as John cleans up the garden which had "got badly out of hand" (FC, 91), he and his friends turn Ben into a "part-social being" (FC, 97), who knows the types of social facts which allow one to exist within a human community: what traffic lights mean, for example. Much later, when Ben goes to secondary school, it becomes clear what happens here: these youths represent a group of extra-social individuals, "the uneducable," "the unassimilable," "the hopeless," (FC, 120), forming a society of their own outside of the mainstream of society represented by the Lovatts. This extra-social group is socialized in two ways: first, it follows enough of the rules of mainstream society to be able to interact with the mainstream without too much friction; secondly, it has its own rules of behavior internal to its own loose structures. Ben is socialized in both of these "extra-institutional" ways.

These figures provide a link between Ben and the other children: like Ben, they are not contained by the society's institutions; but like the other children, they are able to move between social and extra-social spaces. They reveal Ben to be sufficiently socializable to interact with little friction with the social world; they also reveal that "extra-social" worlds such as that in which they move are only "extra-social" in the sense that they are "outside" of mainstream society; they are profoundly social in the sense of being a society with rules and structures. When Harriet speculates about the characteristics of Ben's "kind," by which she means something biological, she neglects this quite contemporary social "kind." This "extra-institutional" group slips out of the field of vision of modern disciplinary bureaucracy, becoming invisible, illegible, and unnamable. This invisibility forces Harriet
to conceive of a different extra-social group with which to compare Ben. The elsewhere she conceives of is at first temporal:

Harriet watched Ben with his followers and tried to imagine him among a group of his own kind, squatting in the mouth of a cave around roaring flames. Or a settlement of huts in a thick forest? No, Ben's people were at home under the earth, she was sure, deep underground in black caverns lit by torches—that was more like it. Probably those peculiar eyes of his were adapted for quite different conditions of light. (FC, 122)

Harriet's observations of the socially excluded produce narratives of extra-social, in this case extra-historical, possibility which make their exclusion comprehensible. At the novel's end, these speculative stories no longer project into the past but rather into the future, as she wonders about what will happen to Ben; the novel doesn't end so much as stop, with Harriet imagining various possible conclusions to the story, two of which fit quite nicely into models of examination and exclusion. On the one hand, Ben could be finally seen by someone other than Harriet, his difference acknowledged, by "an amateur of the human condition, perhaps an anthropologist of an unusual kind" (FC, 132). However, such an identification of Ben could not lead to any reasonable action, other than perhaps his being "sacrificed to science" so that his difference could be classified and categorized (FC, 132). On the other hand, Ben could up in the hands of the police: by this time, Harriet is well aware that his gang of youths is living off of petty crimes; in such a situation the story's end would revert to the ending she had earlier rescued him from: "[...] before very long he would be as he had been when she had found him dying" (FC, 132). This radical exclusion from mainstream society is often the end for such extra-social types. But Harriet imagines another possibility, external even to models of exclusion or examination: Ben has always somehow not been seen; what reason would there be for him to suddenly now be seen?

Or perhaps they could avoid being caught? [...] And why should they stay in this country? They could easily take off and disappear into any number of the world's great cities, join the underworld there, live off their wits. (FC, 132)
Harriet finds another elsewhere in which to fit Ben, here that of an indefinite elsewhere that could be anywhere in the world, or in the underworld; the story she invents for Ben's past and the likely story of his possible future coincide in the image of a world under the world. In the story of the future, "world" and "underworld" signify social spaces, a set of institutional constructions and their extra-social counterparts, while in the story of the past, those terms would represent natural domains, "world" as the surface of the Earth, "underworld" as its hidden depths, in which tribes gather for their own safety, the safety of being invisible. "La visibilité est un piège," writes Foucault, "visibility is a trap" (SP, 202). Ben seems to have the best defense against that trap: even when in the "world," he is in the "underworld"; even if he is quite visible, nobody is able to see him.

This underworld is figured even in the novel's opening scenes, as David and Harriet's bedroom turns into "a black cave that had no end"; the conception of the family in that scene also first generates the images which later surround Ben. At the end of the novel, when Harriet is most often alone in the house with Ben, she retraces the steps of that first thorough exploration of the empty house, now again almost empty:

Once, when she knew he was in the house, but could not find him, she went up from floor to floor looking into the rooms. The first floor, which was still inhabited [...] though three of the rooms were empty [...] The second floor, with its clean empty rooms. The third floor: how long since children's voices, their laughter, filled that floor and spilled out of the open window all over the garden? [...] But Ben was not in any of these rooms. She went on quietly up to the attic. From the high skylight fell a distorted rectangle of light, and in it stood Ben, staring up at dim sunlight. She could not make out what he wanted, what he felt ... He heard her and then she saw the Ben that this life he had to lead kept subdued: in one leap he had reached the dark edge of the eaves and vanished. All she could see was the obscurities of an attic that seemed boundless. She could hear nothing. He was crouching there, staring out at her ... She felt the hair on her head lift, felt cold chills—instinctive, for she did not fear him with her mind. She was rigid with her terror.

"Ben," she said softly, though her voice shook. "Ben ..." putting into the word her human claim on him, and on this wild dangerous attic where he had gone back into a far-away past that did not know human beings.

No reply. Nothing. A blotch of shadow momentarily dimmed the thin dirty light under the skylight: a bird had passed, on its way from one tree to another. (FC, 116-117)
The domestic space, which ought to be a space of "humanization" and socialization, where difference is contained and controlled, is here emptied of domesticity; in its place is Harriet's inability to "humanize" Ben, the failure of the name itself to put a "human claim" on him. This "human claim" takes on extra domestic force if we recall that the Hebrew word "Ben" means "son"; Harriet's claiming of Ben is a claiming of her biological relationship to him, which his non-response refuses. All possible socialization of Ben disappears for Harriet in the revelation, however brief, of his absolute difference, a revelation of what is concealed through the gesture of its concealment rather than its exposure. The darkness of the attic completely obscures him, but the moment of his self-concealment confirms for Harriet all her speculations about his "kind." The "wild dangerous attic," at the margins of domestic space, lit by "dim sunlight," figures the "black caverns lit by torches" of which Harriet dreams. All this, however, merely repeats the images in the scene of the empty house at the beginning of the novel; the uncanny natural images have been displaced onto Ben, and the attic as a "magical space" in which children can play has been replaced by this other "magic," this "nature" which, radically excluded by the production of domesticity, has returned to overwhelm it.

Harriet's attempt to put a "human claim" on Ben by using his name contrasts with the many moments in the novel when Ben is given other kinds of names, such as "gnome," "monster," or "enemy." The last of these is the name Harriet gives to the foetus on the evening when David tells the story. This is one of many names she has already begun to use to try to understand "this savage thing inside her" before Ben's birth (and even before David tells the story):

Phantoms and chimeras inhabited her brain. She would think, When the scientists make experiments, welding two different kinds of animal together, of different sizes, then I suppose this is what the poor mother feels. She imagined pathetic botched creatures, horribly real to her, the products of a Great Dane or a borzoi with a little spaniel; a lion and a dog; a great cart horse and a little donkey; a tiger and a goat. (FC, 41)
Harriet's inability to name the difference which inhabits her leads her to produce increasingly fantastic images in the effort to understand what is happening to her. The names she comes up with here derive from a grotesque image of scientific experimentation; elsewhere, she and the other characters in *The Fifth Child* seek images from different historical periods to "name" Ben, such as "primitive," "barbaric," and "alien," "hobgoblin," "dwarf," or "troll." The possibility that he is a "throwback" combines this synchronic scientific image and the diachronic reference to other historical periods. A similar mixing of temporal and spatial reference appears in Karl Marx's attempt, in *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, to "name" the "lumpenproletariat" which the modern system of production marginalizes:

Alongside decayed *roués* with dubious means of subsistence and of dubious origins, alongside ruined and adventurous off-shoots of the bourgeoisie, were vagabonds, discharged jailbirds, escaped galley slaves, swindlers, mountebanks, *lazzaroni*, pickpockets, tricksters, gamblers, *maquereaux*, brothel-keepers, porters, *literati*, organ-grinders, ragpickers, knife-grinders, tinkers, beggars—in short, the whole indefinite, disintegrated mass thrown hither and thither, which the French call *la bohème*.65

As Peter Stallybrass and Allon White point out, the marginalized group "stimulates [Marx's] linguistic productivity. Marx ransacks French, Latin and Italian in his attempt to grasp this 'indefinite, disintegrated mass'" (SW, 129). Marx's epithets for this "mass" lead to the general term "la bohème" which marks the "lumpenproletariat" in terms of a spatial "elsewhere"; Ben's names, in contrast, mark either a temporal difference which excludes him from the sphere of the "human" by projecting his difference into prehistory, or a biological difference which excludes him from another possible definition of the "human."

In both cases, the marginalized element moves to the center of linguistic description and becomes the subject or hero of the story; the hybrid names of the marginal mark the

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continued attempt to define and reintegrate the "indefinite and disintegrated," the attempt to locate Ben in the "grid" of a sociobiological taxonomy. As Stallybrass and White suggest, this naming follows from the initial construction of the marginalized as other:

[...] the exclusion necessary to the formation of social identity [...] is simultaneously a production at the level of the imaginary, and a production, what is more, of a complex hybrid fantasy emerging out of the very attempt to demarcate boundaries, to unite and purify the social collectivity. (SW, 193)

The exclusion of nature and history provides the basis for David and Harriet's domestic happiness, their own "social identity"; when a figure appears which will threaten that happiness, the process of trying to name that figure and that threat inevitably involves the use of a hybrid collection of names "ransacked" from the very realms which had been excluded from their domesticity, just as their final justification of their dream appeals to the "natural" quality of extra-European models. Ben cannot be rendered completely "other"; he is always represented as a "mixed" form, partly human but not entirely so, a cross between the natural and the social. This mixed form is even more uncanny than something which is clearly not human. Even when he is in his early teens, Harriet wonders about "Ben's people," a "race that reached its apex thousands and thousands of years" ago:

Did his people rape the females of humanity's forebears? Thus making new races, which had flourished and departed, but perhaps had left their seeds in the human matrix, here and there, to appear again, as Ben had? (And perhaps Ben's genes were already in some foetus struggling to be born?) (FC, 130)

Harriet constructs another narrative of crossbreeding, which overwhelms the difference between "his people" and "humanity," the boundary between the human and the nonhuman. The name or narrative would either mark Ben as "absolutely different" in a gesture meant to "purify the social collectivity" or place him within a known category of "normality" in order to integrate him within this collectivity; neither gesture can contain the "hybrid fantasies" which emerge from these demarcations. After Harriet rescues Ben from the institution, a conversation between Harriet and David sums up these two gestures:
She said, "He would have been dead in a few months. Weeks, possibly. [...] I couldn't stand it."
He said deliberately, "I thought that was the idea."
She cried out, "Yes, but you didn't see it, you didn't see —!
"I was careful not to see," he said. "What did you suppose was going to happen? That they were going to turn him into some well-adjusted member of society and then everything would be lovely?" (FC, 87)

David's sarcastic rejoinder emphasizes the distinction between exclusion, which would efface difference, and examination, which would name it, fix it in place: Ben's institutionalization "purified" the family, bringing back the happiness the Lovatts experienced before Ben's birth; it was not intended to "adjust" Ben so that he would fit into categories of social acceptability. The central phrase here is "careful not to see": the exclusion of Ben involved an active desire not to see him.

In contrast, one would expect that Ben's institutional examiners, doctors and teachers whose disciplines depend on observation, would carefully try to see him. However, the categories of observation Ben's examiners use stifle their linguistic productivity, and Harriet identifies their stock phrases as signs of an inability or unwillingness to see Ben's difference. As with the application of technology to the African landscape, the scientific "gridding" which constructs "fields of comparison" does not read the particularities of the "case," but rather tries to fit the case into its pre-existing categories. Dr. Brett, the family physician, is the first whose "blindness" Harriet confronts, when, eight months pregnant with Ben, she confronts the difficulty of naming Ben in terms which Dr. Brett will understand:

"[...] But this is different."
"Not that I can see."
"It's because you don't want to. It's not you who is carrying this—"
She cut off monster, afraid of antagonising him. (FC, 47)

The language which Harriet would use to name her experience is inappropriate in the medical context. Confronted with her inability to name her difficulties, Harriet insists on
the difference between this pregnancy and her other four, relying on the *image* of difference to convince Dr. Brett, rather than the name or story of difference:

"But it's not the same thing, it is absolutely different. I don't understand why you can't see it. Can't you see it?" She thrust out her stomach, which was heaving and—as she felt it—seething as she sat there. [...] No, he couldn't see it. Rather, he wouldn't—that was the point. Not only he, but all of them, they *wouldn't* see how different this was. (FC, 47-48)

Dr. Brett does not see the seething thing; rather, he relativizes the "difference" of this pregnancy by comparing it to Harriet's earlier pregnancies ("You never did find being pregnant easy, did you?"—FC, 47). She understands this as either incapacity or refusal: either he cannot see difference because he fits the pregnancy into an existing category and so need not consider the problem further, or he will not see the difference. When Harriet later returns to Dr. Brett when Ben is eighteen months old, the doctor again does not "see" what Harriet sees: "He's physically normal for eighteen months. He's very strong and active of course, but he's always been that. You say he's not talking? But that's not unusual. Wasn't Helen a late talker?" (FC, 63-64). Dr. Brett's diagnosis contains three different types of normalization and comparison: he fits Ben into a general category of knowledge about children's development ("physically normal for eighteen months," "late talker"), and compares him to his siblings (Helen was also a "late talker"), or compares him to himself ("he's always been that"). Ben's very existence, his "mere givenness," creates a new category within which his development can be normalized and processed. Within the active institutional observational structure of medicine, with its finely differentiated categories, Dr. Brett can produce a new category, Ben's own physical history, which makes his body as readable as either of the other two procedures of normalization does.

Thus, Dr. Brett uses the "fields of comparison" which his observational provides for him in order to write a "case history" which normalizes Ben's difference. The specialist to whom Dr. Brett later refers her, Dr. Gilly, "a shrewd professional woman," is also able to diagnose Ben's difference within the terms of medical discourse: "He is within the range of
normality" (FC, 103-104). Harriet does not respond by telling the *story* of Ben's difference, but rather by insisting upon the *image* of Ben's difference; she compels the doctor to look again at Ben, who is brought into the office:

> He stood with his shoulders hunched forward as if about to spring off somewhere. He was a squat, burly little figure, with a big head, the yellow stubble of his coarse hair growing from the double crown of his head into the point low on his heavy narrow forehead. He had a flattish flaring nose that turned up. His mouth was fleshy and curly. His eyes were like lumps of dull stone. For the first time Harriet thought, But he doesn't look like a six-year old, but much older. You could almost take him for a little man, not a child at all.

The doctor looked at Ben. Harriet watched them both. (FC, 104-105)

After Ben leaves the office, Harriet asks two questions: "Tell me, Dr. Gilly, what did you see?" and "He's not human, is he?" (FC, 105). Her response marks not the story of Ben's difference, but the image of her own reaction to that difference:

> Dr. Gilly suddenly, unexpectedly, allowed what she was thinking to express itself. [...] an unlicensed and illegitimate distress showed itself, and she looked beside herself, even tipsy.

> Then she decided to repudiate what Harriet knew was a moment of truth. She let her hands fall, smiled, and said jokingly, "From another planet? Outer space?" (FC, 105)

The invisibility of the examining observer "without qualities" is central to Foucault's description of institutional "disciplines" and reinforces the authority of disciplinary discourse. However, Harriet observes the examiner in the process of examination and "breaks through" or "sees behind" the façade of institutional objectivity. The breakdown of the smooth veneer of professionalism, the appearance of the "illegitimate" within the sphere of "normality" and the legitimate, gives the "truth" so revealed its peculiar power and continually fascinating character. The admission of this "truth" into the discourse of legitimation *intoxicates* the participant in that discourse; its poison can only be combated by hiding its effects, as Dr. Gilly quite promptly does, with a joke. Harriet responds to Dr. Gilly's gesture of concealment, however, not by appealing to the visible difference of Dr. Gilly's distress, but by reasserting Ben's visible difference:
"No. Well, you saw him, didn't you? How do we know what kinds of people—races, I mean—creatures different from us, have lived on this planet? In the past, you know? [...] How do we know that dwarves or goblins or hobgoblins, that kind of thing, didn't really live here? And that's why we tell stories about them? [...]"

"You think Ben is a throwback?" enquired Dr. Gilly gravely. She sounded quite prepared to entertain the idea.

"It seems to me obvious," said Harriet. (FC, 106-107)

Harriet's appeal to fairy stories and their mythic truth remains outside science, as does Dr. Gilly's "other" response to Ben. Scientific discourse constructs itself in part through the exclusion of such mythic stories and discourses, whose traces are left behind in fairy tales, which provide a sociocultural site of control of "women, sexuality, and nature," that is, precisely that which, in the case of Ben and Harriet, needs to be brought under control, fit back into scientific models of "l'individualité cellulaire, organique, génétique et combinatoire" (SP, 194). Dr. Gilly reasserts her scientific control of the conversation in two stages: first, the term "throwback" provides a point of contact between the mythic and the scientific, dissolving somewhat the boundary between the two. Then, she appeals to the authority of her discourse not to claim responsibility but to absolve herself of it: "Can't you see that it is simply outside my competence? If it is true, that is? Do you want me to give you a letter to the zoo, 'Put this child in a cage'? Or hand him over to science?" (FC, 107).

Ben is outside the boundaries of her discipline; he slips through the cracks between medical and scientific discourse. Dr. Gilly's reaction reveals the inability of these discourses, for which "la différence individuelle est pertinente" (SP, 194), to contain extremes of individual difference. In the absence of a discursive verification of Ben's difference, that difference appears not as a matter of his appearance but as matter of reception: it is the change in Dr. Gilly's behavior which is the actual mark of his difference. The reception or reading of Ben's image is the site of difference, not Ben's body itself.

The medical comparison of Ben to his siblings is doubled in the text by Harriet's comparison of Ben to his cousin Amy, the child born with Down's syndrome. Before Ben
is born, Harriet already remarks upon Amy's appearance, arguing that the phrase "mongol child" is appropriate even though "one shouldn't call them mongol," because "the little girl did look a bit like Genghis Khan, didn't she? A baby Genghis Khan with her squashed little face and her slitty eyes?" (FC, 22). This single term captures the same range of temporal, spatial, and cultural difference as the myriad names for Ben; unlike Ben's, however, hers is a diagnosable difference, one for which a category already exists. The scientific name for that category, "Down's syndrome," erases the representation of a sociocultural difference and replaces it with a biological difference; the authority of the scientific name fixes Amy's difference in relation to the range of the "normal." Nevertheless, when Amy is a baby, Sarah must still cover up her difference; when she gets older, no scientific name is necessary to mark the normalcy of her behavior: "Her head was too big, her body too squat, but she was full of love and kisses and everyone adored her" (FC, 66). Amy's behavior reveals that she is socializable, that she not only understands human interaction but relishes it, even expecting "everyone to adore her." In contrast, Ben is apart, standing to one side, and watching: "Ben's eyes were never off her [Amy], this other afflicted one, adored by everyone in the house. But did he know himself afflicted? Was he, in fact? What was he?" (FC, 67). Ben's apartness emphasizes the sense Harriet has that he is "absolutely different" and stimulates her questions, which hinge on the question of the difference between his difference and Amy's, that is, on a difference within difference. Amy's diagnosable difference stands in sharp contrast to Ben's difference, for which the language of illness, of "affliction," may not even be appropriate. Similarly, Harriet later contrasts the eight-year-old Paul with the six-year-old Ben: "Paul was even more difficult than Ben. But he was a normal 'disturbed' child, not an alien" (FC, 107). "Disturbed," like "Down's syndrome" or even "mongol," places Paul into a manageable category, the very category against which Harriet had once defined her own normalcy. The names for Ben's
difference, in contrast, do not have a specific relationship to the normal; neither disciplinary nor parental observation can fix that difference into their "comparative fields."

The goal of disciplinary observation is the production of "corps devenus exactement lisibles et dociles" (SP, 190); the solitary body is incorporated with the mass of bodies by situating it in relationship to the taxonomic categories known to the examining gaze. These categories involve the reading of the body in terms akin to those used by Dr. Brett and suggested by Lessing in the Prisons essays. As Peter Brooks suggests, a particular kind of literature corresponds to this production of legible bodies:

Along with the concern to make some version of the bodily mark [...] into a universal system of social semiotics and control goes a literature driven by the anxiety and fascination of the hidden, masked, unidentified individual. The invention of the detective story in the nineteenth century testifies to this concern to detect, track down, and identify those occult bodies that have purposely sought to avoid social scrutiny.66

The mark of difference on the body becomes the site of a control which reveals, unmask, and identifies the individual, disciplining the difference which that individual represents. The "underworld" into which Harriet projects Ben is a space in which such "occult bodies" can avoid "social scrutiny." What makes Ben's body so fascinating in The Fifth Child is that, in the middle of a disciplinary society constructed around such observation, and in a family whose parents explicitly understand themselves as observers and readers of their children, he remains invisible, escaping the control of medical and scientific discourse and so disturbing his parents that they are "careful not to see" him, lest his difference upset the structure of their family.

If The Fifth Child is an allegory of "social doom," it is in the displacement of blame that the allegory must function: the disciplinary society displaces its failure to fulfill its ideals onto a set of scapegoats, here figured in the inassimilable child and the mother who is

"responsible" for him. This tension lies, however, not in the application of the ideals but rather within the formulation of the ideals themselves; the ambiguities of examination and exclusion are then expressed by the technology of discipline: by its architecture, by its relation to nature, and most of all by television, the complete technologization of observation. Television is both the ultimate production of visibility and the ultimate site of the imaginary return of elements repressed in the production of that visibility; in the course of The Fifth Child, it and its immediate technological predecessor, radio, make increasing inroads into the Lovatts' protected domestic space, bringing back the "mere givenness" the chronotope would otherwise repress. In the early years of the dream, television itself was part of the world excluded from the dream: "This was a house—and this defined it for everyone, admiring what they could not achieve themselves—where television was not often watched" (FC, 24). The penetration of the domestic space by the technology of observation over the course of the years can be traced in the changing images of television and its role: if it is at first a grudgingly watched source of information on the state of the threatening outside world, which can still be suppressed, as when David tells the story, television later becomes a site of normalization of the children, where Ben learns to be like Helen and Luke by copying their television-watching behavior, in contrast to Jane, who learned by copying their father-watching behavior during the story. Finally, it becomes a place of complete identification, first for Paul, who increasingly "escaped into it" (FC, 107), and then for the gang, discretely observed by Harriet: "She watched them watching—but it was more as if they were actually part of the stories on the screen" (FC, 122). If one of the gang, Billy, would occasionally spring up and "seem almost to disappear into the screen" (FC, 123), that only anticipates the moment when Harriet sees them on television in a report on a riot, standing "in a group at one side, leering and jeering and shouting encouragement" (FC, 126). This chain of increasing identification with the technology of observation suggests that of Harriet's various speculative endings to Ben's
story, the most likely is the last, in which, after Ben's expected escape into the "underworld," he would reappear:

Perhaps quite soon, [...] she would be looking at the box, and there, in a shot on the News of Berlin, Madrid, Los Angeles, Buenos Aires, she would see Ben, standing rather apart from the crowd, staring at the camera with his goblin eyes, or searching the faces in the crowd for another of his own kind. (FC, 132-133)

This final ending brings together the various names and narratives which circle around Ben during the course of the novel, then transforms them according to the logic of television. Ben has been identified in terms of a set of spatial "elsewheres," just as the dream has been marked by its suppression of its "outsides"; they reappear here as the anonymous world of international urban life. The temporal "elsewheres" are here reduced to the indefinite future upon which Harriet is speculating, but she still continues to name Ben in terms of a hybrid, fairy-tale biology with the term "goblin eyes." Finally, Ben appears here as the purified observer, who "stands apart," stripped of all relationship to those around him. If The Fifth Child is an allegory of "social doom," then the society which it represents has become an empty form whose primary symbol is "the box," the "pure optical system" not of the Panopticon, but of television.

In the essays, Lessing sets a system of self-observation and self-discipline against the all-pervasive technology of disciplinary socialization. She explicitly compares the brutalizing and desensitizing effects of this technology to those of military indoctrination, one of the spheres which Foucault represents as a birthplace of modern discipline, but she nevertheless reads this process as accidental to the technology itself: "This is not the result of some cynical expert manipulator deliberately using knowledge of psychology, but an almost haphazard result of our technology" (PWC, 41). This technological "effect," however, is no accident; the colonizing and leveling force of television is the technological expression of the permeation of contemporary society by the models of observational discipline whose initial growth and application Foucault analyzes in Surveiller et punir.
When Lessing constructs the writer as a "detached observer" who will reflect social patterns for the society to observe, she appeals to a traditional literary model which has both a liberating and a colonizing side; her explicit development of the "colonizing" effect of television suggests that her construct of the writer is meant to oppose literature's potential liberating effects to the leveling effect of television which permeates the society in which she lives. In proposing observation as the solution to a problem of observation, however, she repeats a gesture which, Foucault argues, is fundamental to the social and geographical extension of the disciplines: "la prison a toujours été donnée comme son propre remède" (SP, 273).
Chapter Two
A Gaze through the Ages
Christa Wolf

2.1. A Statue

Woman is not simply an object, however. If we think in terms of the production of culture, she is an art object: she is the ivory casting or mud replica, an icon or doll, but she is not the sculptor.

Susan Gubar, "'The Blank Page' and the Issues of Female Creativity"67

Doris Lessing's model of observation does not account for the history of observation—either the general history of observation in her culture or the particular observational position which her own experience has constructed for her. In contrast, the issue of the gendering of observation—both in historical and personal terms—is central for Christa Wolf. The primary figure of observation in Wolf's texts, a figure which appears throughout her work, is that of a woman observing a woman observing. This figure destabilizes the structure of disciplinary observation as it is described by Foucault: the observer is no longer a neutral observer "without qualities," and the observed object, as an observer herself, is recognized as sharing the observational power of the observer. In some of Wolf's texts, such as Kindheitsmuster (1976) or Was bleibt (1990), a woman observes herself observing; often, the central figure of these texts is a writer reflecting on her own experiences, a writer who resembles Wolf in many ways. In other texts, such as Nachdenken über Christa T. (1969), the narrator is a woman writing about another woman; the object of narrative observation is herself depicted as an observer. Finally, Wolf has written some texts, such as the story Kassandra and the essays accompanying it, Voraussetzungen einer Erzählung (1983), in which both figures appear: in the essays, Wolf

describes how she came to be interested in the figure of Kassandra\textsuperscript{68}, who is the narrator of the story, one who, like the narrator of \textit{Kindheitsmuster}, narrates how she became an observer. As with Lessing, the positions available to these women observers are restricted by the positions available to women in the various societies in which they live. In order for Wolf's figures to become observers, they must first identify with the structures of power in their societies; their narratives then trace the gradual breakdown of this identification. In the texts I will analyze, this breakdown remains incomplete: neither Kassandra nor the narrators of \textit{Kindheitsmuster} and \textit{Was bleibt} are able to overcome their earlier strong identification with a social power structure they have come to renounce.

A brief representation of a woman observing a woman observing appears in "Ein Modell von der anderen Art," the first text in a small collection of essays and speeches, \textit{Ansprachen}, which Wolf published in 1988. The text was written as part of a series in the German newspaper \textit{Die Zeit}, in which various authors described a work of art which had made a strong impression on them. Wolf's text describes her encounter with a four-thousand-year-old figure of a woman:

\begin{quote}
Meines Erlebnisses bin ich mir sicher: Ich war ergriffen von jener Frauenstatue in einem der vorderen Säle des Archäologischen Nationalmuseums in Athen. Unsicher bin ich, wie ich mir selbst dieses Erlebnis erklären soll.\textsuperscript{69}
\end{quote}

Even before the second sentence opens up the issue of interpretation, the grammar of the first sentence, by shifting from the present to the past tense, produces a distance between Wolf's experience of the statue and her description of that experience. The following contrast between the still-present certainty of the experience and the uncertainty of interpretation opens up a more general distance between experience and interpretation, in

\textsuperscript{68} As I am using the German text of \textit{Kassandra}, I have retained the German spellings of the Greek names rather than using the standard English spellings.

\textsuperscript{69} Christa Wolf, "Ein Modell von der anderen Art," in Wolf, \textit{Ansprachen}, Darmstadt: Luchterhand, 1988, p. 9. Further references will be included in the text with the abbreviation MA.
which experience both precedes and demands interpretation. If it thus appears that Wolf
privileges the moment of experience over the moment of interpretation, Wolf's text
nevertheless then shifts from an emphasis on the past moment of experience to the present
moment of interpretation, listing a number of possible explanations for her strong response
to the statue:

   Vor-Wissen könnte ich anführen: ein seit Jahren anwachsendes Interesse an
der Ur- und Frühgeschichte besonders der Völker und Stämme des
Mittelmeers. Gewöhnen meiner Augen an die andersartige Schönheit
archaischer Formen; ein immer sich wiederholendes Angerührtsein durch
jene kleinen, meist weiblichen Ton-Idole aus dem Neolithikum, die oft
Alltagsszenen darstellen. (MA, 9)

Each of Wolf's potential explanations, whether knowledge, interest, habituation
(Gewöhnung), or comparison with other statues, marks a certain receptivity in herself, a
receptivity based more or less explicitly on repetition, most clearly with the small clay
idols. Here, the repetition lies both in her repeated experience of being touched by the idols
and in the idols themselves: depictions of "everyday scenes" are representations of
repetition. Such repetition even marks the one moment of difference here, the otherly
beauty of these artifacts to which she has become habituated through repeated contact; thus,
the repetition of difference allows for its interpretation. If the description of an experience
necessitates temporal distance, the interpretation of that experience necessitates a structure
of repetition which is itself temporal (duration being a precondition for repetition).
Interpretation thus places the description of experience into a sequence of events which can
be understood as a narrative; that narrative situates and explains the experience in terms of
its temporal relationships to other experiences.

This narrativization of a particular experience privileges the story of receptivity to
experience over experience itself. If the privileging of interpretation recalls Lessing's
tendency to displace experience in favor of the analysis, Wolf immediately rejects this
hierarchy, revealing her proposed interpretation as a rhetorical strategy used not to assert an
interpretation of repetition but rather to reject it in favor of an experience of difference:
"Aber diese Statue ist nicht klein. Sie ist ein Meter fünfzig groß. Sie ist aus Stein—
parischer Marmor—, weiß. Sie tut nichts. Sie blickt nicht an" (MA, 9). Wolf's receptivity
to this statue depends on three differences from the small clay Neolithic idols. The size of
the statue receives some special emphasis because its rhetorical position in the paragraph
marks the transition from an interpretation based on repetition to an emphasis on difference;
nevertheless, this physical difference between this statue and the small idols, reinforced by
the difference in materials, itself gives way to a further difference: the idols' depiction of
everyday scenes contrasts sharply with the apparent inactivity of this statue. This stasis
provides no basis for an identification based on repetition, yet the statue does represent
something: not women engaged in everyday activities, but a woman's gaze. This gaze
represents not repetition and the possibility of identification but rather the force of a
demand, which undermines the internal stability of an otherwise detached observer:

Ungewarnt, hatte ich keine Zeit, eine Abwehr aufzubauen. Meine
gemischten Gefühle irritierten mich: ein Aufblitzen von Wiedererkennen.
Konfrontation. Freudige Zuneigung. Fremdheit. Am seltsamsten: eine
Unterströmung von Trauer. Eine Empfindung: Die will was von dir. Wie
sieht die dich an.—Ein Blick durch die Zeiten. Durch übereinander-
gelagerte, ineinander verfilzte Schichten von Entfremdung. (MA, 10)

The defenseless observer's "mixed feelings" are inscribed in two ways: first, their
paratactic listing breaks the smooth flow of Wolf's text into individual, disjoint
articulations; second, a single sensation (Empfindung) replaces those mixed feelings
(Gefühle) even as the second person replaces the first. This replacement displaces the
fracturing effect of the statue's gaze from the observer's feelings onto the observer herself,
splitting her in two even as the multitude of feelings coalesce into a single overarching
sensation. If the visitor to a museum is a panoptic observer whose gaze is produced,
directed and controlled by the structure of the institution itself, the return of that gaze breaks
the otherwise unified panoptic observer apart; she becomes both observer and observed, both of the object she confronts and of herself.

The experience of a difference between this statue and other statues and between this statue and its observer exposes a split within the observer herself. Across the dash after this second description of the statue's gaze ("Wie sieht die dich an"), Wolf turns away from the specific form of that internal difference to address its mode of production, both within the encounter with this statue and within the history which this statue represents. That history, however, continually forces her to return to the statue's demand for self-confrontation; the exploration of the complex palimpsest of forms of alienation demands confrontation with the various modes of internal difference from oneself which one has actually experienced. The "gaze across the ages," through the palimpsest of alienation, always leads her back to herself, to the question not of that which is "essential" to the statue, but of that which is "essential" to herself: "Dieses Urbild, dessen Wesentliches hervorgetrieben wird, fordert mich heraus, mein Wesentliches zu suchen, mich ihm zu stellen" (MA, 10). Nevertheless, at every return to this question Wolf once again turns aside the direct, textual confrontation with this "essence" to address a more abstract aspect of the challenge the statue represents; here she emphasizes that the statue's demand does not involve material needs but comes "aus einer devotionalen Sphäre" (MA, 10). The same process of direct challenge to herself and a turn away to the question of the statue is then repeated:

 Welche Erfahrung in mir antwortet dieser Figur?
The experience (*Erfahrung*) which Wolf addresses here is of a different kind than the experience (*Erlebnis*) with which the text began; nevertheless, the two are related: in a 1990 interview with Therese Hörmig, Wolf questions "die Verarbeitungsart von Erfahrungen—jenen geheimnisvollen, nicht genug zu bestaunenden Vorgang, der aus einem Erlebnis erst eine Erfahrung macht."70 Wolf's usage in the description of the statue supports this distinction between a "raw" experience and the processed internalization of that experience: where she first speaks of "my experience (*Erlebnis*)," she wonders here which "experience (*Erfahrung*) in me" responds to the statue's challenge; as at the text's beginning, it is her raw response to the statue which is certain and "grasable" (she writes of having been "*ergriffen*"), while the internal transformation or interpretation of that response remains uncertain. The interpretation of the response leads her to the experience of a difference within herself, but that difference lies in the realm of uncertainty marked out even in the text's opening lines, in the distance between experience and description, experience and explanation, an experience (*Erlebnis*) and the abstraction "experience" (*Erfahrung*).

This uncertainty, which is missing from Lessing's discussion of "experience" in *Prisons*, opens up the possibility that Wolf's response to the statue could be determined *entirely* by this undefined internal "experience," making the statue a *tabula rasa* onto which she projects her own interpretive needs. Wolf introduces the trope of the "unbeschriebenes Blatt" precisely to offset this possibility: the terms of her reception of the statue, she claims, are inscribed in the statue itself and not only in her own experience. She disclaims both the possibility of interpreting (*deutbar*) the statue in any way she pleases and the possibility that she is using it (*verwendbar*) in ways which are inappropriate to the statue itself. An interpretation of the statue's effect on her should take into account its position in the society which produced it, the Neolithic culture of agriculture and domestication (of the production

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of "culture" in the etymological sense). That culture, however, already contained the seeds of the internal difference which Wolf finds in herself, and this difference, the "bridge" from the statue to herself, is already inscribed in the very need of those Neolithic peoples to produce this statue, and thus in the statue itself: an expression of the historical roots of that alienation which today is often articulated in terms of a distance between "nature" and "culture"—or between "woman" and "man," "female" and "male." The anxiety which this statue may have represented to its producers is repeated in Wolf, the contemporary woman observing the statue; this anxiety is, as Laura Mulvey suggests, paradigmatic: "[...] the woman as icon [...] always threatens to evoke the anxiety it originally signified."\(^7\) Wolf's reading of the statue, however, marks not only the anxiety the statue originally signified and the return of that anxiety in the moment of observation, but the history of the anxiety as well. Wolf's "gaze through the ages" touches on the period of the statue's production, the moment of her response to the statue, and the intervening millennia. Thus, the implicit "writing" which the statue represents is precisely the historical palimpsest of images of women which overlays any contemporary observation of such a statue, the transformation of women from the powerful goddesses of prehistory into the socially and politically powerless women of modern patriarchy, "die aus der Sphäre des Heiligen vertriebene, zum Trivialobjekt gemachte Frau" (MA, 12). If the statue represents a woman made into an object, that object is not trivial, is still sacred; the "writing" on this piece of paper describes a woman in a position of social and cultural power.

As Susan Gubar's examination of the trope of the "blank page" shows, that blankness is itself a cultural palimpsest, full of contradictory and highly gendered meanings. If the

blank page has been a figure for creative dilemmas, one which Wolf herself has used\textsuperscript{72}, it has also been a means of articulating the social position of women:

While male writers like Mallarmé and Melville also explored their creative dilemmas through the trope of the blank page, female authors exploit it to expose how woman has been defined symbolically in the patriarchy as a tabula rasa, a lack, a negation, an absence.\textsuperscript{73}

Wolf's insistence that the statue in front of her is \textit{not} a "blank page" thus appears to be more than just a rhetorical strategy: the insistence on the palimpsestic inscription of a history of the alienation of women displaces the traditional representation of women as a blank page or an absence. If woman today represents an "art object" fundamental to the production and reproduction of culture, Wolf's statue represents the original moment of production of culture, the moment, long since repressed, when the sacred representation of the figure of a woman, if already an expression of the original moment of alienation, marked not her absence from the realms of real cultural power but her central presence in it, not as an object of representation but as a subject intimately involved, as priestess, goddess, and field-worker, in the production and reproduction of culture.

Despite her clear rejection of identification as the basis of her reaction to this statue, Wolf nevertheless clearly identifies with the statue insofar as it is a statue of a \textit{woman}. If this figure of a woman observing a woman observing is, as I have suggested, paradigmatic for Wolf, this text is nevertheless not truly paradigmatic of Wolf's use of this figure: here, Wolf does not develop the details of her experience, whether \textit{Erlebnis} or \textit{Erfahrung}; in her longer works, the figure of the observing woman never fails to turn a critical and analytical eye back onto herself, onto the observational process in which she is engaged. Here, Wolf

\textsuperscript{72}For example, in \textit{Kindheitsmuster}: "Was du heute, an diesem trüben 3. November des Jahres 1972, beginnst, indem du, Packen provisorisch beschriebenen Papiers beiseite legend, einen neuen Bogen einspannst, noch einmal mit der Kapitelzahl 1 anfängst." (Christa Wolf, \textit{Kindheitsmuster} (1976), Frankfurt am Main: Luchterhand, 1989. Further references will be included in the text with the abbreviation KM.) The blank piece of paper reappears later in \textit{Kindheitsmuster}: "Das Blatt blieb eingespannt, neun Tage lang hat keiner auf der Maschine geschrieben, ein seltener Vorfall" (KM, 410).

\textsuperscript{73}Gubar, "The Blank Page," pp. 305-306.
does not present the details of the "essential" or the "experiences" which the statue might have brought forth in her; rather, she presents an outline of the historical and contemporary basis for an intelligent response to the statue, a response which takes into account the twin history of the representation and repression of women in patriarchal society. A woman's reception of the representation of an observing woman becomes the basis for an outline of that double history, a brief sketch which positions both the contemporary observer and the historical representation with respect to the history which both connects and separates them.

If the text, because of this absence of self-criticism, is not paradigmatic of Wolf's fiction, it is nevertheless paradigmatic of Wolf's work in another way: it is called "A Model of a Different Kind," and Wolf is continually concerned with "alternatives" to standard models of women, history, and narrative. However, just as she does not present the details of her confrontation with her own experience here, she also does not present the details of such an alternative model, preferring to leave the question open:

Wenn die uns suggerierten Kurzzeit-Modelle sich immer schneller abnutzen, immer häufiger ausfallen—ist dann nicht vielleicht der Sog, der von diesem Standbild ausgeht, ein Zeichen für Sehnsucht nach Modellen einer ganz anderen Art? (MA, 12)

This last, speculative description of her own response to the statue marks both the primary subject of Wolf's own writing and also the place of the possibility of otherness in her work. Although she consistently addresses the problem of alternatives to patriarchal or capitalist social structures, her texts nevertheless focus more on "signs of longing" for such alternatives rather than the alternatives themselves. She inscribes this longing for the possibility of difference in her texts through the tension between the experience of difference and the interpretation of repetition. This possible difference finds expression in Wolf as the moment of alienation within the observing woman, the moment when her
subjectivity confronts the experience of being made into an object and when she breaks out of her position as object to assert her subjectivity.

The texts I will analyze in order to trace the role of observation in Wolf’s writing reveal three different aspects of the figure of the observing woman. In Kindheitsmuster, a woman writes, several decades later, the story of her childhood in Nazi Germany. Her distance from the child’s ideological experiences render her as far from her childhood, in a sense, as the statue in the Athenian museum is from Wolf herself: Wolf can still identify with the figure of the Neolithic marble statue, while the narrator of Kindheitsmuster is no longer able to identify even partially with the child she was. The narrative becomes a search for moments of identification between the narrator and her child self, moments which are extremely difficult to locate, because the narrator does not want to identify with those aspects of her child self which were strongly identified with the ideological currents of Nazism. The search for identification becomes the search for those moments of ideological disidentification which the child herself already experienced.

If Kindheitsmuster thus tells the story of identification across a history which undermines identification, Kassandra contains the narrative which is missing from Kindheitsmuster, the narrative of progressive disidentification from power: recalling her life moments before her imminent death at the hands of the Greek queen Klytaimnestra, the Trojan princess and seer Kassandra traces her own initial identification with the structures of Trojan power and her progressive loss of that identification. The central moments of this narrative of disidentification are Kassandra’s famous prophecies, in Wolf’s version less the predictions which no one believes than the expressions of the gradual collapse of Kassandra’s identification with her childhood image of Trojan power. Both her prophecies and her retrospective narrative involve the projection of a present psychic loss onto either the future (Kassandra’s psychic disturbance as Troy’s downfall) or Klytaimnestra (Kassandra’s loss of an identification with power as Klytaimnestra’s intimate association

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with power—and her future loss of that power). If her monologue traces her progressive disidentification with the structures of Trojan power, that monologue is nevertheless not independent of those structures: in order to relate her confrontation with power, she must use, in the narrative of that confrontation, the structures of power which she would resist.

Wolf's first publication after the fall of the Berlin Wall in November of 1989 was a story entitled *Was bleibt*, which appeared in June of 1990. Here, Wolf describes a woman observing her own reactions to becoming the object of surveillance by the secret police. As she had already written a version of the story in 1979 but did not publish the text until after the East German secret police had ceased to exist, this story generated a tremendous controversy upon its publication. Wolf was attacked in the German press for trying to stylize herself as a dissident in a society in which she had received numerous privileges. The controversy, which began with several reviews extremely critical of Wolf's text and of Wolf herself but eventually became a larger discussion about the role of intellectuals both in East Germany and West Germany since World War Two, failed to address the textual parallels between the narrator's self-construction as an "observing woman," a writer who understands her work as "observation," and the role of the secret police as observers in a society of discipline. If one reads the narrator as claiming a radical difference between herself and the secret police who are observing her, the text might appear as an attempt to describe a dissident. However, the text repeats the structure which appears in *Kindheitsmuster* and *Kassandra*, narrating the writer's struggles with her identification with a political system of which she is increasingly critical but from which she cannot entirely separate herself. Here, the figure of the woman observing the effects of an internalized discipline upon herself is complicated by the explicit presence of an external disciplinary observer; that presence renders her continuing identification with a political system which has begun to criminalize her all the more suspect. Far from being a narrative which claims the narrator's innocence, *Was bleibt* is, like the other text by Wolf which I
analyze here, a narrative of continuing implication, as both subject and object of observation, in structures of disciplinary power from which one desires to escape.
2.2. Marble Statues

Kennst du das Haus, auf Säulen ruht sein Dach,
Es glänzt der Saal, es schimmert das Gemach,
Und Marmorbilder stehn und sehn mich an:
Was hat man dir, du armes Kind getan?
Kennst du es wohl?
Dahin! Dahin
Möcht ich mit dir, o mein Beschützer, ziehn!
— Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahren

The palimpsest—"übereinandergelagerte, ineinander verfilzte Schichten"—is a dominant feature of Wolf's narratives. A woman's voice involved in a process of remembering explores the past in order to understand the present, as Wolf's own voice does in the brief description of the statue. A description of this narrative process appears in Patricia Herminghouse's comparison of Wolf's Kindheitsmuster to another Second World War novel by an East German writer, Hermann Kant's Der Aufenthalt: "Anders als Christa Wolfs fragmenthafte Rekonstruktion ihrer höchst komplexen Erinnerungsvorgänge hält Kant sich an die Perspektive des allwissenden Erzählers." In Kindheitsmuster, Wolf's narrator is anything but an "all-knowing" figure separate from the narrated material; the process of narration in Wolf's text becomes part of the narrated material. More precisely, the "narrative" consists of the "extremely complex process of remembering" itself, rather than just the remembered events alone. This generates a palimpsestic temporal structure involving the narrator's present experience as well as the narration of her past experiences. This palimpsest appears in many concrete forms in the text: literary citations, dreams, photographs, city maps, and even seasons all appear in various "layers." The palimpsest of songs provides a concise introduction to the text's basic structure:

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Lenka kamen nicht die Tränen. Sie sagte: Scheiße.

Nelly hat das Jahr 45 hindurch kein einziges dieser Lieder kennengelernt. Sie hat ihr grünes Kunstlederheft weitergeführt, in das sie sich ganz andere Liedanfänge notierte. ("Eine Trommel geht in Deutschland um"—"Wenn alle untreu werden ") Noch zwei, drei Jahre, dann wird sie singen—unter ihren Füßen das Pflaster einer Stadt, deren Namen sie jetzt noch nicht einmal gehört hat: "Bau auf, bau auf." Und sie wird sich bemühen, die Lieder aus jenem grünen Heft, das übrigens abhanden gekommen ist, zu vergessen. Es gelingt niemals. Die einander überlagernden Schichten der Lieder. (KM, 516-517)

The mutually overlapping layers of songs figure the consciously produced palimpsest of *Kindheitsmuster* by representing the connections between the narrator's personal history and the history of Germany in her lifetime. The anonymous narrator is an East German woman, born in 1929, whose work from 1972 to 1975 on an autobiographical manuscript (this book) provides one narrative thread. She writes of herself not in the first but in the second person ("ihr habt gesungen"—plural here because she is singing with others). One of her subjects is a trip she made with her family—brother (Lutz), husband (H.—his "name" does not appear in this passage), and daughter (Lenka)—from East Germany to Poland in the summer of 1971; this drive from Kostrzyn to Slubice is part of the trip back from a visit to the city where Lutz and his sister grew up in the thirties and forties (in what was then part of Germany). Both this childhood town and Kostrzyn figure the palimpsestic quality of the narrator's experience in their provincial names: while she was growing up, the narrator would have known Kostrzyn as Küstrin, and she now refers to her hometown as "L., heute G." (KM, 12).

During the trip, the narrator, her husband, and Lutz sing the

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76 A similar renaming appears in the text's references to street names, both in Poland and in East Germany. In Poland, Polish again replaces German: "[...] du kannst auf dem an der Hauswand angebrachten Straßenschild die polnische Schreibweise des Wortes 'Sonnenplatz' erahnen: Plac Słoneczny, was du ohne Vermittlung durch das Russische kaum entziffert hättest" (KM, 23). In East Germany, the renaming of streets replaces the heroes of National Socialism with the heroes of Soviet Socialism: "Es war dir eigentlich
songs of their adulthood, Communist songs which understand the history of Germany from a Communist perspective, so that a German bullet killing a German Communist during the Spanish Civil War is a tragic moment. In their childhood, they sang different songs, the songs of the Hitler Youth. This childhood provides the text's other primary narrative, but the narrator uses the third person and the name "Nelly" to speak of her own childhood experiences. By avoiding the first person, the narrator constructs a distance not only between herself and Nelly but also between herself and Nelly's historical context: "Weil es nämlich unerträglich ist, bei dem Wort 'Auschwitz' das kleine Wort 'ich' mitdenken zu müssen: 'Ich' im Konjunktiv Imperfekt: Ich hätte. Ich könnte. Ich würde. Getan haben, Gehorch haben" (KM, 312). Not only does this "unbearable" association of the word "Auschwitz" and the first person singular compel the narrator to write of her childhood in the third person, she does not complete these sentences. As Ruth Waldeck points out, any completion of these sentences is thus possible, such as "ich hätte den Befehlen im Lager gehorcht," and therefore, the narrator "beläd sich, im Konjunktiv Imperfekt, mit unerträglicher Schuld." This avoidance of a first person burdened by a potential and hence limitless guilt, however, is doubled by a desire to be able to use the first person to speak of all her experiences, a desire expressed in the text as the goal of the text: "Schließlich kann man ein Spiel mit sich um sich beginnen. Ein Spiel in und mit der zweiten und dritten Person, zum Zwecke ihrer Vereinigung" (KM, 216). The narrator's

Immer lieb gewesen [...], nach dem Kriege nur durch Städte zu gehen, deren Lenin- und Stalinalleen du nicht als Adolf-Hitler- und Hermann-Göring-Straßen gekannt hast" (KM, 406). The narrator thus avoids a personal confrontation with the palimpsest of renaming which took place after the war not only in Poland and East Germany but in West Germany as well.

The narrator's ability to decipher the Polish name through Russian figures another aspect of her complicated life narrative: if she did not learn Polish in this city which is now in Poland, she did learn Russian in what was, at the time when this book was written, East Germany. At that time, a further layer had already been added to the palimpsest: at least in East Berlin, "Stalinallee" had already been given back its old name, "Frankfurter Allee." Since East Germany reunited with West Germany, the layering has continued, and, recently, Berlin's "Hans-Beimler-Straße" has been renamed as well.

noncorrespondence with Nelly and the distance she constructs from Nelly through this "game" with grammatical person generate a desire for correspondence, a desire problematized by the narrator's desire not to "correspond" with Nelly's identification with the Third Reich and hence with Nelly's potential, if unrealized, co-responsibility for the crimes that the word "Auschwitz" later came to symbolize. Her childhood in the Third Reich compels the narrator to avoid the use of the first person, but at the same time it compels her to write about her childhood, to address her own experiences and those of her family: "Alle diese Leben, über die dir ein Urteil nicht zusteht. Über die man schweigen könnte, wenn nicht sie, gerade sie von den mörderischen Zufällen dieser Zeit besonders abhängig wären" (KM, 254). The "murderous chances" of her time compel the narrator to confront the problem of memory represented so clearly by the palimpsest of songs of her childhood, youth, and adulthood. If the narrator remembers these songs, despite the loss of the book in which Nelly had documented them, she is otherwise confronted not only with the loss or nonexistence of documents, of "Erinnerungshilfen" (KM, 17), but also with the loss, whether through repression or the simple passage of time, of the memories themselves, which, like the songs she still remembers, she had long tried to forget.

Sifting through this palimpsest of memories and documents, the narrator engages in two forms of self-observation: of her adult self, traveling to the city of her childhood and writing the book exploring the difficulties of memory, and of her childhood self, growing up in the Third Reich and then, at the end of the war, fleeing from the advancing Russians. As in "Ein Modell von der anderen Art," the text centers on the figure of a woman observing a woman observing: the narrator not only recognizes Nelly's construction herself as an observer, she also reflects on and analyzes her own observation of Nelly. Like the narrator, Nelly is also an observer of women: of her mother, Charlotte Jordan, and of two of her teachers, Julia Strauch and Maria Kranhold, but most of all of herself. All these representations of women observing women problematize the identification and distancing
which appear in the narrator's own relationship to Nelly: the moment of observation produces a distance which disrupts the possibility of identification even as that observation depends upon a pre-existing desire for identification. Nevertheless, Nelly's self-observation provides a clear continuity with the narrator's and opens up possibilities for the narrator, through the very process of remembering and narrating, to bridge the distance between herself and Nelly.

Photographs play a central role in the narrator's memories; the most important ones are not the ones she still has, but those which the family lost when they fled their house in the face of advancing Soviet troops in January 1945: "Du begannst Fotos zu sichten, die nur spätrlich zur Verfügung stehen, denn das dicke braune Familienalbum wurde wahrscheinlich von den späteren Bewohnern des Hauses an der Soldiner Straße verbrannt" (KM, 18). One other lost photograph was not in that album; a professional portrait of Nelly's mother hung on the wall of her grandmother's living room:

Nelly hat es auswendig gelernt, für Zeiten wie diese, da es nicht mehr existiert. [...] Ist es denkbar, daß ihre Mutter Lebenszustände gekannt hat, da sie es über sich brachte, in einem solchen bräunlichen Kleid mit weißem Brustesatz und Spitzenkragen, vor allem aber mit einem derartigen Wagenrad von Hut (der ihr stand—and wie er ihr stand! doch seit wann achten Mütter darauf, was ihnen steht?)—so angetan also über die Richtstraße zu wandeln und in Knispels Fotoladen einzutreten, um ein Kunstporträt zu verlangen. Mit Hut. (KM, 126-127)

If the imagined story of the taking of the photograph helps Nelly to understand her mother's motivations in having the portrait made, she also imagines the story of the photograph itself, inscribing the moment of its potential loss in her memory of the photograph. Loss is, however, the determining figure of the picture even before Nelly inscribes it in her memory: taken two years before her mother met her father, Bruno

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The name of the street on which Nelly's family's house stood provides another example of a palimpsest: "Bruno Jordan hat in einem scharfsinnigen Schriftsatz dem Magistrat der Stadt bewiesen, daß 'Am Galgenberg' für einen Lebensmittelladen eine geschäftsschädigende Adresse ist, und erhält die Erlaubnis, sich als Anlieger der Soldiner Straße zu betrachten und zu benennen" (KM, 162). The permission to identify the store with an inexact address underscores the arbitrary, even fictional, character of the naming of streets, even when the names do not produce a palimpsest of references to the political heroes of different eras.

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Jordan, it marks, for Nelly, a moment in which Charlotte Menzel (not yet Jordan) is not only not her mother but might have conceivably never become her mother. The various stories which the photograph might tell include some which do not lead to Nelly as their inevitable result; thus, the picture also represents Nelly's potential loss of herself, a terrifying possibility presented to her by the family's maid:

Jeder Mensch ist zuerst nicht da, befindet Frau Elste, bis seine Eltern heiraten.—So ist es also denkbar, daß zwei Eltern sich gar nicht treffen, auch nicht heiraten und einem bestimmten—zum Leben bestimmten—Menschen die Möglichkeit, auf die Welt zu kommen, einfach entgeht?—Dummchen! So was passiert alle Tage. [...] Das war nun das Trostloseste, was man ihr hätte mitteilen können. (KM, 120)

This threat stimulates Nelly's imagination in two opposite directions: "Wenn es den Kitzel der Selbstzerstörung gab, gab es doch auch die Wonne der Selbsterschaffung" (KM, 121). She replaces her self-destructive fantasies, which involve "die Rückführung aller ihrer Körperteile ins Nichts" (KM, 121), with the pleasure of self-creation, telling herself the story of how her parents met, and thus of how she herself could come into being: "Nelly, die sich die Geschichte von ihrem glücklichen Ende her erzählen kann, kichert in ihrem Bett [...]" (KM, 122). By retelling her parents' story in her own voice, Nelly transforms the threatening possibilities of her parents' lives into a narrative of self-creation; such a narrative contains the threat represented by the photograph's representation of Charlotte's own self-construction, which otherwise remains independent of her role as Nelly's mother.

Further, insofar as the photograph not only figures Charlotte's construction of an image herself as an object of observational desire but also her preservation of that image in an artistic portrait (Kunstporträt), an anticipatory moment of self-loss is marked in the photograph itself. The image of Nelly observing the photograph thus tells a double story of self-creation and self-loss, both Nelly's and Charlotte's; Nelly's commitment of the photograph to memory extends this concern with loss and preservation which is already inscribed both in the photograph itself and in her relationship to the photograph.
The narrative of self-creation serves to contain the threat represented by narratives of self-loss or self-destruction. However, if Charlotte was once able to enjoy the pleasure of self-creation herself, she is now restricted, by the very fact of Nelly's existence, to her role as mother: as mother, Charlotte is beautiful, but that beauty is independent of any possible self-construction:


From Nelly's perspective, the experience is certain, but its interpretation is not: the picture comforts her, but she does not know why. Rather than intervening to provide a retrospective interpretation of Nelly's feelings, the narrator tells the story of Nelly's reception of the photograph: a changing interpretation of the mother's gaze, the addition of a layer of pain to her expression, producing Nelly's involuntary association with Frau Elste's favorite song. The citation emphasizes Nelly's interaction with the photograph as a moment of observation through the exchange of gazes between "marble statues" and the song's lyrical subject; in Goethe's Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre, Mignon sings the song to Wilhelm:

Melodie und Ausdruck gefielen unserm Freunde besonders, ob er gleich die Worte nicht alle verstehen konnte. Er ließ sich die Strophen wiederholen und erklären, schrieb sie auf und übersetzte sie in's Deutsche. Aber die Originalität der Wendungen konnte er nur von ferne nachahmen. Die kindliche Unschuld des Ausdrucks verschwand, indem die gebrochene Sprache übereinstimmend, und das Unzusammenhängende verbunden ward. Auch konnte der Reiz der Melodie mit nichts verglichen werden.79

The determining factor in the disappearance of the "innocence" of Mignon's original text is Wilhelm's production, in his translation, of a seamless, continuous whole in place of Mignon's disjoint and fractured original. This seamless whole is figured in the song itself.

79Goethe, Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre, p. 240.
as the "marble statues"; Wilhelm's translation thus figures Wilhelm himself as one of these marble statues to whom Mignon sings her appeal for help ("Dahin / Möcht ich mit dir, o mein Beschützer, ziehn!") even as he is also the one who refigures Mignon in his own terms. Mignon's self-construction in the song falls prey to her normalization by others. Wolf's text, like Goethe's song, also figures the relationship between self-construction and normalization through an exchange of gazes, but both Nelly and her mother could be identified either with the marble statues or with Mignon: either Nelly's gaze at the photograph or the photograph's gaze at Nelly could be asking: "Was hat man dir, du armes Kind, getan?"

If Nelly associates herself with Mignon through the song, then the role of Frau Elste becomes central: she is the one whose frank comments revealed to Nelly the accidental character of her own existence; Nelly's narrative of self-creation, her self-consolation, then parallels the image of Charlotte's self-creation, which becomes a confirmation of Nelly's own possibilities. However, Nelly's own "translation" of the problem of self-destruction into a narrative of self-creation produces a seamless whole from a set of proliferating details or fragments (all the parts of her body dissipating into nothing); if Frau Elste's story makes Nelly into a threatened Mignon, she transforms herself from a Mignon into a marble statue, in the process inscribing Charlotte's self-construction only as a part of Nelly's—and Charlotte becomes a Mignon, one fragment in Nelly's narrative whole. The textual interaction of song and photograph produces both identification and distance between mother and daughter: on the one hand, both are Mignons (or both are marble statues); on the other hand, each finds her own self-construction limited by the other's.

The song allows for a further complication of the interpretation of this passage. At some point in the transmission of Goethe's text from his novel to Wolf's, the first person has been transformed into the second: where Goethe wrote "Marmorbilder [...] sehn mich an," Wolf's text reads "sehn dich an." This revision of the song's text is consistent both with Goethe's original text and with the image of revision in Wolf's text: where Goethe's
Wilhelm translates Mignon's song into German, Wolf's narrator refers to the rewriting (Umdichtung) of the "Song of the Good Comrade" with the new story of Hans Beimler's death. Just as both these "translations" figure the revision of a song for one's own purposes, the narrator transforms Goethe's song to conform to the pronominal structure of Kindheitsmuster: the second person replaces the first. This transformation allows the narrator to insert herself into the play of gazes figured by Goethe's song: she herself becomes both Mignon and marble statue, with Nelly at the other end of those gazes. The narrator as Mignon would have Nelly respond to her determined questioning, give her information about the house and the land where she once lived; with the gazes reversed, the narrator, too, becomes a marble statue who fixes and limits Nelly's self-construction according to her own needs: Nelly becomes a figure for the narrator's manipulation. This revision of the story would be consistent with Nelly's own narrative procedures: she also makes the material she works with, the story of her parents' meeting, conform to her own needs. Like Nelly's narrative, the transformation of the song to conform to the text's pronominal structure introduces the narrator into a scene from which she has otherwise been absent; however, when the narrator now appears more explicitly in the ensuing completion of the discussion of the photograph, she does not even speak in her usual second person:


Ein Foto mit Hut aber besitzt sie nicht von sich. (KM, 127)

Here, after her initial comment on the story she has just told, the narrator speaks of a self of indeterminate age, identified only as "the daughter" of her mother. This self is both Nelly and the narrator at once: the temporal reference of "viele Jahre später" may suggest that the narrator is now referring exclusively to her adult self and not the child Nelly she left
behind, but such a reference ("mit den Jahren") appears in the previous paragraph as well, and there the narrator still speaks of Nelly despite the passage of time. Thus, the memory of the photograph of the mother produces a moment of identification between the narrator's adult and childhood selves, as the daughter of this mother—more precisely, as the daughter of this representation of her mother not as mother, but as daughter. This identification allows the daughter to accept her copying of the mother's various gestures and expressions, which confirm the mother's assertion of their similarity. This similarity is not the result of a conscious self-construction but of an unconscious "imitation" (Nachahmung) which recalls the relationship between Mignon's song and Wilhelm's translation: "die Originalität der Wendungen konnte er nur von ferne nachahmen." The daughter's unconscious imitation of her mother thus marks the displacement of the daughter's own originality. The next sentence of Wolf's text, doubly emphasized by its position not only in a paragraph of its own but also as the last sentence of a chapter, appears, with its "aber," to mark out a new position of independence and self-construction for the daughter, but the absence of such a photograph implies that the daughter has never been able to construct herself as the mother once could. Thus, the claim of independence from the mother, of a moment of nonrepetition, a claim which would assert the daughter's own potential self-construction, finally depends on the failure, or at least the nonexistence, of such self-construction. If the narrator is able to use the figure of the mother's photograph to produce a strongly reinforced point of contact between herself and Nelly, that point of contact nevertheless reveals the tension in the daughter's self-construction between an unsuccessful assertion of difference and a resisted recognition of repetition, a tension also marked by her narrative splitting of herself into two separate grammatical persons. If the narrator is thus able to overcome the distance she feels from her childhood self, she is nevertheless unable to use this moment to construct herself as a unified and independent figure capable of
saying "I." The narrator is capable of temporary identification with Nelly, but not of an assertive self-construction which would parallel Nelly's.

The text's palimpsestic structure thus allows the narrator to narrate her story in search of possible moments of identification with Nelly; with these identifications, however, she risks effacing Nelly's perspective in favor of her own, becoming a marble statue for Nelly's exploited Mignon. As the interaction of song and photograph makes clear, this textual palimpsest includes more than just songs; in addition, the palimpsest of literary references includes the narrator's references to Bertolt Brecht, Pablo Neruda, and Ingeborg Bachmann as well as Nelly's reading of novels celebrated by the National Socialists, such as *Volk ohne Raum* and *Soll und Haben* (not to mention the SS magazine *Das Schwarze Korps*). The narrator also includes many references to Adolf Hitler, slogans which Nelly identified with, such as: "Der sportlich erzogene Mensch beider Geschlechter ist der Staatsbürger der Zukunft. Adolf Hitler" (KM, 139). Nelly's identification with this ideology, with which the narrator not only no longer identifies but which she also finds abhorrent, makes Nelly so problematic for the narrator. The palimpsest of literature also includes, however, authors with whom both Nelly and the narrator identify: primarily Goethe himself, but also Friedrich Schiller. Nelly, like any young German since the nineteenth century, read these authors in school; each of the teachers who acted as role models for her, the "NS-Frauenschaftsleiterin" Julia Strauch during the war (KM, 296) and the "gläubige Christin" Maria Kranhold after the war (KM, 523), presented her with a different version of these authors. This observation is less Nelly's than the narrator's—and Maria Kranhold's, who assigns her pupils an essay on Schiller:

Der Aufsatz behandelte den Marquis Posa in Schillers "Don Carlos." Maria Kranhold hatte ihnen ins Gesicht hinein behauptet, dieses Stück sei—wie übrigens auch der "Wilhelm Tell"—in den letzten Jahren des Nationalsozialismus an den deutschen Schulen nicht mehr behandelt worden, schon wegen eines einzigen Satzes: Geben Sie Gedankenfreiheit, Sire!—Alle, besonders aber Ute, Helene, und Nelly, hatten diese

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Behauptung erbittert bestritten. Eine Verleumdung, daß an ihren Schulen nicht der ganze Schiller behandelt wurde. (KM, 522-523)

Thus, each of her teachers taught Nelly a different Schiller, a difference dependent not on variant literary interpretations of Schiller but on the ideological climate in which each taught. The narrator does not explicitly side with Maria Kranhold in this argument, but she does mark Maria's silent commentary on her pupil's stubborn contradiction:


This conversation takes place during Nelly's first visit to Maria Kranhold's apartment, which Nelly herself marks as a doubling of an earlier visit to Julia Strauch's apartment\textsuperscript{80}; the scene reveals a palimpsest of visits as well as a palimpsest of Goethes. Here, Nelly's Goethe is still Julia's: she still prefers her old teacher's emotional recitations to her new teacher's subtle glances.

Once again, however, Wolf does not cite Goethe exactly; the opening line of the play actually reads "\textit{Heraus in eure Schatten, rege Wipfel}" and not "\textit{Hinaus.}" If this does not radically change the meaning of Goethe's text the way the citation of the song does, it does repeat the gesture of misquoting the author who is \textit{the} classic author of German literature. As I suggested before, the misquotation of Mignon's song is consistent both with Goethe's original text and with the basic narrative gesture of Wolf's text. In contrast, misquotation in a context where the meaning is not radically changed and where the cited text does not itself seem to allow for the possibility of such misquotation emphasizes the importance of

\textsuperscript{80}The palimpsest of visits involves some uncanny repetitions as well as some clear differences: "Es ist gerade ein Jahr und drei Monate her, daß Nelly bei einer anderen Lehrerin, Julia, in der Schlagetersstraße in L. Haferflockenkekse gegessen hat. Das Zimmer dort war genauso von Büchern umstellt wie dieses ehemalige Studierzimmer von Maria Kranholds Vater. Die Kranhold sagt, es könnten, wenigstens zum Teil, die gleichen Bücher gewesen sein, sie ist zwanzig Jahre jünger als Julia, sie hat braunes, nicht schwarzes Haar, trägt auch einen Knoten" (KM, 525).
misquotation as such to Wolf's narrative. Semantically insignificant misquotation of Goethe is an attack on the "marble statue" of classic German literature; the "Mignon" who thus attacks such a "marble statue" could be either Nelly or the narrator: if Nelly is misreading the Goethe Maria Kranhold gave her, she would defend herself against the "translation" of Julia Strauch's Goethe (and the National Socialist Schiller as well) into Maria Kranhold's; in contrast, the narrator's misquotation would distance her from Nelly's nonresponse to the words which were "strange" to her and also from Nelly's identification with Julia's Goethe. If such misreading allows both Nelly and the narrator to resist others' attempts to impose a particular Goethe upon them, the gesture of misreading nevertheless doubles the Nazis' own manipulation of the classic canon. Such misquotation or manipulation of the classic text serves to disable those elements of the classic text which are threatening: if the Nazis would censor Schiller in order to suppress the idea of "freedom of thought," Nelly would censor Maria Kranhold's Goethe in order to privilege the Goethe Julia Strauch had read for her, and the narrator would censor Nelly's Goethe in order to distance herself from Nelly's identification with Julia Strauch and resistance to Maria Kranhold. If the name of "Schiller" was a site of ideological struggle for the Nazis, the name of "Goethe" becomes a site of psychological struggle for the narrator/Nelly; this psychological struggle extends the Nazis' ideological struggle into the postwar period, as Nelly moves from an identification with Julia Strauch's Goethe to an identification with Maria Kranhold's:

Nelly [...] geriet nun endlich, die Bücher studierend, die Maria Kranhold ihr schickte (unter ihnen jenes kleine blaue Buch mit Goethe-Gedichten), an die Hand und in die Hände der Dichter. [...] Die meisten Gedichtzeilen, die du auswendig kennst, hat Nelly in jenen Jahren in sich aufgenommen. (KM, 534)

Nelly's identification with Julia produced a first Goethe; her identification with Maria Kranhold produces a second. Further, the memorization of poems, which recalls Nelly's earlier
memorization of the photograph of her mother, provides another moment of identification between Nelly and the narrator, an identification reinforced by the blue book itself:


This book is literally a palimpsest, its flyleaf inscribed with the different dedications which tell a story of being given from hand to hand. Maria's dedication bridges the distance between the name "Nelly" and "your earlier name," the one which the narrator does not reveal. Where Maria's first gift only emphasized Nelly's alienation from the perspective of a teacher who had not identified herself with National Socialism, this gift marks an identification with Maria and with this new Goethe which reinforces the narrator's moment of identification with Nelly through the memorization of poems. This identification marks, however, a Nelly who has ceased to identify with her earlier Goethe, a Nelly whose psychological development has, to some degree, left her identification with National Socialism behind.

The palimpsest of Goethes associated with each of Nelly's teachers is doubled in the text by a palimpsest of Nelly's own writings for those teachers. The essays themselves are not included in the text and so are presumably lost, as the narrator would certainly have otherwise cited them, as she did with a poem Nelly wrote and which she still remembered.81 The essays figure Nelly's relationships to each of her teachers not through

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81 The text cites the beginning of the poem, written for an earlier teacher of Nelly's on the theme of "Wer hat am Ende des Weltkrieges das deutsche Volk verraten?: "Von Feinden umringt war das deutsche Volk / beim großen Weltenbrand, / doch unser tapferer deutscher Soldat / ließ keinen Feind ins Land. / Da wurde durch schnöden Judenerrat / mit Deutschland Frieden geschlossen ..." As the narrator notes: "Reime bewahrt das Gedächtnis treulich und lange" (KM, 177).
their text but through Nelly's attitude to their composition; the memory of the text written for Julia arises through the narration of her visit to Julia's for tea, more precisely, through the memory of a question Julia asked:

Wie kam es aber, daß viele über "Volk ohne Raum" oder "Nordischer Geist in antiker Dichtung" flüssig schreiben konnten, ein so einfaches Thema wie "Der erste Schnee" aber ganz und gar nicht bewältigten? Nelly wußte es nicht, und was sie vermutete, hätte sie nicht ausdrücken können: daß es um vieles schwieriger ist, über sich selbst zu schreiben als über allgemeine Ideen, die einem geläufig sind. Sie erinnerte sich genau: Als sie jenen Sonntag beschrieb, an dem dieses Jahr der erste Schnee gefallen war, hatte sie keine Sekunde aus dem Auge verloren, für wen sie diese Beschreibung anfertigte. Über jede Zeile lag ein Hauch von Unwahrhaftigkeit, sie hatte ihre Familie eine Spur zu idyllisch, sich selbst um mehr als eine Spur zu brav geschildert; Genau so, wie sie glaubte, daß Julia sie zu sehen wünschte. (Die Heuchelei und daß sie ihr schwach bewußt blieb, ebenso wie die Sehnsucht nach Aufrichtigkeit: Vielleicht war das eine Art Rettung? Ein Rest von Eigenleben, an den sie später anknüpfen konnte?)

Um Julia zu gewinnen—oder zu täuschen, das schien dasselbe zu sein—, hatte sie sich aller plumpen Manöver zu enthalten und die anspruchsvolle Lehrerin, der nicht leicht zu schmeicheln war, mit einem Gespinst feinster Art zu umgarnen: Blicke, Gesten, Worte, Zeilen, die haarscharf neben den aufrichtigen Empfindungen lagen, doch niemals ganz mit ihnen zusammenfielen. (KM, 304-305)

Julia's question marks a difference between two types of writing, one centered on topics from which the individual writer can separate his own experience, another demanding a confrontation with one's own experience. This interpretation of this difference in modes of writing is already the narrator's: it is not Nelly's, because she could not have expressed it, and it is not Julia's. The narrator's interpretation of Nelly's hunches, at that time inexpressible, marks the narrator's desire to be able to identify with Nelly. Nevertheless, this desire does not make the interpretation into a projection onto Nelly of a difference which did not actually exist in her: the memory of what Nelly did actually think while she was writing provides the basis for the interpretation of that which she was not able to express. Nelly is no more a tabula rasa for the narrator than the Neolithic statue is for Wolf.

Nelly's writing transforms the distinction Julia makes between different topics and their differing effects on her pupils into an implicit distinction between two different modes of
writing—a difference not between writing from experience and writing separated from experience by a concentration on "general ideas," but between writing directed at a particular audience and writing whose direction is not determined by the writer's identification with the presumed desires of that audience. Nelly's attempt to produce a moment of identification with Julia does succeed (near the end of the visit, Julia says: "Wir beide wissen ja, was wir aneinander haben, nicht wahr?"—KM, 309)\textsuperscript{82}, but at the price of her knowledge that Julia has merely fallen prey to flattery. This writing, which is able to "win" the reader, is able to do so because it manipulates and deceives the reader by playing up to her desires. Nelly's interpretation of her experience of her writing implicitly answers Julia's question: a writing focused on "general ideas" is more likely to be able to satisfy its intended reader than a writing based on individual experience; pupils taught to write for their teacher will thus tend to be more able to write about clichés than about their own lives. This figure of Nelly writing serves two clear textual purposes: first, Nelly's writing provides a negative model for the narrator's own writing; second, not Nelly but the narrator identifies, and identifies with, that small "remnant of a life of her own."

Elsewhere, the narrator, in a conversation with her daughter, defines what she considers to be "[d]as Hauptkennzeichen schlechter Bücher": "[N]icht, daß ihre Darstellung den gängigen Vorstellungen teilweise entspricht[, ... s]ondern, daß sie darauf aus sind, ihnen vollkommen zu entsprechen" (KM, 465). A bad book aims to correspond completely with readers' expectations, with "current ideas." If the narrator also aims at a writing which

\textsuperscript{82}Julia had already made clear that she held Nelly in high esteem: "Einen Höhepunkt von Vertrauen stellte es natürlich dar, als Julia, verantwortlich für den Ablauf der Feier zu Führers Geburtstag in der Aula, Nelly die zentrale Gedichtrezitation übertrug: "Wenn je dem Volk / die Flut seiner Not / bis zum Munde schwillt, / greift Gott / aus dem Reichtum der Männer, / die ihm immer bereitstehn, / den Tauglichsten / mit seiner eigenen Hand, / stößt ihn / gnadenlos, wie es scheint, / in den lichtlosen Abgrund, / schlägt ihm / tödliche Wunden, / und überläuft sein Herz / mit der bittersten Qual / all seiner Brüder." This time, it is Lenka who adds the ironic remark about memory: "Das nenn ich Gedächtnis. Ich werde kein einziges Gedicht länger als ein Jahr behalten" (KM, 300).
produces correspondence, it is not a correspondence between writing and reception, but between writing and experience:

Im Idealfall sollten die Strukturen des Erlebens sich mit den Strukturen des Erzählens decken. Dies wäre, was angestrebt wird: phantastische Genauigkeit. Aber es gibt die Technik nicht, die es gestatten würde, ein unglaublich verfilztes Geflecht, dessen Fäden nach den strengsten Gesetzen ineinandergeschlungen sind, in die lineare Sprache zu übertragen, ohne es ernstlich zu verletzen. Von einander überlagernden Schichten zu sprechen—"Erzählleben"—heißt auf ungenaue Benennungen ausweichen und den wirklichen Vorgang verfälschen. (KM, 365-366)

The narrator complains that the "fantastic precision"\(^\text{83}\) to which she aspires is obstructed by the noncorrespondence between the "structures of experience" and the "structures of narration"; her metaphors mark this difficulty by contrasting a complex fabric with two possible narrative images: the linear, diachronic structure of language and the common literary critical metaphor of "narrative levels." This critical analysis reads as a critique of the narrator's own procedure: on the one hand, she would mark the interconnections between the "present" and the "past," the interconnected palimpsest of her own experience, but on the other hand, her narrative technique (the text's pronominal structure) tends to produce the independent "narrative levels" which she here describes as a "falsification." In order to be able to approach the material she would like to be able to relate with "fantastic precision," the narrator finds herself compelled to use a narrative technique which already prevents her from achieving that precision. In contrast, the goal of Nelly's writing was not precision but noncorrespondence; this noncorrespondence does not lead her to the successful production of a self in full identification with Julia but rather to an internal division which reinforces the narrator's identification with Nelly:

\[\text{Der Besuch bei Julia hatte nichts zu verhehlen, war Nelly sich von ihm versprochen hatte—das Übliche. So sprach ein Teil von Nelly zu dem}\]

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\(^\text{83}\)Heinz-Dieter Weber has pointed out that this phrase also appears in Robert Musil's *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften*. The palimpsest of literature in Wolf's text thus includes unidentified citations in addition to the many citations whose sources the text does identify. See Weber, "Phantastische Genauigkeit: Der historische Sinn der Schreibart Christa Wolfs," in Wolfram Mauser, ed., *Erinnerte Zukunft: 11 Studien zum Werk Christa Wolfs*, Würzburg: Königshausen und Neumann, 1985, p. 84.
Finally, it is noncorrespondence which allows the narrator to be able to identify with Nelly. Her sense of her own hypocrisy and of self-judgment are those points which the narrator would emphasize, but she would identify not with Nelly judging but with Nelly judged, not with Nelly identifying with Julia but Nelly feeling her distance from Julia precisely in what should have been the moment of greatest identification.\textsuperscript{84} Insofar as the narrator is Nelly, she is unable to overcome this internal distance, either the division Nelly constructed in herself or the distance the narrator herself created through her pronominal structures. Nelly’s construction of herself opens up the possibility of identification between the narrator and Nelly, but also closes off any complete identification between the two; the narrator’s desire for identification with her childhood self confronts the results of her own past self-construction and of her present narrative reconstruction of that self-construction. The disappearance of the first person reinscribes distances, noncorrespondence, which Nelly already constructed in herself.

Noncorrespondence is also the central figure of the second essay of Nelly’s which the text mentions, written for Maria Kranhold. Unlike the essay for Julia, this essay does not allow the narrator to find a moment of identification:

\begin{quote}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{84}A textual point of contact reinforces this identification: Nelly’s set of carefully considered "Blicke, Gesten, Worte, Zeilen" echoes the daughter’s copying of the mother’s "Gesten, Blicke, Worte." Here, Nelly produces a ghostly version of herself, a fiction designed to charm its intended recipient, Julia; she willfully produces a division between herself and this construction of an image of herself in order to overcome the distance between herself and Julia. In the earlier passage, the narrator’s unconscious repetition of her mother’s behavior overcomes the distance she would otherwise put between herself and her mother. The former involves conscious, and deceptive, self-production, while the latter figures the unconscious production of a negated self.
Where the narrator had marked the distance between Nelly's feelings and her textual intentions as a moment of possible connection between herself and Nelly, Nelly's conscious production of an ambiguous textuality as a mode of resistance to her new teacher leaves no opening for an identification between Nelly and the narrator. If Nelly's observation of Maria produces a mode of writing which serves as another negative model for the narrator, it is purely negative: it does not contain the moment of possibility which the production of the earlier text retains. The narrative of Nelly's writing tells the story of an increasing *impossibility* of identification which opposes the increasing *possibility* represented by the narrative of Nelly's reading: the palimpsest of literature produces a Nelly who is closer to the narrator than she was during the war, while the palimpsest of essays produces a Nelly who is farther from the narrator than she was during the war.

Nelly's textual self-construction was first undertaken for the purpose of winning Julia; in contrast, she later produces a doubled version of herself as a means of defending herself against a perceived threat to her identity, a threat represented by Maria. This self-construction continues even after Nelly, suffering from a mild case of tuberculosis, has gone to a sanatorium; as the patients around her die, Nelly consciously formulates her defensive self-construction:

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Betroffen, aber nicht ernsthaft gefährdet sein—auch das kann zur Lebensformel werden. Nelly probierte sie aus. (In der dritten Person leben ...) Es kam ihr leicht vor, Distanz zu halten. Es sollte niemals mehr irgendeinem Mensch möglich sein, sie ernstlich zu treffen. (KM, 544)
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Nelly's "formula" allows her to maintain and strengthen the internal distancing which she had already begun using in her childhood; once a means of connection and communication in her relationship with Julia, her reflexive self-doubling hardens into a barrier to communication, a defense against the threat communication represents. The parenthetical reference to the third person, however, refers not only to Nelly's self-construction but also
to the narrator’s construction of Nelly (and herself) in the book’s opening paragraphs, as she confronts the problem of how to begin her text:

Allmählich, über Monate hin, stellte sich das Dilemma heraus: sprachlos bleiben oder in der dritten Person leben, das scheint zur Wahl zu stehen. Das eine unmöglich, unheimlich das andere. Und wie gewöhnlich wird sich ergeben, was dir weniger unerträglich ist, durch das, was du machst. (KM, 11)

The narrator, who, despite her distance from her childhood self, feels compelled by the "murderous chances" of her life to write about her childhood, solves her problem by constructing or reconstructing her childhood self in the third person. To "live in the third person" thus appears both as a product of the narrator’s difficulties with the material she is working with and as a consequence of Nelly's own self-construction. The use of the third person in the text is as much a result of Nelly's choices in the face of a catastrophic experience as it is a product of the narrator’s choices in response to her contemporary "dilemma." The narrator’s solution to her initial "dilemma" thus makes clear what is "less unbearable" to her—"living in the third person" rather than remaining entirely speechless—but it also prevents her from completely overcoming the problem which the dilemma expresses. Nevertheless, the text itself, as a linguistic object and thus as a sign of someone not remaining speechless, already marks the choice the narrator made: she chose, like Nelly in the sanatorium, to "live in the third person."

The narrator’s use of the second person also arises from a problem of silence, her "Schwierigkeiten, Strukturen zu finden, in denen sich heute noch reden läßt":

Auf einmal bildeten sich Sätze, die du als brauchbaren Anfang ansahst; jemand war also mit "du" anzureden. Der Tonfall hatte sich eingestellt. Du wußtest nicht glauben, daß du noch einmal von vorne anfangen solltest, aber am Morgen hatten die Sätze sich erhalten—wurden natürlich später getilgt—, der Tonfall war geblieben. Immer noch ungläubig, begannst du von neuem. Dir war, du hättest nun die Freiheit, über den Stoff zu verfügen. Schlagartig war dir auch klar, daß nicht ein schnell zu machendes Ergebnis zu erwarten war, sondern eine lange Zeit von Arbeit und Zweifel. (KM, 36-37)
Just as her search for a way to avoid being "speechless" about the past leads her to the use of the third person, the narrator's search for structures for contemporary narration leads her to the use of the second person, providing her with a "freedom" with her material which was otherwise lacking. The name "Nelly" and the pronoun "she" solve one narrative problem; the pronoun "you" solves another. Together, they also provide the narrator's narrative with the goal of unifying the two persons, which appears several times in the course of the text:

Der Endpunkt wäre erreicht, wenn zweite und dritte Person wieder in der ersten zusammentrafen, mehr noch: zusammenfielen. Wo nicht mehr "du" und "sie"—wo unverhohlen "ich" gesagt werden müßte. (KM, 468)

The narrator later once more reinforces this image of the story's end: "Wann werden du und sie im Ich zusammenfallen? Das Ende dieser Aufzeichnungen anzeigen?" (KM, 535).

The initial synchronic tension between the freedom to work with the material and the difficulty of the project is expressed diachronically in the course of the text itself. In the seventh chapter, the narrator can still express her manipulation of pronouns as a "game."

Near the text's end, however, she describes this manipulation not in playful terms which might potentially be under her control, but through the image of "falling together" (as if by accident) and through a complex passive modal structure, "would have to be said," which allows the possibility of actively saying "I" even as the passive denies it and the "müssen" makes it not an active choice but a compulsion. If telling a story from its end was for Nelly a pleasure, for the narrator it is increasingly an overwhelming difficulty. An "unconcealed" (unverhohlen) usage of the first person indeed does not appear until the text's last page; there, it appears twice before a final paragraph entirely in the first person, both appearances addressing the problem of the narrator's "living in the third person":

Je näher uns jemand steht, um so schwieriger scheint es zu sein. Abschließendes über ihn zu sagen, das ist bekannt. Das Kind, das in mir verkrochen war—ist es hervorgekommen? Oder hat es sich, aufgescheucht, ein tieferes, unzugänglicheres Versteck gesucht? [...]
Und die Vergangenheit, die noch Sprachregelungen verfügen, die erste Person in eine zweite und dritte spalten konnte—ist ihre Vormacht gebrochen? Werden die Stimmen sich beruhigen? Ich weiß es nicht. (KM, 549, italics mine)

The text from moves from the second person of the previous paragraphs through the first-person plural of a generalization to arrive at a first-person singular which explicitly does not combine the second and third person into one: even as the narrative voice shifts from second to first person, Nelly is still "das Kind," still separate from that voice. In this first "unconcealed" use of the first-person, the second and third person do not "fall together": the second person moves to the first, and the third remains the third. Insofar as the narrator maintains part of the text's primary linguistic expression of the distance between herself and her childhood, the rhetorical questions might be answered: the child does not "emerge," and the splitting of the first person into second and third remains in effect even as the narrator clearly says "I." The paradox of this "I" is that it is unable to overcome the rules it produced for itself in order to be able to produce the text which is now at its end; a first-person subjectivity can only emerge by doubting its own emergence. The end of the text, the arrival at the first person, does not provide the pleasure of self-construction which Nelly found in telling a story in full knowledge of its happy end, but only this ambiguous self-assertion, this continuing uncertainty about the narrator's relationship to her past. Only the construction of narrative moments of connection between Nelly and the narrator appears to produce the desired identification, and then only temporarily, and only implicitly, and never with the use of the first person.85

85 Many critics (for example, Waldeck, "Heikel bis heute," p. 158, and Weber, "Phantastische Genauigkeit," p. 101) claim that the narrator does not use the first person at all to speak of herself prior to the last page, but this is not quite correct: she does use the first person, but in "concealed" ways. The first "ich" appears in a dialogue with her family during the trip, in a conversation with her brother Lutz: "Vor allem hab ich mich erschrocken" (KM, 397, italics mine). Only the appearance of "meinst du" later in the paragraph makes it clear that the sentence is part of the dialogue and not part of the narration itself. Later, the first person appears in the course of an inner dialogue the narrator has with herself: "Steckt denn in der Frage 'Wer bist du?' noch irgendein Sinn? Ist sie nicht hoffnungslos veraltet, überholt von der Verhörfrage: 'Was hast du getan?', die in dir selbst auf die schwache Gegenfrage stößt: Was hat man mich tun lassen?"
The narrator's discussion of her discovery of the use of the second person centers on the problem of beginning; the discovery of a "usable beginning" near the end of the first chapter leads to the erasure of previous beginnings—there seem to have been many of them ("noch einmal von vorn"). In one sense, the narrator overcomes the difficulty of beginning by discussing the difficulty of beginning; this addresses the problem of beginning at all. In another sense, however, the difficulty of beginning is not the "blank page" but the choice of which beginning to use; to overcome this problem, the narrator does not choose one and erase all the others, but includes as many different beginnings as possible:


Kein fremder Zeuge, der so viele unserer Erinnerungen an die frühe Kindheit, die wir für echt halten, in Wirklichkeit überliefert hat. Die Szene ist legitimiert. (KM, 13-14)

The narrator's palimpsest of beginnings adds these less abstract possibilities to the abstract discussion of the past and of narrative voice with which the text actually begins: either some possible concrete starting points (flight from the city—beginning at the end, in a sense; earliest memory) or some metaphorical representations of the problem of memory. These metaphorical representations lead the narrator to the "original memory" of the moment, full of the pleasure of self-construction inseparably connected to the risk of self-destruction (mit einem lustvollen Schrecken), when the child identifies itself as "I."

(KM, 469, italics mine). It appears that dialogue allows the narrator to use the first person; as she cannot enter into a dialogue with Nelly, the narrator is still unable to use the first person in connection with her.
narrator privileges this memory in several ways, first simply by identifying it as the "ground" of her memory and as "original." Further, the narrator's inquiries establish her memory of this moment as exceptional. Parallel to this determination of the memory's exceptionality is the grounding of its legitimacy as an "original memory" and not the memory of a story once told her. Finally, the content of the memory, the child's identification of herself as someone who can say "I," clearly privileges this moment in terms of the construction of the text itself: the adult this child will become does not herself say "I" but nevertheless privileges this one moment of saying "I." This apparent paradox underscores the importance of one aspect of this memory: the child's immediate certainty that she should censor this experience, not speak of it to anyone. The narrator's "original memory" thus places the first person under an always already existing censorship, one which the narrator's censorship of the first person in the text continues.

The narrator also privileges this possible beginning by filling in more of its details than she does with the others, which are mentioned only in their absence, their erasure. Further, this memory becomes the source of narrator's "baptism" of the child:

Aus dem Wohnzimmerfenster hätte die Mutter nun das Kind zum Abendbrot zu rufen, wobei sein Name, der hier gelten soll, zum erstenmal genannt wird: Nelly! (Und so, nebenbei, auch der Taufakt vollzogen wäre, ohne Hinweis auf die langwierigen Mühen bei der Suche nach passenden Namen.)

Nelly hat nun hineinzugehen, langsamer als gewöhnlich, denn ein Kind, das zum erstenmal in seinem Leben einen Schauder gespürt hat, als es ICH dachte, wird von der Stimme der Mutter nicht mehr gezogen wie von fester Schnur. (KM, 15)

The child not only herself censors her understanding of herself in the first person, she also clearly sees the distance she thus creates between her mother and herself. Until this moment, the mother's voice connected the child to the mother as with a "cord"; the voice as "cord" (Schnur) provided an extension of an earlier connection between the bodies of mother and child, the umbilical cord (Nabelschnur). The child's claiming of the first person thus explicitly appears here as a psychological counterpart to the child's physical birth: her
"I" cuts the "cord" connecting her to her mother. The mother's voice no longer corresponds to the child's. This noncorrespondence, the moment when the mother's interpellation of the child no longer commands the child's complete attention, is one of several in this scene; the others do not involve the mother but only the child—and the adult she will become. Saying "I" creates a distance within the child between the one who says "I" and the one who answers the mother's call, the one who sees herself as a speaking subject for the first time and the one who sees herself only in terms of her role in a family. The textual naming of the child, however, creates another distance within the child, between "the name which will be used here" and the child's other, suppressed name. This textual interpellation would fix the child into the narrator's textual production just as the mother's interpellation would keep the child in her familial place. The narrator's refusal to use the first person to identify Nelly reinforces this parallel: by continuing Nelly's self-censorship, by putting her into a third person and keeping her there, she puts Nelly back onto the "solid cord" of obedience from which she—the narrator—would otherwise free her—Nelly—so as not to falsify her story: "Vor dem ersten Satz wäre hinter den Kulissen alles entschieden. Das Kind würde die Regieanweisungen ausführen: man hat es ans Gehorchen gewöhnt" (KM, 14-15). Again, the narrator's construction of a position from which to be able to narrate at all creates not the eventual possibility of a unifying use of the first person but actually prevents it; the pronominal structure she uses to mark her own distance from her childhood self contradicts her explicitly expressed desire to understand her childhood self's own perspective precisely by continuing the self-censorship which she has always practiced on herself. "To learn to live in the third person" means, then, to return to the kind of obedience that the child had before the moment of saying "I": by using the third person for Nelly, the narrator takes back this moment of independence from the child even as she desires to keep the child free from the "solid cord" of that very obedience.
Nelly's self-censorship expresses her always already existing internalization of the tension between her use of the first person and her double interpellation by her mother and the narrator. Because of this internalization, later figured in her self-observation and self-judgment, Nelly is her own "marble statue," censoring internal expressions of her own individuality in order to construct a surface image of correspondence between herself and the desires of those around her, as she does in her essay for Julia. This self-construction as statue becomes increasingly rigid in the course of the text, leading finally to Nelly's rigid "Lebensformel" or her concealment of herself in an "undurchdringlichen Schatten" (KM, 428). Insofar as the narrator is Nelly, her goal in the text is to fracture this statue, as her last dream expresses:


Nelly's "living body and face" remain hidden in the statue she produced for herself and which the narrator's own narrative self-production reinforced; nevertheless, the fractures in the statue itself reveal the impossibility of the production of a "seamless whole" which would entirely conceal the narrator's experience from herself. If the process of narrating such a complicated palimpsest of experiences cannot reproduce the childlike innocence of a Mignon (where Nelly sits "in all innocence" on the steps and says "I") and cannot reveal Nelly's experience from a perspective which is not that of a "marble statue," the moments of noncorrespondence between the statue and the body inside of it, between the "shimmering surface" of Nelly's self-production and the memory of her internal distance from that self-production, do allow the narrator to overcome the distance between herself and the child she once was.

Most critics of Kindheitsmuster ground their interpretations of Wolf's text to some degree in her own representation of the text and in essays and interviews; this is a tempting
interpretive method for two primary reasons: Wolf's interpretations of her own text are compelling and convincing, and further, the narrator's interpretations within the text of Kindheitsmuster itself provide several points of contact with Wolf's general theoretical ideas about literature and representation. Despite the strength of Wolf's self-criticism, and despite the points of contact between Wolf and the narrator of Kindheitsmuster, the appeal to Wolf's own explanations of her text is not only unnecessary to the interpretation of Kindheitsmuster (none of Wolf's comments elsewhere on the book's structure are not already in the book itself), but also misleading: it effaces the distance between Wolf's narrator and Wolf herself and thus effaces Wolf's construction of the narrator as, both literally and figuratively, a "second person." Nevertheless, Kindheitsmuster does contain one critical comment which Wolf identifies as being written by herself and not by the narrator—her version of the novelist's disclaimer:

Wer Ähnlichkeiten zwischen einem Charakter der Erzählung und sich selbst oder ihm bekannten Menschen zu erkennen glaubt, sei auf den merkwürdigen Mangel an Eigentümlichkeit verwiesen, der dem Verhalten vieler Zeitgenossen anhaftet. Man müßte die Verhältnisse beschuldigen, weil sie Verhaltensweisen hervorbringen, die man wiedererkennen. C.W. (KM, 6)

The initials at the end of this disclaimer are those of the author named on the book's title page; with the disclaimer's first sentence, this author distinguishes herself from the narrator of the text she has written. Wolf's distancing of herself from the narrator is the first of several moments of noncorrespondence in the disclaimer, each of which contains points of context with the text of Kindheitsmuster. The formulas in the second and third sentences contradict the narrator's appeal to a writing which would produce a "fantastic precision"

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86 For example, not only does the essay "Lesen und Schreiben," written in 1968 and published in 1971, contain several anecdotes—written in the first person—which also appear in Kindheitsmuster, it also contains a discussion of Georg Büchner's Lenz in which Wolf uses the same phrase to describe Büchner—"phantastische Genauigkeit"—which the narrator in Kindheitsmuster describes as the narrative goal of her own writing.
(Genauigkeit) in which the "structures of narration" and the "structures of experience" would correspond. If the narrator claimed that this desire would necessarily fail because no "technique" exists which is capable of producing such correspondence, the disclaimer suggests not a technical failure but a conscious attempt to avoid producing figures who are "identical with any person, living or dead." What appears in the text as a problem of narrative itself appears in the disclaimer as a decision; further, this distance between the actual and the described, between the experienced and the narrated, refigures the distance between two meanings of "experience" (Erlebnis and Erfahrung) which appears in "Ein Modell von der anderen Art" and in Wolf's interview with Therese Hörmigk. The central word in this refiguring is "Vorgang," event or process: in both the interview and in the passage about "fantastic precision," Vorgang refers to a process: in the former, the "mysterious process" which transforms an experience into experience; in the latter, the "real process" whereby experience is transformed into narration, a process which the concept of "narrative levels" only "imprecisely" (ungenau) identifies. The mystery and imprecision of such processes is displaced in the disclaimer, where the word Vorgang refers to events and not to processes: the emphasis is now on the distinction between the "described episodes" and "real events" and not on the transformation of one into the other. The disclaimer thus effaces the narrative problematic which is so central to the text itself, the tension between the desire for and the impossibility of "fantastic precision," replacing that problematic with a contrary desire, the desire for imprecision, in which author and narrator, events and episodes, "persons" and "figures," do not correspond. The disclaimer makes the text which follows appear to be closer in form to Nelly's essay for Julia Strauch than to the narrative precision to which its narrator aspires.

The second paragraph of the disclaimer complicates this picture of noncorrespondence by shifting attention from difference to similarity, to the "strange lack of peculiarity" of the generations who lived through the Third Reich. This "lack of peculiarity" appears explicitly
in the text itself as the product of the kind of self-censorship in which the narrator herself engages:

Was die Zensur passiert, sind Präparate, Einschlüsse, Fossilien mit einem furchtbaren Mangel an Eigentümlichkeit. Fertigteile, deren Herstellungsprozeß—an dem du, wie du nicht leugnen wirst, beteiligt bist—zur Sprache gebracht werden muß. (KM, 209)

The narrator then gives a few examples of such "fossils": "Maxe Schmeling gegen Joe Louis—das behielt ein jeder. [...] Luftschiff 'Hindenburg' bei Landung in Amerika explodierte: Behält auch jeder. [...] Dieser furchtbare Mangel an Eigentümlichkeit" (KM, 211). Here, it is not individuals who "lack peculiarity," but memories; however, the individuals who share these "fossils" are themselves the result of a "production process" which the narrator herself lived through and which she would describe. This absence of individuality, however, is not merely the result of the vagaries of memory alone; rather, it is, as the disclaimer concludes, the "conditions" (Verhältnisse) which are responsible for effacing the differences between individuals and producing a generation characterized by "lack of peculiarity." If the generic disclaimer seeks to absolve its author of responsibility for correspondence between real individuals and fictional characters by appealing to coincidence, this disclaimer blames not chance but circumstance for any such resemblance. According to Wolf, the correspondence between characters in the text and real people derives from the demands of an era in which individuals were compelled to suppress their peculiarities and be like each other. Thus, in Nelly's childhood, both Nelly herself and the adults she grew up with were engaged in a process of self-construction whose purpose was not the production of individuality but rather the production of similarity, of a set of identical "marble statues." The narrative of Kindheitsmuster seeks to shatter the "shimmering surface" of one such statue and expose the "living body and face" which that surface was created to hide. Finally, the primary narrative problem in the text is the tension between the narrator's desire for Nelly not to correspond and her recognition that Nelly
desired nothing more than to correspond. The attempt to break through the "shimmering surface" of correspondence and reveal a "Mignon" who precedes and outlives the production of the self as a "marble statue" runs the risk of exposing not the "living body and face" of an individual who stands outside the times in which she was raised but rather a "fossil" who was unable to survive the "murderous chances" of her childhood unscarred.
2.3. Prophecies

We all know the story of Helen of Troy but few of us have followed her to Egypt. How did she get there? Stesichorus of Sicily in his Pallinode, was the first to tell us. Some centuries later, Euripides repeats the story.

H.D., Helen in Egypt

In Kindheitsmuster, the "murderous chances" of a given era transform biographies which would otherwise have been historically silent into important documents of that era's conditions of possibility. In Kassandra, Wolf retains the figure of a narrating woman remembering and relating her own life but, rather than narrating the lives of people distant from power, people who would otherwise have been forgotten, she renarrates a life close to power, a life whose story has already been told: the life of the Trojan princess and seer Kassandra. Further, rather than inscribing the story of the text's production within the text itself, as in Kindheitsmuster, Wolf erases such a possibility in Kassandra: Kassandra, fated to die within hours, engages in a long interior monologue and mentions several times that this story will not survive her, because there is no one for her to tell it to. Wolf nevertheless has published a history of her production of this text: the first four lectures of her contribution to the ongoing series of Frankfurter Poetik-Vorlesungen, in which she describes how she came to be interested in the Kassandra figure and what particular aesthetic and political problems became the focus of her work on the story. (The story itself was then the fifth and final lecture.) These "conditions of a narrative" (Voraussetzungen einer Erzählung) provide Wolf's perspective on her own text, but Kassandra's reflections on the problem of her story's potential transmission, as well as on the political and social context in which she lives, provide an internal set of "conditions" independent of the external "conditions" of Wolf's own production of the story. The most

88The first lecture begins with her reading of the Oresteia of Aeschylus: "Kassandra. Ich sah sie gleich. Sie, die Gefangene, nahm mich gefangen, sie, selbst Objekt fremder Zwecke, besetzte mich." (Christa Wolf, Voraussetzungen einer Erzählung: Kassandra. Frankfurter Poetik-Vorlesungen (1983), München: DTV, 1993, p. 10. Further references will be included in the text with the abbreviation VEK.)
thorough study of the tensions between the lectures and the story is by Sigrid Weigel; however, Weigel begins by describing Wolf's intentions and then testing the story's realization of those intentions. By using these "external" intentions as a starting point, Weigel not only fails to consider the story's "internal" conditions but privileges the author's intentions over her execution. Weigel judges the story Wolf wrote by comparing that story to the story Wolf claims she wanted to write. My reading of Kassandra will focus on the story Wolf actually wrote, on the three primary narrative "conditions" of Kassandra's monologue: first, the narrative is not only "impossible" but thematizes its own impossibility; second, the thematization of impossibility is connected to Kassandra's speculations about the possibility of producing a narrative alternative to the "songs of the heroes" (Heldenlieder); finally, Kassandra's narrative is not itself that alternative narrative about which she speculates but is rather the narrative of her own development, more precisely, the narrative of her attempt to characterize her own development from identification with Trojan power to the moment when she refuses to submit herself to the dictates of that power. Kassandra's three prophecies each figure a moment in the course of this narrative of disidentification with power.

The primary "condition" within the story is the moment of narration itself: enslaved by Agamemnon after the fall of Troy, then brought back to Mycena, Agamemnon's kingdom, Kassandra awaits her death at the hands of Agamemnon's wife Klytaimnestra, who seeks to revenge his sacrifice of their daughter Iphigenie prior to his departure for the Trojan War. Kassandra is certain that Klytaimnestra is going to kill her because she has seen it; this "seeing," however, is not the doomed prophetic vision for which Kassandra is famous but an interpretation of what she knows about both Agamemnon and Klytaimnestra:

90 Christa Wolf, Kassandra (1983), München: DTV, 1993, p. 95. Further references will be included in the text with the abbreviation K.
Wenn Klytaimnèstra war, wie ich sie mir vorstellte, konnte sie mit diesem Nichts [Agamemnon] den Thron nicht teilen.—Sie ist, wie ich sie mir vorstellte. Dazu noch haßerfüllt. [...] Da ich nicht nur die Männer, sondern, was schwieriger ist, auch die Frauen kenne, weiß ich, mich kann die Königin nicht schonen. Mit Blicken hat sie es mir vorhin gesagt. (K, 12)

The first sentence marks Kassandra's observation of Agamemnon both in Troy during the war and during the journey from Troy to Mycenea; before she first sees Klytaimnèstra, Kassandra has already combined these observations of the Mycenean King with speculations about his Queen and concluded that, upon his return, the Queen will not want to share with him the power she accumulated in his absence, a conclusion confirmed by her observations of Klytaimnèstra. Kassandra's "prophecy," of her death and Agamemnon's, is thus not a matter of divine inspiration but of intelligent observation, in three forms: imagination ("wie ich sie mir vorstellte"), generalization ("die Männer, die Frauen"), and a certain "reading," the exchange of glances with the Queen. This visual "conversation" between the two women continues throughout the text in the moments when Kassandra interrupts her memories to reflect on her present situation; the basis of this conversation is identification, concretely figured in the identical necklaces, gifts from Agamemnon, which Kassandra and Klytaimnèstra see on each other's necks: "Mit der gleichen Geste griffen wir danach, blickten uns an, verstanden uns, wie nur Frauen sich verstehen" (K, 120).

Kassandra's observation again combines nonverbal language with a generalization about gender: she perceives a uniquely female understanding between the two. Although undefined here, this understanding is in part a comment upon Agamemnon, the giver of these gifts; another part of the "conversation" between the two women more fully develops this comment:

Vorhin, als die Königin aus dem Tor trat, ließ ich eine letzte sehr kleine Hoffnung in mir aufkommen, ich könnte ihr das Leben der Kinder abgewinnen. Ich hab ihr dann bloß in die Augen seh'n müssen: Die tat, was sie mußte. Sie hat die Dinge nicht gemacht. Sie stellt sich auf den Stand der Dinge ein. Entweder sie entledigt sich des Mannes, dieses Hohlkopfs, gründlich, oder sie gibt sich auf: ihr Leben, ihre Regentschaft, den

Kassandra reads in Klytaimnestra's eyes a determination to do what the "state of things" compels her to do; her interpretation of Klytaimnestra's shrugging of her shoulders reinforces this depersonalization of the situation. The "text" in the Queen's face has a different meaning for Kassandra than for Agamemnon; if Kassandra's interpretation of this palimpsestic "writing" privileges her interpretation over Agamemnon's, the reading of the Queen's face does not finally contrast the women's intelligent "seeing" and the man's stupid "blindness" but only the women's recognition of their own potential blindness and the man's failure to recognize his. Again, however, Kassandra privileges communication between women on the basis of a perceived identification between herself and Klytaimnestra.

The impossibility of confirming Kassandra's observations of Klytaimnestra is inscribed in the very conditions of the monologue; this opens up the possibility of understanding Kassandra's observations—and not only those about Klytaimnestra—as projections. Kassandra's own tendency to psychological interpretations only reinforces the possibility of using such a mode of interpretation. In such a reading, Kassandra's preconceived ideas about Klytaimnestra might figure her own desire not to share power with men, the image of the "hate-filled" Queen might project her own hatred, and the Queen's murderous gaze might mark her own desire to die. Further, Kassandra finds in Klytaimnestra a unity of self, life, political power, and control of sexuality which requires the Queen to rid herself of Agamemnon in order to defend that unity; thus, the Queen figures Kassandra's ideal of a
woman's power. Kassandra’s understanding of Klytaimnestra’s sexuality involves a *double* reading, of Klytaimnestra and of the "figure in the background"; her rhetorical question about the correctness of her reading of the Queen’s lover marks her awareness of the uncertainty of her reading and further reinforces the possibility that her "seeing" is a matter of her own projection. Her identification with and understanding of Klytaimnestra’s motives is the center of this projection, exposing Kassandra’s primary desire for access to power, independence, and sexuality, a possibility clearly negated by the gendering of power structures in Greek (and presumably Trojan) society.

Not all elements of Kassandra’s monologue can be so clearly read as projection, however. In situations where Kassandra knows more about the individuals involved, her interpretations receive a confirmation which her reading of Klytaimnestra lacks. In her narration of the present-tense events, then, almost everything can be read in terms of projection; however, she also interacts with one person she *does* know well, also enslaved by Agamemnon, her servant Marpessa:


Kassandra’s visual "conversation" with Marpessa receives a confirmation which her exchange with Klytaimnestra does not: not a verbal confirmation, but simply the fact that she and Marpessa know each other well. In fact, the answer to the otherwise rhetorical question "Who knows me better than Marpessa?" calls the validity of Kassandra’s "reading" of Klytaimnestra into question by underscoring the weakness of the foundation of that reading: not an accumulated knowledge of Klytaimnestra but a combination of a few observations with some imagination and some generalizations about gender relationships.
Unlike the statue which Wolf observes in the Athenian museum, Klytaimnestra is largely a "blank page" onto which Kassandra projects her own desire for a power akin to that which the Greek queen clearly holds.

Although she believes that what she knows will not survive her, Kassandra will use the time which remains to her to try to understand (begreifen) her life and her experiences. For Helmut Kiesel, Wolf chooses this moment as the point of her narration "ohne Rücksicht auf die erzählerischen Komplikationen, die sich daraus ergeben"; however, these complications are inscribed throughout the text of Kassandra's monologue. Here, as in Lessing, the unanswered rhetorical questions open and close the possibility that Kassandra's story will survive even if she is not able to tell it to anyone; the wagon driver is not a potential audience, but neither is Marpessa: "Hier spricht keiner meine Sprache, der nicht mit mir stirbt" (K, 8). The narration of her own story in her own language is thus impossible. If Kassandra considers appealing to Klytaimnestra to spare her, she immediately rejects the possibility:


Und daran könnt ich glauben, auch nur einen Tag?
Erschlag mich, Klytaimnestra. Töte mich. Mach schnell. (K, 94-95)

Kassandra's monologue thus appears under the sign of a multiple negation: silenced by her own disbelief in the plausibility of alternative transmissions, her story is also silenced by its own historical nonexistence, its absence from a canon of classical literature which provides neither a means of transmission for such a story nor a form designed for the promulgation

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of such contents. The "narrative complications" in Kassandra are thus less the expression of what Kiesel calls Wolf's "Untergangserwartung"\textsuperscript{92} than a conscious means of problematizing not only her own narrative but the surviving narratives, the "songs of the heroes," from which Wolf derives her story. Kassandra's hypothetical appeal to Klytaimnestra would produce an alternative version of the Trojan War differing from heroic epics in \textit{transmission, form, and content}. Like the message communicated between Kassandra and Klytaimnestra, this narrative would be transmitted from woman to woman, independent of the transmission of the heroic texts in which an Agamemnon can see a celebratory image of himself like that which he reads in the Queen's face. The text's negation of the possibility of what Weigel calls a "weibliche Geschichtsschreibung"\textsuperscript{93} provides a faithful representation of its historical negation, figured in the text of Kassandra by the text's own representational impossibility.

If, despite the text's negation of such a possibility, the potential transmission of the alternative narrative is thus positively figured in the text, the form of the narrative is only described in negative terms, through an opposition with the Greeks' heroic style: "Was in der Nacht geschah, die Griechen werden es erzählen, auf ihre Art" (K, 157). This negative representation of the form of the alternative is doubled by the negative representation of its content: Kassandra leaves the narration of the horrific events of Troy's last night to the Greeks, "heroic songs" providing a form more appropriate to them. This form, however, produces a distorted representation of Kassandra's experience:

\begin{quote}
Daß ich "die Wahrheit" sprach; ihr nicht nicht hören wolltet—das hat der Feind verbreitet. Nicht aus Bosheit, sie verstanden es nicht besser. Für die Griechen gibt es nur entweder Wahrheit oder Lüge, richtig oder falsch, Sieg oder Niederlage, Freund oder Feind, Leben oder Tod. Sie denken anders. Was nicht sichtbar, riechbar, hörbar, tastbar ist, ist nicht vorhanden. Es ist das andere, das sie zwischen ihren scharfen Unterscheidungen zerquetschen, das Dritte, das es nach ihrer Meinung überhaupt nicht gibt,
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{92}Kiesel, "Literaturgeschichtliches Vergleichen," p. 147.
\textsuperscript{93}Weigel, "Vom Sehen zur Seherin," p. 174.
Wolf inscribes the production of the classical image of Kassandra into her own text: the seer whose prophecies the Trojans do not believe appears as a figure invented by the Greeks themselves, not out of malice but because the strictly materialistic categories in which they think do not allow them to understand otherwise. Here, Kassandra privileges an alternative possibility, "the Third," which the production of the Greeks' songs will efface; the Greeks' differentiations make not only the representation of but the belief in such an alternative impossible. If this alternative appears here as an abstract category which would break open the binary structures of Greek thought even as it is itself broken by them, it is also part of Kassandra's concrete experience, an experience whose plausibility Kassandra questions in her own representation of it—impossible that this could have happened "in der Mitte des Kriegs".

Kassandra experienced, outside of the fortress of wartime Troy but still within the Trojan community, the development of a community of women which embodied the abstract figure of the "lächelnde Lebendige" she set against the Greeks' binary abstractions: this community was capable both of producing and reproducing itself ("sich immer wieder aus sich selbst hervorzubringen") and of unifying what the Greeks kept separate, Geist and Leben, in their life of political discussion and everyday bodily experience. One pole of this
community was Arisbe, the mother of a half-brother of Kassandra, the other Anchises, father of Kassandra's sometime lover, the Trojan hero Aineias (some men were part of the community as well); these two parental figures were the community's centers. Their authority, however, derived not from their parental or political positions but solely from their merits, unlike the double authority—both familial and political—of Kassandra's own parents, Priamos and Hekabe. This community, in its concrete realization as well as in its abstract form, remains unrepresentable in the narratives of the Greeks, but its unrepresentability also partially informs Kassandra's own reflections: not only is she uncertain that anyone would believe that such a community could have existed in that time and place ("Wer würde uns glauben, Marpessa?"), she also cannot believe in the possible transmission of the narrative of this community ("Und daran könnt ich glauben, auch nur einen Tag?"). It is this content—the alternative represented by the women of Ida—which cannot be transmitted in the form provided by the "songs of the heroes."

In Kassandra's appeal to Klytaimnestra, the search for alternative forms corresponds to the search for an alternative audience, "jene fernen, vielleicht glücklicheren Menschen, die einst leben werden." These hypothetical recipients of her narrative would no longer identify with the heroes of the Greek songs and the tradition they established but with the alternative structures of the women's community. The rest of the community shared this desire with Kassandra; this potential audience for representations of their experience was of central importance to their self-conception: ...
The community's ironic "eternalization" of itself in the walls of the caves not only anticipates a reading by a future audience, it also repeats a gesture made by a previous community, for whom the women of Ida would have been the figures of a distant future; there were already figures carved into the walls of the cave: "Vor undenklichen Zeiten aus dem Stein gehauen. Frauen, wenn ich recht sah. Ja. Eine Göttin in der Mitte, andre, die ihr opfern" (K, 142). The figures of the women and the goddess are the traces of a matriarchal religion whose last existing forms have persisted from these "inconceivable times" until the time of Kassandra's Troy; the women of Ida "rescue" these last traces and reinvigorate them, thus playing for those who came before them the role they hope those who come after them will play. Through this positioning of their present experience as both future and past, they inscribe themselves into an unwritten historical narrative; further, the fragility of this narrative is inscribed into their own production and reproduction of it, in their sealing of the caves in which they have left their mark. One of the primary conditions of this alternative narrative appears to be that it be enclosed: here, the women must seal it off in the caves in order to protect it from the Greeks; in Kassandra's unspoken appeal to Klytaimnestra, her narration of the story would take place in Klytaimnestra's "deepest dungeon." In order to be able to exist as an alternative to a dominant narrative tradition of "heroic songs," this alternative narrative must hide itself away from that dominant tradition.

If Kassandra's monologue foregrounds the figure of this alternative narrative through the image of the "tiny rivulet" which runs parallel to the "stream of heroic songs" and through the community's desire to leave a record of itself for future generations, the monologue itself is nevertheless not the "rivulet" of which Kassandra speaks. Facing the moment of her death, Kassandra does not tell herself the story of the women's community but her own story, one of whose threads involves the creation of the alternative within wartime Troy. That communal thread is contained within the narrative of Kassandra's
individual development, which Kassandra figures by contrasting herself with Marpessa and Agamemnon:

Merkwürdig, wie eines jeden Menschen Waffen—Marpessas Schweigen, Agamemnons Toben—stets die gleichen bleiben müssen. Ich freilich hab allmählich meine Waffen abgelegt, das wars, was an Veränderung mir möglich war. (K, 6)

Kassandra figures her development as disarmament, as a demilitarization, but the framing of this paragraph belies Kassandra’s assertion that she has "laid down her weapons": if the previous paragraph concludes with her present reasons for staying alive ("[...] ich zog Lust aus allem was ich sah—Lust; Hoffnung nicht!—und lebte weiter, um zu sehen"), the following paragraph consists of a single sentence: "Warum wollte ich die Sehergabe unbedingt?" (K, 6). The narrative which Kassandra would tell herself as she awaits her death is of her acquisition and renunciation of her "weapon," the gift of prophecy, "seeing," but her scopophilic desires outlive that renunciation, becoming her very reason to live. The narrative answer to the question of desire is a tautology which adds to the question only the name of the position which would fulfill that desire: "Ich wollte Priesterin werden. Ich wollte die Sehergabe, unbedingt" (K, 44). Rather than answering the question with which it begins, Kassandra's monologue provides no reasons for her absolute desire; further, it does not tell the story of her renunciation of her "weapon," but of her reproduction of it:

[...] da war der Vorsatz fertig, geschmolzen, ausgegült, gehämmert und geformt wie eine Lanze. Ich will Zeugin bleiben, auch wenn es keinen einzigen Menschen mehr geben wird, der mir mein Zeugnis abverlangt. (K, 27)

The monologue itself is the product of Kassandra's scopophilic desire. By using the rhetoric of weaponry to construct herself as a witness, Kassandra maintains, despite the fall of Troy, her old position, the position of seer. Thus, the narrative of Kassandra's development is neither a narrative of absolute desire nor a narrative of disarmament; the change she has undergone must be figured in other terms than explanation or renunciation.
The weapon of prophecy involves more than "seeing"; like Marpessa's silence and Agamemnon's rage (and also like Klytaimnestra's gaze), prophecy is a form of language. If the conclusive answer (the third and final answer) to the question of Kassandra's prophetic desire is tautological, the first answer she gives shifts the stress from seeing to speaking: "Mit meiner Stimme sprechen: das Äußerste. Mehr, andres hab ich nicht gewollt" (K, 6). Thus, for Kassandra, prophecy and the priesthood allow her not only to observe, but also to describe what she observes in her own voice. However, if "voice" is a "weapon," its renunciation can hardly be the subject of a monologue: the monologue cannot exist without "voice." Nevertheless, Kassandra's narrative does describe a certain change in her voice, a change she identifies when she speaks of her voice for the second time:


The change in the tone of Kassandra's voice allows her monologue to tell a story of development and transformation, but not a story of self-transformation: the disappearance of the "tone of annunciation" is passive, the result of an imprisonment mentioned here but only narrated later (an imprisonment which cannot be confused with her enslavement by Agamemnon, as he has not confined her). Thus, the narrative of Kassandra's change does not tell a story of desire or disarmament but rather appears here as a story of victimization, of Kassandra's development from priestess to prisoner.

Kassandra's monologue is the narrative of a transformation in the tone of her voice, specifically, in the voice of prophecy. Within the monologue, the effects of this voice are marked by the figure for which it is famous: not only in the Greeks' production in their stories of the classical image of Kassandra but also in the Mycaneans' response to her when they discover who she is: "Der Wagenlenker [...] hat ihnen meinen Namen genannt. Da sah ich, was ich gewöhnt bin: ihren Schauder" (K, 13-14). Kassandra already experienced another form of the effect of her name on others during the crossing from Troy.
to Greece, as Agamemnon would have her appeal to Poseidon to quell the storm which is threatening their ship: "Er stieß mich an den Bug, riß mir die Arme hoch zu der Gebärde, die er für passend hielt. Ich bewegte die Lippen" (K, 12). Kassandra offers this as a second, ironizing answer to her question "Warum wollte ich die Sehergabe unbedingt?"; here, she speaks not with her "own voice" but in a parody of prophecy in which all that is left is the outer form of the prophetic experience, lips moving, hands raised in an appeal to the god, but the "tone of annunciation" gone. Kassandra's name has this effect on the Myceneans and Agamemnon, however, not only because of the role her name plays in the Greeks' stories, but also in part because of her own prior production of her name, a production inscribed in the very moment of prophecy itself:


Kassandra's prediction becomes a means of rescuing, if not herself, at least her image from the catastrophe to come. She may be glad that her voice has lost the "tone of annunciation," but it is that tone which produced the narrative of her name and provided it with its power to produce fear in Agamemnon and the Myceneans. Ironically, Kassandra's name has not actually been mentioned yet at this point in the text, even if its fame is inscribed not only in the text itself in the words of Panthoos but in the title of the story as well. Her name appears in the text at the moment when she narrates her accession to the priesthood, again in the mouth of Panthoos, the Greek priest who serves with her in the Trojan temple to Apollo:

Da schlug ich Panthoos, als er am Abend jenes Tags, an dem er mich zur Priesterin geweiht, mir sagte: Dein Pech, kleine Kassandra, daß du deines Vaters Lieblingstochter bist. Geeigneter, das weißt du, wäre Polyxena: Sie hat sich vorbereitet, du verläßt dich auf deinen Rückhalt bei
ihm. Und, wie es scheint—ich fand sein Lächeln unverschämt, als er das sagte—, auch auf deine Träume.

Dafür schlug ich ihm ins Gesicht. Sein Blick durchfuhr mich, doch er sagte nur: Und jetzt verläßt du dich darauf, daß ich zwar der erste Priester, aber doch bloß ein Griech bin. (K, 18)

The textual interpellation of Kassandra's name marks the tension in Kassandra's position in Troy, a position she manipulated, according to Panthoos, by relying not on preparation but on her relationship to her father, on her dreams (a dream of Apollo granting her the gift of prophecy), and on her ability to understand the codes of Trojan society (such as that she can strike the priest of Apollo because he is "only a Greek"). If Panthoos is right (and Kassandra grants that he "traf die Wahrheit, doch nicht ganz und gar"—K, 18), the "weapons" Kassandra uses in her quest to become a priestess resemble those she uses in her "reading" of Klytaimnestra: her dreams would correspond to her imagination, and the implicit opposition between Greeks and Trojans would replace the explicit opposition of men and women; only the exchange of gazes is missing, replaced by a different field of "reading," Kassandra's understanding of her intrafamilial relationships. Far from having been "laid down," the "weapons" Kassandra uses to read Klytaimnestra are much the same as those she used in order to become a priestess; with them, she takes advantage of her position as the king's daughter to gain access to a position of social power otherwise unavailable to her. The desires for a unity of self, life, sexuality, and political power which Kassandra's reading of Klytaimnestra expressed were thus already present in Kassandra's desire to become a priestess. Elsewhere, Kassandra twice implicitly confirms the accuracy of Panthoos' reading of her position: first, she identifies her own past blindness to the tension in her desire to be both the king's "favorite daughter" and a priestess of Apollo: "Ich Seherin! Priamostochter. Wie lange blind gegen das Naheliegende: daß ich zu wählen hatte zwischen meiner Herkunft und dem Amt" (K, 13). The "seer" in Kassandra was blind to the tensions of her own position; similarly, her prophetic voice was unable to speak a sentence admitting the heart of her own desire: "Priesterin werden, um Macht zu gewinnen?
Götter. Bis an diesen äußersten Punkt habt ihr mich treiben müssen, um diesen schlichten Satz aus mir herauszupressen" (K, 61). If the change in Kassandra's prophetic voice can thus be understood as her turning of the visual and verbal power of prophecy onto herself, Kassandra does not tell a narrative of "disarmament" but one in which she no longer uses her "weapons" against others, but rather against herself.

Following Kassandra's third, tautological answer to the question of her desire for the gift of prophecy, the focus of her monologue shifts from an exploration of her acquisition of the gift to the actual prophecies themselves, the "fits" (Anfälle) for which she is famous. The three prophecies are intimately connected to the development of relations between Troy and Greece as well as to the development of Kassandra's relationship to her origin (Herkunft) and her office (Amt); the developing political conflict sharpens the tension between Kassandra the king's daughter and Kassandra the priestess and seer. The narrative of Kassandra's prophecies is thus inseparable from the narrative of Troy's conflicts with Greece and their influence on Troy's internal political structure. Prior to the beginning of the war, this political narrative centers on a series of three ships sent by the Trojans to Greece, the first of which brought Panthoos from Greece to Troy:


Anchises' version of Trojan history inscribes the tension between different perspectives on that history and the political structures which produced it: the "palace" and the "people" each provide a different name for Lampos' ship; already, the official censorship of the popular name marks the control of language and of narration as the central figures of the narrative of Trojan political transformation. This political narrative already includes Kassandra: she was present as the "people" cheered the ship's departure:

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Just as a chronological version of Kindheitsmuster would begin with Nelly's first "ICH," a chronological version of Kassandra's autobiography would begin with her "first memory," the departure of the "first ship." Thus, the narrative of her development and the narrative of Troy's destruction both begin at the same moment. Her childhood exaggeration of the ship's size marks Kassandra's identification with the symbols of Trojan power; Anchises not only corrects her memory of the boat itself but also the terms of this identification: a Troy which had as much power as Kassandra's "mighty ship" would represent would not have had to send such a ship at all. Thus, from the conflict's very beginnings, Kassandra's sense of Troy's position with respect to Greece is distorted by her jubilant childhood construction of a Trojan community with more power than it really had. If Kassandra would identify herself with Troy's power by becoming a priestess, the basis of her desire for power is this illusory image of Troy, as seen from her nurse's arm. The Troy whose downfall Kassandra predicts has always already fallen.

Anchises' history lesson includes not only two different names for the "ship to Delphi" or the "first ship" but also two different reasons for the ship's voyage to Greece: on the one hand, the official but secret reason, negotiations with the Greeks about access to the Hellespont, on the other, the unofficial but public reason, the capturing of "booty," in this
case Panthoos. As a child, however, Kassandra heard a third version of the story of the "first ship" from her brother Hektor:


This "half-official" version of the events surrounding the "first ship" displaces the political-economic reasons for conflict between Troy and Greece with a narrative which concerns the security of Troy alone; the "palace's" official version suppresses the failure of Lampos' political and religious missions by transforming Panthoos into a prisoner, producing, through its control of language, a narrative which conceals Troy's weakness in its confrontation with Greece and allows an image of Trojan power to remain in place. Kassandra's narrative construction of an image of Troy is not, however, only determined by politics but also by a certain aesthetics; her childhood desire for a well-constructed story determined her reception of the various versions of the story of Lampos' mission, specifically here with respect to Hektor's version:


Through the stories she heard in the palace, Kassandra's overestimation of Trojan power combined with her desire for well-constructed narratives to provide the basis for her own self-construction according to an illusory image of power and an aesthetic desire for the
"imaginable" and the "well-invented." This combination of power and aesthetics determines Kassandra's reception of the events surrounding the "second" and "third" ships which lead to her three prophecies of Troy's downfall. (Further, the trajectory of Kassandra's monologue appears here as a narrative of expatriation whose climax is, as with the narrative of victimization, her imprisonment.)

The official reconstruction of the narrative of the "first ship" in order to provide a positive outcome produces a figure which determines the limits within which the Trojans are able to understand and articulate the missions of the later ships: the figure of abduction. In Wolf's revision of the Iliad, this figure already becomes the basis for Troy's understanding of the conflict with Greece even before the Homeric explanation of the war's cause, Paris' abduction of Helena, fully displaces attention from the conflict's political-economic basis. Wolf's tracing of this cause leads back not to the abduction of Helena to which Homer would trace it, but to the production of the figure of abduction in Trojan rhetoric as a displacement of their own inability to defend their control of trade passing through the Hellespont. Thus, the official mission of the "second ship," captained by Anchises and accompanied by the Trojan seer Kalchas, was not to continue the negotiations with the Greeks but to "recover" Priamos' sister Hesione, the wife of the Spartan king Telamon, who, Priamos claimed, had "abducted" Hesione. In retrospect, the "failure" of this mission seems inevitable:

Als das ZWEITE SCHIFF endlich zurückkehrte, selbstverständlich—so sagte auf einmal jedermann!—ohne die Königsschwester, aber auch ohne Kalchas den Seher; als das Volk sich enttäuscht, ich fand: beinahe feindselig am Hafen versammelte, murrend (der Spartaner, erfuhr man, habe über der Troer Forderung gelacht); als der düstere Schatten auf meines Vaters Stirn erschien—da habe ich zum letztenmal öffentlich geweint. Hekabe [...] verwies es mir, ohne Schärfe, doch bestimmt. Über politische Ereignisse weine man nicht. [...] Das Volk, natürlich, begleite Ein- und Auslaufen eines jeden Schiffes mit seinen hochfliegenden Erwartungen und unvermeidlichen Enttäuschungen. Die Regierenden hätten sich zu beherrschen. (K, 44-45)
Kassandra's reception of the return of the "second ship" leads Hekabe to reemphasize the distinction made by Anchises between the "people" and the "palace": the "palace's" role is again to neutralize political events. However, the "neutralization" in the renaming of the "ship to Delphi" involved the assertion of the palace's authority over the people; here, that authority is expressed not in the control of the ruled by the rulers but in the rulers' self-control. The neutralization of politics becomes the neutralization of the politicians. Further, the disappearance of Kalchas allows the political application of the figure of abduction to continue:


For the people, the palace produces a narrative of abductions—of Panthoos by the Trojans, of Hesione and Kalchas by the Greeks—from a narrative of desertions; for Kassandra, the narrative of desertions represents the "unimaginable," a poor invention which she insistently rejects in favor of the narrative of abductions, which corresponds more closely to her exaggerated sense of Troy's power. If the tone of either of these narratives is at least appropriate to the image of Trojan power which Kassandra internalized, Aineias' confirmation of Marpessa's story exposes not the drama but the banality of Kalchas' desertion:

Kalchas der Seher fürchtete—so trostlos banal waren die Gründe für weittragende Entscheidungen!—, nach dem Fehlschlag des ZWEITEN SCHIFFES werde man ihn in Troia zur Verantwortung ziehn für seine günstigen Prophezeiungen vor seinem Auslaufen. Wobei das Kuriose war, hatte Anchises dem Aineias gesagt: Das Königshaus hat ihm die günstigen Prophezeiungen abgezwungen. Seherlos. (K, 46)

The desertion which the palace transforms into an abduction is itself the result of the palace's application of its power for the purposes of producing a desirable narrative: a narrative which refuges not the past but the future so as to emphasize Troy's power.
This failed refiguring of the future reveals Troy's weakness to Kassandra—or rather, compels her to admit what she already knew. This triggers the first of her prophecies:


Kassandra constructs her self-image as a Trojan around an image of Troy's power; her own repressed recognition of Troy's weakness "speaks" here as an alien voice which has occupied her body: "[...] unberechtigt [...] war alles an mir, unberechtigt ich" (K, 47). The rulers' self-control is intimately connected to their control of public narrative; Kassandra's recognition that the public narrative is and has been a carefully constructed illusion thus coincides with her own loss of self-control. The first of Kassandra's prophecies is less a prediction of Troy's future downfall than a sign of the downfall of Kassandra's childhood image of Troy, the image she had constructed first from her nurse's arm and then through her absorption of a certain history of Troy in the Trojan court. The loss of this image does not decrease her interest in claiming the power which the priesthood gives her; rather, as she slowly recovers from the "fit," her desire for that power increases:


Kassandra figured her initial desire to be a priestess in terms not of the acquisition of power but of the ability to speak with her own voice; thus, the priesthood here provides a haven from the experience of an alien voice speaking through her, a voice she is not yet willing to claim as her own. This voice speaks of a world which does not correspond to the world of
Kassandra's desire, in which Troy would be the "mighty ship" which she once saw and
not the "boat" which Anchises described. In the wreck of Kassandra's image of Trojan
power, Kassandra nevertheless reaches for the "weapon" she had used to produce her
position within that structure of power.

Thus, Kassandra does not speak "with her own voice" in her first prophecy; the voice
which speaks through her admits that she "knew it from the beginning," but her knowledge
conflicts with her own self-construction as a "Trojan" and her own construction of "Troy"
and leaves her "shipwrecked." Despite this "shipwreck," Kassandra seeks to maintain her
position in a Troy which moves ever farther from her vision of the Troy of her childhood;
this position comes to include more than just her roles as daughter and priestess: "Der
Wahnsinn, der ins Gastmahl einbricht—was könnte grauenvoller und daher
appetitsteigernder sein" (K, 64). The second of Kassandra's prophecies takes place during
a banquet Troy holds for the Spartan king Menelaos, "es war der Vorabend der Abreise des
Menelaos, zugleich der Vorabend für das DrittE SCHIFF" (K, 64). This banquet again
marks a new stage in the development of Troy's internal political structure as a change in
the use and control of language:

Am Kopf der Tafel Priamos, Hekabe, Menelaos, der Gast, den niemand
mehr "Gastfreund" nennen sollte. Was? Wer verbot denn das! Eumelos,
die Palastwache unterstand. Seit wann entschied ein Offizier über den
Gebrauch von Wörtern. Seitdem die, die sich die "Königspartei" nannten,
in dem Spartaner Menelaos nicht den Gastfreund, sondern den
Kundschafter oder Provokateur sahen. Den künftigen Feind. Seitdem sie ihn
mit einem Sicherheitsnetz umgeben hatten. Ein neues Wort. Dafür gab man
das alte, Gastfreund, her. Was sind Wörter. Auf einmal sahn sich, die an
"Gastfreund" fästhielten, auch ich, beargwöhnt. Aber die Palastwache war
ein kleiner Haufen, der nur an hohen Festtagen in Prachtuniform den König
umgab. Dies würde anders werden, und zwar gründlich, versprach
Eumelos. (K, 64-65)

One sentence here, implicitly spoken by Kassandra, marks a certain bad faith on the part of
those who constitute the "palace" in Troy: the complaint that an officer can now control "the
use of words." The "palace" has long since manipulated the use of language in Troy for
political purposes, through the production of narratives and usages for the consumption of the "people"; here, however, the political manipulation of language which had created an inside/outside relationship between Troy and Greece as well as between the "palace" and the "people" begins to censor the usage of the members of the "palace" themselves. The very "weapons" which the "palace" had been using to refigure its failures as successes, desertions as abductions, are now being turned onto those members of the palace who object to such procedures. The transformation of the role of the chief of the palace guard, Eumelos, provides an institutional structure for this censorship. This transformation in the structure and purpose of the palace guard marks the narrative of Troy's development in terms of a shift from spectacle to discipline: the palace guard, once part of the spectacle of the king's power, becomes an institution of disciplinary observation. Thus, the institutions created to control the palace's differentiations of itself from its others create a split within the palace itself, a split separating even the queen from the "king's party":

Abends beim Gastmahl konnte man die Gruppierungen mit den Augen unterscheiden, das war neu. Hinter meinem Rücken hatte Troia sich verändert. Hekabe die Mutter war nicht auf der Seite dieses Eumelos. (K, 66)

Kassandra's reading of the new "groupings" marks their visibility and legibility, but it also once more figures her own "partial blindness": she reads differentiations created by a process which was invisible to her, which took place "behind her back." The invisible process of transformation takes place while Kassandra is concerned with her discovery of chapters of her family's history which were previously invisible to her: "[...] aufgewählt und zum Äußersten bereit war ich durch die allmähliche, mühsame Enthüllung heikelster Punkte aus der Geschichte unsres Hauses, durch das unvermutete Auftauchen eines verlorenen ungekannten Bruders" (K, 53). The suppressed existence and history of Kassandra's brother Paris reveals the royal household's continuing concern with the
control of its own narrative. If his return breaks the family's silence about the most sensitive moments of its history, Paris himself breaks the silence which Hekabe seeks to impose upon him at the banquet:


Hekabe's attempted censorship of Paris followed Paris' rude questioning of Menelaos about the Spartan's wife Helena, whom the goddess Aphrodite has promised to Paris. This promise marks the changing status of Trojan women, another change of which Kassandra only now begins to be aware:

Aber habe schon jemals ein Mensch gehört, daß Aphrodite, unsre liebe Liebesgöttin, einem Mann eine Frau zutreibt, die er gar nicht liebt? Nicht einmal kennt? Nur besitzen will, weil sie angeblich die schönste aller Frauen sei? Weil er durch ihren Besitz der erste aller Männer werde? (K, 68)

Aphrodite's promise transforms women into objects for men to possess, rather than subjects of their own desire; through Wolf's text, the transformation from matriarchy to patriarchy which this figures runs parallel to the transformation from spectacle to discipline. The alienation to which women are subject in this process is thus double: stripped of their subjectivity by the change in the social structures of both gender and observation, they are made into objects of patriarchal discipline; Kassandra, who would claim her right to "see" and to "speak with her own voice," is directly subject to both these transformations.

By refusing to be silenced by Hekabe, Paris takes advantage of both of these transformations: Hekabe's position of power is threatened both by the changing status of women and by the disciplinary construction of a "king's party" from which she is excluded. Here, these transformations in the Trojan present lead Kassandra not to

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94 Kalchas interpreted a dream Hekabe had while pregnant with Paris: "Das Kind, das Hekabe gebären sollte, werde ganz Trola in Brand stecken" (K, 58). After this prophecy, the child was to have been killed, but was not; he returned to Troy 1as an adult, his story having been completely repressed by Priamos and Hekabe.
comments on the changes themselves or on her relationship to or recognition of those changes but to a prophecy about Troy's future:


Paris has an ambiguous position in the family and in Troy: by Kassandra's definition, one becomes a "Trojan" not by birth but through the stories one hears in Troy as a child; hence, Paris is biologically a "Trojan" but not culturally. His speech thus marks not a conscious attempt to violate the standards of discourse of the Trojan palace but rather his ignorance of those standards; he resists not the general family censorship which prescribed particular forms of speech and proscribed others but the particular censorship imposed upon him by Hekabe (an appeal, perhaps, to the self-control of rulers). The silence which Paris produces is a product of the silence which he breaks, the unexamined self-censorship of the members of Kassandra's family, including Kassandra herself, a self-censorship recognized here only in its violation. The breakdown of linguistic control opens up the space in which Kassandra can "see"; this "seeing," this "experience" (Erfahrung), again takes place at the moment when elements of Kassandra's understanding of "Troy" are disrupted, here, the unwritten rules which "govern" Trojan discourse: Paris' speech disrupts not Trojan public narrative but the conditions of that narrative's possibility. Kassandra's "voice" enters this silence to decry not this violation of the rules which make her self-understanding as a Trojan possible but the impending voyage of the "third ship." In fact, both in form and content, Paris' speech makes the "third ship's" voyage a direct expression of the political changes Troy is undergoing, through his unpunished violation of Troy's old rules and
through his appeal to a new model of gender relationships. Thus, Kassandra correctly identifies the "third ship" as a figure of Troy's doom. However, this doom is again less Troy's actual catastrophic destruction at the hands of Greece than the disappearance of her image of Troy, a Troy governed by unwritten communal rules one learns through their representation in the narratives which make one a "Trojan."

However, by violating the central rule of the rulers' "self-control," Kassandra's "voice" repeats Paris' violation of the rules of discourse Kassandra would otherwise defend. This violation marks a conflict in Kassandra: as with the first fit, the "prophetic" voice expresses Kassandra's internal resistance to her mother's rule of self-control. This splitting of the self for purposes of self-control turns the disciplinary structure of the Trojan society and court in onto each individual within the court, creating in Kassandra an antagonistic self consisting of disciplinary observer and undisciplined "voice" which she perceives as alien to her own self. Thus, the "conscious" Kassandra identifies her "self" with her internalization of the disciplinary structure of Trojan society and thus with the "king's party." This internal creation of an observational structure persists even within the "madness" which follows Kassandra's fit; in fact, the "madness" complicates it:

In meinem tiefsten Innern, dort, wohin er [der Wahnsinn] nicht vordrang, hielt sich ein Wissen von Zügen und Gegenzügen, die ich mir "weiter oben" erlautbe: ein humoristischer Zug in jedem Wahnsinn. Der hat gewonnen, der ihn zu erkennen und zu nutzen weiß. (K, 71)

When Kassandra relates the death of her brother Hektor at the hand of Achill, she provides a more detailed picture of this innermost part of herself, the site of her identification with Hektor: "In der tiefsten Tiefe; im innersten Innern, da, wo Leib und Seele noch nicht geschieden sind und wohin kein Wort, auch kein Gedanke reicht" (K, 129). For Kassandra, this preverbal unity is the site of a certain knowledge which is independent of the social structures of power which she has internalized and which provides her with a "weapon" against the effects of the destabilization of those structures. She uses this
knowledge to "win" the game with her madness. This "winning," however, does not reproduce this preverbal unity but rather the previously existing psychological structures of self-control which derive from her identification with Trojan structures of social control; Arisbe challenges Kassandra to confront the dual images of that control, her internalized images of Hekabe and Priamos, but Kassandra is no longer able to address the question:


The internalized structure of observation, in which Kassandra's "I" suppresses her "madness," explicitly figures the "self-control" which Hekabe privileges as well as the structures of disciplinary observation which Eumelos is introducing to Trojan politics. Observation, however, is not only an increasingly central element in the structure of Trojan society, it also plays a role, as Kassandra later learned, in the structure of the alternative community around Arisbe and Anchises:


Arisbe's understanding of Kassandra appears at first to oppose power and knowledge; however, she does not oppose power to a prediscursive knowledge which would be independent of the conflicts between discourses. Rather, the opposition is between knowledge and the desire to identify with those who hold political power. For a long time, Kassandra is unwilling to sacrifice this identification with those who rule Troy, primarily with the figure of Priamos, to her own critical insights into their machinations; the impossibility of maintaining identification and insights simultaneously cannot be expressed in the forms of Trojan political discourse but only in the "non-form" of Kassandra's prophecies.
Of necessity, Kassandra's prophecies take the same form as Paris' speech: both violate the rules of discourse in Troy in order to express their own power, the personal power which derives from and produces their own knowledge. It is this power, Kassandra's own, which would provide her with a discourse for challenging Troy's political structures; however, such a challenge remains impossible until Kassandra breaks away from her identification with Troy, because Troy's political interests—as understood by the "king's party"—cannot be reconciled with Kassandra's defense of her image of Troy. In contrast, those interests are consistent with Paris' intentions; thus, his violations of the terms of Trojan political discourse are reincorporated into that discourse, rather than being radically suppressed by it. The "third ship" returns without Paris but with the news that Paris has abducted Helen and is bringing her separately to Troy; these actions, so contrary to Kassandra's sense of Troy, immediately become part of Trojan politics:

Ich war Zeugin, wie im Hin und Her zwischen dem Palast und den Tempelpriestern, in Tag- und Nachtsitzungen des Rats eine Nachricht hergestellt wurde, hart, gehämmert, glatt wie eine Lanze: Paris der Troerheld habe auf Geheiß unserer lieben Göttin Aphrodite Helena, die schönste Frau Griechenlands, den großmütigen Griechen entführt und so die Demütigung gelöscht, die unserm mächtigen König Priamos einst durch den Raub seiner Schwester angetan worden war.

Jubelnd lief das Volk durch die Straßen. Ich sah eine Nachricht zur Wahrheit werden. (K, 76)

The palace's control and production of language transforms Paris' actions into the expression of Troy's political aims. The rhetoric of the official message combines divine justification, superlative and insulting epithets, and the previously minted figure of the theft of Hesione; the "people's" reception of this rhetorically charged announcement completes the process of production of a political truth. Kassandra's description of her own reception of the process which transforms a report into truth has different implications: here, she finds herself in the same position of witness which she later (chronologically) or earlier (textually) constructs for herself; further, she uses there the same figure of a weapon which she uses here: the message (Nachricht) or resolution (Vorsatz) as a spear. In the narrative,
Kassandra first constructs a linguistic weapon for herself, then she recalls how she witnessed a similar linguistic production on the part of the "palace." The image of the spear, however, is not connected to the production of metaphorical weapons alone:


The king's dream provides the last of the text's three uses of the image of the spear, and chronologically it is the second, coming shortly after the palace's message and long before Kassandra's resolution. However, the use of the figure of the "spear" for the palace's message is not contemporary with the message but rather part of Kassandra's narration. Thus, Priamos' dream-image of a "spear" precedes and conditions Kassandra the narrator's identification of linguistic "weapons" as "spears"; more precisely, the dream and its interpretations mark the ambiguity of Kassandra's own narrative production of "weapons."

If her psychological interpretation projects her own continuing internal conflicts onto Priamos, Panthoos' politico-military interpretation figures armament as self-defense; Kassandra's use of the "spear" as a figure thus expresses both a "move" in her own psychological struggles and an attempt to defend herself against perceived external threats. Kassandra's self-disarmament thus fails, even in Mycenea, because of her own continuing fear ("die Angst die Angst die Angst mich zwingt zu denken"—K, 84). Her self-production as a witness detaches her from this fear even as it reproduces the psychological structures which made the fear possible in the first place, the militarized structures which understand
armament as self-defense, which allow the projection of internal fears onto external objects, which transform language from a means of communication into a weapon.

This linguistic "armament" directly transforms the position of women in Trojan society; the corresponding exaggeration of the tension in Kassandra's identification with her idea of Trojan society is thus explicitly gendered. The gendering of Troy's politico-linguistic weapons transforms the name "Helena" into a weapon, first in the production of the message announcing her abduction, then in the return of Paris to Troy:


The name of Helena and the accompanying image of perfect beauty provides a further means by which the "palace" controls the "people" of Troy; further, the veiling of the image allows each individual to imagine a Helena of his own, unhampered by the possible reality of the woman under the veil. Veiled and politicized, Helena becomes not only an object for Paris' possession but also an object in Troy's political games, useful, so to speak, in both domestic and foreign policy. This objectified image of perfect beauty is not only a weapon but also a figure of violence, threatening to blind those who would see it directly; further, that violence turns against the image itself, cutting its very name into pieces, dismembering "Helena" through the pronunciation of her name. This production of a woman's dismembered name as a political weapon coincides with the full extension of disciplinary power through Trojan society, not only within the "palace" but within the "people" as well; the "security net" cast around Menelaos becomes, a "chain" running through Troy itself. The linguistic dismemberment of Helena doubles the disciplinary dismemberment of Troy.

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Wolf does not, however, use Homer's version of the story of Helena, but a variation, in which Helena never comes to Troy but remains in Egypt. Kassandra's third prophecy again develops from her refusal to admit a truth which conflicts with her image of Troy (and, in this case, with her image of Helena): "Jede Faser in mir verschloß sich der Einsicht, daß keine schöne Helena in Troia war" (K, 79). Despite mounting evidence that Helena is not in Troy, Kassandra refuses to "think the unthinkable" ("das Undenkbare noch nicht denken"—K, 79) until Paris himself tells her the truth:

Komm zu dir, Schwester. Mensch: Es gibt sie nicht.
Da riß es mir die Arme hoch, noch eh ich wußte: Ja, ich glaubte ihm.
Seit langem war mir so zumute, angstverzehrt. Ein Anfall, dachte ich noch nüchtern, hörte aber diese Stimme schon, wehe wehe wehe. Ich weiß nicht:
Schrie ichs laut, hab ich es nur geflüstert: Wir sind verloren. Weh, wir sind verloren. (K, 80)

In this third and final prophecy, Kassandra finally identifies the voice which speaks through her as her own; if she first speaks of "this voice," she nevertheless then says "I screamed" (or "I whispered") rather than "it (the voice) screamed." As with the second fit, Kassandra's prophecy does not identify the actual contemporary Trojan political crisis but rather displaces that crisis into its potential future effects; however, she not only identifies the "voice" as her own, she also identifies the contradiction in the "voice's" revelation as her own:

Denn warum schrie ich, wenn ich schrie: Wir sind verloren!, warum nicht:

95As Priamos later says to Kassandra: "Der König von Ägypten hatte sie dem Paris, diesem dummen Jungen, abgenommen" (K, 81). The American poet H.D. used the same variation in her epic poem Helen in Egypt; her reference to the history of this variation appears as the epigraph of this section. Although she does not provide a source for the variation, Wolf provides a more detailed version of the variation in the third lecture of the Voraussetzungen: "Helena [kam] niemals mit Paris nach Troia [...], sondern [begegnete] dem Paris in einem Tempel der Aphrodite auf Zypern [...], wo sie ein Freudenmädchen der Aphrodite gewesen sein kann [...]. Danach floh sie [...] nach Ägypten, vielleicht 'entführt' von Paris, der, nach einer Überlieferung, vom König Proteus zunächst gefangengesetzt, dann nach Troia zurückgeschickt wurde; während er, Proteus, der ägyptische König, die schöne Helena behielt [...]" (VEK, 103).
As Irmgard Roebling puts it, Kassandra "verrät dem Volk im prophetischen Warnschrei die Helene-Lüge nicht und bleibt so im buchstäblichen Sinn den väterlich-authoritären Normen verpflichtet."\textsuperscript{96} If Roebling thus correctly identifies Kassandra's continuing commitment to "patriarchal-authoritarian norms," that commitment has continued through the shift in those norms from spectacle to discipline, and Kassandra uses that shift in order to maintain her identification with Troy. Earlier, her identification with the structures of Trojan power derived from her absorption of the stories of Troy she heard as a child and from her identification with her father; here, she has already internalized the new structures of disciplinary power which Eumelos has introduced. Thus, she is able to claim the "voice" of her prophecy as her own, but only by distancing herself from her own self-censorship through the use of the name "Eumelos." Kassandra projects the different aspects of her identification with power onto two different figures, Eumelos and Priamos, and is thus able to keep them separate, projecting the positive side of her identification onto her father and negative aspects of that identification, such as her self-censorship, onto Eumelos. Eumelos provides a figure onto whom she can project those elements of her identification with Trojan power which she is slowly in the process of rejecting; this allows her to maintain her image of Priamos independent of her developing insight into the ugly machinations she identifies only with Eumelos.

Kassandra's "grain of calculation" immediately reappears in the ensuing conversation with Priamos: "Wenn ich so weitermache, sagte er dann, müde, bleibe ihm nichts, als mich einzusperrn. Da dachte in mir etwas: Jetzt noch nicht" (K, 81). This "something" in Kassandra calculates the possibilities which imprisonment represent and recognizes the possibility that she may be imprisoned in the future, but, as with the "Eumelos" in her,

\textsuperscript{96}Irmgard Roebling, ""Hier spricht keiner meine Sprache, der nicht mit mir stirbt.' Zum Ort der Sprachreflexion in Christa Wolfs Kassandra," in Mauser, Erinnerer Zukunft, p. 217.
Kassandra is not yet willing or able to identify with her own political calculations (it is "something in her" which thinks this, not "herself"). Despite her own public self-censorship, Kassandra tries, in this private conversation with Priamos, to prevent the continuing instrumentalization of the image of Helena and, further, the war itself. Here, however, she once more confronts the real politico-economic reasons behind the conflict now being fought around the image of a woman:


Kassandra's conversation with Priamos displaces the reasons for the war first from the image of an abducted woman to the economic problem of the Hellespont and then to the issue of Troy's "honor." In Wolf's representation, this complex of women, honor, and economic power determines the rhetorical and political development of the entire conflict between Troy and Greece: if the image of Helena abducted aestheticizes the economic conflict by introducing an image of absolute beauty into it, the conflict had already been recast in terms of honor and gender by Priamos' previous insistence on the problem of his sister's "abduction." The conflict over economic rights becomes a conflict over the exchange of women. More precisely, the production of the figure of abduction figures the reflection of a crisis in peaceful trade back onto the anthropological basis of that trade (the exchange of women between different tribes). If the exchange of women provides the basis for other modes of economic exchange and for peaceful interaction between different societies, the replacement of such an exchange by a series of "abductions" of women
(whether imagined, as with Hesione, or real, as with Helena) marks the breakdown of peaceful economic exchange and the beginning of war.

Thus, Kassandra's resistance to the instrumentalization of the image of Helena\textsuperscript{97} does not merely clash with the economic conflict between Troy and Greece or threaten the "honor" of Troy; her challenge confronts the foundations of the patriarchal economy. The continuing presence of matriarchal structures in Troy makes this challenge all the more threatening to those foundations, which have not yet been completely stabilized. The instrumentalization of women in Kassandra's Troy thus serves the ends of a political power structure from which they are increasingly excluded; this exclusion, and not the corresponding extension of disciplinary structures, finally leads Kassandra to the "no" which her narrative comment on her conversation with Priamos anticipates. More precisely, this first "no" comes as a response to the first moment of such instrumentalization following the radical exclusion of women from Troy's political decision-making; the exclusion itself, though shocking to Kassandra, is not enough:

\begin{quote}
\end{quote}

Kassandra's interpretation of this exclusion is ambiguous: if, on the one hand, she perceives this gesture as another violation, perhaps the most extreme one yet, of her sense of Troy and of Trojan tradition, she is, on the other hand, fascinated by the possibility of that Troy's imminent collapse. However, "nothing happened": the exclusion of Hekabe from political deliberations would have caused the immediate collapse of Kassandra's Troy, but that is no longer the Troy in which she lives (and, of course, perhaps never

\textsuperscript{97}This is not the only moment in the narrative in which a woman resists such an instrumentalization of the image of another woman. Hekabe herself resisted Priamos' initial claim that Hesione had been abducted; further, Kassandra later resists Priamos' use of the image of Briseis, the daughter of Kallias, who leaves Troy to join her father in the Greek camp besieging the city (K, 98).
was). This exclusion culminates the creation of a Troy in which women can only have access to power through their use as instruments of male power. The council, now exclusively male, seeks Kassandra's help only when they feel she can play a part in the execution of their war plans:


Kassandra's successive understandings of the council's subject figure several different possible perspectives on the council's plan: if it is perceived as being "about Polyxena," the plan appears abhorrent, the crude transformation of a woman into a weapon; if it perceived as being "about Troy" or "about Achill," then this instrumentalization of Polyxena becomes less visible, disappears behind Troy's immediate military needs. For Kassandra, the plan is primarily "about Polyxena"; hence, her perspective remains incompatible with the council's: "Um sie geht es nicht. Es geht uns um Achill" (K, 145). Despite the exclusion of women, including Polyxena, from the council, the council has brought Kassandra to hear their plan; not only that, Priamos would have her consent to it, as if he still feels the need for confirmation from the women he so recently excluded from the scene of his political deliberations:

Der Vater sagte noch, sofort solle ich den Plänen, die zur Verhandlung stünden, nicht nur zustimmen; ich solle mich verpflichten, über sie zu schweigen und, wenn sie ausgeführt, sie gegen jedermann ausdrücklich zu verteidigen. (K, 146)

In the final analysis, this demand for consent to, silence about, and eventually defense of the plan has nothing to do with the plan itself—whether Kassandra consents or refuses her
consent will have no effect on the plan’s execution. Kassandra’s consent would be less to the plan than to the instrumentalization of women for the purposes of Troy’s defense. If she had earlier rejected the idea of being imprisoned ("jetzt noch nicht"), she here confronts the possibility once again, as something she had anticipated:


Kassandra’s considerations outline once more the different perspectives with which the council began: if the plan is "about Polyxena," then Kassandra sees it not only as a violation of her sister’s rights but as tantamount to her murder; if the plan is "about Troy" or "about Achill," then it becomes a matter of duty to Troy. Further, Priamos’ demand for consent has added another issue: the plan is now also "about Kassandra" and is a violation of her rights for the purpose of murdering Troy’s "worst enemy." Finally, Priamos transforms the question into one of "rationality," and Kassandra finds the "voice" with which to say "no":

Nun, Kassandra. Nicht wahr, du bist vernünftig.
Ich sagte: Nein.
Du stimmst nicht zu?
Nein.
Aber du wirst schweigen.
Nein, sagte ich. Angstvoll umfaßte Hekabe die Mutter meinen Arm. Sie wußte, was jetzt kam, ich auch. Der König sagte: Nehmt sie fest. (K, 146)

Kassandra refuses to consent, refuses to be silent, refuses to defend the plan. The change in her voice which she figures as "speaking more quietly" may be less a matter of her own active changing of herself than of this imprisonment by Priamos, but it is also the result of her finally finding the capacity to differentiate herself from the structures of Trojan power which she had internalized—or, to put it another way, she recognizes here that the "Troy" to which she would feel a sense of duty no longer exists and might never have existed; a
"Troy" which would use herself and her sister so brutally is not and cannot be her "Troy."

This definitive change in the status of women from subjects to objects of power finally makes the difference between her idea of "Troy" and its reality unbearable to her. Thus, Kassandra's refusal to consent, like Priamos' demand that she consent, is independent of the actual execution of the plan, which, as Kassandra learns during her imprisonment, is a success:


The moment of negation is thus the moment when Kassandra finally speaks with "her own voice," claiming a position for herself independent of her identification with Trojan power. Here, the narrative of Kassandra's development does not appear as the story of victimization which her first representation of her imprisonment suggested, but as a narrative of resistance, more precisely, of learning to resist. This psychological development leads Kassandra to a point of unity akin to that which she sees in Klytaimnêstra: her life, her voice, and her body all come together in the moment when she refuses to agree, less to Achill's death than to the instrumentalization of Polyxena and herself. Kassandra's reading of Klytaimnêstra, then, is a recognition of an experience of unity akin to her own as well as a projection of her unfulfilled desire for the combination of this experience of unity with an experience of power no longer possible for women in the Troy in which she lived.
Kassandra’s monologue, then, does not present the alternative narrative of which she speaks in her hypothetical appeal to Klytaimnestra or in her representation of the alternative community’s attempts to immortalize itself; rather, the monologue figures Kassandra’s development from affirmation of Trojan power to its negation. The position of Achill in Kassandra’s negation has to be taken into account in order to have a complete understanding of the figure of narrative within Kassandra’s monologue: while Kassandra’s refusal to consent to the plan appears as an affirmation of "Achill the beast," one element of Kassandra’s narrative desire is the negation of Achill and of his story:


The alternative narrative which Kassandra and the women of Ida would communicate is neither a negation of the "songs of the heroes" nor a variation upon them; this extended metaphor of the "tree of hate," however, figures not a parallel to the Greek version of the Trojan war, but a challenge to it, the negation of the Iliad itself: the song of Achill’s anger replaced by the story of Kassandra’s hatred; Homer’s many celebratory epithets for Achill replaced by Kassandra’s insistence on the single "Achill the beast."98 Further, Kassandra would be the observer not of Achill’s death, but of his deaths: "Daß er, Achill das Vieh, tausend Tode gehabt hätte. Daß ich bei einem jeden dabei gewesen wäre" (K, 97). However, in the actual moment when Achill will be killed, Kassandra does not agree to kill

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98Earlier in her monologue, Kassandra expresses this desire directly, using a metaphor not of the survival and growth of her hatred but of burning: "Wenn ich den Namen tilgen könnte, nicht nur aus meinem, aus dem Gedächtnis aller Menschen, die am Leben bleiben. Wenn ich ihn ausbrennen könnte aus unsren Köpfen—ich hätte nicht umsonst gelebt. Achill" (K, 12). Here, rather than cursing the singers of Achilles’ fame, Kassandra would directly attack the memory of that fame. Her monologue thus appears as an attempt to "take back the Iliad," as the composer Adrian Leverkühn in Thomas Mann’s Doktor Faustus composed a work whose goal was to "take back" Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony.
him; the price to be paid for his death—the death of Polyxena and, more generally, the death of Trojan women as subjects of power—is too high.

These two moments of negation, however, do not actually conflict with each other, even if one moment marks a refusal to kill Achill and the other marks a desire to do so: the negation of Troy's patriarchal power and the negation of Greek epic narrative both figure Kassandra's resistance to the simultaneous transformation of women and language into weapons. Her own continuing formulation in her "resolution" (Vorsatz) of language as a weapon thus of necessity leads her to turn this "weapon" onto herself:


Wohin ich blicke oder denke, kein Gott, kein Urteil, nur ich selbst. Wer macht mein Urteil über mich bis in den Tod, bis über ihn hinaus, so streng. (K, 27-28)

Heidi Gidion reads the language of this passage in terms of a contrast between poetry and prose; it moves from the iambic rhythms of a high poetic language—"die Wortwahl scheint mitbestimmt durch metrische Nötigung"—to the "sober prose" of the "verfluchten Griechenwagen" and the question which breaks the "Amplifikatio" of the anaphoric "wurd ich." For Gidion, the poetic language is a "mask" which Kassandra removes to speak this sober prose; however, the iambic rhythm is broken only by the single word "verfluchten" and by the phrase "das Gebrüll," the two points torn from the "metrical necessity" which
otherwise produces the "amplifying" effect of this paragraph.99 The first removal of the "mask" of high metrical language takes place only for the assertion of an epithet recalling the use of the epithet "großmäulig" in the other "hammered lance," the palace's political announcement; the curse on the wagon slips from the wagon itself to its makers, and what Gidion interprets as Kassandra's fracturing of her resolution, her "lance," appears as the further application of the "weapon" of the Trojan royal house itself. This first disruption of "metrical necessity" thus marks Kassandra's continued internalization of the imperial necessities of Trojan power. The second variation incorporates the screaming of the sacrificial animal into the poetry even as it allows that scream to disrupt the rhythm just enough to make its present felt; the sacrifice's scream may not correspond to the "high tone" of a religious ritual, but, like the poetry which allows for such variation, the ritual always already contains the disruptive force which the scream figures. If the first variation in Kassandra's "high language" marks her continuing internalization of Troy's political structure, this second variation figures the persistence of her identification with Trojan religious ritual, even as she figures herself now as the sacrificial victim in that ritual, rather than the performer of that sacrifice. Kassandra's monologue, indeed, her entire will to survive, thus repeats, in internalized form, the moment of confrontation with Priamos, the moment in which the transformation of Trojan politics refigures Kassandra (and Polyxena as well) as sacrifices through the use of women and language as weapons in the fighting of a war.

The primary narrative of Kassandra's monologue is thus the story of her identification with an illusory image of Trojan power and her successful but incomplete disidentification

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99Heidi Gidion, "Wer spricht? Beobachtungen zum Zitieren und zum Sprechen mit der eigenen Stimme an Christa Wolfs Günderrode- und Kassandra-Projekt," in Drescher, Christa Wolf: Ein Arbeitsbuch, pp. 210-211.—In fact, what Gidion identifies as the first shift from poetry to prose, centered on the phrase "verfluchten Griechenwagen," is but a variation in the otherwise strict iambic rhythm, the kind of variation which all poetry contains. Her own failure to notice the extra syllable in the foot "das Gebrüll" is perhaps a mark of the conventionality of such a variation.
with that image, a narrative not of "disarmament" or "victimization" but in the transformation of her prophetic voice and the production of negation. The "alternative" narrative which would counter the "songs of the heroes" is a theme of this narrative of negation, but Kassandra's narrative position makes the positive representation of the production of such a narrative impossible. Nevertheless, reflections on the problem of producing such a narrative, an "andere Art zu erzählen" (VEK, 154), take up a considerable amount of space in Wolf's reflections on the "conditions of the narrative" in the four essays accompanying Kassandra. Wolf questions "die Autorität der literarischen Gattungen" (VEK, 131) because the literary genres which she has inherited, like the "songs of the heroes" in the story, exclude and negate, in form, content, and transmission, the possibility of an alternative narrative which would communicate the experience not of male heroes but of everyday women. However, the "songs of the heroes" are not "seamless wholes": if they exclude and negate alternative narratives, they nevertheless do not do so completely: "Nur in den Lücken zwischen den Schlachtbeschreibungen schimmert das Alltagsleben durch, die Welt der Frau" (VEK, 91-92). Wolf stresses that "woman's world" only appears in the "gaps between the descriptions of battles—but that alternative world does appear; the possibility of an alternative is already inscribed in the "authoritative" texts themselves. Wolf uses just such an alternative in Kassandra, the alternative version of the story of Helen which H.D. also used in Helen in Egypt. Similarly, Wolf's "misquotation" of Goethe in Kindheitsmuster repeats the "translation" which is already a part of Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre. Wolf questions the authority of classic authors and classic literature not by producing a radical alternative to them but by using the "gaps" in their works in order to analyze in detail their attempts to negate the possibility of alternatives. Wolf's revisions and misquotations of classic "marble statues" crack the "shimmering surfaces" of those works; the "childish innocence" of a Mignon, her "living body and face," may not be wholly exposed in her texts, but those texts have a different goal: they present not an alternative to the alienation of
the observing woman, but the history of the production of that alienation. The return to a moment of "childish innocence" would lead only to a moment like that of Kassandra's first memory, the vision of Troy's "mighty ship": a moment which, far from being free of alienation, marks the beginning of the story of alienation which Kassandra tells.
2.4. As If

[...] die interessierten Privatleute, zum Publikum versammelt, also in ihrer Eigenschaft als Staatsbürger, [verhalten] sich äußerlich so [...], als ob sie innerlich freie Menschen wären.

Jürgen Habermas, Strukturwandlung der Öffentlichkeit

In a letter to Brigitte Reimann in February of 1969, Wolf wondered about the age in which she was living, an age in which no one wrote letters anymore: "Kann man sich denn auf irgendeinen Briefpartner verlassen?" After this triggered a puzzled response from Reimann, Wolf clarified the question a few weeks later:

[...] eigentlich richtete sich der Satz vom "Verlaff" auf den Briefpartner ja auch gar nicht gegen den Briefpartner—den kann man ja aussuchen—, sondern gegen die Briefzensur, die man sich nicht aussuchen kann.

"Relying" on one’s correspondents becomes, in Wolf's brief recasting of the image, a matter of choice rather than of skepticism about the age in which she lives; Wolf displaces the difficulty expressed in the original question from the correspondent to the censor who might open the letters she and Reimann are writing, the censor whom one cannot choose.

While this seemed to have reassured Reimann of Wolf's faith in her, perhaps it should not have: Wolf's self-consciousness about a censor's possible reading of her letter might undermine the trust which both she and Reimann appear to agree is necessary for a proper correspondence; the prior knowledge of an invisible, undesired reading might act as a brake on the openness which two friends might expect of one another. Earlier, at a symposium in 1964, Wolf had made a similar remark about East German literary criticism:

Ich habe manchmal den Eindruck, daß viele Kritiken nicht für die Leute geschrieben werden, die sie lesen sollen, und auch nicht für den Autor.

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100 Jürgen Habermas, Strukturwandlung der Öffentlichkeit (1962), Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1990, p. 189, italics added.
102 Wolf to Reimann, 23. February 1969, Reimann and Wolf, Sei gegrüßt und lebe, p. 34.
sondern für irgendwelche in der Einbildung vorhandene höhere Instanzen, die sich dazu freundlich äußern sollen.\textsuperscript{103}

The writer of a letter or of a piece of literary criticism finds herself writing to different types of readers: a reader to whom the writer would like to communicate something (the contents of the letter or the book review) and another reader by whom the writer feels judged. This imaginary "higher authority" whose praise the writer of criticism seeks is not, however, entirely imaginary: in East Germany, not only literature but criticism as well would be analyzed for its loyalty to the party line which was in effect at the time of its publication. A writer who produced work which was seen as contradicting that line might suffer consequences ranging from nonpublication to imprisonment. Such a context for writing generated an internal censor which the writer would use to try to anticipate the reactions of external censors to her work.

In Wolf's story \textit{Was bleibt} (1990), precisely such an anticipation of censorship, of the reader one "cannot choose," has destroyed the anonymous narrator's ability to write a "spontaneous letter":


Whereas Kassandra narrates her monologue as if an audience for it might exist, the narrator here, an anonymous woman writer like the narrator in \textit{Kindheitsmuster}, suffers not from the absence of an audience but from the presence of an undesired audience: the secret police


\textsuperscript{104}Christa Wolf, \textit{Was bleibt} (1990), Frankfurt am Main: Luchterhand, 1992, pp. 61-62. Further references will be included in the text with the abbreviation \textit{WB}.
(to be more precise: the East German Ministry for State Security, the Stasi). The letters which she is able to force herself to write are representations of the "confidential and intimate" letters she is no longer able to write, written as if the extra, undesired audience, the censor, did not exist. This figure of "as if" permeates Wolf's story, in two complementary ways: on the one hand, as with her "as-if" letters, the narrator attempts to live "as if" the police and the censor were not there; but on the other hand, when the police are not there, she continues to behave as if they were there.

The mode of observation which the police have chosen for her—a car with two or three "junge Männer in Zivil" stands throughout the day in the parking lot across the street from her apartment (WB, 13); her post is opened in such a way that she can still the traces of the tampering—is, according to a friend who claims to know, intended as a warning, in the form of "auffälliges Vorhandensein" (WB, 29). This "conspicuous presence" creates an exemplary panoptic effect in the narrator, who so internalizes the police's presence that, even in their absence, she is unable to change her behavior, unable to explain why "an jenen Tagen, an denen die Autos nicht in Wirklichkeit, nur als Phantombild auf meiner Netzhaut vorhanden waren, die Angst nicht von mir wich, nicht einmal geringer war als an Tagen der offensichtlichen Observation" (WB, 22-23). "Conspicuous presence," of course, is one way of paraphrasing the purpose of the architectural structure of the panopticon; again, this presence need only be possible: the actual presence of the observer in the central tower is not necessary, so long as the prisoners think the observer is there.

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105 In one of the reviews which triggered the controversy around the publication of this text, Ulrich Greiner claims that Wolf depicts both an anonymous institution and an anonymous city: "Weder von Stasi ist die Rede noch von Berlin." The former is true—neither the name of the institution nor its nickname appears in the text itself—but the latter is not: not only does the text contain references to a number of features of the landscape of Berlin, including the appearance of the name of the street where the narrator's apartment is (Friedrichstraße) in the passage I quoted as an epigraph in the introduction, it also names the city on the text's very first page, as the narrator gets out of bed in the morning: "[...] sprang ich auf und fand mich schon barfuß auf dem schön gemusterten Teppich im Berliner Zimmer [...]" (WB, 7). See Greiner, "Mangel an Feingefühl" (June 1, 1990), in Thomas Anz, ed., "Es geht nicht um Christa Wolf": Der Literaturstreit im vereinigten Deutschland (1991), Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch, 1995, p. 68.
Wolf's narrator has perfectly internalized this structure: as with Kassandra's "Eumelos in me," actual police observation is no longer necessary to produce the disciplinary effect of such observation. Because of this internalization, it is as if the police were there, even when they are not.

The primary effect of observation is the production of an imaginary "higher authority" like that Wolf spoke of in 1964. This internalization of the police produces the difficulty of writing "as-if" letters, letters which represent a spontaneity which is no longer possible. The narrator, however, is very good at representation; after the same knowing friend has told her that a very close friend of hers is a police informer, she even takes a certain degree of pleasure in the skill she has developed in writing "as-if" letters: "[...] er [the probable informer] würde nichts merken; ich würde ganz natürlich wirken, das kann ich nämlich. Und sogar, bis zu einem gewissen Grad, offen" (WB, 60). Again, the internalization of the police's presence leads to the production of a complementary (and compensatory?) representation of the police's absence, as if they were not there. Again, the flip side of this structure appears in the story as well: in a telephone conversation with a third friend, the narrator and her friend make jokes about the possibility that the police are tapping their phones, perhaps even recording their conversation; the narrator wonders what form their conversation would take if no one were listening: "Und wenn keiner mithörte? Wenn wir mit unserer Selbstüberschätzung und Mutspielerei ins Leere liefen? Das würde nicht den geringsten Unterschied machen" (WB, 25). This construction also appears in the narrator's dream from the night before the day which the story narrates, a dream in which a crowd of strange figures press to enter her apartment. In the morning, their words have stayed with her: "Daß wir uns nur ja nicht stören lassen sollten. Daß wir so tun sollten, als seien sie gar nicht da. Daß es das allerbeste wäre, wir würden sie vollständig vergessen" (WB, 14). This dream-image provides the narrative's most compact representation of the structure of observation, combining both the "conspicuous presence" which is intended to lead the
object of observation to internalize the police’s disciplinary power force and the production of a hypothetical representation of the police’s absence despite the object’s knowledge of their continuous presence.

The controversy around the publication of Was bleibt centered largely on a question of timing: many of Wolf’s critics felt that she should have published the story of an observation by the secret police before the fall of the Berlin Wall; its publication after the East German secret police had ceased to exist seemed more or less pointless or, worse, like an attempt by Wolf to position herself as an ex post facto dissident. In his critique, which included a detailed representation of Wolf’s entire literary career, Frank Schirrmacher wondered why the secret police had not appeared earlier in her work: "Zum erstenmal taucht in ihrer Prosa die Staatssicherheit auf, die Angst vor dem totalitären Staat." If this is the first appearance of the East German Stasi in Wolf’s work, it is nevertheless not the first representation of a secret police which Wolf has produced, a point Schirrmacher missed despite his summary of Wolf’s earlier writings. In Kassandra, not only does Eumelos transform Priamos’ palace guard into a secret police, the same structure of inner confrontation with the secret police that appears in Was bleibt appears in the earlier text as well, as Kassandra finds "[d]aß ich mich in einen inneren Dialog mit Eumelos—mit

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106 For example, Greiner claims that November 9, 1989, the day when the Berlin Wall fell, is "eine historische Wasserscheide. Davor wäre die Publikation des Textes eine Sensation gewesen, die sicherlich das Ende der Staatsdichterin Christa Wolf und vermutlich ihre Emigration zur Folge gehabt hätte. Danach ist die Veröffentlichung nur noch peinlich." Greiner, "Mangel an Feingefühl," p. 67. Frank Schirrmacher makes a stronger version of this point: "Dieses Buch [...] hätte vor zehn, ja vor fünf Jahren der Staatssicherheit wohl Schaden zufügen können. Jetzt ist es bedeutungslos, anachronistisch und hat Züge des Lächerlichen." (Schirrmacher, "'Dem Druck des härteren, strengeren Lebens standhalten': Auch eine Studie über den autoritären Charakter: Christa Wolfs Aufsätze, Reden und ihre jüngste Erzählung 'Was bleibt'" (June 2, 1990), in Anz, "Es geht nicht um Christa Wolf," p. 87.) Both Greiner and Schirrmacher, whose essays catalyzed the controversy around the publication of Wolf’s text, are West Germans; in an essay entitled "Ach, ihr süßen Wessis," the East German writer Martin Ahrends wondered if Greiner and Schirrmacher were really so "naive": "Glaubt ihr wirklich, daß irgendein Buch, zumal ein im Westen gedrucktes, irgendeiner DDR-Behörde, zumal der Stasi, irgendwelchen Schaden hätte zufügen können?" (Ahrends, "Ach, ihr süßen Wessis" (July 1, 1990), in Anz, "Es geht nicht um Christa Wolf," p. 136.)

107 Frank Schirrmacher, "'Dem Druck des härteren, strengeren Lebens standhalten'," pp. 86-87.

108 It is also certainly not Wolf’s first representation of “fear of a totalitarian state,” which appears both in Kindheitsmuster and Kassandra.
Eumelos!—verstrickte, der über Tage und Nächte ging. Soweit war es gekommen. Ihn, Eumelos, wollte ich überzeugen" (K, 119). As I suggested above, the "Eumelos" in Kassandra marks her internalization of the structure of disciplinary observation which increasingly permeates Trojan society; in the context of Was bleibt, it is the "as-if" structure of this imaginary "inner dialogue" which is striking: Kassandra imagines conversations with Eumelos as if she could convince him to change his policies. By imagining conversations with Eumelos, Kassandra personalizes what would otherwise be an anonymous confrontation with observational power\textsuperscript{109}; when she was first under observation, the narrator of Was bleibt engaged in a similar personalization, one she now feels she has overcome:


The narrator's fantasy of "speaking with an institution as if it were a person" doubles Kassandra's desire to try to "convince" Eumelos; each personalizes the anonymous structure of panoptic power in order to confront both the external threat which that power represents and their own internalization of the structures of that power. This personalization runs the risk of depoliticizing the threat which each faces by making a moment of sociopolitical control into a moment of interpersonal confrontation, one in which the threatening other, whether Eumelos or a personalized institution, can be spoken to in rational terms, as if the two partners in the imaginary conversation were playing by the same rules. Wolf's letter to Reimann shifts from a chosen correspondent to an unchosen censor and thus displaces the responsibility for the problem of unreliability from that over which one does have control to that over which one does not; in Was bleibt, the

\textsuperscript{109}In fact, Kassandra is highly critical of such "personalization" when the "palace" engages in it, transforming the politico-economic reasons for the war into the "personal reasons" of abduction, specifically of Paris' "self-alienation": "[...] ist diese Selbstfremdheit eines Prinzen der Schlüssel zu einem großen Krieg? Sie werden es so auslegen, fürchte ich. Sie brauchen diese persönlichen Gründe" (K, 53).

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personalization of the institution allows the narrator to confront the problem of observation as if she had some control over the situation she has found herself in, a quintessential moment of panoptic observation.

The personalization of the institution also colors the narrator's thoughts about the young men observing her from the parking lot. She tries, for example, to imagine what they tell their wives about their work. Then she imagines further, speculating about how their "day at the office" might be structured: "Zum Beispiel hätte ich mich auch interessiert, wie bei ihnen die tägliche Arbeitseinteilung vor sich ging, oder der Befehlsempfang, wie man das wohl nennen müßte [...]" (WB, 18). The narrator's desire for such apparently trivial information marks the nearly complete invisibility of the functioning of the secret police in East German society, despite its "conspicuous presence" even for those who are not immediately objects of police observation. Faced with this invisibility and anonymity, the narrator begins to speculate about her observers, specifically about the individual in charge of her case; her imaginings mark not only the desire to give the "conspicuous presence" a name and a face but also the hope that a personalized power provides: if an individual can be detected within the anonymous institutional structure, then the institution becomes less mysterious, becomes explicable on the basis of one's experience with other individuals, or even with that individual. Here, the personalization of power is not a tool for the production of a "personality cult" but a challenge to a structure of power entirely stripped of "personality."

The figure for the narrator's speculations is a onetime acquaintance whom she chances to see at the post office; however, they do not speak: "Für den Bruchteil einer Sekunde hatten unsere Blicke sich gepackt, aber Jürgen M. wollte mich nicht kennen, um Bruchteile von Sekundenbruchteilen hatte sein Blick sich eher zurückgezogen als der meine" (WB, 39-40). If Jürgen M. turns his gaze away a split second before the narrator turns hers away, she nevertheless immediately recognizes how the two of them are alike: Jürgen M.
"kann ruhig sein: Ich spiele mit" (WB, 40). Nevertheless, his refusal to recognize her gaze triggers a series of speculations about this old acquaintance; the combination of these speculations combine and her thoughts about the personalities of policemen lead to the connection of the two: "Da war sie wieder, meine fixe Idee [...]! daß es jemanden geben mußte, der außer dem wirklich Wichtigen alles über mich wußte. [...] Wie, wenn es der Schädel von Jürgen M. wäre?" (WB, 45). The figure of Jürgen M. is, it turns out, appropriate to the narrator's desire to personalize her observation, for, as she now remembers, Jürgen M. had once, years before, revealed to her that he had been following her life:

[...] so erfuhr ich denn, daß er, Jürgen M., seit Jahren mich und mein Leben verfolgte. Daß er jedes Wort kannte, daß ich gesagt oder geschrieben, vor allem jedes Wort, das ich verweigert hatte; daß er meine Verhältnisse so genau kannte, wie ein Außenstehender die Verhältnisse eines anderen überhaupt kennen kann; daß er sich in mich hineingedacht, hineingefühlt hatte mit einer Intensität, die mich bestürzte, und daß er mich—was ihn zur Weißglut reizte—für erfolgreich und glücklich hielt. (WB, 47)

Jürgen M.'s earlier observation of the narrator connects with the narrator's present image of being observed by the police: her words, both spoken and written, as well as her circumstances, become material for the observers' analyses; further, these analyses allow the observer to penetrate the unspoken and the invisible, to interpret not only her self-censorship ("jedes Wort, das ich verweigert hatte") but also her hidden thoughts and feelings. So much of Jürgen M.'s observation of the narrator is consistent with anonymous panoptic observation, but Jürgen M.'s confession adds a further element to the structure of observation: jealousy. This personalization of observation allows the narrator to find a nonpolitical reason for her current observation by the police; this depoliticization then becomes the object of the narrator's own self-criticism:

Einer, der kein persönliches Interesse an mir hat. Der mir nichts beweisen will. (WB, 52)

The "self-censor's" role here appears to be less than that of censorship as such than that of a taming of the narrator's imagination. Her desire for narrative leads her to produce a story with a personal basis and without politics; the "self-censor" returns the "narrative" which she invents to the politico-bureaucratic reality in which she lives, reinscribing the panoptic impersonality which her image of "Jürgen M." has displaced.

The narrator's figure of "Jürgen M." represents the attempt to humanize the anonymous institutional observation, the attempt to place an observing individual into the center of the panoptic tower. If this personalization might reduce the threat represented by the institution, such an image is at the same time rather frightening, and reveals why it might be preferable that the panoptic observer be "without qualities": an observer explicitly following his or her jealousies and intrigues will be patently unjust, whereas an observer who attempts to be "without qualities" will, as long as he or she maintains some skepticism about his or her success in "characterlessness," be able to be at least somewhat just. Nevertheless, despite her expressed preference for an observer who takes "no personal interest" in her, the narrator persists in her speculations about Jürgen M. and his possible motivations. Her persistence exposes the parallels between her own occupation, writing, and the activity of the secret policeman:

Aus Erfahrung wußte ich: Innerer Dialog ist dem inneren Dauermonolog vorzuziehen. Also gab ich meinem inneren Zensor zu bedenken, was den Jürgen M. sicherlich antreibe: Namlich daß er danach gierte, mir zu beweisen, nicht nur ein Schreiber könnte alles über eine Person herausfinden—er könne das, auf seine Weise, auch. Auch er könne sich, wie jeder x-beliebige Autor, zum Herrn und Meister seine Objekte machen. Da aber seine Objekte aus Fleisch und Blut sind und nicht, wie die meinen, auf dem Papier stehen, ist er der eigentliche Meister, der wirkliche Herr. (WB, 52-53)

Stephen Brockmann reads this passage to mark a contrast between the narrator and the secret police: "Whereas the narrator's method is interior dialogue, remorseless and meticulous introspection, an opening up to responses from the present and the past, the
Stasi believes in meticulous inspection of external details and external monologue.\textsuperscript{110} If Brockmann's contrast between the narrator's focus on internal details and the secret police's focus on external details is convincing, he nevertheless does not sufficiently address the role of fantasy in the narrator's construction of the image of Jürgen M.: the latter is a secret policeman only in the former's imaginary attempt to personalize the observation she is experiencing. Further, Brockmann finds it surprising that the narrator is unable to differentiate her mode of observation from that of the secret police ("She cannot even completely separate her role as a writer from Jürgen M.'s presumed role as a collector of documents for the Stasi"\textsuperscript{111}), but this inability is consistent with the ambiguous role of observation in the historical construction of the author position which the narrator of Was bleibt assumes. It is not actually necessary to refer to Foucault or Bakhtin to make this point; the internal evidence in Was bleibt is already strong enough. In fact, as the narrator imagines it, it is not the writer who is like the secret police, but the secret police which is like a writer. The narrator's image of the writer is consistent with her narrative speculations about Jürgen M.: the role of the writer appears to her to be precisely the exploration and explication of "a person," that is, of personality. Her interpretation of Jürgen M.'s desire then figures the secret policeman as another—and better—interpreter of the structures of personality. This interpretation of personality is not, however, done for its own sake; rather, for both the writer and the policeman, the interpretation of personality is a means to a different end: a certain power. For the narrator, then, the distinction between the two lies not in the mode of functioning of this will to power but in the object of its application: objects made of paper versus objects made of flesh and blood. Here, "Jürgen M." himself is but another of the narrator's "paper" objects, a construction in the narrator's imagination;

\textsuperscript{111}Brockmann, "Preservation and Change," p. 79.
the potential "flesh and blood" object of her observation remains invisible. If the narrator becomes, as an object of police observation, herself the "flesh and blood" object of the observing police's power, her own narrative invention is nevertheless the source of that image of personalized power. The very image of the secret policeman as an observer of personality depends on her own understanding of the writer's role as an observer of personality, of herself as such an observer, constructing literary "characters" from the people—such as Jürgen M.—whom she observes. If her construction of the figure of Jürgen M. is an attempt to reposition herself in the economy of observational power, her understanding of that power remains limited by the very desire for personalization which lead her to construct that figure: the personalization of panoptic power appears as its radical depoliticization and, further, as the displacement of an economy of power by an economy of choice, in which the object of observation would be able to choose, rather than be chosen by, a censor.

The figure of "Jürgen M.," then, allows the narrator to construct a narrative which explains the experience of being observed without confronting the political basis of her observation. This psychologization of the external conditions of her observation is doubled by her own internal psychologization of observation in the figure of the "self-censor," the figure of "inner dialogue." This internalization of a critical position of observation does not, however, figure her internalization of the very "censor" who is observing her; rather, this internal censor serves as a brake on her own narrativization of her situation. Through her confrontation with this internal dialogical figure, the narrator nevertheless does repoliticize her understanding of the processes of observation and internalization:


Pfeife zu tanzen wie die jungen Herren da draußen vor meiner Tür? [...] Das wars, was ich brauchte: glauben zu können, daß ich jenen Dritten eines nahen Tages ganz und gar von mir abgelöst und aus mir hinausgestoßen haben würde; daß ich das wirklich wollte; und daß ich, auf Dauer gesehen, eher diese jungen Herren da draußen aushalten würde als den Dritten in mir. (WB, 56-57)

Like Kassandra, the narrator of *Was bleibt* confronts the problem of her own internalization of the structures of political power in which she lives. Arisbe’s representation of Kassandra directly contrasts Kassandra’s identification with power with her desire for knowledge; here, the narrator does not oppose power and knowledge but makes them part of a trinity of power, knowledge, and self-protection (a "trinity" with a fourth element even: the "self-censor"). To know oneself and to spare oneself appear separately from each other and from the temptation to identification with power structures, a temptation which the narrator, unlike Kassandra, is able to identify as a part of herself which is as capable of speaking in the first person as the other two. This identification effaces the difference, otherwise very important to the narrator, between herself and the young men outside the door, a difference which she immediately seeks to refigure in terms of the difference between this identification with power and the observers. This refiguring, however, remains conditional: she "needs to be able to believe" that she will find her identification with power more unbearable than the presence of the police; the difficulty of this belief lies not in the distinction between their "conspicuous presence" and her desire to identify with the same political power they do but between her identification with power and her internalization of that presence. Nevertheless, the narrator’s naming of these structures of identification does repoliticize the psychological structures which the narrative of Jürgen M. had depoliticized—even if that repoliticization continues to leave the actual terms of her observation unnamed.

The narrator’s "as-if" constructions, then, do finally lead her to an observation which is neither conditional nor depoliticized. The figure of "Jürgen M." and the problem of
behaving "as if" the police are not there disappear in the narrator's direct confrontation with her own internalization not of observation but of the structures of political power in her society. Then, these reflections themselves appear as "as-if" reflections; the narrator calls them "Ablenkungsmanöver" (WB, 57) because she sees them as a delaying tactic before she opens the letter from the friend who might be an informer. Thus, her politicization of her situation is framed by a doubly conditional structure: the construction of the image of Jürgen M. and the reflections on "as-if" letters. A similar framing reappears in the reading which the narrator gives at the end of the story, in the evening of the narrated day. As she learns from the organizer of the reading, the audience is at least to some degree an "as-if" audience, consisting mostly of "geladenen Teilnehmer," which leads the narrator to ask Frau K., the organizer of the reading, "ob denn [...] überhaupt noch normales Publikum zu erwarten sei. Damit hatte ich sie nun aber beinahe beleidigt. Selbstverständlich habe sie auch 'Leute von der Straße' hereingelassen" (WB, 89). The audience, then, consists primarily of a representation of an audience; for such an audience, the narrator at first gives a representation of a reading:


The "as-if" reading takes precisely the form of the narrator's "as-if" letters: the reading of the text becomes a performance of spontaneity and openness, appearing as "natural" as the letters she writes to the informer/friend. Nevertheless, her observation of the audience during this performance leads her to change the mode of her reading because of the presence of those few "people from the street":

[...] für die ich ganz anders lesen müßte. Warum müßte: Muß. Und wenn nur die beiden wären. Aber es können auch zwei, drei Dutzend sein, und ich habe nicht mehr an sie gedacht. Und warum ist mir nicht eingefallen, daß es auch für die anderen lohnen würde, für die, die man hergeschickt

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hat? Denn wo steht geschrieben, daß sie aus Eisen, daß sie nicht auch verführbar sind.

Also gut. Jetzt streng ich mich an.

Jetzt legte ich keinen Wert mehr auf eine Einteilung des Publikums, nach welchen Gesichtspunkten auch immer. Wie sich in den über hundert verschiedenen Köpfen die Welt spiegeln mochte—ich wollte für diese eine Stunde meine Welt in ihre Köpfe pflanzen. (WB, 93)

Here, the terms of the "as-if" structure become completely clear in their moment of breakdown. The "as-if" reading depended on the narrator's distinction between "invited guests" and "people from the street"; similarly, the idea of an "as-if" letter or an "as-if" review depended on the existence of a double audience, the one to whom the letter was written and the "unchosen" censor, or the "people" and the imaginary "inner authority." As the narrator begins to read in earnest, however, she ceases to read for a double or multiple audience; the text becomes an expression of her "world" with which she would displace the "worlds" in the minds of her audience. The "as-if" structures produce a world of double readings akin to that which Kassandra discovers in Klytaimnestra's face; here, the narrator does not produce a text consciously intended to produce different meanings for different readers but one whose ambiguities are not the result of a "differentiation of the public" but rather an expression of the ambiguities in which she lives. Such a text might express the tensions of the "multiple beings" which constitute her "I," but it would not be composed differently for the young men in the car then for the "people from the street."

This breakdown of the "as-if" structure of the narrator's reading is then doubled by the discussion that follows. If it at first begins as an "as-if" discussion, a young woman's question about the future breaks the formality of the situation and opens up a different kind of discussion, one without "formulas":

Mit den Formeln fiel bald die Förmlichkeit. Es fiel die entsetzliche Angewohnheit, für andere zu sprechen, jeder sprach sich selbst aus und wurde dadurch angreifbar, manchmal zuckte ich noch zusammen: Wie angreifbar. (WB, 96)
The habit of "speaking for others" in public doubles the narrator's production of "as-if" letters (and Wolf's comment on "as-if" reviews as well); her breakdown of the "as-if" structure in her reading is doubled by the breakdown of "as-if" speaking in the discussion. The narrator's continued internalization of the structures which generate such habits, however, continues to make itself felt: she sees in the openness of the discussion less a challenge to those structures than the vulnerability of the speakers to punishment for speaking openly. If she desired to break through the limitations of an "as-if" reading, the open discussion nevertheless appears primarily threatening to her, rather than liberating.

When the narrator discovers that those "people from the street" who had not been able to get in (because the reading was "sold out") had been dispersed by the police, she also discovers that the police had been called before the crowd had even begun to assemble.

These discoveries recast the whole event in a different light:


The entire scene appears staged. The reading itself, and not only the "demonstration" and arrests which took place outside the reading, appears once again as an "as-if" reading; however, the producer and director of this representation of a reading is no longer the narrator but "Jürgen M. or whoever it might be," who thereby produces a set of "as-if" reports from an "as-if" demonstration before an "as-if" reading. Thus, the narrator's attempt to break through the structure of "as-if," if partially successful, is again framed by the very structure she sought to escape.

This framing is a further product of the narrator's imagination. Again, she has constructed a narrative which disables her own ability to act spontaneously and marks her own internalization of the structures of power in which she lives. Wolf's text, then, does
not represent a writer who is an unequivocal dissident; rather, her narrator is, as in *Kassandra*, struggling with her own relationship to power, her own understanding of herself as a writer, and her own position in the society in which she lives. The figure of this struggle is the narrator's persistent representation of her desire to discover a new "language" in which to speak without the structures of "as-if," beginning with the text's opening: "Nur keine Angst. In jener anderen Sprache, die ich im Ohr, noch nicht auf der Zunge habe, werde ich eines Tages darüber reden" (WB, 7). The "as-if" world in which the narrator finds herself living, however, renders her unable to express this "other language." As Wolfram Schütte points out, the text of *Was bleibt* itself cannot be understood as an expression of this otherness: "Der Wunsch nach einer 'neuen Sprache' wurde noch mit den ästhetischen Mitteln und im Bannkreis der alten Sprache artikuliert." Rather, the text is a representation of the "same" language in which the narrator finds herself caught. In the image of an undivided public, her reading opens up a possible way to overcome the "as-if" structures which have permeated her consciousness: a writing which would not be conscious of the different modes of interpretation which different readers would bring to the text would be able to speak directly. A direct figure for this "other" language does appear in the text, not in the writing of the narrator but in the writing of a "girl" who comes to visit her in the afternoon. The narrator immediately identifies the girl as both like and unlike herself: "Mit diesem Mädchen trat etwas mir vom Ursprung ihrer Verwandten und zugleich ganz und gar Fremdes über meine Schwelle" (WB, 74). This simultaneous similarity and difference is unclear at first, but the narrator slowly

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112 Wolfram Schütte, in Anz, "Es geht nicht um Christa Wolf," p. 258. Schütte's comment appears in an untitled contribution to the section of Anz's documentation entitled "Der Streit geht weiter: Neue Stellungnahmen zur Debatte."

113 It is not clear whether the text which she does read is such a text or not; however, it is safe to assume that it is not. If it were, then she would have already find her "other" language and would not need to be looking for it.

114 Another, less developed image of such a writing appears in the poems which a young man has recently been leaving in the narrator's mailbox. The youth of these two writers turns the question of using a "true" language into a generational problem: "Die Jungen schreiben es auf" (WB, 76).
can give them both names: the girl is a writer, hence the similarity; the difference, however, is figured in a single word: "Gefängnis' war das Wort, das unsere Verwandtschaft in Frage stellte" (WB, 75). The narrator's relationship to power, unlike the girl's, has never led to her imprisonment; the girl, unlike the narrator, has no "third" in herself who is identified with power. Thus, she, unlike the narrator, is able to produce a text which is not an "as-if" text: "Nur habe sie es eben gern, etwas aufzuschreiben, was einfach wahr sei. Und dies dann mit anderen zu bereden. Jetzt. Hier" (WB, 78). The narrator has lost this ability to write and speak what is "simply true" in the here and now; if the girl represents the narrator's "other language," its presence in the girl's text nevertheless only emphasizes its absence from the narrator's writing, where it is not yet "on her tongue" and is deferred to an indefinite future.

This deferral is inscribed in the text's title; its first appearance in the text itself further emphasizes the girl's difference from the narrator: "Das Mädchen fragte nicht krämerisch: Was bleibt" (WB, 79). The narrator thus explicitly uses the girl's frankness and openness to criticize her own writing; "was bleibt" is then not only the title of the text but a persistent theme of its final pages, culminating in the concluding image which connects this motif with the theme of the "other language":


Insofar as the text of Was bleibt neither tells the story nor speaks the language which these lines promise—that story and that language appear to be the girl's and not the narrator's—, these lines should not be read as a figure for Wolf's text as a whole. Was bleibt is a representation not of the writing which the girl now does or the narrator might in the future do but of the psychological structures of observation, the "as-if" structures which the experience of observation and of identification with power produce in the narrator, leaving
her unable to speak "easily and freely" about her experience. The phrase "was bleibt" appears in everyday German, but it is also a literary reference: the final line of Friedrich Hölderlin's poem "Andenken" reads "Was bleibt aber, stiften die Dichter." The narrator's use of the phrase thus might figure her desire to play this "founding" role which Hölderlin claims for poets; however, the first appearance of the phrase in the text, in which the narrator contrasts the girl's frankness to her own Philistinism, deflates the grand possibilities of the poetic allusion. Further, another passage in Hölderlin's poem figures the openness of which the narrator is no longer capable:

Doch gut
Ist ein Gespräch und zu sagen
Des Herzens Meinung, zu hören viel
Von Tagen der Lieb,
Und Taten, welche geschehen.116

Observation by the secret police has left the narrator unable to engage in a simple conversation in which she can freely speak her opinions or even, as her reception of the girl's writing and biography shows, hear of "days of love" or "things which happen"; even her participation in an open conversation initiated by another is tainted by the police's observation and by the disciplinary structure of her society. "What's left" for her is a life of "as-if" conversations, letters, writings, and readings.

Jürgen Habermas' interpretation of Immanuel Kant's essay "Was ist Aufklärung" suggests that the idea of the public sphere itself is permeated by an "as-if" structure; the individuals gathered together in the "public sphere" not only behave "as if they were free men" but also "as if they were scholars": "Nicht allein in der Republik der Gelehrten verwirklicht sich Öffentlichkeit, sondern im öffentlichen Gebrauch der Vernunft aller, die sich darauf verstehen. Sie müssen freilich aus den Schranken ihrer Privatsphäre so


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hervortreten, als ob sie Gelehrte wären." 117 Wolf's narrator, of course, does not live in a
country with an actively functioning public sphere (at best, it has a representation of a
public sphere), but the observational structures put in place by the secret police are
nevertheless consistent with the observational structures of a public sphere as theorized by
Habermas: just as the participants in the Kantian "Öffentlichkeit" must represent themselves
as free and educated in order for the public sphere to function, the objects of the police's
observation must, in order not to appear suspicious, behave as if they were not under
observation. The acknowledgment of the police's observation can be, at best, a humorous
gesture 118; at its worst, that acknowledgment becomes a justification for the observation
itself, acting as an "Indizienbeweis [...] für die Notwendigkeit der Observation" (WB, 21).

The "as-if" structure of the text of Was bleibt can perhaps explain why its publication
was so controversial, leading many critics to accuse Wolf of stylizing herself as a victim of
a system which, they claimed, she had, by staying in East Germany and tempering her
direct criticism of its structures, helped support. In Was bleibt, Wolf published a text "as
if" East Germany still existed in its old form; that is, she still wrote in the form necessary
for the communication of such material under East German conditions prior to the opening
of the borders. In the absence of the explicit structures of censorship which existed in East
Germany, the narrator's internalization of those structures was not read as a representation
of a psychological conflict generated by the experience of observation; rather, the
depoliticizing moment in the representation of those "as-if" structures, a moment which
would have been necessary if the text had been published in the old East Germany (if such
a representation of the secret police could have been published at all), was isolated from the
text and made the object of a critique of Wolf's writing in general and, finally, of Wolf

117 Habermas, Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit, p. 182.
118 There are several examples of such gestures in the text, such as this: "Plötzlich habe ich das Licht
anknipsen, dicht ans Fenster treten und zu ihnen hinüberwinken müssen. Worauf sie ihre Scheinwerfer
dreimal kurz aufblitzen ließen. Sie hatten Humor" (WB, 20).
Finally, however, as Brockmann points out, *Was bleibt* "already anticipates" both the specific critiques of Wolf and her text and the general "literary debates which were to shake the artistic consciousness of unified Germany": "Its narrator is as hard on herself as any of West Germany's critics were on Christa Wolf [...]." Indeed, Wolf's text, and Kindheitsmuster and Kassandra as well, is exactly what Ulrich Greiner claims it is not, "eine aufrichtige Auseinandersetzung mit der Frage intellektueller Mitverantwortung." Such a confrontation requires the recognition of one's own identification with power and the tremendous difficulty of disidentification, precisely the problems which Wolf uses the figure of a woman observing a woman observing to confront. If her use of that figure does not escape the tension between repression and emancipation which is inscribed in the history of the writer as observer, her awareness of the gendering of observation does allow her, unlike Lessing, to consciously depict that tension.

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119 An effective critique of depoliticization in *Was bleibt* would have to do more than just show that that depoliticization outweighs the various moments of repoliticization in the text and the narrator's own criticisms of her depoliticizations of her experience. Such a critique would have to address two further problems: first of all, the narrator is not Wolf but a figurative construction; this depoliticization is part of a figure which Wolf has constructed. An argument against this point would have to show both that a general tendency to such a depoliticization exists in Wolf's writings and that she does not "intend" this tendency. Such an argument would still have to deal with the following point: by leaving the reasons for the surveillance of the narrator vague, Wolf opens up an opportunity for the reader, especially but not exclusively an East German reader, to identify his or her own experience in her text (this mode of identification is characteristic for Wolf and, indeed, for many East German writers). The depoliticization of the narrator's experience is thus part of an attempt to open up a space for identification with the narrator, an identification which would expose identifying readers to the same tensions which the narrator is experiencing. This exposure would lead such readers to confront the internalization and personalization of structures of power in themselves. A critique of this depoliticization would thus have to confront the absence of a functioning public sphere in East Germany and the manner in which literature served to fill the gap left by this absence of Öffentlichkeit. Cf. David Bathrick's essay on the problem of the public sphere in East Germany, which appears in Hohendahl and Herminghouse's *Literatur der DDR in den siebzigern Jahren.*


121 Ulrich Greiner, in Anz, *Es geht nicht um Christa Wolf,* p. 245. This untitled comment, like Schütte's, also appears in "Der Streit geht weiter: Neue Stellungnahmen zur Debatte."
Chapter Three
The Gendering of Observation
Marguerite Duras

3.1. A House of Her Own

[...] a woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction; and that, as you will see, leaves the great problem of the true nature of women and the true nature of fiction unsolved.

Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*122

In order to construct themselves as observers, both Doris Lessing and Christa Wolf seek to take over the *subject* position which their culture has traditionally gendered male, even when it is, as in panoptic disciplinary observation, supposed to be "without qualities" and neutral in gender. Marguerite Duras' approach to observation is entirely different. Where Lessing and Wolf implicitly or explicitly confront the tensions involved when a woman takes over a subject position which was constructed for men, Duras uses the *object* positions socially constructed for women to construct a new, transformed *subject* position for herself. This transformation appears in an initial form in her 1954 story "Le boa," but its most complete depiction is in *L'Amant* (1984), in which the narrator recalls the adolescent experiments with these positions by which she created herself as the active subject, rather than the passive object, of a gaze. If this "experimentation" creates a position of activity from positions of passivity, Duras' texts also contain women who are unable to perform such a transformation on a classic position of passivity: the position of women in wartime, waiting for their men. In the screenplay *Hiroshima mon amour* (1960), a French girl witnesses the death of her lover, a German soldier; in the volume of memoirs *La Douleur* (1985), Duras herself waits at war's end for her husband, a captured member of the Resistance, to return from his deportation by the Germans. This position of waiting

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122Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own* (1929), London: Hogarth Press, 1959, p. 6. Further references will be included in the text with the abbreviation ROO.
paralyzes the women into passivity; only after her husband has returned and his recovery is secured can Duras begin once more to construct herself as the subject, and not the object, of narration.

If Duras' constructions of "observing women" manipulate various traditional positions in which women are the objects of male gazes, her career as a writer nevertheless contains a moment of radical concealment from the male gaze, a moment Duras describes in "Écrire" (1993). Here, Duras talks about the mode of writing she developed around 1960; this mode, in which Duras creates her own independence, both economic and aesthetic, through her literary production itself, fits Virginia Woolf's model of a woman writer who has "money and a room of her own" perfectly. Woolf's analysis of "women and fiction" in *A Room of One's Own* centers on two interconnected issues: the psycho-aesthetic problem of the mental condition necessary for the production of literature, and the socio-economic problem of the material conditions necessary for the production of that mental condition. Literary work, according to Woolf, requires a certain "freedom of the mind" (ROO, 95), a freedom largely denied to women because of historical restrictions on their ability to provide financial support for themselves. The "true natures" of women and fiction will continue to remain obscure as long as these socio-economic conditions remain in place. Thus, for Woolf, the development of women's writing only began in earnest when women could support themselves through writing, when Aphra Behn "made, by working hard, enough to live on" (ROO, 95). Because "women could make money by writing" (ROO, 97), Behn, and the women writers who followed her in the eighteenth century, were able to write on a wide variety of subjects previously closed to them. This professionalization of the woman writer at the end of the seventeenth century stands in sharp contrast to the model of authorship represented by Ben Jonson, who sought to dissociate the writer from the marketplace so as to elevate the status of the writer to that of "author," in the process *creating* the "true nature" of literature as something *independent* of socio-economic conditions.
One effect of this construction of literature's "true nature" was to close the world of elite literature to women precisely at the historical moment when a significant number of middle-class women began to participate in the marketplace of literature both as readers and as writers. As Woolf's depiction of "Oxbridge" makes clear (ROO, 7), the world which Jonson "colonized" with his construction of an elite literature, the educated world of universities and social power, remained closed to women until the twentieth century. Thus, if the emergence of the professional woman writer addresses, to some degree, the first, financial part of Woolf's formula, it does not necessarily provide the space in which the "freedom of mind" which Woolf values so highly can develop. The second part of Woolf's formula, the "room of her own," addresses this problem. In order to be able to follow Ben Jonson in occupying the realms of elite literature, women who write must, like Jonson, be able to detach themselves from the demands of the marketplace; only then can their minds generate the "incandescence" which Woolf claims is necessary to the production of great literature (ROO, 85). The writer first attaches him- or herself to the marketplace, but then must proceed, if he or she would be a writer of "Literature," to detach him- or herself from the marketplace, otherwise that "freedom of the mind" will be adulterated by material concerns, by the very marketplace which makes that freedom possible.

Duras' international success has provided her with a steady source of income; in addition, she has also used her income from her work to buy herself a "house of her own": "Cette maison de Neauphle-le-Château, je l'ai achetée avec les droits de cinéma de mon livre Un barrage contre le Pacifique." The marketplace success of Duras' previous writing provided her with the financial security to be able to detach herself from the

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123 Marguerite Duras, "Écrire," in Duras, Écrire, Paris: Gallimard, 1993, p. 29. Further references will be included in the text with the abbreviation É.

124 This success was not unambiguous. In 1974, Duras claimed that she was living "de mes droits à l'étranger" and selling almost nothing in France; further, her ignorance of the existence of "la clause d'un pourcentage" in cinema contracts led to her being radically underpaid for her work on the movie Hiroshima mon amour, a worldwide success: "Et dix ans après [Alain] Resnais [director of the film] m'a dit que, en dix ans, j'avais dû perdre des millions—vingt-deux millions, je crois." (Marguerite Duras and Xavière Gauthier, 225)
market, achieve Woolf's "freedom of the mind" and write as she had never written before, in the privacy of this "house of her own": "C'est seulement dans cette maison que je suis seule. Pour écrire. Pour écrire pas comme je l'avais fait jusque-là" (É, 15). The solitude of the house is of two types: an external solitude, an isolation from other people (akin to Woolf's vision of socio-economic independence), and an internal solitude, a psychological and aesthetic isolation from the internalized voice of literary history which Woolf describes, "that persistent voice, now grumbling, now patronising, now domineering, now grieved, now shocked, now angry, now avuncular, that voice which cannot let women alone [...]" (ROO, 126). Both of these solitudes are the result of an active process of production of a space of self-concealment: "On ne trouve pas la solitude, on la fait. La solitude elle se fait seule. Je l'ai faite. [...] J'avais enfin une maison où me cacher pour écrire des livres" (É, 19, 23). If this generalized space for writing is not gendered, Duras' experience of that space is; her concealment of herself coincides with a concealment of her writing from men, something which she claims women in general must do if they are to write: "Aux amants, les femmes ne doivent pas faire lire les livres qu'elles font. Quand je venais de terminer un chapitre, je le leur cachais" (É, 18-19). For women who want to write, the construction of this external solitude, the material "room of one's own," is absolutely necessary in the face of men's active resistance to women's writing: "Les hommes ne le support pas: une femme qui écrit" (É, 21). By hiding herself and her writing, Duras produces her own such external solitude, within which she can then develop an "internal" solitude, Woolf's "freedom of the mind," a psychological space in which she will no longer have to listen to that "persistent voice."

For Woolf, this internal solitude allows the writer to go beyond gender concerns; in fact, the writer must do so in order to achieve the "incandescence" which she privileges.

Les parleuses, Paris: Minuit, 1974, pp. 35, 81. Further references will be included in the text with the abbreviation P.)
She contrasts not only Jane Austen and Charlotte Brontë, but also William Shakespeare and Rudyard Kipling: in each pair, the latter author does not produce a writing which transcends gender, a transcendence the former achieves. Whereas Woolf's discussion of this psychological solitude does address the problem of gender, if only to leave it behind, Duras' representation of an internal solitude, of a resistance to a "persistent voice," does not bring up gender at all:

Je crois que c'est ça que je reproche aux livres, en général, c'est qu'ils ne sont pas libres. On le voit à travers l'écriture: ils sont fabriqués, ils sont organisés, réglementés, conformes on dirait. Une fonction de révision que l'écrivain a très souvent envers lui-même. L'écrivain, alors il devient son propre flic. J'entends par là la recherche de la bonne forme, c'est-à-dire de la forme la plus courante, la plus claire et la plus inoffensive. [...] des livres charmants, sans prolongement aucun, sans nuit. Sans silence. Autrement dit: sans véritable auteur. [...] pas des livres qui s'incrustent dans la pensée et qui dissèment le deuil noir de toute vie, le lieu commun de toute pensée. (E, 41-42)

Although Duras does not mention an internalized voice like Woolf's, such a voice is implicitly present: a book "without silence" would be one occupied by discourse, by the societal voice which urges the writer to produce "good form." This conformity eliminates access to an extrasocial transcendence, "the place common to all thought"; the writer's internalization of the forces which organize and control his society, eliminating the nonstandard, the unclear and the offensive, turns him into "his own cop," a paradigmatic subject of Foucault's disciplinary society. Such a writer will most likely choose an outsider as his central figure—outsiders are the primary subjects of disciplinary narrative—only to control that figure in the end through his or her successful assimilation into society or through death. In the novels Le ravissement de Lol V. Stein (1964) and Le Vice-consul (1965), the two novels Duras mentions writing in "Écrire," the title figure either remains unassimilated or, if disciplined, remains incomprehensible to those who disciplined him. The writing of the former required its concealment from the lover Duras then had; the latter required the elimination of any possible internalization of an external perspective: "Écrire Le
Vice-consul. [...] Je ne pouvais en parler parce que la moindre intrusion dans le livre, le moindre avis 'objetif' aurait tout effacé de ce livre-là" (É, 30-31). The physical solitude of Duras' house was the basis for this psychological solitude in which she could write books which were not "effaced" but "free," books which did not "conform," in which the writer did not "become his own cop." A trace of this nonconformity appeared in the reviews of Le Vice-consul: "[...] quand j'ai lisais des critiques, la plupart de temps, j'étais sensible au fait qu'on disait que ça ne ressemblait à rien" (É, 31). The combination of her two solitudes allowed Duras to produce a third, the solitude of the radically singular book, what Maurice Blanchot calls "the essential solitude." 125

Both the external and internal solitudes are bodily solitudes, whether physical or psychological; the solitude of the book is, in a sense, metaphysical. For Duras, the latter is explicitly dependent on the former: "Cette solitude réelle du corps devient celle, inviolable, de l'écrit" (É, 17). In contrast, Blanchot denies the dependence of the "essential" solitude on what he calls "la solitude dans la monde." 126 If he begins his essay with an image of the latter, taken from a letter written by Rainer Maria Rilke in August 1907, he does so only to define what the essential solitude is not:

Übrigens habe ich, zwei kurzen Unterbrechungen abgerechnet, seit Wochen kein Wort gesprochen; meine Einsamkeit schließt sich endlich, und ich bin in der Arbeit wie der Kern in der Frucht ... 127

For Blanchot, this Einsamkeit is not "essentiellment solitude: il est recueillement" (SE, 13). As a characteristic of the literary work itself, this solitude is independent of the "circonstances, c'est-à-dire l'histoire" (SE, 14) of its production. "L'oeuvre est solitaire,"

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125 Maurice Blanchot, "La solitude essentielle," in Blanchot, L'espace littéraire, Paris: Gallimard, 1955. References will be included in the text with the abbreviation SE.
127 Rainer Maria Rilke, Briefe aus den Jahren 1906 bis 1907, Ruth Sieber-Rilke and Carl Sieber, eds., Leipzig: Insel, 1930, p. 305. The ellipsis is in the edition itself; it is unclear whether it is in the original letter. The text is cited in French by Blanchot (SE, 13). Further references will be included in the text with the name "Rilke."
not the author, and the circumstantial quality of his or her solitude contrasts with the "absence d'exigence" of the work's solitude (SE, 15). If Duras understands the work's solitude as a transformation of the author's, a transformation which renders that corporeal solitude "inviolable," for Blanchot the two solitudes are related in a merely accidental, circumstantial fashion. The "essential" solitude, like the "true nature" of women, fiction, or literature in general, is something created to be independent of socio-economic conditions. Blanchot's "essentialism" appears suspect to the same kind of criticism Woolf would apply to "the true nature of women" or the "true nature of fiction." A closer examination of the material conditions and modes of representation of the implicitly "inessential" solitude of the body or "recueillement" exposes the gendering of the construction of solitude which is "essential" to the production of the "solitude of the book."

As cited by Blanchot, Rilke's metaphor of the seed in the fruit desocializes his solitude by naturalizing it; the production of his isolation disappears in favor of a poetic productivity figured as a process of biological reproduction. However, the context of that sentence, both within the letter and within that period of Rilke's life, belies such a straightforward rhetorical displacement; the preceding paragraph of the letter indicates some of the conditions of that productivity:

    Meine Frau denkt Ihrer herzlichst; sie ist mit der kleinen Ruth auf einem Gute in der Nähe von Hannover, wohin ein Auftrag sie kürzlich berufen hat. Ich selbst bin und bleibe in Paris, obwohl es mich einigermaßen erschreckt, daß die Kastanien schon jetzt fast leer sind ... (Rilke, 304)

Rilke's metaphor contrasts sharply with the preceding image of the leafless chestnut tree; if the chestnuts are at the end of their reproductive cycle, Rilke is in the midst of his own. Furthermore, this aesthetic productivity depends, in a month in which he wrote forty-one of the poems which would appear in his *Der Neuen Gedichte Zweiter Teil*, on his isolation from his own position in the cycle of biological reproduction, on the absence of his wife
and daughter. These material conditions are present in Rilke's letter even as he transforms them in the concluding metaphor. By citing only the metaphor, Blanchot suppresses the gendered basis of Rilke's "recueillement," of his external solitude, a basis which is anything but accidental: Rilke's productivity, like Duras', is fundamentally dependent on an external solitude produced through the isolation of their writing from their respective partners. Furthermore, both do so in a space of their own, Duras in her house, Rilke in his Paris apartment: "Mein Daimonion heißt mich diesmal energetisch aushalten in der kleinen stillen Stube, die Sie kennen [...]" (Rilke, 312-313). Rilke's "little quiet room," like Duras' house, provides a space for the withdrawal necessary for literary work.

Unlike Duras', Rilke's representation of internal solitude is explicitly gendered. Receiving a monograph from a scholar, Ernst Ludwig Schellenberg, Rilke not only declined to comment on it, but refused to read it as well, on the grounds of protecting his psychological solitude:

[...] ich lese nie irgend etwas von meinen Arbeiten Handelndes. [...] Ich muß mit meiner Arbeit allein sein und habe so wenig das Bedürfnis, andere von ihr reden zu hören, wie etwa einer wünschte, die Urteile anderer über die Frau, die er liebt, gedruckt zu sehen und zu sammeln. (Rilke, 318, emphasis in original)

Here, gender is not an issue in the construction of solitude, neither in terms of a physical isolation from women nor in terms of a resistance to a gendered "persistent voice"—Rilke's refusal to read the critic's remarks has nothing to do with gender. Rather, gender appears as part of the artist's relationship to his work, a relationship which must, for Rilke, remain completely solitary. Rilke's two metaphorizations of his solitude first naturalize his isolation, eliminating the role of gender in its production, and then create a gendered figure

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128 On Rilke's productivity, see Ingeborg Schnack, Rainer Maria Rilke. Chronik seines Lebens und seines Werkes, Frankfurt am Main: Insel, 1975, vol. 1, p. 276.
129 Thus did Rilke turn down an invitation to visit his friend Karl von der Heydt. The remainder of this letter contains another reference to his self-imposed isolation from wife and daughter, and further a discussion of the printing of Neue Gedichte: "Der Insel-Verlag verspricht sich (und mir), ein schönes Buch daraus zu machen" (Rilke, 313). This is another aspect of the material production of books which Blanchot neglects.
of the work he does there, displacing both his relationship to nature and to gender from his social surroundings to his poetic production. The connections between these figures and their contexts remain implicit. In contrast, Duras rarely uses metaphors in her descriptions of solitude, and when she does, the literal basis of the metaphor is explicit:

J'écrivais tous les matins. Mais sans horaire aucun. Jamais. Sauf pour la cuisine. Je savais quand il fallait venir pour que ça bouille ou que ça ne brûle pas. Et pour les livres je le savais aussi. (E, 40-41)

The relationship between cooking and writing is double: if at first cooking interrupts writing, it nevertheless then becomes a metaphor for it. Whereas Rilke figures his aesthetic production in biological terms without any reference to his own nourishment, his own biological self-reproduction, Duras uses the production of such nourishment as her model for literary production. Rilke feels like he is in the fruit; Duras makes jam.\(^{130}\) This contrast is charged with social implications: women concern themselves with biological reproduction while men focus on a socio-cultural production which is understood in terms of metaphors, like Rilke's, based on that biology. Duras inserts her own literary production into this model and thereby creates a new metaphor for writing—cooking. This interruption of the writing process by physical necessity is not a matter of contingency; Duras' transformation of writing into cooking not only reinscribes a traditional social constellation of aesthetic and biological (re-)production but also makes that interruption itself an essential rather than accidental part of the creative process: the plan of cooking is the structure upon which she fixes the planless process of writing Le Vice-consul. She refigures "women's work" to include writing, using a metaphor which could not arise for Rilke or Blanchot, for whom the reproduction of their own bodies is unimportant to literary production even when, as for Rilke, it is symbolically important. In Rilke, food appears only as a metaphor,

\(^{130}\) As Xavière Gauthier wrote in the introduction to Les parleuses: "[E]ntre les enregistrements de nos entretiens, nous avons fait des confitures" (P, 10).
whereas for Duras it is *essential* both in itself and as a productive image of writing. For Duras, art is a process of production; for Rilke, art is like a natural growth.

Similarly, the metaphorical presence of woman in Rilke's response to his critic corresponds to the absence of women from their exchange, a discussion between men, while Duras relates her various encounters with Jacques Lacan, both in text and in person, in non-metaphorical language which again contains possibilities of transformation:

Personne ne peut la connaître, L.V.S. [Lol V. Stein], ni vous ni moi. Et même ce que Lacan en a dit, je ne l'ai jamais tout à fait compris. J'étais abasourdie par Lacan. Et cette phrase de lui: "Elle ne doit pas savoir qu'elle écrit ce qu'elle écrit. Parce qu'elle se perdrait. Et ça serait la catastrophe." C'est devenu pour moi, cette phrase, comme une sorte d'identité de principe, d'un "droit de dire" totalement ignoré des femmes. (É, 23-24)

Duras' figure, Lol V. Stein, remains free and inviolable, outside the closure represented by Lacan or by a conformist discourse, even as Duras herself can still be threatened by the authority of that discourse. Her bodily encounter with Lacan repeats the terms of this textual encounter:

Lacan had me meet him one night in a bar at midnight. He frightened me. In a bar in a basement. To talk to me about Lol V. Stein. He told me that it was a *clinically perfect* delirium. He began to ask me questions. For two hours. I more or less staggered out of the place.131

The "stunning" quality of Lacan's text is doubled by the "staggering" effect of his person, both of which seek to claim Duras for his own discourse, as the one who knows the terms of that discourse without knowing she does. Rather than succumb to this threat of co-optation, of being transformed into an object for Lacan's knowledge, Duras seeks, by transforming herself from the known into the knower, to make herself as inviolable as her figure is. Unable to completely understand Lacan and his statement of her paradoxical not-knowing knowing, Duras shifts the terms of this double "not-knowing" into her own form of knowledge, the source not only of her own writing but of a general principle for women

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who would resist a "persistent voice" like Lacan's. As with "women's work," Duras refigures women's position so that it becomes a position for writing. Although Duras' solitude is violable, she is able to defend it against the "voice" which Rilke refuses to confront at all.

Both Rilke and Duras construct a solitude in which they can write, a solitude centered on the room or house of their own. Further, both do so in clearly gendered terms. However, for Rilke, the gendering of solitude is primarily metaphorical; his figures efface the material conditions of his solitude, especially the absence of his wife. In contrast, Duras constructs a model of writing which refigures the already gendered material conditions of her writing so as to create the space of solitude in which she can then proceed to write in a way wholly new to her. By using Rilke to define what the "essential" solitude is not, Blanchot extends Rilke's own figuring of his solitude; the disconnection of the solitude of the work from the supposedly "accidental" solitude of the author is consistent with Rilke's own formulations. A similar assertion about Duras would contradict the terms of her own solitude; for her, the solitude of the work cannot completely displace the author's solitude, because to do so would be to efface the material conditions of a woman's writing. The construction of the "house of her own" as a space of solitude is not incidental to her writing but essential.

Woolf's analysis of "women and fiction" might not apply to Duras, who comes from a different literary tradition than Woolf's. As Joan DeJean shows, "the female tradition" in France "has a history incomprehensible through reference to either that of the novel or that of English women's writing [...]."¹³² Whereas women writing novels in English have been a steady presence even when that presence has been trivialized, an initial period of women's literary presence in France (the seventeenth century) has been overshadowed by

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several centuries, especially the nineteenth, in which women have had almost no influence whatsoever on the French tradition. The potential for a strong women's literary tradition existed, but that potential was not fulfilled. Further, that potential can be understood in Woolf's terms: first, in the figure of the "room of one's own," or rather, the cabinet, which the Duchesse de Montpensier figured in 1660 (TG, 64); then, in Madeleine de Scudéry's ability to support herself from her literary production: "[...] a bourgeoisie living in a world dominated by aristocrats, she was the first French woman writer to depend on her literary production for her livelihood" (TG, 232, n. 32). But Duras does not appeal to this French tradition of women secluding themselves in order to be able to write or producing works which allow them to support themselves as she does from her work. When she does talk about her reading, she talks about men: "Les grandes lectures de ma vie, celles de moi seule, c'est celles écrites par des hommes" (Ê, 43). Her examples of such writers are Michelet, Saint-Just, and Stendhal, "et bizarrement ce n'est pas Balzac" (Ê, 43). Further, when Duras does appeal to a woman writer, she appeals not only to Woolf, but to A Room of One's Own. Duras' figuring of herself as a woman writer thus does not depend on the French literary tradition which DeJean analyzes, even if her self-construction is consistent with the primary terms of that tradition. In fact, it would be surprising if she did appeal to that tradition, for, as DeJean shows, that tradition was effaced by the eighteenth-century construction of a classic French canon.

Thus, the use of Woolf to read Duras' construction of a space of solitude is not inconsistent either with Duras' own formulations or with the French literary tradition, despite DeJean's warnings against using English models to speak of French writers. The use of Blanchot is much less questionable, as Duras and Blanchot not only are contemporaries but

133Cf. the interview with Duras which appears in the collection of interviews edited by Alice Jardine and Anne M. Menke, Shifting Scenes: Interviews on Women, Writing, and Politics in Post-68 France, New York: Columbia University Press, 1991, p. 75: "From the position I have today, a definitive one, the most important writer from the standpoint of a women's writing is Woolf."

134Cf. "The Origin of Novels: Gender, Class, and the Writing of French Literary History" (TG, 159-199).
are friends who have written and spoken about each other on several occasions. The figure of Rilke as a contrast to Duras' construction of her solitude then derives from Blanchot's use of Rilke in his essay on solitude. If a reading of Duras' "Écrire" in connection with Woolf, Blanchot, and Rilke shows that Blanchot's construction of the concept of the "essential solitude" neglects to take the gender of solitude into account, the connection of that reading to DeJean's version of French women's literary history exposes another absence in Blanchot's construction of solitude: the absence of a history of solitude, of Einsamkeit, in which women must continually reconstruct a position of solitude which men have, in their construction of history and literary history, repeatedly erased.

The paradox of my discussion of Duras lies in the tension between this concealment of herself in solitude and her construction of women figures exposed to and manipulating the male gaze which appears as a threat to aesthetic production in "Écrire." That tension appears to be one of the motive forces of Duras' writing: the self-exposure which makes woman's creativity possible in her work serves in part to conceal the self in the very act of exposure itself. The narrative production of activity from positions of passivity creates an exposed but opaque surface; this self-concealment in the gesture of self-exposure serves to use the male gaze to free the woman from being the object of the male gaze even as she appears to become just such an object. The production of a space of self-concealment becomes the basis for the narrative production of activity from positions of passivity; this interplay of exposure and concealment appears in both "Le boa" and L'Amant, but it is in the multiple "experiments" in L'Amant that the transformation of object positions is carried farthest. Finally, the tension between exposure and concealment reappears in the problem of "unseen deaths" as well: the opacity of death or the absence of the observed body paralyzes the transformative process by which Duras otherwise creates her figures and herself as subjects of their own gaze.
3.2. A Snake

Si l'on mène un jeune provincial à la Ménagerie de Versailles, et qu'il s'avise par sottise, de passer la main à travers les barreaux de la loge du tigre ou de la panthère; si le jeune homme laisse son bras dans la gueule de l'animal féroce; qui est-ce qui a tort? Tout cela est écrit dans le pacte tacite.

Denis Diderot, "Le Neveu de Rameau"135

Duras has often identified the primary moment of change in the style and direction of her writing as taking place not with the writing of Le ravissement de Lol V. Stein and Le Vice-consul but rather with the writing of the novel Moderato cantabile (1958). For Duras, her work changed because of an experience she had, a violent love affair: "[C]e que je raconte dans Moderato cantabile, cette femme qui veut être tuée, je l'ai vécu ... et à partir de là les livres ont changé ..." (P, 59). However, experience did not anticipate literature; the writing of Moderato cantabile took place before her own "love story," in which she experienced what she had previously "racontée de l'extérieur dans Moderato cantabile [...]" (P, 59). Thus, the change in Duras' style which began with that novel cannot be justified only in biographical terms; the story of erotic violence or violent eroticism moved back and forth from literature to life, from the stories which Duras invented to the personal history she experienced. First, she wrote, "from the outside," the story of Anne Desbaresdes, whose desire to be killed by a lover is itself "exterior," the result of a story, not an experience: having heard the shot with which a man killed his lover, Desbaresdes, who knew neither the murderer nor the victim, becomes fascinated with the possible stories which might have led to this event; along with a man she did not previously know, she speculates about those possible narratives which could explain this crime of passion. Then, Duras herself experienced such desire in her own "histoire d'amour" (P, 59); Anne Desbaresdes' identification with the victim ceased to be a story outside herself and became an internal source of the change in her style of writing. Finally, the story of her experience

and the experience of a story combined with her construction of solitude in the house at Neauphle-le-Château, and she arrived at the writing of *Le ravissement de Lol V. Stein*, in which she transformed the passive position of a woman victimized by male sexuality into a woman's active manipulation of that position, making, as Martha Noel Evans argues, "the female object of male fiction" into the resisting and productive subject of her own story.\(^{136}\) Duras' personal history thus becomes another story which interacts with the stories she invents; both life and literature are constructed as narratives which develop into stories of resistance to the cultural "story" of feminine passivity. Thus, in Duras' work, both experience and literature are structured in terms of stories; more precisely, any attempt to recount experience becomes a story, further, a story manipulating other stories: in Duras, the articulation of experience necessarily involves the manipulation of pre-existing narrative models. The narratives manipulated in "Le boa" are the stories which the central figure, an adolescent girl, sees represented in the figures of the women around her.

The narrator of "Le boa" is one of the pubescent girls living in "la pension Barbet" in "une grande ville d'une colonie française, vers 1928."\(^{137}\) Although most of the observations in the story are those which the narrator made at the time of the narrated events, a retrospective perspective on those events is presented as well: "je n'appris que bien plus tard le côté commercial de la prostitution" (B, 1001). The teenager at the center of the narrated events becomes the object of the adult narrator's observations. Within the story the narrator tells, the girl is herself an observer with three principle explicit objects of observation: the boa of the title, whom she sees in the zoo; Mlle. Barbet, the directrice of the *pension*; and her own pubescent body. The observation of these bodies is doubled by a set of absent bodies, especially those of her mother and of prostitutes. The girl

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contemplates the possibility of inserting herself into the narratives which each of these observations, complete or incomplete, represents, seeking a position which will provide her with active control of herself rather than passive submission to those narratives; the narrator's distance from her experiences allows her to successfully construct an active rather than a passive position in the observational economy of her culture, a position in which she becomes a *teller* of stories, the subject of her own narratives rather than the object of cultural narratives.

The first observation described in the story is that of the boa: every Sunday, Mlle. Barbet takes the narrator to the zoo to watch the boa eat a live chicken. Once a week, in a performance staged by the zoo, the boa is fed live prey, "parce que les gens préféreraient ça" (B, 993). This representation of a carnivorous nature, as Bob Mullan and Garry Marvin point out, is a particularly fascinating exhibition for zoo visitors:

> [...] carnivores are usually regarded as bad animals, but many of the larger carnivores still have great exhibition value. This is not necessarily because of any physical attributes but is rather because of that very ability to kill. Certain other creatures such as venomous snakes, scorpions and tarantulas also attract considerable interest in the zoo for this very reason.138

The carnivore's murderous capabilities provide the zoo visitor with a double identification, both with the potential victim and with the perpetrator of that violence. This play of identification with the positions of violence requires the existence of a third position, that of the distanced observer who is outside the threat of that violence: "Part of the thrill is being close to such an animal knowing that it cannot constitute an actual danger" (ZC, 4). This observational position is not the product of the observer's own self-construction but follows from the architecture of the zoo itself. The narrator is free to read the potential violence of the zoo animals in any way she likes because that violence is always already

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138Bob Mullan and Garry Marvin, *Zoo Culture*, London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1987, pp. 75-76. Further references will be included in the text with the abbreviation ZC.
contained by the human violence of domestication, of the zoo itself. Her description of the
zoo's caimans marks the active production of this containment of animal violence:

Un caïman, il y avait vingt ans de cela, [...] avait sectionné la jambe d'un
soldat de la coloniale [...] lequel avait voulu jouer à lui chatouiller, de sa
jambe, la gueule, ignorant que le crocodile, quand il joue, joue sec. Depuis
ce temps-là, on avait dressée une grille autour de la mare aux caïmans et on
pouvait maintenant les regarder en toute sécurité [...] (B, 993-994)

In "Le Neveu de Rameau," the naïveté of the "young provincial" who loses an arm
contrasts with the natural violence of a tiger or panther; Duras' story contains both the
simple scene of animal violence described by Rameau's nephew and the institutional
response to that violence in the construction of the railing. This technological containment
of violence forcibly separates the humans and the animals, allowing the humans to be
"detached" observers without the threat of losing their detachment. Only within such an
architecture of observation, within the zoo as panoptic institution\(^{139}\), can fascination and
detachment exist simultaneously; the technological production of control provides a free
space in which voyeuristic desires (but no others) can be satisfied without risk. The zoo
constructs an image of nature without the dangers inherent in a "state of nature", a world of
uncontrolled "natural" violence.

Within this construction of an image of nature, the technology of the zoo submits the
animals to "the power of human beings to command the presence of living creatures which
would normally absent themselves from the human gaze" (ZC, 159). The narrator inserts
herself into the position constructed for her by the zoo's panoptic architecture, which traps
the animals by producing visibility. However, the trap does not make all aspects of
animality completely observable; the presence of the invisible—or the absence of the
visible—leads to the production of narrative:

Quand on arrivait trop tard, on trouvait le boa déjà somnolant dans un lit de
plumes de poulet. [...] Il n'y avait plus rien à voir, mais on savait ce qui

\(^{139}\)Foucault discusses the relationship between the Panopticon and the menagerie at Versailles in *Surveiller et punir: Naissance de la prison*, Paris: Gallimard, 1975, pp. 204-205.
s'était passé il y avait un instant, et chacun se tenait devant le boa, lourd de pensées. (B, 994)

The fragments of narrative, images of the end of a story, which remain when one arrives "too late," become objects of fascination which demand to be completed; the narrator is able to reconstruct the events from her experience of seeing the boa every Sunday. This narrativization, like the zoo's panoptic architecture, also seeks to control nature, but through explanation and speculation rather than an explicit application of force; narration itself becomes a technology for the production of visibility, constructing a "railing" around the unknown. When further elements of the observed story remain invisible, the narrator begins to use not her own experience to fill in the missing details, but other narratives; the paradigmatic story here is religious:

[...] le boa s'intégrait ce poulet au cours d'une digestion d'une aisance souveraine, aussi parfaite que l'absorption de l'eau par les sables brûlants du désert, transsubstantiation accomplie dans un calme sacré. Dans ce formidable silence intérieur, le poulet devenait serpent. (B, 994)

Both the girl's own experience and cultural paradigms provide stories which, through figuration, make the unknown comprehensible. Unlike Lessing, she privileges neither her own experience nor the cultural stories which come to her, and unlike Wolf, she does not use a rhetoric which alternately privileges the one or the other. The cultural paradigm of the Eucharist, Christianity's central moment of invisibility, provides a narrative model which both renders the chicken's transformation into serpent legible and marks that transformation as beyond human technological constructions of visibility. A miracle, which is only accessible through the intervention of God, and not through any human activity or construction, renders the human observer completely passive before the miraculous object; nevertheless, it also generates a certain narrative activity which both accepts and violates the boundaries the miracle creates:

La Barbet était, de par son âge et sa virginité très avancée, indifférente au boa. Personnellement il me faisait un effet considérable. C'était un spectacle qui me rendait songeuse, qui aurait pu me faire monter [...]
jusqu'à la redécouverte d'un Dieu créateur et d'un partage absolu du monde entre les forces mauvaises et les bonnes puissances, toutes deux éternelles, et au conflit desquelles toute chose devait son origine; ou, à l'inverse, jusqu'à la révolte contre le discrédit dans lequel on tient le crime et contre le crédit que l'on confère à l'innocence. (B, 995)

Here, a different religious paradigm, that of the Fall, underlies the narrator's two possible interpretations of the spectacle of the snake. From the first vision of an "absolute division of the world" into good and evil, she arrives at a revaluation of crime and innocence which inverts that Manichean absolutism. This second interpretation rereads the Fall implicit in the first, rejecting the virginity and innocence of paradise. Since Eucharist comes from the Greek for "grace," the central metaphors here are the fall from grace and the return to grace; in the narration, however, the Eucharist comes before the Fall. Thus, the narrativization of the spectacle of the boa creates a palimpsest of biblical narratives and figures of which escapes human control and understanding by remaining beyond human observational capacities; these narratives allow the girl to actively claim a position for herself in that palimpsest. As in Lessing's construction of her own paradigmatic narrative, the girl's interpretation of the boa in terms of the paradigmatic narratives of her culture is less an assertion of control over the animality of the boa than an assertion of her own control over her position in those narratives; the zoo becomes a site not for the observation of an animal "nature" but for the self-construction of the human observer through an understanding of her own "nature," not a nature she would be a part of, but a nature she would have. However, not only her observational position but the boa's position as well are both expressions not of nature but of the technological production of an image of nature. Her potential position within the cultural narratives depends on her position within the panoptic architecture of an institution designed not to provide for the expression of nature but for its control.

The second object of the girl's observation is the directrice of the pension. Like the zoo, the pension is a panoptic institution constructed for the purpose of observation and control, but the narrator's position in the pension as panopticon is reversed: whereas the boarders
are meant to be the objects of Barbet's observation, the narrator becomes the observer of the directrice, in a ritual which immediately follows the visit to the zoo every week. Barbet exposes her body to the gaze of her charge, standing before her "en combinaison rose, les épaules nues" (B, 995). The primary point of contact between the observation of the boa and that of Barbet is "la succession des deux spectacles" (B, 997), two images of "devouring" in which "[l]e boa dévorait et digérait le poulet, le regret dévorait et digérait de même la Barbet" (B, 999), but the two images are also connected through the use of the phrase "trop tard" to refer to both. However, if arriving "too late" to see the snake generates narrative, both in the attempt to "fill in" what one has missed and in the narrativization of "transubstantiation" and a "fall," the second "trop tard" refers to a story which has not taken place:

Elle se tenait bien droite pour que je l'admire, baissant les yeux sur elle-même, amoureusement. A moitié nue. Elle ne s'était jamais montrée ainsi à personne dans sa vie, qu'à moi. C'était trop tard. (B, 996)

This "too late" first appears as the narrator's language, interpreting the spectacle presented to her and doubling the "too late" of the snake; however, it then appears as Barbet's own words of advice to the narrator: "Le beau linge, c'est important. Apprends cela. Je l'ai appris trop tard" (B, 996). Here, the temporal separation between the adult narrator and her pubescent self becomes important: in the adult narrator's recounting of the events, she twice presents the idea of "too late" as her own, then quotes Barbet's use of the phrase, inverting the order of the narrative and claiming Barbet's language for herself. This narrative inversion transforms what had been the pubescent girl's passive observational position into an active interpretive standpoint. For the girl, this observational position was not one which she assumed voluntarily; she accepts the position given to her because of the situation which led her to be in this pension:

J'étais la seule à qui elle exposait ce corps consumé. Les autres l'auraient dit à leurs parents. Moi, même si je l'avais dit à ma mère, ça n'aurait eu aucune importance. Mlle Barbet m'avait acceptée par faveur dans sa maison parce...
Because of the economic and social context of her residence in the _pension_, the girl finds herself in a position of voyeuristic prostitution: she sells her gaze to Barbet in order to be allowed to live in the _pension_. They become accomplices in _two_ different "crimes": the social crime of taking in an outsider and the moral crime of a sexual exchange between the _directrice_ and the narrator. The adult narrator's inversion of the order of the narrative repositions her with respect to _two_ economic systems: the material exchanges of the money economy and the specular exchanges of a panoptic observational economy. In her observation of the boa, the girl, and the adult narrator with her, is able to locate an _active_ position in a narrative and specular order, even if that position is implicitly dependent on the zoo's panoptic architecture; in her observation of Barbet, she is placed in this passive position of prostitution, and only the narrator's reordering of the terms of these two economies generates a position of narrative activity which corresponds to that which the girl found with respect to the boa.

The _two_ spectacles present the narrator, both the adult and the girl, with the problem of positioning herself both within narratives and within the architecture of institutions. With the boa in the zoo, she uses the observational position the institution provides for her in order to construct a position for herself within paradigmatic cultural narratives. In contrast, the observational position which Barbet constructs for the girl does not directly provide the girl with a means of escaping from the passive positions the two economies provide for her; it is only in the retrospective narration that she is able to control that spectacle directly. The addition of a third "spectacle" to the "succession of the two spectacles" _does_ provide the girl with a means of positioning herself with respect to the narratives which Barbet's
aging virgin body represents; the third object of the girl's gaze, which follows the observation of Barbet, is her own body, seen in a mirror:

C'était terrible. J'avais treize ans, je croyais que c'était déjà tard pour ne pas encore sortir de là. [...] je me regardais devant la glace. Mes seins étaient propres, blancs. C'était la seule chose de mon existence qui me faisait plaisir à voir dans cette maison. En dehors de la maison, il y avait le boa, ici, il y avait mes seins. (B, 998)

This third observation has a number of points of contact with the previous two, beginning with the girl's fear that it is "déjà tard" for her and that she will never escape from the prison of the pension. By exposing herself to herself, she confronts this fear with activity, generating the possibility of taking up any of the positions available in the other spectacles. First of all, in this moment of self-voyeurism doubling Barbet's, the girl puts herself in the active position of self-exposure which Barbet had previously occupied, even as she remains in the interpretive position she herself had occupied with respect to the directrice. Further, the juxtaposition of her breasts and the boa, the two objects of her voyeuristic pleasure, directly connects the sexuality implicit in the Edenic image of the snake with her budding sexuality; once again, she claims the boa's position rather than the chicken's: she will devour rather than be devoured; she will participate in a corporeal economy of "transubstantiation" rather than allow herself only to be devoured by the regret of that corporeal economy. Finally, unlike the observation of the boa and the observation of Barbet, the girl's self-observation takes place in a space of solitude. If this solitude is contained by the institutional structure of the pension, that framing does not prevent the girl from being able to use the "room of her own" to begin to construct an image of herself which would escape the institutionalization and narrativization represented by the image of Barbet. Thus, the space of solitude the institution provides her allows the girl to reinforce her identification with the boa and her rejection of Barbet and to position herself actively within both the narratives and the institutions which confront her.
The sexualized double image of the boa and the narrator's breasts does not lead directly to the image of a man looking at those breasts, but rather to the image of the narrator's mother feeding her children. This first of the story's *absent* bodies represents a first specific cultural alternative to the story of self-denial and spinsterhood which the narrator reads in her observation of Barbet:

Je pensais au corps de maman qui avait tellement servi, auquel avaient bu quatre enfants [...] A maman qui me disait [...] que pour trouver un mari il fallait avoir fait des études, savoir le piano, une langue étrangère, savoir se tenir dans un salon, que la Barbet était mieux indiquée qu'elle pour m'apprendre ces choses. Je croyais ma mère. (B, 998)

The mother's body *does* participate in an economy of corporeal exchange, yet the narrator's identification with that body's position in such an economy is ambiguous: if the mother represents an alternative to the celibacy of Barbet, she nevertheless is not a devourer but is devoured by her children. This first alternative based on an "absent body" is also a story of self-denial, like that represented by Barbet. This story, however, does not involve the denial of the body as well, but rather its *use*: the mother's position in this corporeal economy is not sexual but reproductive; the words which the narrator recalls refer not to sexuality itself, but to its societal representation, marriage. Thus, the two older women's bodies seen by the narrator become images of her own possibilities, of the societal positions which she might assume, of the paradigmatic cultural narratives which describe and define those positions (spinster and mother). The mother may represent an alternative to the institution of the *pension*, but that alternative is a *social* institution, that of the nuclear family, which *consumes* the body of the mother. The image of the boa marks a third possibility for the narrator, the possibility of a "natural" expression of sexuality in which she would not be passively devoured by regret or by the children who would drink from her breasts; this identification allows her to replace the restricted economy of bodily exchanges, represented by Barbet's non-exchange or her mother's limited exchange, with an economy of expenditure, of unlimited exchange:

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Je me l'imaginais, ce monde, [...] comme une sorte de très grand jardin botanique où [...] s'accomplissaient d'innombrables échanges charnels sous la forme de dévoration, de digestions, d'accouplements à la fois orgiaques et tranquilles [...] (B, 1000).

The social position which corresponds to a paradigm of unlimited corporeal exchange is that of the prostitute, the second of the story's two absent bodies. Thus, three models of women's corporeality, three culturally paradigmatic roles for women, exist in "Le boa": spinsterhood, maternity, prostitution. Because her mother despairs at being able to find a husband for her, the narrator finds herself faced with a choice between Barbet and the bordello; she inclines to the bordello: "[...] je me consolais même qu'il me restait le bordel [...]" (B, 1001). The image of the bordello then itself becomes marked by the temporal delay which permeates the narrative, now not "trop tard" or "déjà tard" but the "plus tard" which marks the story's retrospective narration:

Je me le représentais comme une sorte de temple de la défloration où, en toute pureté (je n'appris que bien plus tard le côté commercial de la prostitution), les filles jeunes, de mon état, auxquelles le mariage n'était pas réservé, allaient se faire découvrir le corps par des inconnus, des hommes de même espèce qu'elles. (B, 1001)

Here, the difference between the girl and the adult narrator becomes important for the second time: it is only the girl's ignorance of the economic basis of prostitution which allows her to see the prostitute as a positive alternative. This naive image of prostitution erases the commercial element of sexual exchange which is present in her observation of Barbet and even in the mother's problem of finding the daughter a husband. Here, prostitution is the escape from an institutionalized system of economic exchanges in favor of a natural, pure, even spiritual exchange between men and women of the same "species."

With the exception of the initial "too late" referring to the boa, each of the images of potential or real lateness in "Le boa" has to do with the development of women's sexuality and with a certain relationship of that sexuality to an economy of exchange. The two possibilities which the narrator resists, marriage and spinsterhood, correspond to reputable
relationships between sexuality and economics: either the "legalized prostitution" of marriage or the erasure of sexuality which Barbet represents. Each of these is clearly institutionalized in the institutions of marriage and family or in the institution of the boarding house for girls, run by an old, unmarried woman. In contrast, the bordello appears to the narrator's childhood self as an extra-institutional, extra-economic "temple," outside of the mediated material exchanges represented by marriage and the old maid. However, the bordello, like the zoo she associates with it, is itself a social institution, and the "nature" which is expressed there is a product of human social constructions. Just as the extra-institutional "nature" the narrator sees in the boa is a technological product, each of the images of women's bodies which the narrator observed is a social construction, thoroughly permeated by the institutions within which it exists. Her dream of a "giant botanical garden" of devourings, digestions, and other types of "natural" bodily exchanges erases, as does her image of the bordello, the institutional construction of nature, the very institutionalization and control of nature (and of women's bodies as representatives of nature) from which she is trying to escape.

In Lessing, the narrativization of experience replaces events with the lessons learned from them; in Wolf, narration seeks a "fantastic precision" which would allow it to parallel the experiences narrated. In either case, experience is prior to narrative. In contrast, experience in "Le boa" does not precede narrative but is permeated with it: the problem of the girl's choice of roles is which story to choose. The three alternatives offered to her are all passive positions in a specular economy of corporeal exchange; each represents a different relationship to her body, to society, and most of all to men, figuring a different position both in the money economy and in the social economy of "exchange of women." As the single position she has not experienced, the position of the prostitute, even if she is in error in her understanding of the economic side of prostitution, allows her to have an active relationship to her assumption of a passive position: the prostitute's invisible body,
like the snake's invisible "transubstantiation," gives free reign to her imagination, so she is able to produce a story in which she creates her own position in the economies which control her world. As the single position available to her which involves her free choice, the figure of the prostitute generates the girl's position as a narrator in a cultural context which does not provide women with social positions which control narratives. Thus, "Le boa" figures two things about women and narrative, one passive and one active: first, how women are figured in a set of cultural narratives which limit their choices of how to live by positioning them as objects of observation or consumption within the specular and economic exchanges which define those narratives; second, how a woman writer can position herself with respect to those narratives so as to construct a position of narrative authority for herself. The girl uses the figure of the prostitute; by pointing out the economic character of prostitution, the adult narrator's writing of the story disables the girl's valuation of prostitution as an escape from the institutional structure of the pension, but she nevertheless marks, in her narration, her own power over that institutional structure. Further, whereas the adult narrator clearly possesses the power to control the stories she tells, the girl does not successfully "write" her escape from the institution; she passively waits for a male to take action:

Des soldats de coloniale passaient. Je leur souriais dans l'espoir que l'un d'eux me ferait signe de descendre et me dirait de le suivre. Je restais là longtemps. Parfois un soldat me souriait, mais aucun ne me faisait signe.
(B, 998)

The girl remains a passive reader of the world around her, reading the "writing" of the men who would write her story. The soldiers, like the snake, offer a means of escape from a virgin, cloistered world into a world of sexuality and violence; however, that world, like the zoo, is itself an institution for the control, and not the expression, of a certain "nature": the colonial military serves as a clear representation of the "civilizing" violence perpetrated by Europe on its colonies. Despite her active insertion of herself into an economy of
exchange, despite her active manipulation of the narratives offered her and her construction of herself as a narrative authority, the position which the girl assumes finally remains that of a passive "nature" which will be controlled by an institutionalized, civilizing gaze which is finally always gendered masculine. The girl desires to manipulate the standardized stories around her, stories which represent her various possibilities, the various institutions in which she might live out her possible lives; she would thereby be able to become an active producer of signs. Despite this desire, she remains a passive reader of "signs"; only the distance between the adult narrator and her childhood allows the adult to inscribe the girl's activity as activity, and not simply as the assumption of a preexisting passive position.

The biography of this anonymous, first-person woman narrator—the childhood in Indochina, the mother teaching Vietnamese children, the adult writer—suggests that one could read this story autobiographically; indeed, in her recently published biography of Duras, Frédérique Lebelley does so in completely straightforward fashion.\(^{140}\) Whether the story is autobiographical or not is, however, finally not that important: a casual reading can simply treat it as autobiographical and not worry about it; a critical reader can find in the story a figure for the development of a woman's position in narratives and in institutions, a development from an object to a subject position—again without worrying whether it is "actually" autobiographical. Duras' assumption of a position which corresponds to the third position depicted in "Le boa," that of the prostitute, is itself not literal but figurative; she has written in various contexts of what she calls in *Le Monde extérieur* "la prostitution de la publication"\(^{141}\): the market context of literature is for her already a form of prostitution. Several critics have also remarked on the relationship between literature and prostitution in Duras' writing, such as Leah D. Hewitt, who comments on *L'Amant*: "[...] writing—like


prostitution—entails an act of seduction that submits the writer to the open-ended, indiscriminate circulation among readers [...]"\(^{142}\) She adds in a footnote: "[... when publication is involved, writing, like prostitution, also includes a monetary exchange."\(^{143}\)

The woman writer becomes for Duras the successful manipulator of the various systems of exchange, monetary and corporeal, which she figured in "Le boa." If Duras does not consider herself a reader of women's writings, preferring instead above all Jules Michelet, Michelet does provide, in the figure of the witch, a fourth cultural narrative of woman's position, a model which represents an active and productive relationship between women and language. Unlike all the models for women in "Le boa," witches stand outside of standard systems of economic and symbolic exchange; further, the source of this exteriority is the solitude which Duras privileges in "Écrire." She summarizes her reading of Michelet in various places, among them in her discussions with Michelle Porte, *Les Lieux de Marguerite Duras*, published in 1977:

Pendant le Moyen Age, les hommes étaient à la guerre du seigneur ou à la croisade, et les femmes dans les campagnes restaient complètement seules, isolées, pendant des mois et des mois dans la forêt, dans leurs cabanes, et c'est comme ça, à partir de la solitude, d'une solitude inimaginable pour nous maintenant, qu'elles ont commencé à parler aux arbres, aux plantes, aux animaux sauvages, c'est-à-dire à entrer, à, comment dirais-je? à inventer l'intelligence avec la nature, à la re(in)venter.\(^ {144}\)

Duras could find several reasons for privileging this description of witches: first of all, their isolation from men and from men's language and history, from the grand historical events of war and crusade, makes them an ideal figure for Duras' model of a woman's solitude.


\(^{143}\)Hewitt, *Autobiographical Tightropes*, p. 223. Evans' reading of *Le Ravissement de Lol V. Stein* in *Masks of Tradition* also leads her to the figure of the writer as prostitute, literature as prostitution. Evans also briefly mentions "Le boa" in a footnote (145), but otherwise the story seems to have gone unnoticed among Duras' many critics, except for Carol Murphy's brief discussion in *Alienation and Absence in the Novels of Marguerite Duras*, Lexington: French Forum, 1982, pp. 58-60. Because she fails to distinguish between the adult narrator and the teenager, Murphy concludes that "the narrator of 'Le Bon' experiences love passively and in the imagination" (60).

Secondly, this solitude generated a new use of language, a specifically women's language, of communication between women and nature. Finally, this language involved the active production or invention of a woman's position independent of male intervention and a male gaze, unlike the models provided in "Le boa." These parallels, however, should not conceal Duras' reworking of the witch's standpoint in her representation of solitude in "Écrire": the solitude of the witches was not the result of their active production of that solitude; that solitude was not the result of the women's activity but rather of the men's departure. Duras actively produces her solitude as a moment of resistance to a silencing by men, a resistance which allows her to invent her own language; the witches used their involuntary solitude to invent or reinvent a language of nature, and the men's return led to the punishment of the women for this independence. As with the various models presented in "Le boa," Duras does not passively accept the historical model which is given to her; she actively manipulates that model to produce a position within it from which she can then speak, from which she can, in this case, become a solitary observer independent of the observational economies of discipline and of a hierarchical exchange of gazes.
3.3. Experiments

[...] la poésie du bricolage lui vient aussi, et surtout, de ce qu'il ne se borne pas à accomplir ou exécuter; il "parle," non seulement avec les choses, comme nous l'avons déjà montré, mais aussi au moyen des choses: racontant, par les choix qu'il opère entre des possible limités, le caractère et la vie de son auteur. Sans jamais remplir son projet, le bricoleur y met toujours quelque chose de soi.

Claude Lévi-Strauss, *La pensée sauvage*145

In Duras' *L'Amant*, a more explicitly autobiographical text than "Le boa" which Duras published in 1984, only one word appears in italics, and it appears twice: the word "l'expérience."146 At first, one might read this as "l'expériment," which would be a French neologism associated with the verb "expérimenter," but the accent is missing; further, the italicization of the word emphasizes its difference from the other words in the text. Thus, Duras uses here neither the French word "l'expérimentation" nor the neologism, but rather the English word "experiment."147 This "experiment" refers directly to the text's primary mimetic action, the teenage girl's relationship with her Chinese lover in a French colony in Indochina during the 1920s; however, the process of narrating those events, a process inscribed in the text, involves a similar "experimentation": both the girl and the narrator engage in the kind of "testing" which Lévi-Strauss calls "bricolage," using the fragmented possibilities offered to them to construct positions of narrative power and authority for themselves. These fragments, offered to the girl by society as possible positions for her to occupy and to the narrator by her memory as possible versions of her story, become the tools of each figure's experimentation, an experiment in the production

145 Claude Lévi-Strauss, *La pensée sauvage* (1962), Paris: Presses Pockets, 1990, p. 35. Further references will be included in the text with the abbreviation PS.
146 Marguerite Duras, *L'Amant*, Paris: Minuit, 1984, pp. 16, 28. Further references will be included in the text with the abbreviation A.
147 Duras' 1987 novel *Emily L.* justifies this reading: the many English words in the text, overheard by the narrator, are all written in italics: "Un coup de vent avait traversé le port, le temps de le dire et il était retombé. Il avait dit que c'était la marée qui changeait. The turn of the tide... et que la mer devait être merveilleuse comme elle l'était certain jours d'été. The sea must be marvellously calm. As it sometimes is in summer." (Marguerite Duras, *Emily L.*, Paris: Minuit, 1987, p. 19.)

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of knowledge and in the location of a position of activity. The girl’s experimentation involves the manipulation of her appearance, the production of herself as an ambiguous, self-contradictory image at the boundary between child and adult, male and female, innocent and experienced. The narrator experiments not with her physical appearance but with her memory of her youthful construction of this image, the "absolute" image\textsuperscript{148}; her reflections on that image lead her to trace the transformations which her appearance has undergone in the course of her life. The central figure of her reflections is a photograph which was not taken: no record was made of the girl’s self-construction. These two experiments each function in part in contrast to a negative model against which the experimenter constructs herself: the girl against the image of the white colonial women she observes; the narrator against her mother’s failure to produce herself as an absolute image. In Kindheitsmuster, Nelly looks at a photograph of her mother and the narrator recalls how the daughter never did have a similar photograph made; in L’Amant, a photograph of the mother also plays a central role, but it was taken in her old age and it figures not self-construction but self-erasure. The text which the narrator produces in her old age is the opposite of the airbrushed image of the aging mother; in it, the narrator writes the history of her own face, moving from the "absolute" but unrecorded image of her self-construction to the face of her old age with which the text begins, "dévasté" (A, 9). This narrative history of a face also allows the narrator to perform a third experiment, an experiment which, like the photograph of the absolute, remained unmade in the narrator’s youth, but which the narrator is finally able to make in the very act of narrating the text of L’Amant itself.

Both appearances of the word "experiment" in the text clearly mark a testing of positions, an evaluation of the roles society offers to women; the "experiment" itself then

\textsuperscript{148}In the text, the image is not called "absolute," although the narrator does claim that it has the virtue to "représenter un absolu" (A, 17). The phrase "the absolute image" appears in an interview Duras gave about L’Amant: "[...] le texte de L’Amant s’est d’abord appelé L’Image absolue. Il devait courir tout au long d’un album des photographies de mes films et de moi." ("L’inconnue de la rue Catinat," interview with Marguerite Duras, Le Nouvel Observateur, no. 1038, 28 September - 4 October, 1984, p. 52.)
becomes a means of breaking out of those positions by using the tools which experience offers. In "Le boa," the girl's fantasized experiments with such positions are narrated but do not influence the narration itself; in L'Amant, from the first appearance of the word "experiment," the girl's experiment with herself is always doubled by the narrator's experiment with herself:

Maintenant je vois que très jeune, à dix-huit ans, à quinze ans, j'ai eu ce visage prémonitoire de celui que j'ai attrapé ensuite avec l'alcool dans l'âge moyen de ma vie. L'alcool a rempli la fonction que Dieu n'a pas eue, il a eu aussi celle de me tuer, de tuer. Ce visage de l'alcool m'est venu avant l'alcool. L'alcool est venu le confirmer. J'avais en moi la place de ça, je l'ai su comme les autres, mais, curieusement, avant l'heure. De même que j'avais en moi la place du désir. J'avais à quinze ans le visage de la jouissance et je ne connaissais pas la jouissance. Ce visage se voyait très fort. Même ma mère devait le voir. Mes frères le voyaient. Tout a commencé de cette façon pour moi, par ce visage voyant, exténué, ces yeux cernés en avance sur le temps, l'experiment. (A, 15-16)

The appearance of alcoholism and of pleasure, of the knowledge of these two transgressions, precedes experimentation; this appearance is legible as a mark on the girl's "premonitory" face. Both the writing on the girl's face and its reading (by the narrator's brothers) preceded not only the writing of the text but also the "writing" of experience, of the experiment. The relationship between experience and the writing and narration of experience is clearly different here than in Lessing, where writing always to some degree involves the erasure of experience, but it is also different than in Wolf, where a certain

149 Barbara Bray translates both uses of "l'experiment" with the word "experience"; thus, here she has: "That was how everything started for me—with that flagrant, exhausted face, those rings around the eyes, in advance of time and experience" (Marguerite Duras, The Lover, trans. Barbara Bray, New York: Pantheon, 1985, p. 9). Although this might appear to be a drastic error in translation, it can actually be justified on the basis of the French verb "expérimenter," which can mean both "to experience" and "to experiment." However, this translation does lose two things: first, the play between experience and experimentation; secondly, the Englishness of the word, that is, its foreignness within the French text. This latter, in an English translation, would probably be difficult to save. The German translation retains the word "experiment" and its italicization: "Alles begann für mich so, mit diesem sehenden, mitgenommenen Gesicht, diesen vor der Zeit unrandierten Augen, vor dem Experiment" (Marguerite Duras, Der Liebhaber, trans. Ilma Rakusa, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1985, p. 16). Here, the foreignness of the word disappears into the German word "das Experiment," along with the tension with "experience," but the experimentation and the italicization remain. The italicization in the original appears to be less a matter of emphasis than a matter of the word's foreignness (as the comparison with Emily L. suggests); the emphatic quality of the word "l'experiment" lies as much in its repetition and its position at the end of two different paragraphs (as well as before two of the white spaces which separate Duras' many short sections) as in its italicization.

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nostalgia for an experience which precedes narration always remains even when Wolf or her narrators most strongly figure the impossibility of creating more than a fantasy of such an experience. For Duras, in contrast, the girl is not and never was a "blank page"; an inscription has always already taken place, the inscription of experience itself, written upon the girl's body. Both the girl and the narrator seek to read that writing as much as produce a writing of their own. More importantly here, the girl's face is marked as the object of her family's observation, as a site of fascination for her mother and her brothers (the family is fatherless; the narrator's father died when she was still very young). This familial gaze is not undifferentiated: the brothers' knowledge of this anticipatory "text" is certain, whereas the mother's knowledge of it is uncertain. The narrator's later reading of her own face thus allows her to understand her family in terms of positions of knowledge: her position of retrospective knowledge corresponds to her brothers' earlier knowledge and displaces the uncertainty of the mother's gaze, marked as not necessarily knowing. The narrative "experiment" thus involves the manipulation and displacement of positions with respect to the structure of the family and of society, positions accepted or rejected on the basis of the possibilities of knowledge which they offer.

The narrated "experiment" also involves the girl's reading of positions on the basis of such possibilities for knowledge, as the following abbreviated version of the passage containing the second appearance of the word "experiment" shows:

Je suis avertie déjà. Je sais quelque chose. Je sais que ce n'est pas les vêtements qui font les femmes plus ou moins belles ni les soins de beauté, ni le prix des onguents, ni la rareté, le prix des atours. Je sais que le problème est ailleurs. Je ne sais pas où il est. Je sais seulement qu'il n'est pas là où les femmes croient. Je regarde les femmes dans les rues de Saïgon, dans les postes de brousse. [...] Elles ne font rien, elles se gardent seulement [...] Elles attendent. Elles s'habillent pour rien. Elles se regardent. Dans l'ombre de ces villas, elles se regardent pour plus tard, elles croient vivre un roman [...] Certaines deviennent folles. Certaines sont plaquées pour une jeune domestique qui se tait. [...] Certaines se tuent.

Ce manquement des femmes à elles-mêmes par elles-mêmes opéré m'apparaissait toujours comme une erreur.
Il n'y avait pas à attirer le désir. Il était dans celle qui le provoquait ou il n'existait pas. Il était déjà là dès le premier regard ou bien il n'avait jamais existé. Il était l'intelligence immédiate du rapport de sexualité ou bien il n'était rien. Cela, de même, je l'ai su avant l'expérience. (A, 26-28)

Like the narrator working with her memories to produce a reading of her own past life, the girl reads the women around her as possibilities for her future life, each of which she may accept or reject. Whereas the first reference to "experiment" marks the girl as a passive object for reading by others, with her face as a "text," this "experiment" marks the girl's own active knowledge and her active reading of the women around her, themselves transformed into passive texts for her scrutiny. However, these women are not actually passive; they "operate" on themselves in order to produce themselves as passive objects, much like the girl in "Le boa" does. The girl considers that gesture of an active construction of passivity to be a trap; her "correct" understanding of desire marks her own position of knowledge even within the narrated events. Thus, both these women and the girl's mother become negative models of an absence or uncertainty of knowledge, models against which the girl would define herself. She rejects the social and psychological positions of passivity they represent, both her mother's position in the family and the "novels" ("elles croient vivre un roman") represented by the women who construct themselves as lack.

In contrast to these women, the girl constructs herself according to a model which violates social codes rather than adhering to them. Even as she makes herself into the object of a social gaze, her "self-operation" does not produces an absence waiting to be filled by the presence of a man; rather, she becomes a presence unto herself. This experiment upon herself is described in the narrative between the two appearances of the word "l'expérience"; the central image of the experiment appears in what the narrator calls "la traversée du fleuve" (A, 16), as the girl stood, at the age of fifteen and a half, at the rail of a ferry crossing the Mekong river in Indochina:

C'est au cours de ce voyage que l'image se serait détachée, qu'elle aurait été enlevée à la somme. Elle aurait pu exister, une photographie aurait pu
être prise, comme une autre, ailleurs, dans d'autres circonstances. Mais elle ne l'a pas été. L'objet était trop mince pour la provoquer. Qui aurait pu penser à ça? Elle n'aurait pu être prise que si on avait pu préjuger de l'importance de cet événement dans ma vie, cette traversée du fleuve. Or, tandis que celle-ci s'opérerait, on ignorait encore jusqu'à son existence. Dieu seul la connaissait. C'est pourquoi, cette image, et il ne pouvait pas en être autrement, elle n'existe pas. Elle a été oubliée. Elle a été omise. Elle n'a pas été détachée, enlevée à la somme. C'est à ce manque d'avoir été faite qu'elle doit sa vertu, celle de représenter un absolu, d'en être justement l'auteur. (A, 16-17)

The text's following pages fill in this image, which remains empty here, marked only as "the crossing of the river"; this first detailed representation of "the absolute image" refers not to its content, but to the contradictory conditions of its existence, or rather its nonexistence: at first, the photograph could have been taken, but it was not. Then, however, "it could not have been otherwise" that it does not exist. Further, at first it is not taken because the potential object of the photograph was not significant enough to cause anyone to take a photograph, but then the event actually turns out to be of tremendous significance, a significance not yet legible at the moment of the crossing of the river. Here, the possibilities suggested by "le visage prémonitoire" are denied: it would actually have been impossible for anyone to "read" the face on the ferry and already understand what was to come. The text shifts from an assertion of a failed possibility to an assertion of absolute impossibility, from an accidental to a necessary absence. Finally, in an anticipation which connects the "absolute image" to the later description of the women of French colonial society, this "manque" becomes not a failure but a virtue, precisely that which gives the image its absolute power as an "absolute image" and as the "author" of its own absoluteness, an authorship echoing the absolute power of God, an authorship centered on knowledge. As in Duras' manipulation of Lacan's "stunning" interpretation of Lol V. Stein, the image which lacks, not the image of lack, becomes the figure of a certain authorial self-operation, an absolute power different from that of the women's "manquement à elles-mêmes." This lack, this image which is missing, is not in the narrator.

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or the girl herself, but in their stories; their assertion of narrative control has displaced the social construction of women’s "lack" onto narrative itself.\textsuperscript{150}

This self-operation with regard to the conditions of existence or form of the absolute image is more than doubled by its content. The photo which was not taken would have shown a girl standing at the railing of a ferry crossing the Mekong river; she is returning to the pension where she lives in Saigon after having visited her mother in Sadec.\textsuperscript{151} The absolute image is the result of her manipulation of her appearance:

Je porte une robe de soie naturelle, elle est usée, presque transparente. Avant, elle a été une robe de ma mère, un jour elle ne l’a plus mise parce qu’elle la trouvait trop claire, elle me l’a donnée. [...] C’est une robe dont je me souviens. Je trouve qu’elle me va bien. J’ai mis une ceinture de cuir à la taille, peut-être une ceinture de mes frères. Je ne me souviens pas des chaussures que je portais ces années-là mais seulement de certaines robes. [...] Ce jour-là je dois porter cette fameuse paire de talons hauts en lamé or. Je ne vois rien d’autre que je pourrais porter ce jour-là, alors je les porte. Soldes soldés que ma mère m’a achetés. [...] C’est ma volonté. Je ne me supporte qu’avec cette paire de chaussures-là et encore maintenant je me veux comme ça, ces talons hauts sont les premiers de ma vie, ils sont beaux, ils ont éclipsé toutes les chaussures qui les ont précédés [...] (A, 18-19)

Again, the text moves from possibility to certainty, as the narrator remembers and then confirms the various parts of the image and the means by which she acquired them. Unlike Wolf’s narrator in \textit{Kindheitsmuster}, Duras’ narrator has no difficulty connecting herself to this image of her younger self. The grammar of this connection is simple: the use of first person and present tense allows a certain compression of the distance between the narrator and her childhood self; thus, the sentence "je trouve qu’elle me va bien" refers both to the

\textsuperscript{150}This passage recalls, in its shifting emphases and rhetorical reversals, the beginning of Wolf’s description of the Neolithic statue and her reaction to it in "Ein Modell von der anderen Art." However, Wolf’s rhetorical shifts trace a shift from the certainty of experience to the uncertainty of interpretation, in the end privileging neither experience nor interpretation but maintaining their separation. Duras’ rhetoric, here and elsewhere, marks her use of narration and interpretation to \textit{produce} experience: unconcerned with a "fantastic precision" which would generate an impossible parallel between the "structures of experience" and the "structures of narration," Duras produces a narration of experience which values the experience of narration as much as, if not more than, the experience \textit{preceding} narration which is of such concern to Wolf.

\textsuperscript{151}For a map of French Indochina, see Marie-Thérèse Ligot, \textit{Marguerite Duras: Un barrage contre le Pacifique}, Paris: Gallimard, 1992, p. 166.

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girl's own contemporary pleasure in her appearance in the dress and the narrator's retrospective pleasure in her appearance. This clearly remembered dress provides the image with a center from which its other parts, all of which are touched by uncertainty, can be reproduced. The belt may have come from her brothers; she has forgotten the shoes entirely in favor of the dresses. With respect to the shoes, the narrator constructs a memory for herself from this absence of memory, narrating less the contents of the memory than the process of remembering, in which she slowly pieces the image together herself. As a process, this re-membering doubles her own earlier construction of the image from its various parts, her own childhood "membering"; further, that doubling of the "self-operation" appears in the text as well, both in the ambiguous "je trouve qu'elle me va bien" (an ambiguity repeated by "C'est ma volonté") and in the explicit assertion of a continuity of desire over time: she still today wants to construct herself as she did then. These shoes act as the paradigm of shoes as such, displacing and erasing all previous shoes; in contrast to Lessing, however, this paradigm does not derive from an enigma existing outside the bounds of her narrative control. These paradigmatic shoes displace and replace all previous shoes, but not so as to become the center of a narrative which grounds the narrator's construction of herself as narrator, the author's construction of herself as author. Rather, the construction of the paradigmatic memory is a representation of the movement from fragments to a whole, as the narrator slowly completes the construction of the absolute image, whose center, if it has one, is not the shoes or the dress but the hat, whose position in the image brings together all the factors each of the others represents separately:

Ce ne sont pas les chaussures qui font ce qu'il y a d'insolite, d'inouï, ce jour-là, dans la tenue de la petite. Ce qu'il y a ce jour-là c'est que la petite porte sur la tête un chapeau d'homme aux bords plats, un feutre seuple couleur bois de rose au large ruban noir.
L'ambiguïté déterminante de l'image, elle est dans ce chapeau. (A, 19)

In Kindheitsmuster, the narrator would overcome ambiguity and produce identity; in L'Amant, the narrator identifies with ambiguity. Both Nelly and the narrator here do not
have a picture of themselves in a hat, but here the narrator is able to recall her construction of herself around such an image. The narrative of the girl's "self-operation" might recall Nelly's self-construction, but the narrator's recounting of "self-operation" creates not a connection between the adult narrator and her younger self, as in Kindheitsmuster, but an ambiguity which the narrator celebrates. The girl's production of ambiguity displaces her from any social position into which she might otherwise be placed.

Except for the dress, each of the items which the girl uses to construct herself is marked by uncertainty, an uncertainty which generates a set of stories which would explain how the girl came to possess that particular object. The story of the belt is short: "perhaps a belt from my brothers." The story of the shoes is more complex; having forgotten which shoes she was wearing, the narrator tells a story which explains which shoes she must have been wearing. The narrator later constructs another story to explain how she might have come by lipstick as well: "Ce jour-là j'ai aussi du rouge à lèvres rouge sombre comme alors, cerise. Je ne sais pas comment je me le suis procuré, c'est peut-être Hélène Lagonelle qui l'a volé à sa mère pour moi, je ne sais plus" (A, 25). This uncertainty about the sources of the parts of the image touches the hat as well:

Comment il était arrivé jusqu'à moi, je l'ai oublié. Je ne vois pas qui me l'aurait donné. Je crois que c'est ma mère qui me l'a acheté et sur ma demande. Seule certitude, c'était un solde soldé. Comment expliquer cet achat? Aucune femme, aucune jeune fille ne porte de feutre d'homme dans cette colonie à cette époque-là. [...] Voilà ce qui a dû arriver, c'est que j'ai essayé ce feutre, pour rire, comme ça, que je me suis regardée dans le miroir du marchand et que j'ai vu: sous le chapeau d'homme, la minceur ingrate de la forme, ce défaut de l'enfance, est devenue autre chose. Elle a cessé d'être une donnée brute, fatale, de la nature. Elle est devenue, tout à l'opposé, un choix contrariant de celle-ci, un choix de l'esprit. [...] Soudain je me vois comme une autre, comme une autre serait vue, au-dehors, mise à la disposition de tous, mise à la disposition de tous les regards, mise dans la circulation des villes, des routes, du désir. (A, 19-20)

The story of the acquisition of the hat moves from forgetting to belief to a single certainty (that it was bought second hand); from this single certainty the narrator reconstructs a scenario which would justify the acquisition of the hat. The scenario she produces centers
on the girl's mirror image, on her manipulation of the mirror's generation of an image of the body which is both whole and dependent. If the girl in "Le boa" looks in the mirror and sees her incomplete self, wondering if it is "too late" for her, the girl here uses her mirror image to complete herself, to overcome the "defect of childhood." She sees her body as incomplete but finds a supplement which completes it, not by complementing but by contradicting its "givenness," by creating herself not as a self but as an "other." The shoes take this process of self-construction through self-contradiction one step further: "Pour les chaussures, ça a dû être un peu pareil, mais après le chapeau. Ils contredisent le chapeau, comme le chapeau contredit le corps chétif, donc ils sont bons pour moi" (A, 20). With the shoes, she supplements the supplement, so to speak, producing an image of her body simultaneously complete, controlled and contradictory; she has broken the "mere givenness" of her body, in the process moving it and herself from nature to culture, from the world of the given to the world of the chosen. This absolute image can serve as a paradigm of self-operation precisely because it is not consistent with itself; the play of contradictions between body, hat, and shoes opens up the paradigm and allows for the extended play of substitution, displacement, and replacement which permeates the text of L'Amant and which is already figured in the image itself by the play of narrative which allows for the transformation of the given of memory into the choices of the rememberer.

In passing, Germaine Brée calls Duras "an undaunted 'bricoleuse,'" but she does not develop the comparison between Duras' work and Lévi-Strauss' concept of bricolage.152 The simplest point of contact between bricolage and Duras' representation of the "absolute image" in L'Amant is in a footnote in La pensée sauvage: "Le bricolage [...] opère avec des qualités 'secondes'; cf. l'anglais 'second hand,' de seconde main, d'occasion" (PS, 36). The bricoleur is a jack-of-all-trades, a tinkerer, a "do-it-yourselfer," putting tools to uses

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152 She writes "as Lévi-Strauss would say," but nothing further. (Germaine Brée, "A Singular Adventure: The Writings of Marguerite Duras," L'Esprit Créateur, 30:1, Spring 1990, p. 14.)
which were not their original uses. Like the *bricoleur*, the girl in *L'Amant* "operates" with "second hand" materials: the dress and the belt are "hand-me-downs" from her mother and her brothers; the hat and the shoes are "soldes soldés." Her manipulation of the "tools" she is "given"—including not only the "second hand" goods but even her own body—is precisely that of the *bricoleur*:

 [...] son univers instrumental est clos, et la règle de son jeu est de toujours s'arranger avec les "moyens du bord," c'est-à-dire un ensemble à chaque instant fini d'outils et de matériaux, hétéroclites au surplus, parce que la composition de l'ensemble [...] est le résultat contingent de toutes les occasions qui se sont présentées de renouveler ou d'enrichir le stock, ou de l'entretenir avec les résidus de constructions et destructions antérieures. (PS, 31)

The girl is a *bricoleuse*, a manipulator of the "second hand," in two senses: first, she takes the various fragments offered her by her experience and transforms them into a whole which creates her as an ambiguous but complete image, rather than one fixed in incompleteness. Further, she considers the positions society offers her and manipulates them in order to construct a position of her own. She addresses herself to "une collection de résidus d'ouvrages humaines" (PS, 33), both the material tools she manipulates and the "residues" of the constructions of gender and position produced by the society around her. In Lévi-Strauss, the possibilities represented by these "residues" are "toujours limitées par l'histoire particulière de chaque pièce, et par ce qui subsiste en elle de prédéterminé, dû à l'usage originel pour lequel elle a été conçue, ou par les adaptations qu'elle a subie en vue d'autres emplois. [...] les éléments que collectionne et utilise le bricoleur sont 'précontraints'" (PS, 32-33). The girl's *bricolage*, in contrast, involves the manipulation *precisely* of that which in each piece is "predetermined"; she produces the effect she desires *through* the contradictions between the various parts of the absolute image, their various cultural meanings: the incompleteness of her body, still a child's body but already marked with adult features; the adult masculinity represented by the hat (and perhaps the youthful masculinity represented by the belt); the adult femininity represented by the shoes and the lipstick. In her experi-

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ment, this *bricoleuse* uses the "constraints" imposed by her "tools" in order to "operate" upon herself, producing a *new* position for herself by exploiting the contradictions of the social constraints which would otherwise impose upon her the construction of herself as "lack," as the predetermined heroine of a romance or adventure novel.

The girl's experiment also includes a *bricolage* of gazes, all of which are inscribed in the narration of the production of the absolute image. In addition to being the object of her own gaze in the mirror and the object of a familial gaze in the reading of her face by her brothers, the girl also becomes the object of two other gazes: the gaze of the lover and the gaze of society. Within this play of gazes, the girl constructs herself as noticeable, as someone to attract attention, by manipulating the social codings contained in the objects which make up her outfit. As Charles S. Peirce says of the sign, she "addresses somebody"153, or, to go further, she addresses *anybody*, any *body*, using a "body language" she invents with signs not ordinarily found in that particular juxtaposition. The presence of the gaze in the constructed image is marked by the contrast between her ability to capture the gaze of the Chinese man (and of other men) and the inability of the girl in "Le boa" to capture the gaze of the soldier's passing by in the street: the body of the girl in "Le boa" is *not yet legible*; by using the contradictions between her body, the hat, and the shoes, the girl in *L'Amant produc*es the legibility of her body, rendering it significant with this "writing" *upon herself*. Furthermore, if the sign "addresses somebody," then it is always already *dialogical*; the sign is a social object which contains the thrust of address, the participation in a movement between points of view. Here, the girl's gaze at herself in the mirror, her vision of herself wearing the hat, allows her to split herself and understand herself both as an individual and as a social object herself, as a sign, like that hat, with a possible social meaning. By moving beyond the fixed social meanings of these objects, the


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girl's reading and writing of the shoes, the hat, and her body address the latent dialogical possibilities of these signs; she picks up the "residues" around her and breaks open their supposedly "monological" singularity, using these dialogized fragments to create her own unique point of view.

The success of the girl's production of herself as a sign is marked by her future lover's first comment specifically about her appearance: "Il lui dit que le chapeau lui va bien, très bien même, que c'est ... original ... un chapeau d'homme, pourquoi pas?" (A, 43). The lover's remark generates a metonymy for the girl's body, the "determining ambiguity" of the absolute image, and thus both displaces attention from her body and focuses on it at the same time. This metonymic displacement, however, only repeats a displacement which had already taken place in the moment when the gazes of the girl and the narrator meet as they both see not the future lover on the ferry but rather his car and his chauffeur, the trappings of his wealth: "Sur le bac, à côté du car, il y une grande limousine noire avec un chauffeur en livrée de coton blanc" (A, 25). If the car is a metonym both for the lover and for his wealth, it nevertheless does not appear first as the lover's car but as a metonym for writing: "Oui, c'est la grande auto funèbre de mes livres" (A, 25). Only after this reference to future writings does the man himself appear, still inside the car; further, the explicit mention of his gaze introduces the gaze of society into the image as well:

Dans la limousine il y a un homme très élégant qui me regarde. Ce n'est pas un blanc. Il est vêtu à l'eupéenne, il porte le costume de tussor clair des banquiers de Saigon. Il me regarde. J'ai déjà l'habitude qu'on me regarde. On regarde les blanches aux colonies, et les petites filles blanches aussi. Depuis trois ans les blancs aussi me regardent dans les rues et les amis de ma mère me demandent gentiment de venir goûter chez eux à l'heure où leurs femmes jouent au tennis au Club Sportif. (A, 25)

Even before the narrator begins to discuss the social gaze, the girl's reading of the Chinese man and his gaze is entirely socially coded, economically in her reading of his wealth, but also racially and sexually: both his color and his suit are socially coded, in fact, more coded than the appearance of the girl, whose outfit does not immediately identify her social class
and her occupation. Thus, the play of gazes in the absolute image already contains the production and reproduction of social codes and boundaries, the very boundaries which the relationship between the girl and her lover will transgress. These codes are explicitly articulated elsewhere in the text in terms of a generalized social gaze, a gaze quite clearly disciplinary:

Quinze ans et demi. La chose se sait très vite dans le poste de Sa déc. Rien que cette tenue dirait le dés honneur. La mère n'a aucun sens de rien, ni celui de la façon d'élever une petite fille. La pauvre enfant. Ne croyez pas, ce chapeau n'est pas innocent, ni ce rouge à lèvres, tout ça signifie quelque chose, ce n'est pas innocent, ça veut dire, c'est pour attirer les regards, l'argent. Les frères, des voyous. On dit que c'est un Chinois, le fils du milliardaire, la villa du Mékong, en céramiques bleues. (A, 108-109)

The phrase "quinze ans et demi," which often introduces new sections after the white space setting off Duras' short paragraphs from each other, is always a reference to the "absolute image," from its first appearance on the text's third page: "Que je vous dis encore, j'ai quinze ans et demi. // C'est le passage d'un bac sur le Mékong" (A, 11). (It also introduces the section after the first appearance of the word "l'expérience.") Here, however, the phrase does not appear in the voice of the narrator alone; it is also marked by the voice ("on dit") of social judgment, which reads the girl's position as prostitution, seeing in the suggestive ambiguity of her appearance not a positive moment of self-construction but only the negative moment of transgression, the crossing of the boundaries marked by class and race. The double source of the phrase introduces a "dialogue between points of view" into Duras' text, a dialogue here between her own voice and the condemning voice of a colonial society which understands the honor of its members in part in terms of the manner of their relations to the colonized (even if the Chinese man technically a colonizer as well, a

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154In fact, the Chinese man's first question after offering her a cigarette is "mais d'où venez-vous?" (A, 43), a question the girl need not ask because his appearance is so entirely conventional that she knows immediately where he comes from.

155M.M. Bakhtin, "Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel" (1937-1938), *The Dialogical Imagination*, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist, Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981, p. 76. Unlike the "dialogue between points of view" with which *The Fifth Child* begins, this dialogue is not between two views of the normal but between a social norm and a transgression of that norm.

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Chinese man whose father has exploited the French colonization of Indochina to his own ends). These "points of view" can be taken quite literally here: each "voice" in the text is also a gaze, marking a potential perspective on the "absolute image," a new viewpoint on that image. The text's internalization of this exterior viewpoint allows the narrator to ironize this external judgment, which appears extremely late in the text, providing a further negative model for the girl's self-understanding. However, this negative model does not remain entirely negative; the image of social dishonor allows the girl to locate a positive model for herself: a colonial administrator's wife, whose lover shot himself when she ended their relationship. This woman becomes the object of the girl's gaze:

La même différence sépare la dame et la jeune fille au chapeau plat des autres gens du poste. [...] Isolées toutes les deux. Seules, des reines. Leur disgrâce va de soi. Toutes deux au discrédit vouées au fait de la nature de ce corps qu'elles ont, caressé par des amants, baisé par leurs bouches, livrées à l'infinnie d'une jouissance à en mourir, disent-elles, à en mourir de cette mort mystérieuse des amants sans amour. (A, 110-111)

Earlier in the text, the girl sees only negative models for herself in the society around her, a negativity which compelled her to begin her "experiment." Here, she finds another woman who is in the same position with respect to this social gaze as she is, so she is able to transform her position as the object of that gaze and once again become the subject of her own, producing a gaze which, like the image of herself in the mirror, provides a moment of identification through the image of her own body. If she sees in the mirror an incomplete body completed by the hat, here she identifies with the adult body of a woman already "completed" not only by sexuality but also by motherhood. Again, the girl uses the tools offered to her to manipulate the meanings which this social gaze would impose upon her, producing in the process a position for herself in which she controls the meanings with which she will understand her experience, the results of her "experiment."

Above all, the social gaze marks the girl's relationship with the Chinese lover as prostitution; her self-construction appears only in terms of sexual exchange value. The
absolute image already contains this possible reduction of the girl's self-construction to economics, not only in the precedence of the image of the Chinese man's wealth over the man himself, but also in the explicit possibility of prostitution:

Le lien avec la misère est là aussi dans le chapeau d'homme car il faudra bien que l'argent arrive dans la maison, d'une façon ou d'une autre il le faudra. [...] C'est pour cette raison, elle ne le sait pas, que la mère permet à son enfant de sortir dans cette tenue d'enfant prostituée. (A, 33)

Again, the narrator centers the daughter's creation of the absolute image, the very possibility of that self-construction, on the mother's absent knowledge. Here, however, that possibility is also dependent on the family's poverty, that which the social gaze later identifies as the basis of the girl's affair with the lover. The family is not entirely unconscious of the girl's exchange value; even before the moment of the "absolute image," her older brother already understands the possible use of his sister as a means of escaping his debts:

Mon père avait acheté une maison dans l'Entre-deux-Mers avant de mourir. C'était notre seul bien. Il joue. Ma mère la vend pour payer les dettes. Ce n'est pas assez, ce n'est jamais assez. Jeune il essaie de me vendre à des clients de la Coupole. (A, 94)

The girl herself perceived immediately the possibilities represented by the lover's wealth; however, her self-prostitution with this lover is explicitly distinct from her older brother's problems: when her lover gives her money, she takes measures to make sure that the mother, and not the older brother, will be able to use the money to pay her own debts and not his. The newfound power in the family structure which her body provides her allows her to redirect the money which she acquires for ends separate from those of her brother; this appears in future tense in the narration of the moment of the absolute image itself: "L'enfant dira: je lui ai demandé cinq cents piastres pour le retour en France" (A, 34). The future tense marks the economic aspect of her sexual relationship with the lover even before that relationship has, diegetically, begun; it also marks the end of their relationship in its beginning, inscribing the moment of their separation in the moment of their meeting. This
future tense also marks a further perspective which understands her action as prostitution, that of the Chinese man's father: "Il refusera le mariage de son fils avec la petite prostituée blanche du poste de Sadec" (A, 45). Marriage would legitimize the economic exchange between the Chinese family and the French family; the refusal of this legitimacy leaves their relationship within the realm of transgressive sexuality, a sexuality beyond the boundaries of family and society. The girl herself refuses this legitimacy by accepting the Chinese father's position as her own: "la décision de son père [the lover's] et celle de l'enfant sont les mêmes [...]" (A, 119). The coincidence of her position and the father's allows her to actively claim the position of prostitution which her situation would otherwise appear to have forced her into as her own; by accepting that position, she also takes up the authority of the Chinese father over his son. Her interests become identical with those of the most powerful, if absent, figure in her society; prostitution thus becomes her means of access to social power, not the abstract power of a natural self-knowledge which the girl in "Le boî" seeks, but a concrete material power to order and control her position in the world. With this power, the girl resists both the loss of control represented by marriage and the aggressive threat represented by her older brother, who would otherwise take up the position of the father in her family.

The narrator's diegetic bricolage doubles this narrated bricolage of clothes, positions, and gazes. If, unlike Lessing in Particularly Cats or the narrator in Kindheitsmuster, the narrator of L'Amant at no time is faced with "second-hand" memories whose authority or authenticity she would challenge, the memories with which she operates are still an incomplete "collection of residues of human works." She is not forced to rely entirely on memories, however; some photographs of her childhood and adolescence still remain, even if the primary image around which her narrative circles is an unmade photograph. She uses these memories and the few documents as tools for the construction of a story; the story's progress is determined by certain rules deriving from the problems caused by gaps in her
memory: she tells not simply the story of the hat that she remembers, but the story of
remembering the story, of re-membering the story from the pieces she does remember with
certainty. These rules involve expanding upon what is certain ("Seule certitude, c'était un
solde soldé") with what is likely, what is possible ("Je ne vois rien d'autre que je pourrais
porter ce jour-là, alors je les porte") and with what is pleasing, both aesthetically and in the
narrator's sense of herself ("Je ne me supporte qu'avec cette paire de chaussures-là et
encore maintenant je me veux comme ça"). Both realistic and aesthetic, these rules are
above all a matter of self-construction, a self-construction the narrator continues in the
writing of this text itself in which she produces a textual "photograph" of the absolute
image of which no photograph was made at the time.

The absence of the technological gaze of the camera in the moment of production of the
absolute image contrasts with its presence elsewhere in the text: the narrator describes a
number of photographs which were taken, marking them, like the society women for the
girl, as negative models for the understanding of the image which was not "fixed" and
"framed" in a photograph. These photographs include those of the girl and her brothers,
but the central negative model for the narrator's self-construction is a photograph of their
mother:

Quand elle a été vieille, les cheveux blancs, elle est allée aussi chez le
photographe, elle y est allée seule, elle s'est fait photographier avec sa belle
robe rouge sombre et ses deux bijoux, son sautoir et sa broche en or et jade,
un petit tronçon de jade embouti d'or. Sur la photo elle est bien coiffée, pas
un pli, une image. Les indigènes aînés allaient eux aussi au photographe,
une fois par existence, quand ils voyaient que la mort approchait. [...] Les
portraits étaient retouchés, toujours, et de telle façon que les particularités du
visage, s'il en restait encore, étaient atténuées. Les visages étaient apprêtés
de la même façon pour affronter l'éternité, ils étaient gommés,
uniformément rajeunis. C'était ce que voulaient les gens. [...] Ils avaient
tous le même air que je reconnaîtrais encore entre tous. Et cet air qu'avait ma
mère dans la photographie de la robe rouge était le leur, c'était celui-là,
noble, diraient certains, et certains autres, effacé. (A, 118-119)

Like the absolute image, this "image" is of a woman who has "operated" on herself, but the
operation here produces not a singular image, but an image like all others, its "particularity"
erased. The potential individuality of "self-operation" is undone by the technological effacement of that individuality, by an operation which produces an absence rather than a presence; the moment which would otherwise save the individual’s image becomes the moment of that image's effacement. In contrast, the absolute image became absolute precisely by avoiding this process of fixation and "retouching." The contrast between the two self-operations, the girl's and the mother's, is doubled by the contrast between two aging faces, the mother's and the narrator's; the book's opening image refers to the latter:

Un jour, j'étais âgée déjà, dans le hall d'un lieu public, un homme est venu vers moi. Il s'est fait connaître et il m'a dit: "Je vous connais depuis toujours. Tout le monde dit que vous étiez belle lorsque vous étiez jeune, je suis venu pour vous dire que pour moi je vous trouve plus belle maintenant que lorsque vous étiez jeune, j'aimais moins votre visage de jeune femme que celui que vous avez maintenant, dévasté." (A, 9)

Both faces become the object of a socially coded gaze: the mother's face observed by the depersonalizing technology of the camera, the daughter's observed by an anonymous public. These codes, however, work in different directions: the social gaze contained in styles of photographic portraiture disciplines and effaces difference and normalizes the appearance of the observed individual; the gaze at the often-photographed public figure, in contrast, emphasizes difference and produces and reproduces the public figure as a spectacle who is more than just another "face in the crowd." The anonymous man's comment includes this "public" gaze ("tout le monde dit") as well as another, contrary gaze, that with which he marks his difference from that crowd even as he emerges from it in approaching her. This contrary gaze, unlike the "public" gaze, privileges not the younger face, the one whose features fit into a standardized description of beauty, but the older face, "devastated" by experience, the face whose traces tell a story, the story of that experience. The "retouching" erases that experience and with it that story; Duras' text, then, is not an attempt at "retouching" her life, but an attempt to counter the process of self-effacement represented by her mother's photograph. Against a memory which effaces and normalizes,
she sets a memory which reads the traces of defacement and transgression, reading rather than erasing the writing of time and experience upon her face, her body, herself.

The absent gaze of the camera contained in the absolute image thus marks the presence of the narrator's gaze within that image and within the text as a whole. The text begins with a number of images of the narrator's face at various stages in her life; these images act as a mirror in which, as when the girl sees herself wearing the hat, she can "see herself as an other." She becomes a reader of her own face and of the story it tells, a story whose various stages she can decipher in its defacement:

Entre dix-huit ans et vingt-cinq ans mon visage est parti dans une direction imprévue. A dix-huit ans j'ai vieilli. [...] Ce vieillissement a été brutal. Je l'ai vu gagner mes traits un à un, changer le rapport qu'il y avait entre eux, faire les yeux plus grands, le regard plus triste, la bouche plus définitive, marquer la front des cassures profondes. Au contraire d'en être effrayée j'ai vu s'opérer ce vieillissement de mon visage avec l'intérêt que j'aurais pris par exemple au déroulement d'une lecture. [...] Ce visage-là, nouveau, je l'ai gardé. Il a été mon visage. [...] J'ai un visage lacéré de rides sèches et profondes, à la peau cassée. [...] J'ai un visage détruit. (A, 9-10)

The face which is hers is not the one she constructed for herself but the product of this aging which took place between her 18th and her 25th year, something she did not have under her control. Rather than as a process of writing, she experienced this transformation as a reading; more precisely, her position with respect to these changes was that of a reader: her reception of the "text" of her face was like that of a reader in the course of a reading. This face is a layer over the face of her childhood; her "devastated" face, the one read by the anonymous man, is a layer over the face of the process of aging: the reading of this palimpsest provides the motivating image of the writing of L'Amant. If the mother's photograph was a rejuvenation which effaced the traces of her experience in the anonymity and facelessness of photographic portraiture, the textual experiment is an archaeology reconstructing a version of experience from its remaining fragments. Both produce something whole, but the mother's photograph effaces the process of its production,
whereas Duras' text inscribes the process of defacement and remembering, the *bricolage* of its own production.

The writing of *L'Amant*, then, is the reconstruction of this face not only from the absolute image but also from the process of its disappearance, both through the nonexistence of the photograph and through its defacement. Like the mother's photograph, *L'Amant* is the text of a *rejuvenation*, but it is a rejuvenation which does not efface the defacement of aging; rather, Duras inscribes that defacement in the text as one of the traces to be read in the process of reconstructing the absolute image. Between the two discussions of the narrator's aging face which begin the book, the image makes its first appearance, *sotto voce*, marked as radically private:

> Je pense souvent à cette image que je suis seule à voir encore et dont je n'ai jamais parlé. Elle est toujours là dans le même silence, émerveillante. C'est entre toutes celle qui me plaît de moi-même, celle où je me reconnais, où je m'enchante. (A, 9)

The text begins with the public image of a public face. Then the narrator speaks of an image which only she remembers, an absolutely private image of an unphotographed, unexposed face. However, not only was that private image one which was originally constructed to be public, the narrator makes that most private image public by producing this text itself. *L'Amant* is the republication of an image which had, but for the memory of the narrator, "gone out of print" shortly after its first publication. The text's narrative experiment exposes the absolute image once more to a social gaze, the gaze of publication, even as the narrator claims that image as the silent, fascinating center of her own solitude.

Thus, *L'Amant* presents the double experiment of the production of the absolute image. The adolescent girl as *bricoleuse* manipulates the positions available to her in order to use their contradictions to produce herself as the active subject rather than the passive object of desire. The narrator as *bricoleuse* manipulates the pieces of her memory according to a set of aesthetic and realistic rules in order to repeat her adolescent experiment in self-
construction. The publication of the private image is as essential to the narrative experiment as the public, anonymous position of the girl's image was to the narrated experiment. But *L'Amant* does more than just repeat the earlier experiment; it allows the narrator to fulfill an unfulfilled desire, the desire represented not by the unmade photograph but by an *unmade* experiment, the experiment of which the adolescent fantasized but which she never realized. This experiment would have involved her lover and her friend, Hélène Lagonelle:

> Je voudrais donner Hélène Lagonelle à cet homme qui fait ça sur moi pour qu'il le fasse à son tour sur elle. Ceci en ma présence, qu'elle le fasse selon mon désir, qu'elle se donne là où moi je me donne. Ce serait par le détour du corps de Hélène Lagonelle, par la traversée de son corps que la jouissance m'arriverait de lui, alors définitive. (A, 92)

This experiment remains unmade within the story the narrator tells: the girl never did observe her lover make love to her friend. In the diegesis, however, the narrator fulfills this long-ago wish, this desire to take up this third position with respect to her adolescent sexual experience: she becomes the outside observer of her past lovemaking. The narrator's *bricolage* not only repeats the production of the absolute image, it goes beyond the girl's *bricolage* to fulfill this unfulfilled desire. *L'Amant* is the record of their experiments in the making of the unmade, be it a body unlike any other, an "absolute image," or this final experiment which the narrative itself completes.
3.4. Unseen Deaths

He [Jaromir Hladik] never wearied of conjuring up these circumstances, senselessly trying to exhaust all their possible variations. He infinitely anticipated the process of his dying, from the sleepless dawn to the mysterious volley. Before the day set by Julius Rothe [for his execution] he died hundreds of deaths in courtyards whose rooms and angles strained geometrical probabilities, machine-gunned by variable soldiers in changing numbers, who at times killed him from a distance, at others from close by.

Jorge Luis Borges, "The Secret Miracle"156

Through the various experiments in *L'Amant*, Duras develops the figure of a woman constructing herself as an active subject in terms of both her experience and her writing, neither of which is privileged in the course of those experiments. This procedure overcomes the tensions which problematize both Lessing's and Wolf's attempts to construct themselves as subjects of observation. If the observing woman in Lessing and Wolf is always subject to the "history of contradictory emotions" which determines the observer position in their cultural traditions, Duras' construction of an observing woman is subject to a different tension, a tension which can be summarized by the phrase "the invisibility of death." If this tension is most fully articulated in Duras' texts about World War Two, it also appears in passages about the war in *L'Amant*, in the image of the death of the younger of the narrator's brothers "en decembre 1942 sous l'occupation japonaise" (A, 71). This death is "invisible" because it is unseen; the death which takes place elsewhere, which cannot be visually confirmed, becomes a source of fascination. In *L'Amant*, the death of the younger brother returns throughout the text as a moment of fascination which cannot be overcome; as Alain Goulet points out, "[I]a mort du petit frère [...] n'est répétée pas moins de sept fois au cours du livre."157 If, as Goulet suggests, "c'est bien l'expérience de la mort du petit frère qui fonde la vocation quasi mystique de

l'écriture durassienne"¹⁵⁸, the other moments of the invisibility of death in Duras' writing about World War Two do not act as the basis of a writer's vocation but rather paralyze narration, allowing only the fascinated repetition of the narrative of the unseen death itself.

The death which takes place elsewhere is not the only form of invisible death in Duras. Her screenplay for the film *Hiroshima mon amour* contains a different kind of invisibility: as the French girl watches her lover, a German soldier, die, she is unable to identify the moment when he dies. If, as Peter Brooks argues, the body appears in narratives as "a sign, or the place for the inscription of multiple signs," a process of inscription in which "semioticization of the body is accompanied by the somaticization of story"¹⁵⁹, the dying body in Duras represents the absence of such "semioticization": the invisibility of the moment of death is a moment of non-signification in which the body ceases to be a sign or to be marked by signs. Throughout Duras' writings about the war, this moment of non-signification reappears as a moment in which Duras, or the figures she creates, lose control of the narratives in which they are involved. The observation of the dying body in *Hiroshima mon amour* destroys the active position which the French girl had constructed for herself in her affair with the soldier. Further, the story "Albert des Capitales," in the volume of war memoirs *La Douleur*, centers on the torturing of a collaborator after the Liberation; the story's figure for Duras, Thérèse, depicts the fulfillment of Duras' desire for an active position in the war but also marks the inefficacy of torture as a means of producing the desired narrative of control. Finally, in the text "La Douleur" itself, Duras waits for the return of her husband Robert Antelme (called Robert L. in the text), arrested for Resistance activity and sent to an unknown concentration camp; this wait renders her so passive that her relationship to narrative breaks down almost completely. The profusion of


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narrative possibilities, the many different ways which he may have already died or might soon die, leads not to a "somaticization of narrative" but to its absolute impossibility; the body becomes neither "a source and locus of meanings" nor "a prime vehicle of narrative signification" (BW, xii) but the site of nonmeaning and the suspension of narrative signification. Thus, in its confrontation with death, the body in the war becomes the site of a problematization of narrative in which marks on the body no longer fulfill their narrative function; this failure of signification overwhelms the narrative positions of the observers who would tell the story of that body, whether the casualty's, the collaborator's, or the concentration-camp inmate's.

In each of these cases, the observer of the dying body is a woman; the body is a man's. Although this observational paradigm inverts the specular erotic economy in which women are the objects of a male gaze, it is consistent with another aspect of that economy: male action becomes the object of a female gaze just as "female passion," so to speak, is the object of the male gaze. This exchange of gazes is a fundamental part of the institution of war: the woman stays behind with a picture of the soldier in uniform, a figure of action; the man goes to war with a picture of his "girl" in his pocket, the passive and secure support of his activity. The task of killing the enemy is usually reserved for male soldiers; women's wartime role is to wait for their men to return from the "theater of operations." Duras spent the war in occupied Paris; a memory of the war which appears in "Écrire" marks her imaginary attempt to construct a position of activity for herself:

[...] pendant la guerre, à chaque Allemand dans la rue, je pensais à son meurtre par moi opéré, par moi inventé, perfectionné, à ce bonheur colossal d'un corps allemand par moi, tué. (E, 50)

Just as Kassandra would be a witness of each of the thousand deaths of Achill that she fantasizes for him, Duras sets the activity of her "operation" and "invention" of murders against the passivity of being "occupied." Her imaginary killing of Germans would allow her to become an actor in the theater of war, escaping the passive position assigned to her,
in which the war's mass deaths always remain unseen, elsewhere, undifferentiated. Unlike such deaths, these imagined murders would each be individual and visible, a moment of supreme bodily pleasure rather than a paralyzing image of incapacity, a moment clearly marking the difference between Duras' body and the dead body of the German. In contrast, the invisibility of the moment of death in Hiroshima mon amour combines with the French girl's passive position to efface the difference between the soldier's corpse and the girl's own, still living body; the two bodies are not inscribed with difference and significance but with indifference and meaninglessness:

Quand je suis arrivée à midi sur le quai de la Loire il n'était pas tout à fait mort. [...] Je suis restée près de son corps toute la journée et puis toute la nuit suivante. [...] le moment de sa mort m'a échappé vraiment puisque ... puisque même à ce moment-là, et même après, oui, même après, je peux dire que je n'arrivais pas à trouver la moindre différence entre ce corps mort et le mien ... Je ne pouvais pas trouver entre ce corps et le mien que des ressemblances ... hurlantes, tu comprends? C'était mon premier amour ...
(crié).160

This story is told by an anonymous French woman, recounting her experiences during the war to a Japanese man, also nameless, whom she meets while making a film in Hiroshima, a decade after the war. During their brief affair she tells him the story of her wartime affair with a German soldier stationed in her hometown of Nevers. Here, at one level, "female passion" is the object of the male gaze, but so is female narration, the claiming of a story as her own. The central moment of both passion and narration is this moment of the soldier's death as he lies on the quay next to the Loire, having been shot shortly before the liberation of Nevers while waiting for a rendezvous with his lover, who plans to return with him to Germany. If the girl in "Le boa" transforms the boa's invisible devouring of the chicken into a figure her own sexuality, a figure of possibility and the assertion of control, the invisibility of the soldier's death becomes the annihilation of possibility. This death remains

160Marguerite Duras, Hiroshima mon amour, Paris: Gallimard, 1960, pp. 99-100. Further references will be included in the text with the abbreviation HMA.
entirely beyond the girl's control: she not only does not see the moment of death, she was also absent when he was shot. Further, she transition between life and death leaves no mark upon the soldier's body; the body thus uninscribed is unable to become the basis of a narrative which would create the difference between her body and his. With the invisible unable to support the construction of a narrative as it could in "Le boa," the girl in Hiroshima mon amour is caught in a moment of passion and passivity from which no action of hers can free her.

However, the moment in which she can no longer differentiate between the two bodies is not only the result of the soldier's death. In the appendices to the screenplay are a number of texts which fill in the gaps of the story the French woman tells in the film; the most detailed version appears in a section entitled "Nevers (Pour mémoire)," subtitled "Riva raconte elle-même sa vie à Nevers." ¹⁶¹ This version not only retells the story of the soldier's death but also recounts more of their love affair, often using the same words that appear in the screenplay:

J'exceptais cet ennemi-ci de tous les autres.
C'était mon premier amour.
Je ne pouvais plus entrevoir la moindre différence entre son corps et le mien. Je ne pouvais plus voir entre son corps et le mien qu'une similitude hurlante.
Son corps était devenu le mien, je n'arrivais plus à l'en discerner. [...] Je n'avais plus de patrie que l'amour même. (HMA, 147-148)

Here, a narrative of love, not death, effaces the difference between the two bodies. Further, this narrative effaces the difference between the two countries France and Germany, replaced by a "country" without difference, love. However, both of the narrations of this "in-difference," the "similitude" or "ressemblances" of the two bodies, depend upon a moment of difference. In this version, the girl contrasts this enemy and all other enemies; she does not eliminate the distinction between friend and enemy entirely. The world of war

¹⁶¹Emmanuelle Riva is the actress who plays the French woman in the film. At various points in the "stage directions" of the screenplay, and in the screenplay's accessory texts, the synopsis and the appendices, Duras calls the woman "Riva"; of course, this never occurs in the film's dialogues.
in which the story takes place is determined by the mark of the soldier's uniform, a sign which inscribes the difference between France and Germany on the soldier's body. The unknown sniper who shoots the soldier from a garden beside this quay reads this sign which erases the soldier's individuality: "On a tiré de ce jardin comme on aurait tiré d'un autre jardin de Nevers" (HMA, 126). The shot could have been fired from anywhere; it could have been fired at any German soldier, anyone wearing that uniform; it re-marks the difference between friend and enemy and eliminates the individual difference, so important to the girl, between enemies and this enemy. The "banalité de sa mort" (HMA, 126) is its exchangeability; he does not die because he is an individual who loves this girl but because he is a soldier, caught up in a story in which the signs of war and the signs of love, and the differentiations which determine those signs, cannot be kept separate from each other.

If, in the context of the war, the uniform is the central sign in the narrative of the soldier's death, another sign is central to the narrative of love. The girl's differentiation of this soldier from the mass of soldiers derives from the reading of a sign, indeed, a mark upon the body of the soldier: "Un jour, un soldat allemand vint à la pharmacie se faire panser sa main brûlée" (HMA, 145). The burned hand then becomes the site of a certain writing: alone in her father's pharmacy, the girl bandages the soldier's hand; when he returns, her father asks her to take care of the soldier, and she replaces the bandage. The bandage becomes a metonym for the wound under it, singling out that soldier, making him legible for her, even as she becomes legible for him:

Je jouai du piano. [...] Sur la place, un jeune Allemand à la main pansée était adossé à un arbre. Je le reconnus dans le noir à cause de la tache blanche que faisait sa main dans l'ombre. Ce fut mon père qui referma la

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162 The uniform is never actually mentioned in the screenplay; however, it is visible in the film.
163 Duras' use of the phrase "the banality of his death" predates Hannah Arendt's use of the phrase "the banality of evil" by several years. Eichmann in Jerusalem was written in late 1962; the book of Hiroshima mon amour appeared in 1960, even before the Eichmann trial.
fenêtre. Je sus qu'un homme m'avait écouté jouer du piano pour la première fois de ma vie. (HMA, 145)

The girl's love begins in her production of a figure for the soldier, the bandage, which becomes a sign by which she can recognize him. This marking of the body removes the soldier from a system of exchange in which the uniform marks his exchangeability; now, his body is no longer effaced by the metonym of the uniform but emphasized by the metonym of the bandage. In fact, this scene presents a private exchange of metonyms (the bandage for the soldier's body, the girl's piano-playing for hers) replacing the "public" metonym of the uniform. The girl herself is the producer of both of these metonyms: if she "writes" on the soldier's body when she bandages it, she also plays the music the soldier listens to. Her own activity thus becomes the generating force of her desire; her "passion" is an "action" in which both her "writing" and her "playing" become fetishes for the future lovers, replacements for the actual objects of desire, their two bodies.

In her essay "Female Fetishism: The Case of George Sand," Naomi Schor observes that "female fetishism is, in the rhetoric of psychoanalysis, an oxymoron," because fetishism otherwise involves the denial by men of women's castration, but in all the examples Schor uses to discuss "female fetishism," George Sand does not *depict* a female fetishist; the fetishist in the texts is always male.\(^{164}\) Thus, these are not cases of *female* fetishism but of a woman using images of *male* fetishism in her novels\(^{165}\); Duras' representation of the bandage, however, *is* an example of this "oxymoron": here, both the fetishist and the author who invents her are women. Further, one of Schor's examples, taken from Sand's *Mauprat*, is of a bandage: having inadvertently scratched Edmée's arm, Bernard proceeds later to kiss the bandage which covers the wound. In this case, the

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165 The difficulty of Schor's argument is the claim that Sand's fetishism is "aberrant" (363), because women, according to psychoanalysis, are rarely fetishists. However, the claim of "aberration" is not justified: Sand does not produce the "aberrant" image of a female fetishist but rather reproduces the common trope of the *male* fetishist.
wound itself is a result of the fetishist's actions, and the bandage is not; in *Hiroshima mon amour*, the girl bandages a burn which is not of her own making. If, in this scene from *Mauprat*, Edmée's wound figures women's castration, and Bernard's adoration of the bandage figures what Freud calls "die zwiespaltige Einstellung des Fetischisten zur Frage der Kastration des Weibes", the "fetish" scene in *Hiroshima mon amour* figures a different relationship between the fetishist and "castration": if the "castration complex" is a marker of the cultural disempowerment of women, their placement in a passive position of recognizing male power rather than establishing their own, then the construction and appropriation of these two fetishes allows the girl to claim a position of activity within a wartime society paralyzed by waiting: "La guerre était interminable. Ma jeunesse était interminable. Je n'arrivais à sortir, ni de la guerre, ni de ma jeunesse" (HMA, 144). The girl sets her own construction of her love against the double paralysis of wartime and an unending adolescence, claiming her adulthood from a world unable to give it to her. This fetishistic activity would, in Schor's construction, be less a "perversion" than a "strategy" through which women can appropriate fetishism's "paradigm of undecidability" and generate an active position of resistance to the castration complex, to the social structure which would otherwise construct them as passive. The girl's fetishism marks her "passion" as action.

This action immediately confronts an interdiction, as the father intervenes to subvert the exchange of metonyms, first by closing the window to contain the girl's piano-playing, then on the next day when the soldier returns to have the girl change his bandage once more:

Mon père vint vers nous. Il m'écartera et annonça à cet ennemi que sa main ne nécessitait plus aucune soin.

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Le soir de ce jour mon père me demanda expressément de ne pas jouer de piano. (HMA, 145-146)

The father may censor the metonymic exchange, but both bodies have already been marked by a metonymic desire which displaces that interdiction, having been constructed in his absence and outside of his control. This absence of the paternal censor interdicting a certain mode of reading (and writing) is also the absence of the social interdiction which reads the soldier’s body in terms of its uniform and not of the metonym of the bandage or the wound. The replacement of the general metonym of the uniform with the specific metonym of the bandage, the girl’s own writing on the soldier’s body, generates the difference which makes that particular enemy different “from all the others.” The soldier’s death then reverses the girl’s production of the soldier’s difference from other enemies, even as her love retains its power to efface the difference between her body and the soldier’s, a difference then displaced onto that between life and death. The production of the fetish across the social boundaries represented by the soldier’s uniform leads to a continuous displacement of difference, an “undecidability” which opens up the possibility for the girl of escaping the societal models imposed upon her.

However, from the moment the soldier is shot, this “undecidability” does not remain under the girl’s control; the social interdiction returns with a vengeance. The reaction of the citizens of Nevers to the girl’s relationship to the soldier doubles the girl’s inability to discover “the least difference” between her living body and the soldier’s dead body; they, too, find no difference between those two bodies. As the girl had begun loving the soldier through the medium of her “writing” upon his body, her own body becomes the site of a new “writing”: she is punished for her affair with a German by having her head shaved: “Ils me tendent avec soin jusqu’au bout. Ils croient de leur devoir de bien tondre des
femmes" (HMA, 96). Then, as many other French women were, she is marched through the streets of the city:168

On chante La Marseillaise dans toute la ville. Le jour tombe. Mon amour mort est un ennemi de la France. Quelqu'un dit qu'il faut la faire se promener en ville. La pharmacie de mon père est fermée pour cause de déshonneur. Je suis seule. Il y en a qui rient. Dans la nuit je rentre chez moi. (HMA, 98)

Rather than being the subject of her own love story, the girl now becomes the object of another story, the story of "collaboration." The shaving of the girl's head in particular, and the marching of collaborator women through the street in general, makes this story public by exposing the private difference which their bodies represent. This forced "publication" of a narrative in the form of the sign of difference takes away the girl's control of the presence and absence of marks of difference; the play of "undecidability" which had empowered her ceases, leaving a mark of absolute difference upon her body, making her "collaboration" legible. Mary Jean Green reads Duras' "privileging" of the punished female collaborator as a questioning of "the simple categories established by Liberation mythology"169; the "simple categories" recreate the differences, symbolized by the metonym of the uniform, which the girl's "fetishism" had effaced. The collaborator herself receives a "uniform," a single form which marks her radical difference from other French people and destroys the singularity of her love by equating it with all other affairs between French women and German men. Thus, this punishment, added to by her confinement in

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168Duras refers to the common practice of shaving heads: "On tond quelqu'un quelque part en France. Ici, c'est la fille du pharmacien" (HMA, 139). The parade of women who had "collaborated" was not limited to France: "It was the highly visible collaborators who bore the brunt of public wrath at the time of the Liberation. In France and Norway [...], women accused of having had sexual relations with Germans were marched through the streets." (Bertram M. Gordon, "The Morphology of the Collaborator: The French Case," Journal of European Studies, vol. 23, parts 1 and 2, Nos. 89 &90, March/June 1993, p. 17.) Mary Jean Green also refers to the practice in her article on "Writing War in the Feminine: de Beauvoir and Duras" in the same issue of the Journal of European Studies, p. 227. In the film's synopsis, Duras makes her opinion of the punishment of women for sexual collaboration quite clear: "Tondre une fille parce qu'elle a aimé d'amour un ennemi officiel de son pays, est un absolu et d'horreur et de bêtise" (HMA, 15).

169Green also points out how this questioning "took on particular significance against the background of the Algerian War." (Green, "Writing War in the Feminine," p. 227.)

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her parents' cellar, fixes the "in-difference" between her body and the soldier's body, both marked by the cataclysms of war and the "liberation." Her hair, slowly growing back, then becomes a sign of the difference between her and the soldier, between "Ma vie qui continue" and "Ta morte qui continue" (HMA, 98). The growth of her hair is not her own "writing" but rather a "writing" upon her body by her body itself, a body whose significance is now precisely its difference from the soldier's now dead body. Her body thus becomes a sign of her passivity and victimization, rather than being, as it was, the site of her "active passion." Only when her hair has finally returned to its normal length does she leave Nevers, the mark of her "collaboration" erased.

Her arrival in Paris gives a first meaning to Hiroshima in her life: "Quand j'arrive à Paris [...], le nom Hiroshima est sur tous les journaux. Mes cheveux ont atteint une longueur décente" (HMA, 101-102). The juxtaposition of Hiroshima and the woman's story is thus not only the result of her telling the story in Hiroshima; rather, Hiroshima marks the end of her story, just as it marks the end of the war itself:

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ELLE: La fin de la guerre, je veux dire, complètement. La stupeur ... à l'idée qu'on ait osé ... la stupeur à l'idée qu'on ait réussi. Et puis aussi, pour nous, le commencement d'une peur inconnue. Et puis, l'indifférence, la peur de l'indifférence aussi ...(HMA, 48)
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This indifference is not the corporeal "in-difference" of the "country of love" but rather a fear-provoking indifference to the personal and global catastrophes represented in the film by Nevers and Hiroshima, and, insofar as the two main figures give each other the names of Nevers and Hiroshima at the film's end, by the bodies of the two lovers themselves. As survivors of their catastrophes, they mark both the end of the war and a remaining trace, a physical figure, a fetish perhaps, of the difference, indifference, and "in-difference" which war creates.

In Hiroshima, the French woman tells her lover about the historical newsreels, which she saw in the museum there, of Hiroshima after the bomb, insisting that "je n'ai rien
inventé" (HMA, 28), that she did not invent the images she retained from those films (which appear with her voice-over in the film). If she did not invent those images, Duras herself did invent the central image of the film's wartime story, the death of the German soldier on the quay, thereby fulfilling retrospectively her wartime desire to "operate" and "invent" the deaths of Germans. This fulfillment also appears in the story "Albert des Capitales." In Hiroshima mon amour, the punished collaborator is a woman; in "Albert des Capitales," a woman directs the beating of a collaborator, an informer, in an attempt to extract a confession from him. Although the story is told in the third person, and the central figure is a woman named "Thérèse," Duras identifies this figure as herself in the brief introduction to the story: "Thérèse c'est moi. Celle qui torture le donneur, c'est moi. [...] Je vous donne celle qui torture avec le reste des textes."170 Thus, in writing this story, Duras herself becomes an informer, "informing" upon herself; the process of "informing," of the production of "information," is marked as a process of telling stories. This "informing" appears in a different form in her introduction to another story in La Douleur, "Monsieur X. dit ici Pierre Rabier":

Il s’agit d’une histoire vraie jusque dans le détail. C’est par égard pour la femme et l’enfant de cet homme nommé ici Rabier que je ne l’ai pas publiée avant, et que ici encore je prends la précaution de ne pas le nommer de son vrai nom.171

In both stories, Duras conceals the identity of her central figure with an invented name; further, she informs her reader that the name is invented. However, in the story in which she acts as the "police," torturing an informer, she reveals that she is that central figure; in "Monsieur X," she does not publish the name of the central figure (even though he was a collaborator), does not complete the process of historical "informing," in order to protect those who might be harmed by that information. Thus, Duras’ informing is of a

170 Marguerite Duras, "Albert des Capitales," in Duras, La Douleur, Paris: P.O.L., 1985, p. 134. Further references will be included in the text with the abbreviation AC.

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categorically different character than that of the informer in "Albert des Capitales": she informs only upon herself, whereas the tortured informer had informed on other people. Since her husband Robert Antelme was betrayed by an informer during the war, this distinction is of some importance to her. If Duras confesses the violence in her own past here, she also uses her control of the narratives she tells to keep the violence of "informing," of taking away people's control over their own stories, from spreading.

This play of information provided and information refused figures the importance of such information, of stories told and stories left untold, in "Albert des Capitales." As in Hiroshima mon amour, these stories all involve participation in, or resistance to, the wartime economy of corporeal exchange, centered on the informer's sale of transgressive bodies to the Germans. (Duras' refusal to name names is in part a refusal of the economy of betrayal.) Like the shaving of the girl's head, the beating of the informer marks his difference from those who did not collaborate. However, Thérèse's torture does not seek simply to mark the collaborator's body with a sign which stands for his transgressive story; rather, the torture seeks to make him tell his story: if, in Hiroshima mon amour, the girl's scandalous story is already public knowledge when she is punished, punishment here intends to produce, to "publish," the informer's unknown story. Brooks suggests that narratives of the body seek "to know the body by way of a narrative that leads to its specific identity [and] to give the body specific markings that make it recognizable" (BW, 26); in contrast, the torturers in "Albert des Capitales" seek to use the body to learn the story rather than the other way around. The "marking" of the informer's body in the torture is not meant to make the body recognizable (as is the case with the shaving of the girl's head); rather, the "writing" upon the body seeks to make the body tell its own story: the tortured body is made to speak, to tell its story in a set of fragmentary signs which would reveal the difference between its story and the story of those doing the torturing, the difference between criminal informing and other kinds of "information."

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In this scene of torture, two projects run parallel to each other, both of them described by Foucault: the first is "la mise en scène de la souffrance," the production of suffering as spectacle; the second is the quest for "le supplément d'âme," the story the body contains, which would explain, if not the difference between collaborators and Resistance fighters in general, then at least the difference between the informer and the torturers. These two projects derive from different periods in the history of punishment: the staging of punishment as a spectacle has been, according to Foucault, largely, if not completely, eliminated from modern punishment, which is centered precisely on that "supplement of the soul" which was of no interest prior to the period of the psychologization of punishment in the eighteenth century. The scene of torture enacts this tension between the inscription of punishment on the body and the extraction of a supplement from the body, the confession which would tell the story not only of the informer's actions but also of his motives. If the scene is centered on the problem of the informer's story, it actually represents the confrontation of a set of stories, each story represented by a body or bodies, both absent and present in the scene itself. In fact, the story we read is explicitly marked in its title by an absent body, and thus by an absent, unnarrated story: "Albert des Capitales" is not the name of the informer himself, but rather a name the resistance fighters find in his calendar, which he explains to them before the actual beating begins: "C'est Albert, le garçon des Capitales, un café près de la gare de l'Est" (AC, 137). This Albert has still not been found when the story ends, and it is not made clear whether he is ever found, nor do they have any more information about him. Thus, although the torture of the informer leads to a moment of self-incrimination, the story "Albert des Capitales" points toward the information which is not "given"; it retains its secret, perhaps never to be discovered.\textsuperscript{173}

\textsuperscript{172}Michel Foucault, \textit{Surveiller et punir}, pp. 19, 24.
\textsuperscript{173}Duráš's own relationship to "informing" includes both these moments: the self-incrimination and the information which she keeps for herself, the actual identity of "Pierre Rabier."

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Thérèse's presence is also conditioned by the story of an absent body: "Elle attend un homme qui peut-être a été fusillé" (AC, 142). Within the story itself, this body remains absent, its story untold; however, within the volume *La Douleur* as a whole, the story of this body has been told: the first text in the volume, "La Douleur," recounts the return of "Robert L."174 from the concentration camp to which he had been sent after his arrest. "Monsieur X.," which follows "La Douleur" and precedes "Albert des Capitales," provides even more information about Duras, her experience with her husband in the Resistance, and her husband's arrest. Even as the untold story of Albert des Capitales marks the story "Albert des Capitales" with its secret, the already twice-told story of the absence of Thérèse's husband marks the revelation of what had been the central secret of the Second World War: the true expanse and horror of the concentration camps. *This* story remains untold in "Albert des Capitales," but this implicit knowledge is *not* extratextual if one takes the whole volume *La Douleur* into account, which begins with the experience of that revelation. It is a story which the reader implicitly knows, even if the characters do not know it yet. The two who actually do the beating, Albert175 and Lucien, are chosen to do so because they spent time in prison during the war, further, because they are known *not* to have talked under the torture they received from the Gestapo. As Thérèse's presence marks the absence of her husband, Albert and Lucien's presence marks the absence of the actual victims of Nazi violence and French collaboration. The most important absence of all is that of the Germans, which is in fact essential to the story, which is only possible after the Liberation; their absence is doubled by the presence of a crowd of Resistance fighters, gathered to witness the torturing of the informer. Thus, each set of absent bodies and present bodies represents the confrontation of two stories, one known to the participants in

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174 Even here Duras does not "inform" upon her husband, even though the text identifies "Robert L." as the author of Robert Antelme's *L'espèce humaine*. Interestingly, she does identify François Mitterrand, giving him both his own name and his *nom de Résistance*, François Morland (D, 52).

175 This Albert is a Resistance fighter and has nothing to do with Albert des Capitales.
the torture, one unknown; the torturers would hear the story which they do not yet know.

The capture of the informer opens up the possibility of "reading" these untold stories:

Depuis des années on en entendait parler, les premiers jours on avait cru en voir partout. Celui-ci serait le premier qu'on verrait peut-être en toute certitude. En fin on avait le temps de se faire une certitude. Et de voir comment c'était fait un donneur. La curiosité était intense. On était déjà plus curieux de ce qu'on avait vécu aveuglément sous l'Occupation que de ce que l'on vivait d'extraordinarie depuis une semaine, depuis la Libération. (AC, 135-136)

The blindness of the experience of the Occupation triggers a desire for visibility, first experienced as a paranoid fantasy of ubiquitous visibility ("on avait cru en voir partout").

The confrontation with the informer promises both to shed light on the hidden actions of the Occupation and on the hidden motivations of a collaborator. This play of visibility around the informer thus involves the production of narratives: first, the paranoid story which would see everyone as a potential collaborator; then, the two stories, of actions and motivations, which the Resistance group hopes to hear from the informer. The group's intense curiosity is not directed toward what they can see now but to their previous blind spots, what they were unable to see during the Occupation, a blindness re-marked at the end of the story when "Albert des Capitales" has still not been found. This absent body reinscribes the mystery of the Occupation even as the informer has given information which reveals him to have been working for the Gestapo.

The production of this story involves the reading and interpretation of details, beginning with the discovery of the repeated name "Albert des Capitales" and continuing as the interrogation itself begins: "Il [the informer] a les chaussettes de quelqu'un qui n'est pas rentré chez lui depuis plusiers jours et qui a marché" (AC, 145-146). Here, a metonym for the informer's body speaks: the socks, like the bandage or the uniform in Hiroshima mon amour, are a sign which tells part of a story, the story of a man who does not go home for fear of being caught. One does not need the entire story of his informing; such fragmentary details would confirm the informer's transgression. Thérèse's identification of the
difference between the informer and others in simple terms allows her to formulate a question whose answer would be a sure sign of the informer's activity: "Il y en a des différences entre les hommes. [...] Il entrait rue des Saussaies. Sans attendre, jamais" (AC, 147). The building in the "rue des Saussaies" was the headquarters of the Gestapo; in "Monsieur X.," Duras has already told of her extensive waiting outside that building after her husband's arrest, as she was seeking information about his whereabouts and well-being. The difference of not waiting is thus a sign of the informer's power not only in general but specifically a figurative power over Thérèse's husband; she uses this difference as a basis for her first direct question to the informer: "[...] il faudra que tu nous dises comment tu entrais à la Gestapo" (AC, 150). Entering the Gestapo building without waiting becomes a figure for the entire process of collaboration, especially after the informer responds that he entered "comme tout le monde": "Il n'a pas dit qu'il n'y entrait pas" (AC, 150). The informer's entrances into the Gestapo building become the central sign of his difference from others; Thérèse's second question centers on a detail which would mark his relationship to the building as different from "everybody's": "De quelle couleur était la carte d'identité avec laquelle tu entrais à la Gestapo?" (AC, 151). This single detail would amount to a confession on the informer's part, which he finally gives, admitting his card was green: "Les cartes des agents S.D. Police Secrète Allemande étaient vertes,' dit Thérèse" (AC, 161). The detail of the card's color tells the whole story of his informing, even if it doesn't tell in all its intricate psychological implications the whole story that the interrogators would like to hear: how one becomes a collaborator.

In the process of interrogation, the blows themselves become a language, a writing upon the body which doubles the questions: "Maintenant le rythme des questions et celui

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177 After Duras meets "Pierre Rabier," the officer who arrested her husband, she, too, never has to wait—not because she is collaborating but because Rabier wants to sleep with her.
des coups est le même, vertigineux, mais égal" (AC, 159). The body becomes a harbor of truth from which truth can be extracted:

Il faut frapper. Écraser. Faire voler en pièces le mensonge. Ce silence ignoble. L’onder de lumière. Extraire cette vérité que ce salaud-là a dans la gorge. [...] Pour quoi faire? [...] C’est pour savoir. Taper dessus jusqu’à ce qu’il éjacule sa vérité, sa pudeur, sa peur, le secret de ce qui le faisait hier tout puissant, inaccessible, intouchable. (AC, 155)

Here, the memory of the informer’s former power marks the loss of that power in the absence of the Germans; one trace of that power still exists: "[...] de la puissance du donneur il reste ça, cette voix pour mentir" (AC, 155). The metaphors of "light," doubled by the positions of the bodies in the room (the informer sits in the light of a lamp, Thérèse in darkness), make this body into a figure of the "blindness" the Resistance fighters experienced during the Occupation, and also a general figure for the invisibility of certain forms of knowledge. Thus, for Thérèse, the experience of torturing marks a more general relationship between the body and truth:

[...] elle sent pour la première fois que dans le corps de l’homme il y a des épaisseurs presque impossibles à crever. Des couches et des couches de vérité profondes, difficiles à atteindre. [...] Il faut tenir, tenir. Et tout à l’heure sortira, sortira toute petite, sortira dure comme un grain la vérité. [...] Ce n’était déjà pas un homme comme les autres. C’était un donneur d’hommes. [...] maintenant on ne peut plus le comparer à rien de vivant. Même mort, il ne ressemblera pas à un homme mort. (AC, 156)

The body is a palimpsest of truths torture seeks to penetrate in order to locate one truth, the truth it seeks. If this makes that body a generalized body, like all others which contain such truths, the process of torture nevertheless renders this body radically different from any other bodies, living or dead, including those of the torturers and interrogators. Torture thus involves not only the production of a story but the production of a radicalized difference beyond that between the informer and the members of the Resistance, between the "giver of
men" and those he betrayed.\textsuperscript{178} This radical difference begins to divide the Resistance group itself:

Maintenant ce n'est plus la même chose. Le bloc des camarades s'est scindé. [...] On n'a pas le temps de distinguer: les femmes sont avec le donneur, le donneur est avec tous ceux qui ne sont pas d'accord. L'envie de frapper grandit avec le nombre des ennemis, les étrangers. (AC, 153)

This difference could be described in Foucault's terms: those against the torture may be interested in the potential "supplement of the soul," the informer's confession, but the spectacle of suffering shocks them. This internal split in the group preexists the scene of torture, which becomes merely the moment of realization of a potential for conflict:

Pendant la bagarre, tout le monde attendait tout le monde de la même façon. On se gardait d'avoir une préférence. Maintenant on va recommencer. On va recommencer, on va préférer. (AC, 146)

The name of the Resistance group, "le groupe Richelieu" (AC, 135), itself figures the overwhelming of difference in favor of identity, in Richelieu's position in the historical production of French identity through the erasure of internal differences within the nation. The group's identity breaks down as internal difference begins to reemerge after the immediate moment of Liberation. This breakdown, articulated in the scene of torture, reproduces a difference which existed during the Occupation, not between collaborators and the Resistance but rather an opposition involving a different rhetoric, of Revolution rather than of Resistance:


Against the "comedy" of a future legal judgment of collaborators, Thérèse sets a "justice" based on revolutionary precepts, serving justice not only against the crime of collaboration

\textsuperscript{178} In fact, this radical difference appears even earlier in the interrogation: "Très vite c'est arrivé. C'est fait: qu'il en meure ou qu'il s'en tire, cela ne dépend plus de Thérèse. Cela n'a plus aucune importance. Il est devenu un homme qui n'a plus rien de commun avec les autres hommes. A chaque minute la différence augmente, s'installe" (AC, 152).
but against the "crimes" of the "bourgeois" who surrendered Resistance fighters to the Germans without a sign of struggle or concern. The difference of Revolution is not only that of Communism but that of the French Revolution as well: "Elle est la justice comme il n'y en a pas eu depuis cent cinquante ans sur ce sol" (AC, 157). Thérèse positions herself within a story which allows her to relate what she is doing to predecessors whose actions legitimate hers, appealing back to the French Revolution as a moment of production of radical difference akin to the moment she is now experiencing. Thus, the scene of torture not only involves differences which predate the scene itself but an appeal to a legitimizing set of narratives providing positions for each of the bodies involved in the scene of torture. The conflict between the stories represented by the various bodies present and absent in the scene of torture figures, and is figured by, a set of existing historical and cultural narratives which determine the positions which those bodies occupy, and, further, generates the differences which appear not only between the torturers and the informer, but also within the group of torturers themselves.

The scene of torture, then, becomes the site of the production and reproduction of differences involving positions in the story of Occupation: those who tried to live "normal" lives; those who exploited the Occupation for ideological, economic, or psychological reasons; those who struggled against it for another set of reasons. The torture itself seeks to shed light upon those positions which had remained mysterious to outsiders during the Occupation, but, while the torture does establish the collaborator's position within the Occupational economy, the story of the torture is not able to break the mystery of that economy itself, is not able to connect the informer's difference to a larger structure of collaboration and thus to a chain of differences that would allow "justice" to be done. The motivations of the informer and his actual position in the network of information remain as mysterious as the motivations of the "bourgeois," hiding behind their windows while the "terrorists" are taken away. The fragmentary and insignificant results of the scene of torture
erase this narrativization of the scene in a dénouement in which "justice" ceases to be an issue, as Thérèse herself, even after asserting the difference between herself and the informer so strongly, urges the leader of the group to let the informer go. The production of "justice" may have led to the informer's confession, may even be said to produce a "supplement of the soul" through the spectacle of suffering; however, it does not bring back the absent bodies which determine the structure of the scene of torture: "justice" leads neither to the capture of Albert des Capitales, nor to the return of her husband and other deportees, nor to the return for punishment of the Germans who actually constructed the system of information and deportation. The narrative of past collaboration cannot provide Thérèse with an empowering position in the face of a present determined by her uncertainty. "Albert des Capitales" may narrate, to some degree, the fulfillment of Duras' desire to be an actor rather than a mere spectator in the story of the war, but that fulfillment remains anticlimactic in a context of waiting in which no position of activity is available to her.

In both Hiroshima mon amour and "Albert des Capitales," the central figure is a woman who constructs a position of activity for herself within the wartime economy of action and passion, a position which depends for its existence on the uncertainties generated by the war and thus breaks down at war's end. "La Douleur" is the story of that end, of the waiting for the husband's return. Because of the structure of the volume La Douleur, everything in "Albert des Capitales" is finally secondary to this waiting. Thérèse's reason for being the interrogator of the informer ("Elle attend un homme qui peut-être a été fusillé") contains two primary points of contact between "Albert des Capitales" and "La Douleur": this image of waiting plus the image of the potential death of Robert L. The two images cannot actually be kept separate: as long as Robert's death remains in the realm of possibility, Marguerite179 must wait; as long as she waits, she cannot help but invent new

179The name "Duras" does not appear within the text of "La Douleur," although she is twice called "Marguerite" by other figures (Marguerite Duras, "La Douleur," in Duras, La Douleur, pp. 39, 47-48. 294
possible deaths for him, to the point where "il passe plus d'images dans notre tête qu'il y en a sur les routes d'Allemagne" (D, 43). The wait for the return of Robert L. simultaneously suspends narration in an accumulation of images of death and generates narrative in this uncontrollable profusion of images. The paralysis of waiting displaces narration; placed in a position in which no experimentation is possible (or, more precisely, in which no possible experiment can generate a liberating solution), Marguerite is no longer able to produce or understand narrative. Whereas the narrativization of invisibility in "Le boa" generates a set of traditional narratives of transformation and origin, the only possible narration of the wait for Robert is the narration of the impossibility of narration. As long as Robert has not yet returned from the concentration camps, the "narrative" of "La Douleur," written in journal form, remains doubly paralyzed by this simultaneous annihilation and proliferation of narratability; as Green points out, "it is only at the moment of the return of Robert L. that the dated, present-tense entries of the journal cease, to be replaced by a more coherent narrative which recounts, in graphic detail, the process of his return to life." The recovery of Robert's body, in fact, explicitly provides a narrative of the progressive return of the control which makes narration possible, that is, a narrative of the recommencement of narrative. The suspension caused by his unseen potential deaths disappears in the face of the visibility of his recovery, a recovery whose conclusion, as in Hiroshima mon amour, concludes with the end of the war, with the news from Hiroshima.

If the pre-execution fantasies of Borges' Jaromir Hladik "strain geometrical probability," Marguerite's imaginations of Robert's death "strain" arithmetic probability, in part because she always survives those deaths, in part because she, unlike Hladik, can also

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Further references will be included in the text with the abbreviation D). Hence, I will call this distinct figure in the text "Marguerite" rather than "Durand."

180 Durand speaks here both of herself and her friend Mme. Bordes, hence the plural.

181 Green, "Writing War in the Feminine," pp. 233-234.
imagine scenarios in which Robert would survive, scenarios of his return such as those with which the story begins:

Il pourrait revenir directement, il sonnerait à la porte d'entrée [...] Il pourrait également téléphoner dès son arrivée dans un centre du transit [...] Il n'y aurait pas de signes avant-coureurs. Il téléphonerait. Il arriverait. Ce sont des choses qui sont possibles. [...] Il n'est pas un cas particulier. Il n'y a pas de raison particulière pour qu'il ne revienne pas. Il n'y a pas de raison pour qu'il revienne. (D, 11)

These figures of possible return mark the space of hope in which her waiting takes place, but the space of despair, of figures of Robert's death, is the dominant factor in the story, a story without "signes avant-coureurs." Neither hope nor despair can be privileged, because events can be read as "particular reasons" foreshadowing either his return or his non-return. The only certainty is Marguerite's waiting itself: "L'extraordinaire est inattendu. Il faut que je sois raisonnable: j'attends Robert L. qui doit revenir" (D, 12, italics mine). Because the extraordinary is unexpected, Marguerite cannot anticipate it; she cannot reasonably base her hopes or despairs on such possibilities. However, in wartime, the exceptional is the ordinary; thus, although the stories which she does imagine are in this sense "ordinary," they are nevertheless extraordinarily terrible:

Dans un fossé, la tête tournée contre terre, les jambes repliées, les bras étendus, il se meurt. Il est mort. A travers les squelettes de Buchenwald, le sien. [...] Sur la route, à côté de lui, passent les armées alliées qui avancent. Il est mort depuis trois semaines. [...] Tout le long de toutes les routes d'Allemagne, il y en a qui sont allongés dans des poses semblables à la sienne. Des milliers, des dizaines, et lui. Lui qui est à la fois contenu dans les milliers des autres, et détaché pour moi seule des milliers des autres, complètement distinct, seul. (D, 14)

This image of Robert's death in the ditch appears in numerous variations in which various details are changed or developed: in some, he is shot, in others he dies of exhaustion. The exact time of his possible death is often specified, as here, but with many variations. Constant in all the variations is the indistinguishability of his death from the mass deaths of the war, a product of the "fonction égalitaire des crématoires de Buchenwald, de la faim, des fosses communes de Bergen-Belsen" (D, 57): all individuals are equal in these
common graves, in the face of mass technologized death. Within the "ordinary" mass death of war, Robert's body, especially his death, is only marked as individual for Marguerite (like the German soldier's body for the girl in Hiroshima mon amour). Within that individuality, she imagines that he is dying each of the possible deaths within the mass; thus, while profoundly individual for her, Robert's death, in this accumulation of variations, also becomes a figure for mass death. Every narrative that she invents is not only a possible death for him but a highly probable death for someone, including herself: "En mourant je ne le rejoins pas, je cesse de l'attendre" (D, 15). Her death would put an end to the arithmetic proliferation of narratives by putting an end not to his story or to their story, but merely to the story of her waiting.

As with Robert's potential death, the context of the war generalizes this waiting, makes it an experience Marguerite shares with others, specifically with other women also waiting for men to return in what Green calls the "solidarity of waiting women." 182: "Je récapitule, des femmes qui attendent comme moi, non, aucune n'est aussi lâche que ça. J'en connais de très courageuses" (D, 30). She occupies this historical position which women have always occupied in times of war (the paradigmatic literary model is Penelope), a position which erases national boundaries in a point of contact with Hiroshima mon amour: "Je pense à la mère allemande du petit soldat de seize ans qui agonisait le dix-sept août 1944, seul, couché sur un tas de pierres sur le quai des Arts, elle, elle attend encore son fils" (D, 56). Duras' use of this image in the film changes her position with respect to the soldier's death, as she makes it part of a story she constructed rather than a story beyond her control, as it is here. The appeal to the image of the soldier's mother, and the historicity of women who wait, then appears as another attempt to bring the story, even history, under control, to construct a position of potential action from a position of apparently pure "passion."

182Green, "Writing War in the Feminine," p. 234.
Susan S. Lanser has related this position to *narrative* activity ("In a universe where waiting, inaction, reception, predominate, and action is only minimally possible, the narrative act itself becomes the source of possibility"\(^{183}\)); however, Duras' text clearly figures the *distance* between "passion" and narration: only *after the fact* is she able to become a narrator, develop a position in which she can tell the story of waiting. Although the text is written in a journal form and often uses the present tense, that is itself a literary construct: Duras insists in her introduction that, although she does not remember having written it ("Je n'ai aucun souvenir de l'avoir écrit"), she cannot conceive "de l'avoir écrit pendant l'attente de Robert L." (D, 10).\(^{184}\) In contrast to Lanser's figuring of the narrative act as possibility, Duras' text figures a world of "waiting, inaction, reception" in which narration, precisely insofar as it is a source of possibility, has a *paralyzing* rather than a liberating effect: when the possible means Robert L.'s possible death, it cannot become a means of actively producing a new position for herself or of manipulating the position she finds herself in.

Nevertheless, within the erasure of event constituted by this waiting, Marguerite does seek to construct a position of control for herself through the assertion of the possibility of choice: "J'ai choisi de l'attendre comme je l'attends, jusqu'à en mourir" (D, 37). Here, she manipulates a figure which first appears in such a way as to completely disable the activity of choosing:

> Depuis le sept avril j'ai le choix. Il était peut-être parmi les deux mille fusillés de Belsen. A Mittel-Glattbach on a trouvé mille cinq cents corps dans un charnier. Partout, sur toutes les routes il y en a des colonnes immenses d'hommes hagards, on les emmène, ils ne savent pas où, les

\(^{183}\)Susan S. Lanser, "Toward a Feminist Narratology," *Style*, 20:3, Fall 1986, p. 357.

\(^{184}\)Textual evidence for this appears in the journal sections themselves as knowledge of later events, specifically, of what "on ne sa[vait] pas encore": for example, that the Germans did not necessarily shoot all the remaining inmates of the concentration camps: "[Q]uand ils n'ont pas le temps de fusiller, ils laissent là" (D, 32). This type of knowledge is also given a temporal marker more specific than "pas encore," again with reference to the camps: "Mme Kats a attendu six mois, d'avril à novembre 1945. Sa fille était morte en mars 1945, on lui a notifié la mort en novembre 1945, il a fallu neuf mois pour retrouver le nom" (D, 54).
kapos non plus, ni les chefs. Aujourd'hui les vingt milles survivants de Buchenwald, saluent les cinquante et un mille morts du camps. (D, 34)

Although this choice is both completely passive and totally paralyzing, it does open up the possibility of a second choice, a potential choice of action:

C'est une seule image à deux faces: sur l'une d'elles il y a lui, la poitrine face à l'Allemand, l'espoir de douze mois qui se noie dans ses yeux et sur l'autre face il y a les yeux de l'Allemand qui visent. Voilà les deux faces de l'image. Entre les deux il me faut choisir, lui qui roule dans le fossé, ou l'Allemand qui remet la mitraillette sur son épaule et qui part. (D, 35)

Here, the variations of Robert's possible deaths generate the possibility of choice, which Marguerite then manipulates to open up the choice between mourning and revenge; finally, she is able to assert her waiting itself—more precisely, the style of her waiting—as the result of a choice and not of necessity. However, this choice is illusory, and the position it constructs unsustainable; until she receives definitive information about him, her powerlessness is absolute: "Je voudrais pouvoir lui donner ma vie. Je ne peux pas lui donner un morceau du pain" (D, 43). She cannot construct a narrative, or even a single event (giving bread), in which she can save Robert's life. Even in a narrative in which he dies, she would not be able to choose between the two bodies, the body of the murderer and the body of the victim, between revenge against the living and the mourning of the dead. The determining factor of her waiting, and by extension of the waiting of all women with men who have disappeared in war, is that she can do nothing: no judgment of hers, no thought of hers, no action of hers will affect the life or death of the one for whom she waits. This woman's position cannot in any way be transformed or refigured to produce a position of narrative authority; the "narrative act" is not a sign that one is leaving this position, but that one has already left it.

The position of waiting Marguerite occupies is both individual and historical: she waits alone, but many other women like her are also waiting. This doubling of the historical with the individual renders her unable to position herself within other narratives, both historical
and literary, which might otherwise provide her with active positions. The grand historical events taking place around her also generate a waiting in solidarity, the waiting for the end of the war which permeates the text: "Les femmes qui font la queue pour les cerises attendent la chute de Berlin. Je l'attends. [...] Le monde entier l'attend" (D, 31). This historical waiting does not appear to Marguerite to have the same character as her waiting and the waiting of women like her and her acquaintance Madame Kats, who do not yet know if their loved ones have survived or not:

Ceux qui attendent la paix n'attendent pas, rien. [...] J'ai entrevu qu'un avenir possible allait venir, qu'une terre étrangère allait émerger de ce chaos et que là personne n'attendrait plus. [...] Je suis suspendue à un fil, la dernière des probabilités, celle qui n'aura pas de place dans les journaux. (D, 58)

The narrative of the end of the war and the beginning of the peace will appear in the newspapers; in contrast, the probabilities of Robert's survival, of the survival of those like him, remains a story outside the "news" of war and peace, despite the otherwise central role Robert's experience is already playing in the immediate understanding of the war: "Il ne s'agit pas de nouvelles. Il s'agit de renseignements sur les atrocités nazies" (D, 20). These words, spoken to Marguerite by a French officer, replace the specific "news" Marguerite seeks to gather about survivors with the general "information" about the atrocities of the camps as a whole; this replacement assumes that the horror of the war is already in the past, that the individual experience of the war will now disappear behind the grand narratives which will place the war historically, the kind of simplifying narrative in which newspapers specialize. In "La Douleur," this historicization is marked by reference to the names of those who led the fight against the Germans: Churchill announces that "[n]ous n'avons plus longtemps à attendre"; Stalin watches Berlin burn; Roosevelt dies (D, 39-40, 42). The most important of these figures for Marguerite is Charles de Gaulle, whose actions appear scandalous to her: "De Gaulle a décrété le deuil national pour la mort de Roosevelt. Pas de deuil national pour les déportés morts" (D, 42-43). De Gaulle's
emphasis on the grand narrative of the war erases the many individual narratives which
constituted the war, of the deportees and of those who wait for them:

De Gaulle n'attend plus rien, que la paix, il n'y a que nous qui attendions
encore, d'une attente de tous les temps, de celle des femmes de tous les
temps, de tous lieux du monde: celles des hommes au retour de la guerre.
(D, 56)

Marguerite is thus no more able to locate herself in the contemporary experience of history
than she is able to control her own narrative positions: neither the end of the war as a whole
nor the Liberation of France offers a position which would help her to understand and
explain her waiting. As Lanser suggests, it might not be possible to define waiting in
narrative terms because plot has traditionally been defined as involving "the (intentional)
deeds of protagonists"185; the women who wait are thus not able to become part of the
French national "plot" of the Second World War.186 Their waiting does have further
effects on another kind of narrative:

On a essayé de lire, on aura tout essayé, mais l'enchaînement des phrases ne
se fait plus, pourtant on soupçonne qu'il existe. Mais parfois on croit qu'il
n'existe pas, qu'il n'a jamais existé, que la vérité c'est maintenant. Un autre
enchaînement nous tient: celui qui relie leur corps à notre vie. [...] Parce que
de d'une seconde à l'autre seconde il va peut-être mourir, mais que ce n'est pas
encore fait. Ainsi second après second la vie nous quitte nous aussi, toutes
les chances se perdent, et aussi bien la vie nous revient, toutes les chances
se retrouvent. [...] Il n'y a plus la place en moi pour la première ligne des
livres qui sont écrits. (D, 44)

The stasis of waiting makes "enchainement" impossible; no chain of signs can have
meaning for Marguerite in this waiting which isolates and separates not only the words in a
phrase from each other, but each second from every other second. Further, each second is

186Neither are the women who were involved in the Resistance; Paula Schwartz has argued that the
common conceptualization of what constitutes "Resistance" has effaced roles largely played by women:
"[P]revailing notions of resistance have tended to obscure women's contributions by orienting research away
from participants who did not occupy leadership positions or distinguish themselves in some extraordinary
way." Further, she notes that the distribution of national honors after the war "reveal[s] a definition of
resistance based on membership in a group affiliated with General de Gaulle." (Paula Schwartz, "Redefining
Resistance: Women's Activism in Wartime France," in Margaret Randolph Higonnet, et al, eds., Behind the
identical to any other second, containing both the possibility of his death and the possibility of his life, themselves disconnected from each other.\textsuperscript{187} The total disconnection of waiting thus disables Marguerite's capacity for reading, for understanding the relationships of written narrative; she is left only with the connection between her body and her husband's absent body. When corporeality completely replaces narrativity, there is neither "somaticization of story" nor "semioticization of the body."

Thus, waiting renders Marguerite completely incapable of positioning herself with respect to particular narratives and to narration in general, whether as a "writer" or as a reader, as the one who tells stories or as the one who hears them. This incapacity is directly connected to her inability to refigure her experiences in such a way that she can locate a controlling position for herself; even, or perhaps especially, within the grand narratives of post-war recovery, she remains unable to participate in "liberation." Robert's return does not immediately change this situation. His presence \textit{does} replace the arithmetic proliferation of narratives (\textit{and} the other narratives into which she was unable to fit herself) with a narrative of recovery, the recovery of his body, but in this story as well, the only immediate position available to Marguerite is that of a passive reader. Only in retrospect is there a story to tell, this story of his recovery; until she can locate clear signs that he is recovering, she remains in the nonnarrative world of waiting. Here, corporeality again displaces the "enchainement" of signs, until finally the body itself begins to produce differentiated signs, whose very difference allows for the recovery of narrative in the narrative of recovery. This displacement of signification begins with Marguerite's own body even before Robert's return, when she receives some news of him:

\begin{quote}
Quelque chose a crevé avec les mots disant qu'il était vivant il y a deux jours. Elle laisse faire. Ça creve, ça sort par la bouche, par le nez, par les
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{187}In Robert Antelme's \textit{L'espèce humaine}, his book on his experiences in various concentration camps, the other side of this waiting reveals the same experience of the second: "La mort était ici de plain-pied avec la vie, mais à toutes les secondes." (Robert Antelme, \textit{L'espèce humaine} (1956), Paris: Gallimard, 1978, p. 22.)
yeux. Il faut que ça sorte. [...] Ça sort en eau de partout. [...] Ça sort aussi en plaintes, en cris. Ça sort de toutes les façons que ça veut. Ça sort. (D, 47-48)

The words which provide definitive information that Robert was alive at a given time in the very recent past break the stasis of waiting and release this "ça," an unidentified tension which has built up in the body. "Ça" is not, however, unidentifiable; when Robert's arrival in Paris is imminent, it reappears in another form: "Je hurlais, de cela je me souviens. La guerre sortait dans des hurlements" (D, 64). Robert's return breaks the stasis of waiting; Marguerite is now able to "excrete" the war, as the fluids or cries which her body involuntarily produces on the news of his survival and his imminent return. The complete recovery of Robert's body is implied within the narration itself in the interjected remark about Marguerite's memory; this marker of memory reappears upon Robert's arrival, in the moment of recognition:

Dans mon souvenir, à un moment donné, les bruits s'éteignent et je le vois. Immense. Devant moi. Je ne le reconnais pas. Il me regarde. Il sourit. Il se laisse regarder. Une fatigue surnaturelle se montre dans son sourire, celle d'être arrivé à vivre jusqu'à ce moment-ci. C'est à ce sourire que tout à coup je le reconnais, mais de très loin, comme si je le voyais au fond d'un tunnel. [...] la connaissance est là, que cet inconnu c'est lui, Robert L., dans sa totalité. (D, 65)

Here again the narration is marked as retrospective by the emphasis on memory; the distance between the writing and the experience figured in terms of the narrator's memory is doubled within this moment of recognition itself by the distance between Robert's smile, the metonym for his "totality," and his "supernaturally fatigued" body. Three temporal moments come together here and mark the commencement of the narrative of recovery through the implicit story of change and development which they tell: first, the memory of a time before Robert's deportation, contained here in the recognition of his smile (which itself marks his recognition of Marguerite); then, the time of the scene of recognition itself, the "present" of the narrated events; finally, the time of the narration, marked here by the reference to the memory of the narrated scene. The movement from the past to the narrated
present to the narrating future generates the possibility of narrative, generates a position in which narration is possible—but still only in retrospect. Insofar as the distance between the body and the smile marks the necessary direction of recovery and thus the possible progress of the narrative of recovery, that narrative is potential in the scene of recognition—but it is only potential. The actual narrative of recovery can only begin when Robert's body begins to produce differentiated signs which mark the progress of recovery.

Robert's body itself becomes a text demanding to be read, a text which would tell the story of recovery—or of death. In retrospect (but only in retrospect), this story contains three essential, differentiable phases; the transformation from one phase to another is marked by the reading of a sign. Only the identification of these signs allows the possibility of narration, provides Marguerite with the possibility of telling a story, of becoming a narrator of the narrative of recovery. At the time, there was no story; there were only these signs. The narrative of recovery begins with the image of Robert's "inhuman" excrement:

Il faisait [...] cette chose glutante vert sombre qui bouillonnait, merde que personne n'avait encore vue. [...] Elle était inhumaine. Elle le séparait de nous plus que la fièvre, plus que la maigreur, les doigts désolés, les traces de coups de S.S. (D, 69)

Robert's body, like Marguerite's when she heard of his survival, is in the process of excreting the war. His shit marks the first phase of his recovery: the experience of the concentration camp, like the experience of being tortured for the informer in "Albert des Capitales," has marked him with a radical difference between him and other humans. A change in the character of this green shit marks the first sign of the recovery of Robert's humanity: "Au bout de dix-sept jours la mort se fatigue. Dans le seau elle ne bouillone plus, elle devient liquide, elle reste verte, mais elle a une odeur plus humaine, une odeur humaine" (D, 70-71). In the first stage of his recovery, the persistence of Robert's inhuman shit differentiated him from the people caring for him; in this stage, hunger
replaces excretion as the mark of his difference. The story of his hunger explicitly repeats the story of Marguerite's waiting for Robert's return:

Il mangeait. C'était une occupation qui prenait tout son temps. Il attendait la nourriture pendant des heures. Il avalait sans savoir quoi. Puis on éloignait la nourriture et il attendait qu'elle revienne. (D, 72)

As when Marguerite was waiting, he has his identity displaced: "Il a disparu, la faim est à sa place" (D, 72). His undifferentiated ingestion repeats the undifferentiated excretion; only when he begins to eat in a different way does his recovery enter a third stage: "Hier, il ramaissait les miettes de pain tombées sur son pantalon, par terre, en faisant des efforts énormes. Aujourd'hui il en laisse quelques-unes" (D, 73). This image of the bread crumbs involves a double moment of reading: Marguerite reads the difference between two types of reading by Robert; in the first of these, he obsessively locates every last crumb, every "detail," in order not to miss anything, in the second, he begins to read in a more "human" way, leaving behind several of the crumbs. Thus, the story of his recovery involves two differentiations in which his body ceases to produce a sign of his experience in the concentration camp and begins to produce a sign standard to the experience of "normal" life: first, the differentiation in his shit; then, the differentiation in his eating. Through the "enchainement" of these two signs, a story is produced, recognizable as such only after the two differentiations have taken place. The story of recovery becomes the story of the recommencement of narrative.

During the period of Robert's recovery, the references to the other narratives which had filled the period before his return disappear. The outside world returns only when Robert himself registers it while visiting a rest home for deportees:

C'est en août 1945. Hiroshima, c'est là qu'on l'apprend. [...] Sur le bord de la route, un matin, ce titre énorme dans un journal: Hiroshima. [...] Hiroshima est peut-être la première chose extérieure à sa vie qu'il voit, qu'il lit au-dehors. (D, 76)
There had not been any place in the newspapers for the story of waiting, and there had not been any place for the news in the story of recovery. The reproduction of narrativity brings back the stories of the outside world, offsetting the narrative of recovery with the story of Hiroshima. Hiroshima, the paradigmatic image of the end of the war (even though the war did not end there), reintroduces that end which had been so present as an impossibility in the course of Marguerite's waiting; further, it reintroduces the impossibility of narration, leaving one only, as in the synopsis of *Hiroshima mon amour*, with the narrative of the impossibility of narration: "Tout ce qu'on peut faire c'est de parler de l'impossibilité de parler de HIROSHIMA" (HMA, 10). If Robert's recovery marks the recommencement of narrative, it is only this narrative of the impossibility of narration which becomes possible. In Duras' texts about the Second World War, both the memoirs in *La Douleur* and the fictional text of *Hiroshima mon amour*, this impossibility marks not only the grand historical narratives represented by the catastrophes represented by Hiroshima and Auschwitz but also the individual narratives of those who experienced these catastrophes, including those who experienced them from a distance, the girl in *Hiroshima mon amour* and Marguerite in "La Douleur." In these individual narratives, only a narration of the recovery of the body from catastrophe remains possible.

Unlike Lessing and Wolf, Duras is largely able to overcome the problem of being an observing woman. Rather than trying to assume the traditional observer position directly, she performs a *bricolage* of the various positions available to her in order to generate a new position which takes advantage of the very observational tensions which Lessing is unable to overcome and Wolf is only able to describe. Faced with the problem of narrating the invisibility of death, however, Duras' strategies of activation and of the production of visibility through narrative *bricolage* fail. In the face of this failure, a narrative of the production of activity becomes impossible, and the only narrative which remains is the
narrative of the impossibility of narration figured, for Duras, by the catastrophes of the
Second World War.
Bibliography

ABBREVIATIONS

I have used the following abbreviations:

A Duras, Marguerite, L'Amant
AC Duras, Marguerite, "Albert des Capitales"
AL Lessing, Doris, African Laughter
B Duras, Marguerite, "Le boa"
BW Brooks, Peter, Body Work
DI Bakhtin, M.M., The Dialogical Imagination
É Duras, Marguerite, "Écrire"
FC Lessing, Doris, The Fifth Child
GH Lessing, Doris, Going Home
GN Lessing, Doris, The Golden Notebook
GP Torgovnick, Marianna, Gone Primitive: Savage Intellecets, Modern Lives
GV Gardiner, Judith Kegan, "Gender, Values, and Lessing's Cats"
HMA Duras, Marguerite, Hiroshima mon amour
IPE Lessing, Doris, In Pursuit of the English: A Documentary
K Wolf, Christa, Kassandra
KM Wolf, Christa, Kindheitsmuster
MA Wolf, Christa, "Ein Modell von der anderen Art"
MM Jouve, Nicole Ward, "Of mud and other matter—The Children of Violence"
OWB Rich, Adrienne, Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution
P Duras, Marguerite, and Xavière Gauthier, Les parleuses
PC Lessing, Doris, Particularly Cats and More Cats
PS Lévi-Strauss, Claude, La pensée sauvage
PWC Lessing, Doris, Prisons We Choose to Live Inside
ROO Woolf, Virginia, A Room of One's Own
RSL Gardiner, Judith Kegan, Rhys, Stead, Lessing and the Politics of Empathy
SP Foucault, Michel, Surveiller et punir: Naissance de la prison
SW Stallybrass, Peter, and Allon White, The Politics and Poetics of Transgression
TG DeJean, Joan, Tender Geographies
VEK Wolf, Christa, Voraussetzungen einer Erzählung
WB Wolf, Christa, Was bleibt
ZC Mullan, Bob, and Garry Marvin, Zoo Culture

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