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The Death Instincts
in the
Life and Works of Heinrich von Kleist

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The Death Instincts in the Life and Works of Heinrich von Kleist

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Abstract

This thesis is based on a psychological interpretation of the life and works of Heinrich von Kleist. The basis of the interpretation is the death instincts as formulated by Sigmund Freud in *Jenseits des Lustprinzips* (Beyond the Pleasure Principle) and is extended with the work of Melanie Klein, D.W. Winnicott and other authors who subscribe to the psychoanalytic school; use is made, too, of C.G Jung's analytical psychology.

Part I discusses Freud's paper which deals principally with the repetition compulsion, pathological aggression, sado-masochism, hate and the biological basis of programmed cell death. The thesis then extends the concept of the death instinct to those psychological paradigms which inhibit an authentic life such as psychosis, narcissism and unresolved Oedipal issues. It examines the belief in the Romantic ethos of the corporeal afterlife which makes death both a fearless state and provides the possibility of reuniting with one's love object. I argue that Kleist's confrontation with the subjectivity of Immanuel Kant's philosophy provides a fulcrum in Kleist's life which freed him from the idea of the perfectibility of his own life but also, for him, destabilised language as an adequate means to achieve the symbiotic closeness he needed.

Part II of the thesis discusses the congruence of Freud's theories with Kleist's stories, plays and letters. The sources of psychosis are examined which lead to cannibalism in *Penthesilea* and hate and the repetition compulsion in *Verlobung in St. Domingo*: both result in death. This, too, is the fate of the eponymous hero of *Michael Kohlhaas*. He descends into pathological narcissism and his only recourse at the nadir of his life, to satisfy his sense of self, is to resurrect the revenant of his deceased wife who provides satisfactory supernatural assistance. By contrast, more positive themes are found in *Prinz Friedrich von Homburg* and *Das Erdbeben in Chili*. In the former a resolution of Oedipal issues leads to a satisfactory outcome for the Prinz and in the latter, the citizens of St. Domingo are offered a Christ figure, the Divine Child, to counter endemic sadism. Kleist's last story, *Der Findling*, provides a nihilistic criticism of social and religious mores which reflects his own attitude to his times.

The thesis concludes with a summary of its themes and a discussion of Kleist's meeting with Henriette Vogel, his partner in suicide into whom he projected his achievements and

failures which facilitated a longed for symbiotic closeness in his passage to becoming *todesreif* (ripe for death).

Abbreviations

- Kleist *Heinrich von Kleist: Sämtliche Werke und Briefe*, 4 vols. ed. by Ilse-Marie Barth, Klaus Müller-Salget, Walter Müller-Seidel, Stefan Ormans and Hinrich C. Seeba (Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1987-1997). Quotations from prose works are identified by volume and page number(s); quotations from plays are identified by volume number, lower case roman numerals for act numbers (where appropriate) and line number(s).
- GW *Sigmund Freud Gesammelte Werke:chronologisch geordnet*, 18 vols. ed. by Anna Freud (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1952-1968). The references are given initially as the date of first publication, the title of the book or paper, volume number and page number(s) and subsequently as date of first publication, volume number and page number(s).
- SW *Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, 24 vols. trans. and ed. by James Strachey in collaboration with Anna Freud, assisted by Alix Strachey, Alan Tyson and Angela Richards (London: Hogarth Press, 1955-1974). The references are given initially as the title of the book or paper, volume number and page number(s) and subsequently as volume number and page number(s).

Finally, all English translations of Freud's *Gesammelte Werke* are taken from the *Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*. All other translations from the German are mine and any failure is my responsibility.

Introduction

The purpose of this thesis is to investigate how the concept of the death instincts, formulated by Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) in *Jenseits des Lustprinzips* (Beyond the Pleasure Principle), can be applied to the life and works of Heinrich von Kleist (1777-1811).¹ In *Das Unbehagen in der Kultur* (Civilisation and its Discontents), Freud discussed the frustrations which arise from the imposition of culture and how these frustrations, causing internal stress, are relieved by damage which we may do to ourselves.² It is manifest in a drive towards chaos and dissolution, which shows itself in self-destructive behaviour such as drunkenness, speeding, self-harming or the momentary desire, when standing at the edge of a platform, to hurl oneself into the path of a train thundering into the station. Finally, death is the satisfaction of the death instincts. These manifestations of the death instincts are, thus, present in all of us and, to a particular degree, in Kleist's work. The vicissitudes of the death instincts are also evident in his repeated requests to family members and friends to die with him. Moreover, Kleist lived in turbulent times of social and international unrest: the rise of the middle classes brought a new influence into social discourse and the Napoleonic wars destabilised existing national structures. This fluidity, as well as Immanuel Kant's (1724-1804) philosophy, which destabilised the individual's relationship to the external world, affected Kleist deeply. Further, the mention of death constellates a complex, a feeling toned image or idea, which we do our utmost to avoid. Freud argues this theme, with the conclusion, that in death, we believe that we are still sentient:

Wenn man uns anhörte, so waren wir natürlich bereit zu vertreten, daß der Tod der notwendige Ausgang alles Lebens sei, daß jeder von uns der Natur einen Tod schulde und vorbereitet sein müsse, die Schuld zu bezahlen, kurz, daß der Tod natürlich sei, unableugbar und unvermeidlich. In Wirklichkeit pfl egten wir uns aber zu benehmen, als ob es anders wäre. Wir haben die unverkennbare Tendenz gezeigt, den Tod beiseite zu schieben, ihn aus dem Leben zu eliminieren. Wir haben versucht, ihn totzuschweigen; wir besitzen ja auch das Sprichwort: man denke an etwas wie an den Tod. Wie an den eigenen natürlich. Der eigene Tod ist ja auch unvorstellbar, und so oft wir den Versuch dazu machen, können wir bemerken, daß wir eigentlich als Zuschauer weiter dabei bleiben. So konnte in der

¹ Sigmund Freud (1920), 'Jenseits des Lustprinzips', GW. 13, 3-69 (Beyond the Pleasure Principle, SE. 18, 7-64).

² Sigmund Freud (1930), *Das Unbehagen in der Kultur*, GW. 14, 421-506 (Civilisation and its Discontents, SE. 21, 57-146).

psychoanalytischen Schule der Ausspruch gewagt werden: Im Grunde glaube niemand an seinen eigenen Tod oder, was dasselbe ist: Im Unbewußten sei jeder von uns von seiner Unsterblichkeit überzeugt.

(To anyone who listened to us we were of course prepared to maintain that death was the necessary outcome of life, that everyone owes nature a death and must expect to pay the debt—in short, that death was natural, undeniable and unavoidable. In reality, however, we were accustomed to behave as if it were otherwise. We showed an unmistakable tendency to put death on one side, to eliminate it from life. We tried to hush it up; indeed we even have a saying [in German]: ‘to think of something as though it were death’. That is, as though it were our own death, of course. It is indeed impossible to imagine our own death; and whenever we attempt to do so we can perceive that we are in fact still present as spectators. Hence the psycho-analytic school could venture on the assertion that at bottom no one believes in his own death, or, to put the same thing in another way, that in the unconscious every one of us is convinced of his own immortality).³

The conviction that one is immortal and can be present at the scene of one’s own death is a feature of the letters which Kleist and his partner in death, Henriette Vogel, wrote in Berlin at Stimmings Krug at the Kleine Wannsee immediately before their demise (4, 507-516). It is perhaps this aspect of death mentioned by Freud, that we try to hush it up, which has led to a paucity of commentary about the death instincts in Kleist’s life and work for the complex, which the idea of death constellates, arouses powerful revulsion.

Kleist’s work and life will be investigated from a psychoanalytic perspective with a predominantly systemic object-relations approach. Object relations theory stresses the significance of family interaction and the need that humans have to relate to others. The leading proponents of this approach are Melanie Klein (1882-1960) and D.W. Winnicott (1896-1971). The mother/primary caregiver and father are, therefore, important figures in developing the infant’s apprehension of its self, which leads to a process of internalisation of these figures who may then dominate the individual’s adult life. These internal figures may not represent the reality of the infant’s experience but with good-enough mothering allow the infant to adapt appropriately to adult relationships; with a failure in mothering, the individual remains unevolved and immature which frustrates good relationships in adulthood. The importance in this thesis of object-relations does not obviate the importance of Freud’s drive theories, particularly sex and aggression. These are a significant aspect of the plurality which the discussion of psychology entertains. Moreover, object relations have their place in Freud’s drive theories of which oedipal issues are but one example. The *Protokolle der*

³ Sigmund Freud (1915), ‘Zeitgemässes über Krieg und Tod’ GW. 10, 324-366 (p. 342) (Thoughts for the Times on War and Death, SE. 14, 275-300 (p. 289)).

Wiener psychanalytischen Vereinigung (Minutes of the Viennese Psychoanalytical Association), show the discussions among members, who debated psychoanalytical theory and gave papers on applied psychoanalysis, leading to object relations theorising. The *Protokolle* also give an idea of the stature that Freud enjoyed amongst his colleagues.⁴ He had asserted, in the course of the meetings, that anyone interested in psychoanalysis will project his or her own feelings and desires on the psychopathology of others; it was essential, therefore, that analysts should be analysed (a practice which is now current in responsible psychological trainings).⁵ Freud's dictum is no less applicable to the work of cultural critics who approach a work of art.

The investigation of the relevance of the death instincts to Kleist's work is undertaken with a review of selected works. There is no comprehensive research into Freud's theory of the death instincts applied to Kleist's work or, indeed, to German literature as a whole. Sandra Kluwe's paper deals with the repetition compulsion and the death instincts as discerned in Grimm's Fairy-tales.⁶ The paper covers the repetition compulsion and destructive and aggressive aspects of selected Grimm accumulative stories and concludes that they illustrate Freud's death instincts. However, I will argue, the death instincts are not limited to the repetition compulsion and sado-masochistic behaviour as outlined by Freud, but also include those negative energies which destroy the contentment and well-being of the individual: negative energies inhibit vitality, spontaneity and creativity and any developmental process in the patient and the view he or she takes of objects. Therefore, narcissism, oedipal issues, psychosis and the unacknowledged forces of unconscious processes bedevil the stability of the self. Kleist's attachment anxieties are mirrored in these processes, which are reflected in the letters, stories, plays and occasional writings and I have relied on Günter Blumberger's monumental 2011 biography of Kleist for information about his life.⁷

It is evident from this biography, that Kleist was unable to achieve a coherent and stable self in his lifetime. Kleist writes in the letter of 13 March 1803 to his half-sister

⁴ Herman Nunberg and Ernst Federn (eds.), *Protokolle der Wiener psychoanalytischen Vereinigung: Band 1, 1906-1908* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1976), p. xxv.

⁵ Nunberg and Federn (1976), p. xxiv.

⁶ Sandra Kluwe, 'Wiederholungszwang und Todestrieb in den Kettenmärchen der Brüder Grimm: Tiefenpsychologische Deutungsansätze zu den Kinder und Hausmärchen – "Läuschen und Flöhchen", "Vom Tode des Hühnchens", "Herr Korbes", "Das Lumpengesindel", und "Die kluge Else"', *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte*, 81 (2007), 50-90.

⁷ Günter Blumberger, *Heinrich von Kleist: Biographie* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 2011).

and confidant, Ulrike von Kleist (1774-1849), after he had left Oßmannstedt to escape an erotic entanglement with his host's fourteen year old daughter 'Ich weiß nicht, was ich dir über mich *unaussprechlichen* Menschen sagen soll. - Ich wollte ich könnte mir das Herz aus dem Leibe reißen, in diesen Brief packen, und dir zuschicken. Dummer Gedanke!' (I do not know what I can tell you about me, this inexpressible person. - I would like to be able to tear the heart out of my body, parcel it into this letter and send it to you. Stupid thought) (4, 313). In this message, Kleist expresses both his failure to accommodate himself to societal norms and his deep need for a relationship in which language does not interfere; that is, at the stage of a preverbal infant. It is as if, at the age of twenty-six, he has not yet been incarnated as an adult.

The search for an incarnated self is also the search for an identity of which the question may be asked: who am I and how do I fit into the world around me? Heinz Politzer, from an object-relations perspective, addresses this question in the context of the significance of Kleist's trip to Würzburg.⁸ Kleist arrives in Würzburg with his friend Ludwig von Brockes (1767-1815) on 11 September 1800 and they stay until 22 October 1800. The purpose of the trip is not clear: they arrive under false names so espionage may be an aim but the surgical removal of a phimosis is also a possibility.⁹ Credence for the latter is provided by Kleist's ecstatic letter of 13-18 September 1800 to his fiancée, Wilhelmine von Zenge (1780-1852), which suggests that a major obstacle to marital happiness has been removed (4, 117).

Kleist gives his impression of Würzburg in a letter of 11/12 September 1800 (4,111-116), also to Wilhelmine. He describes the confusing nature of the urban scene in which there is no sense of order or centre, for houses have been built at will without consideration for neighbours. This internalised representation of the self contrasts with the arch which has been the subject of much discussion in the literature. Kleist observes the arch in Würzburg but mentions it later in a letter to Wilhelmine of 16/18 November 1800 when he is in Berlin (4, 159). To give himself intellectual stature, he introduces the subject by first mentioning the observations of notable scientists (Newton, Galilei and Pilâtre) and thus enhances the importance of his own observation. He sees the arch as a fragile construction, which is only held in place because all the stones want to collapse at once. He is gratified that he too would be able to hold himself if everything were to let him fall. I argue that this

⁸ Heinz Politzer, 'Auf der Suche nach Identität: Zu Heinrich von Kleists Würzburger Reise', *Euphorion*, vol.61, no. 4 (1967), 383-399.

⁹ Politzer (1967), pp. 387-388.

is small compensation. The stability of the arch is asserted, yet the possibility of collapse exists and is, therefore, a pervasive background to day-to-day living and would interfere with a sense of the on-goingness-of-being. Kleist's tenuous relationship with his environment and fears of annihilation are clearly expressed in the metaphor of the arch. It is a pervasive background to his existence, which is manifest in his writing, and generally in the inability to maintain anything good. Joachim Pfeiffer considers the Würzburg arch to be the psychodynamic substrate to Kleist's work.¹⁰ This reading is sound for Kleist is unconsciously overwhelmed by the fragility of the arch and erects defensive structures (of which writing is one) against destructive outcomes in which language, nevertheless, fails as a rescue.

The sense of the reliable continuity of existence is achieved by the infant through reliable mirroring, which enables it to enter into meaning making and so arrive at a sense of its own identity.¹¹ I argue, on the evidence of his works and as demonstrated by Ilse Graham, that reliable mirroring is something that was unavailable to Kleist and so he fails also to achieve a sense of a coherent self.¹² Indeed, Jochen Hörisch argues that the characters of Kleist's œuvre, his alter egos, succumb under the weight of the arch, for the trigger in his work, to the development of changed states in characters, is a catastrophe.¹³ The characters have to recognise that the exchanges of valuables, declarations, promises and papers are not reliable but are broken structures due to misuse of power and deceit.¹⁴ We can argue from this perception that the unreliability of the environment is a fundamental flaw in Kleist's perception of the world, which leads to his own unhappiness. This fragility of the self is also emphasised by Politzer, who rightly identifies as projections the *Denkübungen* (thought exercises) which Kleist had sent Wilhelmine in May 1800 (4, 57-66), and which Kleist wants Wilhelmine to complete in order to perfect her status as a woman and appropriate wife for himself.¹⁵ Wolfgang Schmiedbauer goes further and writes of Kleist's Pygmalion complex in which, with the letter of 13-18 September 1800 (4, 122-125), Kleist attempts to make Wilhelmine into a perfect self-object.¹⁶ The Pygmalion complex is a

¹⁰ Joachim Pfeiffer, *Die zerbrochenen Bilder: Gestörte Ordnung im Werk Heinrich von Kleists* (Würzburg: Königshausen and Neumann, 1989).

¹¹ Val Richards, *The Who you Dream Yourself*, (London: Karnac, 2005), p. 15.

¹² Ilse Graham, 'Zur Ätiologie eines Rätselhaften', *Kleist Jahrbuch 1981/82*, 98-116.

¹³ Jochen Hörisch, 'Die Not der Welt', *fragmente 7/8: Schriftenreihe zur Psychoanalyse* (1983), 40-64 (p. 44).

¹⁴ Hörisch (1983), p. 45.

¹⁵ Politzer (1967), p. 386.

¹⁶ Wolfgang Schmiedbauer, *Kleist: Die Entdeckung der narzisstischen Wunde* (Gießen: Psychosozial, 2011), p. 71.

desire to change, rescue or purify the object. Kleist's writing is, thus, an expression of his unconscious and constitutes an effort to deal with his own psychological issues. It is noteworthy too, that Kleist shows a neurosis in attachment issues in these letters (the complaints about non-receipt of Wilhelmine's letters; calculation about how long letters might have taken; and a record of how many letters he had sent) which are mirrored by Franz Kafka (1883-1924), with similar issues, in his letters to his fiancée, Felice Bauer (1887-1960).¹⁷

Kleist compares Wilhelmine to his travelling companion, Brockes, whom he describes as an ideal companion. Wilhelmine does not measure up to that which Brockes represents 'Ja, wenn Du unter den Mädchen wärest, was dieser unter den Männern' (Yes, if you were that amongst maidens which he is among men) (4, 188). The description of Brockes tends towards a homo-erotic idealisation and Politzer states, rightly, that Kleist was taking revenge on Wilhelmine for her tardy correspondence and her failure to honour his concept of the ideal masculine in her response to the *Denkübungen*.¹⁸

The psychological neurosis of the artist, as exemplified by Kleist, is also recognised by Walter Schönau and Joachim Pfeiffer who identify this aspect of Kleist's creative process and assert that psychoanalysts were more interested in discovering the personality of obviously neurotic authors such as Kleist, Kafka, Dostoevsky and Strindberg than in investigating the aesthetic values of a work.¹⁹ Freud is described as a model in this with his tentative statement 'Leider muß die Analyse vor dem Problem des Dichters die Waffen strecken' (Before the problem of the creative artist analysis must, alas, lay down its arms).²⁰ Freud failed to produce a comprehensive theory of personality due to his developmental approach to psychoanalysis nor did he provide a systematic theory of aesthetics since he did not write systematically on art and aesthetic questions.²¹ It is to this issue, that literary commentators seek an answer. We cannot decide what makes a 'good' work of art nor can we fully appreciate why we obtain pleasure from such a work; we may

¹⁷ Franz Kafka, *Briefe an Felice* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1993).

¹⁸ Politzer (1967), p. 394.

¹⁹ Walter Schönau and Joachim Pfeiffer, *Einführung in die psychoanalytische Literaturwissenschaft*, 2nd ed (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2003), p. 129.

²⁰ Sigmund Freud (1928), 'Dostojewski und die Vätertötung', *GW*. 14, 399-418 (p. 399) (Dostoevsky and Parricide, *SE*. 21, 173-194 (p. 177)).

²¹ Jack J. Spector, *The Aesthetics of Freud: A Study in Psychoanalysis and Art* (New York: Praeger, 1972), p. viii.

recognise one when we see it and appreciate its authenticity.²² Freud addressed this subject in the paper on the problem of the artist.²³ Freud recognised that the authenticity of a work in which the artist, as the child at play, recreates and restores something which has been destroyed. The aesthetic pleasure we may experience from a work of art involves a reliving of the artist's emotional state. In a state of unconscious identification we relive the artist's experience. This brings us to the disturbing world of Kleist whose existential unhappiness is mirrored in his work and whose disturbing and destructive *Weltanschauung* then infects us. How are we, as readers, to deal with this conundrum?

One explanation on offer is Johannes Cremerius support of Norbert Groben's exaggeration, that psychoanalytic literary interpretation is so explicit that that it can lead to a precise scientific explanation which should be the aim of every scientific analysis.²⁴ This idealised view of the literary commentator's work cannot be the case for it is impossible to eliminate the subjective quality of the individual's perception. The personal prejudices and workings of even an examined self must always be taken into account. In this respect, Peter von Matt recognises that man is no longer in charge of himself and that logical thinking destroys the chaos of the colours and dark fruitfulness of the unconscious. In this process the writer is not master of his or her own text.²⁵ Carl Pietzker constructs this concept from the perspective of the dream and that approaching a work of art as if interpreting a dream brings benefits to the theory of literary criticism.²⁶ Certainly, Kleist's unconscious motivation is evident in the subject matter he brings to his writings. Hermann Reske, on the other hand, in interpreting Kleist's work, reads the texts from a post-Kantian perspective.²⁷ Drama is in the business of communication through language but that is not the case with Kleist: speech seems difficult and gestures provide meaning.²⁸ The world of objects and consciousness is unreliable for, according to Kant, perception cannot be trusted. We are left with the question, which Reske does not answer: what is reality? There is no discussion of somatic sensations, which may provide an answer but which may also have been a source of embarrassment to Kleist.

²² Hanna Segal, 'A Psychoanalytic Approach to Aesthetics', *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 33 (1952), 196-207 (p. 197).

²³ Sigmund Freud (1907), 'Der Dichter und das Phantasieren', *GW*. 7, 213-223 (Creative Writers and Daydreaming, SE. 9, 141-154).

²⁴ Johannes Cremerius (ed.), *Psychoanalytische Textinterpretation* (Hamburg: Hoffmann and Campe, 1974), p. 12; Norbert Groben, *Literaturpsychologie* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1972), p. 133.

²⁵ Peter von Matt, *Literaturwissenschaft und Psychoanalyse*, 2nd. ed (Stuttgart: Reklam, 2001), p. 131.

²⁶ Carl Pietzker, 'Zum Verhältnis von Traum und literarischen Kunstwerk', in *Psychoanalytische Textinterpretation*, ed. by Johanne Cremerius (Hamburg: Hoffmann, 1974), pp. 57-66 (p. 60).

²⁷ Hermann Reske, *Traum und Wirklichkeit im Werk Heinrich von Kleists* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1969).

²⁸ Reske (1969), p. 24.

Isidor Sadger (1867-1942), who was a member of the *Wiener psychoanalytischen Vereinigung*, in one of the earliest psychoanalytic papers on Kleist, concludes that a determining factor in Kleist's life was masturbation and the self-reproach arising from this activity.²⁹ This is an intuitive step by Sadger based on the examination of the subtext of Kleist's works for which there is no substantial evidence (as there is, for instance, in Novalis's diary)³⁰. There is more evidence to support Sadger's assertion that Kleist had homosexual inclinations. These are displayed in the gender confusion at the conclusion of *Die Familie Schroffenstein* (1, 123-233) when Ottokar and Agnes exchange clothing (1, 220, l. 2426), and in *Das Schrecken im Bad* (The Fright in the Bath) (3, 420-425), the love letter of 7 January 1805 to Ernst von Pfuel (1779-1866) (4, 335-337) and not least, the idealisation of Brockes given above.

Peter Engsfeld recognises the extent to which the subjectivity of the individual intrudes on the interpretation of Kleist texts for psychoanalytic interpretations say more about the author of the interpretation, than about the text.³¹ He asserts that, with the exception of Politzer and Kohut, the transference between the text and the reader is generally ignored.³² Fritz Schmidl had recognised that applied psychoanalysis has been, and is still, controversial among some literary critics and academics who wish to restrict interpretations to a social, political or economic basis. Texts on applied psychoanalysis are, therefore, generally restricted to psychoanalytic journals. Literary or cultural critics with an insufficient frame of reference for psychoanalysis, may fall into error, are dismissively critical or provide only a superficial reading of the text in terms of depth psychology.³³ Moreover, disputes arise because a coherent and agreed 'frame of reference' is lacking between the correspondents.³⁴

An example of a dispute which arises from the alternative view of a text is provided by Erich Heller's (1911-1990) who criticises the nature of Margaret Schaefer's reductive approach to Kleist's *Über das Marionettentheater* (On the Marionette Theatre) (3, 555-563). Heller questions the minutiae of metaphorical meaning, which is also the essence of

²⁹ Isidor Sadger, *Heinrich von Kleist: Eine pathographisch-psychologische Studie* (Wiesbaden: Bergmann, 1910).

³⁰ Novalis, 'Tagebücher' in *Das dichterische Werk: Tagebücher und Briefe, Band 1*, pp. 433-492.

³¹ Peter Engsfeld, 'Über die Folgen verdrängter Motive: Zur Kritik psychoanalytischer Kleist-Interpretationen' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Bremen, 1984).

³² Heinz Kohut, 'Thoughts on Narcissism and Narcissistic Rage', *Psychoanalytic Study of the Child*, 27 (1972), 360-400.

³³ Fritz Schmidl, 'Problems of Method in Applied Psychoanalysis,' *The Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, 41 (1972), 402-419.

³⁴ Schmidl (1972), p. 404.

the psychoanalytic interpretation of a work of art, which led to the subsequent controversy between Schaefer, Heller and Heinz Kohut (1913-1981), a psychoanalyst who developed a *self-psychology* in which the three parts of the mind, ego, id and superego, act co-operatively.³⁵ Schaefer maintains that the text can be understood ‘as a portrayal of self-identity, self-image, self-esteem and self-perception’.³⁶ The conclusion Schaefer draws from this statement is that ‘the work is a particularly lucid, though unwitting, portrayal of the various states of fragmentation and regression that threaten the integrity of the radically insecure and unstable self’.³⁷ With the word ‘unwitting’ we are dealing with Kleist’s unconscious motivation and we are also linked to Politzer’s paper on the *Würzburg* journey.

Heller opens by acknowledging the pervasive influence and importance of psychoanalysis but that Freud merely conceptualised something which was waiting to be constellated and that influence of psychoanalysis in the twentieth century can now be judged in that mothers and fathers can scarcely be mentioned without the shadow of Freud appearing dragging the Oedipus complex behind him.

There is no agreement. Each party speaks from their respective positions but while Heller’s is entrenched, Kohut seems to offer a moderate, consensual perspective. Depth psychology, he maintains rightly, is necessary for us to be able to understand the human condition. He states further, that the expansion of human consciousness is a slow process and will never be complete. Kleist’s vision in the *Marionettentheater* is of a journey round the world in order to return to Eden as though through the back door. This surreptitious return to Eden is an attempt to regain the perfection of the unified subject and object but it is an ideal which will never be realised.

Heller idealises a perfect state of non-conflict and represses the notion that our consciousness is broken (which Friedrich Hölderlin (1770-1843) and Novalis (1772-1801) experience as the separation of subject and object), and thus expects that we can perceive

³⁵ Margaret Schaefer, ‘Kleist’s “About the Puppet Theatre” and the Narcissism of the Artist’, *American Imago*, 32 (1976), 366-388; Erich Heller, ‘Observations On Psychoanalysis and Modern Literature’, *Salmagundi*, 31/32 (1975-1976), 17-28; Erich Heller, ‘The Dismantling of the Marionette Theatre: or, Psychology and the Misinterpretation of Literature’, *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 4, no. 3 (1978), 417-432; Margaret Schaefer, ‘Psychoanalysis and the Marionette Theatre: Interpretation is not Depreciation’, *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 5, no. 1 (1978), 177-188; Michael Sprinker, ‘The Tragic Vision: Erich Heller and the Critique of Modernism’, *Salmagundi*, 52/53 (1981), 124-150; Heinz Kohut, ‘Psychoanalysis and the Interpretation of Literature: A Correspondence with Erich Heller’, *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 4, no. 3 (1978), 433-450 and ‘A Reply to Margaret Schaefer’, *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 5, no. 1 (1978), 189-197.

³⁶ Schaefer (1976), p. 368.

³⁷ Schaefer (1976), p. 368.

the ‘wholeness’ of a work of art. However, the problem that our experience of a work of art is ‘reductive’ is endemic to our use of language. Language eradicates the numinous quality of the symbol or metaphor, which was an issue which Kleist (and Hölderlin and Novalis) found distressing. The sensibility of this feeling is reflected in Kleist’s letters and, in particular, in *Brief eines Dichters an einen Anderen* (Letter of a Poet to Another) (4, 565-567), published in *Berliner Abendblätter* in 1811, the last year of his life. In this piece, Kleist laments his inability to convey intrinsic meaning. He comments that speech, language, rhythm, euphony are all very well but they are nothing but a necessary evil. For Kleist, this loss of numinosity arises because he cannot fulfil the inner demands of his soul and, it has to be said, give him that sense of immediacy in his contact with the other, which he craved (4, 565). We shall also, therefore, experience literature (or any work of art for that matter) from a perspective of self-conscious consciousness. Despite this, recognition in the story or play of that broken consciousness and the visceral relationship to basic human emotions constellates those very feelings which we try to avoid. This touches too, on the idea put forward by Pietzker.³⁸

Pfeiffer also argues sensibly, that a work should be considered from the point of view of poetic fantasies into which are introduced the socio-historical aspects of the writer’s period.³⁹ This point of view, I argue, is the foundation of the relationship between the writer and the reader: is the material which the writer presents sufficiently convincing to create world in which the reader can be immersed? Ernst Kris suggests that this relationship is conceived as ‘regression in the service of the ego’.⁴⁰ The process involves a dissolution of existing frozen mental structures which then leads to an extension of consciousness which reinforces ego strength and stability.

Kleist’s response to the perceived insubstantiality of language was to develop a language of the unconscious, grounded in somatic behaviour such as involuntary gestures, fainting, blushing or paling, weeping, absent-mindedness and the suggestive power of magnetism (hypnotism). They convey states of mind without the use of language. Gotthilf Heinrich von Schubert published these ideas in *Ansichten von der Nachtseite der Naturwissenschaft* (Views from the Night-side of Science), published in 1808.⁴¹ Ursula Thomas writes that

³⁸ Pietzker (1974), p. 68.

³⁹ Pfeiffer (1989), p. 21.

⁴⁰ Ernst Kris, *Psychoanalytic Explorations in Art* (New York: Schocken, 1964), p. 23.

⁴¹ Heinrich Gotthilf von Schubert, *Ansichten von der Nachtseite der Naturwissenschaft*, (Dresden: Arnoldischen Buchhandlung, 1840, 4th. ed (facsimile @ www.Forgotten Books.com).

these concepts were encouraged and also formulated in conversations between Schubert and Kleist and his friends, August Rühle von Lilienstein (1780-1847), Ernst von Pfuel and Adam Müller (1779-1829).⁴²

The psychiatrist Peter Dettmering was in the forefront of the increased interest in applied psychoanalysis in the 1970's and recognised idioglossic behaviour as a representation of internal states.⁴³ He also considers that Kleist's *Marionettentheater* gives the essence of Kleist's life experience as reflected in his castration anxiety, narcissism, and the sense of aliveness of the self and body and makes it a portal to his other work. Dettmering recognises *Marionettentheater* as Kleist's effort to overcome archaic anxieties such as the fear of death which, nevertheless, were trumped by Kleist willingly seeking death. These archaic anxieties, split-off from ego consciousness, have a place in the existential frame of our existence: they are pervasive and affect us all.⁴⁴ Ilse Graham, on the other hand, in her discussion of the *Marionettentheater*, identifies Genesis 3, which describes the Fall and expulsion from the Garden of Eden, as the 'fountain-head' of Kleist's work.⁴⁵ It is, I argue, this sense of being cut-off, rejected and isolated, which is the experience of the expulsion, which dissolves existing structures and is also an endemic theme in the stories and plays.

Bernhard Greiner uses a different psychological approach in his discussion of *Marionettentheater* (3, 555-563), which he does from the perspective of the theories of Jacques Lacan (1901-1981).⁴⁶ Greiner argues that the youth had not lost his grace in the mirror stage, which is, in the imaginary order, but is destroyed with the onset of judgement and discrimination and fails to move into the symbolic order: the youth vainly attempts to re-enter his former state of the real. Greiner states that to return to the state of innocence by eating again from the Tree of Knowledge implies a re-creation of the self. This, I contend, requires a return to the mirror stage which is reductive and clinically flawed.

Anthony Stephens is critical of Lacan when considering the motive of narcissism in Kleist's work, for Lacan is no more rational or consistent in his development of the

⁴² Ursula Thomas, 'Heinrich von Kleist and Gotthilf Heinrich Schubert, *Monatshefte*, vol. 51, no. 5 (1959), 249-261.

⁴³ Peter Dettmering, *Heinrich von Kleist: Zur Psychodynamik in seiner Dichtung* (Munich: Nymphenburger, 1975).

⁴⁴ Dettmering (1975), 11-13.

⁴⁵ Ilse Graham, *Heinrich von Kleist Word into Flesh: A Poet's Quest for the Symbol* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1977), 14.

⁴⁶ Bernhard Greiner, 'Der Weg der Seele des Tänzers: Kleists Schrift "Über das Marionettentheater"', *Neue Rundschau*, vol. 98, no. 3 (1987), 112-131.

Narcissus myth than had been achieved by Kleist.⁴⁷ Kleist is concerned with the dyad and triad of interpersonal relationships while Lacan relies on a dialectical theory of history. Stephens suggests that Lacan's philosophical base is the work of the philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831), from which he also concludes that it shows Lacan's preference for supporting and legitimising existing power structures. Stephens warns, too, of the dangers of intellectual subjugation to theory and unfettered imagination which leads, in his view to Helen Gallas' absurd interpretations, so that the amulet in *Kohlhaas* becomes metaphorically the phallus of the mother.⁴⁸

The phallus is an essential Lacanian concept as a lack for the mother. As the signifier it 'holds all signifieds in thrall', that is, it energises all acts of speech and silences as well as being a constituent of all mental representations. The Lacanian phallus has, however, a negative function for it arouses neither bodily feelings nor erotic desire.⁴⁹ I contrast this with the Kleinian concept, in which, in the infant's pre-genital phantasy of the interaction between the parents mutually feeding and incorporating each other, penetrating, cutting, caring or protecting each other is more vital; moreover, for Klein's concept of the infant's phantasy, the mother's phallus is introjected during coupling with the father. It is, therefore, the father's phallus, which is contained in the mother and not, as in Lacan, the body of the infant.⁵⁰

The Lacanian approach has certain disadvantages when viewed from the systemic object-relations perspective. Primarily, it does not assist in clinical understanding for the Lacanian mind is constructed as an archetype model; it is conceived having an inherent structure in the real, imaginary and symbolic stages and the relationship between subject and object in the environment is relegated or ignored. Further, Schönau and Pfeiffer deem Lacan's emphasis on isolated words and syllables as counter-productive to that which linguistics has determined as providing communication.⁵¹ Norman N. Holland goes further and questions why, since the publication of Noam Chomsky's *Syntactic Structures* in 1957, the theories of Ferdinand de Saussure (1867-1913), on which Lacan bases his linguistic

⁴⁷ Anthony Stephens, 'Verzerrung im Spiegel: Das Narziss-Motiv bei Heinrich von Kleist', in *Heinrich von Kleist: Kriegsfall-Rechtsfall-Sündenfall*, ed. by Gerhard Neumann (Freiberg im Breisgau: Rombach, 1994), pp. 249-297 (pp. 296-297).

⁴⁸ Stephens (1994), p. 269, footnote 51; Helga Gallas, *Das Textbegehren des "Michael Kohlhaas": Die Sprache des Unbewussten und der Sinn der Literatur* (Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1981).

⁴⁹ Malcom Bowie, *Lacan* (London: Fontana, 1991), pp. 122-125.

⁵⁰ R.D. Hinshelwood, *A Dictionary of Kleinian Thought*, 2nd. ed (London: Free Association Books 1991), p. 60; Gallas (1981), p. 76.

⁵¹ Schönau and Pfeiffer (2003), p. 157.

theories, still find favour with Lacanian theorists.⁵² Lacan offers the signifier/signified as a psycho-linguistic construct, which reduces Freud's complex truths to a binary system with no place for the sublimation of social or psychological elements. Holland sees Lacan's theories as deeply anti-psychoanalytic for 'signifying' eliminates the human element and shrivels our understanding of, and response to, feeling.

The same can be said of Lacan's flawed theory of child development which dates from 1936. Research in the 1970's and 80' has shown that the infant does not identify itself in the mirror until the age of some fifteen months: it is only at this stage of development that it identifies the rouge spots in the mirror, placed surreptitiously on its face, as belonging to it.⁵³ It is also at this stage, of fifteen months, that the infant begins to use language. I argue that at six to eight months of Lacan's mirror stage, the infant can merely perceive whole objects; there is no self-reference. This stage coincides with Klein's depressive position when the infant recognises the whole mother/caregiver who until then has been body parts of breast, hands, face and so on; the depressive position is not, therefore, a recognition of itself as a nascent individual: it is merely the recognition of a whole object. Further, why, in Lacan's important mirror stage, would the infant choose to have a relationship with a mirror image rather than the parents? Holland also asks why, with this evidence, Lacanian analysts and theorists today, persist in promoting the mirror stage as a valid concept in child development. We surmise, therefore, that Lacan's psychoanalysis is more a philosophy than a feasible tool for clinical interpretation. The cultural historian, Richard Webster (1950-2011), writes critically of Lacan but provides a balanced conclusion:⁵⁴

For many literary intellectuals Lacan remains one of the greatest thinkers of the twentieth century. By some others the rise of Lacan is regarded as a shameful indictment of the intellectual standards which prevail in American and European universities and an affront both to science and reason.⁵⁵

⁵² Norman N. Holland (1991), 'The Trouble(s) with Lacan' <<https://www.users.clas.ufl.edu/n.holland/lacan.htm>> accessed 6 June, 2017; Noam Chomsky, *Syntactic Structures* (The Hague, Mouton, 1957).

⁵³ Holland (1991), p. 12; Michael Lewis and Jeanne Brooks-Gunn, *Social Cognition and the Acquisition of Self* (New York: Springer, 1979); Margaret S. Mahler and John B. McDevitt, 'Thoughts on the Emergence of the Sense of Self, with Particular Emphasis on the Body Self', *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association*, 30 (1982), 827-848.

⁵⁴ Richard Webster, 'The Cult of Lacan: Freud, Lacan and the Mirror Stage' (1994), pp. 1-23, (p. 8) <http://www.richardwebster.net/thecult_of_lacan.html> [accessed 6 August, 2018].

⁵⁵ Webster (1994), p. 2.

Lacan was controversial throughout his life by his behaviour and theories as his biography by the French psychoanalyst, Elizabeth Roudinesco, demonstrates. He remains so after death, through his intellectual legacy.⁵⁶

A satisfactory approach in three papers by Dorrit Cohn, Politzer and Pfeiffer on *Die Marquise von O....* (The Marchioness of O....) (3, 143-186) is based on object relations.⁵⁷ This story deals with a fundamental tenet of Freud's theories: repression as the cause of pathological neurosis, which he outlines in *Die Verdrängung* (Repression).⁵⁸ Repression is a mental activity in which the subject attempts to avoid confrontation with unpleasurable ideas or images from the unconscious. It is a psychological defence in which the resistance of the subject to these ideas/images, the unwillingness to be confronted with unpalatable truths, is also a component: repression, defence and resistance are all part of the Marquise's behaviour, which Cohn argues. She represses knowledge of the rape by the Graf through shame. She had led a retired life as a widow and denied erotic feelings. Her refusal to acknowledge her participation in the sexual act is brought out in the garden scene on her estate when the Graf attempts to woo her and she rebuffs him with 'Ich will nichts wissen' (I do not want to know anything) (3, 171). Kleist's reacted to the consternation, which this story had caused in the public and so colludes in the Marquise's repression, which is clear from this epigram which appeared in numbers four and five of *Phöbus*, the short lived periodical he edited in Dresden in 1808:

Dieser Roman ist nichts für dich, meine Tochter.
Schamlose Posse! Sie hielt, weiß ich, die Augen bloß zu.

(This novel is nothing for you, my daughter.
Shameless trick! I know she only kept her eyes closed) (3, 414).

Poltizer addresses the story from the same perspective, in that repression is at the root of the Marquise's denial. Politzer acknowledges Freud's structure of the psyche, in which repression is the cause of neurosis. The action of the ego (in this case the Marquise's denial) is appropriate when it meets the demands of the id, the super-ego and reality. In the

⁵⁶ Elizabeth Roudinesco, *Jacque Lacan: An Outline of a Life and a History of a System of Thought*, trans. by Barbara Bray, (Cambridge: Polity, 2005).

⁵⁷ Dorrit Cohn, 'Kleist's "Marquise von O....": The Problem of Knowledge', *Monatshefte*, vol. 67, no. 2 (1975), 120-144; Heinz Politzer, 'Der Fall der Frau Marquise: Beobachtungen zu Kleists "Die Marquise von O...."', *Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte*, vol. 51, no.1 (1977), 98-128; Joachim Pfeiffer, 'Die wiedergefundene Ordnung: Literaturpsychologische Anmerkungen zu Kleists "Die Marquise von O...."' in *Heinrich von Kleist: Studien zu Werk und Wirkung*, ed. by Dirk Grathoff (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1988), 230-247.

⁵⁸ Sigmund Freud (1915), 'Die Verdrängung', *GW*, 10, pp. 248-261 (Repression, *SE*, 14, pp. 141-158).

Marquise's case the workings of the id (the source of powerful sexual feelings), are rejected and so the super-ego plays no part.⁵⁹ Her subdued relationship with her parents, and the incestuous demands of the father, in which she colludes, is the psychological prison from which she must escape if she is to establish her selfhood. She is successful in this for she ultimately establishes a fruitful, familial relationship with the Graf.

Pfeiffer focuses on the significance of the domicile in the story. There is much moving from house to house and place to place. Pfeiffer rightly interprets the domicile as a metaphor for the fragility of the self.⁶⁰ However, the resources to acknowledge erotic desire and the need to escape from the psychological patriarchal embrace of the home are found when the Marquise departs to her own estates following a familial rejection 'Durch diese schöne Anstrengung mit sich selbst bekannt gemacht, hob sie sich plötzlich, wie aus ihrer eigenen Hand, aus der ganzen Tiefe, in welchen das Schicksal sie herbgestürzt hatte, empor' (She arose suddenly from the depths to which fate had thrown her, as if through her own efforts, and recognised herself through this bountiful effort) (3, 167). For Pfeiffer, the story is about the lost and resurrected unity of the self.⁶¹ This again touches on the themes which Politzer identified in the Würzburg episode. It was a theme which concerned Kleist throughout his life and for which he failed to find an answer.

The thesis is divided into two parts. Part I deals with an overview of Freud's death instincts, a survey of Romantic perception of death and the after-life and Kleist's confrontation with Kant's philosophy which moved him temperamentally from the intellectual rigidity and constraints of the *Aufklärung* to the febrile quicksand of Romantic freedom, emotional intensity and darkness. Part II considers selected works of Kleist to demonstrate the relevance of Freud's death instincts to these works. The subjects of these chapters are arranged chronologically.

Chapter 1 outlines the background and substance of Freud's theory of the death instincts which is pertinent to Kleist's work. Freud's development of this concept arose from the metaphorical cul-de-sac in which he had arrived in the second decade of the twentieth century and which he analysed through his clinical work. Why did patients return repeatedly in their lives to similar trauma? And why did they obstruct and destroy repeatedly a developmental breakthrough? And why did natural aggression become

⁵⁹ Politzer (1977), p. 111.

⁶⁰ Pfeiffer (1988), p. 234.

⁶¹ Pfeiffer (1988), p. 235.

pathological sadism? Freud considered the biological basis of the dissolution of matter as a fundamental sign-post to the death instincts which was a step too far for many of his followers. At that time it constituted speculation which has, however, since been proven empirically in programmed cell death. We add to Freud's narrow definition of the death instincts also those aspects of the mental apparatus which inhibit spontaneity and creativity: psychosis, unresolved oedipal issues, narcissism and hate and finally, perhaps a reflection of Kleist's own pathology: the experience of a dystopian world. These are all modalities of the death instincts which prevent an individual living an authentic life.

Chapter 2 deals with the Romantic fascination with death in a brief examination of the works of Herder, Goethe, Hölderlin, Novalis and Kleist in which death is either the fantasised and idealised other world or the actual land of free opportunity. There is a sense of the corporality in the after-life which lends a positive enhancement to the sense of death for it is not the end. A re-unification with the loved one, toned with eroticism, is the desired apotheosis. The development of a language of *Empfindsamkeit* (sensitivity) to express these new feelings which arrived with the Romantic ethos allows the expression of the new sensibility. This new sensibility seeks the sublimation of the self in the object in which death is the ultimate objective. A concentration on the uncanny is a preponderant interest in the literature of the period which finds its echo in Kleist's works too.

Chapter 3 considers the crisis that Kleist underwent in his confrontation with the works of Immanuel Kant and Johann Gottlieb Fichte and the freedom it gave him to escape the boundaries of the *Aufklärung* and find himself as a writer. The changes in social structures, the rise of the middle-classes, war and revolution brought about a new sensibility in a turbulent age. Kleist's self-perceived failure to communicate his innermost thoughts, allied to the subjectivity in perception of the environment and interpersonal relationships, created an ambivalence which he was able to express in idiosyncratic terms; the subjectivity created by Kant's philosophy continued to be source of anguish which was expressed through his perception concerning the inadequacy of language as a form of communication.

In Chapter 4, *Penthesilea*, we are confronted with psychosis which is also an exploration of the symbolism of the maternal breast which in primitive infancy is an object for libidinal incorporation. Bodily incorporation is both a symbolic desire to obtain the qualities of the object as well as a desperate need for symbiotic closeness. The fixation of the symbiotic desire, prevented by the rituals of the Amazon tribe, creates a conflict in *Penthesilea* which

she cannot master without descending into psychotic splitting which then leads for her to concrete thinking so that she cannot recognise what is real and that Achilles is her love object: having cruelly killed him, her only recourse is then death.

The absence of fathers in the Amazon community is a failure which is also explored in *Prinz Friedrich von Homburg*, Chapter 5. Kleist's remarkable exploration of the Oedipal complex, a century before Freud, takes place in Homburg's unconscious dream world in which Homburg must come to terms with the authority of the father which he has ignored. The father's authority prevails over the fear annihilation which Homburg fears of the self as well as the recognition of fame and glory in the after-life; he is prepared to abandon a libidinal claim on the Kurfürst's niece. When he finally accepts his own death, the Kurfürst recognises that Homburg has accepted his authority and, in doing so, has also developed as an individual. He has moved from a state of wilful enthusiasm to one of relative maturity which integrates him into the community.

While *Homburg* deals with a neurotic aspect of human behaviour, *Michael Kohlhaas*, Chapter 6, deals with a pathological narcissism in which the desire for the obliteration of an offending object is so great that magical means are brought to bear in a phantasy which solves Kohlhaas' problem of victimhood. The magical means are real/phantasy in a self-delusional empowerment for success. At the conclusion of the story Kohlhaas' desires are met: his blacks have been restored to their former health, there is financial reparation and the Junker Wenzel is imprisoned. He also ensures the destruction of the Elector of Saxony by ingesting the prophecy about the future of his House. Kohlhaas is then *todesreif* (ready for death), a state in which no further desires can be made of this world and which Kleist also claims prior to his own demise.

Erdbeben, Chapter 7, is a story about the survival of the Divine Child and is certainly a positive story in Kleist's canon. The Divine Child, a Christ figure, will also bring Christ's message of love to a city in which sadistic hate and destruction is the predominant affect. This pathological destructive instinct arises from frustrating and unresolved conflicts which the infant experiences and are expressed as rage even into adulthood. It is in the destruction that the subject feels most real. The interregnum outside the city after the earthquake is the promise of the Divine Child but it does not last for Kleist, in himself, cannot hold anything good; his infant self is too compromised for that. The promise of

redemption through the Divine Child is implied and the citizens of St Domingo have a model for their own salvation and where it lies.

The realisation of salvation lies far from the understanding of Gustav in *Verlobung*, Chapter 8. He is, and remains, a naïve soul whose guilt concerning the death of his former fiancée, for which he feels responsible is a trauma, which he repeats with Toni. The repetition compulsion is one of the neurotic components of the death instincts which Freud identified in particular. Gustav murders his lover, the newly affianced Toni, who has taken on the symbolic value the dead fiancée. The ambivalence between love and hate is a narrow chasm in which the reversal from love to hate arises out of feelings of mistrust which is harboured in skin colour, the most divisive feature. There is, in this story, a separation of communities defined by skin colour which is the basis of inter-racial tension expressed in hate by both sides.

Der Findling, Chapter 9, was written in the months before Kleist's suicide and reflects the despair and nihilism of Kleist's mental state at that time. A child is adopted into a dystopian environment and brought to Rome. The adoptive father is cold and matter of fact, the adoptive mother exists in an erotic fantasy world of her own and the adopted child, Nicolo, is without affect. He becomes the ruin, to the extent that it was not already ruined, of his adopted family and the question arises, if this is through innate failures in nature or nurture in Nicolo? Nonetheless, the erotic interest that Nicolo shows in his adoptive mother leads inexorably to a break-down of all relationships in the family. The father is left in his pursuit of Nicolo whom he murders but wishes to pursue even into Hell. The Romantic theme of the *Doppelgänger* is presented as a narcissistic theme of mirror awareness in which Nicolo is a *Doppelgänger* both for the replaced natural son and for the mother's love object.

This thesis relies largely on psychoanalytic texts as a source authority for the interpretations of Kleist's works and life. It is not intended to be a categorical statement about the meaning of Kleist's works but merely one perspective among other valid views such as socio-political, familial or economic. From the perspective of this thesis, however, Kleist's conflict with the social norms of his times does lie in the personal development of the child to the adult and, thus, the concomitant environmental influences of the family. Kleist felt he stood outside society just as he stood outside the family and, from this perspective, created works which by their modernity encapsulate the anxiety of our times.

Kleist's modernity can be judged from the statement in a letter to his cousin, Marie von Kleist in 1807, while he was a prisoner of the French in Chalons-sur-Marne where he claims that 'Erfindung ist überall, was ein Werk der Kunst ausmacht. Denn nicht das, was dem Sinn dargetstellt ist, sondern das, was das Gemüth durch diese Wahrnehmung erregt, sich denkt, ist das Kunstwerk' (Invention is predominantly what determines a work of art. For it is not that which is presented to understanding which makes the work of art but the work of art is that which the mind thinks and through which feelings are aroused through perception) (4, 379). It is a remarkably modern statement worthy of a review of a Jackson Pollock or Mark Rothko painting.

Chapter 1

Freud and the Death Instincts

This chapter seeks to investigate the relationship between Freud's concept of the death instincts and the life and works of Kleist. In taking Freud's concept, I posit an extension, so that the death instincts also include negative aspects of the human condition, which entail not only repetition compulsion, aggression and sado-masochism as identified by Freud but also basic human emotions of hate, envy, unresolved Oedipal issues and psychotic transgressions which are factors that prevent an individual leading a spontaneous and creative life. These factors appear in the works of Kleist culminating in the ultimate satisfaction of the death instincts in Kleist's suicide.

In this context, another aspect of the death instincts is demonstrated in the disagreement, acerbity and acrimony that exist in the field of metapsychology between the different psychological schools. In the course of the last hundred years a number of different schools of metapsychology have sprung up and split from the theoretical model proposed by Freud. Interpretation of theoretical concepts and the clinical material presented by patients have led to rejection, resentments and splitting into different approaches with each promoting its own ideas, generally to the exclusion of any other. The most prominent split, and the first, was the schism in 1912 between Freud and C.G. Jung, in which the matter at issue was the importance of the sex drive maintained by Freud and the libido theory, which included the sex drive and encompassed a more complete picture of bodily energy, promoted by Jung. The publication in 1920 of *Jenseits des Lustprinzips* (Beyond the Pleasure Principle) held the possibility of another moment at which some of Freud's colleagues balked at the theoretical model that he proposed.¹ Freud himself was tentative about this new model but his standing was such that no direct opposition took place in connection with this work which might have led to a schism.

In a review of Freud's major concepts, Eva Cybulska draws comparisons of these between Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860), Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) and Freud.²

¹ Sigmund Freud (1920), *Jenseits des Lustprinzips*, GW. 13, 3-69 (Beyond the Pleasure Principle, SE. 18, 7-64).

² Eva Cybulska, 'Freud's Burden of Debt to Nietzsche and Schopenhauer', *The Indo-Pacific Journal of*

Cybulska states that Freud had always vehemently denied having read either Schopenhauer or Nietzsche until late in life and that an unconscious sense of guilt may have caused this denial. Freud had written to Lou Andreas-Salome (1861-1937) in the summer of 1919 and said that he had been reading Schopenhauer and that he had stumbled on strange ideas about the drives.³ Schopenhauer had published in 1818, *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* (The World as Will and Representation).⁴ In this work Schopenhauer declared that everything that exists does so by a metaphysical will, that is a will to live, and that the foundation of this will is pleasure. However, since life is replete with suffering and unhappiness the testimony of that will is negative and, therefore, to be avoided. Freud had seen the operation of the mind as a binary function of the pleasure/unpleasure principle and so Schopenhauer's ideas proved a fruitful ground on which to incorporate death and its attributes in the theoretical model. The death instincts were, thus, a structural reorganisation of metapsychology which had already required attention in earlier theoretical models.⁵ Freud had recognised by the second decade of the twentieth century that his development of a map of the psyche required a theoretical opposite to Eros, or life instinct, which had been seen as opposed to the ego instinct but which is placed at the service of the ego in defensive conflicts. He had worked on the assumption that neurotics seek to alleviate unpleasure with the help of the psychoanalyst in order that they may return to a life in which pleasure plays its part. However, clinical practice continued to contradict this assumption, for patients obstructed the therapeutic process and worked hard to remain tied to their symptoms, which were based in unpleasure or relapsed just when they could have improved their life perspective. Why did this happen? And how do we incorporate sadism or masochism in the configuration of a life to be grounded in spontaneity and creativity? And how do we understand the extreme destructiveness of depressive patients, perverts, drug addicts and psychotics?

Freud found, therefore, that the concept of the death instincts was an organic development of his thinking when he considered these issues, which became apparent in his on-going clinical work and which impinged dramatically on the body of theory which he had already constructed. His apprehension of the force of the death instincts may have been brought to a head in trying to find an accommodation with his experience in the

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³ Peter Gay, *Freud: A Life for Our Time* (London: Macmillan, 1989), p. 401.

⁴ Arthur Schopenhauer, *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, ed. by Angelika Hübscher (Zurich: Diogenes, 1977).

⁵ *The Language of Psychoanalysis*, ed. by J. Laplanche and J.-B. Pontalis (London: Karnac, 1988), pp. 97-98.

consulting room of what he perceived to be an irresistible urge by certain patients, particularly those with a neurotic tendency, to repeat behaviour patterns. This could consist of repeated marriages or alliances with a partner who exhibits a similarly collusive and destructive influence on a relationship as a previous one or repeated self-destructive behaviour when on the point of success.

Freud answered these questions with a hypothesis in *Jenseits des Lustprinzips* (Beyond the Pleasure Principle) which also constituted a novel development in his thinking in that it rested on a biological and not merely a clinical foundation. He proposed that the basic unpleasure/pleasure principle, the basis of his economic argument, is regulated by the binary forces of the life instincts or Eros and the death instincts. Thanatos is the name generally assigned to the death instincts as an opposite of Eros. Thanatos is a term first used by Wilhem Stekel (1868-1940).⁶ Stekel was a founding member of Freud's Psychological Wednesday Society but broke with Freud in 1912 and, as a consequence, Freud never wrote of Thanatos but used it in only conversation. Thanatos, however, gained currency with Melanie Klein (1882-1960) and her followers. So, for the purpose of this thesis, Freud's nomenclature of death instincts and Eros will be used. Freud describes the death instincts from a tripartite perspective: first from a purely theoretical perspective of psychological structure and organisation; secondly, from clinical basis through the experience in the consulting room; and thirdly, from a biological basis.

Evidence from clinical work also reflects the destructive effects on the individual of the death instincts without necessarily demanding death. The death instincts are not merely about dying, though they are about that too; they are also an expression of those negative mental energies which destroy the happiness and sense of well-being of the individual. They inhibit vitality, spontaneity, creativity and any developmental process in the patient and the view taken of his objects. The aim of the death instincts is not only to kill or annihilate but to tie the individual to the tormenting quality of negative feelings.⁷ Nevertheless, death is the ultimate satisfaction of the death instincts. The negative feelings we have mentioned are then also part of the life of the subject of this thesis: Heinrich von Kleist. The characters that Kleist created, and the life led by Kleist, himself are imbued with the qualities which define the death instincts which will be shown in an analysis of his

⁶ Jaap Bos and Leendert Groenendijk, *The Self-Marginalization of Wilhelm Stekel: Freudian Circles Inside and Out* (New York: Springer, 2007), p. 12.

⁷ Michael Feldman, 'Some Views on the Manifestation of the Death Instinct in Clinical Work', *The International Journal for Psychoanalysis*, 81 (2000), 53-56.

life and works.

The concept of death instincts may have first been brought to Freud's attention in 1911. On 30 November of that year Freud wrote to Carl Gustav Jung (1875-1961) about the presentation that Dr Sabina Spielrein (1885-1942) had made to the Wednesday Psychological Society in Vienna. Spielrein was successively a patient of Jung and a patient and colleague of Freud. She had presented a shortened version of her paper, 'Die Destruktion als Ursache des Werdens' (Destruction as a Cause of Coming into Being).⁸ Freud objected to the tendency of Spielrein's paper to subordinate the psychological to the physiological material which Freud deemed an unwarranted dependence but later acknowledged his debt to her in a footnote to *Jenseits des Lustprinzips*.⁹

In her paper, Spielrein posed the question arising out of her work with sexual problems as to why the powerful sexual instinct is also associated with feelings of disgust and anxiety instead of the anticipated feelings of pleasure; particularly as the sexual instinct is also a reproductive instinct.¹⁰ These negative feelings must be overcome in order to engage with these reproductive activities. She quotes Jung to say that the libido, that is also the sexual instinct, has two aspects: the positive and beautifying as well as the negative and destructive.¹¹ Spielrein proceeds to establish a biological basis for these theories in which in the reproductive union of the male and female cells each die in order to create new life.¹² The unity of each cell is thus destroyed and from this destruction new life arises.

In *Jenseits des Lustprinzips*, Freud posited a duality of instincts which are opposed to each other: Eros and the death instincts. However, he accepted that the concept of the death instincts was speculative and intimated that he was not fully convinced of it himself.¹³ Moreover, this concept has not been as widely accepted among his psychoanalytic followers as have Freud's other theoretical writings. In the third volume of Ernest Jones' biography of Freud, Jones writes about *Jenseits des Lustprinzips* as being

⁸ Sigmund Freud-C.G. Jung, *Briefwechsel*, ed. by William McGuire and Wolfgang Sauerländer (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1976), p. 519 (The Freud/Jung Letters, trans. Ralph Mannheim and R.F.C. Hull, ed. by William McGuire (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 286; Sabina Spielrein (1912), 'Die Destruktion als Ursache des Werdens', in *Sabina Spielrein*, ed. by Günter Bose and Erich Brinkmann, 2 vols (Berlin: Brinkmann and Bose, undated), vol. 2, pp. 97-144.

⁹ Freud (1920), GW. 13, p. 59 (SE. 18, p. 55).

¹⁰ Spielrein (1912), p. 97.

¹¹ C. G. Jung, *Symbols of Transformation*, in *Collected Works*, trans. by R.F.C. Hull, ed. by Sir Herbert Read, Michael Fordham, Gerhard Adler, 20 vols (London: Routledge, 1986), vol. 5, §165.

¹² Spielrein (1912), p. 99.

¹³ Freud (1920), GW. 13, pp. 63-64 (SE.18, pp. 62-63).

noteworthy in having received little acceptance by psychoanalysts: only half of the approximately fifty papers supported Freud in the first decade after publication, in the second decade only a third and none at all in the third decade after its publication.¹⁴ Lis Land has suggested that it is the obscurity of Freud's paper and the proximity of an unacceptable complex, death, may have discouraged an exploration of its importance.¹⁵ As a significant mark or sound, the death instincts will have carried affect which was best avoided. That Freud chose to write in a less authoritative manner than he normally did, perhaps, also gave his colleagues licence to disagree with him. One could argue, though, that the publication of the concept of the death instincts completed a gap in the development of the theory of psychoanalysis, which its practitioners found difficult to accept. It upset established mind-sets, as Freud continued creatively to develop coherent psychological theories. The theory of psychoanalysis in Freud's hands was not a fixed trope but an on-going development of a body of work. Moreover, opposites are a necessary part of creation; the concept of Eros cannot be established with any sense of grounding or definition unless the opposite of Eros, the death instincts, are also acknowledged. Each is, to some extent, defined by the other.

Freud postulated the instincts for self-preservation and preservation of the species as the reality principle, which is part of Eros (allied to the sexual instinct). The aim of Eros is to establish ever greater unities and to preserve them. The aim of the death instincts, on the other hand (allied to the ego instinct), is to regress to a previous state, to undo connections and to lead what is living into an inorganic state. Of the two instincts Freud stated that Eros is more overt and, therefore, more accessible for study. Despite their polarity, Freud concluded that the two instincts are linked and work in support of each other.¹⁶

Freud repeated that the pleasure principle automatically regulates mental events in that it seeks to negate unpleasure felt by the organism in order to return it to a stage of stasis. The purpose of Freud's economic argument is to demonstrate that a lowering of unpleasurable tension is the goal of mental activity and that an avoidance of unpleasure leads to a production of pleasure.¹⁷ The dominance of the pleasure principle is accepted as the agency which regulates the activity of mental life in that it seeks to minimise the extent of

¹⁴ E. Jones, *Sigmund Freud: Life and Works*, 3 vols. (London: Hogarth Press, 1957), vol. 3, p. 287.

¹⁵ Lis Land, 'Thanatos: The Drive without a Name: The Concept of the Death Drive in Freud's Writings', *Scandinavian Psychoanalytical Review*, 14 (1991), 60-80.

¹⁶ Sigmund Freud (1920), 'Das Ich und das Es', GW. 13, 237-289 (pp. 267- 268) (The Ego and the Id, SE.

¹⁷ Freud (1920), GW. 13, p. 3 (SE. 18, p.7).

excitation and to establish mental equilibrium.¹⁸

However, Freud had established in the 1911 paper ‘Formulierungen über die zwei Prinzipien des psychischen Geschehens’ (Formulations on the Two Principles of Mental Functioning), that the supremacy of the pleasure principle is modified by another psychological force.¹⁹ This is the reality principle, which governs the ego’s instinct for self-preservation. The reality principle, though, is also responsive to the pleasure principle but, in the interests of self-preservation of the ego, postpones satisfaction and accepts the temporary burden of unpleasure as a stop-gap measure on the path to pleasure.²⁰ A second source of inhibition of the pleasure principle may be the strictures of ego development into a higher organisation in which psychic energy is not permitted to reach the same level of development. Instincts or part instincts incompatible with the unity of the ego are split-off, repressed and are felt as unpleasure by the ego though they may well be moving towards the goal of pleasure by a delayed, circuitous route.²¹ One might call into question the extent to which repetition compulsion plays its part in the application of the reality principle. Does repetition compulsion provide pleasure, at some stage, at the expense of the reality principle?

Freud’s first reference to repetition compulsion is in 1914 in ‘Erinnern, Wiederholen und Durcharbeiten’ (Remembering, Repeating and Working Through).²² In this earlier publication before *Jenseits*, Freud comments that the experiences which lead to a compulsion to repeat are due to resistance when the experiences of the events in the past are not accessible to the individuals as memory. This also includes repetitive dreams where the meanings are not brought into consciousness. The acting out, that is repetition of the trauma, will increase resistance and, more extensively, replace remembering.²³ The concept of repetition compulsion was again mentioned in ‘Das Unheimliche’ (The Uncanny).²⁴ In this paper, Freud equates the sense of the uncanny to the repetition of certain events or occurrences which, in total, seem more than mere chance and which lead,

¹⁸ Freud (1920), GW. 13, p. 5 (SE. 18, p. 10).

¹⁹ Sigmund Freud (1911), ‘Formulierungen über die zwei Prinzipien des psychischen Geschehens’, GW. 8, 220-238 (Formulation on the Two Principles of Mental Functioning, SE. 10, 213-226).

²⁰ Freud (1920), GW. 13, p. 6 (SE. 18, p. 10).

²¹ Freud (1920), GW. 13, pp. 5-6 (SE. 18, p. 10).

²² Sigmund Freud (1914), GW. 10, ‘Erinnern, Wiederholen und Durcharbeiten’, GW. 10, 126-136 (SE. 14, Remembering, Repeating and Working Through, 146-156).

²³ Freud (1914), GW. 10 (p.130) (SE. 12, (p. 151)).

²⁴ Sigmund Freud (1914), ‘Das Unheimliche’, GW. 12, 229-268 (p. 249) (The Uncanny, SE. 17, 368-407 (p. 236)).

therefore, to a sense of the uncanny.

As an illustration of repetition compulsion, Freud describes in *Jenseits* the activities of his one and a half year old grandson in coming to terms with the absence of his mother, his primary caretaker, by creating the well-documented ‘fort-da’ game. It consisted of a ritual with a cotton reel tied to the boy’s cot. The boy would throw the cotton reel into his cot so that it would disappear and exclaim: ‘fort’ (gone). He retrieved the cotton reel by pulling on the string and would exclaim joyfully when it reappeared: ‘da’ (here). Freud describes his grandson as having come into a great cultural achievement in managing the instinctual unpleasure at his mother’s disappearance without his protest and his joy at her eventual return. He had re-created the event by making the cotton reel a symbol of the mother’s disappearance and reappearance.

Freud interpreted the game in a two-fold manner. First, it could be considered as the boy’s being swamped by an unpleasurable situation in which he was merely the passive participant. By engaging in the game he became active and gained mastery over what was a dismal scene. Secondly, this repetition compulsion is then the urgent desire of the mental apparatus to come to terms with an overwhelming experience or trauma by repeating. In this process it resurrects feelings incompatible with the pleasure principle. In the repetition, we are reminded unconsciously of the first cause. Kleist deals with this aspect of repetition compulsion as an aspect of the human condition in *Die Verlobung in St. Domingo* (The Engagement in St Domingo) (3, 222-260).

Lawrence S. Kubie comments that Freud’s use of the concept of repetition compulsion was at times perplexing and implicitly contradictory and cites a number of commentators who develop a variety of approaches to this concept.²⁵ He says further, that the concept of repetition compulsion had become a mere descriptive epithet, a psychoanalytic version of the word ‘habit’ and claims, unjustifiably, that there is no need or evidence for such a concept.²⁶ By taking this position, Kubie ignores the neurotic/pathological element to the concept, which gives it its clinical validity.

However, the requirement of the organism to restore things to an earlier state in order to reduce tension/unpleasure and to achieve a state of pleasure requires a repetition of a

²⁵ Lawrence S. Kubie, ‘A Critical Analysis of the Concept of repetition compulsion’, *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 20 (1939), 390-402 (pp. 393-396).

²⁶ Kubie (1939), p. 402.

previous action or experience and is, hence, allied to repetition compulsion. Freud found it necessary, therefore, to integrate the concept of repetition compulsion on the basis of clinical evidence and an intuitive apprehension and appreciation of biological determinism. Freud determined too, from clinical experience, that the existence of ambivalence, aggression, sadism, masochism and hate as they surfaced in his sessions with obsessive and neurotic patients could not be derived from the sexual instincts which are in the domain of Eros. These affects did not support the premise that the aim of the organism is always to be in a state of pleasurable equilibrium.

Initially, the death instincts are internalised and aim towards self-destruction. In this phase they are silent and unobtrusive. Only when they are turned outwards and are tinged with eroticism in aggression towards the external world do they become noticeable.²⁷ Moreover sadism is a residue of that sexual element derived from the aggression which is inherent in the capture of the sexual object and which is a split-off part of sexual instinct:

Die Sexualität der meisten Männer zeigt eine Beimengung von Aggression, von Neigung zur Überwältigung, deren biologische Bedeutung in der Notwendigkeit liegen dürfte, den Widerstand des Sexualobjektes noch anders als durch die Akte der Werbung zu überwinden. Der Sadismus entspräche dann einer selbständig gewordenen, übertriebenen, durch Verschiebung an die Hauptstelle gerückten aggressiven Komponente des Sexualtriebes.

(The sexuality of most male human beings contains an element of aggressiveness - a desire to subjugate; the biological significance of it seems to lie in the need for overcoming the resistance of the sexual object by means other than the process of wooing. Thus sadism would correspond to an aggressive component of the sexual instinct which has become independent and exaggerated and, by displacement, has usurped the leading position).²⁸

Freud states in this text that aggression, as an inherent part of the sexual instinct, is also an inherent part of being human as it affects men and women. The human race requires the assertiveness which aggression brings in order to develop, overcome and survive. It is principally through this affect that we can develop and thrive. It has also brought about beneficial changes in culture: the significance of the family has gained stature and we no longer feed Christians to the lions. The examples given below also have their origin in a truly pathological tendency. Kleist provides an example of this pathology, with the sadistic behaviour of the mob, in *Das Erdbeben in Chili* (The Earthquake in Chile) (3, 189-221).

²⁷ Sigmund Freud (1930), 'Das Unbehagen in der Kultur', GW. 14, 421-506 (p. 478) (Civilization and its Discontents, SE. 21, 57-146 (p. 119)).

²⁸ Sigmund Freud (1905), 'Drei Abhandlungen zur Sexualtheorie', GW. 5, 33-72 (p. 57) (Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality, SE. 7, 123-246 (pp. 157-158)).

While in Freud's terminology sadism and, hence, aggression are frequently tinged with an erotogenic component through the connection with Eros, he does also concede its non-erotic component.²⁹ Freud takes examples from history to demonstrate the truth of this assertion, such as the barbarity demonstrated by the Huns and Mongols or even the capture of Jerusalem by God-fearing Christians. Our own times, too, provide many examples of the barbarity of man to man such as the Holocaust, the Serb massacre of Bosnian Muslims in Srebrenica in 1995, the savagery of Isis in Syria and Iraq in the years 2014 to 2018 and not least the bombing by Russian planes of civilians in Syria. The effect of this sadistic streak in culture, this permanent mutual hostility, leads towards disintegration which man tries to hold unsuccessfully in the face of reasonable interests. Hence we have too, as Freud states, the reaction-formations to put a check on our behaviour: methods designed to impel people into identification and aim-inhibited relationships by putting restrictions on sexual life as well as the idealised commandment to love one's neighbour as oneself, which runs strongly against an individual's native inclination. We do, however, also have to recognise individual acts of philanthropy and self-sacrifice.

With 'Triebe und Tribschicksale' (Instincts and their Vicissitudes), published in 1915, Freud had connected sadism and hate to the ego instincts; he asserted that the ego's struggle to survive is the cause and derivation of hate:

Ja, man kann behaupten, daß die richtigen Vorbilder für die Haßrelation nicht aus dem Sexualleben, sondern aus dem Ringen des Ichs um seine Erhaltung und Behauptung stammen.

(Indeed, it may be asserted that the true prototypes of the relation of hate are derived not from sexual life, but from the ego's struggle to preserve and maintain itself).³⁰

Sadism, however, does not stand alone: its analogue energy is masochism, which stands in opposition to sadism in that it is experienced as sadism turned inwards upon the self. Masochism and sadism are, therefore, an opposing pair. Masochism is expressed in the multicellular organisms in which Eros meets the death instincts or the instincts for destruction whose aim is to reduce the organism to inorganic stability which Freud discussed in the 1924 paper, 'Das ökonomische Problem des Masochismus' (The

²⁹ Freud (1930), GW. 14, pp. 470-471 (SE. 21, pp. 111-112).

³⁰ Sigmund Freud (1915), 'Triebe und Schicksale', GW. 10, 210-232 (p. 230) (Instincts and their Vicissitudes, SE. 14, 111-140 (p. 138)).

Economic Problem of Masochism).³¹ However, in multicellular organisms there is a conflict between the Eros and the death instincts. While the death instincts are endeavouring to lead the organism into a state of disintegration and inertia, Eros works in order to make the death instincts ineffective, which it does by diverting its energies outwards towards objects through the musculature of the body. It diverts them to external objects through destructive behaviour or the desire for power or for the sexual function, where it is expressed as sadism; the split-off part that remains introverted within the organism is libidinally bound there and expressed, in a footnote added in 1924, as ‘erogenen Masochismus’ (erotogenic masochism).³²

One of the objections to Freud’s description of masochism in response to his 1924 paper was voiced by N.J. Symons.³³ Symons contends that the aim of masochism does not violate the pleasure principle since the masochist seeks pain as a means to an end which is pleasurable and not pain as an end in itself. However, the gratification derived from one’s own pain also requires a perspective in which the goal of pleasure is achieved through the experience and transcendence of pain. The experience of pleasure, as pain, is manifest in the masochistic experience and is, thus, the primary experience of the masochistic desire.

J.R. Pedder also questions why Freud had put to one side the idea of aggression for so long and attributes it to the relative economic and social stability of Austria in the nineteenth century.³⁴ This was upset by World War I about which Freud reflected with astonishment in ‘Zeitgemäßes über Krieg und Tod’ (Thoughts for the Times on War and Death).³⁵ In ‘Das Unbehagen in der Kultur’ (Civilization and its Discontents) Freud is astonished, too, that he had for so long ignored non-erotic aggression and destructiveness and had not, until the publication of *Jenseits des Lustprinzips*, given it its proper place in the interpretation of psychological life.³⁶ To some extent, Freud is here addressing his colleague’s resistance to his postulation of the death instincts, which by now, in 1930, he finds to be self-evident. He writes that ‘aber im Laufe der Zeit haben sie eine solche Macht

³¹ Sigmund, Freud (1924), ‘Das ökonomische Problem des Masochismus’, GW. 13, 371-382 (p. 376) (The Economic Problem of Masochism, SE. 18, 155-170 (p. 163)).

³² Freud (1905), GW. 5, p. 57 (SE. 7, p. 158).

³³ N.J. Symons, ‘Does Masochism Necessarily Imply the Existence of a Death Instinct’, *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 8 (1927), 38-46.

³⁴ Jonathan R. Pedder, ‘Some Biographical Contributions to Psychoanalytic Theories’, *Free Association*, 1 (1987), 102-116.

³⁵ Sigmund Freud (1915), ‘Zeitgemäßes über Krieg und Tod’, GW. 10, 324-355 (SE. 14, Thoughts for the Times on War and Death, 273-300).

³⁶ Freud (1930), GW. 14, p.479 (SE. 21, p. 119).

über mich gewonnen, daß ich nicht mehr anders denken kann. Ich meine, sie sind theoretisch ungleich brauchbarer als alle möglichen anderen‘ (in the course of time they have gained such a hold upon me that I can no longer think in any other way. To my mind they are far more serviceable from a theoretical standpoint than any other possible ones).³⁷ Ten years after the publication of *Jenseits des Lustprinzips* Freud has abandoned the diffidence which is so evident in that publication.

From his clinical practice, too, Freud established the negative features of the death instinct in the ambivalence of love and hate which he described in ‘Das Ich und das Es’ (The Ego and the Id).³⁸ He develops in this paper a new model of the mind as ego, id and superego and identifies a ‘negative therapeutische Reaktion’ (negative therapeutic reaction), which arises from unconscious guilt in which the patient feels the need to continue to be punished and to suffer, a process which prevents eradication of the neuroses.³⁹ Freud argues that there is a fusion between the death instincts and Eros, in which the corollary of complete diffusion of the two instincts takes place in severe neurotic and perverse states. Freud suggests that the polarity of the death instincts and Eros can also be seen in the chasm between love and hate, the former being the representative of Eros and the latter of the death instincts. However, from clinical observation, Freud cannot incorporate the recognised concept that love can change to hate and hate to love and has no answer for it in any explanation which might arise from this new topography of the mind.

At the base of the theories which Freud propounds is the biological concept that the task of the death instincts is to reduce multicellular organisms to a state of earlier existence and in this he proposes a major principle of the death instincts and one which caused most disquiet amongst his colleagues. It was for the time an intuitive leap too far into biology which was not wholly accepted by Freud’s followers and about which Freud also had reservations:

Wenn wir es als ausnahmslose Erfahrung annehmen dürfen, daß alles Lebende aus inneren Gründen stirbt, ins Anorganische zurückkehrt, so können wir nur sagen: Das Ziel alles Lebens ist der Tod, und zurückgreifend: Das Leblose war früher da als das Lebende.

(If we are to take it as a truth that knows no exception that everything living dies for internal reasons, becomes inorganic once again, then we shall be compelled to

³⁷ Freud (1930), GW. 14, p. 478-479 (SE. 21, p. 119).

³⁸ Sigmund Freud (1923), ‘Das Ich und das Es’, GW. 13, 237-289 (The Ego and the Id, SE. 14, 3-68).

³⁹ Freud (1923), GW. 13, p. 278 (SE. 19, p. 49).

say that the aim of all life is death and, looking backwards, that inanimate things existed before living ones).⁴⁰

Freud gives his reasons later when he states unequivocally that from the basis of this premise he has drawn further conclusions to the effect that every living thing dies from internal causes and that he is sanguine about this assumption since the poets have told us so.⁴¹ Why have we, Freud asks, assumed this burden of the recognition of the internal drive towards death? Could it be to allay anxiety or is it ‘um die Schwere des Daseins zu ertragen’ (in order to bear the burden of existence).⁴² He recognises that there is little agreement between biologists on the matter of death and the anxiety concerning it seems to disappear when they approach it, perhaps, as a defence against the real fear of dying.

Freud considers the views of the German biologist, F.L.A. Weismann (1834 -1914). Weismann introduced the concept of the duality of living substances in multicellular organisms as mortal and immortal parts. The mortal part is the body (soma) which carries out normal bodily functions and which dies. The germ-cells (ova and spermatozoa), on the other hand, are considered immortal since they transmit heritable information which can develop into a new individuals given the right circumstances. For unicellular organisms the individual and the reproductive cell are still one and the same. However, it does not help Freud’s argument, he says, if death only appeared with multicellular organisms, for then there was no death instinct from the beginning of life.⁴³ However, if the morphological point of view is abandoned and it can be shown that that which is immortal has not yet separated from the mortal, then any death-inducing forces may be so hidden under the life preserving ones, that it may be difficult to establish evidence of their presence.⁴⁴

The aim of multicellular organisms is to return to an earlier, more primitive state, an inorganic state in which the organism wishes only to die in its own fashion and from internal causes: ‘Wir haben auf Grund der Voraussetzung weitere Schlüsse aufgebaut, daß alles Lebende aus inneren Ursachen sterben müsse’ (We have drawn far-reaching conclusions from the hypothesis that all living substance is bound to die from internal causes).⁴⁵ As already mentioned, the aim of the one, Eros, is to establish even greater unities against the other, the death instincts, which wishes to dissolve these unities. The

⁴⁰ Freud (1920), GW. 13, p.40 (SE. 18, p. 38).

⁴¹ Freud (1920), GW. 13, p. 47 (SE. 18, p. 44).

⁴² Freud (1920), GW. 13, p. 45 (SE. 18, p. 47).

⁴³ Freud (1920), GW. 13, pp. 49-50 (SE. 18, pp. 52-53).

⁴⁴ Freud (1920), GW. 13, p. 52 (SE. 18, p. 48).

⁴⁵ Freud (1920), GW. 13, p. 47 (SE. 18, p. 44).

destructive instinct thus brings us to the point where its true purpose is to return life to an inorganic state. The ultimate fate of the living, then, which arose from the not-living, is to return to its inorganic state; so we can conclude that the death instincts are instincts which seek to return to an earlier form.⁴⁶ For this reason too, all organisms are fated ultimately to die from internal causes.⁴⁷ The force of Eros (the sexual instincts), more resistant to the death instincts, is the guardian of those elements of the organism which survive and which, therefore, represent the true life instincts. The sexual instincts are the true life instincts because they frustrate the operation of the death instincts as has already been recognised by the theory of the neuroses.⁴⁸

The concept of the universal dissolution and death of living organisms to die from internal causes has been largely ignored in psychoanalytic literature since it was a philosophical and biological concept and as such, a strong departure from evidence adduced from clinical work. However, studies by the Russian biologist Elias Metchnikoff (1845-1916) pre-date Freud's theories. Metchnikoff discovered and named phagocytosis, which is the engulfing and destruction by white blood cells of bacteria and cell debris following apoptosis.⁴⁹ Apoptosis, also called programmed cell death (PCD), is a form of cell death in which redundant cells are eliminated safely to maintain the health of the body.

Writing in 1904, Metchnikoff came to the conclusion that the fear of death created the greatest disharmony in the life of homo sapiens and that the more man lived, the more he wished to live.⁵⁰ Metchnikoff designated the fear of death as an instinct. However, he determined that this perspective changes with increasing age as evidenced by the centenarians which Metchnikoff examined who had an increasing desire for sleep and death. This concept he also confirmed with mayflies which made no effort to escape compared to their elusive larvae. He determined that the *instinct de la vie* had been eliminated in the mayfly.

Writing in 1993, Eduardo Bolivar contends that the theory of the death instinct as delineated by Freud is in need of reformulation since 'it is both scientifically and philosophically unacceptable insofar as it was presented by Freud on a dubious biological

⁴⁶ Freud (1938), GW. 17, p. 71 (SE. 23, p. 148).

⁴⁷ Freud (1920), GW. 13, p. 46 (SE. 18, p. 44).

⁴⁸ Freud (1920), GW. 13, p. 43 (SE. 18, p. 40).

⁴⁹ Elias Metchnikoff, 'Lecture on Phagocytosis and Immunity', *British Medical Journal*, 1 (1891), 213–217.

⁵⁰ Elias Metchnikoff, *Études sur la Nature Humaine* (Paris: Masson, 1904).

basis'.⁵¹ While there is disagreement among analysts about the intuitive measure of Freud's thinking with regard to the reduction to a previous state of multi-cellular organisms, there is, nevertheless, significant evidence from neuroscience and cell biology which Freud anticipated and which science is establishing today. Thomas Hoffman notices the similarities between the death instincts and PCD:

Using a convergence of cell biology's views on cell death to update Freud's original understanding, one can better comprehend the coexistence of instincts and tendencies towards life and death, the advantages to the organism of establishing a steady state, and the potential consequences, mental and physical, of its perturbation.⁵²

This concept of PCD and hence the desire of organisms to return to an earlier state is a keystone of Freud's concept of the death instincts. Brian Johnson, quoting Kent C. Berridge and Terry E. Robinson, confirm that the conflict between death instincts and Eros has also been explained and how the conflict between the two instincts leads to a biological basis of the transference and the neural basis of why patients, through the influence of the death instincts in their mental organisation, might seek an unhappy relationship with their therapist.⁵³

Moreover, Freud's proposition, with which his colleague had disagreed because it was of a biological rather than a clinical nature, is also supported by research in cellular biology. Gerry Melino gives summary of research in this subject in an editorial entitled 'The Meaning of Death'.⁵⁴ He identifies the work of Robert H. Horovitz and others in 1982 in mapping the fate of every cell in the nematode, *Caenorhabditis elegans* (*C. elegans*), including those that were to commit PCD. *C. elegans* is a free-living transparent nematode (roundworm) approximately 1mm long. Research into molecular and developmental biology of *C. elegans* was begun in 1974 and it has been extensively used as a model organism. By 1985 Horovitz had shown that PCD was determined by several genes which he named *The Terminators: The Good* (which blocks PCD), *The Bad* (which executes PCD), and *The Ugly* (which activates PCD). Later research has developed and numerically increased this family of genes which control PCD.

⁵¹ Eduardo Bolivar, 'The Ontological Grounds of the Death Instinct in Freud', *Psychoanalysis and Contemporary Thought*, 16 (1993), 113-147 (p. 123).

⁵² Thomas Hoffman, 'Revival of the Death Instinct: A View from Contemporary Biology', *Neuropsychanalysis*, 6 (2004), 63-75.

⁵³ Brian Johnson, 'Just what lies "Beyond the Pleasure Principle"?'', *Neuropsychanalysis*, 10 (2008), 201-212 (p. 201); Kent C. Berridge and Terry E. Robinson, 'Parsing Reward', *Trends in Neuroscience*, vol. 26, no. 9 (2003), 507-513.

⁵⁴ Gerry Melino, 'The Meaning of Death', *Cell Death and Differentiation*, vol. 9, no. 2 (2002), 347-348.

PCD, says Jean-Claude Ameisen, is a genetically regulated process of cell suicide which is central to the development and integrity of multicellular organisms⁵⁵ He also describes research carried out on *C. elegans*, in which PCD was discerned as fixed in genetic control, ‘the first proof of concept that the term and idea of programmed cell death had indeed a genetic correlate’.⁵⁶ The discovery of the genetic code controlling PCD in *C. elegans* also led to the discovery that a similar code was present in fruit flies and mammals, including humans. ‘Such a striking conservation across a phylogenetic divergence range of around 700 million years reinforced the view that PCD may have been essential for animal survival’.⁵⁷

This also leads into Freud’s perception that Eros and the death instincts are indeed linked. Eros is more overt and produces tensions, whose release is felt as pleasure whereas the death instincts do their work in the shadows. The pleasure principle, Freud asserts, seems to serve the death instinct. It keeps watch upon stimuli from without, which are dangers to both instincts and also guards against increase of stimulation from within. Increasing stimulation would make living more difficult. Freud regrets that this raises questions which cannot be answered at present.⁵⁸ However, with the passage of time, these questions are now being answered through research in molecular cell biology, which determines that which Freud intuitively apprehended. The research recognises molecular mechanisms which support memory and information storage and that somatic experiences influence mental structures which in turn lead to patterns of behaviour.

With the publication in 1926 of ‘Hemmung, Symptom und Angst’ (Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety) Freud proposed that fear of death is not a primary anxiety because we have no knowledge of death but that our existential anxiety is the anxiety of the oedipal fear of castration through which we have regular experience in the separation of faeces from the body ‘Im Unbewußten ist aber nichts vorhanden, was unserem Begriff der Lebensvernichtung Inhalt geben kann’ (But the unconscious seems to contain nothing that could give any content to our concept of the annihilation of life).⁵⁹ Fear of death is not something that we experience in the first instance since we have no experience of death;

⁵⁵ Jean-Claude Ameisen, ‘Looking for Death at the Core of Life in the Light of Evolution’, *Cell Death and Differentiation*, vol. 11, no. 10 (2004), 4-10.

⁵⁶ Ameisen (2004), p. 4.

⁵⁷ Ameisen (2004), pp. 4-5.

⁵⁸ Freud (1920), GW. 13, p. 69 (SE. 18, p. 63).

⁵⁹ Sigmund Freud (1926), ‘Hemmung, Symptom und Angst’, GW. 14, p. 160 (Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety, SE. 20, (p. 129)).

the anxiety concerning death arises from secondary impingements, which have to do with bodily functions and developmental factors such as oedipal castration anxiety. Otto Rank (1884-1939), for some twenty years a close and valued collaborator of Freud, claimed that primal anxiety originates with birth.⁶⁰ For Rank, the oceanic womb experience was replaced with the act of birth which involved dyspnoea and constriction, which sets up an experiential anxiety modus that afflicts the individual throughout life.⁶¹ This ideological conflict between oedipal castration anxiety and primary birth anxiety led to a split between Freud and Rank.

Freud's phallogocentric view of oedipal castration anxiety prevailed in psychoanalytic theory as did the differentiated psychosexual development of the boy and the girl. Freud writes of: 'weiblichen Ödipuskomplex' (feminine Oedipus complex) and adds in a footnote that he does not see any advantage to using the term Electra complex for the development of a girl.⁶² A boy suffers from castration anxiety because he fears losing his penis as a punishment from the father for desiring the mother. The powerful, threatening figure of the castrating father is the major player in the oedipal drama and the mother is reduced to a subsidiary, nurturing role. The girl, on the other hand, suffers from a castration complex because, not having a penis, she realises that she has lost it. This then gives rise to the girl's penis envy since she cannot be afraid of losing something she does not have; she experiences a lack, an emptiness. Further, as a rival to the mother for the father's love, she also fears losing the mother's love which is the cause of her anxiety. These fears are played out in the shadow of the Oedipus complex so that the psychosexual development of the individual is bound up with anxiety and talion fears.⁶³

Melanie Klein (1885-1952) disagreed that developmental factors impinge on the development of the individual and relied on innate archetypal psychological constructs to make evident the roots of anxiety and fear of death. She was also assembling, from her clinical practice, evidence which indicated this to be the case. She was closer to Rank, with his concept of primal birth anxiety, than to Freudian oedipal castration theories, though she never acknowledged her debt to Rank.

⁶⁰ Otto Rank, *The Trauma of Birth* (New York: Dover Publications, 1993).

⁶¹ Rank (1993), p. 187.

⁶² Sigmund Freud (1920), 'Über die Psychogenese eines Falles von weiblicher Homosexualität' GW. 12, 271-302 (p. 281) (The Psychogenesis of a Case of Female Homosexuality, SE. 18, 145-172 (p. 155)).

⁶³ Sigmund Freud (1933), *Neue Folge der Vorlesungen zur Einführung in die Psychoanalyse*, GW. 15, pp. 92-93 (New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis, SE. 22, pp. 86-87).

Freud's development of the dual instinct theory, of the death instincts and Eros, however, also solved a problem she had encountered. For Klein, the development of the superego (conscience) in the child happens much earlier than had been supposed. Freud conceived of superego development after the expiration of the Oedipus complex (approximately in the fifth year of life) whereas Klein placed an active superego in children of ages two and three-quarters to four. In 1933, Klein published 'The Early Development of Conscience in a Child'.⁶⁴ In this paper she argues that the superego in a child represents its early relations with its internalised parents and that this superego is harsher and crueller than had been supposed. In consequence, the child's dreams and phantasies were filled with images of being torn-up, eaten, devoured and that it was surrounded by threatening figures. Klein theorises that this severe superego arises out of repressed impulses of aggression manifested by the death instinct or Thanatos in opposition to Eros. A fusion of the two arises which the ego experiences as potential destruction. Fear of destruction leads to tension and anxiety. The child's ego has to mobilise Eros against Thanatos but due to the fusion between the two can only do this partially. The child's aggressive instincts, raised to ward off threats of death and annihilation, are then turned outwards and so the object, not given a sense of realness for which the child is not yet ready, takes on a monstrous character and must be destroyed. Klein calls this experience of the child the 'paranoid-schizoid position' which takes place during the oral stage of development (approximately from birth to one year) and involves the internalisation by the child of parental images. These will be particular to each child but, Klein argues, will be of an unreal and terrifying nature.⁶⁵ The oral stage of development involves gnawing and biting at the mother's breast with teeth and jaws which Klein deems cannibalistic phantasies designed to gratify the child's aggressive and destructive impulses.⁶⁶ Klein comments that this psychological framework corroborates Freud's concept of the death instinct of aggression at war with Eros.

Faeces and urine are used in phantasy as weapons to destroy the inside of the mother's body which is imagined to be filled with babies and father's multiple penises which the mother is incorporating during copulation through her mouth. Excrement, a corroding substance, wild animals and weapons are forcibly ejected into the mother's body in order

⁶⁴ Melanie Klein (1933), 'The Early Development of Conscience in a Child', in *The Writings of Melanie Klein*, ed. by Masud R. Kahn, 4 vols (London: Hogarth Press, 1981), vol. 1, pp. 248-257.

⁶⁵ Klein (1933), p. 251.

⁶⁶ Klein (1933), p. 253.

to destroy it and all it contains.⁶⁷ At about six to eight months of age, the child perceives the mother as a whole object; it is at this stage too, that it can feel pity as reparation for the cruelty wreaked on the maternal figure during the paranoid-schizoid position. The child feels a sense of guilt for its attacks on its primary carer and it has now arrived at what Klein denotes as the ‘depressive position’.⁶⁸ Increasingly helpful and beneficial images appear. At this point there arises too, a more balanced relationship with objects which ultimately leads to socialisation.⁶⁹ At the phallic stage of development (approximately one to five or six years) the force of the superego has decreased and sadistic impulses have been largely overcome.⁷⁰

D.W. Winnicott (1896-1971) disagreed with Klein about the capacity of the early infant to organise conceptual phantasies about the parental bodies. Winnicott denies the possibility of the paranoid-schizoid position as a mental organisation that starts with life. He maintains that the early infant does not have the ego capacity to hold in mind the concepts assigned to it by Klein.⁷¹ Winnicott, though, considers the infant’s depressive position as an achievement: the infant experiences feelings of guilt that it has treated the body parts of the mother (which have now become integrated into a whole human being) so cruelly, ablates its aggressive instincts and experiences feelings of reparation. It is a development in emotional growth.⁷² He also accepts that the two mechanisms of talion dread and splitting of the object into good and bad are there but that good-enough mothering may make these unimportant.⁷³ Moreover, Winnicott also makes the statement about Freud ‘I simply cannot find value in his idea of a Death Instinct’.⁷⁴

Winnicott is largely supported by the psychoanalyst, Otto F. Kernberg (1928-), who defined personality disorders and narcissistic personality traits.⁷⁵ Kernberg claims that there is no clinical evidence to support the concept of the death instincts and that the Kleinian school has retreated to ‘an area of unfortunate dogmatic rigidity’.⁷⁶ He criticises

⁶⁷ Klein (1933), p. 253.

⁶⁸ Klein (1933), p.254.

⁶⁹ Klein (1933), p. 255.

⁷⁰ Klein (1933), p. 252.

⁷¹ D.W. Winnicott, ‘A Personal View of the Kleinian Contribution’, in *The Maturation Process and the Facilitating Environment*, ed. by M. Masud R. Khan (London: Karnac, 1990), 171-178.

⁷² Winnicott (1990), p. 176.

⁷³ Winnicott (1990), p. 177.

⁷⁴ Winnicott (1990), p. 177.

⁷⁵ Otto F. Kernberg, ‘A Contribution to the Ego-Psychological Critique of the Kleinian School’, *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 50 (1969), 317-333.

⁷⁶ Kernberg (1969), p. 326.

particularly the Kleinian view of the infant's inborn apprehension of the genitals and sexual intercourse and of the immediate conflict between Eros and Thanatos.⁷⁷ However, sufficient clinical evidence exists for us to be able to reject the propositions of Winnicott and Kernberg: the death instincts are a useful and essential paradigm in clinical practice as is shown, in particular, by Hanna Segal below.

In 1948 Melanie Klein published 'On the Theory of Anxiety and Guilt'.⁷⁸ In this paper she reverted to Freud's statement that fear of death is not a primary anxiety. Klein maintained that if there are death instincts, then there must also be a corresponding fear of annihilation in the deepest layers of the mind. It is therefore, the fear and danger arising from the internal working of the death instincts which is the first cause of anxiety.⁷⁹ Klein regards this fear as fear of the total annihilation of the self, which in turn is derived from the projection of being devoured: first by the breast and then the mother becomes the devouring object and then the father's penis and then the father. Hence the 'bad breast' (mother) and the 'devouring penis' (father) are the cruel and dangerous representatives of the death instincts which inhabit the infant's ego, and which are deemed the building blocks of the superego.⁸⁰

Nevertheless, despite criticism from authorities such as Winnicott and Kernberg, Kleinian psychoanalysts tended to retain the sustainability of the concept of the death instincts as a useful clinical tool. Hanna Segal (1918-2011) was a psychoanalyst who worked within the framework of Kleinian thinking and also did much work on the difference between the symbol as representation and equivalence deeming the latter to be concrete psychotic thinking. Segal writes in 'On the Clinical Usefulness of the Concept of the Death Instinct' about the clinical application of this concept.⁸¹ She acknowledges Freud's theory, that the silence of the death instinct can be established with the further research that has been undertaken. She accepts the fusion of the life instinct and of the death instincts and that in healthy development the death instincts are subject to the life instinct. In unhealthy development, the destruction towards objects is not only a deflection to the outside but also the wish to annihilate, directed both at the perceived self and at the

⁷⁷ Kernberg (1969), p. 326

⁷⁸ Melanie Klein (1948), 'On the Theory of Anxiety and Guilt', in *The Writings of Melanie Klein*, ed. by M. Masud R. Kahn, 4 vols (London: Hogarth Press, 1987), vol. 3, pp. 25-42.

⁷⁹ Klein (1948), p. 24.

⁸⁰ Klein (1948), p. 30.

⁸¹ Hanna Segal, 'On the Clinical Usefulness of the Concept of the Death Instinct', *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 74 (1993), 56-61.

perceived object.

Segal uses clinical accounts from four patients to elucidate the operation of the death instincts. It is manifested in the countertransference experienced by the analyst of feelings of deadness, despair, pessimism and aggression which invade the analyst (aggression which results in the analyst being pushed to become the patient's punishing superego) and in the patients' projected aggression in others which results in situations for them in which they are misunderstood, misjudged, exploited and persecuted. The environment plays a part in the factors of the life and death instincts since their formation is part of the relationship to early objects.

Segal describes one patient in particular, Mrs A, whose case illustrates the workings of the death instincts.⁸² Mrs A. was not psychotic. She was intelligent, sensitive, perceptive and capable of affection. Yet she was also fragile and subject to feelings of tormenting persecutory guilt and psychosomatic fears. She was inhibited in external aggression but her emotional and phantasy response to any deprivation, anxiety or envy were of extreme violence with responses such as 'I want him dead' or 'I want to kill all of them'. There was also constant violence against herself; she almost believed that the cure for a headache was to cut off her head and she wished constantly to eliminate her limbs, organs and particularly her sexual organs in order to avoid any perception or impulse which could lead to frustrating anxiety. These attacks on herself, attacks beyond internal objects, led to somatic trauma such as partial anaesthesia of sexual organs, migraines and hypochondriacal anxiety. In the case of Mrs A, Thanatos has the upper hand in the war between Thanatos and Eros. The ultimate satisfaction of Thanatos is death but the antecedent is pain. Segal's paper is, and remains, a convincing example of clinical evidence in support of Freud's hypothesis of the death instincts.

However convincing Segal's account of the triumph of Thanatos over Eros may be, the history of the development and application of the concept of the death instincts is, nevertheless, marked by dissension and conflict. We mentioned above Jones' account of the increasingly limited support which the publication of *Jenseits des Lustprinzips* received from Freud's colleagues. The point at issue is generally the biological basis which takes the concept outside the consulting room into scientific theory, which has, however, proven subsequently to be a sound basis. Freud chides those that reject the desire for destruction or

⁸² Segal (1993), p. 56.

badness as an inborn trait, likening them to little children who wish to deny that aspect of themselves and desiring only divine perfection.⁸³ These discussions of metapsychology produce extreme reactions, which are defended fiercely. The so called Controversial Discussions are an example of this.

The Controversial Discussions were a series of meetings of the British Psychoanalytic Society (BPS) between 1941 and 1945, in which the leading proponents of psychoanalytic theory, Klein and Freud's daughter and intellectual heir, Anna Freud (1895-1982) were in dispute. These two, and their followers, held acrimonious discussions about the importance of the new object relations theory, which Klein was promoting based on her experience of child analysis. Opposed to object relations theory was the classical Viennese drive theory inspired by Freud and defended by his daughter, Anna.⁸⁴ Since these two approaches were interdependent, one may characterise the Controversial Discussions as two bald men fighting over a comb.

There was also a third party, the Independents, who tried to mediate between the warring sides. Disagreements surfaced which had been simmering since the twenties in personal rivalries which included the fierce opposition to Klein herself of her daughter, Melitta Schmiedeberg (1904-1983). The discussions ended in a stand-off in that it was agreed that neither the Freud nor the Klein side would try to take over the BPS and that training and its administration would be run separately for the Freud and Klein groups. The Controversial Discussions are an example of the hubristic streak which exists in psychology and for which theoreticians falsely claim absolute ownership and certitude of their theories. Consensus is impossible since each party holds that it alone has the true answers. One may well ask why the participants in these debates, as psychologists, were not more self-reflective.

Winnicott, discussing the attention that Klein claimed to pay to environmental factors in the psychological development of children, writes 'Klein claimed to have paid full attention to the environmental factor, but it is my opinion that she was temperamentally incapable of this'.⁸⁵ Winnicott published this statement after Klein's death and, in one sense, one could argue that he wished to avoid sowing dragon's teeth. However, this

⁸³ Freud (1930), GW. 14, p. 479 (SE. 21, p. 120).

⁸⁴ *The Freud-Klein Controversies 1941-1945*, ed. by Pearl King and Riccardo Steiner (London: Routledge, 1990).

⁸⁵ Winnicott (1990), p. 177.

statement may also contain the explanation for the variety of psychological theories that have arisen and that have been held so vehemently. It is the personality, environmental experience and inclination which determine the theoretical outlook of the individual. An attack on the theory is then experienced as an attack on the integrity of the individual and hence of the self. Out of this arise also the unconscious fears of annihilation which must be resisted. However, we can insist that no one theory is *right*, for theories are based on intuitive perceptions of what transpires in the consulting room; no empirical measures exist which can judge the truth of any hypothesis, so we are left with our own experience to judge the matter. Each approach has particular insights into the human condition so we could well claim that pluralism is good.

It is appropriate, therefore, that a pluralistic psychological approach is available in the treatment of individuals for no one person will necessarily respond to a straight-jacket of dogma. In this regard, Kleist and his works are particularly appropriate for a psychoanalytical approach for his neuroses are, on the one hand, rooted in infant and childhood experiences and the death instincts are, on the other hand, evident in his life and works. We have mentioned above, in addition to the death instincts, the basic human emotions of hate, envy, unresolved oedipal issues, psychotic transgressions, repression, suicide, which are the negative aspects of existence which lead to dissolution. These are the themes of the plays, stories and life of Kleist. While they do not all fall within the purview of *Jenseits des Lustprinzips* they are, nevertheless, reductive and assert a negative influence on the individual's life. The concern with dissolution to a previous state, which is now a proven biological fundamental aspect of the death instincts, leads to a contemplation of death. A fundamental aspect of this is the place that the subject of death takes in the Romantic imagination following the rational strictures of the German *Aufklärung*. This subject will be discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 2

Death and the Romantic Imagination

Kleist was born in 1777 in the late period of the *Sturm und Drang* (Storm and Stress) and reached adulthood when the Romantic period was underway. The period of the *Sturm und Drang* lasted approximately from the late 1760's to the early 1780's and the subsequent Romantic epoch from approximately 1780 to the death of Ludwig Tieck (1773-1853) although its influence is still manifest in modern culture.¹ The period of the *Sturm und Drang* also coincided with the *Aufklärung* with its rational structured ethos, in which Kleist had been educated. In contrast, the *Sturm und Drang* and the Romantic periods emphasise extremes of emotion, the bizarre and the supernatural; a yearning for the ineffable, the darkness of the night and the sublimation of the self in the object. The uncanny is preponderant through inexplicable coincidences, scenes in impenetrable forests, caves and ruins; preoccupation with death and the afterlife exercised a strong fascination for artists and writers of this period. This preoccupation with the afterlife, as Lieselotte E. Kurth-Voigt notes, was often contemplated by the living in cemeteries.² The influence of the English writers prevailed here, which Goethe deemed cause for the preoccupation with death which consumed the generation of Werther. These English writers were, in particular, Edward Young (1683-1765), who in *Night Thoughts* laments the death of his wife and friends and human frailties, Thomas Gray (1716-1771), whose *Elegy* set in a churchyard was a contemplation on the lives of those who occupied the graves and James Macpherson (1736-1796) who supposedly translated the Gaelic poet Ossian into English and wrote of the night, blasted heaths and dead heroes as if they were alive.³ The influence of literary texts such as Homer, Ossian and Shakespeare was a determining factor in the attitudes of the time.

In *Das Unbehagen in der Kultur* (Civilisation and its Discontents), published in 1930, Freud examines the role of religion and civilisation as giving a bulwark to the fragile lives

¹ Detlef Kremer, *Romantik*, 2nd. edn (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2001), pp. 49-50.

² Lieselotte E. Kurth-Voigt, 'Poetic Visions of the Beyond and Imaginative Speculations about Continued Existence after Death in Eighteenth Century Literature: Prolegomena to a Study of Life in a Future State', *South Atlantic Review*, vol. 52, no. 2 (1987), 3-14 (p. 5).

³ Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Aus meinem Leben: Dichtung und Wahrheit*, in *Goethes Werke*, ed. by Erich Trunz and others, 14 vols (Hamburg: Wegner, 1951), vol. 9, pp. 524-527; Edward Young, *The Complaint: or Night Thoughts on Life Death and Immortality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Thomas Gray, 'Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard', in *The Oxford Book of English Verse 1250-1918*, ed. by Sir Arthur Quiller Couch (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1939), pp. 465-468; James Macpherson, *Poems of Ossian* (Memphis: General Books LLC, 2012).

of the individual as he or she mediates the conflict between Eros and the death instincts.⁴ The fear of death is considered as an unconscious factor in life in order to give the individual a concern for self-preservation.⁵ Speculation about the afterlife is also a desire to escape fears of annihilation, which is predominantly the fear of the extinguishing of the ego. Man's overweening desire not to extinguish the ego transcends the symbolic identity which he has constructed and which leads to thoughts of an afterlife and resurrection. This afterlife is constructed in a number of ways which are dependent on cultural milieu and community beliefs and, for the Romantics, the corporeality of the afterlife was a significant factor in the fantasy of what happens next. The departed continued to inhabit the sense and preoccupation of their earthly life so that re-union in the afterlife was merely a continuation of the earthly life, which suggests that the survival of the ego and self-consciousness survives in the afterlife. Here was an unassailable belief that life is not extinguished with death but continues in some form, which was comprehensible to the living.

The ideas concerning death and the afterlife are reflected in eighteenth century literature, though Kurth-Voigt writes that poets might borrow their vision of the afterlife from the more beneficial models of ancient literature. Thus the Greek Elysian Fields, which became the Isles of the Blessed, were the abode of the righteous dead. Since here there was no time or geography it was possible for the renowned men of all ages to meet and discourse on the problems of the day.⁶ However, when this became a public forum, which then had little to do with the concerns of the individual for his soul in the afterlife, Elysium lost its appeal and was replaced by the heaven of Christianity. This heaven was freely embellished with the promise of corporeal resurrection from which messages could be sent to those left behind.⁷ Christoph Martin Wieland (1733-1813) wrote in verse form a series of nine letters for fictitious characters, *Briefe von Verstorbenen an hinterlassene Freunde* (Letters from the Deceased to Surviving Friends), in which advice was tendered from an idealised seraphic space about righteous behaviour, the nature of the afterlife and consolation about the difficulties of being alive.⁸

⁴ Sigmund Freud (1930), 'Das Unbehagen in der Kultur', GW. 14, 421-506 (Civilisation and its Discontents, SE. 21, 59-146).

⁵ Ernest Becker, *The Denial of Death* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1973), p.18.

⁶ Kurth-Voigt, (1987), p. 4

⁷ Kurth-Voigt, (1987), p. 4.

⁸ Christoph Martin Wieland (1753), *Briefe von Verstorbenen an hinterlassene Freunde* (Zurich: Conrad Orel, 1753), <https://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_search_guide.aspx> [accessed 1 April 2017].

I would posit two forms of death in examining the Romantic experience and fantasy of the afterlife. There is on the one hand the demise of the body and the fantasised experience of the post-mortem in which the personality and desires of the dead survive. On the other hand there is the psychological death which seeks sublimation in the environment or in the other which involves a negation of the ego and which is the experience of self-identification of subject and object in the process of *participation mystique* (mystical participation). The seamless quality of this experience, of the unification of subject and object, is what the writers and artists of the Romantic epoch sought to recover. These themes, as well as the bizarre and the supernatural and ultimately the dissolution or annihilation of the ego, are a component of the works of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832), Friedrich Hölderlin (1770-1843), Novalis (Friedrich von Hardenberg 1772-1801), and Heinrich von Kleist (1777-1811). The desire for a symbiotic sublimation were expressed by Goethe's character Werther in *Die Leiden des jungen Werther* (The Sorrows of Young Werther), by Hölderlin's character Hyperion in the eponymous novel, by Novalis in the poem cycle 'Hymnen an die Nacht' (Hymns to the Night), and by Kleist in *Über das Marionettentheater* (On the Marionette Theatre), and in his letters. Novalis and Kleist also sought the darkness of death through demise of the body, which would, nevertheless, lead to a resurgent life of new consciousness.

The pantheistic self-identification of subject and object was explored by the French ethnographer Lucien Lévy-Bruhl (1857-1939), who studied primitive mental states, which studies were published in 1910, *Les fonctions mentales dans les sociétés inférieures* (translated as *How Natives Think*).⁹ He determined that primitive peoples lived in a world in which there was no split between the inner mental functioning and apprehension of the outside world. He called this aspect of mental functioning *participation mystique* (mystical participation). Aspects of the primitive person's life are related to symbolic perception of objects and there was, as further defined by C. G. Jung, no sense in which the individual who was merged into the collective can distinguish him or herself from it; such individuals can only think and experience by projection.¹⁰ The development of this idea also leads to the concept of projection and projective identification. This is a psychological phenomenon in which the subject projects his or her feelings or qualities into the object and introjects the objects feelings or qualities of the object into himself or herself. The relationship

⁹ Lucien Lévy-Bruhl (1910), *Les fonctions mentales dans les sociétés inférieures* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1951), trans. by Lilian A. Clare, *How Natives Think* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1926).

¹⁰ C. G. Jung (1921), 'The Type Problem in Aesthetics', in *Collected Works*, trans. by R.F.C.Hull, ed. by Sir Herbert Read, Michael Fordham, Gerhard Adler and William McGuire, 20 vols (London: Routledge, 1989), vol. 6, §495-497.

between the object and the subject is seamless and this seamlessness, which the Romantics sought to recover, had been broken with the developing consciousness of culture.

A new language was required to overcome the rationalism of the *Aufklärung* and to facilitate the emergence of a new sensibility which consisted of an awareness of interiority and feelings of the possibility of union with the divine. The new form of language, which had its roots in Pietism also found expression in the sensibility of *Empfindsamkeit* (sensitivity) in the poetry of Friedrich Klopstock (1724-1803).¹¹ This new language, this new terminology informed by unbounded feeling, provided fertile ground in which the ideas of Johann Gottfried Herder (1744-1803) flourished. Herder encouraged a sensibility which elevated nature, feelings and human individualism over the rationalism of the *Aufklärung* but which required a linguistic precursor: hence the significance of the language of religious Pietism and the *Empfindsamkeit* of Klopstock's poetry. Catherine J. Minter has given two definitions of this new feeling of *Empfindsamkeit*: 'in the moral sense (it) signifies the quality of being easily affected by emotional influences; and in its physical sense it denotes physiological (nervous) sensibility'.¹² What it does do, is to remove the individual's sensibility from the rational scientific external culture of the *Aufklärung* and make an examination of the internal world sufficiently significant so that a new language, a new way of communicating was required to deal with it.

It is this aspect of the *Aufklärung*, the rational and scientific, which Herder rejects when he declares his wish to be a philosopher of nature and to understand it without books or instruments. Herder had lived in Riga for five years as a clergyman and teacher and left Riga by ship in 1769. During the voyage he recorded a variety of literary projects in *Journal meiner Reise im Jahr 1769* (Journal of my Voyage in the Year 1769), first published in 1803, which were to be the basis of his lifetime's work.¹³ The voyage was an escape from his existence in Riga for 'alles war mir zuwider' (everything was repugnant to me), and he had the intention of familiarising himself with the world of his Creator. During the sea voyage he also thought to familiarise himself with his own nature and as to what he thought and believed.¹⁴ He felt that he could be a philosopher of nature and perceive the world without the aid of books or instruments.¹⁵ These musings were initially formless and required to be cast in a new language in which metaphor was to prevail over concept. It

¹¹ Nicholas Boyle, *Goethe: The Poet and the Age*, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon, 1991), vol. 1, pp.12-39.

¹² Catherine J. Minter, 'Literary "Empfindsamkeit" and Nervous Sensibility in Eighteenth-Century Germany', *The Modern Language Review*, vol. 96, no. 4 (2001), 1016-1028 (p. 1017).

¹³ Johann Gottfried Herder (1769), *Journal meiner Reise im Jahr 1769*, in *Werke*, ed. by Günter Arnold and others, 10 vols (Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1985-2000), vol. 9/2, pp. 9-126.

¹⁴ Rüdiger Safranski, *Romantik: Eine deutsche Affaire* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 2010), p. 18.

¹⁵ Herder (1803), vol. 9/2, p. 9, p. 11.

also brought Herder into conflict with the philosophy of Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) and the *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (Critique of Pure Reason), first published in 1781.¹⁶ Safranski writes that Herder was sufficiently presumptuous to wish to rejuvenate the concept of reason.¹⁷ Herder took issue with Kant's limiting of intuition and perception and contrasted his own 'lebendige Vernunft' (living reason) with Kant's 'abstrakte Vernunft' (abstract reason). The former immerses one in the depths of existence, the unconscious, the irrational and the spontaneous. Its basis is the dark undercurrents of human existence which relies on the flux of the creative forces in life.¹⁸ The latter, according to Herder, excludes and cannot comprehend the creativity of the former and is based merely on causality. Ultimately, Herder was working towards the promise of the perfectibility of man.¹⁹

Rudolf Unger asserts that this sense of the visceral embodiment of life was attractive to the generation of the *Sturm und Drang*, who were no longer content with the sparse conclusions of rational psychology of the *Aufklärung*.²⁰ Hence Herder attempted to understand the world through 'soul'; 'soul' was the carrier of feeling, fantasy and emotion, which is thus in touch with unconscious psychic energies through living reason.²¹ Herder saw himself as the prophet of change in which only a poet is capable of encompassing the chaos and the dark chasm from which will arise the energies to reanimate the world.²² The capacity of the soul represents an *Innerlichkeit* (interiority), which also connects to the external and which then develops into the spiritual and cultural life of the nation. Herder does not merely wish to establish a new aesthetic but to build a new world in which the capacities of 'soul' are given a pre-eminence and in which the concept of an alternative afterlife, as palingenesis, plays its part.

In *Tithon und Aurora* (1792), Herder lays the ground work for his later support of the idea of palingenesis.²³ He describes palingenesis as a gradual evolution, not revolution, in which we are brought into maturity. The old must die in order that the new can be brought into life, thus 'was wir Überleben unserer selbst also Tod nennen, ist bei diesen Seelen nur Schlummer zu neuem Erwachen, eine Abspannung des Bogens zu neuem Gebrauche'

¹⁶ Immanuel Kant (1781), *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (Cologne: Atlas, 1950).

¹⁷ Safranski (2010), p. 20.

¹⁸ Safranski (2010), p. 21.

¹⁹ Kremer (2001), p. 75.

²⁰ Rudolf Unger, *Herder, Novalis und Kleist: Studien über die Entwicklung des Todesproblems im Denken und Dichten vom Sturm und Drang zur Romantik* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1968), p. 4.

²¹ Unger (1968), p. 4.

²² Vines Buchheitt, 'Sendungsbewusstsein beim frühen Herder', *Euphorion*, vol. 95, no. 1 (2001), 1-15 (p. 3).

²³ Herder (1792), 'Tithon und Aurora', vol. 8, 221-239.

(what we call the survival of our self that is death is with these souls merely a sleep into a new awakening; an easing of the bow for new use).²⁴ Herder speculates directly about the return of the individual to the embodied world in *Palingenesie: Vom Wiederkommen menschlicher Seelen* (Palingenesis: On the Resurrection of Human Souls), published in 1797. He asks, with a nod to Pythagoras and Plato, why each individual could not have been on this earth more than once.²⁵ This thought arises from the sense that each incarnation is a step towards perfectibility in which the new life will bring the benefits learned in past lives. Moreover, Herder generalises that all people imagine their future estate as their current one, particularly as a community. But those individuals who lacked empathy with the world and who were not so tied to it and did not feel the soul of the world, also did not transfer the experience of their existence into the next world. Metempsychosis was the answer for these individuals.²⁶ The souls of these individuals were not then transferred from their current life into a similar one in the next life but into animals or birds, whose lives seemed less toilsome. To join them, says Herder, was ‘sinnlicher Wahn’ (sentient madness).²⁷ Herder also regards metempsychosis as a form of punishment for not having lived a righteous life. However, animals and birds are not aware of the reason why they have been reduced in status from man. As a moral law, punishment without knowing the reason is unsatisfactory and is, therefore, also unjust. Herder thus rejects metempsychosis as a punishment.²⁸

This concern with the natural world led the Romantics to favour the creative attitude of Baruch Spinoza (1632-1677).²⁹ Herder addressed Spinoza’s pantheism, that all Nature is unified in the Divine, in *Gott: Einige Gespräche* (God: Some Dialogues), published in 1797.³⁰ In this work, Herder re-casts Spinoza’s philosophy as vitalistic pantheism in which Nature is an all-encompassing living organism. Herder engages with the science of the day to suggest that matter is alive and vital and not an inert substance. All of nature is a living thing and with this statement, Herder asserts the unity of Nature: there is no longer a dualism, for the mind/matter split is merely a different facet of the same living force. Herder stipulates the interconnectivity of all things: nothing in nature is superfluous and without cause. The soul is translated into a new arena of activity if its current place of

²⁴ Herder (1792), vol. 8, p. 234.

²⁵ Herder (1792), ‘Palingenesie: Vom Wiederkommen menschlicher Seelen’, vol. 8, 257-282 (p. 257).

²⁶ Herder (1792), vol. 8, p. 261.

²⁷ Herder (1792), vol. 8, p. 261.

²⁸ Herder (1792), vol. 8, pp. 264-265.

²⁹ Frederick C. Beiser, *The Romantic Imperative: The Concept of Early German Romanticism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard, 2003), p. 77.

³⁰ Herder (1787), ‘Gott: Einige Gespräche’, vol. 4, 679-794.

activity is destroyed. Moreover, everything in nature, which arises, must also disappear and it disappears as soon as it is enabled to do so but it also remains as long as possible. With the metaphor of the flower, Herder argues that even though it dies once it has achieved its highest niveau, it will regenerate and not necessarily make place for a younger manifestation for ‘kein Tod ist in der Schöpfung, sondern Verwandlung’ (there is no death in creation but on the contrary, transformation).³¹ Nature is thus an ever evolving revolving system of decay and transformation in which the optimistic Christian doctrine of resurrection into a new life is embedded. Herder ascribes to nature a dynamism which prevents stagnation. The paradox of life is movement and energy in an attempt to attain stasis but there is an ongoing movement from chaos into order. There must be progress in the Kingdom of God and progress requires transformation.

It is this seamless quality of experience, which Werther seeks in the passage quoted further below. and it is also this quality of experience which Hölderlin addresses in *Urteil und Sein* (Judgement and Being).³² For Hölderlin, ‘Nature’ is the source and the split between subject and object destroys the source.³³ ‘Nature’ is the unity, which governs the individual’s existence but which is destroyed by the judgement of his or her consciousness or intellectual scrutiny. Novalis also addresses this theme in his incomplete novel, *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, with Heinrich’s regressive search for the blue flower.³⁴ These questions, which the artists of the Romantic period sought to answer, also required a language that acknowledged a certain narcissistic interiority, a concentration of the subject on itself.

However, there was also a positive aspect to this thesis. Impulses of the mind spread through the body and increase the strength and power of the emotions.³⁵ These, then, had physical expression in sympathy/empathy in which the relationship between friends and lovers is expressed as a physical force of an electric or magnetic nature. This feature of magnetism was used therapeutically by Franz Anton Mesmer (1734-1815). Mesmer developed a method of curing patients by accessing the animal magnetism of the individual with the aid of magnets. He maintained that the magnetiser, the doctor, is the

³¹ Herder (1787), vol. 4, p. 792.

³² Friedrich Hölderlin (1795), ‘Urteil und Sein’, in *Friedrich Hölderlin: Sämtliche Werke und Briefe*, ed. by Jochen Schmidt, Katharina Grätz, Wolfgang Behschnitt, 3 vols (Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1992-1994), vol. 2, pp. 502-503.

³³ Stefan Bütner, ‘Natur-Ein Grundwort Hölderlins’, in *Hölderlin Jahrbuch 1988/89*, 224-247.

³⁴ Novalis, *Werke, Tagebücher und Briefe Friedrich von Hardenbergs*, ed. by Hans Joachim Mähl, Richard Samuel, Hans Jürgen Balmes, 3 vols (Munich: Hanser, 2002-2005), vol. 1, pp. 237-413.

³⁵ Minter (2001), p. 1021.

therapeutic agent of the cure. To enable healing, the magnetiser must first of all establish a relationship with the patient: a ‘rapport’. The healing occurs through the crisis which the magnetiser experiences and which he then controls. This interchange between the magnetiser and the patient in a medical environment is similar to the sympathy between friends and lovers in a social environment.³⁶ It is also the concept and manifestation of transference, which is important in a clinical setting.

A kiss between individuals is an exchange of energy in which the partners animate each other through the mutual transference of a life force or vital fire.³⁷ In the exchange the souls of the individuals are also affected so that a strange communion, *eine Seelengemeinschaft* (a community of souls), takes place. Novalis, writing in October 1791 to Professor Karl Leonhard Reinholdt (1757-1823), a philosopher and populariser of Kant, envies his meetings with Friedrich Schiller:

Sie sehen ihn oft. Sie tauschen Ihre beiden Seelen oft an traulichen Abenden gegeneinander um und ich der sich so heiß darnach dürstete kann kein stiller lauschender nichts verlierner alles tiefverschlingender Zeuge dieses herrlichen Schauspiels seyn.

(You see him frequently. You frequently exchange your two souls on intimate evenings and I who craved this so fervently cannot be a quiet, listening, missing nothing and attentively absorbing witness of this wonderful scene).³⁸

This passage illustrates the extent to which individuals, susceptible to the communion of souls, were prepared to lose their identity in this spiritual exchange. This is similar to the feeling experienced by Werther, in his pantheistic communion with nature, in the passage quoted below. Individuals were prepared to dissolve in the spiritual aura of another, which also meant abandoning their self without apprehension of what the annihilation of the self might entail. This seems to suggest that a death wish is a close corollary of this mind set and it is, therefore, not surprising that Goethe, Hölderlin, Novalis and Kleist, who expressed the desire to be become indissolubly linked and understood by the other, should also approach the psychological dissolution through physical annihilation by death, either in fact or phantasy. This passage is, therefore, an example of the psychological death which the Romantics sought. The psychological death is the sublimation of the individual’s psyche in the experience of the now.

³⁶ Henri F. Ellenberger, *The Discovery of the Unconscious: The History and Evolution of Dynamic Psychiatry* (New York: Basic Books, 1970), p. 69.

³⁷ Minter (2201), p. 1022.

³⁸ Novalis (1791), vol. 1, p. 509.

the cult of death play with the fascination with the afterlife. Fanciful deceits were developed in order to capture the excitement of the known/unknown.

Herder, in particular, influenced Goethe, his junior by five years. Goethe embraced Herder's pantheism and found expression for the ideas of the *Sturm und Drang* in the epistolary novel published in 1774, *Die Leiden des jungen Werther* (The Sorrows of Young Werther). Werther turns his back on the environment in order to engage in reverie, when he can say, in response to the limitations of the everyday imposed on people *ich kehre in mich selbst zurück und finde eine Welt*' (I return to my innermost self and find a world).³⁹ He identifies the lack of opportunity that individuals have to develop their true nature and to which they remain blind. These ideas which Herder brought to re-invigorate the cultural and spiritual life of the community were a sudden eruption at a time, in which the ideas of the *Aufklärung* still held sway.

The pantheism which Herder promulgated is reflected by Werther, who seeks oblivion of the self in the presence of the world:

Wenn das liebe Tal um mich dämpft, und die hohe Sonne an der Oberfläche der undurchdringlichen Finsternis meines Waldes ruht, und nur einzelne Strahlen sich in das innere Heiligtum stehlen, ich dann im hohen Grase am fallenden Bach liege, und näher an der Erde tausend mannigfaltige Gräschen mir merkwürdig werden; wenn ich das wimmeln der kleinen Welt zwischen Halmen, die unzähligen unergründlichen Gestalten der Würmchen, der Mückchen näher an mein Herz, fühle und fühle die Gegenwart des Allmächtigen, der uns nach seinem Bilde schuf, das wehen des Allliebenden, der uns in ewiger Wonne schwebend trägt und erhält; mein Freund! wenn's dann um meine Augen dämmert, und die Welt um mich her und der Himmel ganz in in meiner Seele ruhn wie die Gestalt einer Geliebten - dann sehne ich mich oft und denke: Ach könntest du das wieder ausdrücken könntest du dem Papier das einhauchen, was so voll, so warm in dir lebt, daß es würde der Spiegel deiner Seele wie deine Seele ist der Spiegel des unendlichen Gottes! – Mein Freund - Aber ich gehe darüber zu grunde, ich erliege unter der Gewalt der Herrlichkeit dieser Erscheinungen'.

(When the vapours arise about me in this lovely valley and the sun shines high on the impenetrable darkness of my forest and only single rays steal into the inner sanctum and I lie here in the long grass by the tumbling brook and lower down close to the earth, I am alerted to the thousand various little grasses; when I sense the teeming of the little world among the stalks, the countless indescribable forms of the little worms, little gnats closer to my heart and feel the presence of the Almighty who created us in His image, the breath of the All-loving who bears us aloft and holds us there in perpetual joy; my friend, when it then grows dim before my eyes and the world about me and the heavens lie peaceful in my soul like a lover - then I am often filled with longing and think: ah if only you could express this, if only you could breathe onto the paper in all its fullness and warmth what is

³⁹Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1774), *Die Leiden des jungen Werther*', in *Goethes Werke*, ed. by Erich Trunz and others, 14 vols (Hamburg: Wegner, 1951), vol. 6, p. 13.

so alive in you so that it would mirror your soul as your soul is the mirror of God in His infinity! – my friend - But it will be then end of me. The power of the magnificence of these visions will be my undoing).⁴⁰

This passage illustrates the unconstrained ethos of the sensibility of the *Sturm und Drang* and the longing for sublimation in the other which, taken as the pantheistic *participation mystique* of Lévy-Bruhl, seeks the dissolution of the ego. The text moves from the particular to the general, from the minutiae of the forest floor to an all-encompassing relationship with God in one sentence. There is a desire to dissolve in the forest, just as much as there is a desire to dissolve in the arms of God but all is of no avail, for the dissolution of the self will contain no evidential material of the numinosity of the experience. The experience is all and is fugitive, for transcendence is not to be circumscribed. It is, in effect, a realisation of human mortality, for pursuit of such experiences, which is overwhelming, can only end in disaster for it would be Werther's undoing. This language then is not the scientific language of the *Aufklärung*; the experience cannot be measured with instruments nor did it erupt suddenly without relative factors in the culture. The feeling is like an act of devouring which derives from a deep unsatisfied longing for merging with the ineffable which can never be assuaged while man seeks and exercises self-consciousness.

Kleist also expresses this longing in the limits he experiences in language. The immediate transmission of feelings and desires is stunted by the inability to grasp the fruit in the bowl which he describes in *Brief eines Dichters an einen Anderen* (Letter from a Poet to Another) (3, 565-567). Language cannot describe, transmit or convey the essence of what is soul work. Werther feels this too, by being unable to perceive himself as both the container and enlivener of the environment through the act of establishing an 'I'. This leads him into the insubstantiality of his own existence and feelings and focuses on his narcissism and sense of transience of the world. If the world is transient then the question arises: what is my place in it?

In this ethos, the perception of the subject is self-centred and is summarised by Werther, when he writes to his correspondent Wilhelm about Lotte's husband, Albert:

Sie wäre mit mir glücklicher geworden als mit ihm! O er ist nicht der Mensch, die Wünsche dieses Herzens alle zu füllen. Ein gewisser Mangel an Gefühlbarkeit, ein Mangel - nimm es wie du willst; daß sein Herz nicht sympathisch schlägt bei - o! - bei der Stelle eines lieben Buches, wo mein Herz und Lottens in einem zusammentreffen.

⁴⁰ Goethe (1774), vol. 6, p. 9.

(She would have been happier with me than with him! Oh he is not the person to fill all the wishes of this heart. A certain lack and sensitivity, a lack take it as you want; that his heart does not beat sympathetically at - Oh! - at the passage of a dear book at which my heart and Lotte's join as one).⁴¹

This exclamation of Werther's follows a discussion he had had with Albert on the theme of suicide.⁴² Albert maintains that suicide indicates a weakness of character, whereas Werther argues that an individual is brought to suicide by a failure to mediate feelings and passion against the limitations of his or her existence. For Werther, suicide is justified as an answer to impossible personal conflict; hence the wish to die is justifiable. Albert, as a representative of the *Aufklärung*, is sober and regressive and maintains absolute standards of behaviour; whereas Werther, a representative of the *Sturm und Drang*, argues for the excesses of human nature through which something great and wonderful can be achieved. Werther considers himself to be speaking from the heart, whereas Albert, to his mind, is offering merely platitudes. The broken nature of Goethe's prose is a strong metaphor for the turmoil of feeling which hinders rational and sequential language, which is after all also the language that must be abandoned in favour of the language of poetry; the language of poetry is 'feeling' language, which Werther finds in literary texts.

Thus, Werther's internal life is sustained by his adherence to the works of Homer and Ossian.⁴³ Homer creates for Werther an artificial fantasy existence in which Werther does not have to experience the impingements of real life. Stuart Walker Strickland also makes the germane point that Werther's existence is one long escape from personal difficulties: he flees from Wilhelm after an unhappy love affair; he flees the bourgeois society of Lotte and Albert; he flees from the aristocratic company of the Count; he flees from boredom and inactivity; and finally he flees from life itself with his suicide. He consoles himself with reading Homer after experiencing the difficulties in the social round with aristocratic individuals who are not sympathetic to him and who reject him.⁴⁴ The bigger wound arrives when he realises that all and sundry in the neighbourhood know of his 'humiliation', which for a narcissistic personality such as Werther is an impingement that can only be remedied by removing himself totally from obloquy.

Werther's mood turns darker when he loses the connection with Lotte through the presence of Albert and instead of the ordered, sun-lit Mediterranean world of Homer, we

⁴¹ Goethe (1774), vol. 6, p. 75.

⁴² Goethe (1774), vol. 6, pp. 45-50.

⁴³ Stuart Walker Strickland, 'Flight from the Given World and Return to the New: The Dialectic of Creation and Escape in Goethe's "Die Leiden des jungen Werther"', *The German Quarterly*, vol. 64, no. 2 (1991), 190-206.

⁴⁴ Strickland (1991), p. 191.

are given Ossian with a landscape of dark gorges, swollen rivers, looming mountains, storms and fogs, desolate heathland and moonshine, which reflect Werther's distress and illuminate his internal world. In the letter of 12 October, Werther writes: 'Ossian hat in meinem Herzen den Homer verdrängt' (Ossian has ousted Homer from my heart).⁴⁵ Albert has supplanted him and Werther's internal object world is now one of despair and desolation, which is reflected in the desolate Ossianic landscape. We also have the death of noble individuals of which he, Werther, will be one.⁴⁶

This wish to die which Werther expresses is one of the factors outlined by Karl A. Memminger as a part of a triad of unconscious conditions which underlie suicidal ideation.⁴⁷ The other two conditions are the wish to kill (for which Albert would be a prime target) and the wish to be killed (which underlies the Ossianic ethos of self-immolation in battle). Kate Friedlander proposes that the wish to die is in the unconscious linked with the wish to sleep; there is an afterlife to which the self has access since sleep is no annihilation, for in Greek mythology the gods of sleep and death, Morpheus and Thanatos, are brothers.⁴⁸ However, for Werther all sources of narcissistic satisfaction ultimately arrive at death so 'adieu! Ich sehe dieses Elendes kein Ende als das Grab' (adieu! I see no end to this misery but the grave).⁴⁹

For Werther, death is not the end of life but merely a stage, a resurrection into another existence which will allow him a reunification with Lotte. Werther, unable to accept the failure of his connection to Lotte in this life, expects the connection to be established in the afterlife in complete corporeality. He greets with hope and certainty Lotte's question, if they will meet again in the afterlife.⁵⁰ This anticipates Werther's ultimate statement in his last letter 'ich gehe voran! Gehe zu meinem Vater, zu deinem Vater' (I am going ahead! Going unto my Father, unto your Father).⁵¹ The final letter completes too, the existence of the round of self-objects which have been indicated throughout the novel: 'die Freundin meiner Jugend' (the loving friend of my youth), nature, Homer and Ossian, Lotte and ultimately the Father in Heaven. All earthly sources have failed to feed and sustain Werther's narcissistic needs and the ultimate source of satisfaction is the godhead, which

⁴⁵ Goethe (1774), vol. 6, p. 82.

⁴⁶ Goethe (1774), vol. 6, p. 82.

⁴⁷ Karl A. Memminger, 'Psychoanalytic Aspects of Suicide', *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 14 (1933), 376-390.

⁴⁸ Kate Friedlander, 'On the "Longing to Die"', *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 21 (1940), 416-426.

⁴⁹ Goethe (1774), vol. 6, p. 55.

⁵⁰ Goethe (1774), vol. 6, p. 57.

⁵¹ Goethe (1774), vol. 6, p. 117.

with Lotte in an altered state, he can only meet in death. However, this is merely another stage in Werther's blind search for an object worthy of his devotion which shall not disappoint; annihilation of the sentient ego is the self-defeating result of Werther's narcissistic search.

In creating *Werther*, Goethe was also dealing with issues in his own life and the process of creation enabled him to overcome what he called: 'den pathalogischen Zustand' (the pathological condition) to which he was subject at the time and of which he does not wish to be reminded, as he mentions to Johann Peter Eckermann on 2 January 1824.⁵² Ernst Feise has also established a connection between Goethe's suicidal state of mind at the time of writing of *Werther*, due to his unhappy love affair with Charlotte Buff. It is apparent then, that Goethe experienced the pains of unrequited love, which had a real and destabilising affect and that these feelings were mediated in *Werther*.⁵³

The quality of experience which Hölderlin addresses in *Urteil und Sein* is a mirror of that shown in *Werther*. For Hölderlin, the split between subject and object was the source of our alienation from nature. Nature is the unity which governs the individual's existence but which is destroyed by the judgement of his or her consciousness or intellectual scrutiny. This is the conundrum which Hölderlin addressed in *Urteil und Sein*, the separation of subject and object, of soul and matter. Since the split is irreparable, the individual is left with an intense unquenchable longing for that which is unobtainable. This is demonstrated in Hölderlin's *Hyperion*, of which the final version was completed in 1798. *Hyperion* is another epistolary novel but composed from a retrospective perspective.⁵⁴ The events which Hyperion describes to his correspondent, Belarmin, have already occurred and concern his own passivity before he is energised by his love for Diotima, his part in the war against the Turks, the death of Diotima and his sojourn in Germany. The character of Hyperion vacillates constantly between the need for political activism to change the world and religious quietism that seeks surrender in the infinite. The grave and the past are associated in an equitable solution to the unbearable tension between these poles:

Wir sind zerfallen mit der Natur und was einst, wie man glauben kann, Eins war, widerstreitet sich jetzt und Herrschaft und Knechtschaft wechselt auf beiden Seiten. Oft ist uns als wäre die Welt Alles und wir Nichts, oft aber auch als wären wir Alles und die Welt nichts.

⁵² Johann Peter Eckermann, *Gespräche mit Goethe*, ed. by Ernst Beutler (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1999), p. 545.

⁵³ Ernst Feise, 'Goethes Werther als nervöser Charakter', *The Germanic Review*, vol. 1, no. 3 (1926), 185-253 (pp. 232-233).

⁵⁴ Friedrich Hölderlin (1798), *Hyperion* vol. 2, pp. 13-175.

(We have fallen away from nature and what was once, as one can believe, as one is now in opposition and the seigniorial and the serf change on both sides. It often seems to us, as if the world were all and we were nothing but also as if we were all and the world nothing).⁵⁵

Hölderlin experiences the flux of the world and suggests a psyche which is unanchored in the world and which moves from the incarnated to the un-incarnated. Hyperion expresses a depressive *Lebensanschauung*: ‘mein Vaterland... wie ein Totengarten’ (my father-land ...like a garden of the dead).⁵⁶ Hyperion’s retreat into a hermit’s life is redolent of personal failure for he cannot deal with the demands of the collective and the culture is anathema to him as ‘die rauhe Hülse um den Kern des Lebens und nichts weiter ist der Staat’ (the state is nothing more than the rough shell around the core of life).⁵⁷ Images of death, longing for death and the idealised life of ancient Greece reinforce this feeling. Antiquity though is buried and forgotten, for ‘da saß ich traurig spielend neben ihm und pflückte das Moos von eines Halbgottes Piedestal, grub eine marmorne Heldenschulter aus dem Schutt’ (I sat beside him sadly playing and plucked moss from a half-god’s pedestal, dug a hero’s shoulder from the ruins).⁵⁸ Hyperion envies the child because he feels that he, Hyperion, is excluded from a close communion with nature: his self-awareness excludes him. The exclusion impoverishes his connection to nature, from which he might draw emotional sustenance in the way a child does for ‘in ihm ist Frieden; es ist noch nicht mit sich selbst zerfallen. Reichtum ist in ihm; es kennt sein Herz die Dürftigkeit des Lebens nicht. Es ist unsterblich, denn es weiß vom Tode nichts’ (it is at peace: it has not yet fallen out of itself. It has riches; it does not know its heart or the poverty of life. It is immortal for it knows nothing of death).⁵⁹ Implicit in this quotation is the feeling that we are divorced from the real essence of life, that there is something of which we are dimly aware but which we cannot grasp. The child has not yet come into that state of consciousness in which the adult lives, subject to the dichotomy between subject and object, nor is it conscious of its future demise. Hyperion abhors an integrated life in the community, which he renounces in order to commune with nature and there to find his consolation and salvation. The sublimation of the self in nature, to abandon consciousness is also a retreat from the problem of living in a changing world where uncertainty rules: psychological retreat and death are to be preferred.

⁵⁵ Hölderlin (1798), vol. 2, p. 256.

⁵⁶ Hölderlin (1798), vol. 2, p. 15.

⁵⁷ Hölderlin (1798), vol. 2, p. 40.

⁵⁸ Hölderlin (1798), vol. 2, p. 22.

⁵⁹ Hölderlin (1798), vol. 2, p. 17.

The inexorable longing for sublimation of the self in nature is also expressed archetypally by Novalis in his incomplete novel *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, written in 1800 and published posthumously in 1802.⁶⁰ Heinrich dreams of the blue flower and in the dream regresses to a metaphorical womb and is about to reach the blue flower when his mother awakens him. The return to the womb betokens a return to the oceanic state in which there was no separation of subject and object; all is unified in the experience of the womb and the non-ego. A return to this state is an extinguishing of the ego, a death of consciousness arriving at *participation mystique*. This programme set out at the beginning of Novalis' novel is a fundamental statement of Romantic obsession similar to that expressed by Hölderlin. The search for the blue flower associated with the uterine experience becomes a defining symbol of Romantic desire. Words are unnecessary in this uterine state, which is also the immediacy of communion sought by Kleist. However, regression to this state is impossible; Kleist is to be forever thwarted in his desire for unmediated communication.

This search for the meaning of death, immortality and speculation about the beyond was also pursued by Novalis in *Hymnen an die Nacht* (Hymns to the Night).⁶¹ This was the only complete work published in Novalis' lifetime in the last issue of the magazine, *Athenäum*, in 1800. Unger claims rightly that two poems in Herder's *Paramythien: Dichtungen aus der griechischen Sage* (1785) (Metamyths: Poetry from the Greek Legends), *Nacht und Tag* (Night and Day) and *Der Schlaf* (Sleep), are the *Gedankengut* (concept) of the first and second of Novalis' *Hymnen* but that Novalis renders Herder's concepts in a more poetic and allegorical manner.⁶²

Thus Novalis' first *Hymn* commences in praise of enlivening Light, whose presence reveals the riches of the world. But then the poet turns to ineffable, secret Night, which initially brings feelings of absence and a yearning for Light. These feelings are replaced by feelings of safety in the presence of Mother Night in which an eternal wedding night can be celebrated with the beloved. Night is now experienced as the sacred embrace whose infinite power is represented by the dark vault of the heavens.

In Novalis' second *Hymn*, the return of Light overcomes Night but the realm of Night is boundless for it can also be met in the Light through the intoxication of wine, oil of

⁶⁰ Novalis (1800), vol. 1, pp. 241-242.

⁶¹ Novalis (1800), vol. 1, pp. 147-177.

⁶² Unger (1968), p. 67; Herder (1785), vol 3, pp. 697-724.

almonds or opium and the delights of sensual love. Novalis stresses the limitations of Light in contrast to Night.

Novalis' third *Hymn* carries a subjective experience of death which is based on the transcendent experience that he underwent when visiting the grave of his fiancée, Sophie von Kühn. Sophie had died on 19 March 1797; Novalis was unable to attend the funeral and had made previous visits to the grave but on a visit on 13 May he records his experience laconically in the middle of a diary entry which deals with mundane matters. After reading, Shakespeare, Novalis writes:

Abends gieng ich zu Sophieen. Dort war ich unbeschreiblich freudig – aufblitzende Enthusiasmus Momente- Das Grab blies ich wie Staub vor mir hin- Jahrhunderte waren wie Momente - ihre Nähe war fühlbar - ich glaubte sie solle immer vortreten.

(In the evening I went to Sophie. There I felt indescribably happy - flashes of momentary enthusiasm - I blew the grave before me as if it were dust - centuries were like an instant - her presence was palpable - I believed she will always appear).⁶³

With the enlivening arousal through Shakespeare and the experience at Sophie's grave, Sophie becomes a more significant presence in Novalis' thoughts as if he, too, were more concerned with death. Another laconic diary entry on 14/15 May records a further visit to Sophie's grave for 'es war beyde Tage viel Lärm und Getümmel im Haus. Gestern Abend war ich am Grabe und hatte einige wilde Freudenmomente' (both days there was much noise and tumult in the house. Yesterday evening I was at the grave and experienced a few wild moments of joy).⁶⁴ On 20 May, Novalis reflects on the grave without feeling emotion but then experiences 'die Bangigkeit ihres Todes - das Einsame meiner Lage - das Entsetzliche ihres Verlustes gefühlt' (the anxiety of her death - the loneliness of my situation - the horror of her loss).⁶⁵ On 21 May he visits Sophie's grave again, where he reflects deeply and experiences indescribable peace. He then leaves Grüningen for Tennstedt on 22 May and records how he felt ill at ease on account of potential intellectualising. This is the separation of subject and object which was also of concern to Hölderlin:

Je mehr der sinnliche Schmerz nachläßt desto mehr wächst die geistige Trauer desto höher steigt eine Art von ruhiger Verzweiflung. Die Welt wird immer fremder - die Dinge um mich her immer gleichgültiger. Desto *heller* wird es jetzt *um* mich und *in* mir - Bey meinem Entschluß darf ich nur nicht zu vernünfteln

⁶³ Novalis (1800), vol. 1, p. 463.

⁶⁴ Novalis (1800), vol. 1, p. 463.

⁶⁵ Novalis (1800), vol. 1, p. 466.

anfangen - Jeder Vernunftsgrund jede Vorspielung des Herzens ist schon Zweifel Schwanken und *Untreue*.

(The spiritual anguish increases as the physical sense of grief diminishes and the more a sort of quiet despair arises. The world becomes increasingly stranger - the things around me ever more indifferent. But it becomes increasingly *lighter around* and *in* me - I dare not start to intellectualise with the decision I have made - every intellectual basis, every precursor to the heart is already doubt, unsteadiness and *faithlessness*).⁶⁶

Novalis realises how important it is for him to continue to experience Sophie's death as a mystical transcendence, which cannot be rationalised; he cannot dissect the experience and pass judgement on it for it must be internalised as it was experienced, unmediated by the mind. He needs to reject the external world's impingements in order to maintain the experience of the event. Intellectualising would remove him from the immediacy of the experience; it would create a gulf between the subject and the object, which is detrimental to the experience of the world as an enveloping embrace. The consciousness of the experience of the separation of object and subject also makes the individual aware of the painful existential loneliness of the human condition. Novalis had made the decision to follow Sophie into death and he alludes to this and the irreplaceable chasm that Sophie has left in his life in letters to Caroline Just, a platonic friend in Tennstedt, and to Friedrich Schlegel.⁶⁷ In a later diary entry of 12/13 June Novalis writes:

Sie ist gestorben - so sterb ich auch - die Welt ist öde.
Selbst meine Philosophische Studien sollen mich nicht mehr stören. In tiefer
heiterer Ruhe will ich den Augenblick erwarten der mich ruft.

(She has died - as I will die - the world is desolate.
Even my philosophical studies shall no longer disturb me. I shall await the moment
which calls me with deep serene calmness).⁶⁸

Novalis recognises that his engagement with Sophie was not for this world and that he was not to find his completion in the present existence.⁶⁹ The experience at the grave is reconstituted in a deeply felt poetic form in the third *Hymne* as a loving recollection of the incident which changed his life. Central to Novalis' vision is the immanence of the beloved. She is not deceased but exists in a timeless zone which he experiences as a connection to eternal life in which death is merely a transfiguration into another existence of peace and tranquillity and which he is impatient to enter. The last morning will come when Light no longer drives away Night and love. Novalis writes in the *Teplitzer*

⁶⁶ Novalis (1800), vol. 1, pp. 466-467.

⁶⁷ Novalis (1800), vol. 1, p. 623 p. 635.

⁶⁸ Novalis (1800), vol. 1, p. 473.

⁶⁹ Novalis (1800), vol. 1, p. 473.

Fragmente, that this last morning will be the wedding night for ‘im Tode ist die Liebe am süßesten; für den Liebenden ist der Tod eine Brautnacht - ein Geheimniß süßer Mysterien’ (love is sweetest in death; death is a wedding night for the lover - a secret of sweet mysteries).⁷⁰ The entry into Night is an entry into death which is everlasting peace and which is not a final extinction of the self but rather a reunification with the beloved in an afterlife of continual sensual delight.

The afterlife which Novalis envisions is developed in the fourth to the sixth *Hymnen*. Death, the brother of Sleep, is no longer the end of existence since the example of Christ’s resurrection has shown that Death is merely a liminal experience; man is a stranger in Light and seeks Night’s eternal peace. The sense of this step into death and a reunification with the beloved implies a corporeality of the individual. We shall promenade in death as we did in life except that we shall be released from the frenetic business of the world, symbolised by Light; we shall enter the womb of the mother goddess, which shall be like sleep and an eternal sensual wedding-night. This sense of death is desirable for it removes all doubts and disharmonies which assail the individual. This clarity about the afterlife, though, is disturbed through Novalis’ pondering of the metempsychotic interchange between rocks, plants, animals and humankind.⁷¹ The interchange was no more since humankind had lost the instinctual truth of nature; it had become aware of its own consciousness which divorced it from the unity of nature and made nature’s language incomprehensible. Alice Kuzniar says of this, that here Novalis was close to Herder and Rousseau.⁷² In the notes for the continuation of *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, made by Ludwig Tieck (1773-1853) probably in 1808, Novalis sees an afterlife in which ‘Heinrich kommt in Sophiens Land in eine Nature wie sie seyn könnte’ (Heinrich comes into Sophie’s realm into a nature as it could be) and in which ‘Menschen, Thiere, Pflanzen, Steine und Gestirne, Elemente, Töne, Farben, kommen zusammen wie eine Familie, handeln und sprechen wie ein Geschlecht’ (people, animals, plants, rocks, heavenly bodies, elements, sounds, colours come together as if one family act and speak as a single species).⁷³ The influence of the Greek philosophers, particularly Pythagoras, is strong in these ruminations of Novalis’.

Novalis calls for the world to be romanticised and writes that ‘die Welt muß romantisiert werden. So findet man den ursprünglichen Sinn wieder’ (the world must be romanticised.

⁷⁰ Novalis (1798), vol. 2, p. 411; vol. 3, p. 190..

⁷¹ Alice Kuzniar, ‘A Higher Language: Novalis on Communion with Animals’, *The German Quarterly*, vol. 76, no. 4 (2003), 426-442 (p. 428).

⁷² Kuzniar (2003), p. 430.

⁷³ Novalis (1808), vol. 1, p. 412.

Thus one can recover the original faculty).⁷⁴ In so doing, Novalis is arguing for a qualitative change in cultural norms through which humankind can re-establish the reunification of subject and object and of spirit and matter. Novalis seems to expect to achieve this through an act of will. He says that the search for the secrets of nature is an individual internal task and exclaims in *Die Lehrlinge zu Saïs* published in 1802, in an echo of Goethe's Werther 'mich führt alles in mich selbst zurück' (I am led back to everything in myself).⁷⁵

This brew of post-death existence finds a mirror in letters which Kleist wrote during his life and particularly on the point of death in November 1811. Prior to this period, Kleist describes two events in a letter of 21 July 1801 to Wilhelmine, which could have had fatal consequences (4, 243-248). The first is of an accident during the journey to Paris with his sister, Ulrike, when the horses bolted and he and his sister were thrown out of the overturned carriage. The second concerned a stormy and dangerous passage on a Rhine packet-boat. Kleist reflects on these events and his relationship with mortality and concludes that life is only a worthwhile possession when the fear of death is eliminated (4, 427). This statement is a reflection of Biblical language which promises that those who love life shall lose it but those that are prepared to abandon life in the temporal world shall enjoy life everlasting.⁷⁶ It was with the recognition of this sentiment that Kleist gave himself the freedom to be morally alive and cast off the restraints which come with a fear of death with trepidation about the next step and the courage to risk all in self-exposure. It is also a statement which, in the progress of his life, points to a greater embrace of the possibility of death such that Kleist's repeated requests to friends and family to enter into a suicide pact with him is the joyfulness of the individual who finds living painful and can, therefore, abandon life easily, as he writes to his confidante, Marie von Kleist (4, 508). In a letter to Rühle von Lilienstern on 31 August 1806, Kleist writes of dying 'als ob wir aus einem Zimmer in das andere gehen' (as if we go from one room into another one) (4, 361). The easy transition makes death unproblematic and at the root of this thought is also the feeling that life is merely a short difficult span to be undergone, which is followed by an unending time of trouble-free death in which the existence of the self would continue: paradoxically, death is the beginning of life.

Combined with this ease for entry into death was also the separation anxiety, which is sourced in an infant's fear of separation from the mother, and which was something that

⁷⁴ Novalis (1798), vol. 2, p. 334.

⁷⁵ Novalis (1802), vol. 1, p. 203.

⁷⁶ John 12. 25.

had to be repaired throughout his life.⁷⁷ In Kleist's case, this was also confirmed by the companionship he sought on his incessant travels; he was constitutionally unable to set out alone. Moreover Kleist had made requests repeatedly for suicide pacts with August Rühle von Lilienstern (1780-1847), Ernst von Pfuel (1779-1866), Friedrich Fouqué de la Motte (1777-1843), and Marie von Kleist (1761-1831) and finally successfully with Henriette Vogel (1780-1811).⁷⁸ Like a child with its mother, Kleist required a companion for his journeys, whether geographic or terminal..

Ernest Jones (1879-1958) compares travelling together with dying together. The need to die with another suggests an existential loneliness, which may have originated in separation anxiety and the need for the presence of the other, the mother, who was absent in infancy. In this case, 'mother' also includes the figure of the primary care-giver in the mother's absence, such as grand-mother, nanny or maid. Jones suggests in his paper, 'On "Dying Together"', that there are several motives which lead to this particular outcome.⁷⁹ Primarily, he asserts that there is a belief in the mind of the potential suicide that death would transport him to a realm, in which all the failures of the present life are overcome and where no difficulties exist. Jones mentions another factor, which arises when life is filled with disappointment and failure: death will mend that. Moreover the wish to die together is also a paradigm for the wish to lie and sleep together, originally with the mother. This is seen as a return to a desired intimacy, unavailable in infancy and, which is deemed to be a desire for symbiotic union with the mother, expressed sexually. Death, Jones contends, is 'a return to the heaven whence we were born, i.e. to the mother's womb', which is a concept familiar in religious and mythological thought and was also expressed by Novalis in *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, in Heinrich's pursuit of the blue flower.⁸⁰ Furthermore, beyond the symbiotic union, there is also the suggestion of necrophilia, which entertains the sadistic impulse through the helplessness of the dead person, who cannot resist and can, therefore, be enjoyed without hindrance. A dead lover can endure limitless caresses and is unswervingly loyal.⁸¹

Ernest Becker writes of the paradox which assails modern man. On the one hand, there is the punishing wish to identify with something greater than oneself in order to avoid the

⁷⁷ D.W. Winnicott, *The Child, the Family, and the Outside World* (Harmondsworth: Pelican, 1964).

⁷⁸ Isidor Sadger, *Heinrich von Kleist: Eine pathographisch-psychologische Studie* (Wiesbaden: Bergmann, 1910), p. 57.

⁷⁹ Ernest Jones (1911), "'On 'Dying Together' and 'An Unusual Case of Dying Together'", in *Essential Papers on Suicide*, ed. by John T. Maltzberger and Mark J. Goldblatt (New York: New York University Press, 1996), pp. 11-19.

⁸⁰ Jones (1911), p. 11.

⁸¹ Jones (1911), p. 12.

sense of isolation and existential loneliness. The individual feels small and impotent, which is assuaged by the feeling of transcendent value by being part of something larger, which is perhaps meaningful. On the other hand, there is the unique desire of the individual to shine, to stand out from the crowd and be recognised, which brings the danger of isolation.⁸² Identification, though, is a natural urge, which finds expression in the wish to join the group and to be part of the community. An extreme manifestation of this is *participation mystique*, which also runs counter to the wish to be an individual in a group. To assert ego consciousness in the group works against this sense of belonging; this is the torturous ambivalence, which men and women must mediate in order to find existential acceptance. Perhaps this is also the tragedy of the Romantic desire for symbiotic merging with which Hölderlin concerned himself and published in *Urteil und Seyn*.⁸³ He recognised that consciousness, that is the supremacy of the ego, destroyed the unity of the individual with nature and the transcendent whole. A retreat from the world, a sublimation of the ego and a psychological death was the answer to the dilemma of the ‘to be or not to be’ for Hölderlin. He dramatized a symbiotic desire to merge identity in the environment and presents his character, Hyperion, as beset with depressive and negative thoughts for which the grave, a metaphor for a hermetical retreat from the world, is the answer.

In their writings, Goethe, Novalis and Kleist unconsciously solved the problem of engaging with the travails and turmoil of the world by fantasising an afterlife, in which the problems of this world had disappeared, yet the individuality of the person continued to exist and to enjoy the feelings and desires of earthly life. There was no sublimation of the ego but an assertion of individuality, in which Eros, the desire for connection and participation triumphs. Goethe’s *Werther*, influenced by the concept of the Ossianic afterlife, retreats to a world where heroes flourished and, in which with a nod to conventional religion, the God-Father awaited to bless his union with Lotte. For Novalis the afterlife experience was fantasised as a continuous immersion in sexual union with the deceased beloved in which time and place were immaterial.

There is a link between the expression of a literary idea and the internalisation of that idea which is the experience of transference. Thus the expression which Goethe gives to *Werther*’s expectation about meeting with Lotte post-mortem is an internalised experience which changes the apprehension of the subject through introjection of the feeling, experience or suffering of the object. Transference is not limited to the analytic setting but

⁸² Becker (1973), pp. 151-152.

⁸³ Hölderlin (1795), vol. 2, pp. 502-503.

is a common experience of the interaction of individuals.⁸⁴ We cannot help but be influenced by our experience which is mediated through transference. This includes the examination, reading or viewing of works of art. Goethe stressed the influence of the English writers concerning death, on the generation which enthusiastically took to *Werther*. In the same manner we could expect that Kleist too, like his contemporaries Hölderlin and Novalis, subscribed to the Romantic preoccupation with death. Kleist's death wish, however, was a concrete desire to extinguish life which had existed for his contemporaries merely as a fantasised way of joining with the numinous divine and so avoiding the dilemmas of existence. The disappointments in Kleist's life through failure in his lifetime as a writer, his increasing penury, his inability to come to terms with social expectations, the military ascendancy of Napoleon and not least his psychological structure led to an existential chasm from which he was unable to extricate himself.

In the following chapter we shall examine another one of the contributory destabilising elements to Kleist's life, the so-called Kant crisis, which disturbed his fragile sense of self and divorced him existentially from the immediacy of communication with the other. Yet, through his own creative stratagems, Kleist gave meaning to his work as an author. His confrontation with the subjectivity of Kantian philosophy, the sense that, in his perception of the world, he is obliged to be reliant on himself without external standards and with the uncertainty that others may experience what he apprehends differently, created an uncertainty from which he fashioned conflicts in his work of both a personal and an interpersonal nature. It is due to the destabilising force of this experience with Kant that Kleist came into himself as an artist. Conflict is, indeed, the wherewithal of the play or story. Would Kleist have become alive to the paradox and existential dissonance of life, which gives rise to conflict, without his encounter with Kant?

⁸⁴ Thomas S. Szasz, 'The Concept of Transference', *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 44 (1963), 432-435 (p. 433).

Chapter 3

Kleist's Kant Crisis

The Big Issue is a magazine sold by individuals on the street who are either homeless or are trying to get back on their feet after a personal crisis. The editorial in the issue of 23-9 November 2015, entitled 'We will bring change, in our own words', deals in part with the incomprehensibility of the terrorist attacks in Paris on the evening of 20 November, 2015 and our inability to find the right words to express our outrage.¹ Paul McNamee, the editor, admiring Kingsley Amis, writes: 'it's that words, as Kingsley Amis said, change things. Words matter'. This concern with language, the meaning of words and our failure to master communication in the face of unexpected outrage or turbulence was also a problem for Kleist which was initiated with the move from the strict, rationalist and manageable view of the world, in which the natural sciences provided a secure foundation for understanding the environment, to the fugitive, indefinable subjective structures of appearances initiated by his confrontation with Kantian philosophy.² At bottom, however, Kleist benefited from the freedom which this subjectivity brought for it was without boundaries and allowed the imagination to roam. There was benefit as well as danger.

In this chapter, therefore, we shall explore Kleist's tussle with problematic meaning and communication and the ineffable. In a 1912 essay, entitled 'Language', Georg Groddeck (1866-1934), writes of the inhibiting effect of language, which affects our thoughts and actions. We cannot give free rein to thoughts which language is incapable of expressing.³ This is the conundrum which faces Kleist, for he cannot tear the heart out of his breast in order to give his sister, Ulrike, the benefit of his innermost thoughts; the mechanism fails (4, 313). There is little doubt that language was subject to the ego in the period of rationality of the *Aufklärung*. The extent of experimentation to demonstrate the

¹ Paul McNamee, 'We will bring change in our words', *The Big Issue*, no. 1181, 23- 29 November (2015), 1-54 (p. 6).

² Bernhard Greiner, 'Kant', in *Kleist Handbuch: Leben-Werk-Wirkung*, ed. by Ingo Breuer (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2013), 206- 209 (p. 206).

³ Georg Groddeck, 'Language' in *The Meaning of Illness: Selected Psychoanalytic Writings*, trans. by Gertrud Mander, ed. by Lore Schacht (London: Karnac, 1988), 248-264 (pp. 248-249).

nature of the universe gave this period a hubristic sense of entitlement.⁴ We need also only read Kleist's letter of 18/19 March, 1799 to Christian Ernst Martini, to understand the certainty of Kleist's mind with which he addressed his future (4, 19-35). This certainty vanished with Kleist's exposure to Kant and the influence of the subjectivity of the Romantic epoch. It is on the cusp of this dilemma of meaning, therefore, that Kant becomes a crisis for Kleist.

This sensitivity to the paradoxical and incommunicable nature of human experience and the probability of the nuances of failure are outlined with examples from Kleist's works. However, I contend that it is debatable if Kantian subjectivity was solely responsible for Kleist's anguish. He was also a victim of a change in cultural sensibility through war, revolution and the changing status of social classes which brought its own conflicts and ambivalence, which he expressed in his plays, novels, letters and occasional journalism.

We are, however, also dealing with a universal problem which concerned Kleist and which is our existential separateness from the other. Melanie Klein (1882-1960) identified this in the last paper which she wrote and which was published after her death.⁵ D.W. Winnicott (1896-1971) supports Klein's analyses and addresses the problems of communication and the safety measures we take, pertinent to Kleist's experience in a social setting, to ensure our psychological safety.⁶ The sense of alienation is compounded by the understanding of the unconscious which Groddeck outlines, which also confirms Freud's statement 'daß das Ich nicht Herr sei in seinem eigenen Haus' '(that the ego is not master in its own house).'⁷ These psychologists identify the alienation from the self which was at the root of these issues and the sense of helplessness, which can arise when an ego is dominated by unconscious forces. This may lead to splitting, paranoia and, in the extreme, to the atrocities of Paris, for which we have no adequate words or explanation. This was also a personal problem for Kleist because of the

⁴ Steffen Martus, *Aufklärung: Das deutsche 18. Jahrhundert*, 2nd. ed (Berlin: Rowohlt, 2015), pp. 342-348.

⁵ Melanie Klein (1963), 'On the Sense of Loneliness', in *The Writings of Melanie Klein*, ed. by Roger Money-Kyrle and others, 4 vols (London: Hogarth Press, 1987), vol. 3, 300-313.

⁶ D.W. Winnicott (1963), 'Communicating and not Communicating Leading to a Study of Certain Opposites,' in *The Maturational Process and the Facilitating Environment*, ed. by M. Masud R. Kahn (London: Karnac, 1990), 179-192; D.W. Winnicott, (1960), 'Ego Distortion in Terms of the True and False Self, in *The Maturational Process and the Facilitating Environment*, ed. by M. Masud R. Kahn (London: Karnac, 1990), 140-152.

⁷ Georg Groddeck (1920), 'On the It', in *The Meaning of Illness: Selected Psychoanalytic Writings*, trans. by Gertrud Mander, ed. by Lore Schacht (London: Karnac, 1988), 132-157; Sigmund Freud (1917), *Eine Schwierigkeit der Psychoanalyse*, GW. 12, 3-12 (p. 11) (A Difficulty in the Path of Psychoanalysis, SE. 17, 136-144 (p. 143)).

confusion created by the ambivalence he came to recognise as a constituent of the world so that he writes in despair to his fiancée, Wilhelmine von Zengen on 3 June, 1801: ‘können so viele Widersprüche in meinem engen Herz wohnen?’ (can so many paradoxes live in my confined heart) (4, 233). This change in outlook, from the time of the rational letter to his erstwhile tutor, Christian Ernst Martini in March 1799, to this letter to Wilhelmine, may also have prevented him from taking his place in a society which expected an aristocratic Junker to have a certain standing. Coming into adulthood in the mind-set of the *Aufklärung* with a firm belief in the perfectibility of man, Kleist was faced in his early twenties with Kantian philosophy which fundamentally upset his ordered *Weltanschauung* and which has been termed by German scholarship as the ‘Kant crisis’. Ilse Graham and Michael Mandelartz assert respectively that this was initiated either by Kleist’s reading of *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (Critique of Pure Reason), by Immanuel Kant’s (1724-1804) or *Bestimmung des Menschen* (Destiny of Man), by Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762-1814).⁸ Kleist was certainly reading Kant as his letters show (4, 58, 67, 124). There is no material evidence that he read Fichte though he was engaged with his philosophy and there is no reason to suppose that he had not read him. Whatever the truth of the matter is, the effect was the same: an experience of the irredeemable insubstantiality of the perceived world.

The major issue which concerns Kleist scholarship in connection with the Kant crisis is one of language; how Kleist constructed language, allowed for its failure in his works and how it affected him. Kleist also concerned himself with this issue with an investigation as to how we are prompted to think through speech in *Über die allmähliche Verfertigung der Gedanken beim Reden* (On the Gradual Construction of Thoughts during Speech), which he wrote in 1805-1806 (3, 534-540). Kleist here touches on the controversy that prevailed between Kant and Johann Gottfried Herder (1744-1803), in which Kant defended the creation of thoughts before speech and Herder the creation of thoughts through speech. Kleist takes Herder’s side in this debate, as Hinrich C. Seeba has indicated.⁹ Seeba also writes that Herder’s particular leaning towards an etymological source for *denken*

⁸ Ilse Graham, *Heinrich von Kleist Words into Flesh: A Poet’s Quest for the Symbol* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1977) and ‘Heinrich von Kleist: The Captive Vision’, *The German Quarterly*, vol. 51, no. 1 (1978), 1-18; Michael Mandelartz, ‘Von der Tugendlehre zur Lasterschule’, *Kleist Jahrbuch 2006*, 120-136; Immanuel Kant (1781), *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (Cologne: Atlas, 1950); Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1800), *Die Bestimmung des Menschen*, ed. by Michael Holzinger (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2016).

⁹ Hinrich C. Seeba, ‘Kunst im Gespräch: über Kleist und die allmähliche Verfertigung der Gedanken beim Reden’, *The English Goethe Society*, vol. 78, nos. 1 and 2 (2009), 89-105 (p. 91).

(to think) such as *dünken* (to appear/seem) and the related *däuchten* may have given Kleist the impetus towards his essay, in which he quoted almost directly from Herder's 'sprechen heißt laut denken' (speaking is thinking aloud). This phrase finds its echo in Kleist as: 'ein solches Reden ist ein wahrhaftes laut Denken' (such speech is literally thinking aloud) (3, 538).¹⁰ Kleist was still coming to terms with Kant's philosophy five years after he wrote of its impact on him in March, 1801.

We must also take into consideration the extent to which Kleist's own speech problems, his stammer, contributed towards the theoretical approach in this essay. Achim von Arnim (1781-1831), writing to Wilhelm Grimm (1786-1859) mid-February 1810, mentions that Kleist has a manifest uncertainty in speech close to stammering.¹¹ So, it is debateable the extent, to which Kleist's difficulty with speech contributed towards the writing of his essay. The stammerer is obliged to wrestle with words, which also implies a wrestling with thought; they are linked since the word can only be produced concurrently with the thought. Kleist instinctively uses his own dilemma in order to find answers which also accurately represent Herder's definition.

Max Kommerell identifies the confusion which Kleist's characters experience when they are thrust into strange, unnerving, and inexplicable situations. He summarises this with a Kleistian paraphrase: 'hat Kleist je etwas anderes geschaffen als unaussprechliche Menschen' (has Kleist ever created anything different than inexpressible people).¹² 'Unausprechlich' has a certain ambiguity in its meaning, which is also 'unspeakable' which may relate to the negative perception one might have of a Kleistian character. In this connection, we remark on the behaviour of Graf F in *Die Marquise von O....* (The Marchioness of O....) (3, 145-186). He delays admitting to his responsibility for the rape and subsequent pregnancy of the Marquise, hoping only to avert the disclosure by an offer of marriage; he admits his responsibility finally, when every other opportunity to speak had been eliminated. Kommerell recognises that this ineffability, this ambiguity in Kleist's work, confuses meaning. This comment is not a criticism for a deficiency, but a departure into a new perception in which characters remain

¹⁰ Seeba (2009), p. 93.

¹¹ Helmut Sembdner (ed.), *Heinrich von Kleists Lebensspuren: Dokumente und Berichte der Zeitgenossen* (Frankfurt am Main: Insel, 1984), pp. 290 - 291.

¹² Max Kommerell, *Geist und Buchstabe der Dichtung*, 6th. edn (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1991), p. 244.

puzzles and that we, the readers or spectators, must adjust our expectations. For instance, does the Kurfürst, in *Prinz Friedrich von Homburg* (Prince Frederick of Homburg), intend to have Homburg executed, or was that never his intention and does the Kurfürst himself undergo a process of change in the course of the dram? (2, 555-644)¹³ Answers to these questions are not discernible from the text and only serve to enhance the puzzle with the characters' reversals, misunderstandings and idioglossic behaviour. Kleist enmeshes us in this puzzle to the same extent in which he enmeshes his own characters so that we, and they, co-exist in a mystery about which we are obliged to accept the not-knowing. We can surmise that the feelings aroused in the characters and in the audience are also the feelings with which Kleist had to contend: the not-knowing against the pre-Kantian lost certainty of what is.

Herman Reske relies heavily on Kommerell's chapter commencing from the same premise of obfuscation and the unconscious miasma of feelings.¹⁴ Reske offers other examples to illustrate his thesis. He also refers to Kleist's essay, *Verfertigung der Gedanken*, which he sees as the rule book for the development of Kleist's language. Here, Reske recognises that Kleist's *Sprachlosigkeit* (speechlessness), the ineffable, is replaced with the idioglossia of gestures, tics, silences, fainting and unexpected actions.¹⁵ A prominent one of these is the pistol shot at the ceiling by the Obrist in *Marquise* (3, 166). Kommerell's comment concerning indefinable people may well be attributed to the Obrist though he might also attract the negative connotation of this word.

Another one of these indefinable, mysterious people is the gypsy in *Michael Kohlhaas* (3, 13-142). Margarete Landwehr mines a rich seam of the inexpressible concerning this character whose pronouncements are not to be apprehended in this world but in the next. Sentient language comes to a full stop for the gypsy knows things, which are not within the reach of human consciousness and will be appreciated only in the afterlife.¹⁶ With the gypsy, we arrive at a particular literary logical conundrum, for she arrives in the realistic story as a supernatural agent when everything seems lost for Kohlhaas. Is she then, for Kohlhaas, the psychotic and phantasised empowerment of helplessness or the author's *deus ex machina* to

¹³ Kommerell (2009), p. 245-246.

¹⁴ Hermann Reske, 'Die kleistische Sprache', *The German Quarterly*, vol. 36, no. 3 (1963), 219-235.

¹⁵ Reske (1963), pp. 230-231.

¹⁶ Margarete Landwehr, 'The Mysterious Gypsy in Kleist's "Michael Kohlhaas": The Disintegration of Legal and Linguistic Boundaries', *Monatshefte*, vol. 84, no. 4 (1992), 431-446 (p. 441-442).

move forward an arrested plot? We argue that Kleist's writing has a deep and true connection to unconscious processes and what he gives us in the story is the true/not true development of Kohlhaas' psychological fate. We see the gypsy, as it were, in real time but also in other world time of Kohlhaas' phantasy, which the gypsy, as the revenant of Kohlhaas' deceased wife, inhabits. It is this disturbance in the linear development of the story, with its reversals and obfuscations, which gives it its mysterious power.

Walter Müller-Seidel approaches a similar theme when he considers the mistaken identity of individuals and the confusion which arises from that.¹⁷ He notes that: 'versehen' (mistaken) is a significant word in Kleist's vocabulary. These are the mistakes of recognition/identity as in *Die Familie Schroffenstein* (1, 123-233), *Amphytrion* (1, 382-461), *Penthesilea* (2, 7-103) and *Die Verlobung in St. Domingo* (3, 222-260). But this is a recognition/identity not only of the character by third parties, but a non-recognition by the character of himself or herself. Thus it takes the rape and the enigma of the pregnancy for the Marquise to realise her own power and so to escape the patriarchal embrace of the family home and to arrive at a sense of her own individuality. Müller-Seidel notes too, that Kleist is sparing with dialogue in the stories and uses interjections and exclamations preferentially as a substitute for spoken language; he recognises the idiosyncratic nature of Kleist's communication behind which is hidden the individual's consciousness.¹⁸ However, consciousness, and the ability to express it, is an important aspect of recognising what is satisfactorily true for a character in his or her environment. Paranoid anxiety arises in characters who cannot express themselves. As a result trust in the good parts of the self is impaired, leading to a feeling of aloneness before the abyss of uncertainty which is next to the grave.

The eschatological quality of Kleist's writings is also identified by Anthony Stephens, who recognises the paradox between the language used by a character and his or her position in the exercise of power, after Kleist had written *Schroffenstein*.¹⁹ The supposition that there is no collective truth and that the individual is perfectible has been abandoned by Kleist. Characters exist in a state

¹⁷ Walter Müller-Seidel, 'Die Struktur des Widerspruchs in Kleists "Marquise von O..."', *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte*, 28 (1954), 497-515 (p. 499).

¹⁸ Walter Müller-Seidel, *Vorsehen und Erkennen: Eine Studie über Heinrich von Kleist* (Cologne: Böhlau, 1971).

¹⁹ Anthony Stephens, *Kleist: Sprache und Gewalt*, (Feiburg im Breisgau, Rombach, 1999), p. 196.

of confusion, which Stephens attributes as much to the crisis of language concerning Kant as Kleist's experience of violence in post-revolutionary Paris. Humanity and the exercise of power are separated and Kleist fails to recognise the Napoleonic Wars merely as an episode of history but extends this event to an invasion in the temple of nature, which was the responsibility of Napoleon. Kleist assigns guilt to Napoleon through the Socratic dialogue of *Katechismus der Deutschen, abgefasst nach dem Spanischen zum Gebrauch für Kinder und Alte* (Catechism of the Germans, in Accordance with the Spanish for the Use of Children and Old People) (3, 484).

Moreover, in the early Kleist, ambivalence concerning boundaries lead to a concretisation of feelings, so that love becomes a possession of which Wilhelmine is the subject and religion an exclusive cult. A catalyst was required to free Kleist from these illusions which the Kant crisis provided and which had Kleist question the loss of the treasure of absolute truth and his highest objective of self-perfectibility (4, 205).²⁰

Rüdiger Görner describes as *Sprachskepsis* (scepticism concerning language) the bedevilment of linguistic inadequacy but acknowledges that Kleist manages to convey meaning with a singular voice.²¹ Things are intimated but unsaid which then becomes a matter of conjecture for the reader. Görner mentions a poem by Kleist addressed to Wilhelmine and written in approximately 1800, that is before the Kant crisis in March 1801(3, 403-406). Kleist describes in verse six how the artist must work with a chisel to hew his work from obdurate material in order to create the ruler's crown. The connection between the creative artist in the service of the ruler manipulating dense material and the author, who in 1808 completed the comedy *Der zerbrochne Krug* (The Broken Jug) (1, 285-376), displays the dichotomy between the fixed, the rational and that which is fluid and requires repair, for nothing can be contained in a broken jug. The artist uses his chisel to work with the opposition and resistance of the material which is equivalent to the possibility or impossibility of communication. Kleist writes to Ulrike on 5 February, 1801: 'sie (die Sprache) kann die Seele nicht malen und was sie uns gibt sind nur zerissene Bruchstücke' (it (language) cannot portray the soul and what it gives us are only disjointed fragments) (4, 196). The effect of linguistic

²⁰ Stephens (1999), p. 197.

²¹ Rüdiger Görner, 'Generalbaß, malerische Schriften und Dichtkunst: Überlegungen zum Sprachkunstbegriff Heinrich von Kleists', *The English Goethe Society*, vol. 78, nos. 1 and 2 (2009), 106-115 (p. 109).

and existential ambiguity was to cast Kleist adrift so that the problem of self-identity was something which was forever fugitive. Total self-revelation was a horror to be avoided for it would not and could not be complete and would lead only to misunderstanding.

As a scion of an aristocratic Junker family, Kleist was denied bourgeois employment and thus he was caught in the dilemma of working for money denied by the imaginary honour of the aristocracy.²² The alternatives for Kleist were thus the army or a high position in an administrative function, which would have seen him attempt to rise to important positions in government, for which there were few opportunities.²³ However, it transpired that he had no interest in employment of any sort, which he felt, constrained his freedom while he was searching for his true vocation. He had been admitted to the prestigious *Potsdamer Garde Regiment nr. 15* in 1792 but Kleist was constitutionally not adapted to army life: he detested the mechanical nature of the training and the brutality to which the soldiers were subject and he was fundamentally disinclined to exercise the discipline that was required of him (4, 27). He had been denied admittance to the *Berliner Militärakademie*, in which he might have attained the all-round education which he desired. Günter Blamberger speculates that Kleist's life path may have been different if he had enjoyed these privileges of his aristocratic peers.²⁴ Kleist's military career was thus short-lived but he faced a problem of finding a personal identity which would enable him to live his life for which the fulcrum was to be a search for happiness. He explored this in an essay addressed to his friend, Rühle von Lilienstern, *Aufsatz, den sicheren Weg des Glücks zu finden und ungestört - auch unter den grössten Drangsalen des Lebens, ihn zu geniessen* (Essay, the Sure Way of Achieving Happiness and to Enjoy it Even Under the Greatest Pressures of Life) (3, 515 - 530) which contained much the same material included in the letter to Martini (4, 19-35).

On 17 March 1799 Kleist had written to Martini, and attempted to justify his resignation from army service. He also addressed a central problem in his thinking, which was how to perfect both his inner and outer self in order to gain benefit for the life hereafter; in short, a *Lebensplan* (plan for life). The two

²² Michael Ott, 'Privilegien: Recht, Ehre und Adel in "Michael Kohlhaas"', *Kleist Jahrbuch 2012*, 135-155 (pp. 144-145).

²³ Günter Blamberger, *Heinrich von Kleist: Biographie* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 2011), p. 31.

²⁴ Blamberger (2011), p. 32.

documents are thought to be contemporaneous (3, 1110). He also re-iterated these ideas succinctly in the letter of 22 March 1801 to Wilhelmine, which ostensibly heralded the Kant crisis (4, 204-205).

In the letter to Martini, Kleist sets the tone by returning to an inconclusive discussion he had had with Martini in which the question had been posed: can a *thinking* person trust more in the conviction of another than his own? Kleist's answer was simply that no one knows better than oneself what would benefit one's happiness (4, 20). Kleist has laid down rigid ground rules for the discussion he opens up with Martini. He announces, finally, that he needs no advice and that, paradoxically, a person whose advice he might value would not give it. In the rigid mind-set which he displays here, Kleist was also displaying the uncertainty of a man who does not know his way, which is not unusual for a young man of twenty-one years of age. This firm adherence to the idea of a *Lebensplan* seems like a desperate clutching at something which would keep him afloat.

So, he values Martini's quiet, reflective response to his decision to leave the army (4, 20). Kleist's family opposed his decision but then, of course, they were not fully aware of his new *Lebensplan*, which was, ultimately, to be happy (4, 21). Even later in February, 1801, in the letter to his sister Ulrike, Kleist is considering a *Lebensplan*, which he fails to create out of a sense of inner uncertainty (4, 197). This objective of a *Lebensplan* is the procrustean bed, which the Kant crisis enables him to leave.

In the letter to Martini, Kleist states that the meaning of happiness and the source and fulfilment thereof is nothing less than the satisfaction of the senses, which is not determined by external circumstances nor can it be stolen by outside forces; it is an inner sense (4, 21-22). Kleist separates true happiness from external matters and sees it as reward and encouragement when coupled with *Tugend* (virtue); thus, a virtuous enjoyment of the senses (4, 22). On 11 October 1800, Kleist writes to Wilhelmine in a passage in which he also seems to be developing and exercising his literary skills 'das Ersteigen der Berge, wie der Weg zur Tugend, ist besonders wegen der Aussicht, die man eben vor sich hat, beschwerlich' (climbing mountains is troublesome just as is the path to virtue but for the benefit of the view) (4, 145). Thus, virtue is not an easy acquisition but must be sought through unceasing toil. He complains of the stones that have been

thrown into the path but sees them in the same metaphor as the difficulties that must be overcome.

Paradoxically, Kleist marries happiness to virtue and virtue to happiness which is an illogical circular argument. What Kleist says is that the satisfaction of the senses without virtue will not bring happiness which is brought about by the satisfaction of the senses. Kleist also suggests that Martini might feel that he, Kleist, had overreached himself in the exposition of his argument but he hastens to confirm that there is something higher and ineffable for which he searches and which escapes him. Already, at this stage, before the confrontation with Kant, Kleist is aware of the inadequacy of language. This touches the fringes of the distress which Kleist expresses particularly to his sister, Ulrike, in his inability to express the innermost feelings he cherishes (4, 313).

Kleist also couples *Tugend* to *Bildung* (education) (4, 23). Education in this sense is not merely education in the sense of achieving pass marks for certificates. It is a deeply felt, almost Pietistic sense of interiority and the values that flow from it. W.H. Bruford quotes from a lecture Thomas Mann (1875-1955) gave in 1927, in which Mann praises the German's sense of interiority, which led to the development of a unique literary form of the novel of personal cultivation and development, the *Bildungsroman*. The *Bildung* of a German, Mann writes, requires an individualistic cultural conscience and a husbanding of one's own personality in which the objective external world is considered profane and ignored.²⁵ Thus, for Kleist, *Bildung* is required in order to gain a genuine appreciation of *Tugend*. Kleist enumerates character traits, which he has observed individually in others, such as nobility, steadfastness, modesty, frugality and humanity and which he says he could summarise but which would still not comprise the overarching, meaningful definition of the whole (4, 23). He maintains, hubristically, that the character traits he has listed are sufficient for his happiness if he were to succeed in completing his spiritual education and physical development. This would enable him to internalise these qualities strongly and unshakably (4, 23-24). Happiness, then, consists of the gratifying contemplation of one's own morally beautiful being which arises out of the knowledge of one's own beneficent actions, which will, in turn, result in the acquisition of wealth and

²⁵ W.H. Bruford, *The German Tradition of Self Cultivation: Bildung from Humboldt to Thomas Mann*, 2nd. edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975).

honours. Categorically, Kleist states that reward arises from the exercise of *Tugend* and that punishment is the consequence of depravity (4, 24). It is a remarkably prescriptive and binary statement from someone who was to develop a language of paradox and subterfuge.

This letter to Martini contains the idealism and other-worldly aspirations of a twenty-one-year old man in the heroic stage of his life. It is also the statement of a man who needs desperately to create a meaningful system by which he can live and which will fulfil his search for an identity. At this point, Kleist is driven by an intellectual rigour founded in the concepts of the *Aufklärung* of the perfectibility of man. Dieter Heimböckel characterises this period, at the turn of the eighteenth century, as one in which a new movements erupt in which social, political and economic factors destabilise the established order of things.²⁶ This period represents a transition from the classical to the modern age characterised by a rejection of the imitation of nature and straight rhetoric in favour of aesthetic autonomy and poetic imagination. In short, this was a connection to the sense of interiority arising from pietism and *Empfindsamkeit* of language. In this modern phase of the culture, the individual has no paradigm, which can inform his actions; the responsibility for defining good actions have become subjective and Kleist stands at the liminal stage of consciousness concerning these developments.²⁷ The unsatisfactory army existence gave identity, form and structure to Kleist's existence: without this he is cast adrift and he needs to create a life structure which will satisfy his need for constancy, predictability and an objective and certain standard for perception of the world and its doings. Kleist requires existential certainty, which neither the uncertainty of the times nor his personality traits could provide.

Kleist maintains that he must resign from the army since he is unable to pursue the appropriate education there, which would lead to a foundation of his happiness (4, 27). This is, then the basis on which Kleist intended to found his life: simple, secure and satisfactory. This desire has all the elements of an individual desperate to control his life and fearful that it might implode, which, I posit, has its roots in attachment issues in which the ongoingness of life was not sustained by a sufficiently robust, empathic and devoted carer. As noted above, he had written to

²⁶ Dieter Heimböckel, *Emphatische Unausprechlichkeit: Sprachkritik im Werk Heinrich von Kleists* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 2003), p. 48.

²⁷ Heimböckel (2003), p.49.

Wilhelmine from Würzburg, that he had observed an arch and noticed that the arch did not collapse because all the stones pertaining to it wished to collapse at once (4, 159). Kleist's appreciation of the Würzburg arch gives us an insight into his fear of annihilation and the consolation he felt that he would be able to hold himself together with the other parts of his self if, like the arch, each aspect of it supported the others. Thus, the belief in the perfectibility of the individual is not only an expression of *Aufklärung* thinking but also a consolation to a man who unconsciously fears annihilation. With his *Lebensplan*, Kleist proposed to achieve a certain perfectibility through which he would also accumulate 'wealth' (of a spiritual kind) for benefit in the afterlife. This objective was to be confounded by his confrontation with the philosophy of Kant, which was popularised and modified by Fichte and which was to throw him into that slough of despond from which no escape seemed possible.

The works of Kant and Fichte are thus brought into focus for Kleist as an expression of the *Zeitgeist* which found its realisation around 1800.²⁸ The sensibility of the rationality and reality perception of the *Aufklärung* is undermined with the publication of Kant's *Kritik* in 1781. This provided the experience of subjective identity, which on the one hand enabled a certain freedom in the experience of the self but which also sees this freedom as problematic. In this regard, Kleist was a bellwether of his times, in that he encapsulated and struggled with these issues, which also confounded his peers (2, 647).

Kant had taken the Copernican concept, which maintained that perception is based on objects, and had reversed this constellation to suggest that objects, in this sense as manifestations of the external world, are to be recognised in accordance with our perception of them. Kant had offered definitions of a number of concepts which, according to him, were a necessary development for a plausible methodology in metaphysics, including a distinction between analytic and synthetic judgements.²⁹ Analytic judgements are those in which a sentence already contains information about the predicate. Kant gives the example: 'alle Körper sind ausgedehnt' (all bodies are extended) which fulfils this definition for the definition is already inherent in the predicate. The judgement: 'alle Körper

²⁸ Heimböckel (2003), pp. 48 - 49.

²⁹ Brian O'Connor and Georg Mohr (eds.), *German Idealism: An Anthology and Guide*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), p. 8; Kant (1781), pp. 16-19.

sind schwer' (all bodies are heavy) is a synthetic statement since the subject of 'body' does not necessarily define its weight.³⁰ Synthetic judgements, therefore, augment information about a subject whereas analytic judgements specify the constituent of a subject. Kant thus makes the focus of critical transcendental philosophy as to how *a priori* synthetic judgements are possible and how these *a priori* concepts can be established as objectively valid. The object, the *Ding-an-sich*, is not independent of perception but lies within the sensibility of the subject:

Die Ordnung und Regelmäßigkeit an den Erscheinungen, die wir Natur nennen, bringen wir selbst hinein, und würden sie auch nicht darin finden können, hätten wir sie nicht oder die Natur unseres Gemüts ursprünglich hieingelegt.

(We ourselves introduce the order and regularity of appearances, which we call Nature, and would not have been able to perceive them therein, had we, or the temperament of our disposition, not introduced them).³¹

Kant did not deny that the object existed, for the subject would have no apprehension of it if it did not exist. However, the apprehension of the object is the experience of the subject 'Wahrheit ist nicht im Gegenstand, sofern er angeschaut wird, sondern im Urteil über denselben, sofern er gedacht wird' (truth is not to be found in the object in so far as it is viewed but in a judgement of it to the extent that it is the object of thought).³² Further, he maintained that the subjects of metaphysical philosophy and the divine lie outside human experience for they are not material. Metaphysics cannot transcend the limits of thought with *a priori* concepts, for no truth will develop from it since there is not coherent reality to ground it. However, claims for *a priori* knowledge were insubstantial, for Kant was unable to determine with any *scientific* certainty what constituted or made *a priori* knowledge evident.

Fichte engaged with Kant's philosophy and tried to solve the problem that we are subject only to those criteria for which we can regard ourselves as originator. There is, therefore, the problem of self-authorisation, for we are not truly free if the relationship between object and subject is subjectively established. In a series of lectures published in 1794 as *Über den Begriff der Wissenschaftslehre oder der sogenannten Philosophie* (On the Concept of the Science of Knowledge or the So-Called Philosophy), Fichte tried to establish how individuals can be free in a

³⁰ Kant (1781), p. 16,

³¹ Kant (1781), pp. 8-9, p. 81.

³² Kant (1781), p. 175.

world conditioned by necessity and the impingement of objects from the environment, which may inhibit that freedom.³³ He maintained that the mind can only grasp *a priori* facts of reality through ‘intellectual intuition’, which is truth.³⁴ Truth consists of the unity of thought and object but there can be no such unity, for the separation is effected in the subject’s apprehension, that is, judgement of the object. This is the starting point of his thesis with which he claimed he was remaining true to Kant, while also developing his own ideas.

Fichte propounded that ‘true’ science was intellectual intuition and, hence, no further proof was needed as long as the enquirer can rely on a *Grundsatz* (basic concept).³⁵ But then, how do we establish the veracity of this basic concept? Fichte’s response to this ‘first principle’ conundrum was to insist that intellectual intuition, insight and spontaneity were sufficient justification for establishing the veracity of the basic concept:

Die Grundsätze unserer Systeme sollen und müssen von dem Systeme vorher gewiß seyn. Ihre Gewißheit kann in dem Umfange derselben nicht erwiesen werden, sondern jeder in ihren möglichen Beweiß setzt sie schon voraus.

(The basic concepts of our system shall and must be established with certainty within the system. Their certainty cannot be proven within their context but are posited each within its own possible demonstration of proof).³⁶

Fichte relies on the comprehensive aspect of the *Wissenschaftslehre*, which ‘sollte eine Wissenschaft aller Wissenschaften seyn’ (was to be a science of knowledge of all sciences of knowledge) in order to justify the edifice on which is built the idea that the subject of the *Wissenschaftslehre* is the system of all human knowledge.³⁷ He moves to introduce *die Logik* (the logic) without any explanation as to the meaning and substance of this concept from which he then derives the logically correct sentence, $A=A$. By substituting ‘Ich’ for ‘A’ Fichte posits: ‘*Ich bin Ich*’. (I am I). He continues to maintain that because the act of positing was a subjective act there is also, in this single instance, a further content

³³ Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1794), *Über den Begriff der Wissenschaftslehre oder der sogenannten Philosophie*, ed. by Edmund Braun (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2005).

³⁴ Terry Pinkard, *German Philosophy 1760-1860: The Legacy of Idealism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 110.

³⁵ Fichte (1794), p. 35.

³⁶ Fichte (1794), p. 35

³⁷ Fichte (1794), p. 49.

posited which is ‘ich bin gesetzt *weil* ich gesezt habe. Ich bin *weil* ich bin’ (I am posited *because* I have posited. I am *because* I am).³⁸

No logical justification exists for Fichte to be able to extend the meaning of ‘to posit’. Frederick Neuhauser describes Fichte’s positing as a particular kind of activity which makes it seem idiosyncratic and, thereby, also removes any sense of logical validity.³⁹ Terry Pinkard writes, that for Fichte, identity statements derive justification from an *a priori* licence.⁴⁰ The licence involves authorising an inference whose necessity is derived from the authorisation itself. Inference licenses can only be instituted by what is in itself not a *Tatsache* (fact) but by a *Tathandlung* (action) and, since natural things cannot be said to act in a normative sense, the subject that institutes the licence must itself be such a *Tathandlung*. This institutes the licence and also authorises itself to institute such a licence. The self-authorisation to establish the subjectivity of the ‘I’ that Fichte deems necessary for any act of self-consciousness, therefore, makes self-consciousness possible for ‘jedes Objekt kommt zum Bewusstseyn lediglich unter der Bedingung, dass ich auch meiner selbst, des bewusstseyendes Subjekts, mir bewusst sey. Dieser Satz ist unwidersprechlich’ (I can be conscious of any subject only on condition that I am also conscious of myself, that is of the conscious subject. This proposition is incontrovertible).⁴¹ Fichte’s proposition may be incontrovertible but it confirms the separation of subject and object and leads to the Camp Coffee conundrum of first principle. Camp Coffee was sold in a bottle with a label which shows a turbaned servant holding a tray on which stands a bottle of Camp Coffee with a label which shows a turbaned servant holding a tray on which stands bottle of Camp Coffee and so on. The fallacy Fichte entertains is that the subject, in order to become conscious, requires consciousness to achieve it. Which comes first? The turbaned servant is fated forever to stand mute with his bottle of Camp Coffee on a tray.

The significant participants in the Romantic movement and also attendees at Fichte’s lectures and who discussed his ideas enthusiastically were Wilhelm Schlegel (1767-1845), Friedrich Schlegel (1772-1829), Friedrich Schelling (1775-1854), Novalis (1772-1801), Friedrich Hölderlin (1770-1843) and Ludwig Tieck (1773-1853). These were

³⁸ Fichte (1794), p. 61.

³⁹ Frederick Neuhauser, *Fichte’s Theory of Subjectivity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 117.

⁴⁰ Pinkard (2002), p. 113.

⁴¹ Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1797), ‘Versuch einer neuen Darstellung der Wissenschaftslehre’, *Philosophisches Journal*, vol. 7 (1797), 1-20 (pp. 6-7).

contemporaries of Kleist's, who were all acquainted. The particular attraction that Fichte's theories had for them was the freedom implied by the concept of the positing of the 'I'. This established the self as an autonomous entity which can create the world out of necessity and through striving. This striving also implied that it did not allow a steady state existence and hence the social structures, the ideals of the society and the authoritarian rule of princes could also be challenged. The idea of a self-created 'self' led to the idea of action: if I can create my own 'ego', then I am also in command of my own destiny. The subjective apprehension of the Camp Coffee enigma at a time when the certainty of the *Aufklärung* was in ablation is surely an unconscious destabilisation of the permanence and viability of the self which was the crux of Kleist's problem.

Kant's *Kritik* and Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre* determines that the 'I' and material things are not within our cognitive control. They are based on belief and an ungroundedness in an objective structure, which would not lead the individual from A to B in a linear manner and, therefore, provide no evidence of progress towards moral excellence. It is this freedom from the rigid adherence to reason, which initiates Kleist's Kant crisis. It is a lack which Kleist found disturbing for it annihilated the concept of his *Lebensplan*. It also destroyed in his mind any moral benefit that might have accrued to him in the development and consolidation of the *Lebensplan* he had in mind for Wilhelmine and for his afterlife. In his letter to Wilhelmine of April/May 1800, Kleist reassures her that he will occupy himself with her *Bildung*, which will improve the worth of the woman he loves by making her more noble and of a higher standing (4, 55). In the letter of 30 May 1800, Kleist then proceeds to set tedious exercises for Wilhelmine's improvement which he calls *Denkübungen* (mind exercises) (4, 61). This activity is also, according to Kleist, of benefit to himself.

He had written to Ulrike, in May (?) 1799, and asserted that fate can be overcome with the foundation of a *Lebensplan* (4, 38) Ironically, in view of his aimless travelling, he also asserted that an individual without a *Lebensplan* would be like a person going on an aimless journey (4, 40). He continued that a person without a *Lebensplan* is like 'eine Puppe am Draht des Schicksals' (a marionette on the wire of fate') (4, 40). Kleist needed to have control and the idea that unpredictable fate could determine the outcome of his life was repugnant to him. The letter is also a critique of Ulrike, who had failed to devise a *Lebensplan* and had, moreover, expressed the desire neither to marry nor have children, which Kleist considers the most holy destiny of woman (4, 41). This letter of May (?)

1799, shows Kleist at his most controlling and dictatorial. He writes as a man with the certainty that he has all the answers and that one need only follow his advice, for then the future would be secured and predictable. It is with this background of certainty that Kleist confronts Kant's *Kritik* and Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre* and which then leads to the sense of destructive despair expressed in Kleist's letter to Wilhelmine of 22 March 1801. Kleist recognised that everything that he had held dear concerning the perfectibility of creation and the ongoingness of life after death and of himself was a chimera.

As far as the inception of the Kant crisis is concerned, Ilse Graham suggests that Kleist scholarship seems to accept an abrupt break as a 'before and after' in which the letter of 22 March 1801, is ostensibly the trigger. However, the language of his letters, requests for a volume of Kant from Ulrike in August 1800 and an allusion to Kant's philosophy in a letter written to Wilhelmine between 13 and 18 September 1800 suggests that the issue had been simmering for some time and that he had become aware of Kantian thinking (4, 67, 127).⁴² The tone and drafting of the 22 March 1801 letter to Wilhelmine, which is a stepping stone into the Kantian world of imagination has, therefore, been on the horizon and we suspect that it is presented to Wilhelmine in an emotional manner in order to provide a pretext to enable him to travel, particularly with Ulrike, to Paris. Michael Mandelartz, quoting Jochen Schmidt, suggests that the escape to Paris was also a ruse to avoid regular official employment.⁴³ Mandelartz writes that Kleist's uncertainties about how to live his life in the fulfilment of a *Lebensplan* was finally abandoned after familiarity with Fichte's *Bestimmung*. It is an account for the layman of Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre*. On the balance of probabilities, Kleist's call for a Kant text and the allusion to Kant's philosophy in a letter to Wilhelmine in August 1800, demonstrates that Kleist is already familiar with Kant's philosophy. There is no mention of Fichte at this stage though he may well have read Fichte which might have crystallised his thinking about Kant.

The change which took place in Kleist resulting from his confrontation with Kant influenced not only how he extended the meaning of language through the creation of an idioglossia, but it also affected his sense of being in the world. This is evident from his diverse appreciation of Christian ritual as Peter Philipp Riedl

⁴² Ilse Graham (1977), p. 58; (1978), p. 7.

⁴³ Mandelartz (2006), p. 127; Jochen Schmidt, *Heinrich von Kleist: Die Dramen und Erzählungen in ihrer Epoche* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2003), p. 15.

notes.⁴⁴ In the letter to Wilhelmine on 11 September 1800, Kleist had criticised the form of the Catholic Mass, the inaudibility of the priests and the Latin which obscures it so that no sensible thought might arise from such a service. He concludes: ‘überhaupt, dünkt mich, alle Ceremonien ersticken das Gefühl. Sie beschäftigen unseren Verstand, aber das Herz bleibt todt’ (on the whole, it seems to me, all ceremonies stifle feelings. They occupy our intellect but the heart remains dead) (4, 113). He praises the Protestant service which may arouse: ‘herzerhebenden Gedanken’ (heart inspiring thoughts) (4, 113) but here too, only reason is addressed; the heart inspiring thoughts are inadequate. So, on the 21 May 1801, after he had resigned himself to the new subjectivity of Kant and Fichte, Kleist writes differently about the effect such a Catholic Mass may have and recognises that the cold reason of the Protestant service is lacking. Kleist attends a Mass in the Katholische Hofkirche in Dresden and reports to Wilhelmine:

Nirgends fand ich mich tiefer in meinem Innersten gerührt, als in der Katholischen Kirche, wie die größte, erhabenste Musik noch zu den anderen Künsten tritt, das Herz gewaltsam zu bewegen. Ach, Wilhelmine, unser Gottesdienst ist keiner. Er spricht nur zu dem kalten Verstande.

(I have never been moved more profoundly in my being than in the Catholic Church as the greatest, most exalted joins the other arts in order to move the heart violently. Oh, Wilhelmine, our religious service is not one. It only addresses cold reason) (4, 225).

What separates these two diverse accounts of religious rites is the letter to Wilhelmine of 22 March 1801 which ostensibly initiates Kleist’s Kant crisis when familiarity with the writings of Kant and Fichte removed the certainty of the *Aufklärung* ethos. Kleist is no longer concerned with ‘kalten Verstand’ (cold reason) which is the basis of his letter of 18 March 1799, to Martini outlining his project of a *Lebensplan*. His heart has been opened to imagination and feeling through which he is now able to access and value the mysterious, the uncanny and the paradoxical.

Kleist commences his letter of 22 March 1801, with the supposition that the improvement in Wilhelmine’s sensibility, mind and language is due to his intervention, though he shies away from naming himself (4, 201). He is full of praise for the letter that Wilhelmine has written and exhorts her to continue to

⁴⁴ Peter Philipp Riedl, ‘Transformationen der Rede: Kreativität und Rhetorik bei Heinrich von Kleist’, *Kleist Jahrbuch 2003*, 70-106 (pp. 83-84).

struggle for the prize (i.e. himself) which he would make as deserving of envy as possible. Kleist is thus still in the paradigm of personal spiritual and mental improvement; the language is of struggle and objectives as the basis of a *Lebensplan*: ‘nach dem Preis ringen’ (struggle for the prize), ‘mein Bestreben’ (my endeavour), ‘mein Ziehl’ (my target) (4, 201). Graham asserts, rightly, that Kleist’s concept of a happy marriage is hypostasized, that it has assumed the status of an object.⁴⁵ Kleist is also engaged in concrete thinking in which the object has no imaginary or metaphorical dimension. This was to change after the Kant crisis, when his imagination was freed from the literal structures in which he was trying to construct a *Lebensplan*.

He continues, that he can only love her if she is sufficiently loveable ‘meine Liebe ist ganz in Deiner Gewalt’ (my love is totally in your power) (4, 201), for if he were to fall out of love with her, it would be her fault by having failed to meet the standards which might deserve love. He emphasises the argument with this phrase: ‘dich zu lieben wenn ich Dich nicht liebenswürdig fände, das wäre mir das Unmögliche’ (it would be impossible for me to love you if I did not find you loveable) (4, 202). There are only general intimations as to what is required of Wilhelmine to be deserving of love. It seems a curious letter to write to a fiancée and it demonstrates that Kleist had such a disassociated mental apparatus that he was incapable of love for another; his love is narcissistically self-referential. Nevertheless, the tone of the earlier part of Kleist’s letter is positive and encouraging as far as it goes, and it is only when he answers Wilhelmine’s questions about his own interior life that the facade he has presented is overturned. It is significant that Kleist chooses to quote in full Wilhelmine’s questioning words from her letter about his own internal world before launching into a somewhat emotional account of how the basis of his life had collapsed. It is meaningful of someone who wishes to establish a rationale of which the seriousness is not to be doubted.

Kleist reiterates his belief that the aim of creation is the search for perfection in this life which would be of benefit in the next and hence his aim had always been to increase the status of his *Bildung*; this had been his only goal, a search for truth and *Bildung* (4, 204). In his confrontation with Kant’s philosophy, Kleist uses the metaphor of individuals having green glasses instead of eyes:

⁴⁵ Graham (1977), p. 61.

Wenn alle Menschen statt der Augen grüne Gläser hätten, so würden wir urtheilen müssen, die Gegenstände, welche sie dadurch erblicken *sind* grün - und nie würden sie entscheidend können, ob ihr Auge ihnen die Dinge zeigt, wie sie sind, oder ob es nicht etwas zu ihnen hinzuthut, was nicht ihnen, sondern dem Auge gehört. So ist es mit dem Verstande.

(If everybody had green glasses instead of eyes we should have to judge that the objects which they would perceive through them are green - and they could never decide if their eye showed the thing as it is or if it adds something which is not part of them but belongs to the eye. Thus it is with the mind) (4, 205).

The subjectivity of this experience distresses Kleist, for he says we cannot decide if what we think of as truth is indeed truth or if it only appears as such to us. This is the Kantian subjectivity which destabilises yet also frees. If this is the case, then all the truth that we accumulate in this life is nought and any endeavour to gain possessions which would follow us to the grave is futile (4, 205). Kleist says he is deeply wounded by this realisation which destroys his highest goal, and which causes great distraction. Life is bitter for him, for he can find no distraction even with his friends. In this state of confusion and turmoil, he suggests that the only resource he has is to travel, which would distract him from his distress. He asks Wilhelmine's permission to do this (4, 207).

The first part of this letter of 22 March 1801 is positive. Kleist writes of Wilhelmine's improvements and then, curiously, quotes from Wilhelmine's letter as she asks about his inner feelings. At this point Kleist launches into the problem of the subjectivity of Kantian philosophy. Though the concept did affect him, he goes to some length to describe its effect histrionically. The tone of the two parts of the letter is discordant. We doubt he would have composed a reasonably considered and contemplative first half of the letter if he had also felt as distraught as he described in the second half of the letter. His purpose of beating a retreat from Wilhelmine and enjoying the aimlessness of travelling is clearly expressed. Travelling provides the splendid isolation in which one is freed from responsibilities and the need to answer to others; in addition, the description of his wanderings around Berlin and Potsdam do not accord with the reflective quality of the first half of the letter (4, 205).

Ilse Graham suggests, in connection with the irruption of the Kant crisis in the letter to Wilhelmine, that Kleist was aware of the problem which she calls his 'Amfortas wound': this is the Fisher King's wound in the groin in Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parzival* which will only heal if it is met with empathy. Empathy is

not found in a mirror, which not only distorts reality but is merely a reflection. To deal with the glare of the reflection requires capacities which Kleist does not possess.⁴⁶ Kleist had also used the mirror image in his letter to Wilhelmine from Würzburg dated 10 October 1800 (4, 142). First of all he must, in his improvement of Wilhelmine, separate the gold from the ore. The fire ordeal and the sun of his love shall enable him to bask in the rays which the polished surface shall reflect:

Das Gefühl, *im Inneren schön zu sein*, u das Bild das uns der Spiegel des Bewußtseins in den Stunden der Einsamkeit zurückwirft, das sind Genüsse, die allein unsere heiße Sehnsucht nach Glück ganz stillen können.

(The feeling of *being beautiful in our internal being* and the image which the mirror of consciousness reflects in moments of solitude, those are pleasures which alone our fervent desire for happiness can totally appease) (4, 142).

Graham considers this a momentous utterance for the future author of the *Marionettentheater*.⁴⁷ Here the self is still felt to be good and consciousness of the self is sought for it is an unthreatening image; the external world, on the other hand, which is not encapsulated in this consciousness, is threatening, which Kleist then states in his letter to Ulrike of 5 February 1801 (4,195-201). He considers himself a misfit in the social order, for the mirror distorts reality. He writes to Wilhelmine that he is still concerned with his own reflection and that it is others who have the problem of seeing the truth in the mirror (4, 173). Kleist projects those parts of himself, which he cannot acknowledge into the other, thus enabling him to remain inviolate and pristine. The Kant crisis is a symptom of Kleist's deeper malaise which is sensitivity to language and meaning and a yearning that these should be available without the significant mark or sound which is language: the mark and sound are to be by-passed. This is the difference between the mental outlook of Kleist as described in his letter to Martini in March 1779, and his letter to Wilhelmine in March 1801.

Earlier statements to Wilhelmine on 10 October 1800 are again brought to the fore in his letter of 5 February 1801 to Ulrike, in which Kleist discusses the reflectiveness of the mirror. Graham asserts that the mirror image is also a reflective mirror which makes Kleist aware of the cognitive mode of

⁴⁶ Graham (1978), p. 7.

⁴⁷ Graham (1978), p. 5.

apprehension; that Kleist experiences a discordant apprehension of the environment which suggests, on the one hand, that things may be in order and, on the other, that it is only the reflective mirror of the world is crooked and dirty. For, this reason, external objects are not seen as they truly are.⁴⁸ This is an apprehension of the *Ding-an-sich* of which the true apprehension, in terms of Kant's thinking, is impossible.

It is also in this letter of 5 February to his sister, that Kleist expresses his a-social attitude and his fear of being misunderstood. It is language which fails Kleist, and which is also a conundrum allied to the uncertainty of objective perception. Kleist alights on the image of the dirty and crooked mirror, which reflects the world: it is the mirror in which we see ourselves and it is we, who project that failure on the world for we cannot see beyond the mirror's blemishes (4, 199). We can conclude, therefore, how can anything we express in fugitive language be truthful, if we cannot see beyond the blemishes of the mirror?

Thus, the object is seen as something unreliable and, hence, beyond control, which is a concept Groddeck also recognised more than one hundred years later.⁴⁹ Groddeck conceived the psychological life of man to be determined not by any directed cognitive faculty which we may have but that we are lived by 'It', that is, the force of the unconscious to which the ego is subservient. Groddeck also maintains that it is difficult to speak of the 'It' because normal vocabulary and language is inadequate to describe this phenomenon since they contain symbols which overlap and create muddy complexes.⁵⁰ It is only in the ante-natal state and in the symbiotic relationship of the infant with the mother that the 'It' is truly lived in our lives. It colours our desire for togetherness, choice of friends, work colleagues and marriage partners. The 'It' in us remembers the symbiotic state and seeks a return to it (again we are reminded of Novalis' blue flower).⁵¹ This issue was also raised in Kleist's essay, *Verfertigung der Gedanken*. He differentiates and separates the subject and the object of thought: 'denn nicht *wir* wissen, es ist allererst ein gewisser *Zustand* unserer welches weiß' (for it is not *we* who know but it is first of all a certain condition of ours which knows) (3, 540).

⁴⁸ Graham (1978), p. 4.

⁴⁹ Groddeck (1920), pp. 132 - 157.

⁵⁰ Groddeck (1920), p. 133.

⁵¹ Groddeck (1920), p. 138.

Kleist writes to Wilhelmine on 16 November 1800, as he attempts to educate her by telling her that books are ‘schlechte Sittenlehrer’ (poor moral instructors) because they tell us what is true, but ‘es dringt in die Seele nicht ein’ (but it does not penetrate the soul) (4, 161). He is already aware that there are limits to language, which cannot convey the essence of things. The inadequacy of language is an important consideration which was to become more significant as Kleist moved to a confrontation with Kantian subjectivity. He elaborates this concept in a more fundamental manner with Ulrike, in his letter of 5 February 1801. Kleist’s relationship with Ulrike was close and at an almost dependant level of the child to its mother. The significance of Ulrike to Kleist can be measured by the simple words ‘denn hier in der ganzen volkreichen Königsstadt ist auch nicht ein Mensch, der mir etwas Ähnliches von dem sein könnte, was Du mir bist’ (for here in the whole of the populous royal city there is not one person who could be that for me which you are.) (4, 195). He continues with the statement that Ulrike’s love for him is unconditional (as is a mother’s love of her child), and just as the child, Kleist cannot return this unconditional love though he feels obligated because Ulrike has done so much for him. Kleist is concerned with the failure to communicate his innermost feelings, in effect seeking to return to the symbiotic communication of mother and infant in which language is unnecessary.

Continuing in a regressed attitude towards Ulrike, Kleist reiterates how much he would have liked to meet with her in order to be able to communicate with and learn from her. He writes from the child’s position, which assumes that the mother is unfailingly interested in its internal life, saying how he would like to communicate everything to Ulrike but it is not possible:

Aber es ist nicht möglich, u wenn es auch kein weiteres Hinderniß gäbe, als dieses, daß es uns an einem Mittel zur Mittheilung fehlt. Selbst das einzige, das wir besitzen, die Sprache taugt nicht dazu, sie kann die Seele nicht mahlen u was sie uns gibt sind nur zerrissene Bruchstücke.

(But it is not possible and even if there were no further obstacle than this one that a medium for communication is missing. Even the one thing we possess, language, is useless for it cannot paint the soul and what it gives us are only mangled fragments) (4, 196).

Kleist’s identity crisis, his sense of a wall existing between himself and someone to whom he can open his heart is at bottom, the experience of one who is conscious of being existentially alone. Connection in a symbiotic manner which is primitive and unconscious and in which language is unnecessary is what Kleist

craves. So, it is known that Kleist had a speech impediment and he is, perhaps, referring to this when he writes ‘dazu kommt bei mir eine unerklärliche Verlegenheit, die unüberwindlich ist, weil sie wahrscheinlich eine ganz physische Ursache hat’ (in addition there is an inexplicable embarrassment which is unsurmountable because it possibly has a physical cause) (4, 199). However, psychoanalytic theory has concluded that stammering is not a physical defect but has a psychological component associated with infantile character traits. Oral sadism, observed in infants in the development of speech, particularly during the dentition period, results in a biting movement in the speech of stammerers as a punishment mechanism. Stammerers will often bite the tongue or the membrane of the mouth as a cannibalistic phenomenon.⁵² Imran Latif concludes that stammering is an individual matter and that generalisations as to its cause are futile.⁵³ Stammering may result from trauma, from anxiety symptoms or unresolved Oedipal issues, all or some of which may have afflicted Kleist to some extent.

Kleist continues to use Ulrike as a mother substitute when he writes to her in a similar vein on 13 March 1803 ‘ich wollte ich könnte mir das Herz aus der Brust reißen, in diesen Brief packen und Dir zuschicken’ (I wished I could tear the heart out of my breast, parcel it up in this letter and send it to you) (4, 313). Kleist needs the experience of sublime communication in which language is superfluous. He projects this desire for immediate, unmediated communication as a universal need, which he expresses in *Brief eines Dichters an einen anderen* (A poet’s letter to another) (3, 565 - 567). This piece was published in the *Berliner Abendblätter* in January 1811, thus towards the end of his life in November of that year. He writes out of a desperate need to be understood; the entire demands of his soul would be fulfilled if he were able, in the process of writing, to tear his thoughts from his breast with his hands and place them without further ado into the hands of his correspondent (3, 565). He uses a metaphor of the bowl and fruit to suggest that the fruit (or in the case with Ulrike, his heart), not the bowl containing it, is the desired object of a thirsty man, just as the form of the poem (language, rhythm, euphony) is necessary, but that art should make them disappear (3, 566). Kleist sees the necessity of a

⁵² Isador H. Coriat, ‘The Dynamics of Stammering’, *The Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, vol. 2 (1933), 244-259 (p. 247).

⁵³ Imran Latif, ‘Some Aetiological Factors in the Pathology of Stammering’, *British Journal of Medical Psychology*, vol. 17, nos. 3 and 4 (1940).

medium for communication, but his desire is the immediate transmission of thought and feelings without intermediary. Writing, that is language, was for Kleist a substitute for the impossible immediacy of communication without intermediary; language is merely ‘das Kleid meines Gedankens’ (the garb of my thoughts) (3, 566).

This need for understanding in which language is an inadequate mainstay to communication was identified by Melanie Klein in her last paper, *On the Sense of Loneliness*, published in 1963⁵⁴. She identifies this sense as an inner loneliness, which is present even when in company. This is particularly Kleist’s issue when he feels he is unable to show himself when he is in society, when he finds language to be destructive or inadequate because the essence of things cannot be conveyed (4, 199).

Klein says that a satisfactory early relationship to the mother or primary caregiver will establish a secure sense of being totally understood in which the unconscious of the mother is attuned to the unconscious of the infant. This communication at a non-verbal level, is the most complete communication that arises in an individual’s life. It is also a sense of paradise lost when we arrive at a stage at which the cognitive facilities and language establish connections with others, which, inevitably, are incomplete:

However gratifying it is in later life to express thoughts and feelings to a congenial person, there remains an unsatisfied longing for an understanding without words - ultimately for the earliest relation with the mother. This longing contributes to the sense of loneliness and derives from the depressive feeling of an irretrievable loss.⁵⁵

Klein asserts, too, that the relationship between the mother and the infant can never remain undisturbed on account of the paranoid schizoid persecutory feelings that arise particularly in the first three months of life; hence the infant feels insecurity and experiences persecutory anxiety. It sometimes feels abandoned by the mother, who has become a bad object, and Klein suggests that this paranoid insecurity gives rise to the feeling of loneliness. A polarity exists between the feelings of loneliness and the need for relationship, which requires the integration of good and bad impulses. In this case, good impulses are allied to love, and bad impulses to hate, which is the dichotomy Klein describes as a struggle between

⁵⁴ Klein (1963), vol. 3, pp. 300-313.

⁵⁵ Klein (1963), vol. 3, p. 301.

Eros and *Thanatos*, the life and death instincts. The attempt to integrate these impulses is a necessary part of being human, but the journey is difficult to accept. There is no guarantee that *Eros* will emerge as triumphant: there is the conflict between seeking integration as a safeguard against destructive impulses and fearing integration, in case the destructive impulses endanger the good object. Klein writes that patients have experienced the move towards integration (which can never be fully achieved) as painful for feelings of loneliness and abandonment abound, which arise out of proximity with the bad part of the self.⁵⁶

This is Kleist's predicament for he fears that he will be misunderstood and vilified if he tries to fulfil the need to expose his innermost feelings in communication: he cannot show himself as, Groddeck has demonstrated. If he does he will expose his true self to immoderate and destructive assault as Winnicott has mentioned. Winnicott proposes that with a good enough environment the object moves from being a subjective phenomenon to being objectively perceived.⁵⁷ Nevertheless, the infant enters into two kinds of relationships. There is the relationship with the mother in the environment, the human mother, and there is the relationship with the internalised mother.⁵⁸ The internalised mother is subjective and communication does not require to be explicit with this entity. However, the internalised communication leads to a cul-de-sac, for it does not constitute real communication in the adult.⁵⁹ Moreover, in a failed environment, the infant has created a split of a true and a false self, a split which Winnicott discusses in 'Ego Distortion in Terms of the True and False Self'.⁶⁰ The individual protects his true self against environmental impingement by creating a barrier between it and the outside world. This barrier, a sort of psychological and defensive carapace, is the false self, which is the face the individual presents to the outside world. Communicating from the false self does not feel real and is perceived as inauthentic, for it does not involve the core of the true self, where creativity and spontaneity reside.

This is Kleist's problem when he feels the inauthentic part of his self, attempting to communicate on a social and literary level. He is in a cul-de-sac, for he cannot return to his true self without the unwarranted fear of hurt and

⁵⁶ Klein (1963), vol. 3, p. 302.

⁵⁷ Winnicott (1963), p. 179.

⁵⁸ Winnicott (1963), p. 182.

⁵⁹ Winnicott (1963), p. 184.

⁶⁰ Winnicott (1960), pp. 140-152.

impingement. Winnicott encapsulates this sense of vulnerability in the phrase: ‘It is a joy to be hidden and a disaster to be found’ for in the finding, the true self is exposed to the vicissitudes of life and what may happen then?⁶¹ Kleist has a remnant of unconscious infant memory of what non-verbal communication was like, as we all do, but he is denied the immediacy of this form of communication because, as an adult, with the power of language unconscious communication, which existed only in a pre-verbal state, has been lost. The feelings of social isolation predominate when Kleist writes to Ulrike on 5 February 1801 ‘ich passe nicht unter die Menschen [...] sie gefallen mir nicht’ (I am not suitable for social intercourse with people [...] I do not like them) (4, 198). Kleist turns his back on society by projecting the bad parts, which he cannot acknowledge in himself; he can only see the distorted mirror, which shows a poor reflection of the world (4, 199). In addition, having expressed his need for connectedness and the failure that arise out of that, Kleist is also pre-empting rejection. It is easier to bear one’s rejection of others than to be rejected oneself, particularly if others carry the bad parts and particularly, too, if the existential sense of the self is absent.

Thus, as long as Kleist was in the intellectual grip of the *Aufklärung*, he was also certain about the structure and meaning of that environment. This structure included the meaning of language and the ability to express that meaning. Walter Müller-Seidel states that Kleist did not become sensitive to the paradox of life while his thinking and beliefs were dominated by the concepts of the *Aufklärung*.⁶² We see that the perception of the arch during his Würzburg trip is an expression of the paradox and the ineffable terror of annihilation, which was to be a significant feature in his works. Kleist finds it an enlivening consolation that he would be able to hold himself together just as all the stones held themselves in place; if one fell, they would all fall. The falling and the need to hold himself together are in his mind, and the uncertainties about the path his life should take are prescient. Thus, the clarity of the *Aufklärung* is followed by the dark, paradoxical nature of the Romantic imagination and a loss of clear and unequivocal meaning.

The presence of the Romantic paradox is significant, since it allows for ambivalence and equivocation; it is also a mature perspective on one’s being in

⁶¹ Winnicott (1960), p. 186.

⁶² Müller-Seidel (1971), p. 119.

the world. It is, for instance, evident in *Die Marquise von O....*, in which a pregnancy occurs without evident cause and in which Graf F, the rapist, is represented both as angel and devil (3, 143-186). It allows failure of language to come to the fore: the Frau Obristin's language fails her when her daughter, the Marquise, asks for a midwife to be brought to confirm her pregnancy 'ein reines Bewußtsein, und eine Hebamme! Und die Sprache ging ihr aus' (a clear conscience and a midwife! And words failed her) (3, 163). A further example can be cited from *Amphitryon* when Alkmene, speaking to Charis, tries to explain something which cannot be explained 'das Unerklärliche dir zu erklären' (to explain to you the inexplicable) (1, ii. 4, l. 1123) as the doubt arises in her that she had indeed shared the marital bed with one who was not Amphitryon but yet one who was.

Moreover, the subjectivity of the self leads to a language perception which makes meaning at some level incommunicable.⁶³ There is no language, that can adequately communicate the ineffable feelings and emotions experienced by the individual. Language cannot show the depths of the human psyche accurately and, in an attempt to overcome this and to communicate the incommunicable, Kleist creates an idioglossia, a private language, in which the insufficiency of language is supported by silence, tics, non-verbal signs, stammering, fainting, blushing or blanching or acts such as sitting, rising, stepping to a window and so forth, which provide meaning in themselves.⁶⁴ Kleist fears that the communicability of language is compromised, perhaps, due also to his own problems in communicating with stammering and that, in consequence, he will be misunderstood. The misunderstanding has dangerous consequences for the individual and a painful experience for the self: ridicule, obloquy and rejection. These feelings are most strongly expressed in the letter to Ulrike of 5 February 1801. This subjective relationship to language is not one in which the *Ding-an-sich* is compromised; it is more that the characters in his works are faced with extraordinary and stressful situations for which language is inadequate.

Heimböckel suggests rightly that there is a difference between 'Stille' (silence) as absence of sound and 'Schweigen' (lack of articulation).⁶⁵ An individual's

⁶³ Heimböckel (2003), p. 134.

⁶⁴ Helmut J. Schneider, 'Standing and Falling in Heinrich von Kleist', *Modern Language Notes*, vol. 115, no. 3 (2000), 502-518 (p. 502).

⁶⁵ Heimböckel (2003), p. 262.

agency determines the extent to which there is silence or no sound. The former may be described as an interruption to the ongoingness of life without necessarily having an emotional charge and in *Marquise* we may describe the hyphen, which denotes the Marquise's rape, as pregnant with silence; it cannot lead to understanding. It is an emotional impingement, which prevents the formation of thought and gives rise to concealment, to an attempt to hide that which cannot be admitted to consciousness or cannot be articulated, nor can it be hidden. The sense of concealment and the difficulty the characters have in stating their position clearly and unequivocally, of *Schweigen*, are overwhelming in this story. When the Obrist decides that the Marquise should leave his house, she beseeches him to change his mind, instead of words, he turns his back and fires a pistol into the ceiling. He is breaking the silence of non-articulation but he cannot use language (3, 166). The emotional stress is too great to be able to express what he feels. The silence then is filled with sound but is this sound meaningful? The Obrist can be described as angry, anger which arises out of a sense of shame brought on his family by the pregnancy of a daughter who has no husband. In consequence of this scene, the Marquise, fearful for her life, leaves the parental home as her father requires, repairs to her own estates and defends herself against the calumnies of the world: 'Sie beschloß sich ganz in ihr Innerstes zurückzuziehen' (She decided to withdraw totally into her innermost being) (3, 167). The Marquise defends her honour with silence; there is nothing more to be said about her condition which is inexplicable and will be disruptive in her social milieu. Similarly, Graf F misses every opportunity to speak, or is prevented from disclosing his dishonourable act; he remains silent until he appears in answer to the advertisement at the end of the story.

Kleist treats the ineffable with exclamations and signs: there is Toni's: 'ach' at the end of *Die Verlobung in St Domingo* (3, 222-260). The scene is one of exclamations and broken sentences, for no words exist for what has happened: "“ach!” rief Toni, und streckte, mit einem unbeschreiblichen Blick, ihre Hand nach ihm aus: “dich liebsten Freund band ich, weil - -!” Aber sie konnte nicht reden' ("oh!" Toni exclaimed and reached her hand out to him with an indescribable look: "I tied you up because - -!" But she could not speak) (3, 258). The meaning of Toni's indescribable look is contained in the exclamation "ach" and in the two hyphens, which contain the anxiety of her utterance. The exclamation marks heighten the intensity of the feelings raised by this scene, in

which Toni cannot express her feelings for Gustav now that he has shot her. In response ‘Gustav legte die Hände vor sein Gesicht. Oh! rief er ohne aufzusehen’ (Gustav placed his face in his hands. Oh! he exclaimed without looking up) (3, 259). The paradox of a loving relationship rent apart by violence is inexplicable. No words are available to describe this disaster, which cannot be comprehended and can only be described by exclamations and punctuation marks and by inarticulate sounds.

There is also the final utterance in *Amphitryon*, when Alkmene says: ‘ach’ (oh) (1, iii, 11, l. 2365). Alkmene’s sense of self has been destroyed as she realises that Jupiter is indeed not Amphitryon and that she had given herself to Jupiter in the mistaken belief that he was her husband. Her chastity is impugned but, naturally, a god as lover may be preferable to a mere mortal husband. Alkmene is excluded from the discussion between Jupiter and Amphitryon in the final scene, when there is a negotiation between Jupiter and Amphitryon and Jupiter grants Amphitryon’s wish for a son. Alkmene stands mute, bereft of power and a mere chattel in the discussion between the god and the husband. Jupiter departs and finally, Amphitryon calls Alkmene by name as if to bring her into consciousness. She is now left with her mortal husband. László F. Földényi writes that Alkmene’s sigh constitutes an undermining of the power of language.⁶⁶ The immortal Jupiter and the mortal Amphitryon both attempt to convince Alkmene that the world is governed by a certain logic which can be mastered. But Alkmene does not see the world in these terms and is, thus, robbed of speech. This, argues Földényi, makes her sigh dangerous and unfathomable; her sigh is a measure of the alienation of her soul for she has known and then been deprived of the divine.⁶⁷ The alienation is beyond words and leaves Alkmene floundering in a metaphysical morass - there is no happy ending to her story. The meaning of her response of: ‘ach!’ is then, perhaps, also contained in a projection of the reader’s imagination: is she regretful, sad, resigned, disappointed, penitent, unhappy or confused?

Fainting, as a form of communication in Kleist, denotes a breach in the consciousness of the character which cannot deal with the event which has overwhelmed it. He or she may return with renewed vigour to consciousness,

⁶⁶ László F. Földényi, *Heinrich von Kleist: Im Netz der Wörter*, trans. by Akos Doma (Munich: Matthes and Seitz, 1999), p. 20.

⁶⁷ Földényi (1999), pp. 20 - 21.

having been refreshed in a communion with the gods. Whatever the cause, language is obliterated as a form of communication. Margarete Berger and Dorrit Cohen join in seeing fainting as a somatic discharge or defence.⁶⁸ The fainting is seen as an escape from the present situation, which has become unbearable because the character is confronted with vague paradoxical feelings to which it can see no solution. Kleist's protagonists faint not because they come up short against the conception which they have of themselves and of the world; they become aware suddenly that the position they inhabit in the world is unfamiliar. Fainting is, thus, both a loss of consciousness to avoid this realisation, but also a turning point towards greater consciousness, in which the protagonist either triumphs or fails.

Through loss of consciousness which occasions the rape and pregnancy, the Marquise is brought into a sense of her femininity and the power to leave the stultifying embrace of the patriarchal family and incestuous embrace of the father. The Elector of Saxony in *Kohlhaas* does not triumph for with each fainting event he deteriorates and his health is increasingly tied to the fortunes of his house, for which nothing good has been prophesied. His first faint occurs when he listens to Kohlhaas' account of how he received the gypsy's prophecy and sees the amulet given to Kohlhaas by the gypsy (3, 119). He sickens and his state of sickness increases with each failure to obtain the gypsy's amulet. Finally, on the scaffold, Kohlhaas, having read the gypsy's text and in full knowledge of the Elector's future, swallows the paper and deprives the Elector of this knowledge. The Elector faints again and his life and soul are destroyed (3, 143). The Elector had tied his fortune to the aspiration of controlling his future and the future of his house, to no avail. The future was out of his grasp and he is unable to bear the consequences of not-knowing.

In *Schroffenstein*, a play of paranoia and the failure of human perception, Sylvester is unjustly accused by his brother of having murdered the latter's son (1, 123-233). The accusation is brought by a herald and an independent member of the Schroffenstein family, Jeronimus. The accusation takes some time to sink in during which Sylvester becomes increasingly confused and prepares to ride to his

⁶⁸ Margarete Berger, 'Zu den Ohnmachtszenarien kleistscher Protagonisten', in *Freiburger literarpsychologische Gespräche: Heinrich von Kleist*, ed. by Ortrud Gutjahr (Würzburg: Königshausen and Neumann, 2008), 249-278 (p. 254); Dorrit Cohn, "'Marquise von O...': The Problem of Knowledge", *Monatshefte*, vol. 67, no. 2 (1975), 129 - 144 (p. 132).

brother's castle to confront him. He is abused by Jeronimus and faints (1, i, 2, ll. 673 - 684). Now, Sylvester is innocent, unlike the Elector of Saxony, and the fainting does not have a detrimental but a fortifying effect. He returns from his faint claiming he feels so well as if he had entered another life. Gertrude, Sylvester's wife, wants him to go to bed, which Sylvester resists. He then recapitulates his faint in positive and transcendental terms:

Sylvester: Was mich freut,
 Ist, daß der Geist doch mehr ist, als ich glaubte,
 Denn flieht er gleich auf einen Augenblick,
 An seinen Urquell geht er nur, zu Gott,
 Und mit Heroenkraft kehrt er zurück.

(What pleases me is that the spirit
 Is yet more than I believed. It flees for a
 Moment merely to its source, it goes to God,
 And returns with a hero's strength) (1, ii, 2, ll. 898-900).

Sylvester then makes energetic preparations as he prepares to deal with the threat from the House of Rossitz, thus demonstrating the resources of power he has garnered from his faint. Sylvester, innocent and accused of a heinous crime, faints in order to gather up the resources to deal with the House of Rossitz, which has not only traduced his reputation but means him harm. The energy he derives from his faint is a measure of his innocence. The Elector of Saxony, on the contrary, experiences fainting as progressively enfeebling, for he is not innocent. He has been in dereliction of duty and is at fault. Kleist does not use these body reactions to plot lines arbitrarily; they have a symbolic value and thus meaning in lieu of language.

The rationality of the *Aufklärung* had given way to the dark, mysterious interiority of the Romantic period in which the philosophies of Kant and Fichte played their part. Thus, it was not merely a change in the philosophical landscape of the time but also the end of an era. The sense of existential dislocation that Kleist encountered when he was introduced to the subjectivity of the new philosophy rattled an individual, who thought he had his future life mapped out as he had described in his letter to Martini. Kleist's loss of certainty, however, also provided a freedom to the imagination. Freud's dictum that the ego is not master in its own house is surely a factor that Kleist recognised instinctively at this stage in his development hence his unconscious fear of psychological collapse as his description of the Würzburg arch informs us.

Klein describes the sense of aloneness which each of us bears but which Kleist expresses as a previously unmet infantile need. Kleist was unable to rely on the spoken or written word to communicate essential meaning and it this failure that gave him his sense of isolation from the other; this essential meaning, though, is the ineffable which we cannot articulate. He attempted to solve this conundrum by creating an idioglossia of gestures, tics, fainting and so on in an endeavour to communicate meaning. He experienced as a failure, his inability to express his innermost feelings yet also feared that such an exposure, as Winnicott describes, would subject him to environmental impingements of his real self, which had been hidden behind the shield of his false self. Kleist struggles with this dilemma in his letters to Ulrike and, to a lesser degree, Wilhelmine. The confrontation with Kant's philosophy had opened Kleist to nuances of feeling which presented its own particular dread and for which words were inadequate.

In Part 2, I shall examine the manner in which Kleist explored these existential and linguistic dilemmas by discussing selected plays and stories. This will lead us to the nub of Kleist's eschatological concerns. In his letters to Ulrike and Wilhelmine, he complains of his inability to communicate adequately; in his works he demonstrates the effect which this has on the interaction between people and what stratagems are involved to overcome incommunicability. The nature of the dilemmas, the quality of the characterisation and the interaction between characters present a strange world of abnormal behaviour which allies itself to Freud's death instincts. These are sado-masochism, the repetition compulsion and the desire for death itself. From Kleist's works arise features which are common experiences and which have a deleterious effect on the individual. The deleterious effect is one which inhibits spontaneity and creativity and is, thus, as much of a pathological nature as Freud deemed those instincts identified in *Jenseits des Lustprinzips*. These additional features, which I have identified in Kleist's works, consist of psychotic states, unresolved Oedipal issues, narcissism, hate, obsession and finally, the experience of a replaced child in a dysfunctional family, out of which arises the Doppelgänger complex.

Chapter 4

Penthesilea: Psychosis and Anthropophagy

Freud did not include psychotic states in his deliberation on the death instincts in *Jenseits des Lustprinzips* (Beyond the Pleasure Principle), in which he concentrated more on neurotic manifestations of mental functioning. Psychosis is a mental disorder in which abnormality of behaviour such as delusional behaviour is evident. Erotic delusions, as demonstrated by Penthesilea, frequently move from a position of hope to one of resentment when the object becomes unavailable.¹ It is also a mental condition which inhibits the freedom of the individual to act in a spontaneous and creative manner and in examining Penthesilea, we find a woman who is subject to incompatible forces which create unbearable stress. Psychoses arises for the character, Penthesilea, in Kleist's play *Penthesilea* (2, 143-256), from the conflict she experiences between her duty as Queen of the Amazons to observe and maintain the ritual of the Amazon tribe, which she transgresses, and the obsessive erotic desire she experiences for Achilles, which she does not understand since a loving relationship with a man is anathema in Amazon society: there is thus, a conflict between duty and desire. The play is set in familiar Kleist terrain of a character thrust into an unfamiliar and incomprehensible situation for which they have no answers. Penthesilea's solution, in her obsessive erotic feelings for Achilles, is to regress to psychotic, infantile cannibalistic behaviour. This is as the only way in which she, held in concrete thinking, can engage in a symbiotic relationship in an effort to incorporate that which is both loved and hated: the body of Achilles. It is loved but Penthesilea does not understand this love for it is not in her experience and since she does not understand love she also hates. Her unconscious love is expressed by the desire for a symbiotic closeness which can only be made manifest through incorporation by eating the loved object.

In a letter to his cousin, Marie von Kleist, in late autumn 1807 and writing about *Penthesilea*, Kleist says: 'es ist wahr, mein innerstes Wesen liegt darin, und Sie haben es wie eine Seherin aufgefaßt: der ganze Schmutz zugleich und Glanz meiner Seele'. (It is true my inner being is in the work and you have grasped it like a clairvoyant: all the dirt as well as the brilliance of my soul) (4, 397-398). Kleist offers his conflicted internal world

¹ *Oxford Textbook of Psychiatry*, ed. by Michael Gelan and others, 3rd. edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 62, p. 303-304.

to his cousin in the expectation that she will understand him and relate to him. This, the immediate understanding which the human being and particularly the narcissistic personality craves, is what Kleist seeks. Harry Guntrip (1901-1975), a psychoanalyst who made significant contributions to object-relations theory, expresses the sense of this pithily: ‘the fundamental fact about human nature is our libidinal drive towards good object-relationships’.² The individual’s need to be integrated in a community of other individuals is thus a paramount drive. It is this aspect of the Amazon ethos, which Penthesilea, in her obsession with Achilles, cannot understand and which then puts her outside the mores of her community. For Kleist, his cousin’s immediate acceptance of his humanity leaves him feeling less isolated and his gratitude to her is also, perhaps, a sense of how little he is understood by the environment at large. The dirt and the brilliance were indissoluble aspects of his character (and indeed, are part of the human condition), and were a source of confusion for him through repression and splitting.

Kleist published the complete tragedy of *Penthesilea* in 1808 and he had sent Goethe a first fragment published in the *Phöbus* magazine on 24 January 1808. He had submitted the piece to Goethe with great humility ‘auf den Knien meines Herzens’ (on the knees of my heart) (4, 407-408). Goethe’s response appears in almost every book and paper written about this play. He writes to Kleist on 1 February 1808 ‘mit der Penthesilea kann ich mich noch nicht befreunden. Sie ist aus einen so wunderbaren Geschlecht und bewegt sich in einer so fremden Region daß ich mir Zeit nehmen muß mich in beide zu finden’ (I cannot yet make friends with Penthesilia. She is of such curious genus and moves in such a strange landscape that I must take time to find myself in both).³ Goethe was fifty-eight years old at this point in his life and had ostensibly forgotten his own struggles with a disturbed mental state at the time of writing *Die Leiden des jungen Werther*, This book was published when he was twenty-five years old and during the writing of the played each night with thoughts of suicide.⁴ Goethe was, thus, familiar with the edge of madness but denied an understanding of the psychosis to which Penthesilea is subject. It is perhaps also the air of frenzy in the play, an unsettled centredness against which Goethe reacts, though this has, within the context of the play, a function in describing Penthesilea’s mental state designed to arouse pathos.

² Harry Guntrip, *Schizoid Phenomena, Object Relations and the Self* (London: Karnac, 1992), p. 19.

³ Wolfgang von Goethe, *Goethes Briefe*, 4 vols, ed. by Bodo Morawe (Hamburg:Wegner, 1965), vol. 3, p. 64.

⁴ Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, ‘Dichtung und Wahrheit’, in *Goethes Werke*, 14 vols., ed. by Erich Trunz and others (Hamburg:Wegner, 1989), vol. 9, p. 585; Klaus Berdolt, ‘Tod und Freitod in Goethes Briefen, Gesprächen und autobiographischen Schriften’, in *Sterben und Tod bei Heinrich von Kleist und in seinem historischen Kontext*, ed. by Dietrich von Engelhardt, Jan C. Joerden, Lothar Jordan (Würzburg: Königshausen and Neumann, 2006), pp. 65-78.

It is true, there are depictions of cruelty in *Penthesilea* as in other of Kleist's works, such as *Die Hermannsschlacht* (2, 447-554) or *Das Erdbeben in Chili* (2, 189-221). The cruelties in *Penthesilea* are not exceptional and are enumerated by Hans-Jürgen Schings as he describes Goethe's experience during the campaign in France in 1792 and the cruelties Goethe experienced there.⁵ The background of the French Revolution is given as the source of the permission to depict such cruelty for the desire of the mob to exercise its new-found freedom leads to bloody excesses. At the conclusion of his work on the *Campagne in Frankreich, 1792* (Campaign in France), Goethe remarks 'die Welt erschien mir blutiger und blutdürstiger als jemals' (the world seems to me more bloody and blood thirsty than ever before).⁶ A contemporary, Konrad Engelbert Oelsner (1764-1828), reported directly from France for the benefit of a German audience and detailed the cruelties which took place, frequently initiated by women. So what was so terrible about the teichoscopic report of the dismemberment of Achilles by Penthesilea that has as a model *The Bacchae* of Euripides (480 BCE-406 BCE) and the myth of Actaeon and Diana?⁷ The purpose of Greek tragedy was to arouse pathos which *The Bacchae* certainly does and which is also offered in Penthesilea's cannibalism of Achilles:

Die Amazone Sie liegt, den grimmigen Hunden beigezelt,
 Sie, die ein Menschenschoß gebar, und reißt, -
 Die Glieder des Achills reißt sie in Stücken!

(She lies, together with the terrible dogs,
 She who was born of human womb and tears
 The limbs of Achilles, tears them into pieces) (2, 22, ll. 2596-2597).

Meroe Sie schlägt die Rüstung ihm vom Leib reißend,
 Den Zahn schlägt sie in seine weiße Brust,
 Sie und die Hunde, die wetteifernden,
 Oxus und Sphinx den Zahn in seine rechte,
 In seine linke sie; als ich erschien,
 Troff Blut von Mund und Händen ihr herab.

(Roughly she tears the armour from his body,
 The tooth she strikes into his white breast,
 She and the dogs, competing,
 Oxus and Sphinx strike their teeth into his right one
 She into his left one; when I appeared
 Blood dripped from her mouth and hands) (2, 23, ll. 2669-2674).

⁵Hans-Jürgen Schings, 'Über Einige Grausamkeiten bei Heinrich von Kleist', *Kleist Jahrbuch 2008/9*, 115-137; Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1822), *Campagne in Frankreich 1792*, in *Goethes Werke*, 14 vols. ed. by Erich Trunz and others (Hamburg: Wegner, 1989), vol. 10, pp. 188-363.

⁶Goethe (1822), vol. 10, p. 359

⁷Euripides, 'The Bacchae', in *The Complete Greek Tragedies*, 4 vols., trans. by William Arrowsmith, ed. by David Greene, Richmond Lattimore (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1960), vol. 4, pp. 543-608; Robert Graves, *The Greek Myths* (London: Penguin, 1960), pp. 84-85.

Ulrich Port argues that *Penthesilea* follows Aristotle's precept, that pathos is an important element in tragic art through which we are enabled to learn about ourselves through suffering.⁸ Kleist's play does not show us anything new in terms of horror which had not been seen in Greek tragedies or Shakespeare. However, the Weimar classicism of Goethe and Schiller required a subordination of the tragic to elements of nobility, beauty and moderate behaviour, which puts into perspective Goethe's response to the play. Perhaps there was not one overriding feature which was the cause of Goethe's comment but a culmination of affect which Goethe, the sage of Weimar, found disturbing: there is Penthesilea's psychotic state culminating in her cannibalistic attack on Achilles, there is the frantic pace of the play and there is the theme of frenzy, which is also the 'landscape' of the play. The metaphors of rending and frenzy are present from the outset and form a sub-text which anticipates the ending of cannibalism and suicide. The pathological and nihilistic qualities of the play are emphasised in that the polarities of love and hate are fluid, gesture and words are misinterpreted and Achilles' lines become a misunderstood over-simplification 'dies wunderbare Weib,/Halb Furie, halb Grazie, sie liebt mich' (this wonderful woman, half full of fury/half full of grace, she loves me) (2, ll. 2456-2457). This is the confusion which then ends in: 'Bisse' (bites) instead of: 'Küsse' (kisses) (2, 24, l. 1981). It sums up the fundamental misunderstanding between two people: Penthesilea does not understand herself, and hence, cannot understand Achilles, and Achilles does not understand Penthesilea: a common language and understood feelings are absent for they are confounded by desire and cultural difference. Each is too caught up in her and his own selfdom. So, the causes and stages of the psychosis resulting in her cannibalisation of Achilles which assail Penthesilea in the course of the play lead to the reparation she seeks following Achilles' death.

The archetype of orality is an inherent psychic structure, which is discussed by Freud in *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, where he states that orality even when it can be construed as sadism includes the libidinal aim of incorporation.⁹ Freud returns to this theme in *Totem and Taboo*, where he writes that in ingesting body parts of a person one is also incorporating the attributes which belonged to that person.¹⁰ S.O. Hoffmann, however, asserts that Penthesilea suffers from an identity conflict: she is a woman who wants to be a man for her personality contains two masculine archetypes. One is Ares and

⁸ Ulrich Port, 'In unbegriffner Leidenschaft empört: zur Diskursivierung der (tragischen) Affekte in Kleists "Penthesilea"', *Kleist Jahrbuch 2002*, 94-108.

⁹ Sigmund Freud (1905), 'Drei Abhandlungen zur Sexualtheorie', *GW. 5*, 29-149 (Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality, *SE. 7*, 123-243).

¹⁰ Sigmund Freud (1913), *Totem und Tabu*, *GW. 9*, p. 101 (Totem and Taboo, *SE. 13*, p. 82).

the other is Achilles.¹¹ Ares is central and Achilles marginal and Ares prevents the introjective identification with Achilles: cannibalisation is, therefore, an introjection of Achilles, which incorporates his identity and enables Penthesilea to unite with him symbiotically. The purpose of incorporation is either to become like the subject or to attain the symbiotic immediacy of closeness. Symbiosis is a theme which Kleist explored both in *Brief eines Dichters an einen anderen* (A Poet's Letter to Another) (3, 565-567) and as a recurring apophthegm in his letters to his sister, Ulrike (4, 196, 313).

This archaic need for closeness may well arise from a failure of early mothering/caring of the infant in which patterns of abrupt separation were established. Ilse Graham has presented a convincing paper on this theme, using the theories of Klein and Winnicott, which is as meaningful now as when it was presented. At the time, however, it failed to find overall acceptance by a group of German scholars. They did not, in the discussion following the presentation of the paper and recorded in a *Diskussionsbericht* (record of the discussion), give due weight to the function of the unconscious.¹² Graham postulates a failure of care in Kleist's infant experience which is transmitted, in psychoanalytic understanding, even into the personality of the adult and is mirrored in his writing. In particular, the mother/caregiver's inability to mediate primitive sadistic-oral impulses generally reflects on the adult's inability to make more or less coherent relationships with his or her environment. Graham reflects on Kleist's inability to hold a good experience as a dysfunctional relationship with the metaphorical breast. This failure is reflected in the works in the idyllic interregnum of scenes 14 and 15 in *Penthesilea* and again in the idyll in *Die Verlobung in St. Domingo* (3,222-260) which is the night Gustav spends with Toni, or the paradisiacal stage in *Das Erdbeben in Chili* (3, 189-221) between the earthquake and the murderous events in the cathedral. In these examples outside forces arrive to disrupt the sense of consolidation found in the idyll so there is no sense in Kleist's works of the successful on-goingness of life in which he can trust.

Melanie Klein (1882-1960) sees primitive sadistic-orality as an aspect of Thanatos which is inherent in the infant from birth as the paranoid-schizoid position.¹³ In its phantasy, the infant desires to devour the mother's breast or the mother herself in an attempt to possess the mother's body, within which are located the father's penis, excrement and children, which are deemed to be edible material; the child phantasises that

¹¹ S.O. Hoffmann, 'Das Identitätsproblem in Heinrich von Kleists "Penthesilea"', *Jahrbuch der Psychoanalyse*, 8 (1975), 153-162 (p. 162).

¹² Ilse Graham, 'Zur Ätiologie eines Rätselhaften', *Kleist Jahrbuch 1981/82*, 98-116.

¹³ Melanie Klein, 'The Importance of Symbol Formation in the Development of the Ego', in *The Writings of Melanie Klein*, 4 vols (London: Hogarth, 1981), vol. 1, pp. 219-235.

parental coitus involves the incorporation of the father's body in the mother. The child thus attacks both parents, who are, in phantasy, bitten, torn or stamped into destruction. This phase forms the introduction to the Oedipus conflict and creates anxiety in the infant which feels that the weapons employed in its destructive phase may also be used against it. However, the infant's underdeveloped ego is, at this stage, unable to master the problem of dealing with this anxiety and so begins for the infant the process of symbol-making as a form of defence. Penthesilea, in her regressed mode, also in the grip of concrete thinking, is unable to mount a symbolic defence against the intrusion of unwarranted, unwelcome, misunderstood and thus threatening phenomena so that for her Achilles becomes little more than prey. Penthesilea is unable to relate to symbols in a fluid, flexible manner. For her, the symbol is also the object so that being like something and being something are the same. Thus, Achilles became the 'junges Reh' (young deer) (2, l. 2631) and 'das schönste Wild' (the finest game) (2, l. 2572) so that ingesting him is the Dionysian tearing and eating of game. Achilles had lost for Penthesilea, in her concrete thinking, his human individuality; he no longer represents the potential lover but prey. Thus, whether it was kissing or biting: it was all one and the same thing. Achilles becomes game/prey to be hunted and torn asunder just as the helpless infant attempts to maintain its grasp on reality by destroying those aspects of it that it finds threatening.

The concept of concrete thinking was conceived by Hanna Segal (1918-2011), a noted follower of Melanie Klein, who recognised this phenomenon particularly in schizophrenic and psychotic patients.¹⁴ She gives the example of a man who, since he had become ill, had refused to play his violin in public; for this patient, fiddling was also masturbation.¹⁵ Hanna Segal writes that: 'this non-differentiation between the thing symbolized and the symbol is part of a disturbance in the relation between the ego and the object'.¹⁶ Penthesilea's ego is confused with the object (Achilles) through the vicissitudes of the tension between law and desire and the numbing of feelings, arising from the removal of the right breast, which is, though, fundamental to the maintenance of the Amazon state. Achilles has enabled Penthesilea to begin to sustain affect but she is unable to maintain this as constancy and needs to resort to primitive forms of behaviour and grandiose thinking in order to deal with anxiety and disturbance in her own psyche. Segal maintains that symbol-formation governs the capacity to communicate since all communication is by symbol. When the symbols are felt in a concrete manner then the means of communication

¹⁴ Hanna Segal, 'Notes on Symbol Formation', *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 38 (1957), 391-397.

¹⁵ Segal (1957), p. 391.

¹⁶ Segal (1957), p. 393.

are absent since the symbols are unavailable for the purpose of language.¹⁷ This limits the creativity and spontaneity of Penthesilea, who cannot communicate except in increasingly grandiose terms in which reality has no symbolic value. Kleist is able to show Penthesilea functioning within the limits of concrete thinking by an accretion of *Leitmotifs* and metaphor and so expresses psychologically the workings of her psyche. We are left in no doubt about the turmoil and confusion which reigns in Penthesilea's mind.

Both Arvid Erlenmeyer and Joshua A. Hoffs rely on a social context to understand the human race's propensity for cannibalism.¹⁸ Erlenmeyer contends that cannibalistic destructive fantasies arise in times of chaos, when existing cultural norms are overturned or become meaningless. The tension which the individual has to bear to a greater or lesser degree leads to a regressive state in the psyche, which expresses itself in primitive repression, borderline states or a descent into oral-sadistic behaviour. Hoffs, on the other hand, ascribes no overt pathologic basis to cannibalism and sees it more as an expression of social values. He suggests that a variety of reasons lead societies and individuals to engage in cannibalism which may comprise nutrition and pleasure, aggression and revenge, magical purposes or religious, political and social practices. Both views may be considered as valid for there is a fundamental drive in human society for anthropophagy which is comprised of libidinal and regressive phantasies and a defence against chaos and an expression of institutional and cultural norms. The mythological basis of this feature of culture is demonstrated in the accounts concerning Dionysus and the story of Actaeon and Diana.

Peter Dettmering views the play from a psychoanalytic perspective and contends that the tragedy in the play arises from inadequate communication. This is true, but it is a limited view of the conflict in Penthesilea between her desire and her duty.¹⁹ Brigitte Engel considers the play from an analytical psychology perspective which interprets the play as a hero/heroine myth.²⁰ Penthesilea is emancipated from the unconscious into a selfhood through struggle with the iron structures of the Amazon tribe and her infatuation with Achilles. The path to individuation is frustrated by her death for the one-sided masculinity of the Amazons, lacking anima, is unsupportable. Chris Cullens and Dorethea von Mücke

¹⁷ Segal (1957), p. 395.

¹⁸ Arvid Erlenmeyer, 'Das kannibalische Phantasma - eine Annäherung', *Analytische Psychologie*, 19 (1988), 177-204; Joshua A. Hoffs, 'Anthropophagy (Cannibalism): Its relation to the Oral Stage of Development', *The Psychoanalytic Review*, 50B (2) (1963), 27-54 (pp. 29-39).

¹⁹ Peter Dettmering, *Heinrich von Kleist: Zur Psychodynamik in seiner Dichtung* (Munich: Nymphenburger, 1975), pp. 19-30.

²⁰ Brigitte Engel, "'Auf den Knien meines Herzens...'" Zum tiefenpsychologischen Verständnis von Kleists "Penthesilea", *Analytische Psychologie*, 15 (1984), 96-109.

assert that the key to the play is like the collapse of the Würzburg arch.²¹ Penthesilea is unable to hold the internal tensions of disparate elements of her psyche and hence, they all collapse at once, leading to her destruction.

The tension that Penthesilea experiences between the collective demands of the state (the maintenance of the female population organised in sacred ritual endowed by Mars and Diana), and her personal desires (her obsession with Achilles), is the breaking point which leads to madness. By sacred ritual she is not entitled to choose a mate; one must be captured in battle through the intervention of Mars. Hence, it is happenchance as to who the potential mate will be. There is no relational feeling, no affect between the parties. Moreover, once the man has functioned as a provider of genetic material, he is sent away. Male children that may be conceived are killed in order to maintain the membership of the tribe as female (2, 1. 1965). We cannot speak of 'love' in the feeling that Penthesilea has for Achilles, for she has been fed by her mother, Otere, with the image of the divine *Göttersohn* (son of the gods). The obsession that Penthesilea feels for Achilles has no personal element: it is an obsession which her mother, against the mores of the tribe, inculcated in her. It is significant in Kleist's representation of this impersonal feature of the relationship, that Penthesilea never addresses Achilles by name. He is 'Nereidensohn' (son of the Nereid), 'der Pelide' (son of Peleus) or 'Sohn des Peleus' (son of Peleus). The Nereid is Thetis, one of fifty water nymphs of the ancient sea god Nerus, and Peleus was one of the Argonauts. At the wedding feast of Thetis and Peleus, Eris, the Greek goddess of strife and discord, who had not been invited, brought the apple of discord which led to the judgement of Paris and ultimately to the Trojan War. There is, therefore, in the lineage of Achilles already a thread of discord which denies a consensual relationship.

Joachim Pfeiffer, Margarethe Berger, Ursula M. Mahlendorf, Marianne Schuller, and Caroline Neubaur all take a psychoanalytic view of *Penthesilea* which touch on the ideas of Freud, Melanie Klein and Wilfred Bion (1897-1979).²² Pfeiffer addresses the distaste

²¹ Chris Cullens and Dorethea von Mücke, 'Love in Kleist's "Penthesilea" and "Käthchen von Heilbronn"', *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte*, vol. 3, no. 63 (1989), 461-493 (p. 476).

²² Joachim Pfeiffer, 'Form als Provokation: Kleists "Penthesilea"', *Freiburger literarpsychologische Gespräche 9*, ed. by Johannes Cremerius and others (Würzburg: Königshausen and Neumann, 1990), 200-225; Margarethe Berger, 'Der Schacht im Busen: Gedanken einer Psychoanalytikerin zu Kleists Figur der Penthesilea', in *Ein Denken das zum Sterben führt: Selbsttötung – das Tabu und seine Brüche*, ed. by Ines Kappert, Benigna Gerisch, Georg Fiedler (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 2004), pp. 97-114; Ursula R. Mahlendorf, 'The Wounded Self: Kleist's Penthesilea', *The German Quarterly*, vol. 52, no. 2 (1979), 252-272; Marianne Schuller, 'Selbstmord-Sprachvollendung: zu Kleists Trauerspiel "Penthesilea"', in *Ein Denken das zum Sterben führt: Selbsttötung-das Tabu und seine Brüche*, ed. by Ines Kappert, Benigna Gerisch, Georg Fiedler (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 2004); Caroline Neubaur, 'Penethesilea und die Kategorie des Grässlichen', *Kleist Jahrbuch 2003*, 199-217.

and horror which Kleist's play aroused. He notes that the unamelorated presentation of unconscious material will make the reader or viewer react with a defence of which Goethe's reaction is a measure. Pfeiffer recognises though, that Kleist has managed to construct, from the sado-masochistic position which the play material represents, a coherent whole, which, in the final stage of the play, represents the depressive position. Berger's comments on *Penthesilea* relate principally to the effect that the dysfunctional history of the Amazon tribe has on the figure of Penthesilea. She has the right breast removed, like all Amazons, in order to maintain a martial persona. The removal of the breast creates a symbolic pit where should have been the seat of feelings. Instead, there is unacknowledged trauma, which creates emptiness in the depth of Penthesilea's unconscious. Berger identifies the primeval history of the Amazon tribe and sees in Penthesilea's fate a repetition of the tribe's origin. Penthesilea legitimises the internal and external destructiveness of the Amazon collective: she remembers the story but does not, cannot or will not, understand it. Repression is thus a coping strategy to deny an archaic injury which leaves no room for human feelings of empathy, depression, love or reparation, which have been excised with the breast. Penthesilea says: 'wo ist der Sitz schmachvoll, mir Busenlose, Auch des Gefühls, das mich zu Boden wirft' (where is the humiliating seat of feeling that I, a breastless one, will be thrown to the ground by it) (2, 5, ll. 616-617). The breast is the *Leitmotif* of Penthesilea's fate and the words 'Brust' (breast), 'Brüste' (breasts), 'busenlos' (without breast) and 'Busen' (bosom) are mentioned seventy times in the play.²³ We are reminded again and again of the void space where the breast should be so that it becomes a concrete symbol for the failure of Penthesilea to engage with Achilles on a human level; moreover, it is Achilles' right breast which is attacked and ingested by Penthesilea.

Mahlendorf considers *Penthesilea* from the perspective of an interpretation based on the self-psychology of Heinz Kohut (1913-1981) and the psychiatrist R.D. Laing (1927-1989), who sought the patient's cause of neurosis in the environment, particularly in the family. Mahlendorf perceives Penthesilea's problem to lie in the failure of the self, which is split, so that no coherent centre exists in which to locate its relationship with the other. This is the wounded self which Laing describes in *The Divided Self*. This divided self cannot through the experiences in the family, experience the other or the environment as real but can see it only through the prism of a false self, created as a defence against impingement.

²³ *Indices zur Deutsche Literatur: Wörterbuch zu Heinrich von Kleists sämtliche Dramen und Dramenvarianten*, ed. by Helmut Schanze (Nendeln: KTO Press, 1978), p. 67, pp. 68-69.

For Penthesilea, the family is the tribe.²⁴ Thus, Penthesilea, both as a person and as an individual psychologically embedded in the Amazon family, endures the primal wound with the removal of the right breast. The mating ritual of the Rosenfest with the anonymous captured male is something for which she can no longer find consonance having been imprinted with Achilles by her deceased mother. This frees her, unconsciously, from the ritual boundaries of the Amazon tribe. She is unable to relate coherently to any one thing, is unable to symbolise and when faced with the demands of feeling, regresses to a primitive need of symbiotic closeness which is expressed as incorporation and which can only, through concrete perception, be experienced through ingestion.

Schuller observes that for Kleist, love is a battlefield which is denoted in the first scene: 'Schlachtfeld bei Troja' (battlefield at Troy). She establishes an etymological connection between battle and sex in 'schlagen' (to beat), 'Schlacht' (battle) and 'Geschlecht' (sex/gender). Penthesilea seeks Achilles as a primary love object after the death of her mother; but for Penthesilea, Achilles is also a fugitive entity. He is enveloped in metaphors of light in which language dissolves. In Penthesilea's first sight of Achilles she compares him to a 'Tagesstern' (day-time star) (2, 15, l. 2207). It is as if Mars had come to greet his bride; she was blinded as if a bolt of lightning had struck. The images are piled on each other tumultuously and unboundaried and replicate the frenzy of battle. Penthesilea then says, contrary to Amazon custom, which requires the mate to be sent by the gods and thus to come upon him by happenchance: 'doch von zwei Dingen schnell beschloß ich Eines/ Dich zu gewinnen, oder umzukommen' (but of two things I quickly decided on one, to win you or perish) (2, 15, ll. 2220-2221). But the unknown forces which direct these characters are dark, strange and otherworldly. Penthesilea's act of cannibalism is performed in a moment of psychotic derangement towards which the character has been working throughout the play; once confronted with her deed she is released from her madness. We are reminded of the scene in *Michael Kohlhaas* in which Kohlhaas, confronted with Luther's displeasure, is released from the grip of his own narcissism (3, 76). It requires a shock to make a character face reality. For Penthesilea reality is now the death of Achilles and she has introjected/consumed the indigestible, with which language is lost in the crypt of her bosom. Remorse is not the same as grief and grief without the appropriate language is impossible. Language is inaccessible for everything, all feeling, is inaccessible for it is contained in the removed breast.

²⁴ R.D. Laing, *The Divided Self*, 4th. edn (London: Penguin, 1990).

In 'Penthesilea und die Kategorie des Grässlichen' (Penthesilea and the Category of the Monstrous), Neubaur indicates, following Bion (who was attached to the Kleinian group), that the nameless fear, that is anthropophagy, removes the basic thinking function, which Bion calls Alpha function, and thoughts become Beta elements, in which there is no rational thought; objects fail to be integrated in consciousness and become rubbish. Penthesilea is led to destruction by the self-assertion of her individuality, she ignores Amazon ritual and so she becomes a sacrifice. The 'Gräßlichen' of the title is the eternal induration of the split, which constitutes sacrifice without atonement. Penthesilea is caught in the vice of her own erotic feelings and the laws of Tanaïs: that is between her erotic feelings and the resolute misandry of the Amazons. Penthesilea's fate is to entertain misandry, while idealising Achilles, the man, lost in the brilliance of light. This is also the crux of the dichotomy in the play which is to what extent men are to be allowed proximity to the divine in the form of Diana without regression to oral sadism. Neubaur rightly praises Kleist's ability to reduce symbolic equivalence to an effective concretion, without losing symbolic value, which enables Kleist to express the psychotic nature of Penthesilea's behaviour metaphorically. She also asserts that Penthesilea's psychosis arises from the category mistake of mythic confusion: dismemberment in the cult of Diana is performed by Actaeon's hunting dogs but Penthesilea acts like a Bacchic maenad in her cannibalisation of Achilles. Kleist has, thus, fused two separate myths in the play.

There is no argument to suggest that Penthesilea's madness arises from being caught in the dilemma of two separate myths. Kleist systematically encompasses Greek and Roman myths in the names he assigns to the deities which govern Amazon ritual (Artemis/Diana and Ares/Mars) and to Odysseus/Ulysses. Kleist would not have created this confusion through oversight; there is a design. One aspect of this design is that it provides a further sense of confusion to the frenzy of the play but it also grounds the play in an impersonal psychological landscape which has universal application. Kleist presents the play as something which does not apply only to the characters in the play but as an issue which involves us all and that we entertain the denial of feelings and empathy at our peril.

Gerhard Gönner writes that the failure for the Greeks to understand Amazon frenzy arises from the ignorance concerning the Rosenfest and it is the frenzy and the savagery of cannibalism which led to the disapprobation of the play upon its publication. Doris Claudia Borelbach also discusses this theme.²⁵ She recognises that the Amazons do not

²⁵ Gerhard Gönner, *Von 'zerspaltenen Herzen' und der 'gebrechlichen Einrichtung der Welt'* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1989), pp. 141-155.

understand Penthesilea because she acts in contradiction to the demands of the rituals of the tribe. She is a woman with unconscious erotic feelings, which are not to be entertained by a member of the Amazon tribe and, in particular, not by the Queen of the Amazons. This is the basis of the splitting and it is only power and force, which mimic the founding of the Amazon state, and which keeps both the state and Penthesilea functioning. Penthesilea does not understand her erotic feelings and when she becomes aware of them the tension is too great to maintain the split. She is unable to maintain her adherence to the law of Tanais, the founding mother of the tribe, because of her obsession with Achilles and in seeking a resolution to her confusion regresses to boundaryless madness. Borelbach's comments refer, too, to the scandal caused by the publication of *Penthesilea*, which transgressed the aesthetic and bourgeois sensibilities of the time.²⁶ Erotic desire, madness and anthropophagy were in the mythic source material of the play and Kleist unacceptably broke the normative barrier of the *Aufklärung* which demanded a 'beautiful death'. Moreover, since the Amazons did not want to accept oppression, they in turn become tyrants and oppressors. The mythic dichotomy of the play lies, on the one hand, in the desire of the Amazons to dominate where the opponent/mate is selected by the god Mars and, on the other hand, in the submission of the intimate union required for reproduction of the tribe in which the virgin goddess Diana is instrumental. This engenders a tension between erotic desire and ritual, which creates an unsupportable tension which Penthesilea is unable to mediate. The manic and frenzied pursuit of Achilles that galvanises Penthesilea is an expression of this inner dichotomy which Borelbach rightly recognises, gives no room for reflection and results in the sense of mania that pervades the entire play.

Helga Gallas makes a Lacanian reading of the play.²⁷ However, she does say that she relies more on the historical, than psychoanalytical, aspects of Lacan's thinking.²⁸ She argues that the conflict in the play arises from two laws, which are the laws of Mars and Diana, reconfigured as the paternal and maternal law.²⁹ Ulrich Port writes that there is, though, no reconciliation possible between the symbolic order of the Amazons and the Greeks and hence, love and violence remain both congruent and opposing entities in the material of the play.³⁰ Bernhard Greiner writes about the Aristotelian unities of time and

²⁶ Doris Claudia Borelbach, *Mythos-Rezeption in Heinrich von Kleists Dramen* (Würzburg: Königshausen and Neumann, 1998), pp. 53-110.

²⁷ Helga Gallas, *Kleist: Gesetz, Begehren Sexualität*, (Frankfurt am Main: Stroemfeld, 2005), 159- 232.

²⁸ Gallas (2005), p. 11.

²⁹ Gallas (2005), p. 175.

³⁰ Ulrich Port, 'Penthesilea', in *Kleist Handbuch: Leben-Werk-Wirkung*, ed. by Ingo Breuer (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2013), pp. 50 - 61 (pp. 56-57).

place in which the mood of frenzy engendered in the play makes no allowance for thought or reflection. He argues, however, that Kleist has created a play in which he has succeeded in creating a truly modern tragedy by unifying the concepts of the Aristotelian tragic and the Kantian sublime.³¹ The play's twenty-four scenes match the twenty-four hours of the day, as if to emphasise the compression of frantic action into this limited period. In Odysseus' first speech he says 'der Griechen und Amazonen Heer/ Wie zwei erboste Wölfe sich umkämpfen' (the Greek and Amazon armies fight each other like two angry wolves) which identifies with the animal images in the play (2, 1, ll. 4-5). Jan Söffner also attends to this animalistic aspect of the character of Penthesilea.³² She is symbolically at one with her horse, which suggests that she understands the animal instinct of the horse, which also understands her. References by the Greeks to Penthesilea as 'Hündin' (bitch), 'Hyäne' (hyena), 'Parder' (panther) and Dogge (mastiff) reinforces this animality in and of her. The animal is then intrinsic to the unconsciousness which is expressed in the fury and rage of the hither and thither of battle. Söffner emphasises the unconscious quality of Penthesilea's behaviour which is corporeal and agrees with Kleist, who writes in *Über die allmähliche Verfertigung der Gedanken beim Reden* (On the Gradual Completion of Thought through Speaking) (3, 534-540): 'denn nicht *wir* wissen, es ist allerst ein gewisser *Zustand* unserer, welcher weiss' (for it is not we who know, it is primarily a certain condition in us which knows) (3, 540). This is a knowing without having an object, which means that the body knows before consciousness does; it is a state of pre-articulation. Penthesilea acts unconsciously in her pursuit of Achilles: the love and the hate are unconscious elements in her character conditioned by blind acceptance of Amazon ritual, which she breaks, also unconsciously, in her move into psychosis.

Hence, the ambivalence in Penthesilea's comment as she regains her senses after eating Achilles which is also the fundamental key to the play 'So war es ein Versehen, Küsse, Bisse,/ Das reimt sich, und wer recht von Herzen liebt,/ Kann schon das eine für das andre greifen' (So, it was a mistake, kissing, biting,/ That rhymes and who loved deeply in his heart/ Can understand the one for the other) (2, 24, ll. 2981-2983). The misunderstanding between Penthesilea and Achilles in Scene 20, when the herald issues Achilles' challenge, results in Penthesilea acting out from a Kleinian paranoid-schizoid position: Achilles is offering himself up as a conquered mate to be led off to Themiscyra for the Rosenfest. Penthesilea sees him (in her regressed state while still caught in the rigid structure of Amazonian ritual and concrete thinking) as only game to be hunted and killed. The desired

³¹ Bernhard Greiner, *Kleist's Dramen und Erzählungen* (Tübingen: Francke, 2000), pp. 148-173 (p. 151).

³² Jan Söffner, 'Penthesileas Zorn', *Kleist Jahrbuch 2008/9*, 166- 182.

mate to be captured in battle has become prey; she cannot differentiate between the warrior to be captured for sexual congress and game to be killed and ingested. It is only in the final scene, when Penthesilea becomes aware of what she has done to Achilles, that she reaches the depressive position in which the object is felt as a whole object and the differentiation between ego and object is recognised and ‘ambivalence is also more fully experienced’.³³

The frenzy displayed by the Amazon army has Odysseus amazed at the chaotic nature of the battle readiness of the Amazons and the indiscriminate manner in which they seek their adversary. He does not understand that the Amazon’s promiscuous behaviour arises from their objective of capturing opponents as potential fathers for their children, which makes them friend to neither Greek nor Trojan. He says ‘so viel ich weiß, gibt es in der Natur/ Kraft bloß und ihren Widerstand, nichts Drittes’ (this much I know, in nature there is only force and its opposite, no third thing) (2, 1, ll. 111-112). But there is a third thing: the third thing is the Amazon tribe intent not in participating in war for one side to be victorious but to capture mates for the Rosenfest. There is, therefore, not only a misunderstanding, a misapprehension of the reasons for the participation of the Amazons in this conflict between the Greeks and the Trojans which becomes clear in the course of the play, but which Achilles at his peril, blinded by his love of Penthesilea, also fails to understand.

There is also a blind misapprehension of gender differences: there are men and there are women, the Amazons, however, are neither but a third thing. The mastectomy of the right breast has conceived an in-between state for these women. The cowardly impulse to remain as weak women, which was threatened by Mars, caused Thanaïs, the founder queen, to tear off her right breast so that she could draw the bow like a man. The loss of the breast moves the Amazons toward an aspect of masculinity which is not understood by the Greeks: ‘doch als die feige Regung um sich griff/ Riß sie die rechte Brust sich ab, und taufte/ Die Frauen, die den Bogen spannen würden’ (but she tore off her right breast as the cowardly impulse took hold and baptised the women who would draw the bow) (2, 15, ll. 1985-1987). The issue for the Amazons was that they would be seen only as women who with both breasts would be unable to draw the bow in a sufficiently martial manner. The removal of the right breast is a metaphor for the lack of feeling engendered in the Amazon community, which is also reflected in the language Kleist uses. There is an aspect of hardness and obduracy which is demonstrated by the use of the words ‘Erz’ (ore) and

³³ Segal (1957), p. 394.

‘Stein’ (stone), which are found in the text twelve and seven times respectively.³⁴ This hardness has a quality of the beserk warrior who is unyielding, just as ore or stone.

The Amazons are described as beserk with ‘heißer Kampflust voll’ (filled with bellicose desire to fight) (2, 1, l. 19). In scene 15 Achilles, confused about his relationship with Penthesilea who wants to transport him to Themiscyra with the other prisoners, asks:

Achilles Was ist's, du wunderbares Weib, dass du,
 Athene gleich, an eines Kriegsheers Spitze,
 Wie aus den Wolken nieder, unbeleidigt,
 In unseren Streit vor Troja plötzlich fällst?
 Was treibt von Kopf zu Fuß in Erz gerüstet,
 So unbegriffene Wut voll, Furien ähnlich,
 Dich gegen das Geschlecht der Griechen an;

(What is it, you strange woman, that you,
 Like Athene, appear suddenly at the head of an army
 As if from the clouds and without cause
 In our conflict before Troy?
 Why do you attack the Greeks, armed
 Head to foot in iron with such incomprehensible
 Rage, like the Furies?) (2, 15, ll. 1877-1883).

This quality of frenzy which the Amazons display is fundamental to the archetype of Dionysus, the indestructible god of frenzy, transformation and intoxication. *The Bacchae* is a fundamental reference point for the familiars, which were part of Dionysus' entourage as he traversed the East. These were the maenads, satyrs, panthers and tigers, which also figure prominently in the pottery fragments found in archaeological digs.³⁵ The shadow of the myth of the indestructible, dismembered god Dionysus pervades the language of the play in references to Penthesilea which then culminates in the teichoscopic report of the frenzied, maenadic dismemberment of Achilles.

Dionysus, as one of his many manifestations, was Dionysus Trigonos (Dionysus thrice born).³⁶ The first birth was as the divine child of Persephone or Aphrodite and fathered by Zeus. After his first birth, he was surprised by the Titans, who dismembered, boiled and roasted him.³⁷ Some myths say that Zeus, attracted by the aroma, appeared and prevented the cannibalistic feast by smiting the Titans with lightning. Other myths say that the Titans had already ingested Dionysus, except for his heart, and when they were smote, gave off a

³⁴ Schanze (1978), pp. 158-159, pp. 457-458.

³⁵ Robin Osborne, *Archaic and Classical Greek Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 104 – 105, p. 151; Gisela M.A. Richter, *A Handbook of Greek Art* (Oxford: Phaidon, 1959), p. 336, p. 341; John Boardman, *Greek Art* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1973), p. 99.

³⁶ C. Kerényi, *The Gods of the Greeks* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1992), p. 272.

³⁷ C. Kerényi, *Dionysus: Archetypal Image of Indestructible Life*, trans. by Ralph Manheim (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), p. 245.

vapour which became soot which in turn became the stuff of which mankind was made.³⁸ Zeus uses Dionysus' heart to make a potion which he gave Semele to drink whereupon she became pregnant with Dionysus.³⁹ Her death in the seventh month of her pregnancy through witnessing Zeus in his god-like glory left the unborn Dionysus come to gestation in Zeus' thigh, into which he had been sown: thus thrice born. The Titan soot contained both the substance of Dionysus and the Titans and hence the archetype of dismemberment and indestructability was passed from generation to generation. The myth suggests, therefore, that cannibalism is an inherent part of human nature.

A further appellation of Dionysus is Dionysus Zagreus (Dionysus restored to life) and it is in this manifestation that he is also present in *Penthesilea*.⁴⁰ In an effort to escape the Titans, Dionysus Zagreus went through several transformations, including that of lion, horse, horned serpent, bull and tiger. In the Minoan ritual of the return of the Bull-king, the sacrificial object, initially a boy and then later a bull calf, was eaten raw. Dionysus Zagreus transformation into a tiger connects him to Dionysus, who was helped to cross the river Tigris by a tiger which Zeus sent when Dionysus was on his way to India.⁴¹ On his return from India, Dionysus brought elephants which also have a place in *Penthesilea*. (2, 20, l. 2409; 23, l. 2611). As a demonstration of his divine power, Dionysus changed his shape to convince the three daughters of a king to join his revels. He was successively a lion, a bull and a panther and drove the sisters mad. They tore their brother to pieces and devoured him.⁴² Dionysus appeared in communities and drove the women mad (consorting with Dionysus were particularly women's rites), and women, as groups of maenads, danced and sang in the forests, catching game, tearing it to pieces with bare hands and eating it raw.

In *The Bacchae*, Dionysus has now come to Thebes, city of King Cadmus, to recover Semele's, his mother's honour. She had been slandered by her sisters that Zeus was not his father. The sisters claimed falsely that Semele had lied and that Zeus had blasted her with lightning in anger:

Dionysus Because of that offence
 I have stung them with frenzy, hounded them from home
 Up to the mountains where they wander, crazed of mind,
 And compelled to wear my orgies' livery.
 Every woman in Thebes – but the women only -

³⁸ Kerényi (1996), p. 244.

³⁹ Kerényi (1996), p. 259.

⁴⁰ Graves (1960), pp. 118-120; Borelbaach (1998), pp. 74 – 88.

⁴¹ Graves (1960), p. 104.

⁴² Graves (1960), p. 105.

I drove from home, mad'.⁴³

Thebes was ruled by Cadmus' grandson, Pentheus, at the time of Dionysus' visit. Pentheus' mother was Agave and her sisters were Autonoe, Ino and Semele. All three sisters of Semele were also nursemaids to Dionysus and suffered maenadic madness in which they dismembered living game. Agave led the maenads and tore Pentheus to pieces after he was discovered spying on the maenads and hiding in a pine tree.⁴⁴ Autonoe is the mother of Actaeon, the latter is torn to pieces by his own hounds after Diana transforms him into a stag for watching her at her toilet or because he boasted that he possessed superior hunting skills.⁴⁵ The death of Actaeon is caused by the goddess Diana, who is also the founding deity of the Amazon race. Finally, Ino and her husband Athama were driven mad by jealous Hera, Zeus' consort, for nursing Dionysus.⁴⁶

These themes of frenzy, madness and dismemberment intrinsic to the myth are mirrored in the language and metaphors of *Penthesilea*. Kleist has set up Achilles as the victim with parallels to Actaeon and Pentheus and Penthesilea as the dismemberer and follower of Dionysus/Zagreus. Penthesilea is in the grip of a maenadic state, she is a force of nature: 'Penthesilea, / Wie Sturmwind ein gerissenes Gewölk, / Weht der Trojaner Reihen vor sich her, / Als gält es übern Hellespont hinaus, / Hinweg vom Rund der Erde sie zu blasen. (Penthesilea, like gale blowing scudding cloud so are the Trojan lines as if to push them over the Hellespont and scatter them from the earth's crust) (2, 1, ll. 34-38). Another reference is: 'schlug sie mit Donnerkrachen eben ein, als wollte sie den ganzen Griechenstamm / Bis auf den Grund, die Wütende, zerspalten' (she attacked as with a thunder blast as if she, the raging one, wished to split the Greek troops to the core) (2, 1, ll. 145-147). These metaphors of the overpowering force of nature indicate an unfettered psyche which in its elemental force will adopt grandiose thinking and conceive of moving mountains.

Penthesilea, the dismemberer of Achilles, is allied to Dionysus/Zagreus. The familiar animals in Dionysus' train were panthers, tigers and lions. The cat tribe is also an aspect of the feminine which points to the androgynous sexuality of Dionysus. Odysseus remarks how Penthesilea rides a: 'gefleckten Tigerpferd' (mottled zebra) (l. 1, l. 25), in which the reference to 'tiger' is lost in the English translation; later an Aetolian reports 'seht! Wie sie mit den Schenkeln / Des Tigers Leib inbrünstiglich umarmt' (See! How ardently she

⁴³ Euripides (1960), p. 544.

⁴⁴ Euripides (1960), pp. 590-592.

⁴⁵ Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. by David Raeburn (London: Penguin, 2004), pp. 99-107; Euripides, (1960), p. 556.

⁴⁶ Ovid (2004), pp. 151-158.

embraces the zebra's body with her thighs) (2, 3, ll. 396 -397). References to Penthesilea as a 'Wölfin' (wolf) (2, 3, l. 163), 'Hyena' (2, 3, l. 331), 'Parder' (panther) (2, 3, l. 346) and to the army of Amazons dressed in snake skins (2, 1, l. 18) reinforce the congruence with Dionysian energy. The suggestion is that Penthesilea is deeply and instinctively united with animals and hence her nature, too, may be construed as animalistic.

Penthesilea's behaviour is unconscious, in which thinking or rational thought is not part of the mental equipment. She is, as is said about her, a force of nature. By assigning Penthesilea the qualities of the maenad, which is how she is described by the *Oberpriesterin* dancing through the fields, Penthesilea is also allied to the psychosis of this group, a psychosis of wildness, orgiastic dancing and tearing living game apart with bare hands.

Achilles is alternatively described as 'schönstes Wild' (the finest game) (2, 23, l. 2572), 'junges Reh' (young deer), (2, 23, l. 2631) whose antlers betray him (2, 23, l. 2645). Achilles approaches his final combat with Penthesilea naively; he says of Penthesilea 'sie tut mir nichts' (she will not harm me) (2, 12, l. 1472). He does not understand the *raison d'être* of the Amazon tribe but, much more, he also does not understand that at this point Penthesilea had lost her mind. She was not intent on capturing a mate but on killing him which, in her failure to identify Achilles as a potential mate, is the only recourse she has for a symbiotic union founded in the binary love/ hate. She does not understand the communion of love and regresses in an attempt to resurrect archaic memories of symbiotic union, to the libidinous ingestion of the breast which Freud postulated. Achilles is misled by Penthesilea just as Pentheus is misled by Dionysus, and like Pentheus, Achilles suffers the same fate.⁴⁷ He is hunted as game and hides in a pine tree: 'gleich einem jungen Reh' (like a young deer) (2, 23, l. 2631) 'duckt und birgt/ In einer Fichte sich' (ducks and hides himself in a pine tree) (2, 23, ll. 2637-2639). Language has lost its symbolic features, fails to convey meaning and creates a failure of communication between Penthesilea and Achilles.

If Goethe was reacting to Penthesilea's psychotic state we could now perhaps understand to what this was attributable. The 'landscape' of the play is certainly not harmonious. However, Goethe was perhaps astute in his response to Kleist's play in recognising Kleist's identification with it and what it might say about Kleist's internal world. Kleist was working on *Penthesilea* in Dresden in 1807 and 1808, when he was lodging with Ernst von Pfuel (1779-1866), a long-standing friend from Kleist's time in the

⁴⁷ Euripides (1960), p. 590.

army. Kleist appeared in a disturbed state with tears in his eyes in von Pfuel's room. Questioned by him, Kleist replied in distress 'nun ist sie tot' (now she is dead). It transpired that Kleist had written Scene 24 of the play, in which Penthesilea kills herself.⁴⁸ Kleist was able to recover with von Pfuel's help though Kleist's account of this event has von Pfuel in tears (4, 396). Further, Kleist wrote to his cousin, Marie von Kleist in the late autumn of 1807 'ich habe die Penthesilea geendigt [...] sie hat ihn wirklich aufgegeßen den Achill vor Liebe' (I have completed Penthesilea [...] she has really eaten him up, Achilles, out of love) (4, 395-396). Penthesilea can only demonstrate her symbiotic need through ingestion of the loved object, which, in her regressed state, is equivalent to love.

It is evident from the beginning of the play that Penthesilea is somewhat unbalanced. She already has erotic feelings for Achilles even before meeting him, as she discloses in scene 15. Odysseus' remarks on first meeting her: 'sieht sie in unsere Schar, von Ausdruck leer/ Als ob in Stein gehaun wir vor ihr stünden; hier dies flache Hand,/ versichr' ich dich, /Ist ausdrucksvoller als ihr Angesicht' (she looks to our army, with empty expression as if we were stone statues standing before her. Here, this flat hand, I assure you has more expression than her face) (2, 1, ll. 64-67). But then Penthesilea sees Achilles: 'Bis jetzt ihr Auge auf den Peliden trifft:/ Und Glut ihr plötzlich, bis zum Hals hinab/ Das Antlitz färbt, als schlüge rings um ihr/ Die Welt in helle Flammenlohe auf' (Until she looks on Peleus's son and blood suddenly colours her face down to her neck as if all around her the world suddenly erupted in brilliant flames) (ll. 1, 68-71). Penthesilea's reaction to Achilles is then reported by Odysseus:

Odysseus Doch mit Erstaunen, in dem Fluß der Rede,
 Bemerk' ich, daß sie mich nicht hört. Sie wendet,
 Mit einem Ausdruck der Verwunderung,
 Gleich einem sechzehnjähr'n Mädchen plötzlich,
 Das von olymp'schen Spielen wiederkehrt,
 Zu einer Freundin, ihr zur Seite sich,
 Und ruft: solch einem Mann, o Prothoe, ist
 Otere, meine Mutter, nie begegnet!

(Then I notice with astonishment in the flow of my speech
 That she does not hear me. She turns suddenly,
 With an expression of amazement
 Like a sixteen year old girl returning from the Olympic Games,
 To a friend standing at her side and exclaims:
 Oh Prothoe, my mother, Otere, has never met such a man) (2, 1, ll. 83-90).

⁴⁸ *Heinrich von Kleist: Lebensspuren, Dokument und Berichte der Zeitgenossen*, ed. by Helmut Sembdner (Frankfurt am Main: Insel, 1984), p. 154.

In Scene 5, Penthesilea states that she is prepared to die in the event that she cannot conquer Achilles for ‘ins Schlachtgetümmel stürzen will ich mich/ Wo der Hohnlächelnde mein hart, und ihn/ Mir überwinden, oder leben nicht’ (I shall throw myself into the turmoil of battle where the scornful one awaits me and overcome him or die) (2, 5, ll. 653-655). She fails to understand her obsessive fascination for Achilles. She sees him in terms of a warrior to be overcome in the heat of battle and then as a potential mate but not as a man or as an individual. She has also given him a name so he is no longer the potential anonymous mate required by Amazon law; the obsessive erotic feelings Penthesilea has for Achilles are in contradiction to that law. This dichotomy between desire and obedience to the law is the tension which impels her to deny life itself, either her own or Achilles’. In Scene 9, when Penthesilea had succumbed to Achilles’ lance and is weakened, she thinks only of savage reprisals, already embedded in the dismemberment phantasies: ‘hetz all Hunde auf ihn! Mit Feuerbränden/ Die Elefanten peitschet auf ihn los!/ Mit Sichelwagen schmettert auf ihn ein,/ Und mähet seine üpp’gen Glieder nieder’ (set all the dogs on him! Whip the elephants on him with torches/Destroy him with scythed chariots and cut down his haughty limbs) (2, ll. 1170-1173). The erotic feelings are denied in favour of mere Amazon law and repressed hate: Penthesilea swings between these two poles, increasingly losing her hold on reality as the idealisation of Achilles, as a figure of light, pervades her psyche.

In the first scene of the play, Odysseus refers to Achilles’: ‘schimmernde Gestalt’ (shimmering figure) (2, 1, l. 94), which is one of the light metaphors, which describe Achilles and which become increasingly more intense in the play. It is in the light that Achilles is fugitive and the brilliance of it blinds Penthesilea both to her duty and to her perception of Achilles; Achilles set in light is not recognisable for who he is so that he can only be idealised in his brilliance. Thus Penthesilea’s victory over Achilles is deemed equal to: ‘zehntausend Sonnen dünken/ Zu einem Glutball eingeschmelzt, so glanzvoll/ Nicht als ein Sieg, ein Sieg mir über ihn’ (ten thousand suns melted into one flaming ball are not as brilliant, it seems, as a victory, a victory of me over him) (2, 5, ll. 631-634). Achilles is lost in the ten thousand suns and when he is not available as an object, language about him splits like shards of light. One of the Amazons describes him ‘auf einen Hügel leuchtend steht er da/ In Stahl geschient sein Ross und er, der Saphir/ Der Chrysolith, wirft solche Strahlen nicht’ (he stands there on a hill, radiating, his horse banded in iron and he, a sapphire, a chrysolite does not emit such rays) (2, 7, ll. 1036-1039). Overcome by her obsession with Achilles and following the metaphors of light, Penthesilea expresses her own disturbed desire in Scene 9 to join the light in which

Achilles is held. Initially, she wants to meet the sun ‘daß ich mit Flügeln weit gespreitzt und rauschend/ Die Luft zerteile’ (that I cut the air with rushing wings spread wide) (2, 9, ll. 1339-1340). Then Penthesilea complains that Achilles ‘spielt in ewig fernen Flammenkreisen/ Mir um den sehnsuchtsvollen Busen hin’ (plays in eternal, distant flaming circles around my desiring breast) (2, 9, ll. 1343-1344). Penthesilea becomes increasingly disturbed as she seeks a solution as to how to conquer/internalise Achilles who, for her, is lost in light. At this point concrete thinking is the main support of Penthesilea’s madness: Achilles is identified with light, he does not have an individuality of his own and in the context of the play light is equated with psychosis. A psychotic individual cannot hold the boundaries of his or her own ego and thus, like light, the psyche is dissolved: it becomes ephemeral and without boundaries.

Poor reality testing is evident in other speeches too. They display aspects of Penthesilea’s psychosis and an overweening arrogance in the notional grandiose power she deems herself to possess. A sense of her grandiosity is expressed in the reference to the gigantic Titans when she says ‘den Ida will ich auf den Ossa wälzen/ Und auf die Spitze ruhig mich stellen’ (I want to roll Ida on top of Ossa and stand quietly on the peak) (2, 9, ll. 1375-1376). These two mountains are respectively in Crete and Thessaly. During the war between the Titans and the Olympians, two Titans amalgamated these mountains in order to storm Olympus (2, 821-822). It is from this vantage point that, as the irredeemable conqueror of the world, she would be nearer to Achilles who has been personified as Helios, the sun god, whom Penthesilea ‘bei seinen goldenen Flammenhaare zög ich/ Zu mir hernieder ihn’ (I would pull him down to me by his golden flaming hair) (2, 9, ll. 1384-1385). But then she sees the reflection of the sun in the river, believing it to be Helios/Achilles, attempts to unite with it ‘ich, Rasende!/ Da liegt er mir zu Füßen ja! Nimm mich’ (mad that I am! There he lies at my feet! Take me) (2, 9, l. 1385-1386). The stage directions then show her state of mind: ‘Sie will in den Fluß sinken, Prothoe und Meroe halten sie’ (she attempts to sink into the river, Prothoe and Meroe hold her) (2, 9, l. 1387). The shimmering object is dissolved in the watery element of the river in the same fugitive manner in which language is lost. The concrete thinking, identified by Segal, is brought into play when Penthesilea cannot distinguish between the brilliance of the sun and the internalised brilliance of Achilles. Dialogue becomes increasingly fractured from lines 1139 to lines 1395, approximately the last third of the scene, as Penthesilea is more and more consumed by concrete thinking. Language is no longer adequate to create understanding between Penthesilea and her generals, Prothoe and Meroe. For Penthesilea, Achilles has become the sun and the culmination of her desire is to be joined with him. He

is no longer Achilles but a personification of the sun, the sum of the light metaphors which are in the text of the play. Throughout this scene Penthesilea's entourage express concerns about her state of mind and recognise the delusional nature of her behaviour. Thus Prothoe 'schützt, alle Götter, sie' (may all the gods protect her) (2, 9, l. 1377), to which the *Oberpriesterin* replies 'Verlorene' (she is lost) (2, 9, l. 1378).

Then, in scene 13, Penthesilea has been wounded in an encounter with Achilles, appears to be near death and Achilles takes her prisoner. While Penthesilea is unconscious, Prothoe asks Achilles not to disclose to her, her status as Achilles' prisoner until she is ready to accept it. Prothoe realises that in her wounded state, both physically and mentally: 'es lässt ihre Seele nicht berechnen' (her soul would not understand it) (2, 12, l.1536). Penthesilea is seen as disturbed and the conflict of passion and law would have consequences for Penthesilea's state of mind if she were to learn that she is Achilles' captive. It would destroy his potential as a mate for the Rosenfest. The designs of Mars and Diana and the validity of the *Rosenfest* would be called into question. Prothoe pretends that Achilles is, in fact, Penthesilea's prisoner, a duplicity in which Achilles joins. He says untruthfully 'Ich ward entwaffnet/ Man führte mich zu deinen Füßen her' (I was disarmed and led to your feet) (2, 14, ll. 1615-16). In her disturbed state, Penthesilea, obsessed with and believing Achilles an appropriate mate for her, initiates the Rosenfest and garlands Achilles with wreaths of roses. She also invokes the presence of Prothoe's captive, again breaking ritual law. From this arises the jumble of words in which Achilles does not understand Penthesilea when she wishes to go about her business as Queen of the Amazons (2, 15, ll. 1858-1865). She is split in her desire for the one thing she cannot have immediately but grasps, without observance of important and necessary ritual. Penthesilea explains the Amazon ritual to Achilles, thus also disclosing the unconscious split that exists in the community between law and desire.

The Amazon ritual and law is to capture an anonymous mate in battle (2, 15, ll. 2145-2149). In the ritual of the Rosenfest, sanctified by Diana, the captive shall father a child. At the end of the Rosenfest the men are sent away. But tender feelings may arise between the sexes and these must be denied (2, 15, ll. 2083-2086). However, some essential emotional part of the Amazonian psyche needs to be repressed or split off, in order to maintain the frozen emotional attitude of the Amazonian towards erotic feelings, which may arise in the Rosenfest.. The denial is symbolised by the mastectomy of the right breast. The tension between the denial of feelings for the sake of the state and the collective and the pressure of these feelings for Penthesilea which have an identified

object in Achilles is thus the cause of the dichotomy in Penthesilea's emotional life which she cannot bridge and through which she regresses to her psychotic state. Penthesilea experiences stress when she transgresses the Amazonian mating ritual. Her mother, Otrere, had, on her death-bed, pointed her in the direction of Achilles as a desirable mate (2, 15, ll. 2137-2139). There is nothing more seductive than having a desirable object identified and brought to one's attention. Penthesilea's subsequent obsession with Achilles is reflected in Penthesilea's words to Achilles in the idyll of scene 15 'mein ewiger Gedanke, wenn ich wachte,/ Mein ew'ger Traum warst du!' (my continual thought when I awoke, my constant dream was of you) (2, 15, ll. 2187-2188). When she then sees him for the first time, he is for her, in a light metaphor a 'Tagesstern' (day-time star) amidst his Greek compatriots, who are 'bleichen Nachtgestirne' (pale night-time stars) (2, 15, l. 2207).

The ultimate failure of Penthesilea's grasp on reality, however, is the challenge that Achilles extends to her which, after the idyll of Scenes 14 and 15, removes any hope that Achilles might, nevertheless, be an appropriate mate for the Rosenfest. This leads to resentment. Achilles is not aware of the contradiction between his and Penthesilea's position. In telling Achilles her life story and the history of the Amazon race, Penthesilea attempts to legitimise the internal and external destructiveness of the Amazon collective. The idyll is false for she can remember the story but cannot understand it, just as she cannot understand her feelings. So the idyll is cut short because Penthesilea, like Kleist, cannot retain the metaphorical Kleinian good breast, so well defined by Ilse Graham.⁴⁹ When Achilles is told of the removal of the right breast he expresses his horror, culminating in a tender embrace of Penthesilea and his exclamation in which language fails, for it is 'der Sitz der jungen, lieblichen Gefühle,/ Um eines Wahns, barbarisch' (the seat of young, loving feelings/For the sake of a mad illusion, barbaric) (2, 15, ll. 2014-2015). Penthesilea represses the young loving feelings as a coping strategy set in the paranoid-schizoid position, which denies empathy, depression, love or reparation and hence also explains the manic nature of the play; the mania is necessary to keep at bay the mordant phantasies to which Penthesilea is prey. The function of the Oberpriesterin (High Priestess) is to act as form of super-ego to the community and to comment on the tension, that Penthesilea feels in the dichotomy between the laws of the state and her delinquency in not observing them. The Oberpriesterin's expressions of distaste at Penthesilea's digressions are pointed. She emphasises the seriousness of Penthesilea's delinquency in Scene 19 when she recounts Penthesilea's failings: she sought Achilles in battle instead of

⁴⁹ Ilse Graham, 'Zur Ätiologie eines Rätselhaften', *Kleist Jahrbuch 1981/82*, 98-116.

leaving the encounter to chance, she was vanquished by Achilles and crowned him with roses due only to the conquered warrior, she is angry that her people had freed her from Achilles' captivity and through mismanagement let the existing captives escape. So, she releases Penthesilea from further obligations towards the Amazon community and calls on the Amazon army to return home to Themiscyra (2, 19, ll. 2312-2341). Penthesilea has effectively been expelled, which also loosens her moral ties and results in a further loss of balance and appropriate behaviour. As an outcast she can no longer rely on the support of the tribe and must rely on her own powers, which become maenedic. It is this speech of the Oberpriesterin which finally increases Penthesilea's lack of boundaries in her psychosis. She is alone and in her obsession with Achilles and must find any rudimentary support she can, which she does in the dogs that accompany her to Achilles' death. This sense of existential aloneness creates a chasm with the community which also cuts ties to rules that govern the community as well as moral law. Penthesilea now seeks to atone for her faults which the Oberpriesterin enumerated but, in the psychotic state with no hold on reality, can function only in concrete thinking.

In Scene 22, recognising Penthesilea's psychotic state (which also gives her a more than human strength), the Oberpriesterin proposes to have her tied, referring to her as a bitch who cannot be contained by human strength 'der Menschen Hände bänd'gen sie nicht mehr' (human hands can no longer restrain her) (2, 22, l. 2556). Penthesilea desires to possess Achilles but does not know how except in the form of libidinal ingestion. In scene 15 Achilles admits that he had vanquished Penthesilea and her response is 'Entsetzlicher' (terrible person) (2, 15, l. 2249). There is now no idyllic dream of returning to Themiscyra with Achilles in tow. There is loss of hope leading to resentment. Achilles is lost to her as a mate and she responds in terms which speak of personal annihilation that 'ich will in ew'ge Finsternis mich bergen' (I will hide myself in eternal darkness) (2, 19, l. 2351).

Confronted with her splitting and psychotic needs she is intent on the destruction of Achilles. She had taken him into her confidence as a conquered warrior, thinks that his challenge is a betrayal and that he now intends to conquer her. She will not understand that Achilles is offering himself up so that the ritual of the Amazon collective can be fulfilled for her, i.e., so that he can be led off to Themiscyra as a captive mate and consummate his relationship with Penthesilea. The desire for the destruction/internalisation of Achilles is contemplated without a sense of irony and with concrete thinking which brooks no opposition. Penthesilea is unable to enter into a symbolic relationship with Achilles; she is only able to consider a symbiotic union achieved through

ingestion. There is no communication through language as metaphor. She had recounted to Achilles in the Scene 15 the circumstances of the founding of the Amazon state. The *Frauenstaat* (women's state) was founded in violence and in violence it must continue in order to maintain population. There is an internal contradiction between the needs of the psyche and the functioning of this state. Penthesilea has also arrived at the point where she is resolved to conquer Achilles, who has prepared for the duel only lightly armed, believing that the duel is for form only. However, in the madness of concrete thinking, accompanied by her dogs, Penthesilea sets out to kill game/Achilles. The Oberpriesterin comments that Penthesilea is acting as if she had seen the Medusa (2, 1. 2593). The Medusa is a Greek figure, a Gorgon, who had venomous snakes for hair and if looked upon turned the individual to stone. Penthesilea is devoid of pity; she has seen the internalised Medusa and her thinking is concrete, turned to stone:

Die Oberpriesterin Jetzt unter ihren Hunden wütet sie,
 Mit schaubedeckter Lipp', und nennt sie Schwestern,
 Die heulenden und der Mänade gleich,
 Mit ihren Bogen durch die Felder tanzend,
 Hetzt sie die Meute, die mordatmende,
 Die sie umringt, das schönste Wild zu fangen
 Das je die Erde, wie sie sagt, durchschweift.

(Now, among her dogs she rages
 With frothing lip and calls them sisters,
 The baying dogs and like Maenads,
 Dances through the fields with her bow,
 She sets the death-breathing pack
 Which surrounds her, on the finest game
 Whichever, as she says, roamed the earth) (2, 20, ll. 2567-2573).

Penthesilea then fulfils her mythological destiny, in that she behaves like the maenad she has, in her madness, become. An Amazon gives a teichoscopic report of Penthesilea's activities 'sie liegt den grimmigen Hunden beigesellt,/ Sie, die ein Menschenshoß gebar, und reißt,/ Die Glieder des Achills reißt sie in Stücken' (she lies with the dogs together, she, who was born of human womb and tears, tears into pieces the limbs of Achilles) (2, 22, ll. 2595-2597). She cannot distinguish between Achilles and an antlered stag just as Segal's patient could not distinguish between playing the violin and masturbation. Up to this point, the world of Penthesilea and the Amazons occupy the Kleinian paranoid-schizoid position from which Penthesilea moves to the depressive position through the realisation that she has killed a loved object. She can now access her feelings and is open to remorse and reparation. The removal of the right breast involves a numbing of feelings which are only awakened at the end of the play in Scene 24, when Penthesilea kills

herself: suicide is the only closure Penthesilea can find now that feelings have been awakened. Achilles, that object of obsessive desire, is lost to her in life where incorporation is her solution. Thus, Penthesilea says after she has cannibalised Achilles ‘so war es ein Versehen. Küsse, Bisse,/ Das reimt sich, und wer recht von Herzen liebt,/ Kann schon das Eine für das Andere greifen’ (so it was a mistake, kissing, biting, that rhymes and he who truly loves from the heart can take the one for the other) (2, 24, ll. 1981-1983). Incorporation is a symbiosis which is also deemed to be a fundamental act of love. With this, language is lost in the crypt of her bosom ‘denn jetzt steig’ ich in meinen Busen nieder,/ Gleich einem Schacht, und grab’ es kalt wie Erz,/ Mir ein vernichtendes Gefühl hervor’ (for now I descend into my bosom which is like a pit and dig out, as cold as ore, a destructive feeling) (2, 24, ll. 3025-3027). This destructive feeling is one which destabilises existing perspectives. It is an awareness of feeling to which Penthesilea finds an answer in suicide. She has recognised her victim for who he is: not game to be hunted but Achilles. She has lost him to death and in death she will be reunited with him.

As noted above, Kleist had written to his cousin, Marie von Kleist, in 1807 ‘sie hat ihn wirklich aufgegeßen, den Achill vor Liebe’ (she has really eaten him up, Achilles, out of love) (4, 396). There was certainly a libidinal element in the cannibalisation as suggested by Freud; there is, too, also the symbiotic desire to be closer, in a consummated relationship through incorporation. However, there is also the grandiose, maniac quality which Penthesilea brings to the act which has little to do with Eros but is an expression of the intrinsic frenzy which is part of the human condition when the balance of the mind is disturbed. In regression brought about by irreconcilable psychological conflicts this part of human nature may be acted out. It is Kleist’s genius to recognise instinctively these dark forces and to bring them to life a hundred years before Freud brought them to general attention. This prescience of Kleist’s is also evident in the text of *Prinz Friedrich von Homburg* which is the next chapter and which deals with oedipal issues.

Chapter 5

Prinz Friedrich von Homburg: An Oedipal Affair

Kleist's play, *Prinz Friedrich von Homburg* (2, 555-644), was performed at the Donmar Warehouse in London in 2010. In this production, the director, Jonathan Munby and the translator, Dennis Kelly, had changed the ending of the play so that Homburg was executed instead of being reconciled to the Kurfürst in a satisfactory outcome of the oedipal drama which is inherent in the language and structure of the play. They were castigated in *The Guardian* and *Financial Times* reviews for this unnecessary change to Kleist's intention and from a psychoanalytic perspective, they had clearly not understood the core message of the play.¹ This message concerns the oedipal conflict between father and son in which the son, relinquishing the mother, is spared the talion revenge by the father of castration/death. It is immaterial that Homburg is not the Kurfürst's son, nor that his wife is not Homburg's mother, for the sexual prize in this play is Natalie, the Kurfürst's niece, who is close to the Kurfürst. What is remarkable about this play and which the production team had not recognised, is the extent to which it anticipates Freud's own development concerning the oedipus complex and the accurate dance of death which the son and the father execute around the mother/niece. The oedipal conflict, as Freud shows, is not only a sexual conflict between father and son but also an educative development in which the father separates the son psychologically from the mother, so that the son can come into his own masculinity and enter into an appropriate genital intimacy with a woman.

Munby's reductive perspective tends also to be mirrored in older scholarship pertaining to this work. The play was generally interpreted on a social and political level as being a nationalistic call to arms against Napoleon with a subtext of the power of the state contrasted with the freedom of the individual. Gerhard Fricke agrees with Horst Engert who suggests that there are three strands of interpretation which should be considered.² The first interpretation concerns the pre-eminence of law, duty and the demands of the

¹ Michael Billington, 'The Prince of Homburg' *Guardian*, 27 July 2010; Ian Shuttleworth, 'The Prince of Homburg, Donmar Warehouse, *Financial Times*, London', 3 August 2010.

² Horst Engert, 'Persönlichkeit und Gemeinschaft in Kleists Drama: "Prinz Friedrich von Homburg"', *Jahrbuch der Kleistgesellschaft 1925/26*, 1-16; Gerhard Fricke, *Gefühl und Schicksal bei Henrich von Kleist* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1975), p. 170

community against the individual; the second interpretation of the play concerns the triumph of the autonomy of the individual against these and the supremacy of the individual's subjective feelings; and the third interpretation concerns the resolution, reconciliation and harmonisation of these two opposed poles which is ultimately the personal achievement in the resolution of the oedipus complex.

Peter Dettmering deals psychoanalytically with the position of Homburg in the play, that is with the vagaries of the Kurfürst's dealings with him in the oedipal struggle, but fails to comment on the educative role of the Kurfürst/father towards Homburg and, by the same token, the transference which takes place in the Kurfürst in his relationship with Homburg.³

By the same token, Walter Hinderer suggests that anti-Napoleonic sentiment in Germany led to an increase in nationalistic and patriotic sentiment and the attitude of the individual citizen and of his loyalty to the state would, therefore, have been of concern.⁴ Kleist, as part of this scene and concerned with movements of history and with the effect of historical processes on individuals, found refuge and compensation against his existential loneliness in extreme nationalism and patriotic activity.⁵ In a letter of first half of December 1805 to his friend Rühle von Lilienstern, Kleist expresses his pessimistic view about the state of Europe, the propensity of Napoleon to have European thrones occupied by his family and vassals and the inadequacy and passivity of Prussia (4, 350-359). In a letter to his sister Ulrike on 24 October 1806 Kleist again laments the current military situation and suggest it is the cause of his constipation, anxiety attacks and sweating (4, 363-364). He refers to Napoleon as a 'Wüterich' (bloodthirsty tyrant). Kleist was exercised by nationalistic feelings, which find expression in *Die Hermannsschlacht* (2, 447-554) as well as in *Homburg*. But Kleist was unable to eliminate from his work themes which touched on his own development. We have no solid evidence about his relationship with his father or his family while he was growing up but we can assume from the tone of his letters that the life of a boy in a Junker family might bring its own problems of isolation and neediness. We can also argue that Kleist wrote so perceptively about the oedipal issue because he perceived, probably unconsciously, that it was something in his life which needed to be addressed.

³ Peter Dettmering, *Heinrich von Kleist: Zur Psychodynamik in seiner Dichtung* (Munich: Nymphenburger, 1975), pp. 45-61.

⁴ Walter Müller-Sedel, "'Penthesilia" im Kontext der deutschen Klassik' in *Kleists Dramen: Neue Interpretationen*, ed. by Walter Hinderer (Suttgart: Reclam, 1997), pp. 144-171 (p. 144).

⁵ Gordon A. Craig, 'German Intellectuals and Politics 1789-1815: The Case of Heinrich von Kleist', *Central European History*, vol. 2, no. 1 (1969), 3-21 (p. 4).

More recent scholarship concentrates on irreconcilable dissonances in the text.⁶ These, among others, concern the nature and colour of Homburg's horse (2, 2, i, l. 380; 2, 2, x, l.744). Bernd Hamacher argues that the inconsistencies can only be resolved in the performance of the play. However, could these inconsistencies also be Kleist's method of destabilising meaning and making uncertain the ground beneath the feet of both the characters and the audience? Helmut Arntzen asks if this represents Kleist's usual lack of information for the characters which then may have to do with Kleist's distrust of visual perception.⁷ I argue, that it helps to emphasise the dream-like nature of the action which is rooted in primary process thinking, which is an area of the unconscious in which, like the contents of a dream, nothing is substantial and lineal thinking is absent

There is also the question if the Kurfürst were merely the educator of Homburg or was the Kurfürst also educated in the process of educating Homburg? The former interpretation prevailed for one hundred and fifty years; the latter for the past thirty years (2, 5, ix, ll. 1822-1824). The transference that takes place in the educative process was addressed by Carl Gustav Jung, who wrote, in the context of transference in psychotherapy, that there can be no change in the patient unless there is a corresponding change in the doctor.⁸ The transference between two people is unavoidable and does not require a clinical setting. I argue, therefore, that the Kurfürst and Homburg both benefited from the process to which the former subjected the latter.

Finally, another inconsistency concerns Homburg's dream state in Act 1. Is this a dream from which he is awakened at the end of the play and returned to real life? Or is it a momentary reverie before the battle? A theme in *Homburg*, which touches on depth psychology, is one which explores the curtain between illusion and reality: the unconscious state between waking and dreaming in which the oedipal drama is experienced. Maria M. Tatar has reviewed contemporary understanding of somnambulism through J.C. Reil's (1759-1813) *Rhapsodien über die Anwendung der psychischen Curmethode auf Geisteszerüttungen* (Rhapsodies Concerning the Application of Psychological Healing Methods in the Case of Mental Disturbance), published in 1803.⁹ Somnambulism was thought to be based on the interaction of the ganglionic (involuntary)

⁶ Bernd Hamacher, 'Prinz Friedrich von Homburg', in *Kleist Handbuch: Leben-Werk-Wirkung*, ed. by Ingo Breuer (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2013), pp. 80-89 (pp. 84-88).

⁷ Helmut Arntzen, "'Prinz Friedrich von Homburg'" Drama der Bewußtseinsstufen', in *Kleists Dramen: Neue Interpretationen*, ed. by Walter Hinderer (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1981), pp. 213- 237 (p. 215).

⁸ C.G. Jung, 'Problems of Modern Psychotherapy', in *The Practice of Psychotherapy*, trans. by R.F.C.Hull, ed. by Sir Herbert Read, Michael Fordham, Gerhard Adler, 2nd. edn., 20 vols (London: Routledge, 1993), vol. 16, § 114-174 (§ 163).

⁹ Maria M. Tatar, 'Psychology and Poetics: J.C. Reil and Kleist's Prinz Friedrich von Homburg', *The German Review*, vol. 48, no. 1 (1973), 21-34.

and cerebral (voluntary) nervous systems. The ganglionic system governed unconscious activities such as feelings, intuition and passion and the cerebral system governed conscious behaviour. In somnambulism the former took control. The authority of the doctor (in this case the Kurfürst) is paramount in bringing patients to their senses as are loud noises and shocks. Kleist uses many of Reil's psychological insights, making them his own, to show character motivation.¹⁰ In Homburg's case, the sight of his grave activated his intellect and brought him into conscious behaviour. The talion revenge of the father is more terrible than any other deaths for it is exercised by a person who is loved; it extinguishes all libido and hence also erotic desire, enabling Homburg to abandon his desire for Natalie easily.¹¹

The Kurfürst's reaction to Homburg's reverie in the first scene of the play is to tease him in a stratagem which goes too far and which ends in Homburg grasping and retaining one of Natalie's gloves, a sexual symbol (2, 1, i, l. 71). The oedipal drama of the play is acted out in the unconscious of the participants as is the oedipal drama of the living family. However, the role of the father is not only to frustrate the son's relationship with the mother by psychologically separating them, but also to perform an educative role in the development of the son. This leads to the theme of personal development in which the *puer* son is educated or nourished into adulthood by the benign father (who is also transformed in the process). A *puer* is a youth and an adult as *puer* is one who is caught in the psychological grip of adolescence. James Hillman describes a *puer* as having an ungrounded sensibility with little hold on the substance of life.¹² Helga Gallas, using Lacanian terms, describes Homburg as operating in the imaginary order outside the symbolic order.¹³ Outside the symbolic order, Homburg has not yet recognised the name of the father, i.e. has not accepted his authority and is dominated by narcissistic need.

While the father's intention and attitude towards the son may be benign, which could fit the attitude of the Kurfürst in the play, it is nevertheless interpreted by the *puer* Homburg as tyrannical. There are references in particular to tyrannical rulers (which give a taste of the feelings Homburg has about the Kurfürst), the Dei of Algiers, the Assyrian ruler Assurbanipal and Roman tyrants. (2, 3, i, ll. 902-905) Later in the play, the Kurfürst makes

¹⁰ Tatar (1973), p. 32.

¹¹ Heinz Politzer, 'Kleists Trauerspiel vom Traum, "Prinz Friedrich von Homburg" in *Hatte Ödipus ein Ödipus-Komplex?*' (Munich: Piper, 1974), pp. 156-181 (p. 170).

¹² James Hillman, 'Peaks and Vales' in *Puer Papers*, ed. by James Hillman, edn (Dallas, Spring, 1991), 54-74.

¹³ Helga Gallas, *Kleist: Gesetz, Begehren, Sexualität* (Frankfurt am Main: Stromfeld, 2005), pp. 27-47.

reference to the Dei of Tunis (2, 5, ii, l. 1413) and how the Dei would lay a silk cord on his table to encourage a miscreant to commit suicide (2, 4, iii, ll. 1290-1293).

The father sets boundaries and lovingly inhibits excess. However, the issue for the Kurfürst here is Natalie, who has, in defiance of the Kurfürst, called her regiment to Berlin, in support of Homburg, for which, unlike Homburg who has also been disobedient, she will not be punished. The question that Kleist works through in the play and one which he asks himself is: what sort of a father is the Kurfürst? Is he a patriarchal or a paternal father? Jan Mieszkowski has pointed out that the Kurfürst was acting as a benevolent educator working through the ritual of *Bildung*.¹⁴ Certainly, there is an educative quality in the Kurfürst's behaviour towards Homburg. It is tinged with a sense of irony as the Kurfürst manipulates the meaning of Homburg's death sentence and ultimately makes him responsible for determining his own fate.

Kleist also asks the question: what sort of a man is Homburg? In the ambivalence of the feelings surrounding the oedipal issues, the son does rely on the father and does not doubt his love. Homburg says, in the context of his indifference to the judgement of the court martial and Hohenzollern's question as to why he is so unconcerned: 'auf mein Gefühl von ihm' (of my sense of him) (2, 3, i, l. 867). Homburg is confident that he has the Kurfürst's/father's unconditional love in which all can be forgiven. He is to learn that a father's love is not unconditional, for the Kurfürst sets boundaries. Even Natalie recognises the immature and unformed character of Homburg when she exclaims 'ach, dieser Jüngling' (oh, this youth) (2, 4, i, l. 1145), in response to the Kurfürst's question if Homburg thinks impulse or the rule of law should govern Brandenburg. Homburg has also demonstrated his impetuous nature having forfeited for the Kurfürst victory in two previous battles. The Kurfürst says, providing an injunction for Homburg to restrain himself, which he fails to do 'du hast am Ufer, weißt du, mir des Rheins/ Zwei Siege jüngst verschertzt; regier dich wohl' (recently you have forfeited two victories for me/ On the bank of the Rhein as you well know. Contain yourself) (2, 1, v, ll. 349-350).

These themes, outlined above, all have a valid basis in the text of the play but from a psychological perspective the working-out of the oedipal issue is the one theme which is the basis of an individual's mental well-being. I argue, that Kleist was, therefore, attempting to deal with deep-seated neurosis of his own at an unconscious level. There is little evidence of Kleist's early life, his experiences of family life as a child or of his

¹⁴ Jan Mieszkowski, 'Breaking the Laws of Language: Freedom and History in Kleist's *Prinz Friedrich von Homburg*', *Studies in German Romanticism*, 39 (2006), 111-137 (p. 116).

relationship with his parents. We are, therefore, forced to draw inferences and make hypotheses about his childhood and the evident failures of his environment based on his works and his letters. *Homburg* represents a classical text of the oedipus complex which, while Kleist does not represent the classical family context of father, mother, son, he does weave this theme into the play by constellating a family.

There are variations, as in all myths, to the story of Oedipus (swell-foot) but the following account is the main thread of the story.¹⁵ It starts with his father Laius, who ruled over Thebes and who had been childless with his queen, Jocasta. He consulted the Delphic Oracle to learn that his childlessness was a blessing, for any children born to Jocaste would murder him. Laius puts Jocaste away to prevent conception, but she manages to get him drunk, seduce him and nine months later a son is born. Fearful of the Oracle's prophecy, Laius takes the boy, pierces and bound his feet and exposed him. A Corinthian shepherd found him and took him to the Corinthian court, where Oedipus was brought up by the childless King and Queen as their son. On being taunted by a youth that he did not resemble his parents, Oedipus consulted the Delphic Oracle only to be told that he would kill his father and marry his mother. Oedipus immediately left for distant parts since he believed that the King and Queen of Corinth were his natural parents. On the road, Oedipus met Laius, his natural father, whom he killed after an altercation and continued to Thebes. The Sphinx was riddling in Thebes, which was suffering from blight. Anyone caught by the Sphinx who failed to answer correctly her riddle was throttled and devoured. Oedipus answered the riddle correctly, the Sphinx threw herself into a chasm in despair and Oedipus was acclaimed King by the grateful citizens of Thebes. He then married his widowed mother, Jocasta. When the truth of their relationship emerged, Jocasta hanged herself and Oedipus blinded himself with a pin taken from Jocasta's garment. This is the unfolding of a story which Freud came to identify as the Oedipus complex and which has a deep, unconscious resonance in our lives.

Freud conceived and developed the structure of the oedipus complex over a period of thirteen years. In a letter to Wilhelm Fließ on 3/4 October 1897, Freud wrote that his libido towards his mother had been awakened at the age of between two and two and a half years during a railway journey from Leipzig to Vienna when he supposed he saw her naked.¹⁶ Freud was not ready at this stage in his correspondence with Fließ to put this feeling into a psychological context. However, he did realise the importance of it. In a later letter to Fließ

¹⁵ Robert Graves, *The Greek Myths* (London: Penguin, 1992), pp. 371-377.

¹⁶ Sigmund Freud, *The Complete Letters of Sigmund Freud to Wilhelm Fließ 1887-1904*, trans. and ed. by Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1995), p. 268.

on 15 October 1897, Freud mentions *Oedipus Rex* for the first time.¹⁷ Freud wrote that he was in love with his mother and jealous of his father and that he considered this a universal phenomenon which boys undergo. At this stage Freud mentions only the direct form of the oedipal feeling as it affects boys.

In the same letter Freud considered that the power of the myth of Oedipus rested in the unconscious identification that we all have with these feelings, which have already been experienced and from which we recoil in horror. The oedipus complex is mentioned for the first time in 'Beiträge zur psychologie des Liebeslebens, I: Über einen besonderen Typus der Objektwahl beim Manne' (Contribution to the Psychology of Love: A Special Type of Object Choice Made by Men), in which the concept of 'complex' was taken from the work of Carl Gustav Jung.¹⁸ In 'Psychological Aspects of the Mother Complex' Jung outlines the factors which influence a man who is still psychologically tied to the mother.¹⁹ They may result in a negative sense variously in the man's homosexuality or Don Juanism which seeks the mother in every woman or impotence. In a positive sense, the man may, through a developed femininity, have a capacity for friendships or, through a developed masculinity based in Don Juanism, to seek achievement of the highest goals of ambition, sacrifice for the common good or a world-changing revolutionary spirit.

Freud postulated that the libido of the neurotic remains fixed on the mother and does not disappear with the onset of the latency period but continues into puberty and adulthood. Thus the love object of these individuals is identified with the figure of the mother, irrespective of the actual person who then carries the mother transference, which may be the wife or partner. An awareness of the sexual activity of his parents, whether conscious or unconscious, makes the father a love rival for the boy while the mother is conceived as committing acts of infidelity with the father.²⁰ The boy loves the mother and hates the father as a rival. The rivalry is tinged with castration anxiety, castration which the father may effect as just punishment for the boy's desiring the father's wife. However, the boy also loves the father, who had played with him and who had looked after him. The

¹⁷ Freud, (1995), p. 272.

¹⁸ Sigmund Freud (1910), 'Beiträge zur Psychologie des Liebeslebens, I: Über einen besonderen Typus der Objektwahl beim Manne', GW. 8, 66-91 (p. 73) (Contributions to the Psychology of Love: A Special Type of Choice of Object Made by Men., SE. 11, 163-176 (p. 171)).

¹⁹ C.G. Jung (1907), 'Psychological Aspects of the Mother Complex', in *Collected Works*, trans. by R.F.C. Hull, ed. by Sir Herbert Read, Michael Fordham, Gerhard Adler, William McGuire, 20 vols (London: Routledge, 1953-2000), vol. 9/1, §161-198 (§161-166).

¹⁹Freud (1910), GW. 8, p. 70 (SE. 11, p. 169).

²⁰ Freud (1910), GW. 8, p. 73 (SE. 11, p. 171).

ambivalence of this conflict between love and hate is the pertinent issue of the oedipal situation.

Freud found the expression of this oedipal drama in the case of ‘Analysis of a Phobia in a Five-Year Old Boy’.²¹ This is the case of Little Hans, and Freud was delighted that this boy confirmed thoroughly what he had written in *Die Traumdeutung* (The Interpretation of Dreams) and ‘Drei Abhandlungen zur Sexualtheorie’ (Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality):²²

Er ist wirklich ein kleiner Ödipus, der den Vater “weg”, beseitigt haben möchte, um mit der schönen Mutter allein zu sein, bei ihr zu schlafen. Dieser Wunsch entstand im Sommeraufenthalte, als die Abwechslungen von Anwesenheit und Abwesenheit des Vaters ihn auf die Bedingung hinwiesen, an welche die ersehnte Intimität mit der Mutter gebunden war.

(Hans really was a little Oedipus who wanted to have his father ‘out of the way’, to get rid of him, so that he might be alone with the beautiful mother and sleep with her. This wish had originated during his summer holidays, when the alternating presence and absence of his father had drawn Hans's attention to the condition upon which depended the intimacy with his mother which he longed for).²³

It is also in this case, that Freud explores the little boy’s concerns about the existence or absence of his penis and particularly how this affected the boy. Little Hans’ confusion remained rooted in the unconscious fear that he might lose his penis. The *lex talionis* is thus an unconscious fear of the retribution by the father for having transgressed boundaries which the child has to explore in order to be able to understand. Homburg fails to take into account the boundaries established by the Kurfürst, which are the immediate boundaries of military command but which are also muddled with Homburg’s desire for Natalie. In the case of Little Hans, the boy finds the freedom to disrupt these boundaries with the absence of the father, as does Homburg when he believes that the Kurfürst has been killed in battle and so is thus, out of the way.

However, a rescue-motif also arises. Through her fickleness in preferring the father to the boy, the mother is conceived as putting herself into danger from which the boy desires to rescue her. Moreover, feelings of tenderness arise when the boy becomes aware that he owes his life to his parents or that his mother had given him life.²⁴ The need to reciprocate

²¹ Sigmund Freud (1909), ‘Analyse der Phobie eines fünfjährigen Knaben’, GW. 7, 243-336 (Analysis of a Phobia in a Five-Year Old Boy, SE.10, 1-150).

²² Sigmund Freud (1900), *Die Traumdeutung*, GW. 2-3 (The Interpretation of Dreams, SE. 4-5); (1905), *Drei Abhandlungen zur Sexualtheorie*, GW. 5, 29-159 (Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality, SE. 7, 125-245).

²³ Freud (1909), GW. 7, p. 345 (SE. 10, p. 111).

²⁴ Freud (1910), GW. 8, pp. 73-74 (SE. 11, pp. 171-172).

and to return the gift to his parents with one of equal value culminates in a defiant attitude to his father, from whom he wants nothing. He phantasises that he will return to his father all that he had cost him by rescuing the father from danger and saving his life. This is the resolution with the father. Freud writes: ‘diese Phantasie verschiebt sich häufig genug auf den Kaiser, König oder sonst einen großen Herrn und wird nach dieser Entstellung bewußtseinsfähig und selbst für den Dichter verwertbar’ (this phantasy is commonly enough displaced on to the emperor, king or some other great man; after being thus distorted it becomes admissible to consciousness, and may even be made use of by creative writers).²⁵ In this passage, Freud addresses the ambient feature of the oedipus complex which, if resolved, can also be made conscious and become congruent with Kleist’s projections on the rulers of Prussia. The feature of this consciousness is a resolved relationship with the father or authority figure. This means that the authority of the father is accepted as a guiding principle and the adult, who has overcome this complex, is free to function within the broadest terms of his own psyche.

In ‘Drei Abhandlungen’ Freud states categorically: ‘jedem menschlichen Neuankömmling ist die Aufgabe gestellt den Oedipuskomplex zu bewältigen, wer es nicht zustande bringt ist der Neurose verfallen’ (Every new arrival on this planet is faced by the task of mastering the Oedipus complex, anyone who fails to do so falls a victim to neuroses).²⁶ Many who fail to master this complex come from dysfunctional families or families that worked well enough but in which the father was physically absent through work or had in effect been metaphorically castrated by the mother who wielded the power in the home. Mothers love unconditionally since the child is of the mother’s flesh and so they find it difficult not to be indulgent; a father’s love is conditional and establishes law and boundaries. Here we come to the meat of Kleist’s play about Homburg, which is, to what effect, knowing as little as we do about Kleist’s early years, is he attempting to deal with a personal issue in the family which a hundred years later was identified by Freud as the oedipus complex. Since this matter is largely an unconscious issue we can begin by considering the unconscious platform of the play, which is manifestly constructed as a dream, which suggests that Kleist recognised that the issue he had to deal with and understand was largely rooted in the unconscious.

The architecture of the play is composed of the dream sequence at the beginning of the play and the question at the end of the play if the action of the play was all a dream. It is significant that these events take place in identical stage settings, indicating both a

²⁵ Freud (1910), GW. 8, pp. 74-75 (SE. 11, pp. 172-173).

²⁶ Freud (1905), GW. 5, p. 127 (SE. 7, p. 226).

beginning and an end of a transformation. At the beginning of the play Homburg is described in a stage direction as sitting 'halb wachend, halb schlafend' (half-awake, half-asleep) (2, 557). This state of being in an indeterminate stage of consciousness while still being able to function in the real world (Homburg is winding a victory wreath), suggests a connection to an otherworldly energy, a fugue state in which the unconscious governs. The entire play, therefore, takes place in the ambivalence and metaphor of a dream which also has a basis in the reality of Homburg's life. This fugue state is terminated at the question Homburg poses at the end of the play and which are the last words he says 'nein, sagt! Ist es ein Traum?' (No, tell me! Is it a dream?), to which Kottwitz, the most grounded of the characters in the play, responds: 'Ein Traum, was sonst' (A dream, what else) (2, 5, xii, ll. 1856-1857). This playing out of the oedipal conflict in the play is congruent with the development of it in a father/son contest in life: both take place in the unconscious to the extent that the participants are generally unaware of the meaning of the conflict. We would argue that this lends weight to the argument that the play mirrors the oedipal pre-occupation of the author, which can also only be based in unconscious desires and phantasies of the subject and is another example of Kleist's grasp of the workings of the human soul.

The Kurfürst reacts to Homburg's fugue desire for fame and glory and his erotic advance on Natalie, who had been primed to present him with the wreath now also containing the Kurfürst's chain, with 'In's Nichts mit dir zurück, Herr Prinz von Homburg,/In's Nichts, in's Nicht's! In dem Gefilde der Schlacht,/ Sehn wir, wenn's Dir gefällig ist, uns wieder! Im Traum erringt man solche Dinge nicht' (Into the void with you, Prince of Homburg,/Into the void, into the void, We shall meet again/ On the battlefield, if you so desire. You do not attain such things in a dream) (2, 1, i, ll. 74-77). This is a statement of the reality of life, which has also to be dealt with through conscious processes. The unconscious state is not one, in which the reality of the world can be conquered. The Kurfürst consigns Homburg to the dream state, in which he may come to terms with unconscious impulses, but activity and endeavour in the waking world is what counts for the Kurfürst. Thus, early in the play we see the Kurfürst demonstrating, if somewhat emphatically, the need for Homburg to undergo an educative process. The void here is the void of the unconscious, that dark area which is not open to the light of consciousness and in which the battle to be fought is the battle of the son's rivalry with the father, through which a resolution and reconciliation with the father can take place. It is also the site where temporal and geographical boundaries do not apply and where dreams of fame and glory

remain unrealised. But the real world needs to be dealt with too, for nothing of consequence, as far as the Kurfürst is concerned, can be attained by wishful dreaming.

Homburg constellates the oedipal relationship when he creates a personal family. He addresses in turn Natalie, the Kurfürst and Kurfürstin as ‘Natalie! Mein Mädchen! Meine Braut!’ (Natalie! My maid! My bride) (2, 1, i, l. 65), ‘Friedrich! Mein Vater! Mein Fürst.’ (Frederick! My father! My liege lord) (2, 1, i, l. 69), ‘O meine Mutter!’ (O my mother) (2, 1, i, l. 72). Whereas, in the classical oedipal drama, the boy’s desired object is the mother, the possession of which the father has to thwart, in the case of this play, the desired sexual object is Natalie, on whom the Kurfürst also has calls. Initially, there is the position of Natalie as the bargaining chip and potential marriage partner for the Swedish King as a way of ending the war against France and Sweden. Individuals of the standing of Natalie, and even Homburg, did not have the freedom even at the beginning of the nineteenth century to marry for love. Interests of state, political alliances and wealth were the determining factors. Also, there are many references by the Kurfürst as to the status of Natalie in his affection. He addresses her successively as ‘Mein süßes Mädchen’ (My sweet maid), ‘Mein Töchterchen’ (My little daughter) (2, 1, v, l. 241, 244; 2, 4, i, l. 1148). Homburg has upset the tender relationship between Natalie and the Kurfürst in that, having obtained her glove during the initial sleepwalking scene and having identified her as the recipient of his erotic desires, he declares himself to her at a liminal moment, when the Kurfürst is thought to have been killed on the battlefield and, therefore, eliminated. The boy has ‘succeeded’ in wresting the affections of the mother from the father (but in this case the daughter to which the father also has claim) by eliminating the father entirely.

However, since the Kurfürst had not been killed in battle as reported, it is then Homburg’s belief that, having in effect stated a claim on Natalie, he has enraged the Kurfürst to the extent that the latter is seeking to eliminate a political and personal embarrassment with Homburg’s death. The suspicion in his mind arises when Hohenzollern asks him if he, Homburg, has done anything to upset the Kurfürst (2, 3, i, ll. 911-913). Homburg finally recognises that his betrothal with Natalie dooms him for she refuses marriage to the King of Sweden: ‘Es stürzt der Antrag ins Verderben, mich:/An ihrer Weigerung, wisse, bin ich schuld,/Weil mir sich die Prinzessin anverlobt’ (My courtship plunges me to ruin,/For I am to blame for her refusal,/Because she betrothed herself to me) (2, 3, i, ll. 927-930). There is also the Kurfürst’s tender attachment to Natalie and the manner in which any say in her future, whether political or in her relationship with the Kurfürst, is transgressed by Homburg.

The strange evocation of the family as ‘Vater’, ‘Mutter’, ‘Braut’ (father, mother, bride) is considered unseemly.²⁷ Homburg had not yet learned the courtly manner, which is also evidenced by his grasping after Natalie’s glove. There is hurry and impetuosity in his manner, which is an aspect of the *puer* archetype. The Kurfürst maintains, speaking to Kottwitz, that he cannot rule a state in which everyone can interfere for ‘mit welchem Recht, du Tor, erhoffst du das,/Wenn auf dem Schlachtenwagen, eigenmächtig,/Mir in die Zügel greifen darf’ (With what right, you fool, do you expect that/When in the chariot of war everyone/Can take the reins from me) (2, 5, v, ll. 1561-1563). Nevertheless, it is the father’s role to acclimatise the boy to the rigours of the world and the Kurfürst does this for Homburg by making him face his own death. The Kurfürst’s role remains mysterious and somewhat playful. There is no overt declaration as to what his intentions are with regard to Homburg; he is flexible with developments and could, thus, be said to be exercising a benign paternal role.

In one of Western literature’s earliest texts, Homer’s *The Odyssey*, Odysseus learns, on the ten-year journey from Troy to his home in Ithaca, that prudence, circumspection and craft are the attributes that will enable him to obtain a satisfactory intimacy with his wife, Penelope, after a ten-year absence. These also requires a sense of the on-goingness of life based on trust, which is the primary balance of an adult life as opposed to the stagnation which masks an immature adult perspective such as Homburg’s.²⁸ The focus must be the community, rather than the immaturity and impoverishment of the individual seeking personal fame and glory. The world is a treacherous place and Homburg has to find his place in it, which he has not yet done. Homburg’s soliloquy in Act 1, Scene 5, in which he desires fame and glory in the oncoming battle sets him above the co-operative waging of war against the Swedish army and isolates him from his command. It indicates the vainglorious attitude of this man, a general in command of the cavalry but not yet in command of himself.

One of the earliest incidents on Odysseus’ journey home to Ithaca is a visit to Hades, to which Odysseus has been sent by Circe to consult Tiresias, the blind Theban prophet, who will foretell Odysseus’ route home and the stages of his journey. Circe gives Odysseus precise instructions as to the rituals he must follow when he confronts the shades of the dead. Odysseus weeps on being told that he must visit Hades and has no further use of life nor does he wish to see sunshine. Odysseus has moved into depression and his emotional

²⁷ Helmut Arntzen, ‘Prinz Friedrich von Homburg: Drama des Bewußtseins’, in *Kleists Dramen: Neue Interpretationen*, ed. by Walter Hinderer (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1981), pp. 213-237 (p. 226).

²⁸ Homer, *The Odyssey*, trans. by Robert Fagles, ed. by Bernard Knox (London: Penguin, 2006).

state mirrors Homburg's when Homburg confronts his own grave.²⁹ As a species we are conscious of our mortality, a consciousness which we strive to repress. However, in order to live fulfilled lives we need to plumb the depths and face the reality of our own demise. Death is a universal experience, which we must face in order to learn to give up the things we have taken for granted. If we face the idea of death experientially before we die, we shall be liberated from the fear of it and we shall be able to live creatively and spontaneously. By accepting the reality of our own death we transform our way of being in the world and we are then prepared for the experience of dying at the time of our biological demise.³⁰ This is the import of Odysseus' visit to Hades and it is also the lesson that Homburg is obliged to learn, for the talion punishment is an archetypal feature of the oedipus complex. The fear of talion reprisal by the Kurfürst is more terrible than death in battle, for the punishment is meted out by the father who is loved. Kleist is splitting: he writes about the fear of death as a result of Homburg's oedipal conflict, yet is prepared to face his own demise with equanimity.

Pertinent evidence is available from medical examples that a confrontation with, and acceptance of, death has a profound meaning for the human psyche. It is demonstrated in a programme of psychedelic therapy as described in *The Human Encounter with Death* by Stanislav Grof and Joan Halifax.³¹ They comment that 'observations from psychedelic research, as well as data from history, comparative religion and anthropology, seem to indicate that we all harbour functional matrices in our unconscious minds that contain an authentic encounter with death'.³² The basis of the book was a project in 1974 at the Sinai Hospital in Baltimore, in which terminally ill cancer patients were offered the opportunity to participate in a programme of LSD, psychotherapy and emphatic care. The programme was not offered as a cure for cancer but as an amelioration of the psychological state of the patients.

The programme measured the therapeutic value of peak experiences during LSD sessions, including feelings of unity, transcendence of time and space, objectivity and reality, feelings of sacredness and a deeply felt positive ineffable mood. After the conclusion of the programme twenty-nine percent of the patients showed dramatic improvements, forty-three per cent were moderately improved and twenty-eight per cent were essentially unchanged. Those patients that changed seemed to lose depressive affect,

²⁹ Homer (2003), pp. 245-6.

³⁰ Ernest Becker, *The Denial of Death* (New York: Free Press, 1997), p. 14; Norman O. Brown, *Life Against Death: The Psychological Meaning of History* (New York: Viking, 1959), p. 270.

³¹ Stanislav Grof and Joan Halifax, *The Human Encounter with Death* (London: Souvenir Press, 1978).

³² Grof and Halifax (1978), pp. 8-9.

were able to accept the life they had lived, took more interest in other patients and the nursing staff and anticipated their demise with equanimity. One patient, on expiring, winked at his family around the bed and said: 'See you on the other side.' A Janus-like liminal experience of death in life has given these patients a certain self-possession and equanimity in which the actual demise is not experienced as fearful.

On the basis of this experience we would argue that Homburg underwent a similar transcendent experience in coming to terms with his own death. The sight of his own grave brings to his mind the physicality of his body: it is as if the ego would continue in life wrenched unhappily from the body. In Act 3, Scene v, Homburg pleads with the Kurfürstin in the needy tones of a child pleading with its mother, which we also experience with Gustav in *Verlobung*. Homburg says 'O laß mich Deine Knie umfassen, Mutter' (Oh mother, let me clasp your knees) (2, 3, v, l. 967). The psychological separation from the mother is effected, once Homburg rises to the experience of his own masculinity by recognising and accepting the Kurfürst's authority.

The fear of death in Homburg is palpable which Kleist is able to render by a process of psychological splitting. The fear of death which Homburg displays and the acceptance of death in Kleist's own life are derived from different mental processes. The urgency of Homburg's demands for audience with the Kurfürstin is reported by the Hofdame as that Homburg 'fleht bestürzt und dringend um Gehör' (distraught, begging urgently for audience) (2, 3, iv, l. 962). At this stage he had seen the grave being dug for him and in the stress of his fear language breaks down in his speech to the Kurfürstin whom he addresses as 'O meine Mutter' (Oh, my mother) (2, 3, v, l. 967) and again at the beginning of this speech:

Homburg	<p>O meine Mutter, also sprächst du nicht, Wenn dich der Tod umschauerte, wie mich! Du scheinst mit Himmelskräften, rettenden, Du mir, das Fräulein, deine Fraun, begabt, Mir alles rings umher, dem Trosknecht könnt ich, Dem schlechtesten, der deiner Perde pflegt, Gehängt am Halse flehen: rette mich! Nur ich allein, auf Gottes weiter Erde Bin hilflos, ein Verlassener, und kann nichts!</p> <p>(Oh mother, you would not speak thus If death had you in its cold embrace like me You seem endowed with saving heavenly powers, You, the Princess and your ladies, I could fall upon the neck of the lowest stable-boy</p>
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Who tends your horses, your meanest servant
 And beg him to save me.
 Only I am alone on God's wide earth,
 Helpless, deserted and can do nothing) (2, 3, v, ll.971 – 979).

Homburg's desperation is clear. He cares nothing for honour; he has no regard for his standing at Court; he only wants to live. As he explains the source of his fear and focus is his mortal body: his bones, his eyes, his chest (2, 3, v, ll. 983-985). To this is allied the shame of the spectacle that he would make when his being is annihilated: no more honour, no more glory and particularly, no more luck. The Kurfürstin is steadfast in her acceptance of fate while Natalie collapses. Homburg arrives at a Faustian moment with 'O Gottes Welt, O Mutter, ist so schön' (Oh God's world, oh mother, is so beautiful) (2, 3, v, l. 995). This adherence to the world is a paradoxical attitude in the Romantic sensibility in which death was considered merely the continuation of life in another form, the 'contemplation and anticipation of which produces such extreme emotions as ecstasy' (Wollust and Entzücken).³³ The Romantic sensibility suggests the ambivalence of this affect, in which the unknown afterlife brings its own disquiet. This is not the emotion that Homburg feels when he contemplates his open grave, but it is an attitude at which he arrives in the fullness of time, and to which Hilda Brown, quoting from Kleist's letter to Marie von Kleist, describes as *todesreif* (ripe for death) (4, 507).³⁴

Homburg is, then, prepared to hang on to the world by abandoning things which are dear to him for 'Seit mein Grab ich sah, will ich nichts als leben,/Und frage nichts mehr ob es rühmlich sei' (Since I have seen my grave I want nothing more than to live and ask not if it is honourable) (2, 3, v, ll. 1003-1004). He is prepared to retire, work on his estates in the sweat of his brow (the expulsion from Paradise had similar consequences) and, significantly, abandon Natalie which, in particular, is to be brought to the attention of the Kurfürst:

Homburg Ich gebe jeden Anspruch auf an Glück.
 Natalien, das vergiss nicht, ihm zu melden,
 Begehr ich gar nicht mehr; in meinen Busen
 Ist all Zärtlichkeit für sie verlöscht.
 Frei ist sie, wie das Reh auf Heiden, wieder;

(I renounce all claim on happiness.
 Don't forget to tell him that I no longer desire
 Natalie. In my breast all tenderness for her

³³ Hilda M. Brown, 'Ripe Moments and False Climaxes: Thematic and Dramatic Configurations of the Theme of Death in Kleist's Works,' in 'A Companion to the Works of Heinrich von Kleist,' ed. by Bernd Fischer (Rochester: Camden House, 2003), 209-226 (p. 209).

³⁴ Brown (2003), p. 213.

Is extinguished. She is as free again as the
Deer on the heath) (2, 3, v, ll. 1022-1026).

This abandonment of Natalie (who is in place of the mother) is the significant move in this oedipal drama. However, Natalie commits an act as treasonable as Homburg's by calling her regiment to Fehrbellin in defence of Homburg, a threatening gesture towards the authority of the Kurfürst, though there are no consequences for Natalie. The matter is merely discussed as a subject of the Kurfürst's surprise that this should have occurred.

However, a group of officers are prepared to submit a petition to the Kurfürst in favour of Homburg, which is supported by the cavalry. But Natalie already has a letter from the Kurfürst for Homburg in which he offers Homburg life, if he, Homburg, can say that he is innocent of wrong-doing. Homburg recognises that he is not and accepts his death. In effect, Homburg has bowed the knee to the father, accepted his authority and his own culpability. Now that Homburg is submissive to the law/authority the penalty can be forgone. In effect, the father has recognised his own superiority, rejected the challenge from the child and can be magnanimous. In the process, Homburg has also achieved a state of personal maturity and we can expect that the acts of the impulsive *puer* will be have ceased 'ich will ihm, der so würdig vor mir steht,/Nicht ein Unwürdiger, gegenüber stehen' (I will not stand unworthily opposite him who is so worthy) (2, 4, iv, ll. 1380-1381). Not only has Homburg found the resolution to be a man but he has also identified with the values and precepts of the father; he has acceded to the wish, too, to be his own internalised father.³⁵

The teasing of Homburg in the first scene of the play is replicated in the final scene when Homburg is blindfolded and is being led ostensibly to his death which is a continuation of the Kurfürst's teasing game. Blinding and blindfolding returns us to the myth of Oedipus who blinded himself with a pin from Jocasta's garment, on discovering that she is his mother. Freud mentions the relation between castration and blinding in 'Das Unheimliche' (The Uncanny):

Das Studium der Träume, der Phantasien und Mythen hat uns dann gelehrt, daß die Angst um die Augen, die Angst zu erblinden, häufig genug ein Ersatz für die Kastrationsangst ist. Auch die Selbstblendung des mythischen Verbrechers Ödipus ist nur eine Ermäßigung für die Strafe der Kastration, die ihm nach der Regel der Talion allein angemessen wäre.

(A study of dreams, phantasies and myths has taught us that anxiety about one's eyes, the fear of going blind, is often enough a substitute for the dread of being

³⁵ Freud (1910), GW. 8, p. 74 (SE. 11, p. 172).

castrated. The self-blinding of the mythical criminal, Oedipus, was simply a mitigated form of the punishment of castration—the only punishment that was adequate for him by the *lex talionis*).³⁶

Homburg's blind-folding in the last scene of the play is thus an allusion to this subject. Homburg is reconciled to his death, he is *todesreif* because in death he will also find immortality as the victor of Fehrbellin: 'Nun, o Unsterblichkeit bist du ganz mein' (Now, oh immortality you are all mine) (2, 5, x, l. 1830). The blindfold is a reminder of the power of the father, which the Kurfürst mitigates by awarding Homburg the victory wreath, now adorned with the Kurfürst's gold chain, and which was denied Homburg in the first scene of the play.

Wolfgang Nehring agrees that the pantomime of the wreath, of refusal in the first scene of the play and reward in the final scene of the play, is the culmination of a dream, the final scene being the awakening.³⁷ The awakening is the return from the unconscious in which the oedipal drama has been played out; and with the awakening comes the return to community and the sense of personal responsibility. Homburg has achieved maturity and his own desires are no longer more important than the requirements of the state. He identifies with the aims of the state when he joins his fellow officers in the battle cry of the last line of the play 'im Staub mit allen Feinden Brandenburgs' (into the dust with all enemies of Brandenburg) (2, 5, xi, l. 1859). Homburg's life has now been invested with a sense of order and authority, in which he can put the demands of the community and the state before his own intemperate, impulsive nature.

Homburg is the last play Kleist wrote (in 1809-1810) before he committed suicide in November, 1811. He was addressing an issue which we can well believe was significant for him: the authority of the father. His own father had died when Kleist was ten years old. It seems, therefore, that the law of the father was something that Kleist himself had not experienced but was experiencing it by a process of literary creation. As is the case is here, and as Freud has stated, we can understand that artists use their own experience consciously and unconsciously to deal with personal issues. We can only speculate how father and son interacted and what influence the father exercised in the life of Kleist growing into his ten years. Kleist has perceptively offered an oedipal drama with an understanding of depth psychology a hundred years before Freud. It is remarkable that Kleist so closely follows the rhythm and scope of a successful oedipal transition. The myth

³⁶ Sigmund Freud (1919), *Das Unheimliche*, GW. 12, 229-235 (p. 242) (The Uncanny, SE. 17, 219-256 (p. 231)).

³⁷ Wolfgang Nehring, 'Kleists Prinz von Homburg: Die Marionette auf dem Weg zum Gott', *The German Quarterly*, vol. 44, no. 2 (1971), 172-84 (p. 174).

of Oedipus, of course, ended in tragedy and did not contain the details that are played out between Kurfürst/father and Homburg/son nor indeed between Little Hans and his father.

In the following chapter we examine aspects of pathological narcissism and narcissistic rage, often recourse for neurotic individuals who have not successfully confronted the oedipal issue. It is a source of disquiet for these individuals, who then frequently act out self-referentially in sullenness and rage, which inhibits freedom, spontaneity and creativity and a sound relationship with others, leading to a sense of community.

Chapter 6

Michael Kohlhaas: Narcissistic Rage and the Empowerment of Helplessness

The story, *Michael Kohlhaas* (3, 11-142), was published in two stages. The first part included in the *Phöbus* magazine in June 1806, takes the story to the point where Kohlhaas sets out to sack the Tronkenburg. Kleist reworked and extended the story, adding a magical component in the character of the gypsy, and this part and the first part were then published in the first volume of *Erzählungen* (Stories) in 1810 (3, 705). This publication history is significant for comments about the story are that it is artistically flawed. Clayton Koelb, Wilma Rodrigues both quote the Hungarian Marxist critic György Lukács, who claims that the gypsy and the attendant magical business in the second half of the story constitute an *Entgleisung* (derailment).¹ According to Lukács, the text loses credibility as an account of events to which the imagination of the reader can be tied with its moves from the realistic into the fantastic. The jump from the realistic to the fantastic is too large and is introduced at a late stage in the story, which makes it suspect as a narrative device. Bernhard Greiner echoes Lukács' sentiment and adds in a footnote that this lacuna has never been made the focus of interpretations.² However, I argue that this jump to the fantastic is a psychological development in the story and an indication of Kohlhaas' pathology which can also be tied to Kleist's own thinking in the period between the publication of the two parts.

The purpose of this chapter is to argue that the appearance of the gypsy is motivated by Kohlhaas' descent into pathological narcissism. The magical elements associated with the gypsy are a phantasised extension of the plot, in which Kohlhaas lives in two worlds of the real and the magical and in which the magical is a safe recourse from the vicissitudes of an unsupportable environment. This approach will also demonstrate that the story has a coherent psychological structure in the world of a pathologically narcissistic personality. The magical aspects of the story are psychologically motivated because they are introduced

¹ Clayton Koelb, 'Incorporating the Text: Kleist's Michael Kohlhaas', *Modern Language Notes*, vol. 105, no. 5 (1990), 1098-1107 (p. 1098); Wilma Rodrigues, 'Michael Kohlhaas oder die verbrecherische Einrichtung der Welt', *Revista de Letras*, 10 (1967), 179-190 (p.179); György Lukács, 'Die Tragödie Heinrich von Kleists', *Deutsche Realisten des 19. Jahrhundert* (Bern: Aufbau, 1978);

² Bernhard Greiner, *Kleist's Dramen und Erzählungen*, (Tübingen: Francke, 2000), p. 336.

at a stage when Kohlhaas' fortunes are at their lowest ebb. Thus, though the introduction of the gypsy is surprising, her appearance reflects the magical, inflated, grandiose thinking of the pathologically narcissistic personality who has lost control of his or her environment and needs recourse. This individual will regress to hide behind omnipotent, even magical factors, to bend the narrative of their life to their will when there is no solution to the stresses of the day. I describe below the history and factors which are a basis of this pathological narcissism and how the experience of this mental state is played out in the story when the action is taken over in the second part of the story by magical thinking. Magical thinking for Kohlhaas is the empowerment of helplessness.

Pathological narcissism is a morbid condition. We all have elements of narcissism in our make-up, which we require to maintain self-esteem and a realistic place in society and that is, initially, the case with Kohlhaas too. He has a sound mental organisation but erupts into violent excess as a result of the impingements he suffers; in his case, narcissism has sprung the bounds of the normal which is required for a healthy self-esteem.³ He regresses to primary process thinking in which the wish grants fulfilment.

The story's internal logic and psychology are Kleist's, and the particular difficulty with the uncertainty of the internal facts of the story represent Kleist's own disturbed view of the world. While the story may be artistically flawed in its move from fact to magical phantasy it is, nevertheless, psychologically true in its description of the existential uncertainty of Kohlhaas' world. The individual in the grip of narcissistic rage does not live in a universe in which there is an experience of linearity. There is chaos and there are jumps in the existential experience which Kohlhaas mirrors and which lead to bewilderment for us, the readers. Those of us grounded in reality do not share the horrible internal world of the psychotic nor do we need to have recourse to magical solutions and delusions in order to manage our environment.

Kleist manages to make us feel this quicksand quality of the psychotic's life: there are the contradictory facts or they contradictory? As examples, I quote the question of the validity of the permit, which arises later in the story when the Tronkas, in trying to muddy the waters of justice, resurrect a twelve year old edict preventing the import of live horses from Brandenburg into Saxony because of horse pest (3, 104). Does this edict still apply? There is also the uncertainty and precarious position of Kohlhaas in Dresden, whose guards were initially appointed to protect him from the curiosity of the people and then become

³ Horst Geyer, *Dichter des Wahnsinns: Eine Untersuchung über die dichterische Darstellbarkeit seelischer Ausnahmezustände* (Göttingen: Muster-Schmidt, 1955), p. 137.

guards which hold him prisoner and how subtly that shift is arranged. There is the issue, which is significant for the future of Kohlhaas, about the terms ‘freies Geleit’ (safe passage) and ‘Amnestie’ (amnesty), which both, as Hinz von Tronka says, Luther and the State Council seemed to have confused, for Kohlhaas is denied the amnesty he had been promised after winning his case against Wenzel (3, 85, 106). Finally, there is the quality of Kleist’s prose style, which consists of long paragraphs and long sentences with many sub-clauses, ellipses and reversals. The effect is to destabilise the reader as much as Kohlhaas himself. Bernd Hamacher addresses these aspects of the story.⁴ Hamacher also recognises that the character of Kohlhaas is deficient in a moral centre and as a result Kohlhaas is only able to react to events without experiencing development. He is unable to transmute an event into an experience which would have a transformative effect.⁵ This experience is aptly described by William Wordsworth in his daffodil poem.⁶ In the fourth verse of the poem, the poet is able to reflect and internalise the event of the daffodils, which are initially perceived from a lofty spiritual perspective, The internalisation of the event becomes an experience from which the poet is able to draw sustenance: Kohlhaas does not have this capacity.

The story made a great impression on Kleist’s contemporaries because its development transcended expectations of a linear narrative (3, 713-716). Ludwig Tieck (1773-1853), writing in the introduction to Kleist’s *Hinterlassene Schriften* (Posthumous Writings) in 1821, does not find the appearance of the gypsy, the effect she has on the story and the introduction of a supernatural world a convincing factor in the development of the narrative (3, 715-716). So, the function of the gypsy is seen as mysterious, awkward and disruptive and commentators have sought an answer as to Kleist’s purpose concerning her.

Margarete Landwehr, for example, argues that the appearance of the gypsy is an aesthetic whole with the story by enlarging on themes already present, namely the breaking of boundaries and the search for a new landscape of language and identity. The boundary between the world of the living and the world of the dead is ruptured by the appearance of the gypsy, who is the revenant of Kohlhaas’ deceased wife, Lisbeth. Language fails Kohlhaas for he cannot be heard to obtain justice and he can only make himself felt

⁴ Bernd Hamacher, ‘Michael Kohlhaas’ in *Kleist Handbuch: Leben-Werk-Wirkung*, ed. by Ingo Breuer (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2013), pp. 97-106 (pp. 102-105).

⁵ Bernd Hamacher, ‘Geschichte und Psychologie der Moderne um 1800 (Schiller, Kleist, Goethe): Gegensätzliche Überlegungen zum “Verbrecher aus Infamie”, und zu “Michael Kohlhaas”’, *Kleist Jahrbuch 2006*, 60-74 (p. 73).

⁶ William Wordsworth, ‘I wandered lonely as a cloud’, in *The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth*, ed. by Thomas Hutchinson, rev. by Ernest de Selincourt, 18th. reprint (London: Oxford University Press, 1942), p. 187.

through violence and through the secret of the amulet, which is unknown and ultimately unknowable except to Kohlhaas. He only reads it immediately prior to his execution.⁷ Greiner argues, and comes close to the true psychological world of Kohlhaas' experience, that the gypsy and the *Trödelweib* (rag seller), as the same person represent a *Selbsthelfertum* (self-help) in which the narrator can at will arrange for coincidences and thus remove logic from the account.⁸ This self-help and the power of the narrator to arrange fortuitous events for the benefit of Kohlhaas are consistent with the development of narcissistic need in Kohlhaas, as well as in the narrator, who resorts to magic in order to gain supremacy over Kohlhaas' deleterious and narcissistic state.

The term 'narcissism' arises from the myth of Narcissus and is told by Ovid in *Metamorphoses* as the story of Narcissus and Echo.⁹ Liriope, Narcissus' mother, consulted the seer Tiresias as to Narcissus' life expectancy and the seer prophesied that Narcissus would live to a ripe old age 'so long as he never knows himself'.¹⁰ This acute phrase translates into the concept of not-knowing his own consciousness which he does when he falls in love with his own image. He has ignored Echo whose function, as Nathan Schwartz-Salant suggests, is to represent that which is found when facing a narcissistic attitude of defensive control.¹¹ The intrusion of another voice or a suggestion as to how things could be done differently is rejected. Whatever impulse impels us to engage fruitfully with the narcissist is rejected and we become the feeble echo that dies away and ultimately has no meaning. We are brought here to Kohlhaas' predicament when the gypsy tells him on two occasions that the note she gave him will save his life if he chooses to use it, but he ignores her suggestion for his only purpose is to destroy those who have done him ill.

When Narcissus does get to know himself, it is with a self-regarding consciousness which prevents openness to others and which finds satisfaction in the self, constellated around the body. The ego, in this sense, is cathected to the body and spontaneity and liveliness is lost. Kleist also describes this phenomenon in *Über das Marionettentheater* (3, 555-563). Herr C tells the raconteur that the advantage of a marionette is that 'sie sich niemals *zierte*.' (it is never *affected*) (3, 559). Self-consciousness is thus deemed to

⁷ Margarete Landwehr, 'The Mysterious Gypsy in Kleist's "Michael Kohlhaas": The Disintegration of Legal and Linguistic Boundaries', *Monatshefte*, vol. 84, no.4 (1992), 431-446 (pp. 431-432).

⁸ Greiner (2000), p. 344.

⁹ Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. by David Raeburn (London: Penguin, 2004), pp. 109 -116.

¹⁰ Ovid, p. 109.

¹¹ Nathan Schwartz-Salant, *Narcissism and Character Transformation: The Psychology of Narcissistic Character Disorders* (Toronto: Inner City Books, 1982), p. 83.

introduce an element of falseness into the attitude and behaviour of the individual. The raconteur counters this with a story of a youth who enjoyed a ‘wunderbare Anmut’ (wonderful charm) which is displaced by traces of vanity through the favour of women (3, 560 - 561). This youth had seen the statue of the Boy with a Thorne, a Greco-Roman marble copy of a bronze dating from 25BCE-50BCE which showed a boy extracting a thorn from the sole of his foot. The youth sees himself in the mirror when he is drying his feet after a bath, is reminded of the statue and attempts unsuccessfully to repeat the grace of the movement of placing his foot on a stool. A change occurred in this young man who would stand in front of a mirror for days just as Narcissus gazed fixedly at his own reflection in the pool. The youth’s charm left him and an invisible and inexplicable force seemed to inhibit his free movement and within a year all traces of his former grace had vanished. The youth, in Kleist’s story, had lost spontaneity at the expense of self-regard and with the loss of spontaneity there was also the loss of authenticity, which arises from an ‘unconsciousness-onsciousness’ of the self

The clinical concept of narcissism was used for the first time in 1889 by Henry Havelock Ellis (1859 1939) in *The Psychology of Sex*. In volume 1, section 3, entitled *Auto-Eroticism*, he describes the case of a young woman who accepts the attentions of others but is unresponsive to them and finds pleasure only in her own physical attributes.¹² The concept of narcissism was further developed in 1905, when Freud published *Drei Abhandlungen zur Sexualtheorie* (Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality).¹³ It was subsequently enlarged with footnotes and in a footnote added in 1910 he describes the object choice made by homosexuals who are fixated on their own body narcissistically and thus seek a similar image.¹⁴ He discusses the subject of narcissism further in a paper published in 1911, *Psychoanalytische Bemerkungen über einen autobiographisch beschriebenen Fall von Paranoia* (Psychoanalytical Notes on an Autobiographical Account of a Case of Paranoia).¹⁵ This was the case of Daniel Schreber (1842-1911), a German judge who succumbed to psychosis, which Freud interpreted, on the basis of Schreber’s autobiography, as a case of repressed homosexual desire. Freud, in this paper, describes narcissism as a stage between auto-eroticism (when the child uses its body, body

¹²Henry Havelock Ellis, *The Psychology of Sex*, 6 vols. 3rd edn (Philadelphia: Davis, 1925), vol. 1, pp. 205-208.

¹³ Sigmund Freud (1905), ‘Drei Abhandlungen zur Sexualtheorie,’ GW. 5, 33-72 (Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality, SE. 7, 123-246).

¹⁴ Freud, GW. 5, p. 44 (SE.7, p. 144).

¹⁵ Sigmund Freud (1911), ‘Psychoanalytische Bemerkungen über einen autobiographisch beschriebenen Fall von Paranoia’, GW. 8, 240-316 (Psycho-Analytic Notes on an Autobiographical Account of a Case of Paranoia, SE. 7, 1-79).

parts or part objects to engender excitement) and object choice (when the individual fixes desire on an external object).¹⁶

In the 1912 paper *Über neurotische Erkrankungstypen* (Types of Onset Neurosis), Freud discusses the two types of impingement which could cause narcissistic neurosis: one is caused by a change in the external world through which one falls into narcissism through an experience and the other is caused by a developmental process which engenders narcissism.¹⁷ In the paper published in 1914, *Zur Einführung des Narzissismus* (On Narcissism: An Introduction), Freud gives a definition of narcissism similar to the case described by Havelock Ellis above. In essence, in Freud's description narcissism requires a sexual cathexis of the self with the body for its satisfaction.¹⁸ Until this stage in the development of a theory of narcissism, we have been in the arena of the body of the subject (as being also the sexual) in the development of the theory of object relations. Narcissism has, however, distinct issues for the individual's relationship with others and his or her environment which fall outside the merely sexual.

Freud also identifies a pathological narcissism which he describes as *narcissistic neurosis* which is then in the domain of Kohlhaas. He uses this term to describe psychotic illnesses which have attendant symptoms of megalomania and delusions of grandeur. A similar trait is observed in the mental life of children and primitive people, where libido is withdrawn from the external world, directed to the ego, which then results in megalomania and self-delusion.¹⁹ The individual is given to 'magical thinking' and believes that with the power of word or imagination he or she can control the world and make reality conform to his or her desires.

Annie Reich also argues rightly, that narcissism cannot be restricted to psychotic states. Narcissism is a normal phenomenon and only becomes pathological with the irruption of abnormal factors.²⁰ Abnormal factors can be a disturbance in the environment such as not-good enough maternal care, dysfunctional family life or physical and sexual abuse. When such abnormal factors arise, the balance between the object/self-cathexis may be disturbed and there is consequently little or no cathexis to objects. The individual turns away from

¹⁶ Freud, GW. 8, pp. 297-298 (SE. 7, pp. 60- 62).

¹⁷ Sigmund Freud (1912), '*Über neurotische Erkrankungstypen*', GW. 8, 322-330 (p. 325) (Types of Onset of Neurosis, SE. 12, 229-237 (p. 234).

¹⁸ Sigmund Freud (1911), '*Zur Einführung des Narzissismus*', GW. 10, 137-170, p. 138 (On Narcissism: An Introduction, SE. 4, 69-112, p. 73).

¹⁹ Freud, GW. 10, p.140 (SE.14, p. 75).

²⁰ Annie Reich, 'Pathologic Forms of Self-Esteem Regulation', *Psychoanalytic Study of the Child*, 15 (1960), 215-232 (p. 215).

the world and focuses primarily on his or her own body and internal psychological processes. The relationship with the outside world is lost and infantile forms of narcissism are resurrected, in which the balance between self and ego operates at a primitive level. In infantile narcissism there is little ability to enable the subject to distinguish what is real from what is phantasy and hence the use of magical thinking is employed to achieve satisfaction, wish fulfilment and ultimately the ability to control reality.²¹ Recourse to this approach also suggests inflation. Benjamin Beit-Hallahmi, discussing the aspect of both secular and religious conversions with the objective of an escape to identity change, suggests that an exaggerated self-love allows us this conversion. Regression in times of stress and crisis leads to: ““artistic”, religious or magical ways of thinking. When realistic coping fails, magical thinking takes over’.²² This is exactly Kohlhaas’ route to self-help.

Heinz Kohut (1913-1981) and Otto F. Kernberg (b. 1928), both working from an object relations approach, move away from the focus on the sexual parameters in which the debate is concerned with the body to a theory of narcissistic pathology, in which the individual’s relationship with his environment, particularly with others, is paramount; this approach provides a map of character traits as to the orientation of a pathologically narcissistic personality. Both schools emphasise the importance of envy and rage as components in the pathologically narcissistic personality but they diverge in a fundamental respect as to its origin.²³

Kohut developed a ‘psychology of the self’, in which the self is unknowable (except as manifest in its constituent parts), and is not graspable in its essence.²⁴ He maintained that the narcissistic wound arises out of a failure of parents or caregivers to empathise with the child and thus prevent it from developing an internal psychic structure which would foster self-esteem and grounding.²⁵ The wound inflicted on the child is maintained in a regressive form which Kohut terms the archaic self-object and which can be resurrected in cases where the adult has isolated narcissistic structures from the rest of the growing psyche.²⁶ The archaic self-object constitutes the infant self-object created at a time before the infant had ego strength to see a me-you dichotomy in its environment. The self-object is considered by the infant to be people or things as though they were part of its own self (just

²¹ Reich (1960), p. 215.

²² B. Beit-Hallahmi, ‘Apocalyptic Dreams and Religious Ideologies: Losing and Saving Self and World’, *The Psychoanalytic Review*, 90 (2003), 403-439 (p. 411).

²³ Schwartz-Salant (1982), p. 41.

²⁴ Heinz Kohut, *The Restoration of the Self* (New York: International Universities Press, 1977), pp. 310-311.

²⁵ Schwartz-Salant (1982), p. 41.

²⁶ Heinz Kohut, ‘Thoughts on Narcissism and Narcissistic Rage’, *The Psychoanalytic Study of the Child*, 27 (1972), 360-400 (p. 386).

as Kohlhaas' two blacks are self-objects).²⁷ As a result of impingements, the infant must maintain control over its environment which is seen as threatening and out of control because it is indissolubly linked to the infant's self. At this archaic level, the infant's omnipotent lack of empathy and rage at impingements is transferred into a narcissistic rage, which seeks to eradicate the hurt by eradicating the offence. This pathological narcissistic rage can lie dormant but has a permanence, maintained in the unconscious, which (with appropriate stimulus), can erupt years after the event with a freshness as if the impingement had happened yesterday.

Kernberg, on the other hand, has a more negative view of the pathological narcissistic character, which he terms 'the pathological (grandiose) self of narcissistic personalities'.²⁸ The development of the grandiose self arises from a disassociation between early self-representation and object representation with the result that the individual's defences are constructed against experiencing envy, rage and intense hatred.²⁹ Kernberg describes these individuals as having shallow emotional lives, undue self-reference in relations with others and an inflated idea of themselves. They have little enjoyment in life other than tributes from others or their own grandiose fantasies; their relationship with others tends to be exploitative. While presenting an open and charming surface personality, they are frequently cold and ruthless. However, these individuals are, Kernberg says, also capable of high functioning and of consistent controlled behaviour which enables them to achieve their goals of gaining emotional tribute from others; high-functioning pathological narcissistic personalities may show little disturbance in daily activities and their pathological extent of disturbance is only evident with diagnostic examination.³⁰ In the case of these individuals, the pathological grandiose self is hidden and the tributes required to sustain functioning are fed by the personal sense of triumph over fear and pain by inflicting fear and pain on others. Self-esteem is enhanced by the pleasure derived from aggressive acts.³¹

Kohlhaas conforms to both Kohut's and Kernberg's paradigm of pathological narcissism which is focused on object-relations, but built on the foundations created by Freud concerning infant states of primitive unseparatedness in which the infant is still enmeshed

²⁷ Mario Jacoby, *Individuation and Narcissism: The Psychology of the Self in Jung and Kohut* (London: Routledge, 1990), p. 66.

²⁸ Otto F. Kernberg, *Severe Personality Disorders: Psychotherapeutic Strategies* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), p. 189.

²⁹ Kernberg (1984), p. 189.

³⁰ Kernberg (1984), pp. 192-193.

³¹ Kernberg (1984), p. 195.

in the other and has little ego function of its own. Kohlhaas' problem is that he cannot accept the injustice to which he is subject and against which he is powerless. His only recourse is violence and destructiveness, which are an effort to eliminate the injustice; but in so doing he alienates the authorities and ultimately the population at large. The trigger for Kohlhaas' descent into pathological narcissisms are initially the unfair, indeed corrupt, decisions of the authorities in Saxony in his dispute with Wenzel over Kohlhaas' two blacks, which represent self-objects; that is, the identity of Kohlhaas is enmeshed in the identity of the horses. The secondary trigger for Kohlhaas' narcissistic rage is that the Elector of Saxony reneges on the free passage and/or amnesty which he had granted. In these disputes, victory becomes insufficient: the offender or offense must be eradicated and destroyed.

Paradoxically, Kohlhaas is described at the beginning of the story as 'einer der rechtschaffendsten und zugleich entsetzlichsten Menschen seiner Zeit' (one of the most upright and at the same time most frightful individuals of his time) (3, 13). This represents, as Diethelm Brüggemann has pointed out, the paradox of Luther's theology which is enshrined in Luther's *Die 21 Artikel des Glaubens und der Lehre der Augsburger Konfession* (The 21 Articles of Belief and Teaching of the Augsburg Confession).³² In Article II, *Von der Erbsünde* (Of Original Sin), Luther asserts that all people are conceived and born in sin and come into the world full of evil desires and inclinations and thus can have no genuine fear of, or belief in, God. This original sin is a genuine scourge, which will lead to damnation unless it is erased and the individual is brought into rebirth through baptism in the Holy Ghost. However, even though rebirth through baptism in the Holy Ghost may erase original sin, the evil desires and inclinations are not erased: hence the paradox, *simul iustus et peccator* (at once righteous and sinner). Kohlhaas' sense of righteousness implies a desire for fairness and honest dealing, which, when denied, leads him to terrible acts of vengeance (3, 730). The lack of transparency in the judgement of the courts and the corrupt behaviour of the authorities, both of which frustrate the fairness and transparency which Kohlhaas expects, also threaten his social identity.³³ As the son of a teacher, Kohlhaas is integrated in the society of his time and until his thirtieth year was the example of a good citizen. He owns his own business, a dairy farm, brought his children up in the fear of God and is held in high regard by his neighbours. However, the narcissistic

³² Diethelm Brüggemann, *Kleist: Die Magie* (Würzburg: Königshausen and Neumann, 2004), pp. 92-95; *Gesangbuch für die evangelische-lutherische Landeskirche des Königreichs Sachsen* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1883), pp. 511-521 (p. 512).

³³ Dirk Grathoff, 'Michael Kohlhaas', in *Interpretationen: Kleists Erzählungen*, ed. by Walter Hinderer (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2011), pp. 43-65 (p. 63).

personality is unable to navigate turbulent waters with its meagre resources, when it is cast adrift.

The sense of righteousness which is the source of Kohlhaas' virtue is not founded in a legalistic framework to which Kohlhaas ultimately has to submit but in his 'Rechtgefühl' (sense of justice) (3, 27). This sense of justice is an expectation of natural justice, an innate desire for fair dealing which has nothing to do with enshrined laws but which binds the community into a social contract. Kohlhaas' sense of justice 'das einer Goldwaage glich' (which resembled a gold scale), shows clearly when he goes to collect his two blacks after his return from Dresden. Wolfgang Pircher writes that Kohlhaas is unable to defend himself and his household against the high-handed activities of the aristocrats, Wenzel and his family, and when wounded in his role as master and provider of his household, abandons his social for a political role.³⁴ Even as he journeys abroad (that is, over the border of Brandenburg into Saxony), he is calculating the profit that he can make in the market from his string of horses (3, 13). He relies thus on experience of the order of the world which may include its frailties but which would, nevertheless, enable him to pursue his legitimate business interests; and it is a significant question that Kohlhaas poses to Wenzel even as he is stopped at the turnpike: if it is appropriate that his trade be destroyed with the requirement of a permit (3, 19). Kohlhaas views the requirement for a permit as an injustice and his purpose becomes universal to gain redress for his own injustice but also for the injustices committed by the Tronkenburg against travellers generally (3, 27). This decision coincides with the beginning of his inflation, as he regards his own problems in a universal context in that they also concern the community at large. Violence driven by envy and rage arises out of the impingement in such an individual as a way of gaining redress.

Kohlhaas, however, shows considerable resilience to the impingements which assail him; it requires several episodes of injustice before Kohlhaas descends into the pathological narcissism which leads him to terrorise Saxony with fire and sword. When Kohlhaas arrives in Dresden to obtain the necessary permit, he is told by the counsellor that which his own belief had suggested to him 'daß die Geschichte von dem Paßschein ein Märchen sei.' (that the story of a permit were a fairy story) (3, 21). On his return from Dresden to the Tronkenburg, Kohlhaas, seeing the irreparable state of his two blacks and that his stable-boy, Herse, who had been charged to care for them, had now disappeared,

³⁴ Wolfgang Pircher, 'Geld, Pfand und Rache: Versuch über ein Motif bei Kleists "Kohlhaas"', *Kleist Jahrbuch 2000*, 104-117 (pp. 108-9).

refuses to accept them and requires that they be brought back to the state in which he had left them (3, 27).

He finds them to be worked out and wrecked; he learns from a lad that they had been used in the fields during harvest because of the Tronkenburg's lack of draught horses. Kohlhaas' anger arises immediately, which he suppresses: 'Kohlhaas fluchte über diese schändliche und abgekartete Gewalttätigkeit, verbiß jedoch, im Gefühl seiner Ohnmacht, seinen Ingrim' (Kohlhaas swore at this infamous and planned act of violence but suppressed his rage at the sense of his own impotence) (3, 23). The castellan demanded to hear what the problem was, did not want to deal with it and threatened to set the dogs on Kohlhaas if he continued with his complaints: 'Dem Roßhändler schlug das Herz gegen den Wams. Es drängte ihn den nichtswürdigen Dickwans in den Kot zu werfen, und den Fuß auf sein kupfernes Antlitz zu setzen' (The horse dealer's heart beat against his doublet. He felt the urge to throw the vile tub of lard into the mire and push his foot on his copper coloured face) (3, 23). The castellan then gives a misleading account of Kohlhaas' demeanour to Junker Wenzel again 'weil seine Rappen ein wenig gebraucht worden wären' (because his blacks had been used a little) (3, 25). Kohlhaas then realises that the blacks had been impounded specifically for the benefit of the Tronkenburg harvest. Though Kohlhaas' sense of justice anticipates fair play in all dealings that leave the individual with a sense of the reliability of the social order, he is, nevertheless, also conscious of the fragility of this order. This scene in the Tronkenburg yard demonstrates both Kohlhaas' quickness to anger and also his self-control. Kohlhaas can be said to have a sound mind at this stage in the story.

Moreover, Peter Dettmering writes that Kohlhaas has no other possibility of action: he feels rubbish because the horses, which represent his ideal self-object with which he identifies, have been made worthless. So, he rejects them since he is incapable of loving a less than perfect self-object, which would reflect on him. His sense of shame is increased since he believes, mistakenly, to be the object of ridicule in the laughter of Wenzel's friends.³⁵ This laughter was not directed at Kohlhaas, but such is Kohlhaas' self-referential understanding of the world that he feels wounded and takes umbrage. In Kohlhaas' phantasy, the blacks are a symbol of his success and respect in the world; in his identification with them he is now as worthless as they are. The restitution of the blacks, as self-representations of Kohlhaas, is also bound up with forgiveness and reparation.

³⁵ Peter Dettmering, *Heinrich von Kleist: Zur Psychodynamik in seiner Dichtung* (Munich: Nymphenburger, 1975), p. 88.

Kohlhaas cannot feel whole until this wound is repaired.³⁶ Moreover, Kohlhaas' demand that Wenzel undertake the feeding suggests that Kohlhaas is determined to humiliate him just as Kohlhaas feels he has been humiliated with the laughter of Wenzel's friends. Koelb states that the horses are not important in themselves but are a metaphor for other important issues.³⁷ He argues, that they are a symbol of Kohlhaas' potency and standing in the world; sick horses, with which he identifies would, if he were to acknowledge ownership, betoken a weak owner. In this state, the impoverished horses are a too immediate a reminder of his own projected weakness. The fear arises, that in accepting the horses he would be identified with them; he would be stripped of the power and potency that is rightfully his. Kohlhaas' own mocking laughter seems to distance him from his two horses (3, 25). Dettmering further suggests that feelings of unworthiness grounded in the horses, lead to a diminution of self-esteem and castration anxiety.³⁸ This depressive psychological state is not one in which the rage of the narcissistic wound can assert itself and triumph. So, Kohlhaas searches if there may be extenuating circumstances which might affect the situation.

Kohlhaas returns home to interview Herse. Kohlhaas' wife is delighted at his restrained composure, which indicates that Kohlhaas is still in command of his feelings but also that she has experience of her husband's irascibility (3, 29). He is evenly balanced, his composure is that of an individual keen to establish the facts of the case and ready to accept blame if it lay on his side. Kohlhaas is behaving in a reasonable way and is content to let the truth of the situation govern the result. He then learns that Herse had been unjustly chased away from the Tronkenburg and was, thus, unable to care for the horses, which were set to work in the field (3, 33-37). Kohlhaas accepts Herse's tale as the truth. Kohlhaas still maintains his composure and decides to pursue his rights in open court, an endeavour in which he is supported by his wife. It is Kleist's skill, though, that he engenders a further dissonance in the story, for the horses were initially taken into the field by Herse himself, who then lost control of their use when he was chased away.

Kohlhaas travels to Dresden, where he prepares his case, with the help of a lawyer. His demands are modest: punishment of Wenzel, restitution of costs incurred by himself and Herse and return of the horses into the state in which he left them at the Tronkenburg. After some delay Kohlhaas learns that his suit is denied because the family connections of Wenzel with the cupbearer and chamberlain to the Elector of Saxony have enabled them to

³⁶ Dettmering (1975), p. 96.

³⁷ Koelb (1990), p. 1102.

³⁸ Dettmering (1975), p. 89.

frustrate justice (3, 41). The judgement of the court is that Kohlhaas is at liberty to collect his horses from the Tronkenburg and is enjoined to desist from pursuing his claim.

Kohlhaas is in Brandenburg when he receives this news and involves the Governor, Heinrich von Geusau, in his dispute with Wenzel. Von Geusau has administrative responsibility for Kohlhaasenbrück, Kohlhaas' domicile. Von Geusau, seeing the injustice of the case, makes an application to the Elector of Brandenburg in order to exercise the supra-national interests of Brandenburg on behalf of Kohlhaas against Saxony (3, 43). Kohlhaas' supplication is denied and the case is again frustrated through the machinations of the von Tronka family both in Saxony and Brandenburg (3, 45). Kohlhaas is prepared to give up his social role with this news, and a gradual decline into rage with thoughts of revenge follows: 'Kohlhaas, der keine Freude mehr, weder an seiner Pferdezucht, noch an Haus und Hof, kaum an Weib und Kind hatte' (Kohlhaas no longer had joy neither in the breeding of horses nor of home and farm, scarcely of wife and children) (3, 45). Thus, Kohlhaas, the victim of injustice and nepotism, based on family connections, is deemed a vexatious litigant by the Dresden court and is instructed by the Brandenburg Chancery to desist from bothering the court with such nonsense and to collect his horses from the Tronkenburg. When he receives this news 'Kohlhaas schäumte vor Wut' (Kohlhaas foamed with rage), for it was for him not merely about the horses: he would have felt the same pain if it had concerned a couple of dogs (3, 47). Kohlhaas' identification with his property turns them into self-objects, which define him. It is, therefore, about Kohlhaas' self-identification with them and frustrated justice and the hurt which the lack of it has done to him. The nature of Kohlhaas' obsessive preoccupation with the injustice he has suffered and the rage and anger which dominate his thinking have now created an independent complex which occupies his psyche. It has become independent and split off from Kohlhaas' normal mental functioning and with the energy it contains, fuelled by frustration and rage, requires the satisfaction of action.³⁹

The decisive factor in Kohlhaas' road to violence is the realisation that the authorities manage a corrupt legal system and they exercise cruel and arbitrary powers which deny him his legal rights. He has been cast out of the community because he can no longer rely on and enjoy the protection of the law; the community is governed corruptly and so he must find his own solution..⁴⁰ Wolfgang Pircher, quoting Kant, highlights, in particular, the concept that every individual is entitled to justice, a right which should not be abandoned

³⁹ Geyer (1955), p. 128.

⁴⁰ Gerrhard Fricke, *Gefühle und Schicksal bei Heinrich von Kleist* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1975), p. 126.

for if it is, he will also abandon his humanity.⁴¹ However, reconciliation is necessary, for not even God can be called upon to wreak revenge. There is a questionable basis here in which the conflict between revenge, reconciliation and the claim to the individual's humanity is indivisible. As Pircher says: 'es ist eine schmaler Grat, den man zu wandeln hat und der sich zwischen den Abgründen der Rache und der Aufgabe des Rechts auftut' (one has to walk a narrow ridge which opens between the abysses of revenge and the task of legal justice.)⁴² It is Kohlhaas' failure, in his narcissistic rage, to negotiate this route with care for his actions also break the Emperor's peace.

In his approaching megalomania and inflated thinking, Kohlhaas is entering a ruthless phase in his desire for revenge. While he already has violence in mind, he tells his wife, Lisbeth, that he no longer wishes to remain in a country in which his rights are not protected (3, 53). Kohlhaas' sense of justice is a personal matter and he is injured in himself through the processes which he has endured. So far so good: Kohlhaas is disappointed and angry but he has not yet burst the bounds of appropriate behaviour. He anticipates that every noise in the yard indicates that the Junker's men are returning his horses in their sorry state. Further pain is inflicted when Kohlhaas learns from an acquaintance later, that his two horses are still being used in the Junker's fields as before:

und mitten durch den Schmerz, die Welt in einer so ungeheueren Unordnung zu erblicken, zuckte die innerliche Zufriedenheit empor, seine eigene Brust nunmehr in Ordnung zu sehen.

(and in the midst of the pain of seeing the world in such dreadful chaos, he started as he felt an inner contentment arise, in perceiving that his own breast was now in order) (3, 47).

Here Kohlhaas experiences the satisfaction of the individual who knows the fragile institutions of the world and has the satisfaction of having his suspicions about the state of the world transformed into experience: this justifies his feelings. However, he is still subject to restraint by his wife, Lisbeth. His worst fears have been realised: the sense of disorder in the world is mirrored by the sense of contentment that Kohlhaas experiences in himself. Kohlhaas has split off his experience of the world and has introjected all that is good and projected all that is bad and these feelings that are constellated in the split-off complex can now be released into action. The external world is, for Kohlhaas, in turmoil for he projects his feelings of rage and hate, thus maintaining a stable and ordered internal world. Nothing exists in the world, that is of any good and the realisation of this in himself

⁴¹ Pircher (2000), 104-117 (p. 114).

⁴² Pircher (2000), p. 114.

brings him to contentment. He realises that the disorder of the world has always been present and he has merely lived in a fantasy in which the mirror of the world has been distorted. So far, Kohlhaas has maintained a hold on the integrity of his psyche but cracks are beginning to appear with the world turning its malevolence towards him. The self is triumphant and omniscient in this primitive paranoid schizoid state; Kohlhaas is possessed and is in the grip of narcissistic inflation.

However, his satisfaction, as Kohlhaas experiences it, is the means by which he enters into narcissistic omniscience, that enables him to behave in an arbitrary and callous way towards his wife, Lisbeth. He proposes to negotiate with his neighbour, the magistrate, to sell his farm without telling her beforehand: 'sein Weib erblasste bei diesen Worten' (his wife paled at these words) (3, 47). She sees disaster in her husband's actions for she looks at Kohlhaas with 'Blicke, in welchen sich der Tod malte' (glances in which there was a premonition of death) (3, 47). Walter Silz indicates that Kohlhaas considers that his fight with the von Tronkas outweighs any responsibility that he has towards his wife and children.⁴³ His rage and desire for vengeance against Wenzel is now his primary concern, which is consistent with the primacy of the complex that dominates his mental functioning. He is organising his life so that the work of hate, rage and destruction can proceed unhindered while his wife and children are to be sent into safety across the border to Schwerin to his wife's mother. The narrator intimates that Kohlhaas has violence in his mind: he sells neither the horses in his stables nor his weapons and Kohlhaas tells the magistrate that his soul was set on great things of which he would shortly hear (3, 49).

Lisbeth, however, in order to subvert her husband's absolutist behaviour, proposes to go to Berlin herself and to use an old friendship with the steward of the palace to penetrate the circle of courtiers and guards which surround the Elector of Brandenburg in order to give him a petition directly. Lisbeth's journey is unsuccessful. The steward is absent and in pushing herself forward to reach the Elector she is repulsed and receives a mortal blow to her breast from a zealous guard. Kohlhaas has maintained control of his emotions until he understands, that the Elector of Brandenburg cannot or will not help him either.⁴⁴ Kohlhaas' experience is now that only a corrupt state apparatus exists and there will never be a remedy for his injury; the social contract has ceased to exist for Kohlhaas.

⁴³ Walter Silz, *Heinrich von Kleist: Studies in his Works and Literary Character* (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia, 1961), p. 180.

⁴⁴ Dettmering (1975), p. 90.

On her death bed, Lisbeth encourages Kohlhaas to forgive his enemies. Kohlhaas' response in his thoughts is 'so möge mir Gott nie vergeben, wie ich den Junker vergebe' (may God never forgive me as I forgive the Junker) (3, 59). In his inflated state, Kohlhaas is prepared to abjure God's forgiveness and put his soul at risk so that he can pursue Wenzel, for he believes that it is his duty to set matters right in the state and ensure that justice is available to all Christians. Kohlhaas arranges Lisbeth's funeral, which was 'weniger für sie, als für eine Fürstin angeordnet' (arranged less for her than for a princess) (3, 61). Even his arrangements are inflated and not commensurate with his station in society; they represent a further psychotic break with reality. As Dettmering indicates, there is neither any manifestation of genuine grief in Kohlhaas' behaviour nor of self-reflection.⁴⁵ He no longer inhabits a world in which there is a connection with the ordinary, the real aspects of living. He has cast himself beyond a psychological pale and has no sense of reality. Kohlhaas is singularly consumed with rage and hate and it is the death of Lisbeth that now sets him free to enter fully into the business of revenge. His mood is exacerbated by the news he receives even during the funeral that the plea his wife had submitted to the Elector of Brandenburg had been rejected by order of the state and that he should collect his horses from the Tronkenburg and desist from pursuing his claim on pain of imprisonment (3, 61). This frustration of justice is initiated for the benefit of his von Tronka relatives by Kahlheim, the Minister responsible for the decision.

With the funeral of Lisbeth behind him and every redress exhausted, Kohlhaas is now free to pursue the business of vengeance, and so 'warf er sich noch einmal vor ihrem, nun verödeten Bette nieder, und übernahm sodann das Geschäft der Rache' (he threw himself down once again at her now deserted bed and then immediately undertook the business of revenge) (3, 61). As his first task, he prepares an edict in which he demands that the Junker Wenzel von Tronka return the two blacks within three days of receipt of the edict and personally to care for and fatten them in his, Kohlhaas' stables (3, 61). This is a request from a horse dealer to an aristocrat and it is unlikely to be fulfilled. As Michael Ott indicates, there is a fundamental dichotomy between the bourgeoisie's acquisition of *money* through work and the aristocrat's stand-point of *honour* which prevents him from engaging in labour.⁴⁶ It seems then, that Kohlhaas has deliberately drafted the edict in order to humiliate the Wenzel, possibly also in the sure knowledge that he would not and could not comply. Kohlhaas prefers revenge to reparation, which is an indication of the

⁴⁵ Dettmering (1975), p. 92.

⁴⁶ Michael Ott, 'Privilegien: Recht, Ehre und Adel in "Michael Kohlhaas"', *Kleist Jahrbuch 2012*, 135-155 (pp. 144-145).

depth of his narcissistic wound. He has been forbidden, on pain of imprisonment, to pursue his case and ‘Michael Kohlhaas kann nur resignieren oder zur Selbsthilfe schreiten’ (Michael Kohlhaas can only resign himself or take the law into his own hands (3, 742). A berserk rage invades the psyche of the narcissistically organised individual which knows no boundaries and seeks only the destruction of the object that has inflicted the injury. Kohlhaas is now at this stage: the narcissistic wound is too great for resignation and he can only take the law into his own hands. The search for justice has become the business of revenge which requires the annihilation of the object.

After the expiration of three days and without answer from the Junker, Kohlhaas sends his children abroad and attacks the Tronkenburg in the company of Herse and seven of his farm-hands. Already the narrator has Kohlhaas descend into a psychotic inflation in which the powerful fantasy of invincibility is actualised in describing him as ‘Der Engel des Gerichts fährt also vom Himmel herab’ (The Angel of Judgement thus descends from Heaven) (3, 63). Wenzel escapes and in searching for him, Kohlhaas desecrates the chapel (3, 64). He no longer has any concern for divine ordinances or offices as laid down by man; his communion is directly with God and he requires no intercession.

Wenzel has escaped and Kohlhaas is in the throes of an inflated mind-set in which he has placed himself outside the community and its laws. It finds expression in ‘ein sogenanntes Kohlhassisches Mandat’ (a so-called Kohlhaas’ Mandate), in which he proclaims that none should give the Junker Wenzel succour or shelter on pain of death and destruction for he, Kohlhaas, was in a just war with him (3, 65). By putting the Tronkenburg to fire and sword, Kohlhaas demonstrates a final break with reality into a psychotic abyss, which further enhances his megalomania.⁴⁷ There is no restraint on the impulse of the individual when these bounds are broken as Kohlhaas now demonstrates. Impulse restraint and reality testing become fugitive.

Kohlhaas issues a further mandate in which he calls on good Christians to join him in his struggle with Wenzel in return for loot and other military advantages (3, 67-68). In his inflated state, Kohlhaas believes that he is carrying out God’s work in setting to right the injustice of the world and that he is acting in the interests of all good Christians. Kohlhaas, thus in the grip of self-delusion, attempts to give his actions a universal significance while merely pursuing the business of personal revenge. In a further mandate, which makes the inflation more pronounced, Kohlhaas calls himself ‘einen Reichs- und Weltfreien, Gott

⁴⁷ Dettmering (1975), p. 90.

allein unterworfenen Herren' (a freeman of the empire and the world, subject only to God) (3, 68). In one of the few judgmental comments, the narrator rightly calls this 'eine Schwärmerei krankhafter und mißgeschaffener Art' (a diseased and monstrous fantasy) (3, 68). Kohlhaas is psychotic and has developed an inflated sense of his power and of his own agency. He has lost touch with his humanity and in his rage is set only on the pursuit and destruction of Wenzel.

Kohlhaas defeats forces sent out against him and he is pursued as 'der Drachen, der das Land verwüestet' (the dragon which lays waste to the country) (3, 69). He is seen by the authorities as the converse of how he sees himself in the mandate he publishes, as he sets fire to Leipzig. To the authorities he is the destroyer of cities 'den entsetzlichen Wüterich' (the terrifying destroyer) (3, 68) and 'des rasenden Mordbrenners' (raging murderous arsonist) (3, 74) yet he also deems himself to be:

einen Statthalter Michaels, des Erzengels, der gekommen sei, an Allen, die in dieser Streitsache des Junkers Partei ergreifen würden, mit Feuer und Schwert, die Arglist, in welcher die ganze Welt versunken sei, zu bestrafen.

(a representative of St Michael, the Archangel who has come to punish with fire and sword the deceitfulness of the whole world and all those who would take the part of the Junker in this dispute) (3, 75).

Again, this is the statement of a megalomaniac who has lost touch with reality. Kohlhaas is bent on restoring order to the world, and the preoccupation with his individual justice has now assumed universal proportions. The mandate is 'mit einer Art Verrückung, unterzeichnet: Gegeben auf dem Sitz unserer provisorischen Weltregierung, dem Erzschlosse zu Lützen' (signed in a sort of deranged manner: given at the seat of our provisional world government, Lützen Castle) (3, 74).

Kohlhaas can no longer perceive the difference between his own wounds and the wounds inflicted on society. The population at large is in fear of him; he dispenses capital punishment and assumes the trappings of a great lord:

Eben kam er, während das Volk von beiden Seiten schüchtern auswich, in dem Aufzuge, der ihm, seit seinem letzten Mandat, gewöhnlich war, von dem Richtplatz zurück: ein großes Cherubschwert, auf einen rotledernen Kissen, mit Quasten von Gold verzieht, ward ihm vorangetragen, und zwölf Knechte, mit brennenden Fackeln folgten ihm.

(Thus he came from the place of execution in the manner which was customary since his last mandate while people timidly gave way: a large archangelic sword was carried before him lying on a red leather cushion decorated with golden tassels. Twelve men followed him carrying burning torches) (3, 76).

In his megalomania, Kohlhaas believes that he can re-order the fragile constitution of the world. However, by delay of satisfaction of his narcissistic rage, which would be the capture and punishment of Wenzel, he also increases his psychotic bewilderment and loss of reality. He now believes to possess powers and attributes of the highest in the land, for only he knows, in his inflation, what justice is to be given to all people and which justice is currently denied or corrupt. Kohut succinctly sums up Kohlhaas' mental state:

Narcissistic rage occurs in many forms: they all share, however, a specific psychological flavour which gives them a distinct position within a wide realm of human aggression. The need for revenge, for righting a wrong, for undoing a hurt by whatever means, and a deeply anchored, unrelenting compulsion in pursuit of all these aims which gives no rest to those who have suffered a narcissistic injury - these are features which are characteristic for the phenomenon of narcissistic rage in all its forms and which sets it apart from other kinds of aggression.⁴⁸

Martin Luther intervenes and issues a proclamation when the fear arises, that Kohlhaas is about to threaten Dresden, the seat of the Elector of Saxony, where Wenzel is said to be hiding. Kohlhaas' regard for Luther is high, calling him 'dem teuersten und verehrungswürdigsten Namen, den er kannte' (the dearest and most venerated name that he knew) (3, 76). This veneration is also founded in the example that Luther gave through his own revolutionary history with his schism from the Roman Catholic Church; Kohlhaas sees Luther as a kindred spirit. So, on reading the proclamation, Kohlhaas is disturbed. Luther focuses on Kohlhaas' narcissistic wound whose 'grimmige Brust vom Kitzel schnöder Selbstrache gereitzt ist' (raging breast is titillated by despicable personal revenge) (3, 75). He is said to be insane, a wolf of the desert, a rebel and murderer and a sinner before God. Luther addresses Kohlhaas' piety with threats of God's punishment because Kohlhaas has tried to usurp the peaceful community which his ruler, the Elector of Saxony, protects and who knows nothing of Kohlhaas' case. Kohlhaas reads the proclamation and flushes and 'mehr als dieser wenigen Worten bedurfte es nicht, um ihn, in der ganzen Verderblichkeit, in der er dastand, plötzlich zu entwaffnen' (it did not require more than these few words to disarm him of the destructiveness in which he existed) (3, 76). Luther's intervention has given halt to Kohlhaas' destructive impulse and, we suggest, gives him time for self-reflection. It has shocked him out of his inflation for Luther provides a mirroring function for Kohlhaas, which enables him not only to recover from his psychotic transgression but also to re-enter the social order.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Kohut (1972), p. 380.

⁴⁹ Dettmering (1975), p. 93.

Kohlhaas confronts Luther in his own study, where he requires him to reverse his judgement that he, Kohlhaas, is an unjust individual. Luther again challenges Kohlhaas' right to take the law into his own hands, which Kohlhaas justifies because he has been cast out of the *polis* and has thus lost the protection of the law which he requires in order to pursue his legitimate business interests; he must look after his own interests since he is free of jurisdiction. Kohlhaas' argument is that statute is abolished if the citizen feels that he has been unjustly dealt with by the state; from this it follows that the citizen is entitled to take the law into his own hands. This is unacceptable to Luther, for then mere anarchy would result. Kohlhaas learns, and is astonished, that the Elector of Saxony knows nothing of what he has suffered nor the circumstances surrounding his affairs with Wenzel; he demands a safe passage to Dresden so that he can present his case directly to the Elector (3, 78).

Luther opposes Kohlhaas' self-help attitude and questions him as to why he requires a judgement of the court. Kohlhaas' response is that he wishes to assert that his wife did not die in an unjust cause. A tear rolls down his cheek, which suggests that he is experiencing grief, which he did not show when his wife died, and again demonstrates that he is no longer in the psychotic state of desiring vengeance (3, 79). The mirroring function that Luther provides, causes Kohlhaas to reflect on the death of his wife; however, he will not forgive his enemies and hence Luther also denies him Holy Communion.

Through Luther's intercession with the Elector of Saxony, Kohlhaas is granted a safe passage, provided he disbands his rabble, and an amnesty if his case against Wenzel succeeds. However, the full force of the law would be exercised against Kohlhaas for the destruction he has caused in Saxony in the event that it fails. However, it is general knowledge in the population that the nefarious doings of Hinz and Kunz von Tronka, at the court of Saxony, had frustrated Kohlhaas' justified legal actions and the mood in the population is, therefore, on Kohlhaas' side. So, it behoves the Elector of Saxony to accommodate Kohlhaas, who duly arrives in Dresden, takes quarter in the house he owns there and is clearly at peace with the world. The inflationary excesses with which he was gripped in the castle at Lützen have disappeared. He meets the Prince of Meißen respectfully, the tone of the meeting is good and Kohlhaas accepts that the guard to be assigned to him will be temporary and only for his protection against the curiosity of the people (3, 88). After a friendly meeting with Graf Wrede, the President of the Tribunal, Kohlhaas enters his plea again, requiring only a modest compensation (3, 89).

Now the whereabouts and search for the blacks become important in the story since their health is a condition that Kohlhaas has laid before the court. They are brought to Dresden's market place by the knacker from Döbbeln in a terrible, near-death state (3, 91). There is some dispute with the knacker if these are Kohlhaas' horses and Kohlhaas is required to view them to affirm whether these are, indeed, his horses (3, 95). The horses are outside the pale: the knacker's work is not honest and hence his place of work is outside the city walls. He is not part of the community and not beholden to its customs (3, 756). The knacker from Döbbeln demonstrates this with his irreverent attitude to the chamberlain, Kunz von Tronka. Kunz lays claim to the horses in Wenzel's name (3, 92) and Kohlhaas can, therefore, now also acknowledge that the horses which are tied to the knacker's cart belong to him for they are now Wenzel's shame (3, 95).

This mutual ownership unites Wenzel and Kohlhaas in a judicial feud, which can only be decided by the judgment of the Dresden court. Kohlhaas leaves the market place without a further glance at the horses. He dismisses them as worthless, for they still remain a too present reminder of his own state. The tone of Kohlhaas' preparedness to view the horses is akin to that of a settled individual in charge of himself 'Kohlhaas, der mit keiner Miene, was in seiner Seele voring, zu erkennen gab' (Kohlhaas showed no expression as to what was transpiring in his soul) (3, 95). He is no longer in the grip of grandiose inflation but the worthlessness of the horses is telling on him. The sorry state of the horses arouses the laughter of the gathered crowd in the market place as well as astonishment that these wretched horses were the cause of Kohlhaas' violence, which had threatened the stability of the state (3, 92).

The horses have no value just as Kohlhaas himself, whose identity had been tied to the fate of his two horses, no longer has status or value for he is ready to give up his judicial case in favour of an out-of-court settlement. This would not give Kohlhaas the publicity he had required concerning the arbitrary power of Wenzel, which needed to be circumscribed for the benefit of the population at large, nor would it correct the injustice of the law, which Kohlhaas had attempted to remedy for all of mankind. This point in the story is also the nadir of Kohlhaas' fortunes, particularly too, since the mood of the population had turned against him, deeming these two broken-down nags as not worth the fuss that he had made about them. The ultimate health of the horses is put in question, which would be shaming for one of the noblest families in the land, the von Tronkas, so the suggestion is made that the value of the horses be compensated in money: reparation has now replaced

retribution. Kohlhaas' will is broken and he awaits a proposal from the von Tronkas but even such a measure is too much for the proud knights (3, 99).

The narrator offers a further value judgement referring to Kohlhaas as 'der arme Kohlhaas' (poor Kohlhaas) (3, 100). Kohlhaas has indeed become a prisoner through a series of misunderstandings: that the appropriate personnel were not available, the nefarious machinations of the von Tronka family and Kohlhaas himself testing the limits of his safe passage (3, 100-106). Kohlhaas, though, believes that the Elector of Saxony has broken faith with him 'denn nichts mißgönnte er der Regierung, mit der er zu tun hatte mehr, als den Schein der Gerechtigkeit, während sie in der Tat die Amnestie, die sie ihm angelobt hatte, an ihm brach' (for he begrudged nothing more against the government with which he had to deal than the appearance of fairness when in fact it violated the amnesty, which it had granted him) (3, 106). This may be Kohlhaas' judgement but his behaviour is a contributory factor, for in trying to organise his escape he engages in correspondence with Nagelschmidt, his erstewhile collaborator and a troublemaker. This correspondence is discovered. Moreover, the amnesty would only come into force once Kohlhaas had won his case against Wenzel. However, the guarantee of safe passage is violated, for Kohlhaas is now a prisoner; though he has contributed to this state. As a prisoner, Kohlhaas is condemned to be hanged, drawn and quartered in the jurisdiction of Saxony but as a citizen of Brandenburg, Kohlhaas is claimed by the Elector of Brandenburg and is transferred to Berlin.

It is also from this point in the story that the case against Wenzel is pushed into the background and the perfidy of the Elector of Saxony is the focus of Kohlhaas' renewed narcissistic rage 'denn die Dickfütterung der Rappen hatte seine von Gram sehr gebeugte Seele [...] aufgegeben' (his soul weighed down heavily by sorrow, he had abandoned the restitution of the blacks) (3, 112). Again, Kohlhaas' self has been injured and he loses agency and control of his fate. This loss of control leads to regression, which, in the narcissistic psychosis, requires a grandiose manipulation of reality in order to keep a simulation of agency over the subject's affairs. The solution for the narcissistic personality as outlined above is magical thinking, for which the gypsy is invoked and which, in the case of this story, is also achieved through manipulation of time.

The gypsy appears for the first time in a flash-back when Kohlhaas, a prisoner in Dahme on the road to Berlin, recounts, in response to the disguised Elector of Saxony's question, the story of how he acquired from the gypsy in Jüterbock, the note contained in the lead capsule hanging around his neck. Kohlhaas is ignorant of the contents of the note since

they are answers to questions posed secretly to the gypsy by the Elector of Saxony. The Elector faints on hearing that Kohlhaas possesses the information which the gypsy had denied him (3, 118-120). The importance of the information contained in the note for the Elector of Saxony and which the gypsy wrote is thus established as in the words of the Elector himself ‘daß ihm der Besitz dieses Zettels von der äußersten Wichtigkeit sei’ (that the possession of this note were of the utmost importance to him) (3, 121). Moreover, the gypsy’s power of prophecy is established when she predicts correctly that a stag would appear in the market place, an event which the Elector tries unsuccessfully to frustrate by having it killed for the table; but the dead stag is dragged into the market place by a dog (3, 128 - 130). Hence, the Elector’s belief, that the gypsy’s prophecy about him, which did not bode well, was well founded. The event at Jüterbock, Kohlhaas says, occurred when he was on his way with his men to sack the Tronkenburg ‘genau am Tage nach dem Bergäbnis meiner Frau’ (precisely on the day after the funeral of my wife) (3, 118). However, after the funeral of his wife Kohlhaas had given Wenzel three days in which to return the horses and since the three days had elapsed without the horses being returned he had then set out for the Tronkenburg (3, 61).

It could be argued that this temporal inconsistency may have occurred because the departure for the Tronkenburg occurs at the conclusion of the *Phöbus* fragment published in 1808, which Kleist, in the pressure to finish the story for publication in 1810, overlooked this. Wilma Rodrigues intimates that this oversight may have occurred by quoting Kleist’s letter of May 1810 to his publisher, Georg Andreas Reimer, indicating that he, Kleist, was under pressure of time: ‘Ich schicke Ihnen das Fragment von *Kohlhaas*, und denke, wenn der Druck nicht so rasch vor sich geht, den Rest, zu rechter Zeit, nachliefern zu können’. (I am sending you the fragment from *Kohlhaas* and think to be able to supply the rest subsequently at the right time if the printing does not proceed too quickly) (4, 446).⁵⁰ A mistake of this magnitude by Kleist is surely unlikely, given the degree of artistry that he shows. Georg Minde-Pouet writes that Kleist worked conscientiously at many drafts of pieces which were ultimately published and he cites the varied drafts of *Familie Schroffenstein* and *Penthesilea*.⁵¹ It is clear that Kleist had a keen eye as to the effect that his writing would have, since there were many changes to language and notes to himself in the margins of manuscripts as to how to proceed with the piece he had in hand.

⁵⁰ Rodrigues (1967), p. 180.

⁵¹ Georg Minde-Pouet, *Heinrich von Kleist: Seine Sprache und sein Stil* (Weimar: Felber, 1897), pp. 3-9.

I argue, instead, that the temporal dislocation has to do more with the connection between Lisbeth and the gypsy who is called Elisabeth and who has, as will be shown, Kohlhaas' interests at heart and who appeared the day after Lisbeth's death. The disruption of the fabric of time is thus a way in which Kleist can indicate that the story will now continue on a different level in which time and the co-incidences in the story are jolted out of the linear structure which the *Phöbus* fragment might lead us to expect (3, 762). The fracture in the fabric of time arises not only in the inconsistency of the three days but also in the flash-back when Kohlhaas recounts how he had acquired the note. The disruption of time allows the gypsy to arrive and the unconscious phantasy of Kohlhaas to overcome the distress he experiences at the loss of control of his environment. The supernatural now becomes an everyday matter, which addresses the unconscious, in which time is meaningless and in which the ego function of managing order regresses, to allow the chaos of the unconscious to reign. Kohlhaas regresses to primary process thinking, which is the thinking state of dreams, trances and creative work.

Finally, this first event with the gypsy happens at Jüterbock, which lies on the border between Saxony and Brandenburg. The border, a place between two domains, is a liminal space and, as Frank L. Borchardt suggest, there is no better place for the introduction of a mystery than a liminal space.⁵² A liminal space is pregnant with possibilities, of which Kleist makes use. Kleist is intuitively aware of the workings of the unconscious and presents it in a radical and acutely perceptive manner as demonstrated in this story.

The dislocation of the fabric of time is mirrored in the change of the obsessive target of Kohlhaas' narcissistic rage. In the first half of the story it was tied to the tangible: the horses and money which were the cause of the pursuit of Wenzel. In the second part of the story, Kohlhaas abandons Wenzel and his rage is directed against the Elector of Saxony for having betrayed Kohlhaas in the matter of the safe passage and by imprisoning him. He is shipped to Berlin into the jurisdiction of the Elector of Brandenburg, who bargains for him as his subject. In Berlin, due process is made against him on behalf of the Emperor, who has played no part in the arrangements for the safe passage or amnesty and is not bound by them. Now, though, the cause of Kohlhaas' narcissistic rage is something that is intangible and belongs, therefore, also to the order of the mind, to the mental apparatus of Kohlhaas. Kleist here uses this symbolism in a subtle but direct manner in order to show that the derailment of the story is intended and that it has a psychological significance; it does not have to do with the materiality of money or horses.

⁵² Frank L. Borchardt, 'Kleist's Space and Time', *South Atlantic Bulletin*, vol. 45, no. 1 (1980), 1-14 (p. 11).

Is the gypsy a revenant of Lisbeth? Karl Schulz-Jahde asserts that ‘sie sich als Kohlhaasens verstorbene Frau ausweist’ (she identifies herself as Kohlhaas’ deceased wife).⁵³ The purpose of Lisbeth’s re-appearance as the gypsy is for the gypsy to restate her opinion of Kohlhaas’ standpoint, of which she has received insight in Heaven: that if justice is both an earthly and heavenly commodity then so is revenge for frustrated justice. Walter Silz also states that the gypsy is a reincarnation of Lisbeth: she appears the day after the funeral and has the same birthmark on her neck as Lisbeth; the reaction of the family dog is friendly and she signs her farewell note to Kohlhaas ‘deine Elisabeth.’ (your Elizabeth).⁵⁴ The narrator gives the gypsy special status for she acts in the same conciliatory and helpful manner as Lisbeth, takes leave of the children as a true mother would and is evidence of fidelity beyond the grave, thus lending a metaphysical quality to the relationship with Kohlhaas. The gypsy also represents a belief in the afterlife, where love continues and which the questions of earthly existence are answered.⁵⁵ John R. Carey states that the story is replete with ambiguities, for Lisbeth dies a Christian martyr and reappears as a pagan gypsy.⁵⁶ It is a repeated theme in the work: the power of the dead to challenge the power of the living, in which the gypsy also plays the role of the harbinger of death for her eyes on the Elector of Saxony are ‘kalt und leblos’ (cold and lifeless) (3, 129).

Peter Horn contends that there is no clear evidence that the gypsy is a revenant of Lisbeth and that there are merely hints and suppositions in the text to that effect.⁵⁷ He maintains that the gypsy is merely a gypsy and that it is only the excitable nature of the Elector of Saxony that sees more in her. Horn is opposed by earlier commentators, John Carey and Dettmering, who argue that the gypsy is a revenant of Lisbeth and her role suggests a reparative tendency in the internal life of Kohlhaas.⁵⁸ Later commentators such as Helga Gallas, Landwehr, Wolfgang Wittkowski and Brüggemann all argue that the gypsy is a

⁵³ Karl Schultze-Jahde, ‘Kohlhaas und die Zigeunerin’, *Jahrbuch der Kleist-Gesellschaft 1933-37*, 108-135, (p.129).

⁵⁴ Silz (1961), p. 184.

⁵⁵ Silz (1961), pp. 185-186.

⁵⁶ John R. Carey, ‘A Reading of Kleist’s “Michael Kohlhaas”’, *Modern Language Association*, vol. 85, no. 2 (1970), 212- 218 (p. 217).

⁵⁷ Horn (1978), p. 71-72.

⁵⁸ John R. Carey, ‘A Reading of Kleist’s “Michael Kohlhaas”’, *Modern Language Association*, vol. 85, no. 2 (1970), 212-218 (p. 217); Dettmering (1975), p. 86, p. 101.

revenant of Lisbeth who provides support to Kohlhaas and enables him to take vengeance on his enemies.⁵⁹ Gallas introduces the gypsy as part of an oedipal triangle who does not, however, for Gallas, develop from Kohlhaas' pathology but arrives as a *deus ex machina*. She is the archetype of the maternal, at once mother lover and ancestor.⁶⁰ Kohlhaas, though, in the grip of pathological narcissism, is unable to avail himself of the care-giving energy that the gypsy brings to the story.

Kohlhaas considers that the gypsy could be Lisbeth's grand-mother and notices a remarkable similarity between the deceased Lisbeth and the gypsy which is further emphasised by Kohlhaas' dog which seems to know the gypsy 'während der alte Hund des Kohlhaas ihre Knie umschnüffelte, und von ihrer Hand gekraut, mit dem Schwanz wedelte' (while Kohlhaas' old dog sniffed around her knees and was fondled by her and wagged its tail (3, 134-135). I assert that the gypsy is a magical creation by Kleist (3, 712). She exists as a phantasy development of Kohlhaas' narcissistic needs, which will enable him to go to his death, reconciled with the living. The gypsy enables him to destroy those who had impinged upon his existential identity: the true narcissistic revenge. I suggest too, that the reparative attitude which Kohlhaas adopts as he gains the upper hand against the Elector of Saxony is also evident in the lack of curiosity which he, Kohlhaas, demonstrates about the contents of the note until he asks the gypsy/rag seller at their last meeting about its contents. She tells him that he could open the note, which he resists and does only in the presence of the Elector of Saxony immediately prior to his execution. She also says that much else he wishes to know about her will become available to him in the afterlife (3,136). There is something maternal about the way in which the gypsy/rag seller treats Kohlhaas and this may be due to the element of comfort that Kohlhaas requires in order to deal with the tribulations of his life. Where else but in his domestic life did he get the support that he now needs? It is simple to imagine that his phantasy will find contiguity with the familiar, wholesome and nourishing: these elements of solace are the commodities which the gypsy/rag seller brings to her relationship with Kohlhaas.

Kleist treats the appearance of the gypsy/rag seller with a touch of irony when he interjects into the narrative Kohlhaas' realisation that the gypsy and the rag seller are one and the same person. The Elector's chamberlain had made a serious mistake in not recognising the gypsy in the rag seller (3, 134). Kleist is not excusing the co-incidences

⁵⁹ Helga Gallas, 'Das Textbegehren des Michael Kohlhaas: Die Sprache des Unbewussten und Sinn der Literatur' (Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1983), p. 83; Landwehr (1992), p. 431, p. 437; Wolfgang Wittkowski, 'Is Kleist's Michael Kohlhaas a Terrorist? Prussian Law Reform and the Accountability of Government', *Historical Reflections*, vol. 26, no. 3 (200), 471-476 (p. 475); Brüggemann (2004), p. 120-121.

⁶⁰Gallas (1983), p. 83.

that appear in the narrative; rather he is emphasising them in order to support and maintain the adherence to the mysterious, other-worldly nature of the gypsy and her supernatural significance to the story. We, the readers, are not to forget the power of the gypsy and what she represents to the fortunes of Kohlhaas, which are ultimately of a 'self-help' nature to reflect the phantasy world of the pathologically regressed narcissist.

The gypsy's presence, as Lisbeth's revenant, has a purpose, which is to aid Kohlhaas in his dealings with the Elector of Saxony; hence, through magical intervention she fulfils Kohlhaas' narcissistic phantasy of grandiose omnipotence. In Jüterbok, she gives Kohlhaas the prophetic note in a lead capsule which contains answers to the questions raised by the Elector of Saxony and she says to him 'da! wenn es der Herr wissen will, so mag er dich danach fragen' (There! If the gentleman wants to know he can ask you!), thus putting the fate of the Elector of Saxony into Kohlhaas' hands (3, 119). She stresses the importance of the lead capsule which she gives to Kohlhaas 'ein Amulet, Kohlhaas der Roßhändler, verwahr es wohl, es wird dir dereinst das Leben retten' (an amulet, horse dealer Kohlhaas, keep it safe for one day it will save your life (3, 119). However, Kohlhaas' concern for his own life is minimal. At no point in the story is he prepared to trade the note for his life; vengeance and destruction of the Elector of Saxony are pre-eminent. Kohlhaas' power over the Elector of Saxony with the note has the effect of making the Elector fall into a faint, which appears to be a stroke (3,120). He has two further attacks before a doctor is able to attend to him. This is an onset of an illness which pursues the Elector unremittingly for the remainder of the story and every rebuff to obtaining the note affects the Elector's health.

The Elector realises that the note can only be obtained from Kohlhaas with cunning for all the wealth he possesses is inadequate to persuade Kohlhaas, consumed by insatiable revenge, to part with the amulet (3, 121). The Elector sends an agent, Junker von Stein, to obtain the note from Kohlhaas surreptitiously (3, 122). Von Stein is unsuccessful for Kohlhaas remembers the despicable manner in which he had been treated in Dresden and responds disparagingly to von Stein's offer of life and freedom in return for the note. Kohlhaas is ruthless in pursuit of his revenge and is prepared to suffer death rather than see the Elector and his retinue be destroyed by other means; he needs to be the agent of the Elector's destruction to satisfy his narcissistic wounds. He has reverted to a psychotic level of rage and in his narcissistic rage Kohlhaas is empowered and revels in the Elector's destruction. The Elector's health deteriorates further when he received this news from von Stein that the contents of the note will not be disclosed (3, 123-124).

The Elector of Saxony recognises that his destruction lies in Kohlhaas' hands and that consequently destruction of Kohlhaas is unbearable for him for only he, Kohlhaas, could give him information contained in the note. He is thus determined to have the case for disturbing the Emperor's peace against Kohlhaas dropped but his efforts are in vain (3, 123). As a result the Elector's health deteriorates further. He then divulges to his Chamberlain the questions which form the basis of the contents of the note. He recounts how the gypsy had intimated that, contrary to the advice she had given the Elector of Brandenburg at Jüterbok, she had nothing positive to impart him (3, 129). The gypsy writes the answers to the questions which he asked, namely 'den Namen des letzten Regenten deines Hauses, die Jahreszahl da er sein Reich verlieren, und den Namen dessen, der es, durch die Gewalt der Waffen, an sich reißen wird' (the name of the last ruler of your house, the year in which he will lose his regency and the name of him, who will conquer it by force of arms) (3, 129-130). It is for this reason that he is so obsessive about the information in the note. The Chamberlain, Kunz von Tronka, offers to obtain the note and mistakenly engages the rag seller/gypsy, who warns Kohlhaas and then vanishes. Kunz is as unsuccessful as the Junker von Stein (3, 133-135).

The gypsy advises Kohlhaas to make use of the note to save his life as she had advised him in Jüterbok and to take advantage of the offer made by Junker von Stein, guaranteeing his life and freedom. Kohlhaas is overjoyed, and the narrator tells us:

Kohlhaas, der über die Macht jauchste, die ihn gegeben war, seines Feindes Ferse, in den Augenblick, da sie ihn in den Staub trat, tödlich zu verwunden, antwortete: nicht um die Welt, Mütterchen, nicht um die Welt.

(Kohlhaas who was overjoyed at the power he was given fatally to injure his enemy's heel at the moment at which it trod him into the dust answered, not for the world, grandmother, not for the world) (3, 135).

In this interaction, Kohlhaas casts himself as the serpent, destined to be trodden into the dust for the evil it has wrought. Kohlhaas is emotionally in the depths of evil doing; there is no charity, no remorse: merely an unflinching desire to destroy his enemy, the Elector of Saxony. Kleist uses the traditional symbol of the snake as recognition of the place of the primitive feelings of rage and hate that consume Kohlhaas' psyche and which are the most ancient responses involved in aggression and defending territory and which are located in the reptilian part of the human brain.⁶¹ Kohlhaas is delighted that he has the power to injure his enemy fatally at the moment in which he himself has to die.

⁶¹ Paul D. MacLean, *The Triune Brain in Evolution: Paleocerebral Functions* (New York: Plenum, 1990).

It is clear that Kohlhaas has lost all confidence in the surety of the world and believes he can do nothing better than to conceal the information on the note from the Elector of Saxony and that his own progeny would value this. He is confirmed in his belief that there is no certainty in the world which could save him from a new betrayal after the experiences that he had undergone (3, 136). In effect, Kohlhaas has burned his bridges. He is prepared to meet his death provided that the Elector of Saxony also suffers. The enormity of the narcissistic wound is reflected in Kohut's comment that 'the story of *Michael Kohlhaas* is a gripping description of the insatiable search for revenge after a narcissistic injury.'⁶² Nothing matters to Kohlhaas except revenge and destruction of the object of his hate. The absolute nature of his feelings is further emphasised in the ruthless manner with which he deals with betrayal for 'Wer mir sein Wort einmal gebrochen, sprach er, mit dem wechsele ich keins mehr' (he said, I will have no dealings with someone who has once broken his word to me) (3, 136). Kohlhaas is incapable of forgiveness for he inhabits the Kleinian paranoid schizoid position.

Kohlhaas' victory is complete on the day of his execution for his horses are returned to him in their former state 'von Wohlsein glänzend, die Erde mit ihern Hufen stampfenden Rappen.' (the blacks, gleaming with good health, pawing the earth with their hooves) (3, 140). All the financial matters are settled and Kohlhaas reads in the judgement of his case against Wenzel 'mit großen funkelden Augen' (with great, sparkling eyes), that Wenzel has also been punished with imprisonment (3, 140). Kohlhaas is restored just as his horses have been restored and he is again the potent horse dealer; he is at one with his self-object. He acknowledges to the Elector of Brandenburg that his dearest wish on earth has been fulfilled.

However, he still has issue with the Elector of Saxony, who is present for the execution with the aim of having Kohlhaas' corpse exhumed in order to obtain the amulet. He seeks the Elector in the crowd, fixes him with his eyes and then reads and swallows the note and is executed. Thus, Kohlhaas forces the Elector to watch himself be deprived of knowledge about the future of his house which the gypsy had intimated was not good for 'der Kurfürst von Sachsen kam bald darauf, zerrissen in Leib und Seele, nach Dresden zurück' (the Elector of Saxony returned shortly thereafter to Dresden, destroyed in body and soul) (3, 142). Thus, Kohlhaas goes to his death willingly, having destroyed the health of the Elector of Saxony and having achieved the ultimate narcissistic revenge. Seán Allan comments on this aspect of the story that Kohlhaas returns to the bosom of the Church and

⁶² Kohut (1972), p. 360.

rejects revenge by receiving Holy Communion.⁶³ However, in receiving Holy Communion from Luther's representative, Jakob Fresing, Kohlhaas merely re-enters the community of the Church (3, 138). He has not abandoned his desire for vengeance and still ignores his dying wife's injunction to forgive his enemies, which he would do by offering the gypsy's amulet to the Elector of Saxony (3, 59). The question remains then: can a pathologically narcissistic personality such as Kohlhaas ever make peace with God?

Kleist is also making the assertion that forgiveness of one's enemies is not absolutely a Christian duty just as Christ did not forgive all of his enemies; Kleist's message is that justice and revenge are supra-doctrinal. They have nothing to do with the commandments of the Church. Allan sees the swallowing of the note as a statement by Kohlhaas that he is not obliged to enter into more immediate acts of vengeance but can allow his triumph over his oppressors to take place in a future from which he will be absent. Fricke maintains that for Kohlhaas revenge against the Elector of Saxony is demonstrated by swallowing knowledge of the future and depriving the Elector of it.⁶⁴ However, the gypsy, who arrives from the realm of the dead, supports Kohlhaas to achieve his aim of wreaking revenge on the Elector of Saxony. This would also support Kohlhaas' stance that it is unnecessary to forgive one's enemies to achieve reconciliation with God. The sacrament of Holy Communion, which Kohlhaas enjoys prior to his death and which had been denied to him by Luther during their meeting, is further evidence that justice and revenge lie above temporal affairs. After Kohlhaas swallows the note, the Elector is broken in body and spirit: this is the revengeful objective of narcissistic rage, pure revenge and annihilation of the object. Kohlhaas has destroyed knowledge of the future of the House of Saxony but his own children and their descendants will thrive in Mecklenburg, which is neither Saxony nor Brandenburg, which are both the scenes of betrayals.

Ultimately, Kohlhaas' hate, directed against both Wenzel and the Elector of Saxony, is a projected hate which has to do with the badness inside himself which he cannot acknowledge. Gerhard Fricke suggests that Kohlhaas' problem is that he cannot separate the person from the issue, for the hate is accepted by God.⁶⁵ It is for this reason too, that Kohlhaas does not feel the need to forgive his enemies, which would be tantamount to obstructing God's will. In this enmeshment with the divine, Kohlhaas still has the

⁶³ Seán Allan, "Mein ist die Rache spricht der Herr": Violence and Revenge in the Works of Heinrich von Kleist, in *A Companion to the Works of Heinrich von Kleist*, ed. by Bernd Fischer (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2003), p. 241.

⁶⁴ Fricke (1975), p. 136.

⁶⁵ Fricke (1975), p. 128.

grandiosity of being next to God which is an unsupportable place. It is Kleist's gift to be able to access and describe these modalities of the unconscious.

There are material things which, even at the end of his life, connect Kohlhaas to the present and the future. First, there are his children, of whom he is fond and secondly, there remains the business of breeding horses. However, all of these are renounced because he cannot bear the disappointments of the world, which could happen repeatedly. Kohlhaas' acceptance of death is then joyful and mirrors largely the attitude that Kleist had to his own death: a sweet surrender which abandons the difficulties of the frail world. Kohlhaas is told on two occasions by the gypsy that the note she has given him could save his life and by Junker von Stein that he would receive freedom and life if he surrendered the note to the Elector of Saxony (3, 119, 135, 123). Kohlhaas remains obdurate and makes clear to the gypsy and to the Junker, that he is prepared to meet his death and destroy the Elector of Saxony in the process rather than give up the note (3, 123, 136). In this sense, then, Kohlhaas' ending is constructed as a suicide since he gives himself to death willingly. He could have saved himself but chooses to die because he can take the object of his hate, the Elector of Saxony, with him and also because the frail institutions of the world have become unbearable to him. He has come to live in a psychotic state in which death was preferable to life.

In the following chapter we shall address the reparation and reconciliation which can be effected through the intervention of the divine child within us, a commodity which Kohlhaas failed to recognise in himself. The divine child, a Christ figure, would bring the forgiveness which Kohlhaas denied his enemies and for which he died. In the divine child we see an infant, which overcomes death by predestination. Kohlhaas could have survived had he taken the gypsy's advice but he ignored it; he was not open to the love and forgiveness which is the remit of the Christ figure.

Chapter 7

Das Erdbeben in Chili: The Sadistic Impulse and the Divine Child

The purpose of this chapter is to analyse the puzzling survival, against great odds, of the infant Philipp, in Kleist's exploration of the theodicy in the story *Das Erdbeben in Chili* (The Earthquake in Chile) (3, 187-221). Kleist has a tentative answer in the form of the Divine Child and hope for the future. The theodicy embraces the concept attributed to Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646-1716), which seeks to elucidate the inexplicable: if God is omniscient and all-loving, why does He allow evil and disasters to destroy the lives of communities as, for instance, the earthquake in Chile?¹ Philipp, as the survivor, is the Divine Child, which brings hope for the future in which the community shall be returned to a more humane ideal to undercut the pervasive sadistic aggression of the times. While aggression in itself is a necessary function of living, pathological aggression and sadism are detrimental to human interaction. Kleist's story is, therefore, unusual in his canon for it carries an optimistic message with the birth of the Divine Child, which offers a remedial path to a society bedevilled by sadism. The Silesian mystic and poet Angelus Silesius (1624-1677), offers this notion in the following aphorism:

Die höchste Benedeyung
Kein Mensch hat niemals Gott so hoch gebenedeyt
Als der Ihm, daß er ihn zum Sohn gebührt, verleit.

(The Utmost Blessing
And God has never blessed man so highly,
In that He has offered His Son to be born in him).²

Silesius emphasises the belief in the divinity of the child that can be born in us and the power that this gift from God endows in each of us. Every individual shall recognise this mediating energy of the Divine Child in himself and from this, come together in community to alleviate and deny the sadistic aggression which is a feature of St. Jago society.

¹ Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *Theodicy: Essays on the Goodness of God, the Freedom of Man and the Origin of Evil*, trans. by E.M. Haggard, ed. by Austin M Farrer (New York: Cosimo, 2009).

² Angelus Silesius (1675), *Cherubinischer Wandersmann: Kritische Ausgabe*, ed. Louise Gnädinger (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1984), p. 108.

The source of aggression was investigated by D.W. Winnicott (1896-1971), a British paediatrician and psychoanalyst, in his 1950 paper 'Aggression in Relation to Emotional Development'.³ He identifies aggression as an innate human drive which is a by-product of the infant's activity. This aggression is manifest in the early stages of development in utero, in the kicking and energetic movement of the foetus. Winnicott calls this involuntary aggression a 'part-function' which the infant in its developmental stages learns to organise into aggression.⁴ The question then arises, taking aggression as fundamental to human organisation, as to how this natural form of expression is converted into sado-masochistic impulses. Winnicott suggests that the degree of aggression the child will manifest depends on the extent of opposition which it will encounter even though the life force of each individual may be similar; however, excess of opposition may create difficulties for the individual by converting the life force into aggression.⁵ In this case the infant's sense of the 'me' and the 'not-me' will not fuse and a sense of the erotic will be attached to the aggressive impulse. Winnicott argues that the personality is comprised of three parts. There is the true self in which the 'me' and the 'not-me' parts are clearly differentiated and established and in which there is some fusion of the aggressive and erotic parts; then there is the self which is easily seduced in erotic experience but with a consequent loss of the sense of reality; and then there is the self which is wholly aggressive. This aggression carries no sense of desire for destruction but merely facilitates the individual's sense of reality; that is to say, it is in sadistic behaviour that the individual can feel himself or herself to be real, to exist.⁶ This sadistic aggression arouses a perverse excitation with erotic undertones in which the subject triumphs over the object in the pleasure of destruction.

Winnicott does not tell us how the mental apparatus of an individual follows the path towards sadistic energy since the paper is principally about infancy and not psychoanalysis. The excesses of individual and mob violence in this story lead us, therefore, to consider the well-springs of affect that occasion such behaviour. Hendrika C. Halberstadt-Freud has sourced this in the work of Marcel Proust (1871-1922), *À la recherche du temps perdu* (Remembrance of Things Past), which is reviewed by Maya

³ D.W. Winnicott, 'Aggression in Relation to Emotional Development', in *Through Paediatrics to Psychoanalysis* (London: Karnac, 1992), pp. 204-218.

⁴ Winnicott (1992), p. 205.

⁵ Winnicott (1992), p. 216.

⁶ Winnicott (1992), p. 217.

Slater, who is, though, critical of Halberstadt-Freud's use of Proust's text.⁷ Halberstadt-Freud suggests that sadism tends to arise from infant development in the pre-oedipal phase when an over-possessive mother establishes a dyadic and symbiotic relationship with the son to the exclusion of the father; Proust does indeed focus on the exclusive relationship with his mother. This pre-oedipal dyad is replete with aggression and hate for the symbiotic relation is an illusion and is thwarted by the mother being unfaithful in sexual union with the father and conceiving more children. Thus, she is both in love with the child and rejects it, which results in rage against the existing order; this is an incandescent rage with no particular focus. It is also the rage of the individual caught in the trammels of an environment which he or she does not comprehend. It is rage against the mere fact of existence, which is not communicated or shared and which inevitably leads to destruction, self-destruction and death.⁸ The perversity of this rage is a defence against anxiety and the collapse of identity, which is manifest in a disassociation of feeling, thought and speech.

Destruction, and its sub-theme of sadistic violence are characteristic of *s Erdbeben*, in which the characters are helpless and uncomprehending participants in the development of a theodicy being played out before them. It is a story which falls into three parts. The first part relates to state violence against the individual and the general sadistic pleasure at this within the legal framework of the state. The second section is an idyllic, Edenesque interlude before individual violence triumphs through the actions of a frenzied mob in the third part. Sadism is the prevalent force in the story, which includes acts of filicide and infanticide but ends with the survival of the special child, the Divine Child, an archetype made flesh as the Word was made flesh with the birth of Christ. What is it that Kleist is trying to say in this curious story in which the infant Philipp survives all efforts to annihilate him? The infant Philipp survives the turmoil and blood lust of the mob as an answer, perhaps, to the sadistic hate that is endemic in St. Jago. The metaphorical analogy that Kleist brings to the story thus emphasises the possibility of the infant Philipp assuming a divine role in which he would, as did Christ, turn the focus of the community towards *agape*. *Agape* is an ancient Greek word denoting love, that is, the love of God, charity, the love of community and benevolence and goodwill toward one's neighbour; it is not *eros* or sexual love. We can argue that Philipp, the root of whose name is *philia*, the Greek word for close friendship or brotherly love, is a Christ figure who survives in order to return the

⁷ Hendrika C. Halberstadt-Freud, *Freud, Proust: Perversion and Love* (Lisse: Swets and Zetlinger, 1991), quoted by Maya Slater, 'Freud, Proust, Perversion and Love: by Hendrika C. Halberstadt-Freud', *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 74 (1993), 428-431.

⁸ Franco de Masi, *The Sodomasochistic Perversion: The Entity and the Theories*, trans. by Philip Slotkin (London: Karnac, 2003), p. 35.

city to an appropriate level of humanity; he survives in order to provide remedial healing to the citizens of St. Jago, just as Christ brought a message of *agape* to the Roman Empire.

The child is an ever present internal figure which is creative and lively. In ‘The Psychology of the Child Archetype’, C.G. Jung describes the overwhelmingly powerful force of this archetype.⁹ It is an energy which corrects and compensates ego conscious development and thereby prevents the rigidity which is the bane of one sided-ego development. By this token, it is also the potential future and the harbinger of future developments; it is a mediator and healer with a drive towards entelechy and, thus, a participant in the process of individuation. The child image appears as a unity and its function is to overcome the forces of darkness. In this story, the forces of darkness are represented by the state-sanctioned and mob-initiated violence and cruelty.

The features of the Divine Child are the function of a miraculous birth and the overcoming of impossible odds which threaten its existence either by persecution (i.e. Moses was subject to the vagaries of the Nile current and was rescued by the Pharaoh’s daughter; Christ survived Herod’s slaughter of the innocents) or natural disasters. The Divine Child is frequently abandoned and is not welcomed into the social structure.¹⁰ But, Philipp survives the butchery in the church, where a lesser child, the son of Don Fernandez, is slain in his stead (3, 221). The survival of the Divine Child is paramount.

The story concerns a house tutor, Jeronimo, who has sexual intercourse with Josephe, a girl of good family, in a convent garden. Josephe had been consigned to the convent by her father to prevent her association with Jeronimo. She subsequently goes into labour on the steps of the cathedral to the sound of bells on the occasion of the procession for the Feast of Corpus Christi. Once their son, Philipp, is born, a vengeful state in the form of the Archbishop condemns her in an auto-da-fé, in which she is to be burned at the stake. Jeronimo is merely sent to prison. Jeronimo was on the point of hanging himself and Josephe was on her way to her execution when their city, St. Jago, is destroyed by an earthquake. Both now free, Josephe recovers the infant Philipp from the burning convent and the lovers find each other. They spend the night in an idyllic area outside the city where the *agape* of people in distress emerges. Josephe nurses Don Fernando’s infant, Juan, whose mother is incapable of doing so. They then join Don Fernando’s family group and go to the cathedral for a Thanksgiving Mass. The feeling of sanctity in the cathedral is

⁹ C.G. Jung, ‘The Psychology of the Child Archetype’, in *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, trans. by R.F.C. Hull, ed. by Sir Herbert Read, Michael Fordham, Gerhard Adler, 20 vols (London: Routledge, 1990), vol. 9/i, 151-181.

¹⁰ Jung (1990), vol. 9/i, p. 168.

destroyed by the Dominican preacher who likens St. Jago to Sodom and Gomorrah and blames, in particular, Josephe and Jeronimo for their sacrilegious behaviour in the convent garden, which led to God's disfavour the city. The mob is inflamed and seeks vengeance. Jeronimo is recognised by his father, who kills him with a blow of a club and the mob turns on Don Fernando and his family. His infant son Juan, his sister-in-law and Josephe are also murdered by the mob and Don Fernando and his wife are left to adopt the orphaned Philipp.

The unique and special quality of the infant Philipp is not generally addressed in the secondary literature, which concerns itself with a story which contains a catalogue of potential and actual cruelties which lie outside the moral compass of any rationally organised society and which need to be remedied. There is, however, discussion about the evident effects of the violence and chaos of the French Revolution and how this influenced Kleist's sensibility. Peter Horn states clearly that Kleist condemns both state sanctioned violence and mob rule.¹¹ He asks, rightly, what can one make of a society in which a judicial murder becomes a spectacle? The ritualised killing by the state is no better than murder by the mob. Maximilian Bergengruen and Roland Bogards assert that Josephe is stripped of everything with the breakdown of temporal structures following the earthquake. As a fallen woman she no longer has a social identity, for whom mob rule, the violence of the club, triumphs over the violence of the sword where the club and sword are metaphors for the mob and patriarchal institutions respectively.¹² Marjorie Gelus, however, interprets the story from the perspective of the survival of the patriarchy which is re-established through the murder of Josephe and Jeronimo and the legitimisation of Philipp, who is adopted by Don Fernando.¹³ In a further paper, Gelus also makes the point that fear arose at this time in the early nineteenth century about the instability of identity in class, gender and hierarchies at the time of the Enlightenment, the ideas of Rousseau and the example of violence occasioned by the French Revolution: the turbulence of these times is reflected in the story.¹⁴ However, I see the survival of the infant Philipp as a positive sign betokening also a positive hope for the future. Gelus' thread is followed by Hans-Jürgen Schings, who promotes a strong connection between *Erdbeben* and the French Revolution. He claims

¹¹ Peter Horn, 'Anarchie und Mobherrschaft in Kleist's "Erdbeben in Chili"', in *Heinrich von Kleists Erzählungen: Eine Einführung* (Königstein/Ts: Scriptor, 1978), 112-133.

¹² Maximilian Bergengruen and Roland Bogards, 'Bann der Gewalt: Theorie und Lektüre (Foucault, Agamben, Derrida/ Kleists *Erdbeben in Chili*)', *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte*, 2 (2007), 228-256.

¹³ Marjorie Gelus, 'Josephe und die Männer', *Kleist Jahrbuch 1994*, 118-140.

¹⁴ Marjorie Gelus, 'Patriarchy's Fragile Boundaries Under Siege: Three Stories by Heinrich von Kleist', *Women in German Yearbook*, 10 (1994), 59-82.

that Kleist's story is nothing more than a metaphorical experience of the destruction of the state and suggests that Kleist would not have entered into the litany of cruelties in his work without the example of the French Revolution.¹⁵

David E. Wellerby's book, *Positionen der Literaturwissenschaft*, provides an analysis of *Erdbeben* from eight perspectives in which only one, by Werner Hamacher, touches on the redemptive quality of the infant Philippe.¹⁶ The elusive quality of the possibility of a fixed interpretation is emphasised by Claudia Liebrand in the *Kleist Handbuch*, which also relies on Wellerby's text.¹⁷ Peter Philipp Riedel differentiates between *potestas*, which is violence against the individual sanctioned by the state and *violentia*, which is the violence of the mob outside a legally sanctioned framework and it is this distinction which also gives the story structure.¹⁸ The Divine Child, Philippe, is the redeemer for St. Jago just as Christ's message of love eventually took hold so that the healthy part of our being no longer enjoys the spectacles of overt cruelty.

The first section of the story concerns state violence against the individual. Josephe had been tried on the instructions of the Archbishop in 'der geschärfte Prozeß' (a trial of the utmost rigour) (3, 191). The Archbishop was reacting within the parameters of the Judeo-Christian heritage, in which the body of a woman represents the primary temptation of Eve and was thus a danger to the stability of society. Female sexuality has been the source of much contumely against women, which arises out of male fear and which was prevalent also in ancient times. In Homer's *The Odyssey* we are presented with the metaphorical castrating and engulfing vaginas in the form of Scylla and Charybdis which embody unconscious fears of the feminine by the masculine.¹⁹ Today, female genital mutilation is also a reaction to this fear, which the patriarchy seeks to assuage by controlling female sexuality. Gerhard Gönner, too, argues that *eros* creates dangerous and threatening impulses against which the state and Church react violently as does the mob in uncontained

¹⁵ Hans-Jürgen Schings, 'Über einige Grausamkeiten bei Heinrich von Kleist', *Kleist Jahrbuch 2008/2009*, 115-137 (p. 117-118).

¹⁶ David E. Wellerby (ed.), *Positionen der Literaturwissenschaft: Acht Modellanalysen am Beispiel von Kleists 'Das Erdbeben in Chili'*, 4th. edn (Munich: Beck, 2001); Werner Hamacher, 'Das Beben der Darstellung', pp. 149-173.

¹⁷ Claudia Liebrand, 'Das Erdbeben in Chili', in *Kleist Handbuch: Leben-Werk-Wirkunged.* by Ingo Breuer (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2013), pp. 114-120.

¹⁸ Peter Philipp Riedel, 'Texturen des Terrors: Politische Gewalt im Werk Heinrich von Kleists', *Publications of the English Goethe Society*, vol. 78, nos.1-2 (2009), 32-46.

¹⁹ Homer, *The Odyssey*, trans. by Robert Fagles, ed. by Bernard Knox (London: Penguin, 2006), pp. 278-279, p. 284.

violence.²⁰ We see the survival of Philipp, however, as a positive sign of reparation for a society morally adrift, for which Philipp carries the remedial message of *agape*.

For the sin of the seduction of Josephe, Jeronimo is merely imprisoned while Josephe is condemned to death for the blasphemous sexual act which took place in the sacred precinct of the convent garden. The auto-da-fé was to be fulfilled by a burning at the stake, which was changed to beheading on instructions from the Viceroy ‘zur großen Entrüstung der Matronen und Jungfrauen von St. Jago’ (to the great indignation of the matrons and maidens of St. Jago) (3, p. 191).

These matrons and maidens of the city are frustrated in their desire to see the pain and suffering of the burning victim. Josephe’s transgression had been to give in to a sexual impulse and hence she represents a danger to womankind at large. These women who were indignant and disappointed were also fearful, and death by the most savage means was a means of eradicating fear. The preparations made by the town people for Josephe’s execution betokens a sadistic pleasure in her fate; Josephe had become merely a cipher. She has been stripped of all humanity and has thus been objectified, which is a paramount experience of the sado-masochistic relationship. Josephe becomes a spectacle for St. Jago: windows were rented to view the passage of Josephe to her death; roofs were removed for a better view and the pious daughters of St. Jago invite their girl-friends to view the operation of divine revenge as interpreted by the state (3, 191). In this context, the fundamental message of love, enshrined in Christianity, is lost and a redeemer is required again in order to put the world to rights. The women had ceased acting and thinking as individuals and had become a mob out to satisfy its sadistic pleasure, sanctioned by the apparatus of the state. The sadistic excitement is palpable in the preparations for the execution and it is particularly the women who experience this sense of triumph over the fallen Josephe.

Features of the qualities of Josephe’s infant as a special child, as a Divine Child, are evident in the story. In the first instance, the child is conceived on consecrated ground, the convent to which Josephe had been consigned by her father to separate her from Jeronimo, where ‘durch einen glücklichen Zufall hatte Jeronimo hier die Verbindung von neuem anzuknüpfen gewußt, und in einer verschwiegenen Nacht den Klostergarten zum Schauplatz seines vollen Glückes gemacht’ (through a happy chance Jeronimo had been able to re-establish the relationship from anew and in a quiet night had succeeded in

²⁰ Gerhard Gönner, *Von “zerspaltenen Herzen” und der “gebrechlichen Einrichtung der Welt”*: Versuch einer Phänomenologie der Gewalt bei Kleist (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1989), p. 91, p. 95.

making the convent garden the scene of his full happiness) (3,189). The divine ethos of this theme is continued when Josephe goes into labour on the steps of the Cathedral to the sound of bells on the day of the Feast of Corpus Christi. This feast of the Roman Catholic Church celebrates the reality of the body and blood of Jesus Christ in the transubstantiation of the Eucharist. The announcement of Philipp's birth is heralded by bells on the day which celebrates the divinity of Christ and reinforces the significance of the allegorical relationship between Christ and Philipp. While we may interpret these signs as evidence of the sanctification of the child, for the inhabitants of St. Jago, the birth of the child was merely a blasphemy. Moreover, Philipp is illegitimate and is, therefore, unwelcome and is placed outside the social structure; an appropriate exclusion for someone who has to bear the burden of divinity. Despite these disadvantages, the Divine Child overcomes all the odds, commencing with the earthquake itself.

The earthquake occurs as his mother is in a procession to her place of execution. The earthquake rends asunder the institutions, instruments and symbols of the state: Jeronimo's prison is destroyed and he is able to escape; the convent is destroyed and the Abbess and nuns are killed; the corpse of the Archbishop is brought from the ruins of the cathedral; the palace of the Viceroy is destroyed; the Courts of Justice is in flames and even Josephe's paternal house is under water. The people of the town are without direction and with only one concern to escape from the ruins of the city. Looting is rife, monks prophesy the end of the world, sundry women go into labour and rebellion is enacted against the Viceroy by the soldiery with the words 'es gäbe keinen Vizekönig von Chili mehr' (the Viceroy of Chile no longer exists) (3, 205). Social order and all its modalities have disintegrated and Josephe is now at liberty to go in search of her infant:

Sie fand das ganze Kloster schon in Flammen, und die Abtissin, die ihr in jenen Augenblicken, die ihr die letzten sein sollten, Sorge für den Säugling angelobt hatte, schrie eben, vor den Pforten stehend, nach Hülfe, um ihn zu retten. Josephe stürzte sich, unerschrocken durch den Dampf, der ihr entgegenqualmte, in das von allen Seiten schon zusammenfallende Gebäude, und gleich, als ob alle Engel des Himmels sie umschirmt, trat sie mit ihm unbeschädigt wieder aus dem Portal hervor. Sie wollte der Abtissin, welche die Hände über ihr Haupt zusammenschlug, eben in die Arme sinken, als diese, mit fast allen ihren Klosterfrauen, von einem herabfallenden Giebel des Hauses, auf eine schmachvolle Art erschlagen ward.

(She found the whole convent already in flames and the Abbess, who at that moment which was to be her last and who had also sworn to take care of the infant, at the gate crying for aid in order to rescue him. Josephe plunged into the building which was falling down on all sides without a care through the smoke which came towards her and soon re-emerged with him unscathed through the door as if all the angels in Heaven had protected her. She wanted to fall into the arms of the Abbess

who had clasped her hands above her head when she, together with almost all of her nuns, was struck dead ignominiously by one of the gable ends of the house) (3,199).

Thus, Josephe rescues her son with alacrity from a danger in which he might have been killed. She is protected by 'all the angels in Heaven' and flees the scene with her son 'den ihr der Himmel wieder geschenkt hatte' (which Heaven had granted her again) (3, 199). There are repeated appeals to Heaven to endow the child with grace and which puts him under the protection of the divine. These attributes of the divine are significant in order to establish the child's uniqueness, its divinity.

The people of the city escape to the countryside, where all social distinctions are eliminated:

Auf den Feldern, so weit das Auge reichte, sah man Menschen von allen Ständen durcheinander liegen, Fürsten und Bettler, Matronen und Bäuerinnen, Staatsbeamte und Tagelöhner, Klosterherren und Klosterfrauen; einander bemitleiden, sich wechselseitig Hülfe reichen, von dem, was sie zur Erhaltung ihres Lebens gerettet haben mochten, freudig mitteilen, als ob das allgemeine Unglück Alles, was ihm entronnen war zu *einer* Familie gemacht hätte.

In the fields, as far as the eye could reach one saw people of all stations in life lying together, princes and beggars, matrons and farmers' wives, civil servants and casual labourers, monks and nuns; pitying one another and offering gladly reciprocal help and succour from that which they had saved for the maintenance of their lives as if the common misfortune of losing everything had made them into one family (3, 207).

Kleist juxtaposes rank and gender in a comprehensive sweep to join together these disparate individuals who would not, in the strictly ordered society of St. Jago, have interacted with each other at all. It is in this quiet idyll of the countryside: 'als ob es das Tal von Eden gewesen wäre' (as if it were the vale of Eden) (3, 201), that Jeronimo finds Josephe with their son. The earthquake had instilled fear and reduced all social hierarchies so that in this Eden there are no social differences and all are reconciled. A new order arises from the chaos of the earthquake 'und in der Tat schien, mitten in diesen gräßlichen Augenblicken, in welchen all irdischen Güter der Menschen zu Grunde gingen, und die ganze Natur verschüttet zu werden drohte, der menschliche Geist selbst, wie eine schöne Blume aufzugehen' (and indeed, it seemed as if a beautiful flower had bloomed in the middle of these terrible moments like the human spirit itself in which all of the people's earthly goods perish and the whole of nature was threatened with destruction) (3, 207). In this spirit of the day, Josephe is approached by Don Fernando, whose wife is indisposed and asks if Josephe would also feed his infant, Juan; Josephe willingly offers to do this so assuming the all-nourishing attributes of the Virgin Mary.

The many-breasted Diana of Ephesus fulfilled this function of providing for the indigent in pagan times and the Virgin Mary replaced Diana in that role in the Christian period. Ephesus was the city of Diana and it was also the city in which the Virgin Mary is said to have died. In 325 CE, Christian bishops met for the Council of Nicaea, at which the heretical pronouncement of Arius of Alexandria (256-336 CE) that Christ is not divine but a created being was refuted so that Jesus Christ was now endowed with divinity by decree. In 431 CE, Christian bishops met for the Council of Ephesus and declared that the Virgin Mary was the mother of God. The metaphorical correlation of breast feeding with the nourishing image of the Virgin Mary emphasises the divine lineage in which Philipp, as the Divine Child, is promoted as the ultimate saviour of St. Jago.

The tranquillity of this Edenesque interregnum is not to last, however. Ilse Graham makes the telling point that Kleist's disjointed relationship with the maternal breast, which she sources from the imagery, in particular, of *Penthesilea* and based on a Kleinian approach, meant that he was unable to internalise and hold on to anything good, which is then reflected in his works.²¹ Thus, the sense of community, which existed in the countryside outside St. Jago and which equalises social classes was not to last, once the participants had returned to the strictures of the Church and society within the cathedral, in which patriarchal boundaries are re-established. Josephe and Jeronimo are misled by the tranquillity of the day, for when they join Don Fernando's party to attend a Mass in the Dominican cathedral, it was to be celebrated by the Prior who would beg Heaven to spare the city from further misfortune. The colloquial name for the Dominican order was 'Domini canes' (hounds of the Lord). It was an order which led the Inquisition and which was charged with exposing heresy. True to the nature of the Dominican order, the Prior delivers a sermon in which he compares St. Jago to Sodom and Gomorrah, citing in particular the act of sacrilege committed by Josephe and Jeronimo in the convent garden. The congregation is inflamed and becomes a murderous mob, seeking vengeance for the ills the people had suffered, which are attributed to Jeronimo and Josephe.

In the confusion, the mob mistakes Don Fernando for Jeronimo but Jeronimo's father identifies his son and kills him with a blow of a club. Josephe places both Juan and Philipp on Don Fernando's arm with the words 'retten Sie Ihre beiden Kinder und überlassen Sie uns unserem Schicksal' (save your two children and leave us to our fate) (3, 219). I assert that at this point, Josephe is not proclaiming Don Fernando to be the father of Philipp, as

²¹ Ilse Graham, 'Zur Ätiologie eines Rätselhaften', *Kleist Jahrbuch 1981/1982*, 98-114 (p. 113).

Diethelm Brüggemann argues, but throwing the mob off the scent by denying her motherhood in order to save the children.²²

This sadistic perversion triumphs over the charity of the vale of Eden in which people help each other as Josephe provides milk for Don Ferdinand's infant. The mob, now that the social order has broken down, is exercised like a 'rasende Menge' (raging mob) (3, 217), 'blutdürstenden Tiger' (bloodthirsty tigers) (3, 219) 'satanische Rotte' (satanic horde) (3, 221) 'rasender Haufen' (raging rabble) (3, 221), and 'Bluthunde' (bloodhounds) (3, 221). These animalistic metaphors indicate also a breakdown in the humanity of the individual who, overwhelmed by the power of the mob, experiences the delights of destruction and murder in an animalistic, instinctive manner. Don Pedrillo, the cobbler, leads the mob against Don Fernando's party. The motive for aggression is to hurt someone who will be unable to fight back as indeed the victims of the mob demonstrate, for the sadistic impulse feeds on the helplessness of the object.²³ Jule Nydes contends that the sadistic-paranoid character (and here we can treat the violent mob's behaviour as an expression of an individual character) appears to renounce love for the sake of power which Don Pedrillo demonstrates as he urges the mob to, and indeed indulges in, even greater feats of violence and sadism.²⁴ There is no *agape* in this society.

Don Pedrillo, being a cobbler, recognises Josephe because he has had to do with her 'feet', a fetish object which also indicates Pedrillo's excitement and sexual interest in Josephe. He seizes an infant from Don Fernando's arms, which he believes to be the bastard son of Josephe and Jeronimo, but is Don Fernando's son, Juan and swings his head against the corner of a church pillar, squashing his brains:

Don Fernando, als er seinen kleinen Juan vor sich liegen sah, mit aus dem Hirne vorquellenden Mark, hob, voll namenlosen Schmerzes, seine Augen gen Himmel.

(Don Fernando raised his eyes to the heavens in indescribable pain when he saw his little Juan lying before him with the pulp of his brains oozing out) (3, 221).

This is a horrible and terrifying description of the murder of an infant. Kleist manages to dispatch an account of it in a brief sentence. But it remains an important event in the structure of the story, for after this death the undifferentiated mob is quietened. We shall misunderstand Kleist's motivation unless we realise that in presenting us with this

²² Diethelm Brüggemann, *Kleist. Die Magie* (Würzburg: Königshausen and Neumann, 2004), p. 242.

²³ Jule Nydes, 'The Paranoid-Masochistic Character', *The Psychoanalytic Review*, 50B (1963), 55-91 (p. 60).

²⁴ Nydes (1963), p. 56.

grotesque image he was again approaching the Christ image. The wrong child is slain, just as Herod's soldiers failed to murder the Christ child. There is no room for affect in this scene so reminiscent of the slaying of the infants by Herod's soldiers except for Don Fernando's single gesture of raising his eyes to the heavens and weeping over the corpse of his son. The energy to commit further violence leaves the mob when Juan is murdered by Don Pedrillo. Philipp, the agent of brotherly love and the Divine Child is saved: Juan is sacrificed in his place.

From a psychological perspective the sadism perpetrated in this story leads to an inconclusive ending. Don Fernando is left with the adoption of an orphan. There are no victors in this parade of violence. Again, we have to ask, what is the purpose of this story? Why does the 'wrong' child, Philipp, survive its significant dangers? It is born into a dysfunctional society and just as Christ brought a new sensibility to the barbarism of the Roman state so Philipp, I argue, is also the lodestone for the change to a new sensibility for the society of St. Jago.

The Divine Child's paternity is important because its divinity cannot be impugned by human paternity just as Joseph was a substitute father for Christ. Thus, when we address the paternity of the child we are also brought to consider the significance of Jeronimo's claim to paternity, which is implied and never stated explicitly. He consummated the relationship with Josephe in the convent garden and we can assume that Josephe, a girl of good morals and well chaperoned, would have found it difficult to engage in sundry affairs. The likelihood of her having other liaisons is, therefore, remote. Brüggemann, however, argues that Philipp's paternity is suspect through the advent of four potential fathers of which Jeronimo is one.²⁵ Brüggemann further argues that Jeronimo's 'Vaterfreude' (paternal joy) (3, 201) is a condition of his subjective perception of the state of affairs. He believes himself to be the father of Philipp but there is no conclusive evidence.²⁶ Moreover, from the appearance of Don Fernando in the story, Jeronimo seems to be reduced in stature in relationship to Josephe and Philipp.

Josephe encounters the second putative father, Don Fernando, in the idyll when he asks if she would breastfeed his son, Juan 'Josephe war ein wenig verwirrt, als sie in ihm einen Bekannten erkannte' (Josephe was a little confused as she recognised him as an acquaintance) (3, 203). The confusion may have arisen out of the unfamiliarity of the encounter which was unconstrained by social etiquette and not because Don Fernando may

²⁵ Brüggemann (2004), p. 241.

²⁶ Brüggemann (2004), p. 243.

have been her lover. In any event, Josephe explains that in these miserable times we all share what we have. The dash which accompanies this speech, Brüggemann suggests, is of a similar stature to that found in the first paragraph of *Die Marquise von O....* i.e. it betokens an action that has taken place, namely the rape of the Marquise or the sexual intimacy of Josephe and Don Fernando (3, 145). Nevertheless, Josephe accepts to feed Juan ‘Josephe nahm den kleinen Fremdling, indem sie ihr eignes Kind dem Vater gab’ (Josephe took the little stranger while giving her own child to the father) (3, 203), i.e. to Jeronimo. The third putative father is Pedrillo, the cobbler who claims Josephe ‘wenigstens so genau kannte, als ihre kleinen Füße’ (knew her at least as well as her tiny feet) (3, 215). Brüggemann suggest that the verb ‘kennen’ (to know), connects to both knowledge of Josephe’s feet as a sexual fetish object and in the biblical sense as knowledge of her body.

The fourth putative father is Don Alonzo, the naval officer who goes to Don Fernando’s aid intermittently against the mob and who also ‘Josephen sehr genau kannte’ (knew Josephe intimately) (3, 217-218). But at the end of the story, he justifies his inaction in the cathedral because of ‘mehrere Umstände’ (several circumstances) (3, 221), which are never explained so that the reader can come to his or her own decision as to what these circumstances were. While evidence of Jeronimo’s paternity is strong, sufficient intimations of doubt are raised in order to fit this child’s birth into a fatherless mode, just as Joseph was not the father of Jesus Christ. The Divine Child cannot be fathered by human man for then it would be unable to assume the mantle of divinity. What Kleist does effectively in this parade of possible fathers, is to throw sand in the reader’s eyes to make the paternity of the Divine Child suspect. The father plays no role in the development of this child, either through absence, confusion or the Roman principle of signification against which there is no counter-argument ‘mater semper certa est, sed pater semper incertus est’ (the mother is always known, but the father is always uncertain).²⁷ The uncertainty of Philipp’s paternity is well established after Don Pedrillo had called out ‘wer ist der Vater zu diesem Kind’ (who is the father of this child) (3, 216-217).

Though Josephe is Philipp’s mother she does not fare well as she is murdered with a blow from a club. The women in Kleist’s works lead unfortunate lives to say the least: subject to rape and murder, they are victims of the sadistic tenor of Kleist’s soul. Alison Lewis in her examination of male violence towards women in Kleist’s works posits that the

²⁷ Geneviève Delaisie and Pierre Verdier, *Enfant de Personne* (Paris: Odile Jacob, 1994), p. 46

death of a woman in Kleist is not a subject for reflection.²⁸ A significant aspect of a loving relationship is the attention and respect which is exchanged between the parties; in other words, each partner seeks to enhance the enjoyment of the other in the interchange.²⁹ The relationships that Kleist establishes for his characters are cold, without affect and without remorse, just as his relationship with his fiancée, Wilhelmine von Zenge, was cold and lacking in *eros*.³⁰ The object is merely an object without definition. Is it a reflection, perhaps, of Kleist's own experience and psychological make-up which is demonstrated in the last sentence of the story:

Don Fernando und Donna Elvire nahmen hierauf den kleinen Fremdling zum Pflegesohn an; und wenn Don Fernando Philippn mit Juan verglich, und wie er beide erworben hatte, so war es ihm fast, als müßt er sich freuen.

(Don Fernando and Dona Elvire then adopted the little stranger as their own son; and when Don compared Philipp with Juan and the ways in which he had acquired the two of them, it almost seemed to him that he had to feel joy) (3, 221).

Günter Blamberger says, rightly, that this sentence is incredible seen from a psychological perspective.³¹ Don Fernando had defended both children against the mob but his own son, Juan, is killed by Don Pedrillo. The subsequent adoption of orphaned Philipp is 'edel, aber kaum ein hinreichender Grund zur Freude (noble, but hardly a sufficient reason for joy).³² Blamberger continues by questioning the unspontaneous formulation 'als müßt er sich freuen' (as if he had to feel joy) since the feeling of joy was not present but was forced to occur at some time in the future. The disconnect between the language of having to force a feeling of joy, which Blamberger points out is an oxymoron, and experiencing it, is evident and it is a feature which enables Kleist also to wallow in the sado-masochistic experience of violent death and extruded brains. It suggests, too, a construction of Kleist's mental apparatus in which primary attachment is an inchoate element. However, the survival of Philippe lends an optimistic note to the story, despite the many ambiguities which Kleist introduces as, I suggest, the imponderable answer to the problem of the theodicy.

This, too, is the reason why Kleist's characters have a curiously two-dimensional aspect. There is little indication of a back-story or the internal life of the characters. They do not appear to have an inner life of desires, volition, anticipation or spontaneity. If we consider

²⁸ Alison Lewis, 'Der Zwang zum Geniessen: männliche Gewalt und weiblicher Körper in drei Prosatexten Kleists', *Kleist Jahrbuch 2000*, 200-222.

²⁹ de Masie (2003), p. 14.

³⁰ Hans-Jürgen Schrader, 'Unsägliche Liebesbriefe. Heinrich von Kleist an Wilhelmine von Zenge', *Kleist Jahrbuch 1981/82*, 86-96.

³¹ Günter Blamberger, *Heinrich von Kleist: Biographie* (Frankfurt am Main, Fischer, 2011), p. 282.

³² Blamberger (2011), p. 282.

the characters of Jeronimo and Josephe this sense of the meaninglessness of existence become most apparent as it is reflected in their lives. They do not have agency in the sense that there is an active internal self-reflective life. They remain as cyphers and are pushed around the board like chess-pieces to satisfy Kleist's own sense both of what it means to be alive and to be the victim of insurmountable forces. Considered from this vantage point there seems little hope for Jeronimo and Josephe. They live in an overtly cruel, insurmountable patriarchal world over which they have no control and which is destroyed through an act of God by means of an earthquake which also destroys the norms of this society.³³ The intermezzo of happiness in the vale of Eden is short lived. It is only in this idyllic space that Jeronimo and Josephe are able to have their own thoughts and make plans to leave Chile for Spain. This becomes an unrealised initiative when the patriarchal order reasserts itself in the form of Don Fernando. Away from Eden, Jeronimo and Josephe lose what little agency they demonstrated in that secure place. The environment is, and remains, a cruel place in which sadistic mob rule pertains. It is, perhaps, through the agency of the Divine Child that these conditions can be changed. However, as Angelus Silesius says it is the child within us, which we must honour and so awaken the redemptive spirit, which would put an end to *potestas* and *violentia*.

In the following chapter, the *violentia* of mob violence and the suspicion of the other is a predominant theme which serves to disestablish any coherent relationship crippled by an unrealised repetition compulsion. The predominance of hate plays its part in which any relationship between the races must founder. The sense of suspicion engendered by hate prevents anything coming to any good so that personal relationships fail, while already carrying a pathological dissonance.

³³ Gelus (1994), p. 121.

Chapter 8

Die Verlobung in St. Domingo: Hate and Repetition Compulsion

Kleist set this story, *Die Verlobung in St. Domingo* (The Betrothal at St. Domingo) (2, 222-260), in the time of the Haitian Revolution (1803-1804), when the black slaves, encouraged by the proclamations of the French National Assembly in Paris to the right of freedom of every man, arose against their French masters, ravaged the countryside and killed the white families. The themes of the story thus focus on race, miscegenation and the suppressed feelings of hate of both black and white participants in a violent relationship. Kleist presents an argument in which we are asked to recognise the impossibility of avoiding feelings of 'otherness' about those that do not belong to our tribe or community.

A deeper reading of the story also offers up a theme which Freud discusses in *Jenseits des Lustprinzips* (Beyond the Pleasure Principle): repetition compulsion. Freud's description of repetition behaviour manifests itself in four main ways. First, there is the recurring dream which displays repeatedly scenes of the same trauma. Secondly, there is a child's play as it seeks to accommodate an uncomfortable experience, such as the absence of the mother. Thirdly, there is the patient who repeats the repressed past as a contemporary experience instead of remembering it as the past. Fourthly, there are individuals who seek or come upon an experience which they necessarily repeat either to gain comfort from its familiarity or to deal unsuccessfully with the original trauma. The latter compulsion is the one which assails Gustav van der Ried, who is called *der Fremde*, (the stranger) throughout the story. He has to come to terms with the judicial murder of his fiancée, Marianne Congreve, for which he feels and is responsible.

The bare bones of the story are that a Swiss family is travelling to safety through the violence of Haiti. Gustav, a naive young Swiss officer in the French Army, seeks shelter and food in the house of Congo Hoango on behalf of his family which he has left at the *Möwenweiher* (Gull Pond). Congo, one of the most ferocious of the revolutionaries, who has murdered his benevolent master, M. Villeneuve, is absent but encourages his housekeeper Babekan and her fifteen-year old quadroon daughter, Toni, to entrap passing white folk in order to murder them when he returns from his forays. Gustav and Toni are attracted to each other, spend the night together, and become betrothed. He tells Toni that she reminds him of his fiancée, who had been guillotined in France, an event for which he

feels responsible. The following day Congo returns unexpectedly and, in order to save her fiancée, Toni, while remaining faithful to him, trusses him and pretends that he is her captive. Congo postpones the execution of Gustav but the remainder of the latter's party arrive, overpower the blacks and Gustav, released from his bonds, shoots Toni for what he believes to be her betrayal. When he learns the truth, he shoots himself in despair. The Swiss group return to their homeland, where they establish a monument to Gustav and Toni.

The meaning of the word 'hate' is a lexicographical issue and it is defined in the *Concise Oxford Dictionary* as 'having strong dislike of or strong aversion to'. This definition, however, is incomplete for it does not address the affect which is concomitant with hate: the intense visceral, physiological feeling which accompanies the act of hating, which, in some cases, takes over the individual and which Gustav experiences on the point of shooting Toni. Georg Groddeck (1866-1934) suggests that hate is one of the earliest affects to which we are subject. In *Das Buch vom Es* (The Book of the It), published in 1923, he states that it is through hate that birth becomes possible and that a child is born through hatred.¹ The mother hates her distended body and wishes to expel this intruder and the foetus finds the prison of the womb loathsome and together they co-operate in an act of hate to bring about birth. This hate is rooted in the body and as an early memory is inherent to the developing infant and is available as an affective drive for the adult. The visceral nature of hate is, thus, located in the body almost as an inherent psychic structure.

Groddeck does not address the ambivalence in the hating in which hate is the reversal of love. Freud maintains that the ambivalence in the love/hate relationship is one in which psychological conflicts emerge with which the individual has to come to terms. Freud writes about this in *Triebe und Triebchicksale* (Instincts and their Vicissitudes), commenting on the unique characteristics of the relationship between love and hate:

Die Verwandlung eines Triebes in sein (materielles) Gegenteil wird nur in einem Falle beobachtet, bei der Umsetzung von Liebe in Haß. Da diese beiden besonders häufig gleichzeitig auf dasselbe Objekt gerichtet vorkommen, ergibt diese Koexistenz auch das bedeutsamste Beispiel einer Gefühlsambivalenz.

(The change of the *content* of an instinct into its opposite is observed in a single instance only—the transformation of love into hate. Since it is particularly common

¹ Georg Groddeck, *The Book of the It*, trans. by V.M.E. Collins (London: Vision Press, 1969), pp. 27-28.

to find both these directed simultaneously towards the same object, their co-existence furnishes the most important example of ambivalence of feeling).²

This ambivalence between love and hate, between idealisation and persecution, is the factor which every individual must understand and come to terms with if he or she wishes to lead a satisfactory life free of basic conflicts. Certainly, an individual whose internal world is dominated by hate, as is Gustav's with his revulsion of black skin colour, has little chance of living creatively: he is obliged to live out a life of paranoia, of seeing injuries where none are intended and viewing all objects with suspicion. Hate is destructive and splits the psyche and moves towards death and is, therefore, also a prime indicator of the death instincts. However, hate is also enlivening; it provides energy, a factor which André Green notes when he writes that the ego is kept alive through hate of the object.³ This hate is coupled with excitement, which is also a search of the reversal of hate, namely love, which, with hunger, is one of the two great primary instincts of mankind, termed more generally in psychoanalysis as self-preservation and the sexual instinct.⁴

Psychoanalysts working after Freud and building on his theories identified differing categories of hate. These include Joan Riviere (1883-1962), an early translator of Freud and a follower of Melanie Klein; D.W. Winnicott (1906-1971), a psychoanalyst and paediatrician, who did much to shift Freud's phallogocentric perspective to an inclusive role of the mother/infant relationship; and Erich Fromm (1900-1980), a sociologist and psychoanalyst, who incorporated social, political and philosophical humanistic ideals in psychology based on Jewish learning. A category of hate which Riviere mentions is 'delusional hate', which arises from a belief that others have more than oneself.⁵ This reverses to a fundamental belief that one has been robbed, that objects of value, be they persons or goods, have been stolen and that one has been impoverished as a result. It results, too, in a feeling of worthlessness, which develops into feelings of grudge and a desire to exact retribution. This feeling embraces Gustav, who has this experience of Babekan, despite her lighter skin colour, as a relentless repulsion against anybody or anything that is alien or not of one's own tribe. It is part of our inner world, as Riviere says so cogently, and assumes the force of the 'bad' outside us whereas everything that is inside us is 'good'.⁶ The 'bad' inside us is projected onto those objects which deserve our hate

² Sigmund Freud (1915), 'Triebe und Triebchicksale', *GW*. 10, 210-232, (p. 225) (Instincts and their Vicissitudes, *SE*. 14, 109-140 (p. 132)).

³ André Green, *On Private Madness* (London: Karnac, 1997), p. 155.

⁴ Joan Riviere, *The Inner World and Joan Riviere: Collected Papers 1920-1958*, ed. by Athol Hughes (London: Karnac, 1991), p. 168.

⁵ Riviere (1991), pp. 186-187.

⁶ Riviere (1991), p. 324.

for being different, more endowed or more worthwhile than unconsciously we deem necessary. This struggle between the 'good' and the 'bad' entails terrifying and uncontrollable feelings which are split off and omnipotently denied; through reversal the bad objects inside us then become the bad objects outside which continue to be hated viscerally. We rationalise that the objects are deserving of our hate because they have something of ours which we have had to renounce.

Winnicott considers that the ability to hate is an achievement to which the infant accedes from the aggressiveness of magical destruction: the omnipotence of the infant is exercised in that it closes its eyes to annihilate the world and re-creates it with new looking.⁷ It is, then, good enough holding which moves the infant from the path of aggression and the ability to hate without acting out. There is the contrast between the bold and the timid child in which the bold child will obtain relief by expressing aggression while the timid child will internalise aggression and then find it in a paranoid manner in the environment.⁸ The supply of paranoid persecution may be in short supply, in which case the timid child has to manufacture it by delusional thinking. This delusional thinking will end up as hate with a chaotic and miasmatic objective. Hate thus becomes intrinsic to the individual, who always searches for objects deserving of hate.

Fromm distinguishes two kinds of hate: 'reactive' hate and the 'character conditioned' hate.⁹ The former is an individual's response to threats to freedom, life or ideas. It has an important psychological function in that it preserves the individual's internal autonomy. It arises as a reaction to a threat and ceases when the threat is eliminated. The latter, 'character conditioned' hate is a character trait which comprises a continuous readiness to hate and is omnipresent rather than reacting to a stimulus. This hate is often without rational foundation and is found to be a relief when opportunity to hate then arises. It is hate rooted in a person's character and the object of hate is of secondary importance. This form of hate aligns itself to Winnicott's timid child above. The 'reactive' hate, however, is something which is evident Kleist's story as the black population react to geographical dislocation and years of servitude.

The attachment theories of John Bowlby (1907-1990) are illustrated in the development of the relationship between Gustav and Babekan.¹⁰ Gustav demonstrates a neediness to be

⁷ D.W. Winnicott, *The Child, the Family and the Outside World* (London: Penguin, 1964), p. 238.

⁸ Winnicott (1964), p. 234.

⁹ Erich Fromm, *Man for Himself: An Enquiry into the Psychology of Ethics* (London: Routledge and Keegan Paul, 1975), p. 214.

¹⁰ John Bowlby, *Attachment and Loss*, 3 vols (London, Penguin, 1989, 1985, 1991).

close to Babkan, who assumes for him the role of the mother. Bowlby believed (in contrast to Melanie Klein who concentrated on the internal life of the child and its phantasies) that external events and the child's innate need to form attachments for reasons of safety are a determining factor in the mental health of the child and, subsequently, of the adult. In this, Gustav exhibits the neediness of the unattached adult in his subservient relationship with Babekan.

Another aspect of hate which is often overlooked is hate that is engendered by fear which is the source of hate of St. Domingo's white community towards their slaves. It is a significant theme in the book by Matthew Parker about the sugar barons, those individuals who became wealthy through the sugar trade on the back of a slave population.¹¹ The subject of the book is the growth of British colonies in the Caribbean but a case can be made that similar attitudes held in the French colonies. Parker writes of the paranoid fear which the planters have of the large number of slaves, who outnumber the white population many times and who are ill-treated and kept in servitude. They constitute, for the white community, a powder keg waiting to explode. Only accustomed servitude keeps them in their place and prevents them turning on their masters. The declaration of the revolutionary French National Assembly that all men are free provided the impetus for the revolutionary fervour of the slaves in St Domingo.

The archetypal relationship between fear and hate is succinctly expressed by William Shakespeare. In *Antony and Cleopatra* he has Charmian, one of Cleopatra's attendants declare 'In time we hate that which we often fear', which puts the white planters into perspective.¹² Charmian is counselling Cleopatra, who fears Antony's disaffection, not to play contrary and deceitful games with him in order to retain his love. Thus, for Shakespeare, as for Freud, hate and fear are allies in the paranoid world of the dysfunctional subject/object relationship. The suggestion in the quotation is also that the reversal from love to hate requires a passage of time. Gustav has merely twenty-four hours in which to accomplish the reversal but he manages to flip-flop through the emotions of hate and fear in that period.

Gustav arrives at Congo's house in the dead of night, suspicious and anxious about any hostility he may encounter. This house was destroyed by Congo together with its white inhabitants early in the revolt of the slaves and has, therefore, been magically recreated.

¹¹ Matthew Parker, *The Sugar Barons: Family, Corruption, Empire and War* (London: Hutchinson, 2011).

¹² William Shakespeare, *Antony and Cleopatra*, I. 3, in *The Complete Works*, ed. by Peter Alexander (London: Collins, 1951).m

This Kleistian device deconstructs language and logic, for nothing is at it seems, and it marks the house as a house of death. Also, the frequent references to Gustav as *der Fremde* (the stranger) establish him outside any initiated category of existence which Babekan and Toni lead. He is a stranger to the community; he does not understand the habits and customs and is, as a consequence, disoriented from the start in a house which is already disorienting. As an outsider he is not privy to the secrets of the household and he is not aware of the duplicitous game that Babekan is playing in which any genuine affect is negated. To love, we must also be able to bear hate, since these feelings are allies in our psychological structure as asserted by Freud; we must, therefore, also be able to bear ambivalence.. Without ambivalence we see the world as black and white. In this view of the environment anything that is 'not us' must be bad and here we revert particularly to the writings of Riviere. Without ambivalence we have difficulty understanding, bearing and being tolerant of the other though the circumstances of slavery leaves little room for tolerance or understanding. Toni's quadron 'yellow' colour is the source of confusion and revulsion because Gustav is only able to understand difference as a clear, unambiguous separation of skin colour: either black or white. Toni's is a disturbing in-between and thus, there is no clear distinction as to where she belongs.

Frantz Fanon, writing about the Algerian liberation struggle in *The Wretched of the Earth*, speaks of the colonial world as cut in two.¹³ Algeria colonised by French settlers is not the same as the slave-owning community of Haiti but, as a Francophone native of Martinique, he would have been well aware of the historical origins of, and turmoil in, Haiti. Moreover, there are references in Fanon's text to particular Haitian practices, such as Papa Legba, the god of voodoo.¹⁴ Much of Fanon's analysis is based on the history of the Haitian revolt with the observation that the psychological organisation of the oppressed population is similar whether for a slave owning or a colonial community (such as India under the Raj). The factors which separate the whites from the blacks are the police and the army; these two organisations impose order through force. With these in place, in addition to suspicion of 'the other', there is no bridge on which Congo and Villeneuve can meet. The cruelty of the plantation owners is, of course, also a feature which separates the communities. There are always shadow elements between individuals and groups and if the suppression of the oppressed, be they natives or slaves, has gone on over decades, then the

¹³ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. by Constance Farrington (New York: Grove, 1963), p. 38-39.

¹⁴ Fanon (1963), p. 57.

shadow is all the greater and the violence all the more volcanic and more endemic when it erupts:

National liberation, national renaissance, the restoration of nationhood to the people, commonwealth: whatever may be the headings used or the new formulas introduced, de-colonization is always a violent phenomenon.¹⁵

The basis for this violence is initially, Fanon suggests, the internalised hostility of the black man against his own ‘when the niggers beat each other up’ to the confusion of the authorities.¹⁶ In this case the violence, which needs an outlet, is turned inward on their own people. However, when confronted with colonial authorities the black man encounters a hostile world which he also envies. He phantasises that he can stand in place of the settler/slave owner. In this scenario, Fanon suggests the native/slave is confused by the symbols of the colonial world as to what is acceptable and what is forbidden. Whatever the case, the native is deemed guilty in his own mind though this guilt is experienced as a curse. He is overpowered but not tamed and is waiting patiently to exercise his power ‘to exchange the role of the quarry for that of the hunter’.¹⁷ The exchange carries with it all the force of the repressed feeling of humiliation, pain and servitude that the black man has undergone and which is also Congo’s experience.

The weight of research on *Verlobung* is heavily oriented towards questions of race, colour and the ambivalence that is aroused through these in the relationships between Toni and Gustav and the white and black community of St Domingo. St Domingo was to be named Haiti after the successful insurrection of the black slaves against their white masters when the former had taken over the rule of the island. Peter Horn reviews critical literature about this story and castigates authors for simplistic interpretations of the story which are merely a reflection of their own cultural perspectives in which the pressure of National Socialist ideology is clear.¹⁸ Horn debates if Kleist was a racist and concludes that he was not. However, it is not clear what the term ‘racist’ means in the context of the early eighteenth century when the possession of colonies and owning of slaves was seen predominantly as the natural order of things. Colonial peoples and slaves were considered primitive, which denotes a lack of civilisation and was a way of establishing qualitative

¹⁵ Fanon (1963), p. 35.

¹⁶ Fanon (1963), p. 54.

¹⁷ Fanon (1963), p. 53.

¹⁸ Peter Horn, “‘Hatte Kleist Rassenvorurteile?’ Eine kritische Auseinandersetzung mit der Literatur zur ‘Verlobung in St Domingo’”, in *Heinrich von Kleists Erzählungen: Eine Einführung* (Königstein/Ts: Scriptor, 1978), 134-137.

differences, in this case, between the white and black communities.¹⁹ What Horn expresses is, perhaps, Kleist's empathy for the plight of black slaves and the injustice done to them. Babekan's experience as the mother of Toni is proof. Remy Charbon agrees that Kleist was not a racist, but promotes the premise that Kleist selected the issue of colour as one which most cogently emphasises the nature of conflict.²⁰ It is significant, that on this basis, the new masters of St. Domingo, the black slaves, merely replace their former white masters and promote the same elements of cruelty. I argue too, that language and logic is dislocated in this reversal so that the house of his master, destroyed by Congo, is magically recreated to be inhabited by Babekan and Toni; and Toni remains for ever a fifteen-year old seductress.

More recent criticism which has addressed the question of colour as a solution to the problem of identity is contained' in papers by Susanne Zantop, Hans Peter Hermann and Barbara Gribnitz.²¹ Zantop makes a study of the significance of skin colour in the context of miscegenation and the failure of the betrothal through a historical preconception of skin colour. She refers to the categorisation of skin colour as representative of moral value in late eighteenth and early nineteenth century thought, when the subjugation of black races by their white conquerors demonstrates the superiority of the white man. The ability of white women to blush, not seen in a black skin, demonstrates in this period also the moral superiority of the white skin, which could show 'emotional, moral and intellectual "movement"'.²² Since blushing was deemed to demonstrate a capacity for progress or improvement, then Toni's blushing in the seduction scene demonstrates her cultural, ethical and moral ascendancy. This leads Gustav to infer that she was not simulating and incapable of cold and terrible betrayal (3, 236). Increasingly, white skin tones were also said to signify purification from the negative qualities which the negro was deemed to have: thieving and cheating among the men and seduction and ruination of white lovers by the women. In *Verlobung*, it is clear that Toni is as equally active in the development of the sexual relationship with Gustav as himself. However, it is Gustav's suspicion about the

¹⁹ Colin Rhodes, *Primitivism and Modern Art* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1994), p. 13.

²⁰ Remy Charbon, 'Der "weisse" Blick: Über Kleists "Verlobung in St Domingo"', *Kleist Jahrbuch 1996*, 77-90.

²¹; Susanne Zantop, 'Changing Colour: Kleist's "Die Verlobung in St. Domingo" and the Discourses of Miscegenation', in *A Companion to the Works of Heinrich von Kleist*, ed. by Bernd Fischer (Rochester: Camden House, 2003), pp. 165-208; Hans Peter Hermann, 'Die Verlobung in St. Domingo', in *Interpretationen: Kleists Erzählungen*, ed. by Walter Hinderer (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2011), 111-137; Barbara Gribnitz, 'Heinrich von Kleists Erzählung "Die Verlobung in St Domingo" im Kontext schwarz-weißer Liebesgeschichten', in *Heinrich von Kleists Novelle Die Verlobung in St. Domingo: Literatur und Politik im globalen Kontext um 1800*, ed. by Reinhard Blänkner (Würzburg: Königshausen and Neumann, 2013), pp. 53-72.

²² Zantop (2003), p. 196.

meaning of colour which arouses his mistrust which leads among other things ultimately to the shooting of Toni; Gustav could not overcome his fundamental mistrust of Toni's skin colour. This mistrust is also rooted in the unease he feels by being in the house. This unease translates into fear and rage, which culminates in Gustav's fatal attack on Toni. Toni's 'du hättest mir nicht mißtrauen sollen' (you should not have doubted me) (2, 259) was a response to the doubt that Gustav maintained about her fidelity because of her skin colour. However, in her terms, with the absolution given through the sexual act with Gustav, Toni had moved from the identity of black to identity of white.

Hermann, while also reviewing issues of race and gender, suggests that the story is concerned fundamentally with the love relationship of two people and how this may be mediated in a hostile world in which skin colour is a determining feature of identity. He analyses Gustav's fear in approaching the house, the manner in which he is enticed into it and the manner in which Babekan destabilises further his already fearful demeanour. Gustav surrenders in a willing subjectivity to Babekan's manipulation. Gustav has attachment issues so that he readily looks on Babekan as a 'gutes Mütterchen' (good Mummy) and kisses her hand in gratitude (2, 230). The destabilisation of the suggestible Gustav leads him too, into a love relationship with Toni in which, Hermann recognises, Toni also plays her part. However, the aspect of civilisation and barbarity which is the differentiation of white and black communities and which is expressed through skin colour is fundamental to the failure of the relationship of Gustav and Toni; a failure which is also determined by Gustav's unrealised repetition compulsion. The elements of hate contained in the story are the reactive hate of the black man for the injustice and humiliation that the white slave owners have heaped on his kind. There is also the hate of the white man towards the black which is an expression of the fear-creating paranoia because the black man is so much more numerous than the white man and capable, even without the impetus of the declaration of the French National Assembly, of overpowering him and his kin.

Gribnitz, in reviewing issues of race, sex and gender asks first, how it is possible to differentiate between the concept and representation of white identity and between false adaptation and real adaptation in a complex literary text and secondly, who decides between falsity and authenticity and what is represented by the false adaptation of identity? These questions go to the heart of Kleist research not only in connection with this story but in connection with his work at large and with an appreciation of his internal world which finds expression in his writing. A fundamental perspective, also, needs to be emphasised, which is that we, as individuals and as a community, need the other in order to remain

secure in our own identity. This applies as much to black and white as it does to southerners and northerners in England or the different nations of Europe. The other is generally perceived unconsciously as the grasping shadow entity, desirous and envious of the good we have, which must, therefore, be protected. This is the perspective advanced by Riviere and Toni, as a quadroon, highlights in particular a search for identity as she moves from black to white.

Helga Gallas, from a Lacanian perspective, focuses on elements of betrayal, mistakes, mistrust and concentrates, therefore, on the failure of steadfastness in this story in which Kleist demonstrates the problematic nature of identification.²³ Gustav offers Marianne as an identifier for Toni. This loosens the subjectivity of her family alliance in that she is really the daughter of a French business man, which removes her from her race by suggesting that she is really white and European and not a quadroon. There is further repetition and reversal: Congo Hoango saves his master and then kills him; Babekan and Toni simulate care for Gustav but intend to kill him; the black slave pretends erotic feelings for her slave master only to infect him with her fever; Babekan and Bertrand have feelings for each other but Bertrand denies paternity of the child; Gustav flouts the laws of hospitality by seducing the daughter of the house; and finally, Toni betrays both Congo and Babekan by allying herself to Gustav. But it is Congo who determines the unconscious desire of the text for he is the central feared character about whom all are concerned; it is Congo who moves the story forward.²⁴

The summary of the interpretation of the story contained in Christian Moser's paper in the *Kleist Handbuch* concentrates on the question of race and skin colour.²⁵ The narrator's position is seen as unreliable in that he is unaware of the narrow-minded nature of his racist discourse or does he wish to make the reader aware of the master/slave relationship or is he denied any independent point of view so that he is merely a medium for the variety of ideologies which Kleist presents in this story.²⁶ The result of this Kleistian strategy is to offer a many layered text, which fails a definitive interpretation. This perspective, I argue, leads us to the conclusion that there can be no reconciliation between us and the 'other'. The unconscious drives, discussed by Rivier above, are a conclusive argument to this debate.

²³ Helga Gallas, *Kleist, Gesetz, Begehren, Sexualität* (Frankfurt am Main: Stromfeld, 2005), pp. 87-121.

²⁴ Gallas (2005), p. 101.

²⁵ Christian Moser, 'Die Verlobung in St. Domingo' in *Kleist Handbuch: Leben-Werk-Wirkung*, ed. by Ingo Breuer (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2013), pp. 121-133.

²⁶ Breuer (2013), p. 124.

Congo is introduced in the first paragraph of the story as the most demonic of creatures, whose hate for the white slave owners does not correspond to the kindness he had been shown by his own master. Congo, taken from the Gold Coast, nevertheless seemed to be a settled young man who had saved his owner's life during a crossing to Cuba and had been rewarded by being given his freedom, the gift of a property and, contrary to custom, made manager of his master's considerable estate. His master gave him a wife, Babekan with her daughter Toni, and on his sixtieth year retired him with a pension and ultimately made him a beneficiary under his will 'und doch konnten alle diese Beweise von Dankbarkeit Hrn. Villeneuve vor der Wut dieses grimmigen Menschen nicht schützen' (and nevertheless, none of these proofs of gratitude could protect Herr Villeneuve from the frenzy of this enraged man) (3, 222). So, Congo shot his master and set fire to the house in which his wife, three children and other white people of the settlement had taken refuge 'eingedenk der Tyrannei die ihn seinen Vaterland entrissen hatte' (mindful of the tyranny which had torn him from his fatherland) (3, 222). Congo thus harboured a lifelong repressed hatred of his situation as a slave who had been ripped from his homeland and which no amount of benefits and good deeds could redress. He had been removed by force from his native country and subject to the prerogative of his owner. His hate is thus the reactive hate which Fromm identifies. He does not hate constitutionally but because the circumstances of being ripped from his native land had so affected his internal world that he could do no other. This hate has been repressed, for Congo led an exemplary life for which he was rewarded. But even the reward was tainted 'und legte ihm, weil er nicht wieder heiraten wollte, an Weibes Statt eine alte Mulattin, namens Babekan, aus seiner Pflanzung bei, mit welcher er durch seine erste verstorbene Frau weitläufig verwandt war' (and conferred on him from his plantation, since he did not wish to marry again, an old mulatto in place of a wife by the name of Babekan with whom he was distantly related through his first wife) (3, 222). Congo is given a woman: he is not able to exercise choice. This is an example of the lack of agency to which the slave is subject, however high his standing with his master and which is a source of humiliation. It also places the slave outside any coherent social structure

Congo arms slaves and roams the countryside, aiding and abetting his fellows in destroying plantations and killing all who had taken refuge in them and setting upon white travellers who were crossing the land. The narrator speaks of Congo's 'unmenschlicher Rachsucht' (inhuman mania for revenge) in this ferocious war 'bei dem er sich ganz verjungte' (in which he was totally rejuvenated) (3, 223). Congo co-opts Babekan and her daughter, Toni, to hold passing white folk in their house until he returns from his

murderous expeditions, whereupon he would murder these people too. Congo's ego, released from the oppression of servitude, is enlivened by hate. Green's description of the ego's rejuvenation through hatred of the object is apposite here.²⁷

There is mention too, of Babekan's 'grausame Strafe' (cruel punishment) (3, 223) which was inflicted on her in her youth as a result of which she suffers from consumption. She sends out Toni, a quadroon, because of her pale skin and in her best finery to waylay and seduce white travellers. Toni was to deny no caresses except the last, which was forbidden on pain of death (3, 223). All visitors are to be kept in the security of the house until the return of Congo upon which death was the reward for these people that had been seduced by Babekan and Toni's arts (3, 223). Hate of the white man is thus the predominant characteristic of Congo's house of death. Babekan's hate arises out of the injustice that was done to her in her youth and represents Fromm's reactive hate.

On his arrival at the house, Gustav sees the black boy, Nanky, in the yard, which arouses his fear to the extent that he is on the point of leaving when Toni, with her quadroon whiteness, persuades him that there is nothing to fear: for Congo is absent and only she and her mother live in the house (3, 225). At this level, confidence in the trustworthiness of the other is determined by skin colour. Differentiation between self and the other must first be established. In the first encounter between Gustav and Babekan, Babekan leans out of the window above Gustav, thus already establishing a hierarchy which is to dominate the relationship in the house. Gustav's first question relates to the ethnic origin of Babekan. Babekan, leaning out of the window has asked who is there and Gustav replies 'beantworte mir, ehe ich euch dies entdecke, eine Frage! [...] seid ihr eine Negerin' (answer one question before I disclose this! [...] are you a negress) (3, 224). Babekan seeks to reassure him by disclosing that she is a mulatto and that she lives with her daughter who is a quadroon, thus moving away from the dangerous ethnic stance of the negro and the savagery and hate that this would mean for Gustav. Babekan is offering Gustav ambivalence which he does not understand: a person is either white or black. He is fearful with reason, for he tells her that he comes from Fort Dauphin, where all the white folk have been murdered (3, 226). Babekan is surprised that the stranger has made the journey 'mit eurer Gesichtsfarbe' (with your skin colour) (3, 226-227). Skin colour is a significant sign of differentiation throughout the story. Gustav's entry into the house has been accomplished almost through force: he is seduced by Toni's appearance, she then pulls him into the house 'indem sie seine Hand ergriff und ihn nach der Tür zog:' (in that she grasped

²⁷ Green (1997), p. 155.

his hand and pulled him towards the door) and then also pulls him up the stairs with both hands (3, 225-226).

Babekan disarms Gustav with mock severity in that she asks, in respect of the rapier which he carries at his side:

Was bedeutet der Degen, den Ihr so schlagfertig unter Eurem Arme tragt? Wir haben Euch', so setzte sie hinzu, indem sie sich die Brille aufdrückte, 'mit Gefahr unseres Lebens eine Zuflucht in unserem Haus gestattet; seid Ihr herein gekommen, um diese Wohltat, nach der Sitte Eurer Landsleute, mit Verräterei zu vergelten?

(What is the meaning of this rapier which you are carrying under your arm in such a belligerent manner? We have', she said as she put on her spectacles, 'offered you a refuge in our house at the risk of our lives; have you come to repay this good deed with betrayal in the manner of your countrymen) (3, 226).

Gustav is rattled. He has no resources of guile nor defence of steadfastness in the face of Babekan's cunning.

Initially, it is black skin colour which is a source of differentiation and is to be feared. Wucherpennig states that antagonism between the black and the white races, and hence between Gustav and Toni cannot be resolved.²⁸ Just as there is no peace in that relationship there are no hard and fast rules by which an individual can find himself or herself in the community. The question of identity is central to the establishment of a coherent community in which skin colour is a predominant indicator. The question of skin colour is a matter of life and death when Gustav arrives at Babekan's house. He grips Babekan's hand, establishing a mother-child transference, which is reinforced when he addresses her as: 'gutes Mütterchen' (good Mummy). He turns himself into a helpless abandoned child which offers no relief to his anxiety for Babekan does all she can to draw him into her murderous web; but there is a significant maternal transference on Gustav's part, which makes Babekan the source of unconditional love and support in his endeavours. He naively confides to Babekan the whereabouts of the rest of his family as his regression into a child-like state continues: he has removed his sword through Babekan's machinations and is told to sit when Babekan pushes a chair towards him with her foot; a dismissive, humiliating gesture (3, 226). The hate is signified by colour though Gustav finds relief in seeing the mulatto, Babekan, with a paler skin colour. Gustav says naively: 'euch kann ich mich anvertrauen; aus der Farbe eures Gesichts schimmert mir ein Strahl von der meinigen entgegen' (I can confide in you; a glimmer of my own skin colour shines towards me from

²⁸ Wolf Wucherpennig, 'Die Verlobung in St. Domingo oder die Tragödie des Narzissmus', in *Freiburger literaturpsychologische Gespräche: Heinrich von Kleist*, 27, ed. by Ortrud Gutjahr (Würzburg: Königshausen and Neumann, 2008), 207-225, (p. 208).

the colour of your face) (3, 227). He then believes that Babekan is not part of the general conspiracy to murder the whites, for she is not thoroughly black, which that entails – culturally, ethically and morally.

However, Gustav can only differentiate between black and white; there is no ambivalence in Gustav's world just as Kleist is unable to bear ambivalence. Wucherpennig writes baldly: 'Ambivalenzfähigkeit ist denn auch der blinde Fleck der Kleistchen Texte' (The ability to bear ambivalence is the blind spot in Kleist's works).²⁹ Wucherpennig excludes from this statement *Die Marquise von O...* in which the Marquise was subsequently able to bear children to a man whom she had regarded both as an angel and devil. The requirement to bear ambivalence finds its place in the feelings of a character when the experience of something new or unexpected arises. Kleist's solution, to avoid the uncomfortable feelings which arise from this, is to escape into somatic disturbances: either fainting (as does Toni when she becomes lifeless and is carried on Gustav's shoulder to her room), the dreaminess of a fugue state, blushing or loss of language,

Gustav is suitably humbled so that in his naivety he discloses the presence of the rest of his family group at the *Mövenweiher* and his plan to reach Port au Prince. He is convinced, in his anxiety and fear, that the shimmer of the white colour in Babekan's face, which mirrors his own, is a sufficient factor to trust her. Babekan fills the stranger's emptiness which has arisen out of the stress caused by anxiety and fear. He needs an anchor to ground him and grabs the nearest object that expresses some element of kindness towards him. In his anxious state he does not notice the denigration which is the ruse that Babekan uses to pull him into her web. There is nothing as powerful for an individual at a low ebb and subject to insult, however veiled, to bring him closer, to bring the subject closer to the object, as demonstrated in the attachment theories of Bowlby. This identification with the oppressor, also termed the Stockholm syndrome, is a form of traumatic bonding in which the captive identifies with the captor. Hermann rightly says that the stranger's need for contact and *Vertraulichkeit* (familiarity) is a regressive character trait. Gustav cannot establish himself as a man in command of himself for he is a weak vessel.³⁰ Babekan continues to dissimulate to Gustav in that she explains that she and Toni are as much subject to the ferocity of the blacks as are whites: they are tolerated, nothing more. If then,

²⁹ Wucherpennig (2008), p. 207.

³⁰ Hermann (2011), p. 121.

They will surely meet their deaths, if Congo learns that they have harboured and succoured white folk.

Gustav continues on his path when Toni asks him why the white man has made himself so hated. Gustav replies complacently that this hatred results from the general relationship that they, as masters of the island, had to the black man and that he does not wish to defend them but that it has been thus for many hundreds of years and that only a few of the planters treated their slaves badly. He ignores the injustice of taking individuals from their homeland by force (3, 233). Gustav, despite his protestation that he does not wish to defend the racial arrangements on the island, nevertheless justifies them on the basis that they have always been like that, the implicit meaning being, why change? And what have the slaves done to the white man? This question hangs in the air as if it is a justification for the white's treatment of the blacks. Gustav's blindness to the social structure of St. Domingo is an extension of his naivety and general unworldliness.

In particular, Gustav cites the example of the brutality of a black girl who deliberately infects a white planter with yellow fever in revenge for past mistreatments. After she had bedded the planter, the girl spoke, consumed with hate 'Eine Pestkranke, die den Tod in der Brust trägt, hast du geküsst: geh und gib das Fieber allen denen, die dir gleichen' (You have kissed one sick with the pest who carries death in her breast: go and give the yellow fever to all those who are like you) (3, 233). The breast is a significant metaphor in Kleist's works: it is mentioned at least two hundred and forty-five times and it is deemed to be the seat of sexual desire.³¹ The actions of Gustav on first meeting Toni 'indem er sie lebhaft an seine Brust drückte' (as he pressed her vigorously to his breast) (3, 231), intimates the development of their relationship. But the slave who carries death in her breast is a perversion of true desire and provides the shadow which dominates Gustav.

Hansjörg Bay points out that Gustav's naivety removes the demonization of slavery, for surely, as Gustav says, there are only a few masters who ill-treated their slaves (3, 233). It was the madness of freedom which encouraged the blacks to break their chains. This statement ignores the displacement that slaves experienced from their native countries and which is also the reason for Congo's murderous hatred. The suggestion is, therefore, that the slaves' revolt is not a fight for freedom but for revenge. This makes the black man a savage.³² All violence in St Domingo is revenge; there is no fighting by the black

³¹ Lázló F. Földényi, *Heinrich von Kleist: im Netz der Wörter*, trans. by Akos Doma (Munich: Matthes and Seitz, 1999), pp. 77-80.

³² Hansjörg Bay, 'Als die Schwarzen die Weissen ermordeten', *Kleist Jahrbuch 1998*, 80-108 (p. 84).

community for an ideal such as freedom. The violence is directed against past wrongs. Bernd Fischer has shown that even as the blacks murdered the whites, so the whites had murdered the blacks.³³ Where does the responsibility lie? Gustav is oblivious to the solution of this question which is also an indication of Kleist's own position that the responsibility belongs to both parties.

As a savage, the black man has no social organisation. Thus, Babekan is Congo's 'anstatt Weibes Statt' (in place of a wife) (3, 222). Congo did not want to remarry but a woman is given to him almost as a chattel by his master. Animalistic images are given to the black man 'Mittlerweilen waren, durch die Schüsse geweckt, die Neger des Hoango, zwanzig und mehr an der Zahl, aus ihren Ställen hervorgestürzt' (In the meantime, awoken by the shooting, twenty or more of Hoango's negroes burst out of their stalls) (3, 255). The suggestion is that Congo's men are housed as if they were animals; their behaviour is described in terms which reduce them to a rabble. However, the reference by Congo to the white man as 'diese weißen Hunde' (these white dogs) (3, 223) and by Babekan to 'europäische Hunde' (European dogs) (3, 251) reduces both parties to the level of animals without the saving grace of civilisation.

Babekan further enmeshes Gustav in her stratagems in that she ostensibly allies herself and Toni with the white man. She claims that the mixed blood of her heritage does not give her independence or status in the black community and that she and her daughter are subject to the same strictures as any white person. They would be executed if it were discovered that they had given Gustav refuge.(3, 229). Gustav is persuaded Babekan to provide provisions for his family:

Wollts Ihr, gutes Mütterchen, das tun? – 'Nun', sprach die Alte, unter vielfachen Küssen, die von den Lippen des Fremden auf ihre knöcherne Hand niederregneten: 'um des Europäers, meiner Tochter Vater willen, will ich euch, seinen bedrängten Landsleuten, diese Gefälligkeit erweisen'

(Will you do that, dear Mummy? – 'Well' said the old woman while many kisses rained down on her bony hand from the lips of the stranger, 'on account of the European, my daughter's father's sake I will do this favour for you, his harried countrymen) (3, 230).

He is obsequious, grateful and his suspicions as to the intentions of Babekan and her daughter have been stilled. This is a curious conjunction for she announces Toni's father as someone worth remembering and then quickly explains the traumatic circumstances

³³ Bernd Fischer, 'Zur politischen Dimension der Ethik in Kleists "Die Verlobung in St. Domingo"' in *Heinrich von Kleist: Studien zur Werk und Wirkung*, ed. by Dirk Grathoff (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1988).

surrounding Toni's birth. She became pregnant by a rich Marseille merchant named Bertrand, who, on oath, denied paternity the result of which was that she was ordered to receive sixty lashes by her then master, Villeneuve. Babekan has no reason to favour the white man and the grounds for her hate are as concrete as are Congo's. Indeed, Toni says 'sie kannte den Haß der Alten gegen die Weißen zu gut' (she knew only too well the hate that the old woman had for the white man) (3, 242). It is an indication of Gustav's naivety that he cannot make a connection between the allowances Babekan makes for him and his family and the story of the hardship engendering hate which she has to bear.

Gustav's relationship with Toni is initiated while she is laying the table 'mit einem Blick auf den Fremden, schäkernd,' (with a flirtatious glance at the stranger) (3, 230). In the continuing campaign to put him at his ease, Babekan says that 'der Herr würde töricht gehandelt haben, wenn er sich früher in das Haus hineingewagt hätte, als bis er sich von dem Volksstamm, zu welchem seine Bewohner gehören überzeugt hatte' (The gentleman would have acted foolishly if he had dared to enter the house before he has satisfied himself as to which tribe the occupants belonged) (3, 230). This short speech ostensibly places Babekan and Toni in the white camp and is designed to reassure Gustav yet further. While listening to the way in which Toni has encouraged him to enter the house, Gustav lightly places his arm around her waist, a familiarity which Johannes Harnischfeger describes as 'anstößige Verhalten' (offensive behaviour) and which suggests the ruthless behaviour of a man of standing to seduce a domestic servant.³⁴ Gustav then says, while pressing her to his breast in a lively manner 'hätte ich dir [...] ins Auge sehen können, so wie ich es jetzt kann: so hätte ich, auch wenn alles übrige an dir schwarz gewesen wäre, aus einem vergifteten Becher mit dir trinken wollen' (had I been able to look into your eyes as I can now and even if everything else about you had been black I would have wished to drink from a poisoned cup with you) (3, 231). He blushes when he says this, which is the approximation of a fugue state, when the character is on the cusp of change or revelation. It is also tantamount to a declaration of love, an exaggerated declaration of a naive and unworldly man but also an intimation that he is a bringer of death. Gustav is now lost in the poisonous web that Babekan has spun. She has put him at his ease to the extent that he believes that culturally and ethnically he and the occupants of the house are as one. Fear and anxiety have been allayed and the seduction of Gustav by Toni has been initiated: he is prepared to meet her in death. Ambivalence is eliminated and everything appears to be clear.

³⁴ Johannes Harnischfeger, 'Das Versprechen romantischer Liebe: Zu Kleists 'Verlobung in St. Domingo'', *Kleist Jahrbuch 2001*, 278- 291 (p. 278).

Then it seems to Gustav, that mother and daughter looked at each other significantly ‘so übernahm ihn ein widerwärtiges und verdrießliches Gefühl’ (so an unpleasant and morose feeling overtook him) (3, 234). Gustav’s suspicions are aroused despite the atmosphere of harmony which had been created. This feeling of depression and anxiety is reinforced when he arrives at the bedroom which he is to occupy, sees it is tastefully furnished and realises that it belonged to the former owner of the plantation (and that it had been destroyed and magically recreated) ‘so legte sich ein Gefühl der Unruhe wie ein Geier um sein Herz, und er wünschte sich, hungrig und durstig, wie er gekommen war, wieder in die Waldung zu den Seinigen zurück’ (thus, a feeling of uneasiness like a vulture encircled his heart and he wished he were, hungry and thirsty as he had arrived, back in the woodland with his own family) (3, 234-235). He is in the house that Congo burned down, so he realises unconsciously, that he is in a magically recreated house of death. The security of his family even in a destitute state is preferable to the luxury of the dead planter’s bedroom. But he has no agency, for he is caught in Babekan’s snare and is unable to leave; she has disarmed him literally and metaphorically.

Gustav is also diverted from his despair by the sexuality offered by Toni, who kneels before him in the image of Mary Magdalene washing the feet of Christ. Gustav regards her seductive figure and thinks that, except for the colour of her skin, he had never seen anything so beautiful (3, 235). In this position too, Toni reminds Gustav of Marianne Congreve, his fiancée, who had given her life for him on the guillotine. Moreover, the effect that Toni has on him is to reassure him through her ‘Anmut und Lieblichkeit’ (grace and sweetness) (3, 236), that he had nothing to fear, so that ‘die Gedanken, die ihn beunruhigt hatten, wichen wie ein Heer schauerlicher Vögel von ihm’ (the thoughts which had worried him left him like an army of gruesome birds) (3, 236). However, the question of the offensive skin colour remains as an unconscious barrier.

Gustav interrogates Toni while she is sitting on his lap and asks her ‘ob es vielleicht ein Weißer seyn müsse, der ihre Gunst davon tragen solle’ (if, perhaps it should be a white man to win her favour) (3, 236). The concrete nature of this question leaves nothing in doubt that it would indeed be her maidenhead. Toni’s response is to answer in a dreamy manner by nestling against Gustav’s breast and blushing ‘über ihr verbranntes Gesicht’ (over her brown visage) (3, 236). Hans Jakob Werlen links this dreamy state to the hypnotic effect which Gustav has managed to conjure up by separating Toni from her race and hinting at a connection with Gustav’s white dead fiancée, Marianne, and the white

culture of Europe.³⁵ The cross hanging from Gustav's neck, which had been given to him by Marianne functions as the metaphor for a successful crossing of the demarcation between white and black but it is also an intimation of sacrifice and death. Toni is distraught after she and Gustav have consummated their relationship and in an attempt to comfort her Gustav gives her the cross 'indem er sich über sie neigte' (while he leaned over her) (3, 238). The 'leaning over' seems to denote a particularly sinister aspect of Gustav's behaviour at this point; it is a gesture of domination and power: the night with Toni had established Gustav as a spectre of death.

The stipulation of colour is still present but Toni can blush, which is recognised as a developmental factor in the dichotomy between black and white even though skin colour is omnipresent in the relationship between Gustav and Toni. The dreamy state that Toni inhabits is similar to the dream state of Friedrich of Homburg in the first scene of the play, *Prinz Friedrich von Homburg* (2, 1, i, 537). It is indicative of the experience of an intolerable dilemma in the character which can only be dealt with in the unconscious. Homburg's desire is fame and glory; Toni's dilemma is the desire to move into the world of the white community, recognising that it also involves her death: the poisonous cup is an omnipresent reminder.

The conjunction of the golden cross which Toni fondles leads towards Gustav's death wish as a repetition compulsion, from which he seeks relief by reliving the trauma of Marianne's death (3, 235). Gustav tells Toni about the circumstances of Marianne's death and his responsibility in it. We ascertain from the manner of Gustav's telling, that Marianne had sacrificed herself for him. Thus, the cross takes on a special significance as a portal to death: first, as the cross on which Christ died as a sacrifice for humanity, which gives it a universal significance and secondly, as the cross which the guillotined Marianne, who bears a remarkable resemblance to Toni, had given him (3, 237). Gustav's behaviour, the gift of the cross and the token engagement suggests that Gustav does not require a reciprocated love but a joint death. Wucherpennig states that Toni's body, which knows more than the head, knows what the stranger's intentions are, which is to join her in the death for which she is prepared.³⁶ She tells her mother subsequently that 'ich eher zehnfachen Todes sterben, als zugeben werde, daß diesem Jüngling [...] auch nur ein Haar gekrümmt werde' (I would rather die ten-fold deaths than accept that this youth [...] would have one hair put out of place) (3, 241).

³⁵ Hans Jakob Werlen, 'Seduction and Betrayal: Race and Gender in Kleist's "Die Verlobung in St Domingo"', *Monatshefte*, vol. 84, no. 4 (1992), 459-471.

³⁶ Wucherpennig (2008), p. 213.

Gustav and Toni are each willing participants in the love-making about which Gustav then reflects as to where it would lead ‘als er sich wieder gesammelt hatte, wußte nicht, wohin ihn die Tür, die er begangen, führen würde’ (when he collected himself again he did not know where the door which he had opened would lead) (3, 238). He may well be confused, for his task was to support his family group by bringing provisions or aid and he had let himself be diverted by a sexual escapade. The door opened through the consummation of sex leads to uncertainty, for the relationship between Gustav and Toni had changed with the ‘betrothal’. Toni herself is now subject to death, having transgressed Congo’s edict not to engage in sex with white strangers (3, 223). However, the sexual encounter with Gustav has changed Toni, for he has awakened in her an ideal of humanity.³⁷ However, as Harnischfeger indicates, in this period love was not a sound basis for marriage. Family interests and the community governed this process and Gustav and Toni’s almost frivolous betrothal would have been a strange arrangement and would carry within it the seeds of its own destruction.³⁸

Toni now stands between two communities. She has given herself to a white man and she no longer considers herself part of the black community. Hence, she is disturbed and is as if dead in the aftermath of the night with Gustav for ‘er trug sie, die wie eine Leblose von seiner Schulter niederhing’ (he carried her over his shoulder and she hung down as if she were lifeless) (3, 239). In this period of lifelessness, Toni reassembles her identity, which is now housed in the white community. In his confusion Gustav offers marriage and an idyllic existence on the banks of the Aar in Switzerland almost as reparation. He asks for forgiveness and says ‘daß nur, im Taumel wunderbar verwirrter Sinne, eine Mischung von Begierde und Angst, die sie ihm eingeflößt, ihn zu einer solchen Tat habe verführen können’ (that only in the confusion of the extraordinary alienated senses, a mixture of desire and fear which she had inculcated in him had led him astray to commit such a deed) (3, 239).

Gustav claims to have been destabilised through desire and fear. Desire and fear, particularly fear, are emotions which lead to stress and in stress we seek solace and comfort. We have seen how Gustav seeks maternal comfort with Babekan and he has found sexual solace with Toni also to allay his anxiety as to her true intentions. He questioned if she was to be trusted and after a night of intimacy he believes that this is now the case ‘inzwischen sah er so viel ein, daß er gerettet, und in dem Haus, in welchem er

³⁷ Bernard Greiner, *Kleists Dramen und Erzählungen* (Tübingen: Francke, 2000), p. 432.

³⁸ Harnischfeger (2001), p. 279.

sich befand, für ihn nichts von dem Mädchen zu fürchten war' (in the meantime he realised this much, that he had been saved and had nothing to fear from the girl in the house in which he found himself) (3, 238). This episode is another example of the failure to accept the ambivalence of skin colour as a determining factor in the relationship with Toni: Gustav ignores it. Toni's futile confrontation with Babekan in which she tries to convince her not to harm Gustav is evidence of her own change of heart, but Babekan is still bent on murder (3, 240-241).

In attempting to set the final trap for Gustav and his family, Babekan speaks of the revolutionary troop movements and how he has to keep out of sight. The result of her stratagem is to confuse him 'Es gelang ihr, den Fremden dadurch in einen Wirbel von Unruhe zu stürzen' (She succeeded in throwing the stranger into a maelstrom of agitation) (3, 244). However, she also allays his fears, thus creating an atmosphere of uncertainty, which can only ultimately lead to a sense of paranoia.

Toni is shown as faithful to Gustav: she thwarts her mother's plot to delay the arrival of the *Möwenweiher* party (3, 246), and she prays in sincerity to the Virgin Mary for support in furthering her relationship with him, her emancipation and eventual move to Europe (3, 247-248). However, the fear of being traduced is strong in Gustav, who misunderstands why Toni has tied him up on the arrival of Congo. He takes his revenge by shooting her dead 'knirschend vor Wut' (grinding his teeth in rage) (3, 257), when his family rescue him. This is the visceral expression of hate felt in the body. When he becomes aware of the mistake he has made in killing Toni, Gustav turns the pistol on himself and follows Toni into death.

After his arrival and having established the comfort of a mother transference with Babekan and having seen Toni in the full light of the room, the stranger refers to his first sight of Toni at the door of the house and offers an unambiguous invitation to a joint death with the poisonous cup. He enjoys the attraction of her face and figure, which delight him: 'bis auf die Farbe die ihn anstößig war' (except for the colour which was offensive to him) (3, 235). The invitation to drink together from a poisoned cup is unambiguous and there is a strong reason why Gustav is so set on dying in the company of Toni: the death he is seeking with Toni is one which will exculpate him from the death which he did not attain with Marianne. Marianne was sentenced and condemned in his absence by the French Revolutionary Tribunal for his ill-judged, incendiary comments. He was prepared to die on the guillotine with her but she denied knowing him 'diesen Menschen kenne ich nicht' (I do not know this person) (3, 238), and thus sacrificed herself for him. Gustav is caught in

the psychological toils of the repetition compulsion in which he is forced to re-enact this trauma in his life until he find a resolution for it. His need to die is a form of reparation.³⁹ Gustav is attempting to re-enact the death of Marianne in which he would now be a willing participant, bear no guilt and allay the trauma of Marianne's death. Therefore, Gustav was the cause of Marianne's death in Straßburg and is now also the cause of Toni's death in St. Domingo. He is an emissary of death and the pointers in the story lead one to conclude that death is the expected outcome determined by repetition compulsion.

Gustav carries the guilt for Marianne's judicial murder, and this guilt cannot be paid off unless he too were to die and follow Marianne into death; but he is presented as a naive, immature young man with a strong mother transference. The attachment neediness that Gustav shows does not allow him to go into death alone; he needs a companion just as Marianne would have accompanied him. The presence of the mother/caregiver reassures the infant that it is in a place of safety and the presence in death of another for the needy, attachment-hungry adult gives the illusion that the portal to death leads to a place of safety.⁴⁰ The parallel with Kleist's own death in the company of Henriette Vogel only months after this story was written is striking. The story was written in the spring of 1811 (3, 827) and the joint death of Kleist and Henriette followed in November of the same year. It is significant too, that the manner of death, a shot through the breast for Toni and a head shot for Gustav mirrors the murder of Henrietta Vogel and the suicide of Kleist.

The tone of this story is dark, as many of Kleist's texts are, and seems to be a rehearsal for Kleist's own demise. Destabilised and unsure through the conflict of skin colour and social dislocation, Gustav acts impetuously. Hate is the predominant affect in the community which only exacerbates Gustav's confusion as he seeks to dispel the trauma of Marianne's death. In the following chapter we deal with the final story which Kleist wrote before his death, continuing the feeling of hopelessness and despair, which was such a feature of his personal life in his last year.

³⁹Jean Laplanche and Jean-Bertrand Pontalis , *The Language of Psychoanalysis*, trans. by Donald Nicholson-Smith (London: Karnac, 1988), p. 98.

⁴⁰ Ernest Jones, 'On Dying Together' and 'An Unusual Case of Dying Together', in *Essential Papers on Suicide*, ed. by John T. Maltzberger and Mark J. Goldblatt (New York: New York University Press, 1996), pp. 9-19.

Chapter 9

Der Findling: the Replaced Child in a Dystopian World

Der Findling (The Foundling) (3, 265 - 283) is an unusual, dense story full of ambiguities and distortions of narrative which Kleist fosters deliberately. This makes the spadework on the story laborious; through a process of counter-transference the reader is pulled into Kleist's confusing world, in which he or she become equally confused. He lays false trails, provides inadequate information in the progress of the story and provokes an air of the uncanny in the Piachi household. These factors make the narrator unreliable, which adds to the dystopian atmosphere of the narrative. In an attempt to obtain some clarity the three main characters, Piachi, Elvire and Nicolo, will be treated individually. Then the symbolic thread of locks and keys, the replaced child and the *Doppelgänger* motif will be discussed. This scheme leads to some minor and unavoidable repetitions but is an attempt to clarify Kleist's deliberate confusion.

One significant confusion which Kleist fosters, is the status of Nicolo, the *Findling* (foundling) of the title. Nicolo is not a foundling because he has a name and knew his parents. What, therefore, is the meaning of this word? Irmgard Wagner writes that the epistemological basis of the title is found in geology, where the *Findling* is an erratic block of stone found in an area otherwise devoid of such material. The origin of these blocks was inexplicable for early nineteenth-century geologists but, we now know, them to have been uprooted and conveyed by the movement of ice sheets to an alien sites in the Ice Age.¹ It is a stranger in the landscape and disturbs its harmony in much the same way in which Nicolo, as a stranger in the Piachi family, disturbs the harmony of the Piachi household; though to the extent that there is harmony before Nicolo arrives is also questionable.

In nineteen pages, Kleist has provided a scathing criticism of ecclesiastical, social and familial dysfunction and also an acute psychological study of envy, hate and sexual pathology. He has written a story in which fundamental nihilism leads to the supposition that nothing good can come about: there is no future in which the familial, social and ecclesiastical can come into harmony with themselves or with each other. He uses the device of the character of Nicolo as the replaced child for Piachi's dead son, Paolo, to

¹ Irmgard Wagner, 'Der Findling: Erratic Signifier in Kleist and Geology', *The German Quarterly*, vol. 64, no. 3 (1991), 281-295 (p. 281).

disrupt an already introverted family. It is the fact of the replacement of one son for another which allows the Piachi family pathology to ferment with fatal results. A child, which replaces a deceased child in the family, is subject to particular vicissitudes, which are raised in papers by Albert C. Cain and Barbara S. Cain and Andrea Sabbadini.² The family in mourning for a dead child creates an atmosphere which is strong in the feeling of the uncanny through a sense of timelessness, spatial constriction and isolation, which is the subject of Freud's paper, 'Das Unheimliche' (The Uncanny).³ A feature in the concept of the replaced child, Nicolo, arises out of this particular family pathology, which creates a sense of depersonalisation so that he can embrace the metaphorical other, the dead Colino, as a *Doppelgänger*.

The *Doppelgänger* is the apparition of a living person as a double. The *Doppelgänger* motive as presented by the Nicolo/Colino dyad is discussed in Otto Rank's paper *Der Doppelgänger* and by Peter Dettmering, in his 2006 publication.⁴ Dettmering relies on Rank's paper, which is more detailed. The *Doppelgänger* in literature is generally depicted as an unhelpful, disruptive figure, split off from the subject, as in the case of Kleist's play, *Amphitryon* (1, 377-461). In this play, Jupiter and Merkur are divine doubles of Amphitryon and Sosias respectively. In *Findling*, the *Doppelgänger* is not so much an identical simulacrum as a substitute but with equally malign intentions and effect. Kleist has with his usual skill subverted the concept in this story, in which the *Doppelgänger* is not identical to the subject but a separate physical being, but also a threat to the other, Elvire. As Anthony Stephens says, the *Doppelgänger* is a mere substitute: Nicolo is deemed merely to be in place of Paolo.⁵ His effect, however, transcends the implied passivity of substitution. He is both an unsatisfactory son and malign figure who exercises a disturbing and harmful influence in the story and whose presence impels Elvire towards death.

Much of Kleist research of this story has concentrated on the dysfunction and evil, which arises in the family from Piachi's incomprehensible act of taking into his care Nicolo, who is afflicted with the plague. This act leads to the death of Piachi's own son and the adoption of Nicolo. Werner Hoffmeister considers the story to be unusual for Kleist in that

² Albert C. Cain and Barbara S. Cain, 'On replacing a Child', *Journal of the American Academy of Child Psychiatry*, vol. 3, no. 3 (1964), 443-456; Andrea Sabbadini, 'The Replacement Child', *Contemporary Psychoanalysis*, vol. 24, no. 4 (1988), 528-547.

³ Sigmund Freud (1919), 'Das Unheimliche', *GW*, 12, pp. 229-268 (The Uncanny, SE, 17, pp. 217-256).

⁴ Otto Rank (1914), 'Der Doppelgänger', in *Psychoanalytische Literatur Interpretationen*, ed. by Jens Malte Fischer (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1980), pp. 104-188; Peter Dettmering, *Zwillings und Doppelgängerphantasie: Literaturstudien* (Würzburg: Königshausen and Neumann, 2006), pp. 123-127.

⁵ Anthony Stephens, *Heinrich von Kleist: The Dramas and the Stories* (Oxford: Berg, 1994), p. 232.

it is an example of invincible evil without redeeming features and without redemption. This is notionally determined by the uncertain origin of Nicolo and Hoffmeister also points to the unfathomable nature of evil through Piachi's vengeful and determined descent into Hell.⁶ Hoffmeister quotes from Thomas Mann's introduction to an edition of Kleist's stories in which Mann deems this story to be on an equal artistic level with *Michael Kohlhaas* and states that it is 'völlig einmalig, aus aller Hergebrachtheit und Ordnung fallend, radikal in der Hingabe an seine excentrischen Stoffe bis zur Tollheit, bis zur Hysterie' (totally singular, leaving aside all tradition and order and radical in its submission to its eccentric subject matter, to madness, to hysteria).⁷ Robert E. Helbling, Gerhardt Greiner and Günter Oesterle join Hoffmeister in considering that Kleist is concerned with the preponderance of evil in the world, which is demonstrated through the self-interest, false and dissembled emotions and lack of relational affect shown by the characters in the story.⁸ Greiner also connects the story to the Kantian principle of problematic subjectivity, in which nothing is as it seems and so places it outside ethical parameters. For Oesterle, evil is intrinsic to the story.⁹ He identifies Nicolo's abrupt change, from submissive to aggressive behaviour, after he had been discovered by Piachi attempting to rape Elvire. He identifies it as a focal point in disclosing the nature of evil which had run as a thread through the story. Erika Beroth concurs that the Kantian principle of relativity and subjectivity provides no absolute basis for what is.¹⁰ The Kleistian 'green glass' permits no ultimate truth which also makes fugitive the identity of the characters in the story and allows them to appear only as substitutes for others.

Stephens, however, suggests that the failure to read the narrative as a parody of Rousseau and the positive Enlightenment view of adoptive paternity and institutional religion with the accompanying ambiguities which this arouses, has led to multiple perspectives of the internal logic of the story, in which things are never quite as they seem. This makes the story 'a tour de force of experimental narration'.¹¹ Stephens recognises Kleist's intention in writing the story, which was to hold up a mirror to the society of the day. Kleist had already done this in 1809 in *Katechismus der Deutschen*

⁶ Werner Hoffmeister, 'Heinrich von Kleists "Findling"', *Monatshefte*, vol. 58, no. 1 (1966), 49-63 (p. 50).

⁷ Thomas Mann, 'Kleist und seine Erzählungen', *Nachlese Prosa 1951-1955* (Berlin: Fischer, 1956), p. 9, p. 22.

⁸ Robert E. Helbling, *The Major Works of Heinrich von Kleist: A Study* (New York: New Directions, 1975), p. 116; Gerhard Greiner, *Von "zerspaltenen Herzen" und der "gebrechlichen Einrichtung der Welt": Versuch einer Phänomenologie der Gewalt by Kleist* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1989), p. 113.

⁹ Günter Oesterle, 'Der Findling: Redlichkeit versus Verstellung – oder zwei Arten böse zu werden', in *Interpretationen: Kleists Erzählungen*, ed. by Walter Hinderer (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1998), 157-180.

¹⁰ Erika Beroth, *Heinrich von Kleist: Geschlecht, Erkenntnis, Wirklichkeit* (New York: Peter Lang, 2003), p. 97.

¹¹ Stephens (1994), p. 235.

Abgefasst nach dem Spanischen, zum Gebrauch für Kinder und Alte (Catechism of the Germans, composed in the manner of the Spanish, for the use of children and adults) (3, 479-491). The eighth chapter particularly expresses criticism of the money grubbing and loss of spiritual values, which is also reflected in the dystopian world of Piachi. Marianne Schuller confirms this approach by holding that the basis of the story is one of exchange and trade, in which characters are traded for each other in exchanges, in which blood ties are non-existent and in which family feeling is absent.¹² The lack of empathy of the characters for each other and the lack of blood ties are seen to lead to the fatal outcome of the story. This sense of disassociation is also identified by Marjorie Gelus.¹³ She highlights the sense of uncertainty, mystery and confusion which compounds the atmosphere of dislocation in the story. Information about the characters is provided in an episodic, limited and haphazard manner, which also engenders the sense of the uncanny in the Piachi household in that statements are made about the characters, which are patently untrue. The delineation of the narrative is also topsy-turvy for Jürgen Schröder: who claims that nothing is in the right place.¹⁴ Kleist has reproduced a world, which is senseless: there is only a notional societal order full of co-incidence, without justice and without redemption. However, Schröder does make a plea for Nicolo's reputation and suggests that Nicolo is not the sole cause of the fatal denouement and that he is a victim as much as Piachi and Elvire; this ground-breaking insight also provides a necessary balance to the understanding of the narrative.

Irmgard Wagner writes: 'This is a story of sex and violence, of deceit, cruelty, and greed, where all the laws of man and God seem to have lost their validity'.¹⁵ The three major structures of the story - the familial, the societal in terms of contract and law and the religious/metaphysical - all fail and they fail on a temporal and social basis. The sense of time is obscured without clear information about the relative ages of Piachi, Elvire and Nicolo. The lack of information about the relative ages of the characters leads to a failure to establish a coherent familial order for without this, Nicolo is sufficiently unfettered to continue his liaison with his mistress after marriage, can incestuously assault the step-

¹² Marianne Schuller, *Moderne Verluste: Literarischer Prozeß und Wissen* (Basel: Stroemfeld Nexus, 1997), p. 16.

¹³ Marjorie Gelus, 'Displacement of Meaning: Kleist's "Der Findling"', *The German Quarterly*, vol. 55, no. 4 (1982), 541-553, (p. 542).

¹⁴ Jürgen Schröder, "'Der Findling", Ein Plädoyer für Nicolo', in *Heinrich von Kleist: Neue Wege der Forschung*, ed. by Anton Phillip Knittel and Inka Kording (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2003), pp. 40-58 (p. 54).

¹⁵ Wagner (1991), p. 282

mother and oedipally evict the father from the house.¹⁶ All action leads ultimately also to the confusion of the reader. Günter Blamberger sees the story as a Kleistian criticism of the educational model of the bourgeois family. The authority of the father is paramount and tyrannical, which prevents a psychological emancipation of the child, and which is further hindered by the dysfunctional relationship of the parents.¹⁷ In summary, the perception of Kleist research about this story is one of darkness and violence in which the predominant factor is one of disorder and evil. None of the characters display benevolent human characteristics. They each live in an environment that is closed off and dystopian and which separates one individual from the other. This sense is symbolically reflected in the focus on the use of keys and locks, which are used principally to hide and close off rooms. It is a symbolic representation, too, of the inability for the occupants of the Piachi house to have good-enough psychological experiences, for the characters are caught in a paranoid-schizoid position, in which projective distortions confuse relationships.¹⁸ This creates an atmosphere in the Piachi household akin to that which Freud identified as the uncanny.¹⁹ The uncanny is effected through the dead/live Colino who occupies a cavernous space in the mind of Elvire, whom Nicolo startles mortally when he brings her face to face with his *Doppelgänger* figure.

The sense of the uncanny is also fostered by the sense of ambivalence which the *Doppelgänger* arouses and which Freud, quoting E. Jentsch's article *Zur Psychologie des Unheimlichen*, also questions: is this figure alive or dead?²⁰ In a series of three programmes about prehistoric ancestors of *homo sapiens* made at the University of Glasgow for BBC2, the team created life-like figures of, among others, Neanderthal man. When this figure was unveiled at the end of the first programme, one of the presenters, Professor Alice Roberts, said in an alarmed manner that she was 'freaked out'. The other presenter, Dr George McGavin, called the figure 'uncanny'. The spontaneous reactions to this figure demonstrates the extent to which the unexpected can alarm us and the extent to which a lifeless figure can create anxiety.²¹ Much the same feeling pervades the appearance of the *Doppelgänger* in the story.

¹⁷ Günter Blamberger, 'Der Findling', in *Kleist Handbuch: Leben-Werk-Wirkung*, ed. by Ingo Breuer (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2013), 133-136 (p. 135).

¹⁸ Benigna Gerisch, "'...und unter ihr die weite, öde, entstzliche See': Psychoanalytische Anmerkungen zur Adoptionstragödie und Desymbolisierung in Kleists Der Findling' in *Freiburger literaturpsychologische Gespräche*, ed. by Ortrud Gutjahr, 27 (2008), pp. 227-247 (p. 232).

¹⁹ Freud (1919), GW. 12, p. 267 (SE. 17, p. 252).

²⁰ Freud (1919), GW. 12, p. 238 (SE. 17, p. 227); E. Jentsch, 'Zur Psychologie des Unheimlichen', *Psychiatrisch - Neurologische Wochenschrift*, vol. 8, nos. 22 and 23 (1906), 195-198, 203-205.

²¹ Julian Thomas (prod), *Prehistoric Autopsy 1/3* (BBC2, 2018).

These anxieties arise generally from feelings of infant abandonment: the silence and solitude created by the absent mother and the darkness of the shuttered room where nothing is experienced as alive and in which the infant experiences helplessness. There is also the feeling of attendant danger created by these circumstances, which lead ultimately to a fear of death and resurrection of the dead (typified by today's profusion and variety of zombie literature and films) who will not leave us in peace. The revenant is not a homely figure. We deal with these fears repeatedly by confronting the feelings aroused by the uncanny revenant as enshrined in the myths and folk-tales of our culture.

A folk repository of this sense of the uncanny is found in the stories of the Brüder Grimm, many of which instil a feeling of unease, fear or terror due to the machinations of superior, even supernatural forces against mere mortals who do, however, usually triumph. We tell ourselves these stories in order to make sense of the upsets and difficulties of everyday living, for there is also something in the human psyche for phylogenetic reasons to do with survival in the face of danger. The ever present, but unconscious, fear of death also requires us to embrace, even today, such feelings which lead us to fight or flight. Through awareness of our own consciousness, we fear death which hangs over our lives as an inevitable termination of our earthly existence. We live thus in a state of avoidance and have devised rituals to deal with the fear of death. The certainty that the dead are dead and cannot remain to haunt us is also a strong unconscious hope that the loved ones are not departed, muddled up with the fear that they might reappear. It is the possibility of the reappearance of the dead which creates the sense of the uncanny. This is the experience which Elvire undergoes when she sees the *Doppelgänger*, Nicolo, resurrected as the dead Colino.

The Grimm story which illustrates particularly this sense of the uncanny is *Märchen von einem, der auszog, das Fürchten zu lernen* (Story of One who Left Home in Order to Learn Fear).²² It is the story of an unimaginative, unfeeling and rather dim second son who experiences no fear and, therefore, does not shiver. He does not recognise the dead individuals he meets as dead, whether they are hanging from a gibbet or are lying in a coffin. This young man disassociates affect from the unconscious fears which the dead arouse. It is through the unfeeling part of his psyche, that he is able to overcome fear, which has not been admitted into consciousness. It is the unspoken fear and repression of what it means to be dead, which creates the sense of the uncanny; repressed knowledge of

²² Brüder Grimm, *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* (Munich: Winkler, 1988), pp. 51-62.

death returns us to the fear in the living. Freud argues, too, that death and dead bodies as prevalent in the Grimm story are a prime source of the sense of the uncanny.²³

The uncanny, isolated, locked sunless habitation of the Piachi family is a place where denial, deceit and suspicion ferment behind closed doors and in which the dead Colino occupies cavernous space in the psyche of Elvire, to the exclusion of her husband and her step-son; the dead Colino occupies as much psychological space as a living person. This is an environment into which the replaced child is thrust with the expectation that it might flourish. He does not and this is borne out by the particular circumstances of the Piachi household, which mirrors the development of pathological traits in such a child as well as in the parents. This is particularly fostered by the use of keys and locks which dominate the comings and goings in the house and are a metaphor for closure experienced as deadening funereal gloom.

Diethelm Brüggemann compares the Piachi household to a Masonic lodge, cut off from the world and nature, a building without windows, lacking sunlight and which is secretively and obsessively concerned with locks and keys.²⁴ Keys play a significant metaphorical role in the story as source of opportunity and denial and contribute principally to the sense of closed-off, circumscribed space in which the characters move. Doors are kept locked or are locked after a room has been vacated. Thus, when Nicolo wishes secretly to enter his bedroom on returning from the Carnival dressed in the garb of a Genoese knight, he unaccountably finds that the door to his room is locked. Elvire, standing on a chair, sees him and falls to the ground in a faint believing him to be Colino. Nicolo does not want Piachi, Elvire or his wife, Constanza, to know that he had been consorting with Xaviera Tartini, his mistress. He snatches the key ring from Elvire's hips, lets himself into his bedroom and throws the keys back into the room. He then dissembles about the event, feigning not to know what had happened (3, 270-271). Elvire is silent about her experience which results in a fever and Piachi is kept in ignorance. We, the readers, have a hint as to what might be the significance of this event for it is accompanied by the Kleistian escapist fainting when the world is out of kilter for Elvire, who believes she has been brought face to face with the dead Colino.

This event is the first attack, though unconscious, by Nicolo on Elvire's sexuality; the keys he tears from her hips have both binding, loosening and phallic attributes. Schuller

²³ Freud (1919), GW. 12, p. 254 (SE. 17, p. 241).

²⁴ Diethelm Brüggemann, *Kleist. Die Magie* (Würzburg: Königshausen and Neumann, 2004), p. 47.

writes that the key opens the approach to a desired object, but it can also hinder it.²⁵ This event, then, is an intimation of the development of the relationship between Elvire and Nicolo: of Nicolo's desire and Elvire's ostensible frigidity. But we are misled again by the narrator, for Elvire's actual erotic impulse is devoted to Colino and misunderstood by Nicolo and this confusion is the sense of release and closure in the symbolism of keys. Subsequently, Elvire opens the door to the room in which she sees Nicolo making arrangements with Xaviera Tartini's maid, blushes and closes the door. Nicolo is erotically aroused by Elvire's blushing response and misunderstands this as an awakened interest in him, arising from her habitual melancholia (3, 271, 273). He fails to apprehend the closing of the door as rejection, as a termination.

A further incident involves Nicolo listening at and peering through the keyhole of Elvire's door when she is communing orgasmically with Colino. When she leaves the room, observed by Nicolo, she locks her door with a key from the key ring at her hip (3, 274). Nicolo, however, is deprived of the permanent possession of keys although, by this stage, Nicolo is in possession of Piachi's property through inheritance. Piachi has not given up the keys to the house and Nicolo is obliged to obtain a master key in order to investigate Elvire's room, after witnessing her encounter with the fantasised Colino. He opens the door to Elvire's room stealthily and locks it on departure (3, 274). To gain possession of the key signifies initiation and Nicolo remains uninitiated. He tries to remedy this with the rape of Elvire, which would be both a usurpation of Piachi and an initiation as master of the house. Wrestling the keys from Piachi also constitutes an oedipal victory for the son. The possession of keys signifies locking to deny and unlocking to reveal but also to mislead and could devolve power on Nicolo.

Nicolo is mistaken when he appears to have understood his relationship with Elvire 'so glaubte Nicolo den Schlüssel zu allen rätselhaften Auftritten dieser Art, die er erlebt hat, gefunden zu haben' (Nicolo then believed that he had found the key to all mysterious scenes of this type which he had experienced) (3, 278). But the key to his mis/understanding is the anagram game with the names of Nicolo/Colino, in which he misinterprets Elvire's tears as erotic response and interest, even though she pushes the letters that had formed Colino's name apart, thus indicating her disinterest in Nicolo's approach. In the subsequent attempted rape of Elvire 'ging er die Tür zu verriegeln, fand aber daß sie schon verschlossen war' (he went to bolt the door but found that it was already locked) (3, 280). Piachi, as the paterfamilias still possesses the key to the house 'da er

²⁵ Schuller (1997), p. 37.

immer den Schlüssel bei sich trug' (since he always carried the key) (3, 280), the implication being that he had a master key to all the locks in the house. It is with this key, which Nicolo had failed to wrest from Piachi, that Piachi can open the door to Elvire's bedroom and surprise Nicolo in the act of rape. The key as a means of gaining access and of denying entry is a phallic symbol with the insertion of the key in the lock. It is a metaphorical object through which Elvire's genital sexuality was to be awakened.

Elvire's unawakened sexuality is caught in the psychological trauma experienced by the thirteen-year old girl and also lies at the root of problems which arise for Nicolo, the replaced child, in this dystopian world of keys, locks and isolation and a withered knowledge of the real world. Sabbadini writes about the curiosity that we all have about our origins, which are strong in a replaced child who has not had the opportunity to exhaust the parental body. It is particularly strong in adolescence and a failure to obtain answers frustrates the Socratic injunction 'Know Thyself', the motto, which was carved in the forecourt of the Temple of Apollo at Delphi. This desire is connected particularly to the child's sexual curiosity about its origins which, Sabbadini says, even in a healthy family, is never quite satisfied.²⁶ It is thus particularly strong through infant adoption when the child has no knowledge of the parents whatsoever. An instance of this can be cited from a documentary film called *The Other One*, which was made about Bob Weir, a guitarist in the 60s rock band, *The Grateful Dead*. He was adopted at birth and says, when his substitute father, the band leader Jerry Garcia dies, that he needed to know his origins and goes about tracing his parents which, to his great satisfaction, he finds. The finding gives him insight into his own identity. The satisfaction of this urge to know our origins is endemic.

Moreover, the gaps in experience of the child which the removal of the natural parents fractures the sense of continuity of living and leads to a sense of depersonalisation, which is symbolically marked by Nicolo taking on the identity of Colino. The sense of identity of a replaced child is often fugitive. That one is not oneself, also arises out of the failed adaptation to a good, constant object, which Elvire, as the putative mother, is not. The replaced child may also be treated as the embodiment of a memory rather than a person in its own right, which may lead to problems of self-identity, particularly in adolescence.

²⁶ Sabbadini (1988), p. 528.

Cain and Cain reflect ‘The image of the dead child casts its shadow upon his replacement’.²⁷

The responsibility for the dead child’s demise is frequently put at the door of the replaced child.²⁸ This arises from primary process thinking, in which time and logic are subverted by unconscious contradictions in the parental mind, which cannot accept the death as either being without cause or the responsibility of the parents; it is a responsibility which a parent cannot accept. A failure by the parents to truly mourn the dead child and then to complete the process of mourning presents an obstacle to the integration of the new child in the family.²⁹ Features that manifest in the families of such children are the pre-morbid personality of the mother as depressive, phobic or compulsive and the parents’ excessive narcissistic investment in the child that had died. The home that the replaced child then comes to live in is of a funereal character, in which psychological space is occupied by the dead instead of the living. A further consideration is that the parents may impose the identity of the dead child on to the living child who is then deemed never good enough.³⁰ In the parents’ phantasy the dead child is perfect and without stain, which is an impossible model for the replaced child to replicate.

Cain and Cain also discuss the maladaptive behaviour which some of these replaced children bring into their new families and which arises from the loss and disorientation about their environment. But they are also clear in stressing, that through the wide range of human adaptability, basically intact, well-functioning children may also be raised in maladaptive households although these do not necessarily come to the attention of the professional.³¹ In the case of Nicolo, however, we are guided by the narrator’s negative view, in that he was taken into a house which was not welcoming but depressive. Elvire’s demeanour in the household is one of perpetual mourning. She is presented as having ‘einen stillen Zug von Traurigkeit im Gemüt’ (a quiet trait of sadness in her disposition) (3, 268). She has no psychological space to accommodate Nicolo or indeed her husband and is narcissistically obsessed with her own melancholia, rooted in the figure of Colino.

We notice the maladaptive features in Nicolo when Piachi initially looks at the boy carefully. The narrator gives us the face of an estranged individual in which affect and empathy are absent (3, 266). Brüggemann argues that Nicolo is neither the innocent child

²⁷ Cain and Cain (1964), p. 451.

²⁸ Cain and Cain (1964), p. 448.

²⁹ Cain and Cain (1964), pp. 451-452.

³⁰ Cain and Cain (1964), p. 446.

³¹ Cain and Cain (1964), p. 449, p. 454.

nor does he have feelings of guilt but acts as one who knows no guilt.³² Nicolo knows of his illness and knows that the proper course of conduct is to keep his distance from the healthy population. Instead, he approaches Piachi, discloses his sickness, grasps Piachi's hands and weeps on them (3, 265). He had entreated Piachi 'in der Art der Flehenden' (in the manner of supplicants) (3, 265); that is, not *as* a supplicant but in the *manner* of one.³³ His supplication is inauthentic and has a learned quality; it is an entreaty not grounded in real feeling. He imitates the supplicant for he knows no better because he has no inner truth and without it, can feel no guilt; we can draw no other conclusions about Nicolo's character or his experience of his dead parents than those presented by the narrator as Nicolo's behaviour. He asks to be transported out of town and not be taken back by the authorities to the hospital where his parents had died. Piachi, in his folly, takes him into his carriage and all, Piachi, Paolo and Nicolo, are detained by the authorities and consigned to the hospital where Paolo dies. The responsibility for Paolo's death is his father's, for Piachi knew that Nicolo was already diseased. Subsequently, Piachi takes Nicolo into his carriage, where he replaces the deceased Paolo. Nicolo's maladaptive behaviour is demonstrated further, when Piachi weeps for his deceased son and Nicolo is silent and cracks nuts with his teeth in an angry, oral-sadistic manner (3, 267). However, Piachi's comment subsequently about the 'acquisition' of Nicolo reduces him to a financial package 'da er, auf eine leicht begreifliche Weise, den Jungen in dem Maße lieb gewonnen, als er ihm teuer zu stehen gekommen war' (since he, for easily understood reasons, had learned to love the boy to the extent that he had been an expensive acquisition) (3, 267). For Piachi then, the substitution of Nicolo for Paolo is akin to a commercial transaction, which brings him satisfaction as much as his commercial interest might but in which he takes no moral responsibility, and for which he has no affect for the death of Paolo. Piachi's feelings about the replaced Paolo are those of satisfaction at having struck a good bargain; there is no empathy for Nicolo himself. We are also left to wonder to what extent Piachi had parental feelings for Nicolo and in the development of the story it is clear that there are none. The burden of Paolo's death weighs neither heavily on Nicolo as a child, who feels no guilt, nor does it on Piachi, who is unconscious of the moral implications of his actions.

Nicolo is, thus, brought into a loveless household where he is nothing more than a commercial acquisition. When Nicolo meets Elvire he stands before her 'so fremd und steif' (so unfamiliar and rigid) (3, 267). We may excuse Nicolo's manner as being somewhat inhibited in his strange, new environment but these indications which the

³² Brüggemann (2004), p. 30.

³³ Brüggemann (2004), p. 30

narrator gives suggest that all is not well with Nicolo. Thus, there is something alienating about Nicolo, whether from the loss of his parents or other issues we are not told; it is enough to say that he arrives in the Piachi household as a damaged personality: impervious to good influences which were, in any case, wanting. This is the child brought into a cold, shut off house in which there is little life, no sunlight and no view of the outside world. The Piachi household mirrors Nicolo's own impenetrable personality in many respects.

Both Piachi and Elvire engage in a pseudo-mourning for Paolo. Piachi weeps briefly in the carriage after he has taken Nicolo on board and in Rome, Piachi introduces Nicolo to Elvire 'unter einer kurzen Erzählung des Vorfalls,' (with a short explanation of the incident) (3, 267). This short explanation of the incident is hardly sufficient to deal with the death of a son, which supports the thesis that Piachi is both unfeeling and accepts no moral responsibility for it. Elvire weeps heartily at the thought of her step-son, whom she had loved, but then deals with Nicolo by embracing him and slotting him efficiently into Paolo's space. Nicolo is given Paolo's bed and clothes and so takes Paolo's place without further mourning or comment on the part of the parents.

The significant criticism that Piachi and Elvire have of Nicolo in respect of his friendship with the monks of the Carmelite monastery and his interest in women respectively seem major obstacles to an equable relationship with the parents (3, 267-268). Piachi abhors the bigotry of the monks for he fears that his wealth is threatened through their cupidity, a projection that he internalises as being the victim of grasping forces. Nicolo's continued relationship with Xaviera Tartini, the Bishop of Rome's (that is, the Pope) mistress is also a factor in Elvire's disapproval. Xaviera seduced the fifteen-year old Nicolo and her sexuality, as does Nicolo's, presents a threat to Elvire's own frozen sexual development (3, 267-268). Nicolo's marriage to Elvire's niece, Constanza, was to have terminated Nicolo's relationship with Xaviera, but Nicolo thwarts the wishes of his adoptive parents and continues his relationship with her (3, 270-271), and with the Carmelite monks (3, 270). The silence, the locked doors and the lack of relational behaviour in the house is sufficient to support the argument that the death cult in the Piachi household is enough to drive Nicolo into the world. Why would he want to make this domestic milieu the centre of his life? Nicolo thus lives a treacherous, in-between life on the cusp of discovery and disapproval and he would be at the mercy of parental feelings of condemnation, if he were discovered also nurturing the feelings of being not good enough. When Constanza dies in childbirth a year after the wedding, Nicolo resumes fully his association with the Carmelite monks and his relationship with Xaviera (3, 271).

The death of Constanza is a fulcrum in the story. Despite the coldness and deceit, Piachi, Elvire and Nicolo have managed to maintain a relational equilibrium in the household, which is now broken. Nicolo is enraged by the particularly manipulative behaviour of Piachi, who apprehends Xaviera's maid in the house carrying messages between Nicolo and Xaviera. Piachi then fabricates a message for Nicolo to meet Xaviera at the *Magdalenen-Kirche* (3, 272). In short, Piachi steals the note and forges a replacement. He then organises for Constanza's funeral cortege, arranged for the following day, to pass before Nicolo, who awaits Xaviera in the church. When Nicolo enquires of Piachi, who is being laid to rest, he receives the cold reply 'Xaviera Tarantini', though Nicolo is given the opportunity to see his deceased wife in the open casket (3, 272). Nicolo is deeply shamed and a violent hatred arises in his breast against Elvire, who he believed was responsible for this deceit, having seen Xaviera's maid in his room (3, 273).

Nicolo had been erotically aroused when Elvire surprised him with Xaviera's maid and had seen her blushes, which signified for him an element of feeling in Elvire's otherwise depressed and lifeless features (3, 273). She may have reacted to the idea of Nicolo's sexuality in contemplation of his relationship with Xaviera, which is thrust at her with the presence of the latter's maid, but she has also demonstrated a reservoir of Eros in her orgasmic communion with Colino; an event, which Nicolo then mistakenly believes is on his account (3, 273, 276).

Nicolo's feelings for Elvire are ambivalent in that hate and erotic desire are now conjoined for 'Der Gedanke, die Leidenschaft dieser, als ein Muster der Tugend umwandelnden Frau erweckt zu haben, schmeichelte ihn fast eben so sehr als die Begierde sich an ihr zu rächen' (The thought of having aroused the passion of this woman who was a model of immutable virtue flattered him almost as much as the desire to revenge himself on her) (3, 275-276). Kleist's keen psychological insight establishes this conundrum, which is confirmed by psychoanalytic technique. Freud first noticed the ambivalence of love/hate feelings in the transference which he discusses in one of his early case studies concerning the patient Dora.³⁴ In a footnote to that paper, Freud mentions the presence of the remorseless desire for revenge and the equally present love that the subject, Dora, felt for her friend. Hate is the reverse side of love and even in the most amiable relationships this element of hate arises with love. In Nicolo's case it is not so much love as erotic desire confused with hate; the hate arises from shame experienced as a narcissistic wound which

³⁴ Sigmund Freud (1905), 'Bruchstück einer Hysterie-Analyse', GW. 5, 163-286 (p. 284) (Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria, SE. 7, 7-122 (p. 120)).

threatens the integrity of his ego. Nicolo's hate, thus, is of a different category: in his hate he needs to inflict damage and revenge for the shame he has experienced due to the breach in the security of his identity. However, caught up in erotic desire, his wish is to inflict revenge through sexual means and the titillation of awakening Elvire to carnal sex is seductive to Nicolo. Through necessity, Nicolo makes amends with Piachi following the incident in the church, promises to desist in his relationship with Xaviera, but has no intention of doing so (3, 273).

Thus, Nicolo lives a double life. On the one hand he is an industrious and conscientious business man ostensibly gaining the approval of Piachi who, it must be recalled, had devolved his estate on Nicolo, and on the hand he is a devious, manipulative womaniser who promises to abstain from further contact with Xaviera, a promise he has no intention of keeping. The life in the Piachi household is based on lies and deceit. The three characters live there in an unincorporated manner: nobody lives honestly for they are shadows/substitutes for that which might have been better and which for Elvire constitutes a death cult.

Elvire, the second wife of Piachi, is the first substitute in his life, his first wife having died in childbirth with Paolo, Piachi's only child. Elvire is described as 'seiner jungen trefflichen Gemählin' (his young excellent wife) (3, 267), and as 'treuen, trefflichen Elvire' (loyal, excellent Elvire) (3, 268). This gives the impression too, that all is well in the house of Piachi in the relationship between husband and wife. This is not the case on closer examination and is one of the false trails which the narrator creates in order to mislead and confuse the reader. There is, as already discussed, much business with locked doors and keys, which can also be considered a metaphor for failed communication. Further, the narrator suggests that the age difference between Piachi and Elvire makes it impossible for her to hope to have children with him 'der guten Elvire, welche von dem Alten keine Kinder mehr zu erhalten hoffen konnte' (the good Elvire who could no longer hope to bear children from the old man) (3,267). This statement is then brought into question by the narrator's disclosure, as mentioned above, that Elvire had a quiet trait of sadness in her demeanour 'der ihr aus einem rührenden Vorfall, aus der Geschichte ihrer Kindheit, zurückgeblieben war' (a still trait of sadness in her disposition remained from a moving incident in her childhood) (3, 268). This concerned Colino and any mention of his name aroused in Elvire's 'schönes und empfindliches Gemüt' (beautiful and sensitive disposition) significant emotional disturbances, which required her to overcome her pain in isolation (3, 269-270). It was laid at the door of a nervous system which also occasioned a

fever immediately after her marriage to Piachi at the age of nineteen. The question is thus placed before the reader: was this marriage ever consummated?

Colino, also known as Aloysius, Marquis von Montferrat, is the hidden event and damaging relationship Elvire had established with him. He was a Genoese nobleman who had rescued her from her father's burning building, but had suffered a fatal wound in the process and was nursed by her for three years until he died (3, 268-269). She continues to mourn him and is, therefore, psychologically absent for Nicolo and Piachi. The dead occupy space in the psyche of the bereaved without a completed mourning process. This allows no space for the presence of the living, who are consumed with feelings of deadness through the unresolved mourning projected by the bereaved. Thus Nicolo, presented to the doubly bereaved Elvire (bereaved of Colino and Paolo) is excluded from the empathy and feelings of concern that she is unable to mediate: she feels only deadness.

The thirteen year old Elvire, caught in the emotional trauma of the Colino incident, remains stunted in her psychological development. Elvire is unincarnated and in the psychological grip of early adolescence, which has affected her sexual development. She is only able to engage in a fantasised sexuality with her primary dead love object, Colino, in which there is no danger of a carnal encounter. Thomas Mann wrote that Elvire is caught in a form of 'permanenten seelischen Ehebruch' (permanent spiritual adultery).³⁵ Her relationship with Colino, acutely sexual, excludes her husband, Piachi, who, therefore, becomes a metaphorical cuckold. She does not, and cannot, enter into marital relations with Piachi and instead prostrates herself orgiastically before the painting of Colino in lieu of sexual relations with her husband. The narrator makes it clear that her relationship is a sexual encounter for she lay in a 'Stellung der Verzückung' (posture of ecstasy) (3, 273). She establishes a love/death cult which is form of adultery of which Piachi is either ignorant or to which he is indifferent: the narrator does not inform us. Elvire's love object to which she cleaves is the dead Colino, who is the focus of her adolescent longings and through whom she denies adult genital sexuality. Elvire's sexual encounter is the incident when Nicolo spies on her through the keyhole. When he sees her indifferent manner on leaving the room, he is convinced of her impudence and cunning, for he believes that she had entertained a living person (3, 274). However, we know that no other person was present in the room and that her sexual devotions were given over to the 'resurrected' Colino in the form of a painting.

³⁵ Mann (1956), p. 22.

We also know that she grieves for Colino to the extent that his name must not be mentioned in her presence, and any approach to sexual intimacy results in the same feverish escape through illness. She faints, followed by a fever, when she mistakes Nicolo in his carnival costume of Genoese knight for the dead Colino; it seems to her, that the resurrected Colino appears before her and his presence is a present threat of a physical encounter. The event also brings the uneasy, uncanny sense of the revenant. Nicolo is the *Doppelgänger* who has resurrected Colino from the realm of the dead.

Nicolo disguises himself again as the dead Colino by donning his Carnival costume. He attempts to deceive Elvire into believing that he is, indeed, Colino and thus achieve his aim of sexual intimacy with her (3, 270-271; 3, 279-280). She recognises him as Colino, faints and Nicolo enjoys the sight of her naked charms ‘unter dem Kuß des Todes plötzlich erblässende Gestalt’ (suddenly growing pale under the kiss of death) (3, 280). The fainting is a prelude to death, for the world is now so out of kilter, that it has become unbearable. Death is present even before the rape had begun and it is only in death that Elvire can contemplate sexual intimacy. Nicolo proceeds to the rape of Elvire but is disturbed by Piachi’s sudden return from the country. Elvire death from a fever occasioned by this event has enabled her to join Colino in death.

The question which remains with the reader is whether the statement concerning Piachi as ‘the old man’ impugns his virility in that he is impotent, or is this a defensive attitude of Elvire’s in the context of her spiritual adultery, which the narrator thrusts upon the reader? She is not receptive to Nicolo/Colino to the extent that it is indeed the risen Colino she perceives before her. She rejects actual genital intimacy even with her primary love object. The physical presence of what she believes to be Colino, raised from the dead, is too much for her to bear. She, who can only experience sexual gratification in fantasy, is suddenly confronted by the reality of sex, which for her is allied to death and which, with Colino, comes from death itself.

Elvire is an isolated member of the family and her marriage to Piachi is empty. We are informed that Piachi knew her history with Colino; we are not informed, however, if he knew of Elvire’s erotic death cult with Colino (3, 270). However, any communication has become meaningless in the dark, dismal house in which doors are kept locked and in which there is much activity with keys as a metaphorical coda of non-communication. Piachi and Elvire live side by side, not together (3, 271, 274, 280). She has her assignations with Colino and we can assume that she has retained her virginity following the high fever after

her marriage to Piachi. Brüggemann, using alchemical symbolism, suggests that she has experienced a metaphorical deflowering when, in saving her from the fire Colino threw his cloak over the beam to which Elvire had retreated.³⁶ She gives herself to Colino metaphorically but she has not been sexually awakened for her sexual identity is tied to him and is thus also tied to death.³⁷ This submission to death prevents living in a creative and emotionally fulfilled manner and allows no space for another. Hence, Elvire's character in the story is that of an attenuated, ghost-like figure which secures its identity behind locked doors. In her passivity, she is also a poor substitute for Piachi's dead wife and her singular endowment seems to have been a deep love for her step-son, Paolo. Paolo represented the child she would never have and so she was able to weep for him (3, 267). She was also, of course, weeping for the space that the dead Paolo had left in her life so she was as much weeping for herself. She has no psychological space which Nicolo can inhabit for it is filled either with the dead Colino or the dead Paolo. Here we come to an essential psychological factor, which is the fate of the replaced child as the primary love object, which the mother needs to mediate and which Elvire is unable to do.

There is no answer in the text to the conundrum of Piachi's folly in taking up with the diseased Nicolo. He had decided to escape the plague because of anxiety for his son, abandoning his commercial interests in the process, but then accepts that the diseased Nicolo travel with them. Stephens suggests that what Kleist is giving us is a parody of enlightened altruism fostered by Rousseau.³⁸ But the pre-eminence that Rousseau gave to pity must be tempered by reason if it is to be meaningful and manageable; Piachi does not live in a natural state and through adherence to the notion of the pre-eminence of pity commits a category mistake through which chaos and tragedy ensue in his house. Piachi, in the moment that he takes pity on Nicolo, is described by the narrator as 'so regte sich des guten Alten Mitleid' (thus the good old man's pity was aroused) (3, 265). However, the pity is misplaced since it causes the death of his son even though Piachi had unsuccessfully undertaken measures to disembarass himself of Nicolo. However, it is too late for he is apprehended by the police (3, 266). His behaviour is foolish and is it worthy to call him 'good old man'? The phrase 'good old man' is one of the false trails which Kleist lays throughout the story where events and individuals are misleadingly described as they are not. Piachi is also described as: 'den redlichen Alten' (the honest old man) (3, 273). This description occurs in the text almost immediately after the incident in which he obtains a

³⁶ Brüggemann (2004), p. 49.

³⁷ Gerisch (2008), p. 238.

³⁸ Stephens (1994), p. 227.

letter carried by Xaviera's maid 'halb mit List, halb mit Gewalt' (half with cunning, half with force) (3, 272), and forges a letter to Nicolo in order to humiliate him in the *Magdalenen-Kirche*. This is dishonest, manipulative behaviour the effect of which is to set Nicolo even further against Piachi's wishes of terminating the relationship with Xaviera. It increases Nicolo's own dissembling in the care he must take to circumvent Piachi's attentions (3, 273). This is dishonest dealing by Piachi.

A further inconsistency concerns Nicolo's position as Piachi's heir. Nicolo's marriage to Constanza leads the parents to believe that it would also end of his relationship with Xaviera. On this scant evidence, the parents are united in their satisfaction with Nicolo and give up the larger part of 'ihres schönen und weitläufigen Wohnhauses' (their beautiful and spacious dwelling) (3, 268). This is the house which, in the sub-text of the story, is constricted, gloomy and sunless. Moreover, Piachi retires on his sixtieth birthday and legally transfers to Nicolo the greater part of his estate. Yet Nicolo does not receive the key to the property, which Piachi retains. When Piachi surprises Nicolo in the attempted rape of Elvire, he attempts to eject him from the house (3, 280). He has, though, no rights to the property since he had legally transferred it to Nicolo; while this may be the legal position, Piachi has not relinquished his sense of possession. In the subsequent legal wrangle over the property, which Piachi tries to recover in a legal action, Nicolo calls on his friends, the Carmelite monks, to support him against the old fool Piachi, which they do through the influence of the Bishop of Rome (3, 281). These entities frustrate Piachi's legal action.

Rage occasioned by a double pain strengthened Piachi's resolve: he had buried Elvire the previous day and now, with the unfavourable decree in his pocket, returns to the house and fuelled by anger, attacks the weaker Nicolo, squashes his brain against the wall and stuffs the court decree into his mouth (3, 281). He had given up to Nicolo the right to his, Piachi's, estate and it is a measure of Piachi's confusion and dysfunction that he would consider that his rights still intact.

Eating text has previously appeared in Kleist's story, *Michael Kohlhaas*, when Kohlhaas, immediately prior to his execution, swallows a note precious to the Elector of Saxony. Subsequently, Kohlhaas' descendants flourish but the Elector of Saxony does not. The incorporation of text is usually a symbolic act of empowerment of the acquisition of knowledge or the denial of such knowledge to others (the latter as in *Kohlhaas*).³⁹ It is not

³⁹ Hans-Walter Schmidt-Hannisa, "'Jetzt eß ich das Buch'". Szenarien der Einverleibung von Schrift', *KulturPoetik*, vol. 3, no. 2 (2003), 226-245 (p. 232).

the case in *Findling*, where the legal text of the judgment against Piachi is stuffed into the mouth of dead Nicolo. Here, it is a negative act, for nothing redemptive arises from it. This negative act is not only a measure of Piachi's rage against Nicolo but also a symbolic act of ultimate destruction. Piachi's desire to destroy Nicolo is graphic for he 'drückte ihm das Gehirn an der Wand ein' (squashed his brain against the wall) (3, 281). The brain is extruded and all cognitive function and personal identity is removed. The name of Piachi shall not exist in the form of Nicolo and the decree which confirms Nicolo's status as heir to Piachi must, therefore, be destroyed in order to destroy Nicolo's standing. Hans-Walter Schmidt-Hannisa writes that the incorporation of the text in the body obliterates the text: the body functions as a grave for the text which guarantees its illegibility and ultimate disappearance.⁴⁰ With that, the family name of Piachi disappears, for Piachi has failed to create an artificial genealogy through adoption and inheritance.⁴¹ We are not informed about the effect of Nicolo's death on Xaviera.

Following Nicolo's murder, Piachi is arrested and condemned to be hanged. He refuses absolution before execution, claiming that he wishes to go to Hell in order to pursue Nicolo further. Piachi has not finished the business of revenge, for the decree is only stuffed into the mouth of the dead Nicolo; it is not incorporated in his body which is the only place it could cease to exist entirely. Ekkehard Zeeb asserts that Piachi does not wish to be saved is because he wants no reconciliation with society; for execution without absolution is the only manner in which his name can be expunged.⁴² With absolution and execution, Piachi would have paid his debt to society which would have effected reconciliation with the community, and his name and that of Nicolo would have remained intact. Piachi chooses to die un-absolved in order also to expunge Nicolo and he is executed without the presence of priest or public. At the end of the story the three main characters, which have played a part in this drama, are dead and there is no redemption for anyone.

We arrive now at the *Doppelgänger* motif which has been overshadowing the narrative and which also touches on the thread of substitution in which, in the first instance, Nicolo is a substitute for Piachi's son, Paolo. Nicolo subsequently assumes the role of *Doppelgänger* of Colino without the existential issues which lie behind the presence of this phenomenon. The origin and role of the idea of the *Doppelgänger* is mysterious and shrouded in the development and opening of human consciousness to the fear of the other

⁴⁰Schmidt-Hannisa (2003), p. 227.

⁴¹Schmidt-Hannisa (2003), p. 239.

⁴² Ekkehard Zeeb, *Die Unlesbarkeit der Welt und die Lesbarkeit der Texte: Ausschreitungen des Rahmen der Literatur in den Schriften Heinrich von Kleists* (Würzburg: Königshausen and Neumann, 1995), p. 102.

as a psychological phenomenon. Initially, the *Doppelgänger* was a benign figure founded in the superstitions of primitive people in which the fear of death plays a part. This figure was, therefore, viewed with a placatory attitude as an insurance against the destruction of the ego. It then assumed malign aspects, concerning pacts with the devil and destructive shadow behaviour.⁴³ In its unpredictability, it lived in an atmosphere of ambivalence, which in Freud's view, who analysed Hoffmann's *Der Sandmann* (The Sandman), was created out of the doubt it created as to whether the figure was alive or dead.⁴⁴ In Hoffmann's story, Nathanael, the hero, falls in love with a mechanical doll, believing it to be a real woman and, loses his mind when he discovers his error.⁴⁵

Rank explores and analyses the theme of the *Doppelgänger* principally in the works of Jean Paul (1763-1825), E.T.A. Hoffmann (1776-1822) and Adelbert von Chamisso (1781-1838) in the German Romantic canon and in other European literature. The theme of the *Doppelgänger* in these works is the creation of the identity of a secondary character who resembles the principal 'immer handelt es sich um ein dem Helden bis auf die kleinsten Züge, wie Namen, Stimme, Kleidung ähnliches Ebenbild, das wie "aus dem Spiegel gestohlen" dem Helden auch meist im Spiegel erscheint' (it always concerns someone who is identical to the hero in the smallest detail such as name, voice, clothing as if "stolen from the mirror" and who also frequently appears in the mirror).⁴⁶ The function of the *Doppelgänger* is generally to drive the subject mad.⁴⁷ The existential uncertainty of Kleist's times through war, intellectual turmoil and threat to the established class system creates a chasm of despair in which the *Doppelgänger* figure is a shadow transference receptacle for the fears of the individual. The individual is confronted with a new world of unrootedness and a society in which the characters are divorced from their traditional anchors of community or church, which constitutes a threat to the soul. They become divorced from the self, and the ego is thrown into unaccustomed unrelatedness. The *Doppelgänger* is, therefore, frequently obstructive and is particularly involved destructively in the subjects' romantic interludes which may end in death or suicide of the subjects, particularly if they escape the double.⁴⁸

⁴³ Rank (1914), p. 153.

⁴⁴ Freud (1919), GW. 12, p. 245 (SE. 17, p. 233).

⁴⁵ E.T.A. Hoffmann, 'Der Sandmann', in *Dichtung der Romantik: Erzählungen*, ed. by Karl Balsar, Reinhard Buchwald and Karl Franz Reinking, 4 vols (Wiesbaden: Vollmer, undated), vol. 3, pp. 297-328. .

⁴⁶ Rank (1914), p. 135.

⁴⁷ László F. Földényi, *Heinrich von Kleist: Im Netz der Wörter*, trans. by Akos Doma (Munich: Matthes and Seitz, 1999), p. 26,

⁴⁸ Rank, (1914), p. 123.

The *Doppelgänger* in Kleist's story is the Nicolo/Colino dyad. In Elvire's phantasy Colino is alive but alive in the realm of the dead. His actual appearance is, therefore, traumatic. He is impersonated by Nicolo, the object, who is merely his representation by adopting a similar garb. The Nicolo *Doppelgänger* appears on two occasions to Elvire. The first occasion takes place when Nicolo returns from the carnival, dressed in the garb of a Genoese knight, particularly the clothes which Colino would have worn (3, 270). Elvire sees what she believes is the dead Colino and is 'wie durch einen unsichtbaren Blitz getroffen, bei seinem Anblick' (as if struck by invisible lightning at his appearance) (3, 270). Elvire is reduced to a choleric fever, recovers through the natural strength of her constitution (another misleading statement from the narrator), but retains a certain melancholy: she believes that she had seen Colino. The implication about Elvire's health has been that it is fragile for she succumbs to fevers after her marriage to Piachi, in this event and a subsequent event when she is confronted by Nicolo/Colino; yet here she is deemed to have a sound constitution. A development of the doubles theme follows when Nicolo spies on Elvire's orgasmic encounter with Colino and he searches her room subsequently to find the person with whom she had been dealing.

He finds no one, of course, but he does see the life size painting of Colino. He does not at this stage know who this is but the painting has an effect on him for 'Nicolo erschrak, er wußte selbst nicht warum und eine Menge von Gedanken fuhren ihn, den großen Augen des Bildes, das ihn starr ansah, gegenüber, durch die Brust' (Nicolo was startled and he did not know why as a multitude of thoughts ran through his being as the great eyes of the painting stared at him fixedly) (3, 274). Nicolo cannot collect his thoughts but he realises that there is something significant in the painting which he has yet to discover. He is almost caught in the traditional Kleistian fainting, which occurs when a character is confronted with something new which jolts the world out of its groove. In this story, the usual mirror in which the *Doppelgänger* appears is replaced by a painting. Nicolo's unsettledness, equivalent to the principal seeing his *Doppelgänger* image in the mirror, is, then, a realisation that the painting has significance for him. It is a measure of Nicolo's de-personalisation that the integrity of his identity is disturbed in such a turbulent manner.

Nicolo needs to elucidate the meaning of this painting and, when Piachi and Elvire are absent in the country, he engages the help of Xaviera, who also brings her young daughter Klara. When Klara sees the painting she exclaims 'Gott, mein Vater! Signor Nicolo, wer ist das anders als Sie' (God, my father! Signor Nicolo, who is that but you) (3, 275). Klara speaks directly from the innocence of childhood and Nicolo's reply is 'warhaftig, liebste

Klara, das Bild gleicht mir, wie du demjenigen, der sich deinen Vater glaubt' (truly, dear Klara, the picture is as much like me as you are like the one who believes he is your father) (3, 275). Earlier we have been told that Xaviera is the mistress of the Bishop of Rome, who is also the Pope. Here we are told, that Klara's father is the Cardinal. Doubt is thus thrown on the paternity of Klara as a symbolic repudiation of the identity of the figure in the painting that it is indeed not Nicolo but Colino. Xaviera, however, sees a striking resemblance of Nicolo in his Carnival costume to the Colino of the painting and Nicolo's blushing arouses her jealousy. She leaves but not before presenting herself to a mirror as an inherent reminder of the narcissism of the *Doppelgänger* theme.

Nicole plays the alphabet game with the ivory characters that form both the name Nicolo and Colino, the latter being the name which Nicolo mistakenly believes is a coded reference to himself. He judges Elvire's reaction of: 'Wehmut' (sadness) (3, 276) at seeing the name Colino arranged on the table as further proof of her interest in him. Earlier in the story, we had been told that Piachi was concerned not to mention Colino's name or to remind her of him 'weil er wußte, daß es ihr schönes und empfindliches Gemüt auf das heftigste bewegte' (because he knew that it deeply disturbed her beautiful and sensitive soul) (3, 269). Nicolo is thus mistaken for he had not understood the key to Elvire's soul, which was fixed on a dead lover with whom, as a living person, he could not compete. For Nicolo, there was nothing further than her body in the real world; whereas Elvire lived totally in the dead world of Colino. Nicolo does not have the *Doppelgänger* quality of being dead and beyond reach, which is the only experience that is acceptable to Elvire for the Nicole/Colino dyad.

The second occasion of the materialisation of the *Doppelgänger* for Elvire is when Nicolo poses before the painting of Colino, dressed as Colino. At this stage the reality of the revenant is too much for Elvire (3, 279). Nicolo's actual presence as the *Doppelgänger* of Colino has a malign, disturbing effect which contains the threat of carnal sex instead of the masturbatory activity in which Elvire indulges. Nicolo assumes the role of Colino, which opens the door to the supernatural world of the dead, in which Nicolo's identity is fugitive; he has, as the replacement child, now taken on an identity which also correlates to the desire of the previously indifferent mother for the dead Paolo. Nicolo, as Colino, is for Elvire a real Colino returned from the dead and he is also a revenant of Paolo. He is, therefore, an irruption in Elvire's unconscious, which has never released Colino into death and has not dealt appropriately with the death of Paolo. Both have been kept alive but Nicolo, as the false Colino, returns to pull Elvire unwittingly into death. Nicolo achieves

the effect of the *Doppelgänger*, which is to destroy the romantic alliance that has been forged in Elvire's fantasy life. Elvire's fantasy is, as fantasy, not real but it is destroyed nevertheless because it is allied to death and can only find resolution in death. Elvire has to join Colino and the Nicolo *Doppelgänger* is merely a bridge for that.

Finally, it is significant too, that the story was written in the year in which Kleist took his own life and was probably the last work he wrote. It could, thus, well reflect his own cumulative existential despair. This story might be termed an *Abschiedsbrief* (letter of farewell) with a long gestation for, as mentioned above, already in 1809 Kleist was expressing his criticism of German culture in *Katechismus der Deutschen*. Kleist's disdain for the commercial world, the dysfunctional and dystopian world of Piachi is pronounced.

Schröder mentions two letters which Kleist wrote from Paris on 15 and 16 August 1801 to his fiancée, Wilhelmine von Zenge and her sister Louise (4, 258-271).⁴⁹ Specifically, in the letter to Louise, he describes Paris as a veritable Gomorrah and it is in this sense of the city, that Kleist brings to the theme of this story (which he locates in Rome, the centre of the Christian religion): despair, unrelated association of one to the other and in this milieu, as Kleist complains in his letters, there is only relativity and no absolute standards. The relativity and freedom Kant had given intellectual thought was, for Kleist, reflected in the manner in which people lived and it was not to his taste. It is in this manner in which Piachi, Elvire and Nicolo live: there are no standards of behaviour which are observed, for the wife does not cleave to the husband and the son does not obey the parents. Nor are there commendable standards of behaviour outside the Piachi household: the Pope engages a mistress, the Carmelite monks are concerned with money and confessional vows are broken (3, 279). The only value judgement expressed by the narrator in the entire work concerning the behaviour of the characters is in connection with Nicolo's attempted rape of Elvire described as 'die abscheulichste Tat, die je verübt worden ist' (the most abominable deed that had ever been committed) (3, 279). Piachi too, changes his colours and turns from a 'guten Alten' (good old man) at the beginning of the story into an enraged murderer at the end (3, 265, 281). All betokens a dystopian world left to speak for itself with nothing good to say.

⁴⁹Schröder (2003), p. 40.

Conclusion

I contend then, that there is a psychological aspect to Kleist's oeuvre which arises from the extent to which he discloses his own neurosis in the work. However, no scrutiny has been made to date of the relationship between Kleist, his works and Freud's concept of death instincts. Applied psychoanalysis has primarily concentrated on the issues concerning hysteria, narcissism, the Oedipus complex and transference and countertransference. When it came to death instincts, published in 1921 as *Jenseits des Lustprinzips* (Beyond the Pleasure Principle), Freud's colleagues found this concept difficult to accept. In particular, the biological basis of Freud's thinking that organisms would arrange and collude in their own death in apoptosis (programmed cell death) was a deciding reason that the death instincts were not considered as a clinical tool: apoptosis was not accepted as a fact by many in the psychoanalytic community. However, Freud's intuition, based on modest, but then current empirical evidence, was proved to be correct and confirmed in the scientific evidence accrued concerning apoptosis in the late twentieth and early part of the twenty-first century.¹ Death, therefore, is the satisfaction of death instincts, which is the dissolution of matter. Moreover, death is a matter which is internal to the organism, that is, the organism itself determines the time and form of its death. Freud's further insights from his clinical work also asked the questions: why do patients repeat trauma and subvert their psychological progress at points of potential break-through and success and why do neurotic patients exhibit aggression and sado-masochistic tendencies which do not find a place in the singularity of Eros, the life instincts? These considerations touch on further issues which, though not part of Freud's original concept, move the individual towards depressive states in which authenticity and spontaneity are sacrificed to negative emotions of psychosis, envy and narcissism and the complexity of the oedipal passage. Hence, a duality of fundamental energies is seen to operate in the psychological life of individuals: death instincts and Eros.

¹ Elias Metchnikoff, *Etudes sur la Nature Humaine* (Paris: Masson, 1904); Eduardo Bolivar, 'The Ontological Grounds of the Death Instincts in Freud', *Psychoanalysis and Contemporary Thought*, 16 (1993), 113-147 (p. 123); Thomas Hoffman, 'Revival of the Death Instincts: A view from Contemporary Biology', *Neuropsychanalysis*, 6 (2004), 63-75; Brian Johnson, 'Just what lies "Beyond the Pleasure Principle"??', *Neuropsychanalysis*, 10 (2008), 201-212; Kent C. Berridge and Terry E. Robinson, 'Parsing Reward', *Trends in Neuroscience*, vol. 26, no 9 (2003), 507-513.

Kleist was constitutionally unfit for life as statements in letters of November 1811 to his confidante and distant cousin by marriage, Marie von Kleist, show. The statements sum up his despair at living for he writes ‘meine Seele ist so wund, daß mir, ich möge fast sagen, wen ich die Nase aus dem Fenster stecke, das Tagelicht weh thut’ (my soul is so wounded that, I might almost say, daylight hurts when I put my nose out of the window) (4, 508). Again, in the next letter to Marie, he writes ‘mein Leben, das allerqualvollste daß je ein Mensch geführt hat’ (my life, the most tortured that anyone has ever led) (4, 510). His despair is palpable in his last letter to his sister, Ulrike, on 21 November ‘die Wahrheit ist, daß mir auf Erden nicht zu helfen war’ (the truth is that I could not have been helped on this earth) (4, 513).

But Kleist subjected himself to a form of self-analysis in his work (as all artists do), and we can understand that he should exercise the prerogative of choosing the time of his death. This occurred after he had written one of the most nihilistic stories in his canon, *Der Findling*. However, his keen psychological insight and perspective mark his works as ‘modern’ and are deemed congruent with those of twentieth-century artists. He found favour with literary figures such as Thomas Mann and Franz Kafka who perceived him as a modernist. There is no sentimentality in his work and he addresses themes which were in advance of his times such as the emancipation of women in *Die Marquise von O....*, the psychosexual relationship between men and women as in *Penthesilea* (2, 143-256) and *Das Käthchen von Heilbronn* (2, 321-434), oedipal issues in *Homburg*, which had not been recognised until Freud analysed his own complex, and the redemptive motive of the Divine Child in *Erdbeben*. While the depressive affect of the death instincts pervade much of Kleist’s work, the stories and plays also show an emancipatory and redemptive side.

In particular, the confrontation with the subjectivity of Kant’s philosophy had brought a new perspective which disturbed the conformity of his *Aufklärung* thinking with its intellectual approach and an idealisation of order which ran counter to the feeling-enhanced darkness of the Romantic soul. Suddenly, things were not as they seemed with the rigid former perspective and with this parameter, Kleist’s questions were: how can I understand my experience of the world, believe that it is consistent with the perception that others have of it and how can I express the fundamental meaning of what I wish to communicate? He found no answers to these questions until he was enmeshed in a symbiotic death relationship with Henriette Vogel.

During his life he examined themes which were intrinsic to his own mental states. In particular, in the subject matter of death and its corporeal aspects, he is in the company of

Goethe, Hölderlin and Novalis. Goethe's Werther is confident that, holding to Ossian, he will meet Lotte again in the after-life when she will be shed of her marriage and be able to commune only with him. Hölderlin, though, grieves for a world in which the self and nature are not as one and can find this only in the Hellenic past, which is broken and buried in rubble, while Novalis sought untrammelled sexual joy with his deceased fiancée in the afterlife. These authors, as was Kleist, were reacting to the strictures of the *Aufklärung*, which places them in a historical period, in which they were also subject to the instability and vicissitudes of the times.

It is the instability of the environment too, which Kleist confronts, which is the driving force behind the disruption which his characters have to overcome when faced with surprising and inexplicable dilemmas, whether these are brought about by familial, social or political conflicts. These conflicts had to be mastered much as Kleist had to deal with interpersonal problems in his own social milieu. An inherent psychological flaw also makes the characters susceptible to failure: there is Penthesilea's concrete thinking as she arrives in the depth of her psychosis; the object, Achilles, is not the lover but becomes game which has to be hunted and killed. Kohlhaas' pathological narcissism leads him to his death so that he can take with him his enemy, the Elector of Saxony and on the scaffold he is *todesreif* (ripe for death). His blacks have been restored to their former pristine condition, Wenzel is imprisoned and he is able to destroy the health of the Elector of Saxony. He will continue to live in the projected feelings of the health of his children, the self-object that constitute the blacks and the destruction of his enemies. Nothing further remains for him to do on this earth. In *Erdbeben*, though the city may be redeemed by the Divine Child, both Jeronimo and Josephe die at the hands of the mob. Civilisation, in the form of autocratic authorities, has been subverted through the earthquake and the mob rules and exercises its sadistic pleasures freely. The threat of mob rule and inherent suspicion of the other is also the facet of *Verlobung* which drives the hero, Gustav, to kill Toni, who is, for him, a projection of his fiancée, who died by the guillotine so that he might live but who is also the despised other. *Homburg* has a positive outcome in that Homburg successfully negotiates an archetypal oedipal relationship with the putative father, the Kurfürst of Brandenburg. He faces death, fears it and then accepts it and in accepting also acknowledges the authority of the Kurfürst/father, is reprieved and is incarnated as a responsible member of the community. Kleist's final work is the story *Der Findling*. This most disharmonious story in Kleist's canon is also a scathing criticism of family mores and religious and social institutions. No redeeming feature exists in this story

and it is, perhaps, no surprise that it was written in the months before he committed suicide with Henriette Vogel.

Kleist's death wish is expressed dramatically as he approaches his own suicide on 21 November 1811 with Henriette. He writes to Marie in the first half of October 1811 'ich würde Ihnen den Tod wünschen wenn Sie zu sterben brauchten um glücklich zu werden' (I would wish your death if you needed to die in order to become happy) (4, 504). This is a clear transference wish as to his state of mind: his own death wish is evident. In this letter he writes also of his own failure to achieve his goals; everything he attempts results in failure and the ground under his feet disappears when he wishes to take a firm step (4, 505). Jones writes that there is an unconscious wish-fulfilment in this statement, which is contained in the thinking of neurotics and theologians: namely, that the world beyond provides the consolation of success.² Kleist reverses the subject/object in relation to Marie and is in fact writing about himself. Again, he posits a journey for, if the means are available, he will go to Vienna. Kleist's eternal round of travel, journeys, stop-overs and so forth suggest a journey of escape and finally into death where an idealised existence awaits. It is almost as if he had said that whatever is in the present will be better when I am in Vienna or Paris or Berlin or any other place.

Death is not merely 'the undiscovered country from whose bourn/ No traveller returns' but also a voyage of discovery.³ It is also the beginning of a new life, as Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762-1814) writes 'für mich selbst ist die Todesstunde Stunde der Geburt zu einem neuen herrlicheren Leben' (for me the hour of death is the hour of birth into a new more glorious life).⁴ This is the image that Kleist carried within himself. Kleist had no fear of death; for him dying was merely another journey or a step into another room from which he would not return and which, like Fichte's statement, would be joyful. In his letter of 20 November 1811 to his friend Sophie Müller announcing his prospective suicide, Kleist writes with some levity 'da unsere Seelen sich wie zwei fröhlich Luftschiffer über die Welt erheben,[...] wir unserer Seits wollen nichts von den Freuden dieser Welt wissen, und träumen lauter himmlische Fluren und Sonnen, in deren Schimmer wir, mit langen Flügeln an den Schultern umher wandeln werden (then our souls will rise above the world like two merry aerial sailors [...] we, for our part, want to know nothing of the pleasures of this

² Ernest Jones (1911), "On Dying Together" in *Essential Papers on Suicide*, ed. by John T. Maltzberger and Mark J. Goldblatt (New York: New York University Press, 1996), 11-14 (p. 11).

³ William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, III, 1, ed. by Peter Alexander (London: Collins, 1951).

⁴ Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. by I.H. Fichte, 8 vols (Berlin: Veit, 1845) vol. 2, p. 315.

world and dream of nothing but heavenly fields and suns in whose light we shall stroll hither and thither with long wings on our shoulders) (4, 511).

There is a postscript to this letter by Henriette, which demonstrates her own fervent belief in the afterlife and the communication which can be made to those that remain behind. She writes that she is short of time and will tell them at another time how this (the suicide pact with Kleist) has come about (4, 511). Henriette confusingly expects to be present in life even after death. As Freud commented, this is an indication of a state of mind that did not accept that death would be a final separation from the land of the living. For Kleist there is an existence beyond death which is the fervent belief of the suicide: death is merely a change of state and a better state at that. A wish for suicide can also be a desire to re-create the ideal facilitating environment in the company of the mother. He is accompanied by Henrietta, who has become a symbol for the mother, and he is suffused by the idea that death is merely a continuation of life in another form. In particular, like Novalis, Kleist's unconscious expectation of death is that it is an erotic experience.

Kleist had been living in Berlin in the last year of his life when he found Henriette Vogel, who is thought to have been suffering from terminal cancer, who agreed to die with him and whom he murdered, then committing suicide at the Kleine Wannsee, near Berlin on 21 November 1811 (4, 1150-1151). Kleist had at this stage arrived at a nadir in his life. Günther Blamberger summarises succinctly the social failure in Kleist's life, which may have finally driven him to suicide.⁵ There is the lack of support and disdain he receives from his family after the failure of the *Berliner Abendblätter*, which puts him in severe financial difficulties; there is the failure to gain general recognition of, and make a living from, his literary output; and finally, Kleist, as a nationalist, took badly the political situation when the King of Prussia, Friedrich Wilhelm III (1770-1840), signed the Treaty of Tilsit with Napoleon in 1808 by which Prussia ceded half of its pre-war territories. Kleist, Blamberger writes, discloses himself as 'der nonkonformistische Intellektuelle, der außerhalb der familiären, ständischen, ästhetischen und politischen Ordnung seiner Zeit steht' (the most non-conformist intellectual who stands outside the familial, hierarchical, aesthetic and political structures of his time).⁶ Given this, Kleist has been unable to bear the burden of being an outsider, which was expressed throughout his life to family and friends as repeated requests to die with him. There is a failure in Kleist's psychological

⁵ Günther Blamberger, *Heinrich von Kleist: Biographie* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 2011), p. 460.

⁶ Blamberger (2011), p. 460.

make-up in which he recognises his own sensitivity through which the burden of being alive is too great: in effect, Kleist was not made for living.

Prior to his death with Henriette, he had written three *Abschiedsbriefe* (letters of departure), mentioned above to Marie von Kleist, who for several years had been a confidant. He wrote on 9, 10 and 12 November 1811, announcing his imminent suicide (4, 507-508, 510). The message in the letters is an apology that he had selected another to die with him, for Henriette has the effect 'daß meine Seele durch die Berührung mit der ihrigen, zum Tod ganz reif geworden ist' (that my soul has become quite ripe for death through its contact with hers) (4, 507). The *Todesreife* contains an erotic subtext which is evident when he also writes of his joy at the forthcoming suicide and that he shall experience the 'herrlichsten und wollüstigsten aller Tode' (the most wonderful and sensual of all deaths) (4, 510). It is not the relationship with Henriette which is eroticised here but death itself, which would transfer him to an archaic region in which he can be reunited with the mother; death is, in effect, a homecoming for 'Ein Strudel von nie empfundener Seeligkeit hat mich ergriffen, und ich kann Dir nicht leugnen daß mir ihr Grab lieber ist als die Betten aller Kaiserinnen der Welt' (A vortex of joy such as I have never experienced before has overtaken me and I cannot deny that her grave is dearer to me than the beds of all the Empresses of the world) (4, 510).

He is overjoyed that he has met like-minded Henriette who is prepared to die with him. He longs for the union in the bed/grave of Henriette, this bed/grave is, of course, the mother's bed, for the Empress is the Great Mother, also the mother of the nation who stands at the apex of the maternal. Thus, Henriette is a projection of the mother, for the desire to engage in coitus with the mother precedes the wish to die with her.⁷ It is here, that an unconscious desire can be realised in the bed/grave which will lead to an incestuous union with the mother, that will make the relationship fully symbiotic and thus relieve him, as the infant/adult, of the primitive agonies of separation that have been the experience of his life. Language cannot convey meaning is a sub-text to the state of social disassociation, which can only be satisfied in a symbiotic relationship (4, 196).

In his transference to Henriette, Kleist creates a container for his ultimate desire of a symbiotic union which corresponds to Novalis' expectation of the eternal, untrammelled sexual delight he would enjoy in the after-life reunion with his beloved Sophie. In the 12 November letter to Marie, Kleist also mentions his repeated requests for her to die with

⁷ Isidor Sadger, *Heinrich von Kleist: Eine pathographisch-psychologische Studie* (Wiesbaden: Bergmann, 1910), p. 60.

him and was convinced of the better world he would find after death; it will be a better world where ‘wir uns alle mit der Liebe der Engel, einander werden ans Herz drücken können, - Adieu’ (we shall be able to embrace with the love of angels – adieu) (4, 510). He had also, of course, made similar requests in the past for suicide pacts with friends until he finally found Henriette.⁸

A significant aspect of Kleist’s *todesreife* is the exchange of letters with Henriette, probably in November 1811 and which Ernest Jones calls a “‘dithyrambic rapture” [...] that bordered on lunacy’ and suggests that the letters correspond to exaggerated and heightened emotion which has no basis in normal affect (4, 519-520).⁹ Hilda M. Brown rightly calls it a *Todeslitanei* (litany of death) and recognises that the letters correspond to a ritual call and response of a religious service and that its influences lie in the Bible as in the Song of Solomon, the Psalms of David and hymns and poetry of the Baroque (3, 1039-1040).¹⁰ Thus, even when Kleist was preparing for death, he exercises the sensibility of the artist, for his letter is structured with meaning. The language of his letter is not, therefore, merely infant babbling as Jones would have us believe. C.J. Jung refers to the neologisms which Kleist and Henriette use and which schizophrenics can also utter as a ‘word salad’.¹¹ For Jung, this ‘word salad’ is the expression of a complex which is independent of the ego and is, therefore, invested with the power of unconscious motivation and has meaning. Kleist’s writing of this epistle is not an expression of schizophrenia for it is structured and has artistic intent; it is more the expression of manic intensity as Kleist projects his self into the container of Henriette.

The first sentence of Kleist’s letter (4, 519, ll. 12-18) is set in the external world of castles, fields, meadows, vineyards, sun, moon and stars, which are contained in Henriette and by virtue of which they are also in his possession. This section contains material goods, which he failed to accumulate in his lifetime as well as intimate relationships he failed to form. In the second sentence, Kleist addresses worldly power and prestige, domestic harmony as well as literary success and fame (4, 519, ll. 19-22). Henriette is the container for the wife and children he failed to have and which are connected with royalty. She also carries the expectation of fame which has eluded him in life. In the final sentence

⁸ Sadger (1910), p. 57.

⁹ Jones (1911) (p. 13).

¹⁰ Hilda M. Brown, ‘Ripe Moments and False Climaxes: Thematic and Dramatic Configurations of the Theme of Death in Kleist’s Works’, in *A Companion to the Works of Heinrich von Kleist*, ed. by Bernd Fischer (Rochester: Camden House, 2003), pp. 209-226, (p. 214).

¹¹ C.G. Jung (1907), ‘The Psychology of Dementia Praecox’, in *Collected Works*, trans. by R.F.C. Hull, ed. by Sir Herbert Read, Michael Fordham, Gerhard Adler, William McGuire, 20 vols (London: Routledge, 1953-2000), vol. 3, §213-218.

Henriette, as the beloved, becomes the intercessorial embodiment with God, for she will also be able to forgive sins (4, 519, ll. 23-27). Brown rightly recognises that here, Kleist projects the failures of his life, the unrealised objectives and the desire for wholeness into the figure of Henriette. It is this accumulation of sentiment which makes Kleist *todesreif*, for with it he phantasises that he has achieved the goals of his life. Henriette is the container for his failures and achievements, indeed of his entire life. Kleist's transference to Henriette is also the expression of the primitive agonies of the infant in the adult, who needs the mother to mediate and assuage the terrors of its existential aloneness. The tone of the letter is obsessive and unboundaried, which denotes the unrestrained desires of the infant. With this epistle, Kleist achieved the feeling of symbiotic unity, which had eluded him throughout his life.

Glossary

Affect: a feeling state.

Anal stage: the second stage in libidinal development between the ages of two and four which has to do with the meaning of defecation and retention and of the symbolic value of faeces. Character traits connected to this stage are conformity, financial prudence, obstinacy and obsessive behaviour.

Archetype: is a Jungian concept for an inherent psychological structure determined by nature and nurture. It determines patterns of behaviour and is perceived through the operation of complexes.

Complex: is a feeling toned idea or image which is independent of the ego and, therefore, a reservoir of unconscious material.

Depressive position: a Kleinian concept and the stage in an infant's life, usually by month six to eight, when it realises that its mother/carer is not merely a part object but a whole person which it has been abusing with sadistic biting and tearing and destructive phantasies. This arouses feelings of remorse and the need for reparation and leads to a whole-object-relationship replete with loving impulses. It is also the beginning of the acceptance of ambivalence. As adults, we also move in and out of the depressive position into the paranoid schizoid position.

Ego: is part of the psyche which relates to external objects and allows reason and limited management of the subject's experience.

Imago: an internalised figure which is the basis of our apprehension of the object. Thus, the mother imago is how we see the real mother.

Latency period: from the end of the phallic stage to puberty during which there is a pause in the development of sexuality. Some sex relationships flourish and there is an interaction with the social and physical environment. There is a rise in feelings of shame, disgust and the blossoming of moral and aesthetic interests.

Oral stage: the first stage of libidinal development in which sexual pleasure for the infant is connected to excitation of the mouth and lips during feeding. Adult features of this stage are nail biting and gum chewing.

Paranoid schizoid position: a Kleinian concept and a stage from birth to the first six to eight months of the infant's life in which the nascent ego struggles with anxieties in its relationship with objects which threaten its annihilation; it is, therefore, also a manifestation of the death instinct. Adults caught in this psychological matrix tend to be narcissistic, intolerant of others and unable to forgive.

Phallic stage: the third, and Oedipal stage of libidinal development from ages five or six in which the genital zones of the body hold sway until the latency period and then to be resurrected in puberty. In this stage, the child experiences erotic feelings towards the parent of the opposite sex. It is a stage of development in which conflicts are resolved and the child learns to control fundamental emotions of envy, anger and hate. It identifies with and models itself on the same sex parent.

Phantasy: spelled with 'ph' rather than 'f' denotes unconscious mental activity.

Projection: is a process of the subject whereby certain internal objects or desires are imagined to be located in the object. This process is generally unconscious.

Projective Identification: this is projection of parts of the subject's ego into the object in order to control it. It results in depletion in the subject's self and a loss of identity leading to a sense of depersonalisation or of being lost or imprisoned.

Self: is the subject aware in the awareness of its own identity. It differs from the ego which contains unconscious elements which are not available to it. The self is an umbrella concept for the whole of the personality which also includes the ego.

Self-object: is a narcissistic development in which the individual incorporates the object as if it were part of itself. This concept has to do with feelings of self-esteem which are projected into the object and thus making it part of the subjects' own identity.

Splitting: arises from conflict in which parts of the mental apparatus are separated and, through repression, become unavailable to each other. Initially it is a neurotic symptom which may also lead to other neuroses.

Transference: is a mental activity in which unconscious desires or repressed neuroses are projected on to another and in which, frequently, infantile imagos are involved.

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