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MIXING MEMORY WITH TRAUMA IN THE WORKS OF SIGMUND FREUD, D. H. LAWRENCE, VIRGINIA WOOLF, AND MALCOLM LOWRY

By

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ABSTRACT

MIXING MEMORY WITH TRAUMA IN THE WORKS OF SIGMUND FREUD, D. H. LAWRENCE, VIRGINIA WOOLF, AND MALCOLM LOWRY

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Drawing on Freud's writing on trauma and recent trauma studies, this dissertation addresses the idea of modernist literature as a literature of trauma. I argue that both Freud and modernist writers, in their encounter with the overwhelming historical traumas of the twentieth century, register an intense awareness of the catastrophic effects of historical trauma on the individual psyche. Reading modernist texts along with Freud's writing on trauma, this dissertation does not investigate how their writing is a traumatic symptom of the war. First, this dissertation investigates what it means for modernist writers to conceptualize history as the history of trauma. Second, it investigates how their writing has internalized the shocking and unresolved nature of traumatic history in formal devices such as modernist narrative. I argue that modernist narrative employs a peculiar form of non-linearity, blurring all distinctions between past, present, and future, and constant circling around loss to inhabit history through the symptomology of trauma. These essentially formal devices manifest not just as aesthetic representations, but also as unmediated repetitions of a trauma that has yet to be worked through.

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Chapter I: Introduction: Trauma and Repetition in Modernist Literature

This dissertation reads modernist texts along with Freud's writing on trauma. Reading them together, this dissertation does not simply attempt to apply a psychological theory to modernist literature. More profoundly, I seek to remark on a modernist vision of history as trauma shared by both Freud and modernist writers who wrote in the wake of the two world wars and their various aftermaths. I argue that both modernism and Freud's writing on trauma after 1914 begin to register an intense awareness of the catastrophic effects of historical trauma on the individual psyche. In their encounter with traumatic events marked with psychological injuries, modernist writing has internalized the shocking and unresolved nature of traumatic history in formal terms. In this respect, Karen DeMeester has argued that modernist literature is a literature of trauma in that "their forms often replicate the damaged psyche of a trauma survivor and their contents often portray his characteristic disorientation and despair" (650).[1] Following DeMeester, I aim to consider modernist literature as a literature of trauma by addressing the impact of historical trauma on the ways in which trauma is conceptualized and understood, and how this has in turn been reflected in modernist literature. I shall argue that all the texts examined in this dissertation—*Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, *Moses and Monotheism*, *Women in Love*, *Mrs. Dalloway*, and *Under the Volcano*—incorporate the psychological chaos and fragmentation of conscious caused by trauma into their writing. Bringing a historical vision to modernism and reading modernist literature as a

[1]Karen DeMeester, "Trauma and Recovery in Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*," *Modern Fiction Studies* 44.3 (1998): 649-673.

literature of trauma, I hope to show that the mad and schizophrenic nature of modernist narrative has both aesthetic and historical justification.

Although this dissertation will draw on trauma theory that flourished particularly in the 1980s and 1990s to support my argument that modernist narratives mirror the traumatized mind, it is important to point out that long before trauma was given official recognition by the American Psychiatric Association in 1980 in the form of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)[2], modernist narratives have struggled to give meaning to a psychological condition—the haunting effect of trauma—that will trouble psychiatrists for another fifty years. It is also worthwhile to mark that recent trauma theory by literary critics builds upon Freud's observation on the traumatic experience of shell-shocked soldiers.[3] In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud uses the term to

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[2] The American Psychiatric Association defines PTSD as: "The essential feature of this disorder is the development of characteristic symptoms following a psychologically distressing event that is outside the range of usual human experience. . . . The stressor producing this syndrome would be markedly distressing to almost anyone, and is usually experienced with intense fear, terror, and helplessness. The characteristic symptoms involve reexperiencing the traumatic event, avoidance of stimuli associated with the event or numbing of general responsiveness, and increased arousal" (247). See American Psychiatric Association, *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, 3rd ed. (Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Association, 1980).

[3] Although trauma theory emerged in the United States in the early 1990s as a response to the collective traumatic legacies of the Vietnam War and Holocaust, the study of trauma as a new phenomenon that best marks twentieth-century as a ceaselessly and chaotic society can be traced back to the 1910s' fascination with the epidemic appearance of shell shock. For the background of historical trauma studies, see Mark S. Micale and Paul Lerner, eds., *Traumatic Pasts: History, Psychiatry, and Trauma in the Modern Age, 1870-1930* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2001). Contemporary trauma studies have arisen to elaborate on the cultural and ethical implications of trauma. In order to understand the phenomenon of trauma, recent critical interest in trauma studies has involved intersections of various disciplines--psychoanalysis, history, sociology, and literary criticism. Trauma studies explore the issue of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and how trauma gets represented. Although there is a significant number of works addressing the figure and effects of trauma, there is no single methodology dealing with these issues. Roughly speaking, the field of trauma studies can be divided into two groups. The first group is composed of applied scientists, psychiatrists, and social workers who are more concerned with the treatment of trauma, of working through the traumatic stress/symptoms. Critics who are concerned with the representation and narration of trauma form a second group. Critical work on trauma done by Cathy Caruth, Shoshana Felman, Dori Laub, and Bessel van der Kolk largely informs the interest of this group.

describe a painful event not inflicted to the body but to the mind. Freud's conceptualization of trauma speaks to an event which breaks through the protecting shield and overwhelms existing defenses in a form that the physical breaking of defenses becomes thus a psychic one. Once the protective shield is breached, traumatic victims both inside and outside analysis seem caught in a compulsive repetition of self-destructive behavior which makes them seem fated for a negative destiny. In trauma, therefore, victims engage a perpetual struggle to escape the original traumatic event while binding to that event in an endless repetition of undoing, of acting out the symptoms of trauma, at the same time denying that trauma. The history of traumatized individual peculiarly manifests the uncanny effect of "death instinct." Trauma defies not only meaning but also any form of subjectivization: it is as though it cuts through, interrupts, and brings to a halt psychic life and impedes its subsequent development. At issue, however, is not so much the discontinuity as the intolerable, unacceptable continuity of the experience. I shall argue that trauma both as a clinical syndrome and a trope to account for a world that seems threateningly out of control provides a psychical response to the impact of catastrophic historical events. As an interpretation of the past, trauma is a special form of memory, a memory that tells a story of psychic wounds that defies representation. By virtue of this structure of repetition, trauma poses a challenge to historical knowledge, since it is always the symptomology of trauma that one confronts and never the event itself. Although traumatic memory may not bring comprehensive knowledge, it does allow, as Cathy Caruth suggests, "*history* to arise where *immediate understanding* may not"

(11; italics in original).[4] In this dissertation, I ask, specifically, how modernist fiction addresses events that are not "fully" conscious, that is, not fully experienced or assimilated, as is the case with so-called traumatic events. What does writing become if we recognize that we have not fully understood events, or that our knowledge of them is not exhaustive? These are all the questions that concern the knowledge of trauma. Take the character of Septimus Smith in *Mrs. Dalloway* for example. Returning home from the war with a shattered self, Septimus reflects on the meaning of his survival:

> It might be possible, Septimus thought, looking at England from the train window, as they left Newhaven; it might be possible that *the world itself is without meaning.* (133;emphasis added)

Such a reflection on a world as potentially meaningless excruciatingly illustrates how a wound in the psyche long after the event still has power to hurt and disrupt, threatening the total annihilation of the personal spirit. With a wounded psyche, Septimus experiences internal forces that tear apart and fragment the self as if one part of his self was mysteriously lurking in the mind, with a separate vitality of its own. His story is wedded to the issue of survival, of continuing beyond "death" after a life threatening situation. Having descended into the depths of war horror and a form of death and returned to the world of the living, Septimus finds the best way to go on living is to return like a ghost, hovering between life and death. Like a ghost, the original occurrence cannot be remembered but nevertheless leaves its trace on the life of the victim, and, in the case of Septimus, he haunts

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[4] Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1996).

the text of *Mrs. Dalloway* as much as he is haunted by his psychic wounds. A ghost symbolizes the paradox of life/death, of absence/presence. Its presence is a sign of some past wounds, some crime that has not been witnessed, and is therefore a sign also that the present still suffers from that psychic disorder. The story of Septimus, therefore, testifies to an impossibility to remember and at the same time to a compulsion to repeat (re-live), an incomprehensible persistence of belated and fragmentary after-affects. Just because the experience has not been given meaning, he is continually haunted by it in dreams, flashbacks, and hallucinations.

Septimus's statement of a world as meaningless has historical location; a victim of war, Septimus thinks it after the war, because of the war. His story provides a post-war vision of modern history as broken images, unable to make connections.

Written or published at a specific moment in history when civilization seems to "progress" only to the verge of falling apart, modernist narratives recognize the traumatic impact of historical confusion on the human psyche. The essential modernity of the literature which flourished between the two tragic world wars is epitomized in these questions: Why should the western civilization that proclaims itself an agent of progress plunge the world instead to the abyss of destruction? How should one situate the historical process in the twentieth century? And having inflicted a fatal wound in its own heart, how can civilization rehabilitate itself? All the modernist texts discussed in this dissertation are not centrally or explicitly concerned with events at the battlefield; nor are they interested in

describing the obvious consequences of war trauma—soldiers or civilian victims. Rather the war provides a confirmation, a sense of civilization "progressing" to its end with no hope of redemption, like a James Joyce's vision of "the nightmare of history." In this sense, fiction is "possessed" by history; the oppressions and conflicts of history return from repression and register their violence in the memory in the form of trauma. Thus, a powerful model of history as trauma can be found in modernist writing.

Hence, the meaning of this dissertation title "Mixing Memory with Trauma" refers to the structure of time in the traumatic crisis. It raises the issue of a historical relation to the past marked by repetition, where repeating is not remembering but on the contrary testifies to the failure of a certain kind of memory. The complex structure of traumatic time opens up the possibility of another kind of memory, a memory of affects, for it is the repetition of the effect which ensures the continuity of the temporal thread. In formulating modernist idea of history as trauma, I shall argue in particular that such a notion of temporality as repetition echoes the structure of time in traumatic crisis. My point will not be to argue that modernist writing is a traumatic symptom of the war but to analyze what it means for modernist writers to conceptualize history as the history of trauma. Here, Cathy Caruth reading of Freud's much debated text—*Moses and Monotheism*—as a history of trauma would help us to see how an encounter between a crisis in subjective and historical memory can be theorized in the concept of trauma understood as an event that demonically keeps haunting the subject in its peculiar form of latency. Informed both by theories of

shock and by the testimonies of survivors of the Holocaust, Caruth's theory of trauma provides a psychoanalytic account of the impact of catastrophic historical events. Trauma is constituted by unassimilated historical experience, but this is not to suggest that the past is lost to the oblivion of forgetfulness: on the contrary, history is preserved in the unconscious because it is not resolved and discharged by the conscious mind.

Before I go on with discussion on the idea of history as trauma, a few words need to be said about the relationship of modernism and history. Indeed, it may seem unusual at first to link modernist texts with history, for modernism is often criticized for retreating into individual consciousness as a means of escaping the nightmare of history. I argue that modernist literature, rather than retreating into a defeated wall of self consciousness as traditional reading of modernism would have it, is preoccupied by a sense of historical crisis. In the wake of trauma, no thinker, no writer, no serious planner could afford to ignore its defining signatures on modern consciousness. Images of fragmentation and total destruction signifying a fracture in time and space have, to borrow a phrase from Samuel Hynes, "entered post-war consciousness as a truth about the modern world" (Introduction XI).[5] In his much acclaimed work *A War Imagined: The First World War and English Culture*, Hynes proposes two ways of imagining the war: one is to make novels out of the home-front experience of war; another is to respond to the war without ever mentioning it—"a kind of war writing emptied of history, but faithful to feeling" (135). Significantly, Hynes argues that modernist

[5] Samuel Hynes, *A War Imagined: The First World War and English Culture* (London: The Bodley Head, 1990).

fragmentary writing styles bear the same fearful qualities one finds in war—dissolution, flux, and ruin compose a vision of Western civilization at the edge of a vast catastrophe. For Hynes, the works of D. H. Lawrence and Virginia Woolf, though not directly related to the war, nevertheless serve as representative of modernist writers' response to the devastation of war—that is, war separates the present from the past, creating a gap in history.

Obviously, war trauma has created a sense of discontinuity on modern consciousness. Such an incomprehensible catastrophe is beyond history's comprehension, for history is ill equipped to render the tragic experience of disintegration of the twentieth century. For Modris Eksteins, history fails to "find explanation to the war that correspond to the horrendous reality, to the actual experience of the war" (293).[6] Close to announcing the death of history, Eksteins in his work *Rites of Spring: The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age* claims that in the face of war characterized by a pervasive disillusion, history, rather than describing "a social experience, a matter of documentable reality, was individual nightmare, or even, as the Dadaists insisted, madness" (293). The burden of rendering the confusion and disorientation of the postwar world falls into the hands of artists. The magnitude of suffering, past and present, however, is too overwhelming to be understood. Set against broken memories of a wounded past, modern artists can attempt only to make a story of what is not a story, struggling to give shape to individual suffering. But as the extremity of the situation shown in the accounts of war proves to exceed what can be told in mere

[6] Modris Eksteins, *Rites of Spring: The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age* (Toronto, Canada: Lester & Orpen Dennys, 1989).

words, Eksteins continues to argue, "only dream and neurosis remained, a world of illusions characterized by a pervasive negativism. Fantasy became the mainspring of action, and melancholy the general mood" (293). Similarly, in *The Great War and Modern Memory*, Paul Fussell, examining the influences of the Great War on modern thought, also describes the war as "perhaps the last to be conceived as taking place within a seamless, purposeful 'history' involving a coherent stream of time running from past through present to future" (121).[7] We have perhaps accustomed to the Fussellian notion of a constitutive relation between the deep, conceptual trauma caused by the war and the fragmentary, disorienting nature of high modernism. Taken together, these three cultural critics—Fussel, Hynes, and Eksteins—all argue that because of history's failure to adapt to the excruciating experience of war, modernist literature is proposed as a more suitable means to render modern sentiments. They, therefore, ascribe a notion of history to modernism. Taking a cue from these cultural critics, I want to argue that all the modernist texts examined in this dissertation, although making no references to historical events of the war, nevertheless assimilate war trauma and its aftermaths into their world, thus presenting a tragic vision of modern history. Contrary to these critics's claim that modernist view of history as either rupture or discontinuous, I propose to cast the problematic of time in modernist notion of history in terms of repetition compulsion. A history of trauma, therefore, is unable to tell a straightforward story of definite cause and effect. Rather, the return of trauma disrupts our desire to read history progressing from a clear-cut beginning to end, and so it demands reformulating history as a discourse

[7] Paul Fussel, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (London: Oxford UP, 1975).

unavailable to rational understanding in the extremity of its conditions. Much like the unthinkable, shattering nature of trauma, the history of the twentieth century is viewed by modernist writers as an experience not available to immediate and conscious understanding.

Limiting my focus to the work of so-called high modernists rather than those texts that directly address the war will help to expose issues at stake in aesthetic modernism—namely its artistic forms. A number of critics have identified the Great War as a literary watershed, an event that rendered traditional narrative form inadequate to represent the upheaval and trauma produced by the war. Examining the relationships among modernist fiction, cultural history, and the Great War, Trudi Tate contends that although "the formal and theoretical aspects of modernism have been closely analysied . . . its place in the history of its own time has received surprisingly little attention" (2).[8] Hence Tate endeavors to remark on a resonance between the confusion of the Great War and modernist narrative form. For his part, Malcom Bradury argues that "many novelists wrote [the war] into their novels as a sufficient explanation for modern style, for the spatialisation of form, the jump from the diurnal to the symbolist world, as well as for their newer, harder techniques of expression, their rapid cutting, their mechanization of human figures" (193).[9] Compelled to come up with a different way of conceptualizing historical trauma, modernist narrative employs a peculiar form of nonlinearity, blurring all distinctions between past, present, and future, and constant circling around loss to inhabit history through the symptomology of

[8] Trudi Tate, *Modernism, History and the First World War* (Manchester : Manchester UP, 1998).
[9] Malcolm Bradbury, *The Social Context of Modern English Literature* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1971).

trauma. These essentially formal devices manifest not just as aesthetic representations but as unmediated repetitions of a trauma that has yet to be worked through.

Whereas Caruth and other critics of trauma studies privilege the role of belatedness in the concept of trauma,[10] thus emphasizing the collapse of understanding, I want to direct the attention to repetition compulsion that is at the heart of trauma. It is repetition compulsion that so puzzled Freud that he had to return to it again and again in order to figure out why the psyche can be so perverse as to enjoy repeating unpleasant experiences. In that compulsion to repeat, Freud speculates, there is likely to be an attempt to replay the situation, to rewrite the scenario retrospectively for the psyche to achieve some kind of mastery of the unassimilated image. However, as clinical data show, mastery is hardly achieved; more disturbingly, the victims in acting out their traumatic symptoms succeeds only in doing violence to themselves. The psyche actually gets "stuck" in its own suffering, as reliving the past trauma brings only a sense of stasis in life. The subject of trauma is unable to move beyond the haunting effects

[10] At issue is their emphasis on how trauma eludes comprehension, inaccessible to knowledge and rational understanding. Whereas Cathy Caruth argues that there is no simple access to the incomprehensible truth of the latency of trauma, thus challenging the notion of a straightforward textual referentiality, Bessel A. van der Kolk and Onno van der Hart attempt to address the issue of memory in trauma. Informed by the work of Pierre Janet, they develop a theory of trauma as deferred effects of a past cause by distinguishing "traumatic memory" from "narrative memory." Traumatic memory seems to fix the moment permanently in memory of the original event, immune to the vicissitudes of time but unconsciously getting acted out the past repeatedly. By contrast, narrative memory refers to ordinary memory by which Janet described as "the action of telling a story." See their works on trauma in *Traumatic Stress: The Effects of Overwhelming Experience on Mind, Body, and Society*, eds. Bessel A. van der Kolk, Alexander C. McFarlane, and Lars Weisaeth (New York: Guilford, 1996). For their parts, Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub explore the ethical implications of witnessing of the stories of trauma survivors and so they focus on trauma studies in terms of the question of testimony and witnessing. See Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* (London: Routledge, 1992).

left by trauma, and can only experience in a damaging, repetitive fashion. In trauma, repetition compulsion establishes a rhythm of futility in which the trauma survivor structures his life around a single traumatic event that stops forward movement toward recovery. In this sense, repetition compulsion is associated with deterioration, erasure, fragmentation, and neurotic violence—all pointing to a total devastation that strongly suggests symptoms of modernism. Taking repetition compulsion as a trope for narration in forms of haunting, echoing, mimicking, and mirroring, I want to investigate how Freud's writing echoes modernist concerns with the situation of subjects under the historical pressure of cultural processes. I argue that figurations of repetition compulsion employed by modernist writers echo a crisis in historical consciousness in that the insistent return of traumatic events disrupts narrative chronology.

Although I aim, in this dissertation, to indicate that modernist literature defines the post-traumatic condition by incorporating the fragmented and horrific effects of trauma on the psyche into their narrative form, it is not my intention to adopt a single approach to these narratives. As Julian Wolfreys points out, "any gesture in the direction of regulating a response to trauma or establishing a methodology or mode of analysis should be resisted, if one is to do justice to trauma and the work of testimony" (126).[11] The impossibility of regulating a set of rules which determine in advance the approach to traumatic events calls our attention to the nature of trauma in which cohesion of time and consciousness is tragically shattered. My readings seek to remain attentive to the nature of

[11] Julian Wolfreys, "Trauma, Testimony, Criticism: Witnessing, Memory and Responsibility" in *Introducing Criticism at the 21st Century*, ed. Julian Wolfreys (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2002), 126-150.

psychological injury and so I am not claiming that modernist writers attempt to engage with the unresolved experience of trauma in the same way. For example, Freud sets out to understand "traumatic neurosis" as a phenomenon against the pleasurable principle but ends up writing the disorder and confusion of the traumatized psyche into his theory on trauma. Likewise, Virginia Woolf's narrative technique, as DeMeester argues, "brilliantly mirrors the mind of a trauma survivor like Septimus" (650)[12], but in *Mrs. Dalloway*, Woolf depicts not only the chaos of Septimus's shattered mind but also situates the aftermaths of war trauma in relation to a larger society whose inability to face the disturbing social implications of war trauma inhibits trauma survivor's chance of recovery. Woolf responds to the legacy of shell-shock by focusing more on the cultural, sociopolitical, and psychological contexts of trauma. Therefore, *Mrs. Dalloway* addresses how the mind of traumatized Septimus becomes a historical marker to unspeakable experience of social conflicts and wounds. In what follows, I will outline how each writer employs the figure of traumatic repetition in different ways. I aim to show that the device of repetition-compulsion can act at the levels of language, imagery or plot.

In Chapter II of this project—"Limping to History: Trauma and Its Vicissitudes"—I aim to read *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* against *Moses and Monotheism*. I argue that the conceptual difficulties concerning the problem of psychic trauma that Freud tries in vain to explain away with his earlier formed instinctual theory in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* keep haunting Freud so that

[12] Karen DeMeester, "Trauma and Recovery in Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*," *Modern Fiction Studies* 44.3 (1998): 649-673.

he has to work it through (also in vain) by returning to it in his final work—*Moses and Monotheism*. Written at a historical crisis, both texts reflect a remarkable similarity in structure in that the unavoidable and overwhelming imposition of historical events on the psyche mirrors Freud's internal contradictions and doubt concerning the survival of psychoanalysis. Freud is fascinated with the pattern of suffering that characterizes the lives of certain individuals (notably the case of traumatic neurosis) in that trauma seems to repeat itself for those who have already passed through them. In coming to terms with the catastrophic symptoms of trauma, and the subsequent ghostly reappearance by which trauma came to be comprehended, Freud stumbles on the concept of "repetition compulsion." And so he makes a historical departure from war trauma to an analysis of the famous "fort/da" game. The narrative as well as the theory of trauma thus hover between repetition and departure, exemplifying the ambivalence and ambiguity of trauma. In this psychoanalytic encounter with historical trauma, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* has internalized the effects of war trauma. Therefore, the body of the text itself figures symptoms of trauma. Freud's text is, in that sense, not only haunted by its subject psychic disorder, but the text itself is also paralyzed, "limping" like his traumatic patients. It is as though psychic trauma represents an obstacle to psychoanalysis, one that constantly threatens to overturn its most basic assumptions so that Freud unconsciously writes the symptom unto the textual body. The inner conflict (doubt), the "in-coherence" of reasoning (interruptions, the fragility of hypotheses, gaps) points to a narrative of traumatic haunting. The body, in acting out the tragic aspects of the psyche, presents a witness to twentieth

century history as trauma. Propelled by the forward drive of repetition (rather than desire), the textuality of both *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* and *Moses and Monotheism* is itself a form of acting out, a performative discursive act of the trauma of the twentieth century. Like drama, which has the magical power to make present rather than to just narrate, both texts set up a correspondence between rhetoric and psychic process. My reading of Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* and *Moses and Monotheism* seeks to demonstrate that both texts replicate the literary techniques associated with the genre of trauma narratives. In this respect, both texts "act out" what I would call textual traumatism which performs the haunting effects of trauma. In this sense, the text performs a double to its traumatic hero; likewise, the hero's disorder is mirrored by the morbid condition of the narrative system.

Extending Freud's traumatic vision of the twentieth century to the discussion of modernist texts that follow, I propose to read Lawrence' s *Women in Love* as a response to the devastation of the First World War. *Women in Love* is a novel replete with physical injuries and violence which find their equivalents in textual evidence—the novel's highly-charged violent language peculiarly recalls the explosive consciousness under the pressure of historical trauma. In fact, during those years of writing *Women in Love*, the Great War was much on Lawrence's mind: not as military events but as the apocalyptic ending of a sick civilization. "I think there in no future for England," he wrote in a letter in November 1915: "....only a decline and fall. That is the dreadful and unbearable part of it: to have been born into a decadent era, a decline of life, a collapsing civilization." And in

February 1916: "This world of ours has got to collapse now, in violence and injustice and destruction, nothing will stop it" (qtd. in Eksteins 435). Nowhere is such human tendency to self-destruction more visible than in the novel's language. I want to stress that *Women in Love* records trauma at its most basic lexical levels, through the very choice of words by which the attempt at representation takes place. Thus, one aspect of Lawrence's writing situates the responsible act in the materiality of the letter in order to respond to the disturbing and chaotic history during World War I. Thus *Women in Love* demonstrates that words have literal violence in that words whiz like metaphorical shells through the battlefield of discourse between characters. This Chapter—"The Dynamic Principle of the Oxymoron in *Women in Love*"—will discuss how Lawrence uses oxymoron not only as a rhetorical trope but also as an organizing figure for trauma to testify both the limit and inadequacy of representation in the face of catastrophe and horror, and the importance of bearing witness to the fact.

The modernist narrative form of Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* arguably emulates the distinct traumas of modern experience, introducing ideas foregrounding historical rupture, decentering, fragmentation, erasure of identity. However, Chapter IV will take a departure from the traumatic performance of narrative form and focus instead on key issues in the aftermath of traumatic experience. I argue that *Mrs. Dalloway* offers a version of history as haunting, in which the effects of the war are far from over. The central, most traumatic violence of the twentieth century is not mentioned in the novel, because for Woolf modern history is incomplete and unassimilated—a record that has not yet been adequately made.

By its very nature, the condition of trauma presents an inability to integrate experience into narrative memory. The traumatic event is always reconstructed in retrospect; when it occurs, it is only a silent or screaming gap, wound, or void. At a radical loss for a way of coming to terms with their experience, the traumatized, as Cathy Caruth writes, "carry an impossible history within them, or they become themselves the symptom of a history that they cannot entirely possess" (4-5).[13] As we shall see in *Mrs. Dalloway*, the symptom of history as unclaimed trauma returns to the text, simultaneously disrupting narrative development and also demanding attention, like an open wound. Trauma therefore serves to introduce the problem of the relation of narrative to remembering and forgetting and to the special type of forgetting—unexpected and precipitous—that is called dissociation. In Chapter IV—"Remember My Party" through Trauma: the War and the Politics of Memory in *Mrs. Dalloway*"—I discuss the problematic issue of memory in narrative of trauma. Written in the wake of the traumatic event of World War I, this novel comments and critiques our need for a past which is easily packaged and resolved. I argue that postwar British society is troubled by the overwhelming flood of dangerous emotions resulting from the traumatic impact of an event on the scale of World War I. The society, eager to leave the traumatic historical event behind, attempts to contain and suppress the traumatic memory embodied in the damaged psyche of Septimus as if the text is trying to bind the large amounts of stimulus from breaching the ego's protective shield. "Binding" and "breaching" of course recall Freud's description in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* of the important function of the psychical apparatus in binding the

[13] Cathy Caruth, ed. *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1995).

destructive external quantities of excitation in order to master them. The novel demonstrates the losses attending severe war trauma and the costs of denying trauma, both to the individual and to the community. Representing the nightmare of history as well as the troubling and unresolved effects of the past, Septimus is subtly encouraged by the society to kill himself so that the past can be resolved and forgotten. However, my reading indicates that the novel's ending as a long-waited discharge of traumatic excitations in the wake of Septimus's death does offer consolation; instead, the ending is deceptive. Though written off physically from the novel, Septimus returns to ghostly haunt Mrs. Dalloway's party. Central in all this is Virginia Woolf's encryption of a "nonconceptual" density of trauma within discourse, a real kernel whose presence is a sign that the present haunted by the wounds of the past still suffers from some traumatic disorder.

Much like Freud's *Moses and Monotheism*, the textual body of *Under the Volcano* seems to remember the chaos of culture as the rhetorical style responds to the situation of subjects under the historical pressure of cultural process. The novel is perhaps the best portrayal of how a theory of traumatic history is presupposed in the experience of personal trauma. Toward the end of the novel, we read "[b]ut there was nothing there: no peaks, no life, no climb. Nor was this summit a summit exactly: it had no substance, no firm base. It was crumbling too, whatever it was, collapsing . . . it was in eruption, yet no, it wasn't the volcano, the world itself was bursting . . . with himself falling through it all, through the inconceivable pandemonium of a million tanks, through the blazing of ten million burning bodies, falling, into a forest, falling—" (*Under the Volcano*

375). This is an apocalyptic vision the Consul has of a world crumbling down with him when he is shot by a Fascist policeman in Mexico. In linking the downfall of the Consul with the breakdown of civilization in the twentieth century, Malcolm Lowry in *Under the Volcano* is reflecting a tragic despair of history seen through the shattered and distorted mind of an individual. Written in the context of the Europe of the 1920s and 1930s when the world was trying to recover from the horrendous aftermaths of the first world war while at the same time anticipating another more cruel and madder war, *Under the Volcano* confirms an historical vision as the extreme agent of destruction and horror shared by many modernist writers who also wrote in the wake of a world-after-the-war.

The vicious circularity identified in the Consul's own personal history is, in fact, a general condition, at least for the modern West. Certainly Lowry himself, in his letter to Jonathan Cape, lends support to this reading, arguing that the novel, on one plane at least, is a chronicle of "the universal drunkenness of mankind during the war, or during the period immediately preceding it, which is almost the same thing, and what profundity and final meaning there is in [the Consul's] fate should be seen also in its universal relationship to the ultimate fate of mankind" (qtd. in DeCoste 774).[14] Read in this light, the Consul's drinking problem is not a history of an addiction to alcohol, but in its very repetition, the drinking serves as an image for the twentieth-century history conceived as a nightmarish cycle of human waste. *Under the Volcano* asks this question: What does it mean for civilization compulsively to drink itself to the verge of madness/violence?

[14] Damon Marcel DeCoste, "Do You Remember Tomorrow?": Modernism and Its Second War in Malcolm Lowry's *Under the Volcano*," *Modern Fiction Studies* 44.3 (1998): 767-791.

Drunkenness is therefore the structuring trope of the whole novel. The concept of drunkenness as discursive trauma, elaborated in Chapter VI, is central to my argument. I want to investigate how the use of states of vertigo, sensory disorder, circularity, all of which are associated with drunkenness, betrays a complicity with the malady of death characterized by the Consul's narcissistic fixation on loss.

Chapter II: Limping to History: Trauma and Its Vicissitudes

The disturbing phenomenon of trauma is a central concern in Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* and *Moses and Monotheism.* Written at a time when Freud was struggling with an internal crisis (the aging process compounded by his cancer) as well as external conflicts (events surrounding the two world wars), both works document how history gets entangled with psychical trauma. Facing the newly discerned perturbations of mind that he categorizes as "the compulsion to repeat" that is the hallmark of trauma, Freud structures his writing on trauma around a diabolical movement which like trauma is interminably repeating the wound of history. Considered in relation to their historical contexts, these two works assume a particular poignancy and relevance. Reading *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* against *Moses and Monotheism,* I want to use Freud's theory of trauma proposed in these two works to illuminate his own writing. In the course of reading Freud using his own trauma theory, I shall argue that both *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* and *Moses and Monotheism* belong to "the emerging genre of trauma fiction" (Whitehead 4).[1] Such a notion of turning trauma theory into trauma narrative indicates a shift from a reflective mode of writing to a performative act in which the text inscribes traumatic symptoms. In other words, I want to argue that while both works concern about the registration of a traumatic experience in the epistemological crisis of human psyche, the text itself *enacts* trauma of narrative in that the body of both works mimics the impact of trauma.

I. *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*

[1] In her *Trauma Fiction*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2004), Anne Whitehead defines trauma fiction as that which "the impact of trauma can only adequately be represented by mimicking its forms and symptoms, so that temporality and chronology collapse, and narratives are characterized by repetition and indirection" (4).

An Unexpected Encounter of Psychoanalysis and War Trauma

The First World War both confirmed and contradicted Freud's psychoanalytic theories about human nature. The war proved right his theories about the irrational nature of human beings; at the same time, it also revealed to Freud that his theory of sexuality rendered false in the wake of the epidemic of war trauma. However, the First World War had also seen many doctors adopting the method of psychoanalysis in their attempt at finding a cure for trauma victims. In a paradoxical way, psychoanalysis found a shelter in history. Hence, when the dark war ended, Freud lamented in November of 1918, "Our analysis has actually also had trouble. No sooner does it begin to interest the world on account of the war neuroses than the war ends . . . . Our kingdom is indeed not of this world" (qtd. in Breger 250).[2] Little did Freud think that lasting mental illness would be of one of the results of the war. He wrote in his introduction to the report of the Fifth International Psycho-Analytical Congress that "when war conditions ceased to operate, the greater number of the neurotic disturbances brought about by the war simultaneously vanished. The opportunity for a thorough investigation of these affections was thus unluckily lost" (XVII, 207).[3] What Freud considered as an unlucky loss of an opportunity turned out to be a chance for him to reconsider the validity of his early theory of the human psyche as automatically regulated by the pleasure principle. The War brought home tremendous numbers of traumatized soldiers whose bewildering behavior of repeatedly returning to the scene of wounding puzzled Freud. In 1919, when Freud began writing *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (henceforth cited as *Beyond*), he was responding to a historical trauma that challenged his theory of the pleasure principle.

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[2] Louis Breger, *Freud: Darkness in the Midst of Vision* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2000).
[3] See *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychoanalytic Works of Sigmund Freud*, trans. James Strachey, V. XVII (London: The Hogarth P, 1955).

Freud wonders: If the human psyche constantly and fundamentally seeks pleasure, why then do some people repeat in the present what hurt in the past, that which could never be felt as pleasurable? And above all, why do the traumatized soldiers relive the horrors of the battlefield?

This unexpected encounter between psychoanalysis and war trauma pushes Freud to modify his theory of the pleasure principle. In *Beyond*, he deliberately searches for examples that run contrary to the pleasure principle. Of all the divergent examples that Freud gives—the shell-shocked soldier, the accident survivor, the patient acting out their trauma in transference, people repeating their painful fate, and the child losing sight of its mother—only war trauma seriously challenges his theory of the pleasure principle. It is a special case that really explains "beyond" the limits of his theory: a case that haunts Freud throughout *Beyond*, because the soldier's dreams did not accord with his theory of wish fulfillment, according to which every dream represents, in disguised or altered form, an unconscious wish or desire. Trying to account for the meaning of the soldier's nightmares that reflect a stubborn return to the scene of trauma, Freud in *Beyond* shifts the center of psychoanalytic thinking from the individual struggle with internal infantile sexual desire to the external, collective painful encounter with traumatic history. Thus Cathy Caruth writes that "the question raised by war trauma concerning the nature of life thus require a new model for psychoanalytic thinking and, in particular, for the relation between psychoanalysis and history" (Caruth 52; 2003).[4] However, Freud finds it impossible to focus on the adult traumatic experience as a reformulated model for the human psyche; the pleasure principle proves strong enough to pull Freud back to its own

[4] Cathy Caruth, "Parting Words: Trauma, Silence, and Survival," in *Acts of Narrative*, eds. Carol Jacobs and Henry Sussman (Stanford: Stanford U P, 2003), 45-62.

track. The reserve direction holds equally true, however; in a way, *Beyond* can also be interpreted as Freud's inability to defend the supposed primacy of the human psyche to seek pleasure, for the historical trauma keeps intruding without warning the present life. The book therefore records not only the oxymoronic structure of the human psyche but also the oxymoronic movement of the narrative in which distinctions between inside and outside, progress and stasis, past and present, life and death, are rendered problematic.[5] The following discussion will start with Freud's definition of trauma and then will use his definition to read the story of war trauma in *Beyond.*

Although Freud writes *Beyond* with the intention of exploring traumatic neurosis as another principle that works independently of the dominant pleasure principle, it is only with hesitance and taking many turns and twists before he can bring himself to formulate a definition of trauma:

> We describe as "traumatic" any excitations from outside which are powerful enough to break through the protective shield. It seems to me that the concept of trauma necessarily implies a connection of this kind with a breach in an otherwise efficacious barrier against stimuli. Such an event as an external trauma is bound to provoke a disturbance on a large scale in the functioning of the organism's energy and to set in motion every possible defensive

[5] The cyclic reasoning Freud uses to argue for a principle beyond the pleasure principle has led many critics to see the book as an awkward performance of writing. In this respect, the collective resentment is at times, as Todd Dufresne points out, "almost audible: *If only Freud had died before his annoying new revisions of 1920*" (26). *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* sits uneasily among Freud's other works. The critical history of the book has been fraught with puzzlement and speculations on the validity of his claims in the book. Dufresne has provided an excellent genealogy of the critical history of the book—see his *Tales from the Freudian Crypt: The Death Drive in Text and Context* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 2000). See especially his Chapter 2, "The Heterogeneous "Beyond" : An Introduction to the Dead and Dying," (13-144) in which he provides a "review and reconstruction, an archaeology of BPP in general, and of the theory of the death drive in particular" (13-14). There are, it seems, many 'Beyonds' in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle.*

measure. (33)[6]

These terms—*powerful excitations*, *breaking through the barrier*, and *emotional disturbance*—indicate the notion of trauma as an event that overwhelms mental processes by being too sudden or extreme for the psyche to accommodate and process.[7] The psyche, being unprepared and shocked by the accident, has missed the chance to contain and negotiate traumatic fright. The meeting of psyche and trauma paradoxically reveals a missed encounter between them where the psyche helplessly witnesses its own damage. Not knowing why such damage could ever occur, the psyche repeatedly acts out the scene of trauma in nightmares, flashbacks, and hallucinations. Freud describes such an enacting of trauma as "repetition-compulsion" by which he speculates as the psyche's attempt in retrospect to master disturbing mental ailment:

> It is not in the service of [the pleasure principle] that the dreams of patients suffering from traumatic neurosis lead them back with such regularity to the situation in which the trauma occurred. We may assume, rather, that dreams are here helping to carry out another task, which must be accomplished before the dominance of the pleasure principle can even begin. These dreams are endeavouring to master the stimulus retrospectively, by developing the anxiety whose omission was the cause of the traumatic neurosis. (36-37)

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[6] All quotations from *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* are from the Norton edition of the book. See Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, trans. and ed., James Strachey; intro. Gregory Zilboorg; with a biographical introduction by Peter Gay (New York : Norton, 1989).

[7] For her part, Caruth extends Freud's notion of trauma and describes it as "a response, sometimes delayed, to an overwhelming event or set of events, which takes the form of repeated, intrusive hallucinations, dreams, thoughts or behaviors stemming from the event" (Caruth 4-5; 1995). The pathology, she notes, consists "solely in the structure of the experience or reception: the event is not assimilated or experienced fully at the time, but only belatedly in its repeated possession of the one who experiences it" (4-5). See Cathy Caruth, ed., *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins U P, 1995).

However, repeatedly revisiting the scene of trauma is more susceptible to self-destruction than it is a mastery of events. As Freud puts it, "I am not aware, however, that patients suffering from traumatic neurosis are much occupied in their waking lives with memories of their accident. Perhaps they are more concerned with *not* thinking of it" (11; italics in original). The implications and horror of trauma point to a fixation to the moment at which the trauma occurred. It is in this sense that Freud notes the distinctive feature of traumatic dreams in that they represent a re-entry into the experience itself : "[The patient] is obliged to *repeat* the repressed material as a contemporary experience, instead of, as the physician would prefer to see, *remembering* it as something belonging to the past" (19; emphasis mine). The soldiers whom Freud observes have not fully assimilated their experiences of war, and their nightmares represent the ways in which the past acts as a haunting or possessive force. Freud notes the soldiers trapped within their nightmares: "The impression they give is of being pursued by a malignant fate or possessed by some "daemonic power" (41). To reproduce the trauma in the state of repeating it does not mean to remember, to narrate, or to represent a past event as past. It means to re-live the past event in the present, thus disrupting the psyche's experience of time. In its disturbed and disrupted temporality, trauma, for Freud, carries a ghostly or spectral meaning in which it represents the haunting of the individual by an image or event and testifies to an unresolved past. In telling the story of the traumatized soldier, Freud gestures towards a past that haunts the present and resists assimilation. Trauma brutalizes not only the psyche; in trauma, it is time itself that gets wounded.[8]

The repetition of traumatic experiences in the dreams of neurotics is a vain effort

[8] Allan Young also notes the wounding of time in trauma; for him, trauma is "a disease of time" (7). See Allan Young, *The Harmony of Illusions: Inventing Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder* (New Jersey: Princeton UP, 1995).

to reverse time back to its past experience of pleasure before trauma. Trauma therefore raises the issue of a relation to the past marked by repetition compulsion, where reliving the past is not remembering but on the contrary makes cure a rare case in trauma, for the aim of psychoanalysis is to make the patient remember, to work-through in order to elaborate the memory and thereby to stop repeating. And this traumatic resistance to therapy moves Freud's thinking in the direction of a biological "death drive." The death drive is the legitimate "beyond" that acts independently of and often in opposition to the pleasure principle. The proposition of the death drive also moves Freud beyond the discussion of war trauma and triggers a series of peculiar speculations on the function and validity of the death drive, speculations that can be brought to an end only when Freud forces a bold and dire conclusion that "the pleasure principle seems actually to serve the death instincts" (77).[9] With this conclusion, the project of *Beyond* which aims to address traumatic repetition that works against "the dominance of the pleasure principle over the

[9] The conclusion Freud reaches about the relation of the pleasure principle to the death drive arouses more confusion than clarity in explaining the meaning of the death drive. For this reason, the proposition of the death drive has puzzled and annoyed critics for decades. While many critics dismiss the death drive simply as Freud's fantasy, others see it as Freud's attempt to "displace the monistic theory that posited the achievement of real or conjectured pleasure as the primary goal of human activity with a dualistic theory which claims that the drive toward pleasure is always interrupted and thwarted by a rival drive, that of death or Thanatos" (Butler 260). See Judith Butler, "The Pleasure of Repetition," in *Pleasure Beyond the Pleasure Principle,* eds. Robert A. Click and Stanley Bone (New Haven: Yale UP, 1990), 259-276. For Dufresne (see note 5 for information on his work) , the death drive "is a meta-theory, and also a threat, that undermines the theory, practice, and business of psychoanalysis from within" (25). Dufresne continues: "The death drive became for Freud a repository into which he could dump everything that didn't fit well in the categories of sexuality or libido" (34). On the other hand, Lifton's study of trauma survivors of the Nuclear Bombing in Japan confirms in a painful way Freud's theory of the death drive. Lifton writes: "Numbing and overall constriction in depression are so predominant that, among psychic disorders, it comes closest to organismic imitation of death, to what we might call a mimetic death" (Lifton 181). See Jay Robert Lifton, *The Broken Connection: On Death and the Continuity of Life* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979). Perhaps the most vehement proponents of the death drive are Melanie Klein and her followers. Melanie Klein and her school model on the inherent nature of aggression in human beings by which she means the manifestation of the death drive: "The repeated attempts that have been made to improve humanity—in particular to make it more peaceable," Klein wrote in 1933, "have failed, because nobody has understood the full depth and vigour of the instincts of aggression innate in each individual" (257). See Melanie Klein, "The Early Development of Conscience in the Child," in *Love, guilt, and reparation, and other works, 1921-1945* (New York : Free Press, 1984).

course of mental processes" has come full circle: Freud falls back on the function of the pleasure principle. This peculiar writing style in *Beyond* has attracted much critical interest. In his book *The Post Card*, Derrida has noted of the performative structure of Freud's text: "The very procedure of the text itself is diabolical. It mimes walking, does not cease walking without advancing, regularly sketching out one step more without gaining an inch for ground" (269). As such, Freud plays a game of "repetition of repetition" (Derrida 302).[10] Similarly, Zilboorg argues that Freud's acts of speculation advances without advancing : "*Beyond the Pleasure Principle* is what it says; it goes a little further beyond, but it does not abandon whatever preceded it" (xxxi).[11] Aware of the curious rhetoric of *Beyond*, Freud admits that such a theory "raises a host of other questions to which we can at present find no answer" (57-8). *Beyond* ends with these famous lines: "What we cannot reach flying we must reach limping" and "The book tells us it is no sin to limp." Freud expressly connects the limp with "the slow advances of our scientific knowledge," but it is impossible not to apply the metaphor to the faltering exposition of the work.

I would like to suggest that this "limping" back to the pleasure principle indicates simultaneously an evasion of a historical trauma that still remains painful in contemporary experience as well as a response to the trauma by mimicking its disorientation and its symptomatic dimensions at a stylistic level. Freud's text, in limping between a logical impasse where life and death get entangled, testifies to the fact that trauma cannot be mastered: it continues to lie outside or alongside the "integrated"

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[10] Jacques Derrida, *The Post Card: From Socrates to Freud and Beyond*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1987).
[11] Gregory Zilboorg, "Introduction," in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* by Sigmund Freud, trans. and ed., James Strachey (New York: Norton, 1989), xxv-xxxvi.

ego. In this sense, *Beyond* is as paralyzed, "limping" as his traumatic patients, for trauma presents an incomprehensible catastrophe that undermines the very possibility of coherent narrative. The "diabolical" repetitions in *Beyond* may appear as symptoms of historical events that have not been adequately addressed, remembered, and retold. In the following, I will argue that Freud inscribes within his text, in the words of Caruth, "a pathology of history" in which *Beyond* textualizes a narrative of the shattered psyche's response to historical trauma.[12]

Limping to Narrative-as-Trauma

Freud's definition of trauma significantly points to the contingency of external reality disturbing the inner order of the psyche. In this sense, trauma is defined as a puncturing which disrupts a certain order by breaking its boundaries and creating chaos in its structures. The encounter between psychoanalysis and the war neuroses shows Freud confronting the survivors of trauma and both seeing and turning away from what he saw, because the incessant repetition of traumatic dreams serve only to disrupt his masterplot—the psyche's tendency to repeat pleasant experience. No sooner does Freud address the issue of war trauma than he expresses a wish to return to his pleasure principle: "At this point I propose to leave the dark and dismal subject of the traumatic neurosis and pass on to examine the method of working employed by the mental apparatus in one of its earliest *normal* activities—I mean in children's play" (12). Thus he begins to discuss the meaning of the famous "*fort/da*" game. The actor of this game is no one than his grandson who has the habit of throwing away a reel, uttering "o-o-o-o",

[12] Referring to traumatic disruption of temporality and chronology, Caruth writes: "If [trauma] must be understood as a pathological symptom, then it is not so much a symptom of the unconscious, as it is a symptom of history" (5). See Cathy Caruth, ed., *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1995).

and then pulling it back. Freud explains that the child in question is actively turning the painful experience of his mother's departure into a game in which he can make his mother return, thus joyfully uttering "*da*" when he retrieves the toy. In this departure from the historical trauma into a children's game which also turns out to be a family romance, Freud unknowingly juxtaposes two stories—the historical trauma and the personal drama. However, Freud is unable to focus his attention on either of the story, for those two stories seem to simultaneously disrupt and connect each other.

At this point it is pertinent to consider a small alteration Freud made on transcribing the sound accompanying the throwing away of the reel by his grandson. Grubrich-Smitis's careful study of the two manuscript versions of *Beyond* notes that in the first version the phonetic transcription of the throwing away sound is oooo, whereas in the second version, Freud "onomatopoetically extended the sequence of vowels in writing as follows: o-o-o-o" (188).[13] I would like to suggest that this textual strategy of transforming from "oooo" to "o-o-o-o" enacts the paradoxical wound of narrative, for those dashes/links can be interpreted as symptoms of trauma in that the story of war trauma is told by indirectness, repetition compulsion, and fragmentation. In terms of narrative indirectness, we recall that Freud's difficulty in fitting the post-traumatic dreams into the plot of the pleasure principle prompts him to break off the enigmatic dreams abruptly and continue with the analysis of the child's "gone/there" play. In this sense, the story of war trauma seems to perform narrative obstacles in this text, for the text fails to relay the story in a narrative continuum of past, present, and future; in other words, the conventional narrative framework has been disintegrated. In trauma, the

[13] Ilse Grubrich-Simitis, *Back to Freud's Texts: Making Silent Documents Speak*, trans. Philip Slotkin (New Haven: Yale UP, 1996).

narrative framework is cut off by a dreadful event or crisis. Freud responds to this interruptive nature of post-traumatic dreams by referring to them at least nine times, and in different places, in the course of attempting to go beyond the pleasure principle.[14] The many false starts to attempt to narrate the meaning of war trauma reveal Freud's inability to resist the compulsion to repeat that story, and this interrupted but repetitive return to the story of war trauma embodies what Irene Kacandes terms as "narrative-as-trauma" (57).[15]

The traversal between external historical trauma and internal psychic states represents the historiality of the text's attempt to respond to the traumatic reception of new knowledge; it also generates a narrative of repetition compulsion in that post-traumatic dreams both sustain the flow of the narrative and yet interrupt the narrative at every point. Freud's difficulty in working through the "narrative-as-trauma" attests to the technical difficulty concerning trauma spoken of by Avital Ronell, for trauma can be seen as a memory that "one cannot integrate [it] into one's own experience, and as a catastrophic knowledge that one cannot communicate to others" (313-14).[16] The inability to communicate a catastrophic knowledge can be seen as a narrative obstacle; not surprisingly, one of such narrative obstacles in this text occurs at crucial dramatic

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[14] The war-related story is scattered throughout the book. Freud first mentions the nightmares of war in Chapter II but then leaves the subject to talk about other examples. At the beginning of Chapter III, he again mentions the phenomenon of war trauma and then near the end of Chapter III, he tries to relate the compulsion to repeat traumatic dreams to the repetition of children's play. In Chapter IV, Freud proposes that trauma is a break in the stimulus barrier and continues to speculate on the function of post-traumatic dreams. The line of speculation on the notion of war trauma culminates in Chapter V in which Freud regards trauma as a failure to bind excitations. From here on, the narrative digresses from the plot of war trauma to an elaboration of the duality of the drive theory.

[15] Kacandes argues that we can think about "narratives 'of' trauma, but also about narratives 'as' trauma" (55). See her "Narrative Witnessing As Memory Work: Reading Gertrud Kolmar's *A Jewish Mother*" in *Acts of Memory: Cultural Recall in the Present*, eds. Mieke Bal, Jonathan Crewe, and Leo Spitzer (Hanover: UP of New England, 1999), 55-75.

[16] Avital Ronell, *Finitude's Score: Essays for the End of the Millennium* (Lincoln, NE: U of Nebraska P, 1994).

junctures and around the most painful issues: the proposition of the death drive in connection with the death of Freud's daughter, Sophie. Of course, Freud dismissed such a connection, asserting that *Beyond* had been completed before this traumatic event. However, Grubrich-Simitis argues that Freud's loss of his daughter Sophie and of his friend Anton von Freund colored the ideas advanced in *Beyond.*[17] She compares two separate versions of *Beyond*, the first completed before and the second after the deaths. The second version, the one that was published, contains a chapter not present in the first version; it is in this chapter that the concept of the death drive first appears.[18]

Freud's denial of any relationship between the death drive and the death of his daughter can be interpreted as his inability to directly verbalize the pain of personal loss, a fact that the text itself bears witness to, for Freud adds an odd footnote to the discussion of the "*fort/da*" game. The note reads: "When this child was five and three-quarters, his mother died. Now that she was really 'gone' ('o-o-o'), the little boy showed no signs of grief. It is true that in the interval a second child had been born and had roused him to violent jealousy" (16). Significantly in this note, one "o" is missing from the original four o's—"o-o-o-o"—that appears in the main text. Recall that Sophie is precisely the mother of the child whose joyful play ends with the loss of his mother, a tragedy that occurs outside of the text, I would like to suggest that this note unmistakably disrupts the division between externality and internality. The juxtaposition of the nightmares of war to the child's game carries a "limping effect." The juxtaposition is even more compelling

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[17] See note 13..

[18] The text of *Beyond* was written with many interruptions. It was begun in March, 1919, and the first draft was completed in May. Freud started to work on it again during the winter of 1920 and finished the book after making several revisions in July, 1920. The writing of the book is fraught with the historical weight and personal loss in that the many interruptions and returns to the text inscribe Freud's traumatized consciousness. For Freud's life situations surrounding the writing of *Beyond*, see Peter Gay, *Freud : A Life for Our Time* (New York : Norton, 1988).

if we note that Sophie died of the influenza epidemic that originated in the war, and so her death brings us to a point where historical trauma and personal loss are closely interrelated. *Beyond* is a narrative that wrestles with the entanglement of history, collective and personal, and the text arguably bears the hallmarks of traumatic narrative unable to escape its own condition, doomed to mirror the iterable interruption that haunts it throughout.

This marked interruption and doubling that produces a discontinuous narrative-as-trauma insists on acting it out even toward the end of *Beyond* in which Freud "limps" to a conclusion with a quote from a poet:

> *Was man nicht erfliegen kann, muss man erhinken.*
>
> . . . . . .
>
> *Die Schrift sagt, es ist keine Sunde zu hinken.* (78)[19]

Appearing amid the English translation, those German words unknowingly embody the otherness of trauma that remains unassimilated and unnarratable. More telling are those limping dots which evoke the symptomatic dimensions at a literal level. The repetition of traumatic performance on the level of the text produces the disorientation of trauma-as-narrative in which it seems to threaten to limp to a psychic paralysis and is suggestive of the endless drive to repeat. In many ways, this limping is unequivocally applicable to the text of *Moses and Monotheism.*

II. *Moses and Monotheism*

Writing at a time of internal contradictions and doubt, as well as at a time of historical crisis, Freud's *Moses and Monotheism* astonishingly bears the traits that we

[19] James Strachey, translator and editor of *Beyond*, did not explain the choice to let these two lines remain in German in the main text. He included the English translation in the footnote: "What we cannot reach flying we must reach limping . . . . The book tells us it is no sin to limp" (78).

find in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. Just as the total newness and unexpectedness of traumatic dreams presents a situation that does fit into the wish-fulfillment theory of dreams, so does Freud propose in *Moses and Monotheism* (hereafter cited as *MM*) a theory of the origins of Jewish history in apparent contradiction of any official history.

Moses and Monotheism is a book of memory in which Freud, playing the double roles of the patient whose job is to remember and the analyst whose job is to construct, attempts to remember what official and historical memory has forgotten. Determined to retrace the forgotten memory so as to understand the events happening in the present, Freud, through speculations, historical fictionalizing, and psychological analogies, argues that Moses was not a Jew but an Egyptian nobleman by birth, and that he introduced Monotheism invented by Egyptian Pharaoh Akhenaten. However, the crude Hebrews, unable to bear its rigorous standards of belief, rebelled against Moses and murdered him. After centuries of collective repression, Moses's monotheistic teachings managed to surface and become the national religion of the Jews.

What to make of this controversial and shocking conclusion that the history of the Hebrews is founded on a trauma that relates to the murder of the father—the murder of Moses by his people? In a letter to Arnold Zweig dated 9 September, 1934, Freud writes:

> Faced with the new persecutions, one asks oneself again how the Jews have come to be what they are and why they should have attracted this undying hatred. I soon discovered the formula: Moses created the Jews. So I gave my work the title: *The Man Moses, a Historical Novel*. . . . (qtd. in Yerushalmi 1989;377)[20]

[20] Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, "Freud on the 'Historical Novel': From the Manuscript Draft (1934) *of Moses and Monotheism*," *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 70 (1989): 375-96.

In this letter, Freud unequivocally links the writing of *MM* as a response to the "new persecutions" unleashed against the Jews by the Nazis. However, such an imagined construction of a traumatic history as a response to a historical trauma has invited critical speculations on Freud's personal life.[21] Aware of how shockingly opposite this construction is to everything consciously remembered and transmitted, Freud claims that *Moses and Monotheism* aims "at a new concept of truth, that is under the name of 'historical truth', a truth that scholarship, historiography, and perhaps philosophy have some difficulty thinking through" (32).[22] The "historical truth" Freud refers to has nothing to do with 'historical objective evidence" but is concerned with *psychological effects* by which Freud hopes to shed some light on why the Jewish people "should incidentally earn the heartfelt dislike of other peoples" (67).

Of all the three essays in *MM*, only the third and most substantial essay (Part III) in which Freud has Moses murdered proves dangerously outrageous. The first two essays—"Moses an Egyptian" and "If Moses Was an Egyptian"—do not cause specific troubles for Freud, for as many scholars have observed, the hypothesis of Moses as an Egyptian has been entertained since the 18th century. And as Robert Alter argues, it is not

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[21] Lack of biographical, literary, and logical evidence for the murder of Moses has troubled both Freud and its critics. The only way left to salvage this peculiar book seems to psychoanalyze the founder of psychoanalysis himself. Since the critical list of what Yerushalmi calls as "tired and evasive cliche" is long and well-known, I will not repeat such a cliché. There is a trend, since the publication of Yerushalmi's *Freud's Moses*, to shift the critical attention to the application of Freud's ideas on traumatic history, tradition, and transgenerational traits to cultural studies. For Yerushalmi, *Moses and Monotheism* is Freud's positive affirmation of Jewishness, the resolution to his life-long fascination with religion and Judaism. See Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Freud's Moses: Judaism Terminable and Interminable* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1991). On the positive evaluation of Freud's ideas on inherited national traits, see Richard J. Bernstein, *Freud and the Legacy of Moses* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998). Robert A. Paul's *Moses and Civilization: The Meaning Behind Freud's Myth* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1996), also initiate a change in approach from psychological motivation and meaning to an understanding of the text itself. Assmann, using historic texts on the subject of the biblical character of Moses, applied his knowledge of Egyptology to the same end. See Jan Assmann, *Moses the Egyptian: The Memory of Egypt in Western Monotheism* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1997).

[22] All quotations from *Moses and Monotheism* are from Sigmund Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, trans. Katherine Jones (New York: Vintage Books, 1955).

strictly necessary to Freud's argument that Moses be an Egyptian. Alter writes: "The same plot of the murdered leader, the guilty repression of the act, and the subterranean preservation of his doctrine could be worked out if Moses were a Hebrew who had merely picked up his new teaching form the Egyptian or even had invented it himself" (49).[23] But why does Freud insist that Moses be an Egyptian and that the monotheistic idea entirely derived from the religious innovations of Akhenaten? I want to argue that in insisting that Mosaic monotheism be an Egyptian one and the origins of Jewish history based on a murder, Freud, paradoxically, is trying to work through the mystery and the trauma of anti-Semitism. At a tragic historical juncture, Freud's *Moses and Monotheism* does not aim to provoke his fellow Jews; instead, it carries a ray of hope that will bring a possible working-through of trauma.

In demonstrating at all costs that Moses, an aristocratic Egyptian, imposes the monotheism of an Egyptian origin on the Jewish people, Freud does violence to the available historical evidence, but such a violence carries an effect of desperateness to find a solution for his troubled times. For all the scandal of distorting the Biblical narrative, in tracing the traumatic beginnings of monotheism back to Egypt, Freud is sending a message to those who "excel in the practice of anti-Semitism" (117) that it is not the Jew but the intolerable monotheism of an Egyptian origin that have attracted the undying hatred. This is also Assmann's point when he suggests that the Akhenaten version of monotheistic religion is exclusively intolerant and counter-religious: "It is this hatred brought about by Akhenaten's revolution that informs the Judeophobic texts of antiquity" (167).[24]

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[23] Robert Alter, "Freud's Jewish Problem," *Commentary* 93.1 (1992): 48-52.
[24] Jan Assmann, *Moses the Egyptian: The Memory of Egypt in Western Monotheism* (Cambridge: Harvard

At one point of trying to apply individual trauma to collective trauma, Freud distinguishes two kinds of trauma: positive and negative. The former endeavors to live through it by repeating it in terms of "fixation to the trauma" and "repetition-compulsion," terms that have made repeated appearances in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. As to the negative aspect of trauma, nothing is to be repeated of the forgotten traumata. Freud models the plot of the murder of Moses and the subsequent return of his monotheistic demand on the positive aspect of trauma—the way of working through trauma must be through acting it out. Trauma is about repetition, and so the murder of Moses must be itself a repeated act of "the great deed and misdeed of primeval times" (113).

Deliberately leading his reader into the maze of a world where fantasy and reality get blurred, Freud argues that the murder of Moses reenacts the fate of the primeval father, a theory of the origins of human culture that Freud proposes in his own book *Totem and Taboo*. Thus Freud points out:

> The great deed and misdeed of primeval times, the murder of the father, was brought home to the Jews, for fate decreed that they should repeat it on the person of Moses, an eminent father substitute. It was *a case of acting instead of remembering*, something which often happens during analytic work with neurotics. (113; italics added)

Just as the killing of the Father in the primitive time peculiarly initiates the first appearance of religion and moral obligations, a kind of spiritual sublimation in Jewish culture comes from the tragedy of the murder of Moses. According to Freud, it is the

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UP, 1997).

man Moses, not God, who creates the character of the Jewish people by giving them a religion which heightens their self-confidence. Freud writes: "The people, happy in their conviction of possessing truth, overcome by the consciousness of being the chosen, came to value highly all intellectual and ethical achievements" (109). But this progress in spirituality and intellectuality can happen only through a return of the repressed, a very different kind of return from what we usually see in individual neurotics in whom the return of the repressed produces a psychologically deleterious reaction. In the case of the Mosaic religion, long after the trauma of the murder of the demanding father-figure, monotheism ultimately proves victorious, and so it returns to contribute to the Jews' "enhancement of their self-esteem owing to their consciousness of having been chosen" and to reinforce the importance of an ethical life of truth and justice. Here, at the very moment of the return of the repressed, "guilt became a spur to religious genius, to a compulsion to attain to higher moral standards than any other ancient people" (Stern 48).[25] Indeed, Yerushalmi has rightly observed that Lou Andreas-Salome was one of the first to have "intuitively grasped an essential aspect of *Moses and Monotheism* that has largely escaped Freud's commentators" (Yerushalmi 1991;78).[26] After reading a summary of Freud's ideas on MM, Andreas-Salome responded in Freud's favor:

> What particularly fascinated me in your present view of things is a specific characteristic of the "return of the repressed," namely, the way in which noble and precious elements return despite long intermixture with every conceivable kind of material . . . . Hitherto

[25] David Stern, "The Ego and the Yid," rev. of *Freud's Moses: Judaism Terminable and Interminable* by Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi and *Freud and Moses: The Long Journey Home* by Emanuel Rice, *The New Republic* 207.13 (1992): 43-10.
[26] Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Freud's Moses: Judaism Terminable and Interminable* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1991).

> we have usually understood the term of "return of the repressed" in the context of neurotic processes: all kinds of material which had been wrongly repressed afflicted the neurotic mysteriously with phantoms out of the past . . . which he felt bound to ward off. But in this case we are presented with examples of the survival of the most triumphant vital elements of the past as the truest possession in the present, despite all the destructive elements and counter-forces they have endured. (qtd. in Yerushalmi 1991;78)[27]

Andreas-Salome's reading of the return of the repressed in the course of Jewish history is strongly reminiscent of the image of a phoenix triumphantly soaring up out of the ashes. Unlike an individual traumatic neurosis whose revisiting of the traumatic event does not bring any sense of mastery, the traumatic genesis of Jewish history, though based on the model of the neurosis, enables Jewish people to transcend the tragedy of the murder and to return to the enduring legacy of Mosaic monotheism, a legacy of intellectuality, spirituality, and ethical demands that Freud believed held the Jewish people together, and enabled them to survive through centuries of persecution.

The Freudian project of repetition-compulsion also recalls the later judicial murder of Christ that is itself a repetition of the murder of Moses. Indeed, Freud says, when Paul interprets the death of Christ as the atonement for an original sin, he is unconsciously remembering the murder of Moses, for how can a son of God allow himself to be killed without guilt and thus take on himself the guilt of all men? It has to be a son, since it has been the murder of a father. From this arises a complex connection between Christianity and Christian anti-Semitism. Following Freud's scheme of

[27] Ibid.

reasoning, Christians admit albeit in a distorted manner their sin against God by accepting their "son-religion" and displaying a deep hostility against the Jews for they "killed our God" (114). This is what appears to be the manifest source of Christian anti-Semitism; what lies as latent motives against the Jews is the Oedipal rivalry. So Freud ventures to assert, "[T]he jealousy which the Jews evoked in other peoples by maintaining that they were the first-born, favourite child of God the Father has not yet been overcome by those others, just as if the latter had given credence to the assumption" (116). Locating the source of Christian anti-Semitism on an Oedipal rivalry, Freud is holding an ethical appeal—the jealousy is ungrounded since the murder of both Moses and Jesus is a repetition o f the trauma of the primal murder. Therefore, both the Jews and Christians belong to the "brother horde." For Freud is in effect telling the reader that it was not God the Father who chose the Jews to be his people, but the man Moses, who was not only a human being but also a non-Jew. Therefore, there is no reason for the siblings to envy this child of Israel so murderously for his pre-eminent position. And so it is possible to overcome the *paranoid* split between Jews and non-Jews, which unleashes wave upon wave of persecution.

Working through the trauma of anti-Semitism by resorting to his own theory of trauma model: "Early trauma—defence—latency—outbreak of the neurosis—partial return of the repressed material" (105), Freud blurs the distinctions between fantasy and reality, and in the end turns fanciful, if not literary, speculations into historical evidence that supports his theory of the origin of religion. One gets the sense from Freud's reconstruction of Jewish history that the opposition between fantasy and reality is

irrelevant to his argument.[28] Whether Freud's constructions of Moses's life story are correct or not is precisely not the point, since the outcome of *MM* as a hybrid narrative, partly historical and partly fictional, carries a "trauma effect." The text as a whole does not claim that what it represents was *real*; rather, it creates *a sense* that what it represents was real. It is not the dateable event itself, but the psychological reaction to an alleged event that is crucial for Freud's understanding of trauma. Indeed, Freud noted in 1934 in the unpublished introduction to *Moses and Monotheism* that he meant to create a new kind of writing that carries the outcome of the union of history and romance in which events "derive their interest in fact from history, but their intent is that of the novel. They want to sketch moving portrayals and to *affect the emotions*" (qtd. in Yerushalmi 379; emphasis mine).[29] Although Freud changed the book title from the (unpublished) original one—*The Man, Moses: A Historical Novel*—to *Moses and Monotheism*, it is still the emotional effect that runs strongly through the *Moses* study. In this respect, Richard J. Bernstein also argues that it is more profitable to read *Moses and Monotheism* from a psychoanalytic perspective, because it is psychical reality that is decisive. In *MM*, the "psychical reality does not presuppose the "actual" murder of Moses, although it certainly does presuppose the *factual* reality of murderous feelings, emotions, and intentions" (Bernstein 102).[30] It is therefore *the historical present* of the Nazis' murderous aggression against the Jewish people that prompts Freud to think up a traumatic core in Jewish history. In this conjuring up a traumatic past for his "race,"

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[28] Freud's position in *Moses and Monotheism* reminds us of his thesis of the Wolfman case in which, even after the Wolfman's doubt on the actuality of the primal scene, Freud continues to see the primal scene, even if imagined by the Wolfman, as the origin of neurosis. In imaging the origins of Mosaic monotheism as well as in treating the Wolfman, Freud at once elides and displaces the opposition between reality and fantasy in such a way that the status of the event as historical actuality cannot and need not be decided.
[29] See Note 19.
[30] Richard J. Bernstein, *Freud and the Legacy of Moses* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998).

Freud follows the peculiar traumatic time in which chronology gives way to a dynamic but tragic sense of time—the present gets entangled with the past to such an extent that it is no longer sensible to talk about time in trauma.

Seeking to deal with the traumatic present by an appeal to events which presumably occurred in a shadowy historical past, Freud's insistence on telling his own version of a historical trauma with constant repetition of details has "the effect of *masking* the violence that [he] faces in the present" (Kaplan 113; emphasis mine).[31] Freud masks a present trauma in three ways. First, he displaces the historical violence into the protagonist Moses; second, he adopts an ahistorical paradigm of trauma to a historical event, and third, the question Freud asks about the tragedy of Jewish history—"why do they invite undying hatred of other people?"—avoids explaining the intensity of present violence against Jewish people. And yet in the final analysis, this masking strategy signals an inability to move beyond the core of trauma—the murder of Moses. This inability to move beyond a traumatic past paradoxically reflects the movement of traumatic repetition, for while Freud pursues the murder of Moses relentlessly, the murder also returns and haunts both Freud and the narrative itself. Imagined or real, the repetition of the murder in the text speaks of a deadlock, a traumatic moment of experience which cannot be superseded. The narrative can only enact and constantly re-enact that traumatic moment as a point of fixation; in this sense, the narrative functions as a needle stuck in the groove, in an uncanny, obsessive compulsion to re-experience the original traumatic event. Traumatically repetitive, the narrative has a rhythmic *temporal stutter*, suggesting an unresolved shock. This stuttering effect is also one of the

[31] E. Ann Kaplan, "Trauma, Cinema, Witnessing: Freud's *Moses and Monotheism* and Tracey Moffatt's *Night Cries*," in *Between the Psyche and the Social: Psychoanalytic Social Theory*, eds. Kelly Oliver and Steve Edwin (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002), 99-122.

distinctive traits that characterize Moses. At one time in Freud's argument that Moses is a noble Egyptian, Freud hints that Moses has a speech impediment. I would like to argue that the uncanny *stuttering* betrays the characteristics of both Moses the person and the text of *Moses and Monotheism.*

Stuttering into History: Textual Traumatism

Arguing that the biblical narrative yields ample rooms for him to replace historical fact with his own psychological speculations, Freud refers to those "striking omissions, disturbing repetitions, palpable contradictions" in the Hebrew Bible as a distortion of a text which is not unlike a murder (52). In this sense, the word "distortion" has a double meaning: it "should mean not only to 'change the appearance of,' but also 'to wrench apart,' 'to put in another place'" (52). One can argue that Freud's criticism of official history can be equally applied to the text of *Moses and Monotheism.* The text, marked by contradictions, fragmentation, and adjunction, mirrors the subject matter under discussion. Propelled by the forward drive of repetition, *Moses and Monotheism* acts out repetition of historical violence while at the same time anticipating a trauma-to-come. In other words, the text, like its subject, exists in a state of traumatism. And nowhere is this textual traumatism more discernable than in the two prefatory notes to the third essay (Part III, Section I) and in a summary (which functions like a preface itself) to Section II. The first prefatory notes, written in Vienna before March 1938, is literally "wrenched apart" from the second one, written in June 1938, in London—again literally "in another place." In the various prefaces that he appends to his work, Freud himself imposes a link between personal trauma—his aging body, his illness, his exile, and the survival of psychoanalysis—and historical trauma by drawing our attention to the history

of the text's own writing and publication.

Just as the Moses study contains the theory of individual trauma within the core of the trauma of a larger history, the preface written in Vienna is a testimony to a kind of double trauma: there it was the trauma of Freud's personal crisis together with the trauma of living in "very remarkable times" in which "progress has concluded an alliance with barbarism" (66). Freud explains the reasons why he withholds the third essay from publication: the weakening of his creative faculties and aging body accompanied by his fear of inciting Catholic hostility against psychoanalysis. But it is in the second preface written in London that arguably bears all the hallmarks of traumatic repetition. In the face of catastrophe and horror, Freud seems to feel the importance of bearing witness to his troubled times by recording the situation in which the third essay finally came to light. The opening paragraph of the London preface touches on the too-sadly pertinent phenomenon of a trauma-to-come that it is worth quoting in length:

> The exceptionally great difficulties which have weighted on me during the composition of this essay dealing with Moses—inner misgivings as well as external hindrances—are the reason why this third and final part comes to have two different prefaces which contradict—indeed, even cancel—each other. For in the short interval between writing the two prefaces the outer conditions of the author have radically changed. Formerly I lived under the protection of the Catholic Church and feared that by publishing the essay I should lose that protection and that the practitioners and students of psychoanalysis in Austria would be forbidden their

> work. Then, suddenly, the German invasion broke in on us and Catholicism proved to be, as the Bible has it, but "a broken reed." In the certainty of persecution—now not only because of my work, but *also because of my "race"*—I left.
>
> (69-70; emphasis added)

I want to argue that Freud's exile forced by external political entanglement of his "race" and their persecutors, rather than an escape from the condition of trauma, is its dramatized literalization. And this forced exile echoes the exodus of Moses from Egypt in that departure itself performs traumatic repetition. In this uncanny enactment of exile, Freud stumbles on a historical trauma, compelled to tell once again a fragmentary and *stuttering* trauma of history. In the "Summary" inserted in the middle of Part III, written after Freud had moved to London, he retells the writing history of the book:

> The following part of this essay cannot be sent forth into the world without lengthy explanations and apologies. For it is no other than a faithful, often literal repetition of the first part . . . . Why have I not avoided it? The answer to this question is easy for me to find, but rather hard to admit. I have not been able to efface the traces of the unusual way in which this book came to be written.
>
> In truth it has been written twice over. The first time was a few years ago in Vienna, where I did not believe in the possibility of publishing it. I decided to put it away, but it haunted me like an unlaid ghost, and I compromised by publishing two parts of the book independently in the periodical *Imago*. They were the

> psychoanalytical starting-points of the whole book . . . . The rest, which might give offence and was dangerous of . . . . I kept back, as I thought, for ever. Then in March 1938 came the unexpected German invasion. It forced me to leave my home, but it also freed me of the fear lest my publishing the book might cause psychoanalysis to be forbidden in a country where its practice was still allowed. No sooner had I arrived in England than I found the temptation of making my withheld knowledge accessible to the world irresistible, and so I started to rewrite the third part of my essay, to follow the two already published . . . . a device which has the disadvantage of extensive repetition. (131-32)[32]

This summary exists in fact as repetition and echo not only of the two prefaces in question but of the narrative of Moses, in a series of recurrences at the same level of intensity. This insistence on repeating yet again the history of how the book came to be written, returning obsessively to the same themes, embodies *the shape of a stuttering trauma* in which the story of trauma is never given as uninterrupted memory. Hence, the random movement of Freud's writing process interrupted by a tragic history resembles the traumatic path of Moses's monotheism. Both the text and the narrative stutter to move beyond traumatic repetition but in vain. They are doomed to be haunted by the repetitive return of the specters of trauma. The text echoing the movement of the narrative is itself traumatized by an uncloseable fissure between externality and internality, and by its constant reminders of personal crisis and historical trauma in their

[32] Cathy Caruth also quotes this passage in length in her *Unclaimed Experience* in which she reads the book *Moses and Monotheism* itself as "the site of a trauma" that echoes "Moses's murder, its effacement, and its unconscious repetition" (20).

anxious repetition. In effect, it enacts a traumatic history which cannot be portrayed as a sequence of events but in terms of isolated and repeated moments.

The repetition-compulsion to retell the violence of history produces a discontinuous, traumatic narrative which is "anti-narrative, because it effectively blocks all access to figurative contiguity or correlation, and therefore to any proper or appropriate narrative or symbolic reassembly" (Wolfreys 140).[33] The text of *Moses and Monotheism* becomes the effective index of the presence of a historical trauma.

In sum, *Moses and Monotheism* presents a story of the twentieth century that imprints the malady of historical trauma at the heart of the psychic experience. Above all, it is Freud's response to a "murderous hatred" of his people that is to come in World War II that the past in *Moses and Monotheism* anticipates a traumatic future, and so narrative chronology gives way to an anxious historicity. This anxious historicity is also the thematic and structural concern of modernist writers. And it is in the sense that *Moses and Monotheism* inscribes traumatic memory in its textuality that echoes modernist writing in which time and consciousness, haunted by historical trauma, suffer a kind of madness.

Trauma and Modernist Writing

Using Freud's writing on trauma as a model that is the concern of *Beyond* and *MM*, I turn in the following chapters to consider the relation between historical trauma and modernist writing. In making a connection between Modernist narrative and historical trauma, I want to focus on how modernist writers incorporate the depressing, murderous form of traumatic repetition into their stories. Specifically, I want to argue

[33] Julian Wolfreys, "Trauma, Testimony, Criticism: Witnessing, Memory and Responsibility" in *Introducing Criticism at the 21st Century*, ed. Julian Wolfreys (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2002), 126-150.

that a traumatic history cannot be disciplined, because by its nature it tells a story without narrative plot, without beginning, end, or development, without a clear distinction of roles. It challenges the meaningful continuity produced by emplotment. Narrativity is met with suspicion because coherence and meaningfulness are alien to the lived experience of a trauma. The past no longer exists but keeps haunting the present. In modernist writing, narrative chronology gives way to an anxious historicity in which traumatic memory keeps insisting on and manifesting its presence through repetition.

Chapter III. The Dynamic Principle of the Oxymoron in *Women in Love*

Written in an era of international slaughter and domestic turmoil, *Women in Love* conveys more than a bitter feeling about the Great War; it presents the perversity of the psyche taking pleasure in its own destruction. And we recall how Freud in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* is puzzled by the paradoxical nature of trauma in that the psyche is taken aback by the horror of seeing itself enjoying its annihilation. While Freud tries to "analyze" the entanglement of horror and pleasure in trauma, Lawrence "dramatizes" such a pleasurable destructive form of existence in *Women in Love*. A purely violent book, *Women in Love* explores obsessively the destruction of the world and psyche, their disintegration and death. What we find in *Women in Love* is an anxious impulse to see everything through—destroying everything in order to feel alive—and without doubt, such an overwhelming psychological trauma finds its objective correlative in the overwhelming external event. Puzzled while at the same time fascinated by the question why people could choose such a vast amount of destruction as it is evident in the Great War, Lawrence registers the shock of radical historical change as an injury in the psyche. *Women in Love* asks: Where the war is located? Is it inside or outside; in the external world or in the psyche? How to articulate this traumatic vision of the psyche that defies the life-giving Eros and destroys meaning? To "dramatize" such a lust for "inexpressible destructiveness" that Gudrun detects in the miners of Beldover, a lust that also afflicts everyone in the book, Lawrence employs the concept of the oxymoron in order to better present the nature of trauma—the entanglement of horror and pleasure.

The spirit of the oxymoron pervades the art of *Women in Love,* and this fact has not, of course, escaped his many critics. However, there has not been an attempt to link the

structure of oxymoron to psychodynamics of trauma. In this chapter, I want to stress that the novel records trauma at its most basic lexical levels, through the very choice of words by which the attempt at representation takes place. The following analysis seeks to explore oxymoronic language as a key stylistic device of traumatic repetition. In the first section, I discuss how psychic trauma is textually inscribed in the novel's inclination to oxymoron in that words, sentences, paragraphs are presented in contending with themselves; the second half of the section explores how this rhetorical oxymoron is used to indicate the paradoxical world view presented in the novel. In other words, the oxymoronic mode of language informs the content it deploys. That is, structurally speaking, the relationship of Birkin and Ursula is also engaging in an eternal see-saw struggle with that of Gudrun and Gerald. The last section focuses on the death drive that so vividly and poignantly illustrates historical trauma.

I.

No figure of rhetoric captures the cruelty of war better than that of oxymoron. Defined by the juxtaposition of opposites or the coexistence of incompatibles, the oxymoron hinges on a divided perception in which two elements are inextricably knotted in a deadlock of opposition. Oxymoron as a compact paradox, a joining together of contradictory words, produces an epigrammatic effect. Linguistically speaking, oxymoron can be seen as words at war with themselves; as a figure of thought, oxymoron is designed to surprise or jolt the reader into genuine reflection and insight, or endless bafflement. In *Women in Love*, Lawrence largely uses the oxymoron to describe the unreleased tension of war eroding the human relationship and psyche as experienced even by people at the home front. Although by inclination Lawrence has already perceived

"the world as a vast system of interlocking polarities . . . . the war moved him further and faster in this direction by imposing on the entire European consciousness just such a system of binary opposition: for or against, friend or enemy, kill or be killed" (Delany 211).[1] Finding dualism a compelling system, Lawrence's relationship to it is more ambivalent and troubling. The madness of the Great War has convinced Lawrence that a binary opposition which implies selection of one of the polarities and therefore exclusion of inclusive options is too simple to depict a world caught in a deathly state. The either/or approach cannot articulate a war-generated form of *explosive* consciousness in which violence is the dominant activity of the psyche that is at war with itself. For "either/or" Lawrence thus substitutes the figure of oxymoron as the working dynamics of combining contradictories. The reader discovers quickly that the novel is based on a profound intellectual response to the Great War and that the writer is almost obsessively illustrating a world existing only in oxymoronic conflicts. Lawrence, however, is not so much tracking the opposed polarities of the oxymoron as he is fastidiously studying the attempt by one thing to annul, replace, or eradicate, its opposites.[2]

One of the most disquieting qualities of *Women in Love* is its insistence on the extinction of human beings, a lurking desire carried to such an extreme that almost every character in the novel has at one time or another wished the whole human race annihilated. A distinct example of this can be found at the very beginning of the novel when Gudrun is asked by a certain miner's wife about the price for her shocking stockings, and she responds with a sudden violent and murderous anger: "She would like

[1] Paul Delany, *D. H. Lawrence's Nightmare: The Writer and His Circle in the Years of the Great War* (New York: Basic Books, 1978).

[2] The tendency to erase or replace the opposing features of the other word in an oxymoron is well analyzed by Marvin K. L. Ching. See his article "A Literary and Linguistic Analysis of Compact Verbal Paradox," in *Linguistic Perspectives on Literature*, eds. Marvin K. L. Ching, Michael C. Haley, and Ronald F. Lunsford (Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980), 175-181.

them all annihilated, cleared away, so that the world was left clear for her" (9).[3] Such a Lawrentian "genocidal rhetoric" (Delany 210) penetrates almost every aspect of the novel, and it is more disquieting that some key terms like "love,"[4] "inhuman," "pure," "single," "finality," and "fulfillment" carry a kind of apparent opposition in themselves that they are engaging in an oxymoronic pull. Since the evolution of the above-mentioned terms all points to the same direction—an instinctive pleasure of seeing the world extinguished, an analysis of one term will be sufficient to show how words can be charged with violence directed at themselves. In accordance with the "genocidal rhetoric" of *Women in Love*, I will focus on the word "inhuman."

Not surprisingly, it is Gudrun, one of the characters who belongs to the category of "death-seekers" in Leo Bersani's terminology (Bersani 182),[5] that first uses the word "inhuman" in her thinking of the world around her. Simultaneously attracted and repulsed by the collier community in Beldover, Gudrun tries to reason why she should feel such a nostalgia for the place in which one can feel "a foul kind of beauty," and she comes to this conclusion: "Now she realised that this was the world of powerful, underworld men who spent most of their time in the darkness. In their voices she could hear the voluptuous resonance of darkness, the strong, dangerous underworld, mindless, *inhuman*" (117; my emphasis). At this point in the novel, the word "inhuman" has already had a connotation of polarization in itself in that "inhuman" indicates a desirable quality; the other negative as "inhuman" gives a sense of machinery callousness.

Significantly, Gerald is the second character to be associated with the word

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[3] All quotations from *Women in Love* are from D. H. Lawrence's *Women in Love,* Intro. Joyce Carol Oates (New York: The Modern Library, 1993).

[4] Fiona Becket has already made a wonderful study of how "love" functions as an oxymoron in *Women in Love*. See Fiona Becket, *D. H. Lawrence: The Thinker as Poet* (London: MacMillan P, 1997).

[5] Leo Bersani, *A Future for Astyanax: Character and Desire in Literature* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1976).

"inhuman," fatally in the Chapter "Water-Party" in which we see Gerald diving into the lake but failing to find the drowning Diana. When all his efforts to save his sister in the water come to nothing, Gerald comes back to the boat, spirit shattered, and the narrator describes him sitting "slack and motionless in the boat, his head blunt and blind like a seal's, his whole appearance *inhuman*, unknowing" (187;my emphasis). Here "inhuman" indicates a negative meaning. Separated from the human world when he is in the water by himself, Gerald suffers like an animal—he is not human as he is likened to a seal, a horse. The inhumanness in him is even more poignantly felt in "The Industrial Magnet" in which he imposes his chaotic will on transforming the miner into a "perfect, *inhuman* machine" (236;my emphasis). The chapter of "The Industrial Magnet" acts out a chaotic confusion not only in the mind of Gerald but also in his use of language. Thus, having set himself to force "order" into the great industry, Gerald comes to "the conclusion that the essential secret of life was harmony. He did not define to himself at all clearly what harmony was" (235). In his confusing use of language, Gerald easily translates the word "harmony" into the practical word "organization" which conveniently leads to the inhuman productive machine. However, it is "this *inhuman* principle in the mechanism he wanted to construct that inspired Gerald with an almost religious exaltation" (235;my emphasis). Again, while the word "inhuman" in this chapter is meant largely to convey a negative meaning, in Gerald's eyes, "inhuman" is both attractive and repulsive.

It is not only those "death-seeking" characters, of whom Gudrun and Gerald are two archetypal representatives, that are tied up with the word "inhuman." Birkin and Ursula, representatives of "life-seekers" (Bersani 182),[6] use the word, too. We first see Birkin

[6] Leo Bersani, *A Future for Astyanax: Character and Desire in Literature* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1976).

associated with the word "inhuman" again in the death-bound chapter "Water-Party" when he tries to row the spirit-shattered Gerald home. The reluctant Gerald refuses to be taken home, but "Birkin rowed evenly and unswerving, with an *inhuman* inevitability" (188; my emphasis). Appearing in this ominous chapter, the word "inhuman" is inevitably linked with death. That is why following the chapter of "Water-Party" Ursula naturally reflects on the meaning of death in "Sunday Evening." For Ursula, death is otherness—"the pure inhuman" (199). As "[t]hat which the word 'human' stood for was despicable and repugnant to her" (254), it follows that what the word "inhuman" stands for must be desirable and appealing.

The association of the word "inhuman" with those "life-seeking" characters such as Birkin and Ursula may offer an alternative to the use of "inhuman" by Gerald and Gudrun. Yet, the "inhumanness" that both Birkin and Ursula wish for comes from a profound grudge against the human being as the following two examples demonstrate:

1. [H]uman beings are boring, painting the universe with their own image. The universe is non-human, thank God. (274)
2. Love is too human and little. I believe in something inhuman, of which love is only a little part. I believe what we must fulfill comes out of the unknown to us, and it is something infinitely more than love. It isn't so merely *human*. (455; italics in original)

The speaker in both quotes is Ursula, but it sounds as if Birkin is doing the talking. Ursula and Birkin's wish for an ideal and mystical *inhuman* world is no less violent than Gudrun and Gerald's murderous instinct for wiping out the entire human race. The verbal similarities, though hidden and subtle, between both the "death-seeking" and "life-

seeking" characters, force us to see the polarity in meanings for terms like "inhuman." That is, according to the logic of *Women in Love*, the same word can have almost opposite meanings in different contexts. Thus, "inhuman" at one time is seen as horrible; other times, simply loveable and desirable. In other words, the word "inhuman" entails a number of oxymoronic conflicts within itself, so opposites may appear as exchangeable. Or one wants to hint at the fact that even opposites are equal in many important points so that "ultimately" they must be seen as altogether identical. Significantly, Gerald's confusion of language brings home this dynamic principle of oxymoronic tension in words: "I never know what those common words mean. All right and all wrong, don't they become synonymous, somewhere?" (455). Within this context, Diane S. Bond's study of language in *Women in Love* also strikes the same tone:

> The established polarities or oppositions tend to collapse or dissolve when we start looking at the language closely, so that what we actually have is a series of meanings that shade into each other, a series with extremes or poles that become associated with, if not transformed into, each other. (Bond 81)[7]

II.

The oxymoronic energies in *Women in Love* are unmistakably evident in the interplay between literal and figurative uses of phrases—the fitting territory for oxymoron to demonstrate its power. It is my contention that in this novel Lawrence's unusual fascination with the deep polar struggle between human relationships can be attributed to the war trauma that deeply transforms the human psyche. The paradigm for this struggle is the oxymoron of language itself, but the supreme battle is fought within the psyche. In

[7] Diane S. Bonds, *Language and the Self in D. H. Lawrence* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research P, 1987).

the case of *Women in Love*, an oxymoronic duality is best to show the entanglement of a traumatic psyche. The figure of traumatic entanglement has been fully discussed in Chapter I of this dissertation, but Lawrence seems to push a traumatic encounter of the oxymoronic opposition to a fatal entanglement where any two elements in this novel, whenever they come into contact, engage in a battle of life and death. "But always it was this eternal see-saw, one destroyed that the other might exist, one ratified because the other was nulled" (462). This is how the narrator of *Women in Love* analyzes the destructive relationship between Gerald and Gudrun. This terrible "eternal see-saw" can be applied to the whole novel as well—to several key terms, sentences, paragraphs, and by extension, to the content and structure of the novel. In bringing almost everything into a situation where "a fine passion of opposition" is aroused (128), Lawrence meant for the novel to take "the bitterness of the war" for granted in the characters. This implication of the inseparability of ultimate and antithetical dimensions and experiences of life under the influence of war illustrates the paradox that life is death and death is life, that love is hate and hate is love, and that desire kills. Thus the relationship between Birkin and Gerald is described as being flawed because a strange enmity that is very near to love lurks underneath their friendship. As the narrator analyzes it, "[i]t was always the same between them; always their talk brought them into a deadly nearness of contact, a strange, perilous intimacy which was either hate or love, or both" (31). Similarly, though Lawrence undoubtedly intends to render Birkin and Ursula's love relationship as desirable compared to other relationships in the novel, theirs does not appear on critical examination to be an ideal one. At the initial stage of their search for ideal love, Ursula frequently adopts the vocabulary of war to describe the on-going relationship. As her

rumination over their love shows, Ursula feels as if she had announced a declaration of war on love and Birkin had accepted the challenge; therefore, their love is "a fight to the death between them—or to new life: though in what the conflict lay, no one could say" (146). Of course, Ursula and Birkin do seem to achieve a state of harmonious unity in "Excurse", but such a state is too momentous to disperse the shadowy tension that continues through their relationship.

If Lawrence fails to bring a stable unity between Ursula and Birkin, he is more certain when he dramatizes the destructive relationship between Gerald and Gudrun. From the moment Gudrun sees Gerald, she is uncannily magnetized by something northern about Gerald's disposition that glistens "like *sunshine* refract[ing] through *crystals of ice*" (11;my emphasis). Composed of dualistic oppositions, Gerald's life is pulled by oxymoronic tensions. On one hand, he does violence to the world around him; on the other, he takes pleasure in doing violence unto himself—a kind of perverse pleasure in self-destruction. And this oxymoronic propensity in him is repetitively illustrated in a series of scenes. For example, in the famous scene in which Gerald forces a horse to stand firm by a railroad when a train goes by, Gerald is engaging in a war with the horse: "Both man and horse were sweating with violence. Yet he seemed calm as a ray of *cold sunshine*" (113; my emphasis). Again Gerald is described in a compelling oxymoronic vision: *cold sunshine*. This epithet—"cold sunshine"—is of course a canonic example of oxymoron, and it is only fitting that Gerald is the one associated with this kind of oxymoron most often in the novel as he is more direct and coarse compared to Gudrun, who enjoys the subtlety of everything.

Hence, in the depiction of the subtle perverse psyche of Gudrun, Lawrence employs

more complex structures and involves various forms of syntactical expansion, distributing the oxymoronic terms within different clauses of the sentence. The paradigm for such an example occurs again in the chapter of "Coal-Dust"' when Gudrun responds to Gerald's abuse of the horse with sensations of heat and cold—

> Gudrun looked and saw the trickles of blood on the sides of the mare, and she turned white. And then on the very wound the bright spurs came down, pressing relentlessly. The world reeled and passed into nothingness for Gudrun, she could not know any more. (113)

But Gudrun will not allow herself to be possessed with such a mindless heat for too long. She soon recovers and is "quite *hard and cold* and indifferent" (113; my emphasis). Strictly speaking, the description of Gudrun's mysterious transports here may not be a classic oxymoron per se, since it is discursively diluted, but Lawrence expands the definition of oxymoron to include sentences and paragraphs to be his organized oxymoronic aesthetics. One more example will suffice to show how Lawrence integrates an expanded oxymoron, developed and sustained over the whole sentence, into the whole paragraph,[8] investing the sentence with the power of its tension and the depth of its mystery:

> Gudrun looked at Gerald with strange, darkened eyes, strained with underworld knowledge, almost supplicating, like those of a creature which is at his mercy, yet which is his ultimate victor. He did not know what to say to her. He felt the *mutual hellish recognition.* And he felt

[8] Among others, Gamini Salgado and Nicholas Crawford have also analyzed how Lawrence expands the oxymoronic rhetoric phrases to include sentences and paragraphs. See Gamini Salgado, "Taking a Nail for a Walk: On Reading *Women in Love*," in *D. H. Lawrence*, ed. Peter Widdowson (London: Longman, 1992), 137-45; and Nicholas Crawford, "Altar of Paradox: *Women in Love* and the Mystery of Dualism, " in *Like a Black and White Kaleidoscope Tossed at Random: Essays on D. H. Lawrence's* Women in Love, eds. Jean-Paul Pichardie and Philippe Romanski (France: Universite de Rouen, 2001), 45-58.

> he ought to say something, to cover it. He had *the power of* lightning in his nerves, she seemed like a soft recipient of his magical, hideous white fire. He was *unconfident*, he had qualms of fear.
>
> (250; emphases added)

This paragraph appears in the famous scene in the chapter of "Rabbit" in which Gudrun and Gerald unconsciously form a sort of *diabolic* bond that is " abhorrent to them both" (250). The language in the above paragraph describing their demonic bond has the effect of "radical indeterminacy" that hovers on the edge of oxymoron and thrusts beyond it into unresolved tension (Salgado 138). At this point, both Gudrun and Gerald inflict their destructive power on the rabbit whose vehement violence is only a projection of their perverse mentality. In their struggle with the rabbit, they show the coexistence of two contradictory elements in them; vehement coldness and killing heat blend into each other, for it is difficult to determine who really is wielding the power in the scene. That Gerald personifies the element of coldness is well established by the novel, but on close critical examination, it is Gudrun's "diabolic coldness," so subtle and delicate, that corresponds to the ominous, murderous air of the whole novel. Gerald's coldness seems to freeze everything he touches, but it is unto himself that his coldness demonstrates its powerful destructiveness. Gudrun's coldness is less obvious, and yet slowly and poignantly, it kills. The war between Gudrun and Gerald that is fought unconsciously just beneath the surface of civilized life in the earlier part of the novel finally breaks the surface and becomes a heated conflict of life and death in the last three chapters in which their entanglement is transformed into a cosmic level of struggle between heat and cold, in horrifying intimations of some ultimate threat. And this ontological nature of their fight

brings home the crucial and controlling metaphor of destruction in *Women in Love*—the two-faced image of disintegration by heat, and annihilation by cold.

III.

The development of the novel into the snow-bound, dream-like white Alpine world in the end where the metaphor of "snow-abstract annihilation" becomes literalized seems to fulfill "a mystery of ice-destructive knowledge" that Birkin ruminates for the path of dissolution taken by the white races (263). In Birkin's meditation on the Arctic process into a universal dissolution, Gerald appears to be the chief representative of this northern mode of disintegration—"one of [the] strange white wonderful demons from the north, fulfilled in the destructive frost mystery" (262). Birkin can't help but speculate on Gerald's fate, "And was he fated to pass away in this knowledge, this one process of frost-knowledge, death by perfect cold? Was he a messenger, an omen of the universal dissolution into whiteness and snow?" (263-64). But it is the other extreme form of cultural dissolution—the African way of the "sun-destruction"—brought into full play at the end of the novel and interlocked in strife with the Arctic way that makes Gerald's, and by extension, the culture's, *death by perfect cold* a thrilling pleasure. The African way plunges everything into the hell of sensationalism, having abandoned all effort at "pure integral being" and turned to extreme refinements of sensual knowledge, "mystic knowledge in disintegration and dissolution" (263). Gudrun represents such a refined sensationalism.

The novel takes pains to build up a link between Gudrun and the African way of finding a sensual, perverse thrill of destruction. In Birkin's speculation on the cultural pursuit of dissolution, it is the more exotic, African principle of sensual knowledge in

corruption that first conjures up in his mind. Birkin recalls one primitive sculpture of a woman in labor in Halliday's rooms, a statue which he declares to be art because it "contains the whole truth" of the state it expresses, the product of "pure culture in sensation, culture in the physical consciousness, really ultimate *physical* consciousness, mindless, utterly sensual" (78; Lawrence's emphasis). He then recalls another statue of female figure, West African, which is a symbol of sun-destruction knowledge, "the putrescent mystery of sun-rays" (263). It should be noted that Gudrun's fondness of wearing flamboyantly challenging and startling colors of socks and of primitive African sculptures unmistakably though subtly ties her up with the exotic, African way of dissolution. The novel dramatizes the heated physical pleasure of seeing the gradual snow-dissolution by acting out of latent violence and interdestructivity in Gudrun's relationship with Gerald. In other words, disintegration by heat and annihilation by cold are unconsciously bound with a dangerously oxymoronic destructiveness. This explains why Gerald is simultaneously attracted and repelled by "absolute" sensation in the African fetish. Fascinated by the "utter sensuality" of the fetish, its total surrender to physical consciousness, Gerald knows that sensation is vitiated by conscious demonism. And no sensation is so final and satisfied than the extreme murderous sensation that Gerald decides to feel when he sets his mind to kill Gundrun:

> A sudden desire leapt in his heart, to kill her. He thought, what a *perfect voluptuous fulfilment* it would be, to kill her. His mind was absent all the evening, estranged by *the snow and his passion*. But he kept the idea constant within him, what *a perfect voluptuous consummation* it would be to strangle her, to strangle every spark of life out of her, till she lay completely

inert, soft, relaxed for ever, a soft heap lying dead between his hands, utterly dead. Then he would have had her finally and forever; there would be such *a perfect voluptuous finality.*

(478; emphases added)

The desire to murder described in an oxymoronic conglomeration of cold and heat (the snow and the passion) is felt as a physical sensation of excitement. But Gerald finally realizes that to complete "a perfect voluptuous finality," the subject should maximize the energy of physical sensation within itself. In other words, to taste the ultimate form of sensual fulfillment, one should direct the desire for murder to oneself so that one finds extreme satisfaction of the deep reactive sensation for destruction. That is why Gerald releases his hands on Gudrun's neck with an attempt to strangle her but finally decides to take a final walk instead to his death in the "hollow basing of snow" (492), for in death he can experience a blissful fantasy of regressive merging with the snow, like a child returning to the womb.

That Gerald's "death by perfect cold" is associated with a womblike return perfectly symbolizes the dynamic function of heat and cold that both Gerald and Gudrun experience for the desire to murder in the Alps setting. The effect of Gerald's drifting asleep in the cold snow feels more chilling with his willingness to take the process of "purely sensual understanding" (263). Similarly, Gudrun's cynical jokes and nihilistic fancies for the destruction of the world, an instinctual destructive power finally lapsing into a sheer and brutal unrestraint in the Alps setting, communicate a terrible sense of perversely cold emotion and cruelty. As a chief embodiment of the hot African mode of sun-ray destruction, Gudrun, ironically, feels thrilled and at home with the frozen snow

setting. The "center, the knot, the navel of the [snow] world" fills her with strange rapture, Gudrun feeling "[a]t last she had arrived, she had reached her place. Here at last she folded her venture and settled down like a crystal in the navel of snow" (416). For Lawrence, this terrible waste of cold whiteness and silence signifies the end of world, a nightmare version of the Apocalypse shared by Ursula and Birkin. For Ursula, the "bruisingly, frighteningly, unnaturally" frozen air seems "conscious, malevolent, purposive in its intense murderous coldness" (423). This murderous coldness perfectly matches Gudrun's brutal, wounding sensation toward Gerald as she resolves to combat him:

> The deep resolve formed in her, to combat him. One of them must triumph over the other. Which should it be? Her soul *steeled itself with strength.* Almost she laughed within herself, at her confidence. It woke a certain keen, half contemptuous pity, tenderness for him: she was so ruthless. (429; emphases added)

Again, oxymoronic polarities—as Gudrun's *cruel tenderness* toward Gerald demonstrates here—are introduced at every level of the deadly combat between them. Just as Gerald takes his meandering long process of African way in order to fulfill his disintegration into the snow, Gudrun, too, finds that the instinctual release of heated murderous sensation is best enjoyed when flavored with the ringing cold of snow. The snow is therefore the ideal backdrop for the perverse thrill of killing. Unlike Gerald who finds consummation of voluptuous ecstasy in killing himself, Gudrun takes delirium of pleasure in imagining the destruction of the world, a mocking dream of destruction that invokes horror and confusion when added by the mockery and nihilistic cynicism of Loerke, a fellow artist

whom Gudrun meets in Tyro and whose degeneration poignantly represents, for Birkin, the darkness of our evolutionary future. Gudrun and Loerke share the delight in mocking imaginations of the end of the world: "Humanity invents a perfect explosive that blows up the world, perhaps; or the climate shifts and the world goes cold and snow falls everywhere and "only white creatures, polar-bears, white foxes, and men like awful white snow-birds, persisted in ice cruelty" (471). The novel tells another story, however; the perfect personification of white creatures—Gerald—does not survive the catastrophe of cold snow. What survives is the desire for chaos and confusion as the world gradually slides into sheer perversity and meaningless brutality.

IV.

Why is African dissolution sometimes described as cold? And why is the Northern process sometimes associated with mud and marsh flowers? Why does the dissolution of the Arctic north described as hot? Lawrence plays dangerously with polarized themes of integration/disintegration and creation/destruction that they merge into an uneasy conglomeration. And yet it is a feature of *Women in Love* that metaphorical tropes of life and death, love and hate, victim and victimizer point to a peculiar logic that underpins it. That is, the novel is ruled by oxymoronic entanglement that symbolizes not only the psychodrama of the characters but also the upheaval of their historical period. With a picture of global chaos in mind, Lawrence depicts the madness of a collective trauma that is explicit in the Great War. The ultimate form of trauma is the desire for chaos, a form that finds its expression in the entanglement of victim and victimizer. Birkin best explains this logic: "It takes two people to make a murderer: a murder and a murderee. And a murderee is a man who is murderable. And a man who is murderable is a man

who in a profound if hidden lust desires to be murdered" (31). Although Gerald voices his strong disagreement to Birkin's odd reasoning about the logic of murder, the novel actually supports this logic.

Numerous examples in the novel illustrate the horror of entanglement of victim and victimizer. The drowning of the entwined lovers in "Water Party" is merely the most dramatic instance. The scene of Diana getting her arms tight round the neck of her fiancé who tries to save her from drowning causes a lot of confusion. Choking the young man dead, Diana becomes a murderer and yet she is also a victim of disaster. The bodies of the dead get so close that they become one in death. Similarly, in Gerald's terrible will to modernize the miner business, he acts like the god of death by substituting the mechanical principle for the organic, killing the soul of the coal miners. The new world may be strict, terrible, inhuman, and yet it is "satisfying in its very destructiveness," the narrator comments (129). The narrator goes on to analyze how it is possible for Gerald to inflict such destructiveness upon the coal miners: "Their hearts died within them, but their souls were satisfied. *It was what they wanted.* Otherwise Gerald could never have done what he did. He was just ahead of them in giving them what they wanted" (238-9;emphasis mine). One can hardly tell the difference between the victim and victimizer in such a chaotic world; the Birkinian murder logic finds evidence in Gerald's entanglement with the coal miners.

But of course, the death struggle between Gerald and Gudrun perfectly effectuates the poignant truth that it takes two to make a murderer. Knowing that courting Gudrun is equivalent to courting death, Gerald nevertheless enjoys opening his wound to her because in this disclosure he can keep his "cruellest joy" (463):

> He would keep the unfinished bliss of his own yearning even though the torture she inflicted upon him . . . since in being near her, even, he felt the quickening, the going forth in him, the release, the knowledge of his own limitation and the magic of the promise, as well as *the mystery of his own* destruction and annihilation.
>
> (463; my emphasis)

In a sense, Gudrun allows Gerald to satisfy his impulse to be murdered by helping put him to sleep in the snow. The version of frantic entanglement of murder and murderee informs the dynamics and structures of the novel. Both victim and victimizer are just two sides of a coin; they are ultimately exchangeable and maybe even identical. Victims and victimizers are often the same thing, just slightly different ways of indicating strong interaction that is mixed up in oxymoronic fashion. In this, the blurred distinction between victims and victimizers recalls Wilfred Owen's poem "Strange Meeting" in which the speaker dies and enters hell, only to find himself face-to-face with the soldier whom he killed the previous day. Owen reflects on the fraternity that exists between all soldiers on the front line, so that a closer bond exists between those who fought on opposite sides than exists between soldiers in the trenches and their compatriots who have not experienced the front. The speaker is greeted in hell by his former enemy, who suggests that they put aside their differences and rest together. Likewise, Lawrence's spirit of oxymoron illustrates a world of entwined opposites in which oxymoronic nature of certain problems and situations mirrors the confusion of a traumatic psyche. This traumatic oxymoron lies, more often than not, beneath the superstructure of language and rhetoric. We must, therefore, look at the deep structure of *Women in Love* if we want to

see what oxymoron means for Lawrence and how it functions artistically.

V.

It remains to consider more closely the outcome of Lawrence's oxymoronic rhetoric in the overall context of *Women in Love*. "Entanglement," "merging," "mingling" or other forms of breaking down the line of distinction are to be dreaded and at the same time desired in the novel. So against the entanglement of victim and victimizer, the novel offers a competing, alternative theory of "star-equilibrium" which, according to the thought experiment of Birkin, means "a pure balance of two single beings...as the stars balance each other" (151). "Star-equilibrium" is itself an oxymoron in structure, for it "represents Birkin's desire to be simultaneously single *and* exist meaningful in relation to an other" (Becket 173; emphasis in the original).[9] The theory of "Star-equilibrium" is the only model which the text sets against dissolution and apocalypse; and it fails. It fails mainly because it increasingly becomes empty talk of Birkin, especially when he cannot even put his own theory into practice in his relationship with Ursula. The chapters in which the lovers pursue a repeating pattern of quarrel and reconciliation—"An Island", "Mino", "Water-Party", "Moony", "Excurse"—show Birkin repeatedly retreat from his theoretic citadel and Ursula's insistent intimacy wins temporary victories. Beneath all professions of love and all allegiance to "higher" things lies the lust for cruelty—the vain effort to find fulfillment in destructive sex and violence.

If erotic love is not a solution to the crisis of the present moment, "what then, what next?" (469). This is a question literally asked by Gudrun. The entire text is also concerned with this question—it has the four main figures of Ursula and Gudrun, Gerald and Birkin, openly debating where there is a choice between death and survival,

[9] Fiona Becket, *D. H. Lawrence: The Thinker as Poet* (London: MacMillan, 1997).

dissolution and creative growth. In the episode "Continental" Gudrun questions Ursula's plan to leave the murderously cold Tyro for the sunny Italy. For Gudrun, there is no escape, and it is only an illusion to think one can get out of the dying old (454). The only way to do with the world is to see it through. And when the death of Gerald brings Ursula and Birkin back again to Tyro, Birkin finally realizes that the way out to Italy is only a way in again (496). So the Birkin-Ursula relationship is brought into an oxymoronic opposition to that of Gudrun and Gerald, and the text privileges neither. A figure that brings together terms and ideas which bear opposing meanings, oxymoron denies the characters any option of choice, because they themselves are the products of a radical split. The tragic paradox is that there is no great unifying idea at the present moment; there is simply aimless, futile activity. The narrative of *Women in Love* does not merely deploy a series of oxymora and contradictions in the service of a larger unity. It is centrally oxymoronic because it is shot through with the continuous felt tension between the necessity of articulating a vision and its impossibility.

VI.

Referring to the drowning accident of Diana in the episode "Water-Party," the narrator records the local people's response with a mingling of solemn grief and excitement, "Did all enjoy it? Did all enjoy the thrill?" (195). Such a question implies the disturbing but provocative message that the horror of death event is also and at the same time that which offers pleasure, the very feeling that satisfies the psyche. Taking pleasure in a supposedly unpleasurable event like death is a question that baffles Lawrence. *Women in Love* records the mysterious lust for death, the luxuriant talk of corruption.

The desire for violence may well have seemed universal at a time when the whole of society was bent on destruction. The novel bears the violent imprint of its historical moment—the madness of a collective ego.

In one sense, *Women in Love* is a complex, intellectual meditation on the meaning of the violent impulse to death, so the enjoyment of a death-drive becomes an issue for the novel, overtly discussed, theorized, and dramatized. Death as a drive, a process, an event, and a finality repeatedly remains the central concern for every character in the novel. The characters' compulsion to repeat a fixation on a moment of brute and irrecoverable loss reveals less a pleasure in violence done to "others" than it is a joy taken in psychic self-destruction. The power of *Women in Love*, therefore, lies not in its analysis of the pervasive violence and disintegration, but in its acute and troubled perception of a turbulent consciousness that takes delight in self-destruction. Lawrence maintained that the horrors of the war were self-inflicted—the question is why people could choose such a vast amount of destruction? Such a pleasurable brutality is best grasped through a recourse to Freud, since Freud is also at pains to link pleasure and destructive repetition in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle.*

"Repetition compulsion" is a phenomenon Freud used to describe the catastrophic consequences of the war trauma. The mind seeks to feel pleasure and avoid pain, Freud thought. Judging from the fact that the psyche's aim is to seek pleasure, the act of revisiting the painful past on the part of the war neurosis cannot possibly offer the psyche any sense of pleasure. Repetition of the painful past is felt as a pleasure only when it is accompanied with mastery of the past. However, repetitious dreams of trauma override the pleasure principle and its free flow of instinctual energy in their attempt to bind the

original traumatic stimuli. The adult traumatic experience reveals only a compulsion to repeat the trauma with no pleasure of self-mastery. The trauma is not bound, but uselessly and painfully re-experienced without modification by consciousness. Why then is so much energy devoted to so self-canceling an end? And why do men insist on their destruction, wondered Freud? Could the secret lie in the unconscious where another instinct is equally active as its counterpart life instinct? Eros (life instinct), which has been the cornerstone of his psychoanalytic theory, cannot explain alone the tendency of the war trauma patients to turn destructive violence inward. It is this suggestion of a purely self-destructive instinct in the psyche which led Freud to speculate on the existence of the death drive (Thanatos).

As a retort to Eros, Thanatos seems to be equally valid a statement of equal psychoanalytic significance. Conceptualized as an antithesis to Eros, the death drive seeks to dissolve and destroy what Eros strives to bind and connect. That which seeks to "dissolve life back into its "primaeval, inorganic state" is the definition of the death drive. As Freud wrote to Albert Einstein in 1932, the death instinct is "at work in every living creature and is striving to bring it to ruin and to reduce life to its original condition of inanimate matter" ("Why War?" 357). Still committed to a vision of pleasure as the psyche's primary aim, Freud then said that since an absence of all tension in the psyche is viewed to be the ultimate pleasure, the death drive is not really in opposition to the pleasurable principle. However, this conception of the death drive as a backward movement to a state of zero tension characteristic of the pleasurable principle begins to reveal its inconsistencies. If the compulsion to repeat a pain is the sign of the psyche's most radically self-destructive tendencies, it cannot at the same time be pleasurable

without ruining the opposition between Eros and Thanatos. Freud's solution to this theoretical inconsistency is to argue that the death drive is actually in service of Eros. But then we cannot help asking, if both Eros and Thanatos aim for the pleasurable principle, why then do we need the death drive which turns, in Freud's formulation, to be doing the same job as the life drive?[10] Thanatos has meaning only when it functions differently from Eros. Acknowledging that the death drive has the power to subvert life from within, to turn life against itself, and bring life back to chaos or nothingness, Freud, however, is unwilling to locate the death drive "beyond" the pleasurable principle. The initial movement of *Beyond the Pleasurable Principle* seeks first to sever repetition compulsion and pleasure only ends in locating the pleasure on the side of the psyche's own unpleasurable undoing. To the extent that the text fails to keep the psyche's perverse desire to repeat a painful experience apart from the pleasurable principle, Freud's theory of the death drive falls into an oxymoronic logic that paradoxically indicates a complete theoretical collapse. In the following, I wish to look more into the unarticulated implications of the death drive as an oxymoron.

Freud's conception of the death drive is analogous to the structure of oxymoron in that two opposites—the life and death drives—are brought into close proximity that they become uncannily interchangeable, creating radical contradictions which underpin the psyche. Structured as oxymoron, the death drive reveals something deeply anarchic in the human psyche. Thanatos, the drive of destruction, Freud fears, is actually more active than Eros. The mass trauma that bears witness to the violent destruction of the Great War

[10] This idea remained troublingly inconsistent if not contradictory; as Laplanche remarks: "From an economic point of view the major contradiction consists in attributing to a single "drive" the tendency towards the radical elimination of all tension, the supreme form of the pleasure principle, and the masochistic search for unpleasure, which, in all logic, can only be interpreted as an increase of tension" (108). See Jean Laplanche, *Life and death in psychoanalysis,* trans. with an introd. by Jeffrey Mehlman (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1976).

reveals to Freud the temporary victory of the death drive over life. Freud suspects that the attraction of war borrows from the attraction of the death drive, and this may explain why most patients of war trauma seek not a recovery but a revisiting of the past trauma against their will. In this, repetition compulsion on the part of the traumatized misleadingly affirms the psyche of the death drive as erotic. The traumatic submission to an unpleasurable repetition portends the enjoyment of an eroticized death-drive. This oxymoronic conception of death identifies a longing for death as exciting and anticipated. In short, we have an eroticized Thanatos. This is a world where Eros is tainted by the destruction of Thanatos, and Thanatos is seen equally as desirable as Eros. The special concern with the seductive power of the death drive tells an inherent nature of contradictions in human psyche in that Eros and Thanatos, though supposedly in perpetual antagonism, blend into each other to form an oxymoron—*Thanatical Eros*.

This was a bitter thought for any apostle of modern European civilization. And indeed the Great War gave a new, darker inflection to Freud's thinking, causing him to pay greater attention to aggression and sadism, and to explore the death-drive as a basic component of human instinctual life. The war was a tragedy of civilization, in Freud's view, but it at least shed new light on human psychology—in its more tragic aspects. The war confirmed Freud's belief in the destructive effects of the human psyche, as it confirmed Lawrence's. Like Freud, Lawrence identifies the spirit of the war as the spirit of the death, and so in *Women in Love* he is obsessed with the images and gestures that insist on the annihilating, wayward, rebellious, demonic, and contumacious to such an extent that the psyche can find satisfaction only in death. The novel's obsession with death has invited much critical attention. For example, Gerald Doherty argues that the

presentation of death in *Women in Love* anticipates contemporary conceptions of death as metonymic event: "death is a random occurrence, a meaningless act, an essential non-sense" (Doherty 62).[11] Applying Roman Jakobson's binary system of rhetoric to study the dynamics of death event in *Women in Love*, Doherty also conceives death as a metaphorical process, a transcendental act where death, like the function of a metaphor, raises the corpse up and fills it "with fresh spiritual meanings" (Doherty 57). Doherty's rhetorical analysis of the novel's approaches sheds new and interesting light on the novel's visions of death. However, Lawrence's presentation of death in *Women in Love* is more ambivalent and troubling than Doherty's dualistic approaches (either death is a metaphorical event or a metonymic one) to death would allow. Granted that death "is a central motif in the novel: Lawrence presents fatal accidents, fratricide, suicide and natural death" (Schulze 33),[12] Lawrence's treatment of death reveals the psyche's compulsive submission to unpleasurable tension which is also enjoyable and may be considered as tantamount to sexual enjoyment itself. In other words, *Women in Love* brings Thanatos and Eros so close to each other that death is taken as the only goal worth pursuing, insisting on death and destruction as the basis of awareness and meaning. And this is the kernel of the oxymoronic structure of the death drive. The unarticulated implications of death drive as an oxymoron in Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* and Lawrence's treatment of death in *Women in Love* are what the following passages set out to explore.

At the heart of the death drive is the enigmatic function of repetition compulsion, for

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[11] Gerald Doherty, "Death and the Rhetoric of Representation in D. H. Lawrence's *Women in Love*," *Mosaic* 27.1 (1994): 55-75

[12] Cornelia Schulze, "D. H. Lawrence's War Novel: Modes of Violence in *Women in Love*," in *Like a Black and White Kaleidoscope Tossed at Random: Essays on D. H. Lawrence's* Women in Love, eds. Jean-Paul Pichardie and Philippe Romanski (France: Universite de Rouen, 2001), 31-44.

if as Freud points out that the unconscious does not believe in its own death, traumatic repetition seems to contradict this belief. The shocking and unexpected return of a trauma repeatedly brings the psyche into an encounter with death, a death in which the psyche poignantly feels the inability to put an end to the unwished-for repetition of a painful situation. In *Women in Love*, Lawrence articulates this tragic vision of repetition compulsion through the death-bound history of the Crich family. And nowhere is this tragic vision more painfully and movingly articulated in Gerald's reflection on the meaning of the tragic accident of Diana's drowning. After his failed effort to save his sister, Gerald bitterly remarks to Birkin: "Once anything goes wrong, it can never be put right again—not with us. I've noticed it all my life—you can't put a thing right, once it has gone wrong" (189). This view of "things gone wrong can never be put right" reveals not only Gerald's pessimistic life philosophy but also the horror of a trauma repeating itself through the unknowing acts of the psyche. Responsible for the safety of the water at the family party, Gerald links the drowning accident as tantamount to his own doing as he tells his father: "Well, father, I'm sorry. I'm sorry. I'm afraid it's my fault. But *it can't be helped*" (188; emphasis added). Unknowingly, Gerald tells the truth of his death wish, for once again he has caused a death to the family. Immediately the tragedy of his murder of his brother when Gerald was a child calls to mind. The confession that *"it can't be helped"* compellingly marks the crisis of Gerald's traumatic psyche, for repetition of the murderous impulse gives the impression of a demonic force, that which Freud points out precisely as the death drive. As if possessed by a demon, Gerald repeatedly acts on a death drive against his will. Or, it is equally valid to say he unconsciously repeats a destructive force done to others. And it is this phenomenon of "*it*

can't be helped" which deserves our attention.

Gerald's seemingly repeating a killing act by chance resembles Tancred twice killing Clorinda. And it is not by chance that in *Beyond the Pleasurable Principle* Freud cites the case of Clorinda who was killed twice by her lover Tancred to illustrate the phenomenon of a trauma repeating itself, in Cathy Caruth's words, "exactly and unremittingly, through the unknowing acts of the survivor and against his very will" (*Unclaimed Experience* 2). Like Gerald who seems to be haunted by some destiny, Tancred performs a demonic tendency to repeat a painful past. To the extend that it is his beloved that Tancred has unconsciously killed twice, his actions betoken a Freudian scandal of a sadistic pleasurable. On the other hand, in unknowingly allowing herself to be harmed twice Clorinda illustrates a pleasure of masochistic surrender to painful situations. In short, following the "murder" logic dramatized in *Women in Love*, it takes two to make a murder because both the murderer and the murderee find a compulsive enjoyment in the act of killing. Such an enjoyment is the vexatious pleasure of a compulsively repeated embrace of psychic tension that tends ineluctably toward death. Hence by killing once again a sibling, Gerald surrenders to a pleasure, a pleasure far from being masterful residing instead in a desire to repeat an unpleaurable past in order to self-explosively submit to it. And it is in this oxymoronic logic of a compulsively pleasurable submission that Freud's theory of the death drive and Gerald's killing once again of a sibling start to become clear.

The violent interruption of the drowning into the festive occasion triggers a series of responses to the meaning of death. Meditating on the meaning of Diana's death, Birkin argues that Diana is better off in death: "She'll be much more real. She'll be positive in

death. In life she was a fretting, negated thing" (190). This philosophy of Birkin—"Death is all right—nothing better" (190)—reasons that the function of death is no different from that of life so that the psyche seems to embrace annihilation with ecstasy. *Women in Love* is replete with such a desire to explore the confusion of the blend of life and death. Earlier Birkin has also reflected on the omnipresence of violence and destruction, using water imagery as metaphor: "We always consider the silver river of life, rolling on and quickening all the world to a brightness, on and on to heaven, flowing into a bright eternal sea, a heaven of angels thronging. But the other is our real reality—" (176-7). And he goes on to explain to Ursula that the "dark river of dissolution" is our real reality which "ends in universal nothing" (177). This metaphysical reflection of "the flowering mystery of the death-process" as a form of redemption for our reality of the "dark river of dissolution" makes death more seductive than life, for death, as Dollomore's reading of Freud's conceptualization on death drive points out, "is not simply the termination of life but *life's driving force*, its animating, dynamic principle" (193;emphais added).[13] This world view of death as "life's driving force" reveals a traumatic psyche in which all energy is spent on turning an awareness of the destructive into something meaningful, to turn pessimistic knowledge to an affirmation.

Reflecting on the incident of the drowning, Ursula asks, "Was not the adventure of death infinitely preferable?" (198). Her reverie is the major direct response to the smash and the drowning of "Water-Party"; with a gesture of welcoming death as an escape from a life without any inner meaning, a gesture parallel to that of Birkin, Ursula joyfully speculates:

[13] Jonathan Dollimore, *Death, Desire, and Loss in Western Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1998).

> To die is also a joy, a joy of submitting to that which is greater than the known, namely, the pure unknown. That is a joy. But to live mechanised and cut off within the motion of the will, to live as an entity absolved from the unknown, that is shameful and ignominious. There is no ignominy in death . . . There was nothing to look for from life—it was the same in all countries and all peoples. The only window was death. One could look out on to the great dark sky of death with elation . . . and there was no escape, save in death. (198)

This elated contemplation of death as a joyful window open to the greater unknown is cited by Gerald Doherty as an example of death as a metaphoric transfiguration. Ursula's metaphorization of death endows it with a "visionary potential" (Doherty 63). However, lying behind such an up-beat vision of death as a vehicle of transformation is a deathward wish that mistakes death as an agent of Eros. As Ursula's death-thought process shows, death is "a great consummation, a consummating experience" (196) that promises life's greatest pleasure, and so death is undoubtedly seen as equivalent to the excitement of sexuality. To equate death with sex is of course a time-honored tradition, and Lawrence is certainly aware and wary of such a cliché. In *Women in Love* Eros is often inseparable from Thanatos, the arch example of which takes place in the episode "Death and Love" in which Gerald literally carries death into his sexual encounter with Gudrun. As a climax, Gudrun receives the "terrible frictional violence of death . . . in *an ecstasy of subjection,* in throes of acute, violent sensation" (358; emphasis added). However, Lawrence's reflections on the turbulent consciousness of a historical background does not allow him to simply regard frantic and destructive sex as another version of death; rather, the

language describing Gudrun's thought points to a sexual excitement of killing/death. The novel enacts, in its language and themes, Lawrence's vision of a historical trauma in which death and love are linked intimately to become inseparable. In trauma, the impulse to death proves to be as strong as that to life; more importantly, this rejection of life gives the illusion of ecstatic thrill and of infinite possible. And there is much pleasure in dwelling in the infinite possibility of death, a route taken by Gudrun.

Whereas Birkin and Ursula theorize about death, Gerald and Gudrun dramatize the death drive. Gudrun's complaint at the beginning of the novel that "*Nothing materializes!*" (5; italics in original) is not an accurate statement, for the novel provides a lot of occasions to get the attraction/fantasy of death materialized. In her life-and-death struggle with Gerald, Gudrun is thrilled at the charm of death in which she finds the notion of pure possibility: "that was the charm to her, the lovely, iridescent, indefinite charm,--pure illusion. All possibility—because death was inevitable, and *nothing* was possible but death" (486; italics in original). This reflection on death not as an end itself but instead offering all possibility echoes and the same time overrides Ursula's notion of death as a window to the joyful unknown. In the terms that I have defined, both Gudrun and Ursula's conceptions of death are locked in an oxymoronic tension, repeating, with variations, a single psychology that brings Eros and death into contiguous contact. Gudrun's death-exuberance marks less a sadist pleasure in destroying Gerald than a masochistic surrender to the death drive, for in favoring Loerke she unconsciously chooses a much slower tour to death, the long path of dissolution with Loerke, the "wizard rat that swims ahead" (438). Indeed Gudrun's masochistic submission to a slow disintegration has its close counterpart in Mr. Crich's death. To the extend that Gudrun

performs the compulsive pleasure of self-destruction, she transforms the overly intended message—"I take pleasure in seeing Gerald ecstatically dying"—into a more radically true one—"I erotically seek my own death."[14] This riotous stirring in self-destruction beneath the quasi-metaphysical meditation on death opening the door to all possibility reveals the true radical message of the death drive—it is a pleasure of seeing oneself dying. As Laplanche remarks, "the death drive is in the first instance turned, not toward the outside (as aggressivity), but toward the subject . . . . It is radically not a drive to *murder*, but a drive to *suicide*, or to *kill oneself*" (italic in original). In terms of acting on a drive to suicide, Gerald makes a perfect partner of Gudrun.

With Gerald, however, we have an interesting but complex story that links life to the destructive power of the death drive. Gerald asks, "If death isn't the point . . . . what is?" (210). For Gerald death is the point, and the text will take him there. Long before Gerald's actual death in the cold snow, Gerald has recognized that his real activity lies in a "ghastly wrestling for death in his own soul" (335). Viewing the death struggle of his father as an object of fantasy as well as horror, Gerald enacts a perverse will to "experience the whole process of slow death" as if it was he himself dealing with the death (335). Hence, he compulsively stays to the end to witness "the fearful space of death" with a perverse desire that he "somehow *wanted* this death, even forced it" (335; italics in original). Wanting death, Gerald takes a long detour before he reaches his final goal. His pursuit of death with excitement and awful exhilaration makes death-event

[14] I owe these two sentences to Gregory Forter who links reading of the American hardboiled detective novel to an enjoyment of an eroticized death-drive. Arguing that Freud's *Beyond the Pleasurable Principle* fails to separate enjoyment from compulsive repetition, Forter sees such a failure "threatens to transform its intended message--"I seek (non-erotically) my own death"--into its more radically true one: "I like (take pleasure in) somebody (myself) being dead (ecstatically dying)" (430). With due respect to Forter, I borrow his idea and slightly change the order of two sentences to accord with argument that I make for Gudrun's death wish. See Gregory Forter, "Criminal Pleasures, Pleasurable Crime," *Style* 29.3 (1995): 423-77.

interesting, and this curious inclination to make "ever more complicated detours before reaching [his] aim of death" paradoxically presents us with "the picture of the phenomena of life" (*Beyond the Pleasurable Principle* 46).[15] Gerald's relationship to death foregrounds the oxymoronic mode of endowing the death-process with erotic enjoyment. When, in "Snowed Up", Gerald anticipates killing Gudrun, he trembles "in his most violent accesses of passionate approach to her, *trembling with so much desire*" (489; emphasis added), linking murder and death with sexual desire. But the thrill of killing others compares unfavorably to the pleasure of suicide—the true destination of death drive. Releasing his hands on Gudrun's throat, he confesses, "I didn't want it, really," a confession recalling Kaiser's statement of July 1915: "I didn't want the war."[16] The end is the desire that remains to Gerald, the end of his life. His suicidal walk to the snow movingly illustrates a psychological trauma that seeks a thrilling joy of encountering death. The detailed account of his death renders Gerald as object of fascination and anguish. This persistent expression in the novel of death as sexual enjoyment reads as a textual embedding of the perverse thrill of killing in a war. "Death and Love," Eros and Thanatos are mingled in an oxymoronic tension.

A novel on the pleasurable principle of death, *Women in Love* hovers on the anxiously thrilling joy of self-destruction, and this joy of self-destruction extends to a wish for the death of the entire human race. In Birkin's diagnosis, "Humanity itself is dry-rotten" so humanity must go, and "there would be no *absolute* loss, if every human being perished to-morrow"' (129). And his picture of "a world of empty of people, just uninterrupted grass, and a hare sitting up" convinces Ursula that it is indeed a clean,

[15] Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasurable Principle*, trans. James Strachey (New York: Norton, 1989).
[16] See Jack Stewart's notes for *Women in Love* in *Women in Love* by D. H. Lawrence (New York: The Modern Library, 2002), 501-524.

lovely picture of a manless world (129-30). This demonic longing for radical eradication of humankind gives the power of negation in *Women in Love* its full significance. We recall Ursula's delirium of death opening a window onto a prospect of ultimate purification and renewal of the earth purged of human kind. This impulse to get the thing with in order to feel alive gives rise to a chilling apocalypse. And the novel's apocalyptic tone reverberates with the sense of doom that points to the Great War fought outside of the novel. Facing the radical absurdity of such senseless self-inflicted destruction, Lawrence can propose the apocalypse as the only solution to the madness of the world. All the fantasies of exterminatory rage entertained by virtually every character in the novel reveals a collective trauma, for "apocalypse is trauma" (Berger 59).[17] A catastrophic and obliterating event, apocalypse generates symptoms that the violent social upheaval sends tremors even into the cellars of the unconscious. But Lawrence's vision which offers the end of history as the only solution to the disorder of history is an oxymoron, creating an unresolved tension. The novel ends in the midst of an argument between Birkin and Ursula stands as powerful and poignant evidence of a schizophrenic world still trapped in an ever-escalating circle of trauma and symptom.

VII.

As the underlying dynamic figure organizing *Women in Love*, oxymoron allows Lawrence to dramatize the *explosive* nature of war trauma. The wartime atmosphere of death-bound violence saturates the air of *Women in Love* so that the novel repeatedly turns toward a catastrophe, incorporating a ghostly, haunting experience. *Women in Love* defines a problem, "Supposing this old social state were broken and destroyed, then, out

[17] James Berger, *After the End: Representations of Post-Apocalypse* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1999).

of the chaos, what then?" (103), and seeks a solution but in vain. Gudrun and Gerald propose to "dance while Rome burns, since it must burn," for embracing chaos is such "an orgiastic and satisfying event" (298). Hence, the novel remains on the side of unbound, disturbing, freely floating energy of trauma without toying with the hope of working through. The ultimate oxymoronic view of trauma is to transform it into erotic fantasies where the two sets of life-and-death imagery merge, not in harmony, but in a perverse contention that confuses the psyche, a psyche that finds oxymoronic pleasure in traumatic repetition.

Chapter IV: "Remember My Party" through Trauma: the War and the Politics of Memory in *Mrs. Dalloway*

No, no not that,--it's bad to think of war,
When thoughts you've gagged all day come back to scare you;
And it's been proved that soldiers don't go mad
Unless they lose control of ugly thoughts
That drive them out to jabber among the trees. –Siegfried Sassoon

Regarded by Roger Poole to be "the finest 'war novel' that World War I produced" (79),[1] Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* participates in the cultural debates of its time concerning the powerful and destructive effects of war trauma on the mind, of the war generation's tragedy. The mass outbreak of mental disorder caused by the shattering effects of the first industrial warfare as well as inhumane trench conditions forced World War I to become the first war in history that had to deal with the problem of war trauma victims. Hundreds of thousands of soldiers were seen to suffer what was then called "shell-shock."[2] A term coined during the war, shell shock vividly captures the catastrophic consequences of war trauma on the mind that rendered victims psychologically unable to leave the war behind even when the war was declared over. If it is difficult to process, mediate, or commemorate the stark reality of the ordeal undergone by millions of soldiers returning from the trenches, it is even more so with war traumatized soldiers who return with no physical scars. From its inception, the

[1] Roger Poole, "'We All Put Up With You Virginia': Irreceivable Wisdom about War," in *Virginia Woolf and War: Fiction, Reality, and Myth*, ed. Mark Hussey (Syracuse: Syracuse UP, 1991), 79-100.
[2] Although the exact number of shell-shocked soldiers can never be known, the numbers are consistently high. In his *No Man's Land: Combat & Identity in World War I* (London: Cambridge UP, 1979), Eric Leed notes that "[f]rom 1916 to 1920 four percent of the 1,043,653 British casualties were psychiatric cases" (185). According to Peter Leese, 200, 000 is probably a reliable number of troops suffering psychological disorders in the British Army. See Peter Leese, *Shell Shock: Traumatic Neurosis and the British Soldiers of the First World War.* (New York: Palgrave MacMillian, 2002), 10.

phenomenon of shell-shock, described by Freud as a "dark and dismal subject" (*Beyond* 15), has occasioned much confusion and misunderstanding during and after the war. In much of the medical literature on war trauma, shell shock is infamously interpreted as "an affliction of the will, a sign of moral cowardice and hereditary weakness" (Lerner and Michale 19),[3] an interpretation consistently attached to the traumatized soldiers in interwar/postwar society and culture. As such, shell-shock becomes the enemy of settled society, for it mirrors "a social disease and national degeneration" (Mosse 103).[4] In his research on war-time shock and trauma in France, Marc Roudebush points out that encounters with shell-shocked soldiers instigate in physicians a spirit of "neurological patriotism" by which a "battle against hysteria" is waged to protect the health and virility of the entire French nation (255).[5] The French version of "neurological patriotism" can be equally applied to post-war British society, for it increasingly becomes a cultural anxiety at mass mental breakdown when overwhelming numbers of traumatized soldiers have difficulty readjusting to civilian life, which creates legal, medical and moral concerns.[6]

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[3] See Lerner and Micale, "Trauma, Psychiatry, and History: A Conceptual and Historiographical Introduction," in *Traumatic Pasts: History, Psychiatry, and Trauma in the Modern Age, 1870-1930,* eds. Paul Lerner and Mark S. Micale (London: Cambridge UP, 2001), 1-30.

[4] George L. Mosses, "Shell-shock as a Social Disease," *Journal of Contemporary History* 35.1 (2000): 101-108.

[5] See Marc Roudebush, " A Battle of Nerves: Hysteria and Its Treatments in France During World War I," in *Traumatic Pasts: History, Psychiatry, and Trauma in the Modern Age, 1870-1930*, eds. Paul Lerner and Mark S. Micale (London: Cambridge UP, 2001), 252-279. Although Marc Roudebush attempts to make a distinction between English doctors and French doctors' attitude toward shell-shocked soldiers in that French doctors perceived the "high incidence of traumatic symptoms among soldiers as an epidemic and as a genuine threat to the strength and morale of the army" (254), several studies on the phenomenon of shell-shock in the British Army counter such a distinction. For example, see Peter Leese, *Shell Shock: Traumatic Neurosis and the British Soldiers of the First World War,* (New York: Palgrave MacMillian, 2002), and Elaine Showalter, *The female malady : women, madness, and English culture, 1830-1980*, (New York : Pantheon, 1985).

[6] Again Leed notes that a decade after the war, in 1932, a full thirty-six percent of the veterans receiving disability pensions from the British government were listed as psychiatric casualties of the war (*No Man's Land,* 184). Gerard J. Degroot, in *Blighty: British Society in the Era of the Great War,* (New York: Longman, 1996), estimates that in 1922, 65,000 shell-shock victims were receiving disability pensions and 9,000 were still hospitalized. The magnitude of the problem may be gauged from the fact that, as Ted Bogacz points out, " in March 1939 there were still some 120,000 English Great War veterans receiving

The ambivalence, antagonism and confusion surrounding the terrifying effects of war trauma prompt the British Government to establish a committee to investigate the nature and treatment of shell-shock in the Great War. The result of such an investigation—the *Report of the War Office Committee of Enquiry into "Shell-Shock"* issued in 1922—replicates in many ways the already established prejudices against shell-shock. The Committee was established through the good intention of its Chair—Lord Southborough—to invoke sympathy for shell-shocked soldiers:

> The subject of shell-shock cannot be referred to with any pleasure. All would desire to forget it . . . to bury our recollections of the horrible disorder, and to keep on the surface nothing but the cherished memory of those who were the victims of this malignity. But, my Lords, we cannot do this, because a great number of cases of those who suffer from shell-shock and its allied disorders are still upon our hands and they deserve our sympathy and care.
>
> (Address to the House of Lords on 28 April 1920; qtd. in Bogacz 227)

The existence of large numbers of war-trauma ex-servicemen should create a more sympathetic public attitude toward their psychological struggle; yet, as Ted Bogacz has noted, the Committee came to the "fuzzy conclusion that while military rules concerning cowardice were justified, seeming cowardice may be beyond the individual's control [which] saw a blurred line between shellshock and cowardice" (220). During the war as well as after the war, shell-shocked soldiers were viewed with profound ambivalence. Jay Winter has argued that shell-shock has gradually involved to represent the "central

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pensions. . . from war-related "primary psychiatric disability"' (251). See Ted Bogacz, "War Neuroses and Cultural Change in England, 1914-1922: The Work of the war Office Committee of Enquiry into Shell Shock," *Journal of Contemporary History* 24 (1989):227-256.

facets of the war itself" when it moves from the medical to the metaphysical (7).[7] In other words, shell-shock has turned a psychological shock into a cultural shock in which soldiers, civilians as well as the state were all involved in wrestling with the lingering effects of the war-induced trauma, and so it is true that "in a host of ways Britain has never recovered from the shock of the 1914-18 war" (Winter 10).[8] Similarly, Leese also argues that "[e]ven as the war ended shell shock was entering the culture and quickly establish itself as a symbol of the war" (176).[9] It is under this cultural shock that *Mrs. Dalloway* presents a powerful expression of Septimus's shattered mind caused by the Great War.

Concerned with the lingering effects of traumatic history, the novel portrays a most vivid and heartbreaking picture of how survivors of war trauma encounter an unsympathetic and hostile civilian audience that refuses to bear witness to their painful past. In postwar English society, both war veterans and civilians struggle to survive the havoc of the Great War. Eager to get on with life as if the war had not been fought on the Front, civilians employ a collective denial of traumatic experiences, refusing to deal with the anguished memory of the War. War traumatized veterans, on the other hand, struggle to recover from a psychic wound of World War I.

Traumatic events create horrified and anguished experience so alienating that it is impossible to narrativize it in an accessible way, all the more so when the difficulty of expressing the events is enhanced by the political and societal denial surrounding them. Although painful experiences and psychic defenses of trauma survivors can alienate the

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[7] See Jay Winter, "Shell-Shock and the Cultural History of the Great War," *Special Issue: Journal of Contemporary History* 35.1 (2000): 7-11.
[8] Ibid.
[9] Peter Leese, *Shell Shock: Traumatic Neurosis and the British Soldiers of the First World War* (New York: Palgrave MacMillian, 2002).

traumatized from the public, for healing to take place, societies must provide cultural forms and occasions for survivors to tell their stories and to receive some social acknowledgment if not acceptance (Vickroy 19).[10] A lack of such public sympathy exacerbates traumatic symptoms, a situation dramatized in *Mrs. Dalloway.* Postwar mainstream English society does not provide an atmosphere conductive to recovery from the horrors of war. Woolf's Septimus illustrates the difficulty of gaining access to traumatic history, indicating that trauma "simultaneously defies and demands our witness" (Caruth 5).[11] Civilians' denial of war trauma—an emotional paralysis—surprisingly parallels the way trauma deprives the victims of feelings as evident in Septimus's repetitive worry that he cannot feel. In writing a narrative of trauma where sympathetic witness is denied to war veterans, Woolf explores how trauma shapes both national and individual psychic structures in postwar English society. In this chapter I use categories of the Great War, memory, and trauma to read how *Mrs. Dalloway* dramatizes the cultural failure to remember a traumatic history, a cultural amnesia which supports the nation's need for a normative society where all grieving should be wiped out. Specifically, I ask: Where does this denial come from? How does *Mrs. Dalloway* narrate this denial of traumatic knowledge? What are the ethical implications of *seeing* and *not seeing* trauma? How much are people willing to be unsettled by the anguished sight of trauma survivors? What happens when trauma spills the container of denial?

I. The Binding of Traumatic Knowledge

Trauma, as Freud defines it in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, occurs when the

[10] Laurie Vickroy, *Trauma and Survival in Contemporary Fiction* (Charlottesville: U of Virginia P, 2002).
[11] Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1996).

"protective shield" that the psyche sets up as self-defense fails to ward off destructive and powerful excitations coming from outside (6).[12] Trauma is thus seen as an external event that "is bound to provoke a disturbance on a large scale in the functioning of the organism's energy and to set in motion every possible defense measure" (20).[13] One such defense measure the psyche takes to master overwhelming flood of dangerous emotions is *binding* them so that they can be collected and managed. *Binding* is therefore "the most important function of the psychical apparatus," which "serves to protect the organism against the unpleasurable *unbinding* of the ego caused by excessive stimulation, or trauma" (Leys 29).[14] For Freud, trauma, as Mikko Tuhkanen has insightfully observed, "is another name for *unbinding*: it is an experience in which stimuli break through protective barriers in a way that the organism cannot effectively integrate into the coherence of the whole" (566; emphasis mine).[15] The function of *binding* puts emphasis upon the power of the organism to counter the threat perceived by unbridled emotion; it also functions "as a way to avoid unpleasure by mastering energy so that it does not inundate the organism, which guarantees its pleasure by binding excess stimuli into manageable quantities" (Tuhkanen 558).[16]

Given the preceding discussion of the psyche's attempt to master destructive external stimuli, I wish to elaborate on the link between the binding function as a normalcy testing and the domestication of war trauma in *Mrs. Dalloway* by reading the latter as the

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[12] Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, trans. & ed. James Strachey (New York: Liveright P, 1950).
[13] Ibid.
[14] Ruth Leys, "Traumatic Cures: Shell Shock, Janet, and the Question of Memory," in *Tense Past: Cultural Essays in Trauma and Memory*, eds. Paul Antze & Michael Lambek (New York: Routledge, 1996), 103-150.
[15] Mikko Tuhkanen, "Binding the Self: Baldwin, Freud, and the Narrative of Subjectivity," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 7.4 (2001), 553-591.
[16] Ibid.

nation's effort at establishing a stable society. Post-war English society in *Mrs. Dalloway* functions like the psychic displacement of traumatic events from consciousness, and it surprisingly uses the same strategy—*binding*—to defend the nation against the upsurge of large quantities of traumatic emotions that manifest in Septimus who carries his trauma home. As a haunting and unwelcome remainder/reminder of traumatic history, Septimus is a seething cauldron of emotions constantly threatening to overflow civilian insensitivity to war trauma. Coming home with a psychic war wound, Septimus meets with an unsympathetic civilian audience that is more interested in, as Leed points out, conducting "business as usual" after the armistice and the treaty have been signed and the war is designated as "over" (209). To do so, civilians as well as the state have to set up a "protective shield" against Septimus's shell-shocked consciousness, so powerful and dangerous that it will surely disrupt and tear up the illusion of "normalcy" civilians insist on. While wandering as civilians do on a fine day in London in June in 1923, Septimus is culturally and politically *bound* by a web of denials. Binding can take many forms; within the narrative of *Mrs. Dalloway*, denial of war trauma, shared ritual objects, and medicalising the visions of trauma victims all play the role of binding experience. The following discussion will focus on how civilians in complicity with the state attempt to bind the transmission of traumatic knowledge.

While Septimus is immersed in his shell-shocked consciousness—the war becomes his only reality five years after the war is over—civilians suffer "trauma-blindness" as they compulsively try to deny the lingering effects of war. A good example of civilians "quarantining" the horrifying consequences of the war occurs in the first few pages of the novel when Clarissa enjoys wandering in London, celebrating the fact of life returning to

the pleasurable everyday rhythms before the war. What she loves—"life; London; this moment of June" (5)—appears enjoyable only when the consciousness is in denial of the War:

> *The War was over*, except for some one like Mrs. Foxcroft at the Embassy last night eating her heart out because that nice boy was killed and now the old Manor House must go to a cousin; or Lady Bexborough who opened a bazaar, they said, with the telegram in her hand, John, her favourite, killed; *but it was over; thank Heaven—over.*
>
> *(MD* 5; emphasis mine*)*

The easy assumption that the war is a thing of the past and need no longer be a subject of concern is also voiced in Richard Dalloway's thought: "Really it was a miracle thinking of the war, and thousands of poor chaps, with all their lives before them, shoveled together, already half forgotten; it was a miracle" (*MD* 174). The above two passages constitute simultaneously civilians' anxiety over the effects of the war and their repetitive insistence on its termination. While acknowledging that "[t]his late age of the world's experience had bred in them all, all men and women, *a well of tears*" (*MD* 13; emphasis mine), Clarissa immediately stops her consciousness from thinking further and promotes instead "courage and endurance; a perfectly upright and stoical bearing" (13). And Lady Bexborough who continues to open the bazaar while receiving the news of the death of her favorite child is cited for her exemplary stoicism in face of all "tears and sorrows" (13). The worship of the stoical ideal is engaged in a conspiracy to deny the pain caused by the war, a denial that amounts to the level of numbing effect seen in psychoanalysis as a defense against the breakthrough of traumatic emotions. Thus, it serves the function of

warding off the memory of trauma and the meaning of the experience, putting particular emphasis on survival and endurance. To believe that the war was over, one has to ignore the presence of those still suffering at home through bereavement or physical and/or mental injury. In the course of the novel, the phrase 'the war is over' comes to summarize postwar British society's deadening insensitivity to war veterans' psychic wounds.

Insensitivity to war trauma is also acted out in a tension between seeing (as a physical perception) and not seeing (a figure of knowing). Those who physically *see* Septimus fail to *see* through his psychic wound still fresh and bleeding five years after the Great War. The inevitable movement from literal sight to figurative understanding is evident in Mr. Brewer's postwar consciousness. As Septimus's prewar employer and surrogate father, Mr. Brewer dismisses "the War" with only a "tut-tut" (*MD* 28). With such a consciousness fundamentally in denial of the scope of injuries inflicted by the war, Mr. Brewer, although proud to have Septimus return, can only praise his brave fighting in the War—"You have done your duty" (*MD* 108)—while ignoring the traumatic symptoms Septimus begins to show five years after the War. Amiable as Mr. Brewer is to Septimus, Septimus cannot help *seeing* the truth that Mr. Brewer belongs to one of the war deniers:

> For the truth is . . . that human beings have neither kindness, nor faith, nor charity beyond what serves to *increase the pleasure of the moment*. They hunt in packs. Their packs scour the desert and vanish screaming into the wilderness. There was Brewer at the office, with his waxed moustache . . . and *pleasurable emotions—all coldness and clamminess within.*
>
> (*MD* 135; emphasis mine)

Communities, held together by the insistence on the present moment of pleasure, are on the side of binding. The work of binding inevitably leads not only to the survival of the group but to a coldness to those outside the bound entity. The sorrowful past is an obstacle to the future, so it is better to forget about it and leave it behind. This oversight of the past indicates a death of historical perception.

This oversight of a painful past reflects a general inattention to historical context, most evident in Peter Walsh's thinking pattern. Understood by Karen L. Levenback to be a figure who "shares war-blindness" with other civilians, Peter Walsh *sees* Septimus but does not *really see* (53). When Peter sees Rezia and Septimus in Regent's Park, he romanticizes their apprehensive look as a young couple passionately in love: "And that is being young" (*MD* 106). He cannot think of the war as a cause of the couple's distress; in fact, he would rather turn his look to the more soothing sight:

> The amusing thing about coming back to England, after five years, was the way it made, anyhow the first days, things stand out as if one had never seen them before . . . . Never had he *seen* London *look* so enchanting—the softness of the distances; the richness; the greenness; the civilization, after India, he thought, strolling across the grass.
>
> (*MD* 107; emphasis mine)

Although aware that "[t]hose five years—1918 to 1923—had been, he suspected, somehow very important: People looked different" (*MD* 108), Peter, rather than suspecting that changes in London might have been caused by the war, looks forward to the future as he wonders: "What did the young people think about?" (108). In fact, during his whole day's fantasy "neither the war nor the war dead enter his consciousness"

(Levenback 50).[17] And for Septimus who "sees" implications, not *really seeing through* things equates with the death of soul; what he really sees in Peter is ironically true—"the dead man in the grey suit" (*MD* 106). Peter's identification with the inscription around the base of a statue he sees in London—"duty, gratitude, fidelity, love of England" (*MD* 76)—recalls "a great deal of the public-spirited, British empire, tariff-reform, governing-class spirit" (*MD* 116) that has grown in Clarissa. Their ideal is identical to the national ideal; the nation reflects and supports the "spirit" of normative society. So in many ways, the death of soul is applicable to the state's inability to cope with the massive surge of war traumatized veterans.

Even Rezia, the only person who shares Septimus's suffering, fails to see the implications of his mental distress. Having never seen the horror of war, Rezia is unable to cope with Septimus when five years after their marriage he begins to show traumatic symptoms and a fanatical need to communicate, "Rezia could not understand him" (*MD* 139). On their way to the doctor, Rezia constantly fears that "people must notice" Septimus's strange behavior of talking to himself. People must see and she could not bear it, so she leaves him alone on a bench in Regent's Park, thinking only her own suffering: "Far rather would she that *he were dead*! She could not sit beside him when he stared so and did not *see* her and made everything terrible" (*MD* 33; emphasis mine). Rezia's wish that Septimus be dead rather than returning alive with strange symptoms reflects a common attitude toward the war dead; that is, those who had died are seen as morally superior. As Alex King points out, "the moral example of the dead provided an elevated public image of the virtues of military service and of those who performed it"

[17] Karen L. Levenback, *Virginia Woolf and the Great War* (Syracuse: Syracuse UP, 1999).

(227).[18] By contrast, those who return with shattered nerves bear signs of moral weakness. It is Leed (2000) who argues that "[t]he postwar idealization of the dead is the source of the myth of a 'lost' generation, the counter-Darwinian belief that those fallen in war were morally superior to the survivors, who were lessened by their war experience" (93).[19] That she is herself a foreigner and suffers the same fate of isolation (a solitary fate she associates with her being in love) as her husband does not make Rezia more receptive and sympathetic to victims of war, which reveals the difficulty a traumatic survivor needs to overcome in order to survive postwar society. The Regent's Park scene in which Rezia repeatedly and urgently implores Septimus to "look" poignantly points to a war of vision between traumatic soldiers and civilians. That is, Septimus, being a sad, disturbing presence, must be made to *look* outside of himself so that he can be easily assimilated into the harmony that society demands. But Septimus dares "not look," for looking makes him see the war dead coming back to him: "Evans was behind the railings!" (*MD* 36). When Rezia beseeches him to look, he sees himself transformed to be "the scapegoat, the eternal sufferer" (*MD* 37), a fate society has written for him against his own will.

It is not just civilians who are eager to erase the sight of traumatized people. The state in complicity with civilian deniers of war trauma plays an invisible all-seeing role in repressing a traumatic chapter of its history. The power of the state's surveillance over her subjects is embodied in two of her duty-bound doctors: Holmes and Bradshaw. As

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[18] Commemorating the war dead was regarded as a sacred act, so King observes, "commemoration expressed the fundamental assumption that the dead should be respected and that what they had done in the war should be valued. It attributed a number of virtues to them in order to justify holding them in honor" (173). See his *Memorials of the Great War in Britain: The Symbolism and Politics of Remembrance* (Oxford: Berg, 1998).

[19] Eric Leed, "Fateful Memories: Industrialized War and Traumatic Neuroses," *Journal of Contemporary History* 35.1 (2000): 85-106.

Lerner and Micale point out, "Medical professionals had long thought of themselves as state representatives whose task it was to inculcate the ideals of patriotism, service, and self-sacrifice" (21).[20] Recognizing that his traumatic symptoms deteriorate in his postwar setting and wanting desperately to get over them, Septimus does call out for help: "Now he had surrendered; now other people must help him. People must be sent for. He gave in" (*MD* 136). Such a heart-breaking cry for help is met only with the brutality of his doctors. As Herman explains, "In settings hostile to the concept of human suffering, the medical profession is often not exempt from the culturally imposed silencing of traumatic experience" (12).[21] Read in the context of the tremendous numbers of shell-shocked soldiers returning home to haunt the postwar world, Dr. Holmes's hopelessly imperceptive diagnosis of Septimus as just "headaches, sleeplessness, fears, dreams—nerve symptoms and nothing more, he said" (*MD* 138) participates in the governing class's effort to ignore the aftermath of total war. Not only does he serve to mobilize cultural desire to purge the evil of traumatic influence, he also puts the blame on the victim. He tells Septimus that "*health is largely a matter in our own control.* Throw yourself into outside interests; take up some hobby" (138; emphasis mine), a prescription that is fundamentally in conjunction with the long-held prejudice against shell-shock; that is, shell-shock sufferers are egotists and selfish, and so they lack social responsibility. The blame on the victim also calls the final report of the 'Shell-Shock' Committee into mind. Bogacz writes, "frustrated by the slipperiness and ambiguity of the disease, witnesses and committee members blamed the victims rather than the atrocious

[20] See Lerner and Micale, "Trauma, Psychiatry, and History: A Conceptual and Historiographical Introduction," in *Traumatic Pasts: History, Psychiatry, and Trauma in the Modern Age, 1870-1930,* eds. Paul Lerner and Mark S. Micale (London: Cambridge UP, 2001), 1-30.
[21] Judith Lewis Herman, *Trauma and recovery* (New York: Basic Books, 1992).

conditions of the Western Front" (241).[22]

In *Mrs. Dalloway*'s postwar world that would feign ignorance of the War, no civilian really *sees* the problem of Septimus; no one, that is, except the nerve specialist Sir William Bradshaw from whom Rezia seeks help. Septimus's first meeting with Sir William Bradshaw is situated in a narrative irony of what is really being seen. Bradshaw, claiming to understand the human soul, "could *see* the first moment [Septimus and Rezia] came into the room; he was certain directly he *saw* the man; it was a case of extreme gravity. It was a case of complete breakdown" (*MD* 144; emphasis mine). While his diagnosis is right, Bradshaw refuses to see that Septimus's mind bears the marks of the historical twisting and writhing of the Great War. Instead, he brushes aside Septimus's need to communicate his psychic pain, and like Holmes, blames the patient for his egotistic tendencies: "Try to think as little about yourself as possible" (*MD* 149). The authoritarian control of the state over her subjects is manifested in Bradshaw's health prescription—"divine proportion" made possible by "Conversion" (*MD* 150). The novel's image of the demon-like goddess Conversion "who loves blood better than brick, and feats most subtly on the human will" personifies all the social forces that violently impose order and conformity on individuals, especially "on the will of the weakly" (*MD*

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[22] See Ted Bogacz, "War Neuroses and Cultural Change in England, 1914-1922: The Work of the War Office Committee of Enquiry into Shell Shock," *Journal of Contemporary History* 24 (1989):227-256. Several authors have pointed out the affinity between Woolf's treatment of shell-shock in *Mrs. Dalloway* and the War Committee's report. For example, in "Virginia Woolf's Septimus Smith and Contemporary Perceptions of Shell Shock," *English Language Notes* 25.2 (1987): 49-57, Sue Thomas notes, "Woolf's development and treatment of Septimus Smith may . . . be read as a topical reflection of her angry response to *the Report of the War Office Committee of Enquiry into "Shell-shock,"* presented to British Parliament in August 1922, and to the publicity given the Report in *The Times* in August and September, 1922" (49). Likewise, Peter Leese in his *Shell Shock: Traumatic Neurosis and the British Soldiers of the First World War* (New York: Palgrave MacMillian, 2002) observes, "Woolf's portrait of shell shock shows close attention to the public debates of the early 1920s. The author very likely knew of the *Report of the War Office Committee of Enquiry into "Shell Shock"*, which was presented to Parliament and discussed widely tin the press in August 1922, shortly before she conceived the character of Smith in October 1922" (166). See also Peter Knox-Shaw, "The Otherness of Septimus Warren Smith," *The Durham University Journal* 47.1 (1995):99-110.

152). Enhanced by his "divine proportion" and militaristic "Conversion," Bradshaw not only "prospered himself but *made England prosper*, secluded her lunatics, forbade childbirth, penalized despair, made it impossible for the unfit to propagate their views until they, too, shared his sense of proportion" (*MD* 150; my emphasis). Aligning himself with "the police and the good of society," Bradshaw takes upon himself the job of protecting the health and virility of all of England. His defense of England resembles those French psychiatrist-patriots who wage a battle against hysteria. As the whole culture is mobilized to rebuild a stable, unified image of nation and empire, weaklings like Septimus are not fit to be about and so should be put to "rest in solitude" so that it is impossible for them to propagate their disproportionate view (*MD* 150).

In the hands of Bradshaw, Septimus's maddest fears of being seen as a criminal are validated. As a social disease Septimus must be "quarantined" from the public lest they should be contaminated by his "unsocial impulses" (*MD* 154). Such a medical practice in conjunction with a panoptic system of government control has the force to translate war trauma as a sign of moral weakness. Here we can see that the metaphor of "conversion" corresponds to the effects of binding chaotic energy so that it does not inundate the organism. In *Mrs. Dalloway*, the two famous scenes—the backfiring car and the airplane sky-writing—also operate on the binding effect. Those two scenes serve to create a symbol of communion that binds all Londoners together as they collectively focus their sight on what Allyson Booth calls "ritual objects" (187).[23] However, these two "objects-as-emblems" violently draw the attention of a series of passers-by, commanding the respect of the state. The violent explosion of the car, which Clarissa Dalloway mistakes

[23] Allyson Booth, *Postcards from the Trenches: Negotiating the Space Between Modernism and the First World War* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1996).

to be "a pistol shot in the street outside!" (*MD* 19), literally shocks Septimus back to the experience of shelling. Significantly, we first see Septimus in the act of seeing. While everyone including Septimus *looks at* the motor car with greatness seated within, they *see* differently. Civilians paying their tribute to the greatness of England by looking at the motor car are thrilled at the thought of being looked back at by the Royalty, "the Queen bowing; the Prince saluting; at the thought of the heavenly life divinely bestowed upon Kings" (*MD* 27). This reciprocal gaze is not shared by Septimus, who is terrified with "this gradual drawing together of everything to one center before his eyes" (*MD* 21). Instead of seeing a center drawing people together, Septimus sees a world waving and quivering and threatening to burst into flames (*MD* 21). His vision of reality is so terrifying that it is impossible to communicate it to civilians even with their willingness to listen, let alone their reluctance to *see* the truth. The motor car symbolizing the dignitary of the state generates in the gathering crowds an admiration for the "dead," the "flag," and the "Empire" (*MD* 25). Septmus's torment, the inner drama of a shell-shocked victim, is played out in the midst of a society eager to indulge a unifying emotion. Even in the midst of his hallucinations characteristic of traumatic symptoms, Septimus surprisingly retains a keen awareness of postwar society's desire for stability. He sees himself as an obstacle to a unified fellow-feeling: "It is I who am blocking the way, he thought" (*MD* 21).

The sky-writing airplane which takes the place of the car also serves to foster a communion feeling at the expense of the shell-shocked soldier. The airplane writing words in the sky to advertise a commercial product significantly creates a common bond between people when it draws their sight to all look up into the sky trying to decipher the

smoke words. Directing their gaze at the sky brings a sense of "extraordinary silence and peace" to the civilian characters (*MD* 30); again this harmony, however momentary it may be, is achieved when society turns a blind eye to the suffering of war veterans. Septimus looks at the sky-writing airplane; what he sees only accelerates his internal conflicts. Amidst the "silence and peace" shared by all civilians, Septimus desperately tries not to go mad: "But he would not go mad. He would shut his eyes; he would *see* no more" (*MD* 32; emphasis mine). Postwar British society is eager to forget about the War, and so veterans like Septimus who suffer war trauma stand little chance of being regarded as worthy of sympathy. In other words, social unity works against the sorrow of war trauma which brings discontinuity and chaos in its wake.

The previous discussions focus on how postwar English society adopts different strategies to bind traumatic knowledge. I would like to point out that Clarissa's party serves the interest of the state in its attempt at ritual purification of the evil of trauma. The care with which she prepares for her party gives a sense of ritualized oneness, and so the party functions like the two ritual objects—the motor car with greatness seated within and the skywriting airplane. Clarissa's fondness of giving parties is criticized by both Peter Walsh and her husband as an indulgence in triviality; yet Clarissa defends her parties as an expression of her ideal of unity, the wish to bring together "so-and-so in South Kensington; some one up in Bayswater; and somebody else, say, in Mayfair" (*MD* 184-5). Critics have often stressed that the images of merging in *Mrs. Dalloway* culminates in Clarissa's party, which is a mingling of different people.[24] For all its

[24] For example, Jean O. Love, in her *Worlds in Consciousness: Mythopoetic Thought in the Novels of Virginia Woolf* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1970), writes that the party is "a grand spiritual reunion" (147), creating a feeling of integration. See also Nancy Topping Bazin's discussion of how the party creates a mystic sense of oneness, especially pp. 104-5, in her *Virginia Woolf and the Androgynous Vision* (New

esthetic satisfaction in treating the party as a work of art, Clarissa integrates people as much as she excludes them. At one time in the novel she associates her party with those parties in Buckingham Palace, blazing among candelabras, glittering stars: "And Clarissa, too, gave a party" (*MD* 25). This association puts Clarissa's party in the service of the state in that it attempts to ward off the more devastating facts and deep scars of the war. On the narrative level, Septimus's death makes it possible for the party to go on. The news of Septimus's death temporarily shatters Clarissa's composure, but she quickly recovers from the shock, invoking Lady Bexborough's uprightness in the face of her son's death. In a world that penalizes despair and idealizes Lady Bexborough's stoic bearing, Clariss's attitude toward the death of a shell-shocked soldier can be read as a sign of repression, which is the only self-defense feeling that the state approves.

The social heroism of Lady Bexborough's swilled determination to maintain civilized values in the face of death and suffering amounts to the effect of numbing when society is brought to face the death of Septimus. Throughout the novel, Septimus has been troubled by the *feeling* that he committed a crime against humanity—the crime of *not feeling*. But it is the society that does not *feel* for him. The narrative irony is palpable: "Human nature, in short, was on him—the repulsive brute, with the blood-red nostrils . . . . Once you stumble, Septimus wrote on the back of a postcard, human nature is on you" (*MD* 139). Recognizing himself to be "quite alone, condemned, deserted, as those who are about to die are alone" (*MD* 140), Septimus sees "death" as the only escape from an unreceptive audience who prefers to see him out of sight. In fact, his awareness of being deserted brings a moment of clarity to him: "The whole world was clamouring: Kill yourself, kill yourself, for our sakes" (140).

Jersey: Rutgers UP, 1973).

During Septimus's dying scene, he has no consistent or responsive witness. In fact, the only response Septimus meets is the society's final attempt to enclose him from being seen: people either look away or misinterpret his death. Not wanting to see the dying Septimus, "Mrs. Filmer flapped her apron and made her hide her *eyes* in the bedroom," while Dr. Holmes simply "could not *conceive*" why the devil Septimus commits suicide (*MD* 227). Peter sees the ambulance bearing Septimus's body and ironically praises it as "triumphs of civilization": "It struck him coming back from the East—the efficiency, the organization, *the communal spirit of London*" (*MD* 229; emphasis mine). Indeed, Peter's jovial dismissal of this horrifying event precisely represents the communal spirit of civilians who are unable to bear emotional witness to trauma. Septimus's last words before suicide, "I'll give it you!" speaks to a social, collective vision which will define his disordered state as "cowardice" and "lack of proportion": "The coward!' cried Dr. Holmes" (*MD* 226). This judgment on Septimus's death points to the long-standing image of shell-shock as a symbol of cowardice.

Most troubling is Clarissa's indirect witness to Septimus's death. It is a commonplace of criticism of the novel that Septimus enacts Clarissa's death wish. As numerous critics have argued, his supposedly mad maunderings are her unspoken fears and fragmented memory traces. For example, Phyllis Rose writes:

> Septimus acts out instincts suppressed in Mrs. Dalloway, withdrawing to live in a self-enclosed dream-world which frequently becomes a nightmare, and finally opting for death, while she continues to push herself to connect with people and to respond to the beautiful of the world outside her.

(135-6)[25]

Similarly, Makiko Minow-Pinkney also sees Septimus as a surrogate for Clarissa, committing suicide on her behalf (77).[26] Indeed, affinities, echoes, and chains of imagery throughout the text do seem to link Clarissa with Septimus. I want to argue, however, that despite this textual mode of communalization, Clarissa's interpretation of Septimus' death is just another subtle version of political coercion that imposes order and unity at the cost of the war veteran's rupture.

Although she undergoes a complex series of responses to the veteran's suicide, Clarissa's first reaction to the news of Septimus' death is annoyance: "What business had the Bradshaws to talk of death at her party? A young man had killed himself" (*MD* 280). Then she tries to imagine herself physically experiencing the death: "There he lay with a thud, thud, thud in his brain, and then a suffocation of blackness. So she *saw* it" (*MD* 280; emphasis mine). But she does not *see* it; instead her interpretation of Septimus's suicide—"Death was defiance. Death was an attempt to communicate"—violates Septimus' uncommunicative thoughts that he does not actually want to die. In fact, toward the end of the novel, Septimus is on his way of self-healing; when he calls out for the dead Evans for the last time, significantly Evans does not appear, which is a promising sign of recovery that makes him feel "Life was good. The sun hot" (*MD* 226). Completely alienated from witnessing Septimus's internal eruptions, Clarissa can afford to find the thought of death consoling—"If it were now to die, 'twere now to be most happy" (*MD* 281)—because she does not have to be pushed to commit suicide like Septimus despite her lingering flirtation with death all day long. Septimus does not die

[25] Phyllis Rose, *Woman of Letters: A Life of Virginia Woolf* (London: Pandora, 1986).
[26] Makiko Minow-Pinkney, *Virginia Woolf & the Problem of the Subject* (Brighton, Sussex: The Harvester, 1987).

"holding his treasure," as she romantically imagines. Clarissa's "visionary alienation" (Guth 35)[27] from war trauma allows her to identify Septimus' tragedy as "her disaster—her disgrace" (*MD* 282), thus positing herself as sympathetic mourner for Septimus. As Guth further explains, "Clarissa's interpretation should thus not be attributed to *visionary insight* or preternatural communication but to her own desire to *see* Septimus' death in [her own] terms" (Guth 37; emphasis mine). The way Septimus "vigorously, violently" flings himself to death marks the point at which Clairssa's identification with the shell-shocked soldier has to halt (*MD* 225). Her exultance in Septimus's courage to kill himself links her with the same inadvertent joy Peter feels at seeing the efficiency of the ambulance passing by carrying Septimus' dying body. Most significant is her joy that Septimus' death "made her feel the beauty; made her feel the fun" (*MD* 284) so that she has strength now to go back to her party. The strength Clarissa gains from the dead Septimus echoes what J. Hillis Miller's interpretation of this novel as "a resurrection from the dead" (201)[28]; that is, Septimus's plunge into death enables Clarissa's resurrection from the dead. And yet the resurrection scene also disturbingly recalls the vampiric image of Bradshaw's goddess Conversion, "who feasts on the wills of the weakly" (*MD* 154), for Clarissa's claim that Septimus's defiant death acts as a boost to her own life transforms her from a sympathizer to a vampire-like life-sucker. The political hostess' moments of rapture derive from her historical evasion of the impact of the war. Thus, she can slips back into delusion while the shell shock of World War I haunts the fringes. Clarissa's post-trauma testimony to the death of Septimus offers at best a troubled testimony to his oppression, but what is so disturbing is that her seemingly

[27] Deborah Guth, "Rituals of Self-Deception: Clarissa Dalloway's Final Moment of Vision," *Twentieth Century Literature* 36 (1990): 35-42.
[28] J. Hillis Miller, *Fiction and Repetition: Seven English Novels* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1982).

more sympathetic reading turns out to be another subtle and disguised version of violence against shell-shocked victims.

Throughout *Mrs. Dalloway*, the reader confronts a world desperately trying to hold onto an order long lost by looking away from the lingering horrors of the War. This quest for wholeness and unity produces a tension between the felt responsibility of remembering the war and the longing to forget it. And yet despite the culture's violent suppression of traumatic knowledge, it fails to "domesticate" traumatic symptoms. In what follows, through the frame of psychoanalytic theorization of memory, I want to examine the hard work of remembering traumatic history.

II. The Politics of Memory

Septimus shows symptoms of nervous breakdown at a time when "forgetting occurs collectively from the way the experience of the war was consciously forgotten in 1919 and throughout the 1920s" (Leed 89).[29] The political climate of the 1920s prefers to memorize the dead, for it allows the state to attribute the virtues of military service and spiritual strength to the dead. It is worth pointing out that erection of war memorials, the ceremonial gathering, and burial of the dead provide a palatable form of presenting suffering in a manner comforting to the living. Alex King's study of the politics of remembrance in Britain shows that when the psychological health of all who had fought in the trenches was publicly questioned, "the moral example of the dead provided an elevated public image of the virtues of military service and of those who performed it" (King 227).[30] The state has everything in stake in conducting public commemoration of the war dead in which the state can reaffirm its political ideas about the war; at the same

[29] See Eric Leed, "Fateful Memories," note 18.
[30] Alex King, *Memorials of the Great War in Britain: the Symbolism and Politics of Remembrance* (Oxford: Berg, 1998).

time, a remembrance ceremony brings "a coming-together of the community to express sorrow and respect" (King 27).[31] Memorial practices cover over the trauma by reinstating what we call social reality, the comforting collective fantasy that provides answer where there are none In short, it proves relatively easy to memorize the war dead who symbolize a nationalist rhetoric of "love, duty, self sacrifice" (*MD* 152). By contrast, the psychological plight of shell-shocked soldiers challenges a stable, unified image of nation and empire. The story of Septimus points to the difficulty of expressing the suffering of war trauma amid a culture that determines to forget about the war. Although the psychiatric establishment as well as the mainstream British society fail to provide an atmosphere conducive to recovery from the horrors of war, the huge numbers of death by the war make it more difficult to remember the legacy of shell shock. According to Bogacz, almost every British family has someone die because of the war. Hence Bogacz observes: "In light of such sacrifices, it was difficult for many Englishmen both during the war and for years afterward to forgive those who had faltered in their duty or who had actually deserted their posts; "shell-shock" seemed an all too easy way out for the weakling or the coward" (244).[32]

The story of Septimus is inescapably bound to a story of double telling; it dramatizes, in Caruth's words, "the oscillation between a *crisis of death* and the correlative *crisis of life*: between the story of the unbearable nature of an event and the story of the unbearable nature of its survival" (*Unclaimed* 7).[33] The paradoxical nature of his story is more telling when he is able to survive war but is driven to death in peacetime. In death

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[31] Ibid.
[32] Ted Bogacz, "War Neuroses and Cultural Change in England, 1914-1922: The Work of the War Office Committee of Enquiry into Shell Shock," *Journal of Contemporary History* 24 (1989):227-256.
[33] Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1996).

as in life, Septimus is violently silenced by postwar English society, because his death and mangled body will give rise to memories of the insensible war. And yet despite the culture's effort to "quarantine" war trauma, *Mrs. Dalloway* proves unable to quite erase the trace of trauma. Septimus' traumatic experience, inassimilable into the narrative present of the novel, keeps returning to haunt, to disrupt the narrative ordering. The traumatized body of Septimus, to quote Caruth again, appears as "a symptom of history" (*Trauma* 5). Caruth notes 'the traumatized carry an impossible history within them, or they become themselves the symptom of a history they cannot entirely possess" (*Trauma* 5).[34] Traumatic survivors are a symbol of how histories are violently made and unmade in a struggle to forget the trauma of the past.

For history to recover from trauma, society should provide means for the traumatized to integrate their shattered shards of disrupted memory. In other words, society should be willing to bear witness to trauma. However, as numerous psychologists have pointed out, bearing witness to trauma is no easy job, for "the mere existence of victims provides compelling evidence of tragedy and malevolence, and this results in considerable discomfort for nonvictims" (Janoff-Bulman 149).[35] Traumatic victims shatter our basic beliefs that this world is safe and human beings are strong enough to ward off horrifying events. In his account of the relationship between language and World War I that is relevant to the discussion here, Paul Fussel observes:

> One of the cruxes of war . . . is the collision between events and the language available—or thought appropriate—to describe them. . . . Logically, there is no reason why the English language could not perfectly

[34] Cathy Caruth, ed. *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins UP, 1995).
[35] Roonie Janoff-Bulman, *Shattered Assumptions: Towards a New Psychology of Trauma* (New York: Free Press, 1992).

well render the actuality of . . . warfare. . . . What listener wants to be torn and shaken when he doesn't have to be? We have made *unspeakable* mean indescribable: it really means *nasty.* (169)[36]

The nastiness of war trauma makes every civilian in *Mrs. Dalloway* turn a deaf ear to Septimus whenever he tries to communicate, for Septimus, "Communication is health; communication is happiness" (*MD* 141). Throughout the narrative, whenever Septimus appears, he is trying to communicate: with Rezia, with the Prime Minister, and with the world. His plea for communication highlights the dependency of the traumatized self on others and helps to explain why it is so difficult for survivors to recover when others are unwilling to listen to what they endure. Dori Laub has explained why the journey of bearing witness is fraught with dangers: "The survival experience . . . is a very condensed version of most of what life is all about: it contains a great many existential questions, that we manage to avoid in our daily living, often through preoccupation with trivia" (72).[37] Complicating the issue of bearing witness to trauma are Septimus's own failures of recall and acting out his trauma in disturbing ways that alienate him from the outside world.

Woolf's use of dual narrative juxtaposing the story of Septimus and Clarissa in a single day has often been said to show their interrelatedness, connecting, if only momentarily, "what would otherwise remain disconnected" (Squier 120).[38] The story of Septimus presents, however, an order of reality fundamentally differently from Clarrissa's vision of the world. Septimus's disturbing visions of the past do not fit in the

[36] Paul Fussell, *The Great War and modern memory* (New York : Oxford UP, 1975).
[37] Dori Laub, M.D., "Bearing Witness or the Vicissitudes of Listening," in *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History,* by Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, M.D. (New York: Routledge, 1992), 57-74.
[38] Susan Merrill Squier, *Virginia Woolf and London: The Sexual Politics of the City* (Chapel Hill: U of N Carolina P, 1985).

"connecting device" that critics would like to see in Woolf's narrative technique. Rather Septimus's memory of his traumatic past repetitively intrudes on the "tunneling process" commonly shared by Clarissa and her sets.[39] Echoing Woolf's delight in her discovery of the "tunneling process," J. Hillis Miller points out that "*Mrs. Dalloway* is a brilliant exploration of the functioning of memory as a form of repetition" (Miller 177).[40] However, Miller fails to see the difference between Clarissa's *narrative memory* and Septimus's *traumatic memory.* These two terms come from Pierre Janet's observation on trauma victims. Distinguishing between two kinds of memory--"traumatic memory," which merely and unconsciously *repeats* the past, and "narrative memory," which *narrates the past as past*, Janet writes:

> *Memory*, like belief, like all psychological phenomena, is an action; essentially, it *is the action of telling a story.* Almost always we are concerned here with a linguistic operation . . . . The teller must not only know how to [narrate the event], but must also know how to associate the happening with the other events of his life, how to put it in its place in that life-history which each of us is perpetually building up and which for each of us is an essential element of his personality.
>
> (qtd. in Leys 124; italics in the original)[41]

In an attempt to investigate how individuals remember things, Paul Connerton comes to the same conclusion that remembering involves telling a story as a sequential: "To

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[39] On October 15, 1923, Woolf wrote about her discovery of the "tunneling process": "It took me a year's groping to discover what I call my tunneling process, by which I tell the past by installments, as I have need of it. This is my prime discover so far" (272). See Virginia Woolf, *A Writer's Diary: being extracts from the diary of Virginia Woolf*, ed. Leonard Woolf (London: Hogarth Press, 1953).

[40] J. Hillis Miller, *Fiction and Repetition: Seven English Novels* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1982).

[41] Ruth Leys, "Traumatic Cures: Shell Shock, Janet, and the Question of Memory, " in *Tense Past: Cultural Essays in Trauma and Memory,* eds. Paul Antze & Michael Lambek (New York: Routledge, 1996), 103-150.

remember, then, is precisely not to recall events as isolated; it is to become capable of forming meaningful narrative sequences" (26).[42] In contrast, traumatic experience disrupts narrative because trauma is neither remembered nor experienced as sequential. Thus Janet adds, "one who retains a fixed idea of a happening cannot be said to have a 'memory' of the happening. It is only for convenience that we speak of is as "traumatic memory'" (qtd. in Leys 125). Elaborating on Janet's theory of memory, van der Kolk and van der Hart write: "Narrative memory consists of mental constructs which people use to make sense out of experience" (427).[43] Therefore, when Clarissa remembers the most important episode in her past—her rejection of Peter Walsh, she is trying to make sense of her choice to marry Richard Dalloway. In contrast to narrative memory, trauma victims become attached to the trauma; they are "unable to make sense out of the source of their terror, [so] they develop difficulties in assimilating subsequent experiences as well" (van der Kolk and van der Hart 432). Unlike Clarissa, whose memory entails a social act, Septimus is no longer able to resuscitate his past from the "tunneling process." He is out of touch with his former self; his youthful passions for Shakespeare, for England, for Miss Isabel Pole are now utterly alien to him. Traumatized by his war experience, Septimus enacts disturbing traumatic memory where he is completely engulfed in his distorted and disjunctive sense of time, living in the perpetual past with the present and future almost nonexistent.

Despite the fluid boundaries between past and present in *Mrs. Dalloway* (Miller 184), non-victims of trauma have no difficulty telling apart the past from the present. For example, when Clarissa remembers "the central episode of [a] common past" in Bourton

[42] Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1989).
[43] B. A. van der Kolk & Onno van der Hart, "The Intrusive Past: the Flexibility of Memory and the Engraving of Trauma," *American Imago* 48.4 (1991): 425-454.

shared by Peter and Sally (Miller 199), her memories heal, her memories soothe. The common past that Clarissa repetitively returns to is a prewar time, an idyllic time filled with friends, fun and laughter, when rules were broken: "The strange thing, on looking back, was the purity, the integrity, of her feeling for Sally" *(MD* 50). Septimus, too, remembers, but his memories horrify, returning to him in a sudden, vivid, and "literal return of the event against the will of the one [trauma] inhabits" (Caruth, "Psychoanalysis" 3).[44] His history is not merely recalled from his past memory, it is haunting him in the present. His memories rend, twist, fracture. In one of his hallucinations, Septimus sees the "earth [thrill] beneath him. Red flowers grew through his flesh; their still leaves rustled by his head" (*MD* 103). Such traumatic memory has no social component; it is not addressed to anyone and thus is a tragically solitary event. Incomprehensible yet insistent and imagistic, Septimus's reenactment of his traumatic memories defies "the pleasure of temporal continuity" so desired by both civilians and the state itself (Bulter 259).[45] For instance, Richard's favor of "continuity; and the sense of handing on the traditions of the past" speaks to a desire for a coherent and unified historical totality that flows uninterruptedly from past to present as a continuous line (*MD* 177).

Clarissa and others have a heightened sense of the "splendid achievement" (*MD* 82) and continuity of English history, culture, and tradition. The dilemma of the public's relationship to the traumatized is also elucidated in their distinctive responses to time.

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[44] Cathy Caruth, "Introduction: Psychoanalysis, Culture, and Trauma II," Spec. issue of *American Imago* 48.4 (1991): 1-12.

[45] Concerning how repetition can be a source of pleasure, Butler suggests in a text on Freud's BPP that repetitions "serve in part to bind the past and future together, to provide ritualized and sensuous occasions for the invocation of the past and the convocation of the present. Indeed, what other route than repetition instates the pleasure of temporal continuity between the irrecoverable past and the unknowable future?" (259). See Judith Butlter, "The Pleasure of Repetition," in *Pleasure Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, eds. Robert A. Glick and Stanley Bone (New Haven: Yale UP, 1990), 259-76.

Throughout the day, Big Ben, tolling the hours, progresses in a linear and continuous movement that reflects an "imposed notion of time, the time of the state and the time of modernity" (Edkins 94).[46] The enormous bell in a clock tower, Big Ben, a symbol for British Government, strikes the hour "with overpowering directness and dignity" (*MD* 178), recalling Ricoeur's "monumental time" which has the sensible expression in chronological time. Therefore, when Big Ben sounds the hour, it encourages certain ways of thinking about the nation and its narratives of deference and patriotism. As Laura Marcus points out, Big Ben is in a way in complicity "with the figures and institutions of authority and power in the novel—the medical profession, commerce, State, Monarchy, Empire[which] gives to clock time the train of power that transforms time into a radical threat" (Marcus 80).[47] Amid the panic and hustle surrounding the scene of Septimus's suicide, Rezia hears the clock striking, and she cannot help thinking, "how sensible the sound was; compared with all this thumping and whispering" (227). So when Big Ben strikes the hour—direct, downright—it urges people to "move, to go" (*MD* 140). Thus, when Clarissa withdraws to reflect on Septimus's suicide at her party and when she hears the sound of Big Ben, she collects the dispersed parts of her self into a social entity: "The clock was striking . . . . But she must go back. She must assemble" (*MD* 284). For the traumatized, continuity over time is disrupted. Hence, Septimus gets stuck in time, confusing the signifier with the signified:

> The word "time" split its husk; poured its riches over him; and from his lips fell like shells, like shavings from a plane, without his making them, hard, white, imperishable words, and flew to attach themselves to their places in

[46] Jenny Edkins, *Trauma and the Memory of Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003).
[47] Laura Marcus, *Virginia Woolf* (Plymouth, UK: Northcote House, 1997).

an ode of Time. (*MD* 105)

This literalization of time, of transforming words to new meanings, speaks the ultimate tragedy of trauma victims in which they perform a dissolution between subject and object. Traumatic memories are not narratively formed, so they defy communication with others. Septimus mourns without feeling, memorializes the past without narrating it, remembering nothing, yet can forget nothing. He tells a story of being trapped in stopped, stuttering time in which no historical progress can be made. His story performs a stammered history of trauma, literally told in the novel:

> But if he confessed? If he communicated? Would they let him off then, his torturers?
>
> *"I—I—" he stammered.*
>
> But what was his crime? He could not remember it.
>
> "Yes?" Sir William encouraged him. (But it was growing late.)
>
> Love, trees, there is no crime—what was his message?
>
> He could not remember it.
>
> *"I—I—" Septimus stammered.*
>
> (*MD* 148-9; emphasis mine)

For trauma victims, the idea of I, like that of time, cannot be positioned in a proper time and place. Embodying traumatic memory as a text of fragmentation, shell-shocked victims live within a story out of the control of the story-teller. They suffer from text out of context. The story of Septimus is one that resists incorporation into narratives of collective memory that privilege the pleasure of temporal continuity.

Just as traumatic events have no resting place in the psyche, narratives of trauma

remain disorganized and fragmentary. Traumatic memory entails a problematic relationship to narrative; for Mieke Bal, "reenactments of traumatic experience take the form of drama, not narrative" (Bal x).[48] Accordingly, in order for the trauma victims to facilitate storytelling so that others can understand it, sympathize with it, traumatic memory should be transformed into narrative memory: "To enter memory, the traumatic event of the past needs to be made 'narratable" (Bal xi). It is worth pointing out that within psychology, much discussion has focused on the importance of assimilating the traumatic event into a coherently organized narrative of the past, and, perhaps not surprisingly, the bottom line of all of this work is that the construction of a narrative is strongly associated with psychological well-being.[49] Jonathan Shay's study of the relationship between American society and the recovery of Vietnam war trauma victims is relevant to our discussion here. For Shay, "The essential injuries in combat PTSD are moral and social, and so the central treatment must be *moral and social.* The best treatment restores control to the survivor and actively encourages communalization of the trauma" (Shay 187; emphasis mine).[50] This process of working through trauma is missing in *Mrs. Dalloway,* a failure that is symbolic of England's irresponsible reaction to the war's outcome. Traumatic images, sensations, waves of affect, and perceptive worries

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[48] Mieke Bal, "Introduction," in *Acts of Memory: Cultural Recall in the Present,* eds. Mieke Bal, Jonathan Crewe, and Leo Spitzer (Hanover: UP of New England, 1999), vii-xvii.

[49] For instance, in "Narrative Completion in the Treatment of Trauma," *Psychotherapy* 31.3 (1994): 415-422, Jodie Wigren argues: "Narrative organize affect and create identity and social connection. Trauma disrupts narrative processing, by interfering with psycho-physiological coordination, with cognitive processes, and with social connections" (415). With a note of caution of relying on narrative as the only therapeutic method, Brison also agrees that "narratives contribute significantly to such recovery is currently accepted as uncontroversial in the field of the psychology of trauma" (40). See Susan J. Brison, "Trauma Narratives and the Remaking of the Self," in *Acts of Memory: Cultural Recall in the Present,* eds. Mieke Bal, Jonathan Crewe, and Leo Spitzer (Hanover: UP of New England, 1999), 39-54. See also, Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, M.D., *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* (New York: Routledge, 1992), especially pp. 57-74.

[50] Jonathan Shay, *Achilles in Vietnam: Combat Trauma and the Undoing of Character* (New York: Atheneum, 1994).

remain free-floating in *Mrs. Dalloway.* However, the news of Septimus's suicide that intrudes on Clarissa's party shows that trauma is still active, still has the spectral power to haunt and disrupt. The danger that results from not dealing with trauma creates the very possibility of traumatic repetition, symbolically or in action. This perpetual shifting between traumatic memory and narrative memory produces a text of fragments that is the very trauma of history itself. It is perhaps not a coincidence that Lloyd Gerorge, the British Prim Minister, should say in 1919, "The World is suffering from shell-shock" (qtd. Sherphard 143).[51]

III. The Trauma of History

Although *Mrs. Dalloway* presents traumatic experience through literal dramatization of Septimus's fragmented memories, his sensory and bodily responses, and by foregrounding anguished and emotional immediacy unavailable in historical analysis, it fails to deal with trauma in a meaningful and healthy way when it ends with a party to estheticalize the pain of traumatic memory. Given that Clarissa has the privilege to appropriate Septimus's suicide for her own loss, the novel runs the risk of attempting to conflate specific traumatic history with universal loss. Clarissa's ambivalent attitudes toward Septimus—a sequence of complex mixed feelings of annoyance, rejection, and sympathetic imagination—resonate with the ambiguous feelings of the "shell-shock" committee (Bogacz 239-41).[52] Frustrated by the ambiguous and startling phenomenon of shell-shock, postwar British society imposes forgetting rather than the hard work of

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[51] Ben Sherphard, *A War of Nerves: Soldiers and Psychiatrists in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2001).

[52] Bogacz writes: "the ambivalence, antagonism and even confusion of intelligent men confronted with a startling and ambiguous phenomenon for which little in their background or education had prepared them . . . [and so]frustrated by the slipperiness and ambiguity of [shell-shock], witnesses and committee members blamed the victims rather than the atrocious conditions of the Western Front. Such attitudes [are] in conjunction with pre-war social prejudices" (239-241), see Note 31.

memory of war trauma, a wish that manifests itself in the form of denial and fetishism. Locating trauma within a narrative of façade of normalcy so that life can go on as if the traumatic reality of a painful past has never existed corresponds to what Eric L. Santner terms "narrative fetishism" (144).[53] Distinguishing the work of mourning that is "a process of translating, troping, and figuring loss" from narrative fetishism, Santner writes:

> Narrative fetishism, by contrast, is the way an inability or refusal to mourn emplots traumatic events; it is a strategy of undoing, in fantasy, the need for mourning by simulating a condition of intactness, typically by *situating the site and origin of loss elsewhere.* Narrative fetishism releases one from the burden of having to reconstitute one's self-identity under posttraumatic conditions; in narrative fetishism, the "post" is indefinitely postponed.
>
> (144; emphasis mine)

Mrs. Dalloway's party is an attempt to expunge the traces of trauma by "situating the site and origin of loss elsewhere." However, as James Berger argues, telling the story of trauma in this way "is not a method of working through but is itself a traumatic symptom" (Berger 35).[54] Rendered helpless and terrified in trauma, trauma victims' recovery is problematized when a culture does not provide a healthy "translating, troping, and figuring loss" (Santners 144). The disempowerment and disavowal of communities and even entire cultures only exacerbates traumatic symptoms, forcing the traumatized to

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[53] Eric L. Santner, "History Beyond the Pleasure Principle: Some Thoughts on the Representation of Trauma," in *Probing the Limits of Representation: Nazism and the "Final Solution"*, ed. Saul Friedlander (Cambridge, MA : Harvard UP, 1992), 143-154.

[54] James Berger, *After the End: Representations of Post-Apocalypse* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1999).

carry what should be a collective burden. As many psychotherapists have recognized, trauma cannot be faced alone and recovery is possible only "within the context of relationships" (Herman 133). Viewed in this light, the avoided encounters with unprecedented war trauma on the part of civilians in *Mrs. Dalloway*, I want to argue, is a profoundly unethical hesitation to engage historically and meaningfully with the wounds of the past. And this evasion of ethics demonstrates how *Mrs. Dalloway*, while a novel about traumatic experiences during the war, becomes itself the *trauma of history*, that is, a traumatic history "haunting the possibility of history" (Spargo 114).[55]

[55] Clifton Spargo, "Trauma and the Specters of Enslavement in Morrison's *Beloved*," *Mosaic* 35.1 (2002): 113-31

Chapter V: The Psyche that Writes a Suicidal Discourse: Narcissism and Trauma in *Under the Volcano*

Much like *Moses and Monotheism* in which personal crisis and historical trauma get entangled, *Under the Volcano* entails a form of apocalyptic thinking that involves the assertion of a unique connection between an individual and the encompassing darkness of history. The novel records both inner and outer disorder and anarchy which is Lowry's diagnosis of the modern psychic and political condition. On the personal level, the novel follows the Consul's journey to death step by step, almost in a clinical fashion, without ever getting better of it. On his last day alive, the Consul centers much of his mental energy on disintegration, decay, and ruin. Such an intensity of his preoccupations with the injured self verges on narcissism: always the self, the victimized, narcissistic self. The Consul's narcissism, however, shows a digression from ordinary sense of the word. He seems to be infatuated with his self, but the self he mediates on tends to be fragmentary, decentered.[1] The Consul's decentered narcissism presents a narcissistic crisis—a wounding constitution of the self which locks it in a perpetual struggle to avoid disintegration anxiety, while binding the self to an endless acting out that wounding. Focusing more on the psychic wounding of the Consul rather than on his alcoholism, I propose to read the Consul as a survivor of trauma. Lowry's biographer Douglas Day also analyzes the Consul's psychological problems. For Day, the Consul's drinking is bad indeed, but it is not the worst of his problems. In Day's diagnosis the Consul is mad (335), in the manner described by William James in his *The Varieties of Religious*

[1] Tracing the presentation of voice in *Under the Volcano*, Patrick O'Donnell, in *Echo Chamber: Figuring Voice in Modern Narrative* (Iowa City: U of Iowa P, 1992) comes to a similar view of the Consul's ambivalent narcissism: "All discourses seem centered on him, yet they reveal themselves to be decentered, labyrinthine, and arbitrary" (131). The Consul's narcissism, however, is not the thematic concern of O'Donnell's reading. Focusing on how voice indicates indeterminacy of identity, O'Donnell traces a dialectic between a "voice of mastery" and a voice of linguistic hybridity.

Experience.[2] While I hesitate to share Day's radical view of the Consul as mad, I endorse his psychoanalytic reading of the Consul's problems. Instead of seeing the Consul's delirious consciousness as symptoms of madness, I argue that the Consul's chaotic mind which mirrors the equally chaotic outward landscape reveals what is now known as post-traumatic subjectivity. Part I of this chapter discusses how an interdependency of narcissism and trauma can help us better understand the Consul's psychic wounding. In part II, I argue that Lowry's vision of modern history suggests an anxious historicity in which the Consul's Faustian fate anticipates a world on the verge of another war. Indeed, Lowry went to some trouble to situate the Consul's chaotic battle "for the survival of human consciousness" against the historical realities of the day—the Spanish civil war; Abyssinia; Fascism; the policies of the Cardenas government in Mexico; references to Hitler; and most importantly, the anticipation of modern civilization mindlessly plunging itself into another world war. Faced with such pressing and emergent crises—both personal and political—neither the main characters nor the major world powers can redirect the path away from self-destruction. Instead, the novel explores how each of the main characters as well as western civilization can only self-destructively repeat their traumatic past, groping "in the darkness of *remembered* ways"—as Yvonne writes in one of her letters to the Consul after her departure from Quauhnahuac (346; emphasis mine).

I. Trauma and Narcissism

Many critics have been keen in noticing the narcissistic traits in the Consul, but they

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[2] Douglas Day in *Malcolm Lowry: A Biography* (New York: Oxford UP, 1973) views the Consul's paranoid fantasies as a result of his alcoholism. However, he concludes that alcoholism, instead of being the worst of the Consul's problems, is a symptom of his madness. Day uses James's definition of paranoia to support his argument. James writes, "In delusional insanity, paranoia, as they sometimes call it, we may have a diabolic mysticism, a sort of religious mysticism turned upside down. . . . only this time the emotion is pessimistic: instead of consolations we have desolations; the meanings are dreadful; and the powers are enemies to life" (qtd. in Douglas Day 335).

do so only in passing. Brian Shaffer is thus far the only critic who traces hints of narcissism in the Consul. Linking the Consul's problems—his alcohol addiction, sexual difficulties, and sadomasochistic raging—with symptoms of narcissism, Shaffer argues that the self-absorbed ex-Consul invokes the fate and doom of Narcissus, with one portion of the self "watching the other deteriorate (with aesthetic fascination)" (145).[3] The Consul, "because he is convinced of his own imminent demise, choose to luxuriate in the aesthetic appreciation of it—Narcissus-like—rather than attempt to alter his situation" (Shaffer 131). While I don't dispute Shaffer's analysis of the Consul's narcissistic symptoms, I propose another reading of the Consul's narcissism as a traumatic acting out of his psychic wounds. In the following, I seek to explore narcissism as a key device for Lowry to repeatedly link individual trauma with historical and cultural trauma. Before I discuss how a narcissistic wound functions like trauma, a revisit of the myth of Narcissus is perhaps necessary.

According to the myth of Narcissus and Echo narrated in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, the beautiful Greek boy falls in love with his own reflection in a pond. Presumably, this amply sums up the nature of his namesake: a narcissist whose love is centered on the self. Unable to love others than him self, Narcissus cruelly rejects the advances of the nymph Echo and is punished by Nemesis to pine away exactly as Echo has pined away in solitude. In other words, Narcissus's death results from echoes of his own reflections. What Narcissus falls in love with is not himself but watery images of himself, an illusory self. The story is also complicated by the fact that looking at his own reflection, Narcissus "does not recognize himself in the fluid image that the water sends back to

[3] Brian W. Shaffer, *The Blinding Torch: Modern British Fiction and the Discourse of Civilization* (Amherst: U of Massachusetts P, 1993.)

him" (Blanchot 125);[4] instead, he is tormented by the water imagery as Echo is tormented by the image of Narcissus. Narcissus falls in love with an illusory presence of absence, a nothing, that is. The watery reflection yields not a pleasure of self-recognition but a path to death. Already underlying this beautiful but poignant myth is a moral lesson we all know too well—self-love indicates a courting of death. Hence, Blanchot writes: "The water in which Narcissus sees he shouldn't is not a mirror, capable of producing a distinct and definite image . . . . It is madness he sees, and death." Hinted in this intriguing myth rich in paradoxes is the dark side of the story little recognized by critics—Narcissus was the product of his mother Liriope's rape by the river God Cephisus. His birth, therefore, is a reminder of a past sexual crime not yet redressed. Viewed in this respect, Narcissus's fatal attraction to the water image "seems to be a repetition of his mother's near drowning" (Berman 6).[5] The moment Narcissus looks at his reflection in the water already points to an uncanny return of trauma. Thus, Berman continues to argue that "Ovid's story darkly hints at a repetition compulsion principle, traumatic events reenacted but not mastered" (6). Repeatedly entranced by his water reflection, Narcissus unconsciously acts out a traumatic past. True to the Freudian repetition-compulsion principle, such a traumatic acting out leads only to death. Therefore, Charles Shepherdson argues that "the time of narcissism is the time of a disaster, the time of an event whose traumatic character repeats itself at every moment, beyond the recovery of historical memory" (134).[6] Shepherdson's point is that the trauma of narcissus profoundly disrupts temporality that recalls the experience of war and other traumas that

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[4] Maurice Blanchot, *The writing of the Disaster*, trans. Ann Smock (Lincoln : U of Nebraska P, 1986.)
[5] Jeffrey Berman, *Narcissism and the Novel* (New York: New York UP, 1990).
6 Charles Shepherdson, "The Catastrophe of Narcissism: Telling Tales of Love," in *Topologies of Trauma: Essays on the Limit of Knowledge and Memory*, eds. Linda Belau and Petar Ramadanovic (New York: Other Press, 2002), 127-150.

Freud discusses in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. Hence, his reading of the myth of Narcissus has already hinted that Narcissus is a survivor of trauma, and his repeated visit of his image in the water enacts post-traumatic subjectivity. The myth of Narcissus and Echo is very complicated and can be explained in many levels.[7] For my purpose of suggesting the ways in which Narcissism and trauma provide a suitable means for reading the Consul's predicaments, I will define narcissism as "a concentration of psychological interest upon the self."[8] In the case of the Consul, it is a traumatized self that he repeatedly mediates on. In the following, I discuss how Lowry's *Under the Volcano* illustrates what has increasingly become the psychological core of modernist experience: trauma and narcissism.

The trauma of betrayal and abandonment are of central importance in the novel. It is fair to say that on the Day of the Dead in November 1938, when the Consul is not thinking about alcohol, his mind is mostly preoccupied with Yvonne's adultery and with his life theme of abandonment by people most dear to him. The Consul's fear that his world is a drama of betrayal and abandonment "repeating itself like a disruptive movie" can be attributed to his family history. The trauma of his mother's early death renders young Geoffrey helpless in an alien world; he is also subsequently traumatized by his

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7 When we think of the term narcissism, Freud's groundbreaking paper "Narcissism: An Introduction" immediately comes to mind. However, in his essay "Toward a Functional Definition of Narcissism," in *Essential Papers on Narcissism*, ed. Andrew P. Morrison, M. D. (New York: New York UP, 1986): 197-209, Robert D. Stolorow points out, Freud's model of narcissism as the libidinal investment of the self has been criticized by recent critics, especially Heinz Kohut and Otto F. Kernberg. Since Freud, numerous authors have ventured to redefine the term "narcissism" to such an extent that the term means almost everything concerned with the self. For an overview of narcissism, see both Stolorow and Pulver's essays in Essential Papers on Narcissism. Although Freud has been the reference point throughout this dissertation, I will not adopt his definition of narcissism in this chapter; nor will I use other psychoanalytic theory of narcissism. Instead, I revisit the myth of Narcissus and link it with trauma theory to read the Consul's mental activity on his last day on earth.

8 I adopt the definition of narcissism in the Glossary of the American Psychoanalytic Association (qtd. in Sydney E. Pulver 107). See his essay "Narcissism: The Term and the Concept," in *Essential Papers on Narcissism*, ed. Andrew P. Morrison, M. D. (New York: New York UP, 1986), 91-111.

father's unexpected and unexplained abandonment when his father mysteriously disappears into the Himalayas. Shortly after his father's disappearance, his step-mother dies, too. Such a succession of repeated life tragedies throws the young Consul into the care of strangers, rendering him unable to be recovered from this early life trauma. At one time in the novel the Consul associates Yvonne's departure from him with his feeling of being abandoned by his mother's death:

> And yet, he was thinking *all over again, and all over again as for the first time*, how he had suffered, suffered, suffered without her; indeed such desolation, such a desperate sense of abandonment, bereavement, as sure this last year without Yvonne, he had never known in his life, unless it was when his mother died. (205; emphasis mine)

The Consul's response to Yvonne's betrayal is characteristic of trauma survivor—feeling the assault of trauma as if it happened for the first time. Viewed in this light, Yvonne's return to the Consul on the Day of the Dead provides not a possibility of salvation, but a literal return of trauma.

Indeed, on the Day of the Dead, all of the Consul's traumatic pasts seem to be resurrected from the dead to return to haunt him yet again. These repetitions are notable because they do not seem to be motivated by the individual, but appear as if they were the result of possession by fate. Hence, with no clear purposes in mind, Yvonne's returning seems to be an act of fate. When Hugh says to her, "I'd like to know precisely what the situation is," she answers, "So would I." Then he asks if she has gone back to the Consul and she answers, "Yes. No . . . Yes. I've gone back to him all right all right" (114). But she has no well-thought plans for saving the Consul, nor does she ever tell him

unequivocally that she has returned to him for good. The Consul has doubt in her purpose of returning, too; he is more surprised than pleased with her return, asking, "—Have you really come back? Or have you just come to see me?" Her answer to the Consul is equally ambiguous, "Here I am, aren't I?" (73).

Yvonne is the Consul's echo, that is. As if summoned by his call, she returns to replay the drama of betrayal and abandonment for the Consul before his death. When Yvonne is dismayed at the Consul's ruined garden—saying it is a wretch—the Consul blames her for such ruins, using an analogy:

> [S]uppose for the sake of argument you abandon a besieged town to the enemy and then somehow or other not very long afterwards you go back to it—there is something about my analogy I don't like, but never mind, suppose you do it—then you can't very well expect to invite your soul into quite the same green graces, with quite the same dear old welcome here and there. (76)

Still unwilling and unable to forgive Yvonne's betrayal, the Consul has to punish her by physically failing her in love. Their attempt at experiencing yet again for the pleasure they once had unfolds like a scene of sexual crime, a reminder of Narcissus's visit of his mother's body violated in the water. The Consul enters Yvonne's room, "innocently as a man who has committed a murder while dummy at bridge" (84), and feeling at the same time " a sudden peculiar sense of embarrassment, a sense, almost, of indecency that he, a stranger, should be in her room" (90). This language is fraught with hints at incest taboo that the Consul fears of committing, but the hurt of betrayal looms larger than this fear so that he has to make sure Yvonne tastes the feeling of being betrayed, too. Shortly after

their unsuccessful attempt, the Consul explains what happened as "a sign of my fidelity, my loyalty; any other man would have spent this last year in a very different manner. At least I have no disease" (95).

As a narcissist, the Consul is the actor in his own self-directed drama in which he appreciates his exceptional trauma-narcissism nexuses. On their way to Tomalin, the Consul, Yvonne, and Hugh have unexpected encounter with Jacques, Yvonne's former lover. Ignoring Yvonne's pleading to leave the Jacques's, the Consul deliberately draws Yvonne and himself to revisit the scene where Yvonne betrays him with Jacques, displaying a narcissist-like sadomasochistic need to seek suffering and humiliation. It is here he also acknowledges that his love for Yvonne " seems so far away from me and so strange too, for it is as though I could almost hear it, a droning or a weeping, but far, far away, and a sad sound" (205). The Consul does not fail to satisfy his compulsion to yet again repeat the trauma of betrayal when he walks into Jacques's room, wondering, "Was it here he had been betrayed? This very room, perhaps, had been filled with her cries of love" (206). A sight of Jacques's naked body provokes an even greater excruciating pain in the Consul as he imagines how Jacques's body has "sought its pleasure in his wife's body [bringing] him trembling to his feet. How loathsome, how incredibly loathsome was reality" (215).

It is also during this revisit of his trauma that the Consul thinks at length about the notion of having "willed" Jacques to Mexico "for obscure purpose of his own" (219). He sees the image of himself in Jacques; the Consul's identity is split, with one part of himself plotting to destroy his already shattered self. Therefore, it seems as if in complicity with Jacques, they cause Yvonne's infidelity. The alcohol-induced insight is

unmistakably clear: "Was it not almost as though the Consul had *tricked* him into dishonour and misery, *willed*, even his betrayal of him?" (219; emphasis mine). To make sure the chance for reconciliation with Yvonne is gone, he slips under Jacques's pillow Yvonne's belated postcard in which Yvonne proclaims her love for the Consul. Jacques will find the postcard at the same time when Hugh calls to announce the death of the Consul. Earlier in Chapter I Jacques has also speculated that it was "as though the Consul had calculated it all, *knowing* M. Jacques would discover it as the precise moment when Hugh, distraughtly, would call from Parian" (32).

A narcissist is answerable for only himself; even his trauma cannot be shared. Yvonne sums it up: "No, you loved yourself, you loved your misery more than I" (15). Thus the Consul effectively damns any chance to heal his psychic wounds. In Chapter II when Yvonne is arrested by a photograph labeled *The Parting* and projects her longing to heal the cleft rock, she has the feeling of the other rock's unappreciative of her effort: "That's all very well," it said, "but it happens to be your fault, and as for myself, I propose to disintegrate as I please!" (56). The damage has been done and every attempt at reconciliation is regarded by the Consul as belated. During the course of the novel, we see the Consul seemingly struggle to find love back, at the same time defeating such a struggle:

> Could one be faithful to Yvonne and the Farolito both?—Christ, oh pharos of the world, how, and with what blind faith, could one find one's way back, fight one's way back, now, through the tumultuous horrors of five thousand shattering awakenings, each more frightful than the last, from a place where even love could not penetrate. (210)

If the Consul repeatedly searches for situations to revisit his psychic wounds, his mind is equally active in reviewing tragic figures from history and literature—the damnation of Faust, the betrayal of Christ, Lord Jim, Macbeth, Brutus, Oedipus, Wilde, Maximilian and Carlota; common to all of this heterogeneous mixture is a tone of foreboding doom. Even the Mexican landscape reflects his trauma; everywhere the Consul looks is abyss, rupture, disintegration—all is fragmentary, portentous, and confused. For a narcissist, the outside world is but a mirror of his inner world; hence, the psychological space that is a "rudimentary and essential ability to distinguish self from not-self, does not exist" for the Consul (Grace 275).[9] His mind—in his own terms, his soul—is like the Mexican town where electric systems don't function properly. The Consul has a vision of his mind as a town "ravaged and stricken in the black path of his excess . . . the whole town plunged into darkness, where communication is lost, motion mere obstruction, bombs threaten, ideas stampede—" (150-1).

Such a mind as the Consul views seems to be constantly harassed by the outside world, but it is he who projects his own mind to the outside, thus breaking the boundary between the inner and outer world. Thus Mexico's history of betrayal and invasion is but an extension of his own history:

> What is a man but a little soul holding up a corpse? The soul! Ah, and did she not too have her savage and traitorous Tlazcalans, her Cortez and her *noches tristes*, and, sitting within her inner most citadel in chains, drinking chocolate, her pale Moctezuma? (298)

Past and present histories emerge in his consciousness into an anarchic juxtaposition

[9] Sherrille E. Grace, *The Voyage That Never Ends: Malcolm Lowry's Fiction* (Vancouver: U of British Columbia P, 1982).

totally at odds with itself. The mirror the Consul looks into is shattered; what he sees is a delusion replete with ghostly images of sorrow and tragedy. The Consul's narcissistic fantasies serve in traumatic situations as protection against helplessness. In *Trauma and Recovery* Judith L. Herman identifies the core experience of trauma as "threats to life or bodily integrity, or a close personal encounter with violence and death. [Traumatic events] confront human beings with the extremities of helplessness and terror, and evoke the response of catastrophe" (33).[10] In the wake of trauma, Herman observes, traumatic events "shatter the construction of the self that is formed and sustained in relation to others" and "cast the victim into a state of existential crisis" (51). "Traumatized people," Herman continues to explain, feel "utterly abandoned, utterly alone, cast out of the human and divine systems of care and protection that sustain life", a situation which impels "people both to withdraw from close relationships and to seek them desperately" (56). Equally emphasizing the inner world shattered by traumatic experience, Ronnie Janoff-Bulman in her *Shattered Assumptions: Towards a New Psychology of Trauma* argues that the victim's exposure to trauma brings her to experience an "assumptive world" no longer benevolent and meaningful: "[S]ddently the victim's inner world is pervaded by thoughts and images representing malevolence, meaninglessness, and self-abasement. They are face to face with a dangerous universe, made all the more frightening by their total lack of psychological preparation" (63).[11] These criteria for the diagnosis of post-traumatic subjectivity help to explain and summarize the different facets of the Consul's psychological wounding in the novel.

Yvonne's infidelity and abandonment seem to contribute to the Consul's drinking

[10] Judith Lewis Herman, *Trauma and Recovery* (New York: Haper Collins, 1992).
[11] Ronnie Janoff-Bulman, *Shattered Assumptions: Towards a New Psychology of Trauma* (New York: Free Press, 1992).

problem; at least this is how Hugh and Jacques see it. Yet else where in the novel the Consul acknowledges his "sourceless sorrow" (78) and "his own fruitless selfish ruin" (346). Dimly aware that his suffering seems senseless and his life offers no explanation, the Consul is still in agony. In the language of trauma theory, this type of behavior is described as a "proto-experience", an experience that has not been fully realized. Thus to Jacques' charge: "Have you gone mad? . . . . Am I to understand that your wife has come back to you, something I have seen you praying and howling for under the table—really under the table . . . And that you treat her indifferently as this, and still continue only to care where the next drink's coming from?" (214). Jacques wants a reference theory of experience—the Consul should drink miserably only when his wife leaves him. For the Consul, the point about traumatic experience is that it is not something that can be immediately understood. Thus, he accuses Jacques of interfering with his great battle against death (226). In an attempt to understand his "vague tragedy and sorrow," the Consul drinks. In this sense, the Consul is not only the sophisticated personification of the unspeakable in trauma; he is also something of a fetishist. He supplements the bottle for trauma. For the Consul, the bottle represents for "Bliss. Jesus. Sanctuary . . . Horror" (132), an oxymoron suggesting diffusion and splitting. As Vice notes, the bottle for the Consul is "a transitional object; it stands in for the loved and lost one, and he constantly tries to incorporate it into himself by drinking it, again and again" (132). It should point out that the Consul's problem is not his drinking, but as he indicates, he does not "wish merely to drink, but to drink in a particular place and in a particular town" (135)—the Farolito at Parian, where he meets his death:

> Sometimes I am possessed by a most powerful feeling, a despairing

> bewildered jealousy which, *when deepened by drink*, turns into a desire to destroy myself by my own imagination—not at least to be the prey of—ghosts. (374; emphasis mine)

As Chet Taylor points out, "drink only 'deepened' the death wish; it did not create it" (146).[12] Indeed, the Consul treats drinking as rhetoric for his suicidal melancholia. He masquerades as an alcoholic so that he can better see this world as deception and illusion. When he accuses Jacques of interring his battle against death, his battle "for the survival of the human consciousness" (226), there is little evidence in his action for such a battle. When the prospect of drinking in the Farolito—The Lighthouse, the lighthouse that invites the storm, and lights it—fills "him with an almost healing love . . . for it was part of the calm, the greatest longing he had ever known" (208), his death scene contradicts his imagination. There is only chaos and murder that waits for him in the "paradise of his despair" (350). More ambivalent is his prayer for Yvonne's return:

> Please let Yvonne have her dream—dream?—of a new life with me—please let me believe that all that is not an abominable self-deception," he tried . . . . "I have sunk low. Let me sink lower still, that I may know the truth. Teach me to love again, to love life." That wouldn't do either . . . "
> "Let me truly suffer. Give me back my purity, the knowledge of the Mysteries, that I have betrayed and lost.—let me be truly lonely, that I may honestly pray. Let us be happy again somewhere, if it's only together, it it's only out of this terrible world. Destroy the world!" he cried in his heart. (299)

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[12] Chet Taylor, "The Other Edge of Existential Awareness: Reading of Malcolm Lowry's *Under the Volcano*," *Literary Half-Yearly* 14.1 (1973): 138-50.

In his introduction to *Under the Volcano*, Stephen Spender notes that the Consul is "profoundly ambivalent, as his prayers show, for when he prays to be reconciled with Yvonne, he also prays to be alone, when he wants to rise he asks that he may sink lower still" (xxv), and when he wants to love life again he cries in his heart to have this terrible world destroyed.

It is certain that the true end of this spinning chaotic world is "death, death, and death again and death" (362). During the course of the novel, the Consul even imagines many ways of his death. "Old Samaritan case to be reopened, Commander Firmin believed in Mexico." "Firmin found guilty, acquitted, cries in box." "Firmin innocent, but bears guilt of world on shoulders." "Body of Firmin found drunk in bunker." Such monstrous headlines as there indeed took instant shape in the Consul's mind, for it was not merely El Universal the doctor was reading, it was his fate" (142). He is too submerged in his "dreadful tyranny of self" to be able to distinguish the cries of love from the groans of death. Since death and life are indistinguishable, he actively seeks his death in a randomly systematic way. In Chapter X he orders "mescal" *almost absent-mindedly* (292; Lowry's emphasis), a drink that will seal his fate as he tells Jacques: " It's mescal with me. . . Tequila, no, that is healthful . . . and delightful. Just like beer. Good for you. But if I ever start to drink mescal again. I'm afraid, yes, that would be the end" (225). After that drink, it is a spiral downward to his death. He orders mescal again in the Farolito, this time with sober certainly. Earlier in the novel before he arrives at the Farolito, he has a vision of its Chinese-box rooms as "spots where diabolical plots must be hatched, atrocious murders planned" (208). The vision of course anticipates his impeding tragedy, but his power of clairvoyance does not deter his maniac plunge to

death. Arriving at the bar, he is aware of being drawn by "some reckless murderous power" and of its possible consequences (360). Lowry writes: "He could prevent it now. He would not prevent it" (360).

To make sure his reconciliation with Yvonne is forever doomed, the Consul deliberately sullies himself with a prostitute. In his agony, he sees himself

> Surrounded in delirium by these phantoms of himself, the policemen, Fructuoso Sanabria, that other men who looked like a poet, the luminous skeleton, even the rabbit in the corner and the ash and sputum on the filthy floor—did not each correspond, in a way he couldn't understand yet obscurely recognized, to some fraction of his being? (374)

His identity is dispersed, lost, indistinct. The Consul's tendency to perceive whatever is external to himself as a reflection of the self finally synthesizes in the arrest and death at the hands of the fascists. In his confusion, he sees himself the Chief of Gardens and strikes that figure, a fatal strike that seals his murder by the fascists.

With the aid of alcohol, the Consul writes a narcissistic-suicidal discourse. Stephen Tifft argues that this tragic conviction—that is, tragedy must proceed—is "an elegant refinement of the tragic mode: tragedy as a meditation on itself" (47).[13] The Consul displays a poisonous obsession with a shattered self that renders no escape from the repeated acting out of trauma. His life is trapped in a narcissistic fixation on trauma, characterized by an arrested process of pursuing death, one that attempts to go down into the abyss of grief, to speak through pain, as well as about it.

II. Anxious Historicity

[13] Stephen Tifft, "Tragedy as a Meditation on Itself: Reflexiveness *in Under the Volcano*," in *The Art of Malcolm Lowry*, ed. Anne Smith (London: Clarke, Doble & Brendon, 1978).

The Consul's death, as Edmonds notes, forms "an intricate mosaic of doom" (69). His death wish compounded by the political situation in Mexico brings about his downfall. The world he cries out to destroy points both to his own life as well as to the outside world. In this respect, the novel is both inward and outward-looking. Just as the tragically enmeshed self is unable to extricate itself from the equally pressing entanglements of politics and history, so is the world unable to stop itself plunging into a global warfare. The Consul's death therefore presents a grimy prophetic vision of the future world war. The end of the novel seems to validate his earlier intimation that his own destiny is mysteriously associated with that of civilization itself: "who would ever have believed that some obscure man, sitting at the center of the world in a bathroom, say, thinking solitary miserable thoughts, was authorizing their doom" (151). As John Orr argues, *Under the Volcano* "set on the verge on the verge of World War II, written during it, and published several years afterwards . . . can be read as a microcosm of global catastrophe which anticipates Holocaust more than Allied victory" (18).[14] This anticipating a world war to come is what Lyndsey Stonebridge terms as an "anxious historicity" in which "the past runs into the unthinkable future" (27).[15] Just as trauma is less the effect of shock than an anticipated repetition of it, an anxious historicity hovers over, paradoxically, a certainty that a past trauma will repeat itself again. As in *Under the Volcano*, this worrisome anxiety manifests itself most clearly in devices of repetition to

[14] John Orr, "Doubling and Modernism in *Under the Volcano*," in *Malcolm Lowry Eighty Years On*, ed. Sue Vice (New York: St. Martin's, 1989), 18-35.

[15] In her "Bombs and Roses: The Writing of Anxiety in Henry Green's *Caught*," Stonebridge argues that in Green's novel *Caught*, "narrative chronology gives way to an anxious historicity" (27). Exploring Freud's writing on anxiety, particularly in *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety*, Stonebridge notes, "Anxiety cuts in two directions for Freud. On the one hand, it is a "signal," a protective action that warns the ego of a potential danger to come—"I am expecting a situation of helplessness to set in". But, on the other hand, this warning is efficacious, because it is predicated on the repetition of a past trauma: anxious anticipation has the potential to plunge the ego into traumatic anxiety anew and to devastate its defenses" (35). I think her idea of anxious historicity equally applies to *Under the Volcano*.

evoke a melancholic vision of history in which the past cannot be properly mourned and therefore threatens to paralyze action and thought. The novel responds to trauma by anxiously "looking forward" to a world ready to be destroyed without offering any way of coming to terms with the traumatic experiences. The first chapter has already set the repetition machine in motion.

Technically, the first chapter can be termed a "flash forward," anticipating the death of the Consul and looking ahead to the horrors of the Second World War. Notably a sense of the second world war as a repetition of the murdering crime of World War I is projected into a film that is playing in Quauhnahuac—*The Hands of Orlac*, an artist with a murderer's hands. As Jacques contemplates a poster advertising it, the film is "the hieroglyphic of the times. For really it was Germany itself that . . . stood over him.—or was it, by some uncomfortable stretch of the imagination, M. Jacques himself?" (25). Asked if he has revived the Orlac picture, the theater manager replies: "Companero, we have not revived it. It has only *returned*" (26; emphasis mine). Recurring throughout the novel, this film carries the weight of implications. Possessed by a demon-like compulsion to repeatedly kill, Orlac haunts the text just as the text is haunted by the presence of war.

The theme of failed artist turning to a murderer is further explored in the course of the novel. Looking at the film poster, Jacques has already identified himself with Orlac; later Hugh will associate his failed singing career with another failed artist—Hitler. The Consul has supposedly witnessed the burning of German POWs in the furnaces on the *S.S. Samaritan* during World War I. Toward the end of his life, he is also mistaken by the Fascists as a Jew. What Lowry wants to portray is an entangled history where a sense of

pervasiveness and inescapability of trauma demonstrates that we are all implicated in its effects. Just as Yvonne, Hugh, and Jacques unwittingly conspire to bring about the Consul's destruction, the world seems to get addicted to its tragic history. Hence, drunkenness is the most fitting metaphor for a mad world. Hugh has diagnosed that the Consul, and by extension the world, is unable to recover from the addiction: "What's the good? Just sobering him up for a day or two's not going to help. Good God, if our civilization were to sober up for a couple of days it'd die of remorse on the third" (121). The Consul as well as the world is chiefly concerned with evading its sense of guilt by getting drunk. Drinking, as Heilman points out, is "as an escape, an evasion of responsibility, a separation from life, a self-worship, a denial of love, a hatred of the living with a faith" (Heilman 55).[16]

The pathology of anticipating the war without doing anything to prevent it reflects on the death-oriented non-intervention policy adopted in the thirties. During the course of the novel, Hugh's guilt over his failure to save the Spanish War haunts him, but he also views the non-intervention policies of the West as contributing to the losing of the Battle of the Ebro: "If the paths of glory lead but to the grave . . . then Spain's the grave where England's glory led" (107). Similarly, he links the world's plan for self-destruction with the dormant responsibility of the free world to curb the rising threat of fascism, an evasion of responsibility manifesting in the sleeping Consul whose snore is referred by Hugh as "the muted voice of England long asleep" (101). But while the world looks away, a repetition of the first world war at an even larger scale is taking place. Outside the novel, Munich Agreement was signed in 1938 of which Hitler took advantage and

[16] Robert B Heilman, "The Possessed Artist and the Ailing Soul," in *Malcolm Lowry: The Writer & his Critics*, ed. Barry Wood (Ottawa, Canada: The Tecumseh P, 1992), 48-56.

invaded Poland. Inside the novel, the effect of non-intervention policy is discussed and acted out in Chapter VIII. Previously the political subplot surfaces by means of parallel and analogy, mainly through Hugh's anxiety over the Spanish civil war, but politics becomes a main focus in Chapter VIII, a development which shows that individual lives are increasingly invaded by politics; at the same time, politics itself becomes a pressing concern in the novel. The scene of the dying Indian dramatizes the horror of non-intervention.

On their way to Tomalin, the Consul and Hugh unexpectedly encounter a political as well as moral crisis—whether or not to intervene to save the dying Indian on the road. This scene is suggestive of a traumatic event repeating itself, for even the bus they take is a 1918 Chevrolet. All the bus passengers remain indifferent to the dying Indian, who is presumably murdered by the Fascists because of his job as a payroll rider for the National Bank of Ejido Credit. Nor does the Consul or Hugh react much more decisively, for "each knew the other was also thinking it would be better still should one of the passengers, even the pelado, examine the man" (252). As all wait for others to act first, the scene is then sustained through an agony of indecision, until Hugh feels impatient. He bends over ready to move the hat covering the Indian's face but is deterred by a passenger saying the law prohibiting the intervention. The Consul explains: "For his protection. Actually it's a sensible law. Otherwise you might become an accessory after the fact" (252). The Consul's attitude to the dying Indian is one of cautious non-involvement, a policy that is adopted by other countries, too, for two diplomatic cars pass by, also ignoring the shout of Hugh to halt and help. So they leave the dying Indian, hoping self-cheatingly that the police will come to save the Indian. On the bus, Hugh

reasons that the final obstacle to doing anything about the Indian is this:

> It wasn't one's own business, but someone else's . . . and looking round him, Hugh saw that his too was just what everyone else was arguing. It's not my business, but, as it were, yours, they all said . . . and no, not yours either, but someone else's. (255)

In their failure to act they are unquestionably "murdering" the Indian symbolically. It is at this juncture that the Orlac "murderer's hands" materialize in the pelado's hands clutching "a sad bloodstained pile of silver pesos and centavos" (260). He has stolen the dying Indian's money and made no pretense to conceal such a theft: "his possession of it was open and above board, for all the world to know about" (261). Still, the Consul and Hugh look away, persuading themselves that there is nothing they can do about it, for it "was a recognized thing, like Abyssinia" (261). This concept of anti-Samaritanism, so to say, expands from the individual consequences of not aiding the dying Indian along the roadside into the world-wide political arena of the twentieth century. Outside the novel, it portentously refers to Hitler's hands encroaching over the world.

The debate of non-intervention in Chapter X between the Consul and Hugh betrays a complicity with psychic numbness which prevents moving toward recovery. The Consul's quietism and fatalism—"Can't you see there's a sort of determinism about the fate of nations? They all seem to get what they deserve in the long run" (320)—reinforces his belief that all action proves futile, for tragedy is doomed to repeat itself. Like the Consul's chaotic mind, the world is unable to extract itself from a self-closed destructive circle. What is left to do is to hear the clock ticking for another world war to come: "the ticking of his watch, his heart, his conscience" (349). When in Chapter XII the Consul

reaches Parian, thinking it a dark, melancholy place, it reminds him of Coleridge's poem "Kubla Khan": "In Parian did Kubla Khan . . . " (351). The Consul stops there, but as Markson argues, "the actuality of this particularity abyss at a 1938 fascist headquarters might now lead us to recall more of the original" (190)—

> And 'mid this tumult Kubla heard from far
>
> Ancestral voices prophesying war!

His death vision of a world "bursting, bursting into black spouts of villages catapulted into space . . . through the blazing of ten million burning bodies" becomes a real catastrophe in 1940's (388).

But Lowry is not thematizing history here. He writes about traumatic anxiety of his time. In this respect, *Under the Volcano* shares much with Freud's theory of traumatic history proposed in *Moses and Monotheism* in which Freud also anticipates a trauma-to-come.

Chapter VI: Conclusion: "A Darkness that Murmured"

Faced with the overwhelming historical traumas of the twentieth century, both Freud and modernist writers have sought to understand the peculiar phenomenon of the psyche's compulsion to repeat a painful past. In their encounter with the psyche's persistence of revisiting a traumatic past and its sudden reenacting of the trauma, Freud and modernist writers both have unconsciously internalized the cultural and psychic wounds into their writing, thus adding psychic dimensions to the textual body. This traumatic enactment is also the fate shared by all the heroes in modernist fiction discussed in this dissertation. Their repeated acting out of a psychic wound brings them only to the verge of suicide. Coincidentally all the texts examined in this dissertation end with the death of the hero. Their death is not a redemptive sacrifice: it merely reinforces and darkens the overall vision of loss and decline that characterizes the twentieth-century history. Their tragic downfall has similar functions: it performs the traumatic meaning of the "death drive" that Freud proposes in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, and so their death disturbs the narrative closure. In this respect, modernist narratives do not provide means for working through trauma; rather they call into question the process of recovery in the face of the shocking force of trauma. The power of modernist narratives lies in their echoing the haunting effects of trauma by giving an elegiac feeling of modern history. Throughout this dissertation, I have tried to demonstrate that concerning a particular traumatic event, a historical account aiming to give factual details of a painful past fails to address the fateful repetition of the trauma on the part of trauma survivors. And so it leaves literature to represent the unresolved impacts of a historical trauma.

This dissertation project has set out to address the idea of modernist literature as a literature of trauma and has approached the argument in the context of Freud's writing on trauma as well as recent trauma theory. I have sought to demonstrate that although trauma studies gained wide currency in the later part of the twentieth-century and thus seem to work best with postmodernist literature, the fact that modernist literature has preceded the emergence of trauma theory and has already registered a cultural experience of trauma in the face of the epistemological shock to the self remains to be addressed. Hence, this project has been an attempt to contribute to examine how literary modernism especially after 1914 employs the figure of repetition-compulsion at the levels of language, imagery or plot. The issue of traumatic repetition can be expressed in two questions. The first involves the question of the relationship between, on one hand, Freud's theorization of traumatic repetition as an experience of a new phenomenon, and on the other, the ambivalent nature of repetition. The second concerns the aesthetic mimicking of repetition-compulsion both thematically and formally.

I have argued that Freud's writing on trauma illuminates the key psychic dimensions of modernist literature in that his writing mimics the traumatic effects he is theorizing on. Thus the notorious wild speculation and the circular reasoning found both in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* and *Moses and Monotheism* can be understood as "narrative-as-trauma" in which both texts act out the cultural and psychic wounds of the past. In this respect, traumatic repetition can be simultaneously seen as unassimilated clinical and aesthetic phenomenon. In other words, the psyche's inability to integrate, or to bind in Freudian term, the damaged

splitting self echoes the disruptive narrative chronology that is hallmark of literary modernism. For trauma assumes a space of dissolution, a ghostly presence caught in a curious and undecidable wavering between departure and return. This arises the question of to what the repetition of a traumatic event repeats. Anne Whitehead has addressed a similar question regarding the nature of trauma; for her, the major questions in the thinking of trauma can be summarized as "whether trauma itself is a content or a form" (161).[1] Whitehead continues to elaborate on the contradictory elements inherent in the knowledge of trauma, for trauma "can be defined in terms of specific events or in terms of specific symptomatic reactions to events, and this undecidability recurs throughout the literature on the subject" (162).[2] It is here we turn to the second question concerning the relationship between personal trauma and historical events.

In several places, I have argued that the problem of addressing a historical trauma can be figured through the force of a psychic trauma that literally possesses one's subjectivity. Thus, Gerald in *Women in Love* and the Consul in *Under the Volcano* may both assume a representative historical significance, for their split psyche does reflect the chaotic form of a historical catastrophe. Here trauma is not a specific event in an individual's history; rather, the singular trauma is that which

[1] Anne Whitehead, *Trauma Fiction* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2004).

[2] The undecided specific historical event regarding trauma has been a debate among recent trauma studies. As Geoffrey H. Hartman points out in his essay--"On Traumatic Knowledge and Literary Studies," any general description of trauma may risk "being figurative itself, to the point of mythic fantasmagoria" (537; *New Literary History* 26 (1995): 537-63.) Similarly, in a fascinating discussion of the difference between loss and absence, Domini8ck LaCapra warns against the over generalization of loss to include discourse of absence. Advocating the process of "working through" the past and its historical losses, LaCapra insists on making a distinction between the two. For him, loss is specific, historical, and traumatic, whereas absence is general or structural. For a trauma to take place, LaCapra argues that a real wound/a disaster either physically and/or psychically must be involved. See Dominick LaCapra, "Trauma, Absence, Loss," *Critical Inquiry* 25. 4 (1999): 696-727.

gives specificity to one whole historical period. Therefore, all the modernist texts examined in this dissertation hover between loss and absence. On one hand, they seem to be dislocated from a specific historical event; on the other, they foreground a sense of historical rupture, decentering, fragmentation, erasure of identify, the shattering of origins and ends—all point to a total devastation that strongly suggest the central, most traumatic events of the twentieth century—the two world wars. In this sense, the aesthetic singularity of modernist literature constitutes its historical specificity in that the darkness that murmurs in history and in the psyche will repeat itself in its even more horrific magnitude of form—the Holocaust.

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