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TWILIGHT OF THE LITERARY
Hamlet, Nietzsche, Freud

Hegelian Inscriptions

The Owl of Minerva only takes wing at the approach of twilight.
— Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel,
Philosophy of Right (1821).

Hamlet's fault lies in that twilight, into which
every true tragic poet throws the fault of his hero.
— Friedrich Theodor Vischer,
Kritische Gänge II (1861).

I Origin (Nietzsche)

The Birth of Tragedy is an attempt to articulate a theory of the aesthetic, developed from the evident historical paradigm, or exemplary instance, of the aesthetic as both work of art (or 'structure') and this work's impact (or 'function').[1] Any pragmatic reformulation of Nietzsche's project in The Birth of Tragedy will tend to put the 'birth' into quotation marks and the genetic question into brackets: "The allegorization and ironization of the organic model," which is evident in the title of The Birth of Tragedy and effective in much of its reception, "leaves the genetic pattern unaffected."[2] The question

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[1] All quotations from The Birth of Tragedy according to Walter Kaufmann's translation (New York: Random House, 1967), occasionally modified.

[2] Paul de Man, Allegories of Reading: Figural Language in Rousseau, Nietzsche, Rilke, and Proust (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), 80.

remains, however, as to what we are left with in a project that allows for, or even asks for, allegorization and thus needs ironization. How the pattern of 'genesis' came about may be part of the pattern. As the pattern-paradigm that is tragedy for Nietzsche shows, 'tragedy' may be – among other things, but most certainly in this respect – the very paradigm for the possible coming about of paradigms, including their failure to last, or persuade, forever. And the 'aesthetic' may be nothing but a more general name for the general economy and functioning of that paradigm, the qualification of this paradigm's paradigmatic role.

In terms of the genetic guise (or 'allegory') that comes under the name of The Birth of Tragedy, the Dionysian is opposed to the Apollonian in order to signify the origin of art in originary states of ecstasy, rapture, or intoxication ['Rausch'], whose personification Dionysos was. The mythic name thus seems to stand for what mythology in general seems to represent; some immediate state of experience whose impact, as it were, had been lost under the reign of its all too artful Apollonian other. The issue of immediacy, however, is in itself only a side-effect of the genetic issue that was to be illustrated; rather than persuade us of the birth of tragedy from Dionysian dithyrambs, it is meant to ground, or even anticipate, the world of established images that has come a long way to mirror the immediacy of experience as that which appears now as aesthetic experience. What follows from this by implication is that the immediacy in question is no experience in itself but rather meant to enable experience; nor is such immediacy aesthetic but only a means to ground experience in sheer aisthesis. By the same implication it is even doubtful that this immediacy is 'immediate' at all, but is only what is supposed to be unmediated with respect to the experience called 'aesthetic'.

Here, now, Nietzsche invokes what he had called in the first version of his title "the spirit of music," in an ironic allusion to the other conception out of the spirit of some other logos. However neglected or perhaps even unintended, but certainly unnoticed the irony was, 'music' seemed the best he could do to qualify the paradoxical mediality of the 'immediacy' needed for the aesthetic. In a passage often quoted from The Birth of Tragedy (sec. 16), Nietzsche grants to Schopenhauer the most important achievement in aesthetics worth the name, the recognition of the difference music makes with respect to the mere word. Music is 'different' from the other arts in that it helps to account for the differential step of transgression from the one, pre-aesthetic disposition called the Dionysian to the second, secondary aesthetic manifestation admired as Apollinian. Nietzsche does not hesitate to grant the aesthetic state of the Apollinian dream image an immediacy of its own and even later, in Twilight of the Idols, to accredit it as the other state of ecstasy ['Rausch']. The point of privileging the more originary Dionysian state of ecstasy is not so much, or even not at all, the equivalence or equation of the originary, the immediate, and the aesthetic to synonyms for life's will to power, but the conflict and consequent reaction-formation which characterizes the aesthetic as a phenomenon of transgression.

Thus music's 'medial' contribution to aesthetics is not harmonious melody but primordial dissonance. To underline the primordiality of this dissonance and to explain the role of music as an expression of deeply seated drives in the ecstatic Dionysian state are part of the allegorical genesis rather than its outcome, and what seems to count in this account is the systematic nature of the dissonance, which cuts through the veil of the Apollinian dream-work, rather than a walk on the wild side, which adds to it, and feeds on it. The

Dionysian, while equal to the Apollinian as 'mood' ['Stimmung'], carries the mark of dissonance; it comes as a cry, in "piercing shrieks," whose modulation is brought about, and the cry thus effaced, through artful Apollinian articulation. The Apollinian counter-achievement is a manifestation of what remains latent, and would have to remain latent forever, in the dissonance of origination. In mixing the states, tragedy is thought to bring back the dissonant origin of, and latent threat to Apollinian culture. The allegory of what is brought back, or brought out, is in itself mimetic to what it both recalls and exorcises in mimesis. Tragedy is thus not merely a "representation at two removes," as Henry Staten has recently rephrased the Platonic verdict.[3] It is a reiteration of mimesis miming its origin as mimetic. It is a mime, in other words, of what it was not in the first place, namely mimesis.

The historicity of tragedy inscribed in its origin and lost, according to Nietzsche, in its very history, gets lost in the mode of its representation, mimesis; the loss of its 'originality' is the vanishing of its performative force in the course of mimetic reiteration, or re-citation; of the first within the second remove of re-presentation. Thus it is tempting to take the Dionysian ecstasy as the mythical name for 'performative force' as such: "formschaffende Kraft" in Heidegger's reading of Nietzsche.[4] The Dionysian force per-forms in that it produces 'form'; but while this happens with the force of an 'explosion' according to Nietzsche, the 'idealizing' result of the performing moment of force is due to the violent production, or 'bringing out', of 'dominant traits' ["Heraustreiben der Hauptzüge"]. Dionysian

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[3] Henry Staten, Nietzsche's Voice (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1990), Appendix "The Birth of Tragedy Reconstructed," 199.

[4] Martin Heidegger, Nietzsche I-II (Pfullingen: Neske, 1961), I: 135, 137, 139.

ecstasy, as Heidegger develops it in Nietzsche, relates to the generation of 'Gestalt' ['eidos'] rather than the dissolution of form in states of intoxication. However, Nietzsche does not, as Heidegger wants him to, elaborate aesthetic consequences in formal terms of the (constitution of the) art-work.

His panorama of Greek tragedy takes a different turn. The decay of aesthetic origin turns out to have a rhetorical nature. Taking his departure from Schopenhauer and what one might very well call the unsurpassed impasse of aesthetics in Schopenhauer's theory of music, Nietzsche comes up with a metaphorological rather than a purely aesthetic solution, a point still undeveloped but intuited (and later abandoned in the course of his unfortunate 'detour' into rhetoric). The point is as follows: The vanishing of tragedy's aesthetic moment and momentum consists in no loss of form or 'eidos'; on the contrary, the aesthetics of form or 'eidos' absorbs the performative force, whose loss is what Nietzsche bewails in the Apollinian dream work's overinvestment with imagery. It is, more precisely, the obliteration of the violent imposition of force that characterizes these images in their dreamlike workings. What becomes invisible in them (Nietzsche uses the Hegelian term 'Aufhebung') is the performative potential, and what we are left with is the mere mechanism of a deus ex machina. What we are also left with is the gap between Apollinian delusion and the Dionysian imposition of 'form' whose performance no longer informs what its form, as 'eidos', represents.

Consequently, Nietzsche's panorama oscillates between Dionysian dithyrambs and the ornamental recitativo of Italian opera, an oscillation hard to translate from the performative aspect of music into the representational concerns of drama. On the stage of tragedy, the chorus and the satyr

represent the Dionysian element within an Apollinian context, in a highly informative compromise-formation; while the deus ex machina, as the frozen metaphor of some former live performance, serves as the catachrestic counter-effect. The difference Nietzsche wants to make here, however, that "the deus ex machina took the place of metaphysical consolation" (sec. 17), reveals an overinvestment on his part -- on account of the 'allegory' of the Birth and its Spirit in the Birth of Tragedy out of the Spirit of Music -- that proves to be self-defeating with respect to what it is investing. To be recognized, the performative force had to be disfigured at the moment of its recognition. Investing the origin of tragedy with the spirit of consolation is jumping to more than Apollinian conclusions and not at all in tune with the spirit of the performance called Dionysian in the first place.

Take the satyr, that highly artificial 'fiction' of a 'natural being' ["fingiertes Naturwesen"], representative of a stage whose whole point is to present us with some fiction of naturalness, or 'feigned natural state' ["Schwebegerüste eines fingierten Naturzustandes"]. 'Schwebegerüst' means a stage and its suspension in the literal as well as the metaphorical sense of floating between states of 'nature' and 'culture', whereby the floating and its result, the production of Apollinian dream images, take the guise of naturalness rather than civilization. Following this design, what Nietzsche comes to complain about in the deus ex machina seems to be a paradoxical, not to say satyrical, recovery of a Dionysian moment in tragedy rather than its loss to mere Apollinian civilization. One might argue that the deus ex machina brings out what was ambivalently couched already in the representation of the Dionysian cry; that a god's can be only a dead voice. A staged voice, in any event. The stage, as it turns out, and not its 'natural' pretext, is able to deepen the ambivalence. In deepening the ambivalence, the force of the

performance is enforced; it presents death 'live'. And the spirit of music turns out to be a ghost's cry.

Enter GHOST.

II Representation (Hamlet)

The ends of Romanticism are prominent in Nietzsche's allegory, no doubt, but so is its fate. Nietzsche handles this side issue of his project in a remarkable series of asides, in which he invokes and cites, in the place of Greek tragedy, Shakespeare. The number of unmarked quotations from, and allusions to, Hamlet is astonishing. It is part of a Romantic commonplace, the German version of the Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes, on whose premises, from Herder to Schiller and Schlegel, The Birth of Tragedy is situated. We do not have to go into the details, neither the philological evidence of citations, nor the theoretical genealogy of arguments. It may be sufficient to recall Herder's seminal study Shakespeare from 1773 and Friedrich Schlegel's On the Study of Greek Poesie, an essay in the wake of Schiller's tract On Naive and Sentimental Poetry, in all of which the programmatic alternative comes under the names of Sophocles and Shakespeare (a constellation derived from Young's Conjectures on Original Composition). Nietzsche follows the setting of Friedrich's brother August Wilhelm Schlegel (sec. 7). What was lost in Euripides was to be recovered in Shakespeare, it seems; but is it Sophocles regained? Right in the middle of Nietzsche's analysis of the Dionysian chorus of satyrs, Hamlet enters the description (end of sec. 7). If only in passing, we learn from him what 'Dionysian man' must have been.

Not unlike Freud's use of the same topos, Hamlet brings out what is postulated for Sophocles, though in an almost opposite direction. While a celebrated passage in the Interpretation of Dreams shows Hamlet in a state of neurotic repression of what, behind his back, fulfills the tragic scheme of Oedipus, Nietzsche's Hamlet is the conscious witness of a tragic scheme of knowledge that escapes Dionysian ecstasy and Apollinian imagery alike. In Nietzsche, Hamlet reflects, and is nothing but a reflection of the fate of 'Dionysian man'; in Freud he is subjected to, and nothing but the subject of the Oedipal fate. Stanley Cavell's conclusive remarks on Hamlet, that "Shakespeare's dramas, like Freud's, propose our coming to know what we cannot just not know; like philosophy," illuminate Freud's achievement in terms of Nietzsche's post-hegelian, that is, still Hegelian interest in Hamlet.[5]

The Birth of Tragedy, then, seems to be about reintroducing performativity into (the concept of) mimetic representation and thereby recreating some ancient conception of theatricality with a certain modern concern. Nietzsche's reference to the Romantic commonplace of criticism after Schiller and Schlegel marks a point of orientation beyond the critique of Aristotle that grounds Nietzsche's attempt to recover the performative force of the Dionysian myth from its total obliteration in Apollinian civilization; against the grain, that is, of Aristotle's theory of katharsis. About this, Aristotelian katharsis, he had every reason to be ambivalent. On the one hand, katharsis represents the kind of aesthetic effect Nietzsche is looking for in tragedy (sec. 22); but on the other hand, it is precisely katharsis that reiterates in a mechanical manner and domesticates what Nietzsche postulates as performative origin.

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[5] Stanley Cavell, Disowning Knowledge in Six Plays of Shakespeare (Cambridge University Press, 1987), 191.

The very symptom of this reiterative mechanism, in whose automatic workings the genuine performative force becomes effaced, is the use of the deus ex machina or indeed any other unmotivated mechané, which is said to disrupt the motivation of the plot and is denounced by everyone from Aristotle to Nietzsche for almost always the same reason. But while almost everybody after Aristotle dismissed the uses of any mechané as the most awkward way out of some otherwise unmanagable plot, the reason for Nietzsche to uphold the verdict has shifted. For him, this reason could not very well be the disruption of mimesis but the Apollinian effacement of its Dionysian origin. The ending of Medea, one of Aristotle's prominent examples, provides an interesting case in point: There, the mechané employed brings Medea the sorceress back on a chariot of the sun god, with the dead children by her side. What the use of the mechané was about is revealed in this scene; the mechané enters not just to interrupt, or else end, the action on behalf of the nomos, but to put on display the paradoxical difference the nomos makes with respect to (mere) physis. The mechané reveals the death that, from the beginning, was implied in the Dionysian display of voice.

Hamlet's ghost, to be sure, is a ghost in the machine, as little refinement as the mechané in this case may need. To ignore or suppress the machine and have the ghost appear as any other actor on stage is as senseless as having Medea return for real. In Hamlet, the appearance of the ghost sets the stage from the beginning; it does not reset it at the end. On the contrary, as William Empson has found, the ghost's appearance doubles the stage from the start and creates that specific theatricality of Hamlet's behavior called madness, the madness of "a ridiculously theatrical and therefore unreal

figure."[6] His stage-madness responds and corresponds to the machine that sets it going and keeps it in motion. Thus, the GHOST is not so much haunting the stage but is the haunting, is the theatricality of that stage, that stage's informing, performative principle. It is an "it," first of all, and not the "he" of Hamlet king and father. "It" is, an other words, the Hegelian historicality of the stage, and that includes the history 'formatted', produced and processed, on that stage. 'History' as we know it, view it, name it, and take it for granted, may be to a large extent the product of Shakespeare's stage, and Hamlet's ghost is its informing principle in the sense that, as the ghost of history, "it" haunts from the margins of the text what turns up, and is reflected, as 'history' in the text. Therefore, I do not regard it as particularly problematic to name a specific historical pretext of 'reference' for the play Hamlet, whatever option one would want to entertain. My own intuition in this case is Henry VIII, who had been taken in a "most terrible" revenge from his grave and burned by his daughter Mary, Elizabeth's half-sister and predecessor on the throne; but to show this would be another project.[7]

Hamlet marks the Ghost's apparition with the celebrated phrase at the end of act I "The time is out of joint." (I.v.196)[8] The stage is set at the ghostly moment of time's out-of-jointness. Nietzsche, in his unmarked reference to the passage, gives the paraphrase "to set right a world that is out of joint" (Kaufmann's translation), because "to set it right" (197) seems to fit the

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[6] William Empson, Essays on Shakespeare, ed. David Pirie (Cambridge University Press, 1986), 79, 88, 99.

[7] See J.J. Scarisbrick, Henry VIII (Berkeley: University of California Press 1968), 497.

[8] All quotations from Hamlet according to the Arden Shakespeare, ed. Harold Jenkins (London and New York: Methuen, 1982; Routledge, 1989).

world better than time itself. But it is time, not the world's disorder that is on Hamlet's mind and, that is, as Jacques Derrida has recently rephrased the old theory of Hamlet's melancholia – or the Trauerspiel that is the Tragical History of Hamlet – "the time of mourning, which is finally the true subject of the play."[9] What happened to Hamlet, what put the time "out of joint" and asked him "to set it right"? The "structuring event," wonders Derrida, "may still belong to what Freud called 'psychic reality', as opposed to 'material reality'; it may still testify to the phantasmatic dimension of a repetition en abîme, of the theater within the theater that is reflected in the heart of the play." From the start Old Hamlet's ghost appears and speaks from an abîme whose place may be Hamlet's mind, if indeed one would want to take what happened in Hamlet for 'psychic reality' in Freud's sense and thus take Hamlet's disease for a melancholy disorder. But the question raised by Hamlet's "strange apparition" in Nietzsche's text -- that is what Derrida calls it, writing on 19th century specters, most notably "the specters of Marx" -- is also, and especially, one of the psyche's 'materiality', memory. As such, the mise en abîme of the stage that is Shakespeare's and Hamlet's is a kind of writing and to be read as a writing. "Heaven and Earth," Hamlet exclaims in his first monologue, "Must I remember?" (I.ii.142-43) The uncanny rhetorical question answers the 'reality principle' offered to him by the new king and father who has just earlier not failed to mention Hamlet's mother, "our sometime sister, now our queen," as "Th'imperial jointress to this warlike state" (I.ii.8-9), and moreover to accuse "young Fortinbras" as "thinking by our late dear brother's death/ Our state to be disjoint and out of frame" (19-20).

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[9] Jacques Derrida, "The Time Is Out of Joint," in Deconstruction is/in America: A New Sense of the Political, ed. Anselm Haverkamp (New York NY: New York University Press, 1994), 14-38: 18.

It may suffice for the present purpose, if I leave aside the 'reality' that comes under the name of Fortinbras and keeps threatening from the margins of the text until Fortinbras takes over the stage at the end. In his refusal or inability to cope with it, as it were (if that is what it is), Hamlet would be still able to articulate the difference between the older order of the dead father and the new one of the uncle in the mythical terms of "Hyperion to a satyr" (140), between Apollinian sun-god and Dionysian half-beast. The citation of Hyperion and satyr marks Nietzsche's indebtedness to Shakespeare as well as Nietzsche's falling for Hamlet's story as we know and share it since Wilhelm Meister fell for it. Compared to this event, the pre-romantic profile of Hamlet remains a tricky subject; and also Goethe's all too wellknown treatment in Meister's "theatrical mission" is not what Wilhelm Hero pronounces but a portrait, rather, of that artist as a young man, 'Young Goethe'.

With the stage set in tragic terms, Hamlet is to react more pointedly, just as Shakespeare reacts most pointedly through Hamlet's reaction, to the prevailing dramatic mode of 'revenge tragedies' (Medea comes to mind – to Nietzsche's mind in any event – rather than Kyd). The ghost leaves Hamlet with a task of remembrance, which is, it turns out, no longer a task of revenge: "Adieu, adieu, adieu. Remember me." In response and, as it turns out, in avoidance of a straight response, Hamlet puts on a show – the first of shows – of the obedient son: "Remember thee?" he says, "Ay thou poor ghost, whiles memory holds a seat/ In this distracted globe." (I.v.95-97) The pun, "globe," for his head and mind as seat of memory and the Globe

theatre, did not go unnoticed, but was never taken very seriously.[10] Let me recall the rhetorical emphasis of the argument as Hamlet puts it to his audience:

> […] Remember thee?
> Yea, from the table of my memory
> I'll wipe away all trivial fond records,
> […]
> And thy commandment all alone shall live
> Within the book and volume of my brain,
> […]
> My tables. Meet it is I set it down   [Writes.]
> […] Now to my word.
> It is 'Adieu, adieu, remember me.'
> I have sworn't. (I.v.97-112)

The stage direction in the margin, before it comes to his "word" ("Now to my word"), is "[Writes.]" He "writes," preferably into the air (although rarely ever played that way), puts on an act of writing instead of the gesture of swearing, swears by writing (pretending to write) and seals this oath ("I have sworn't") by imprinting (pretending to imprint) the ghost's "word" for him ("Adieu, Adieu, remember me") onto the tables of his memory. The commandment of the ghost is to be recalled and followed theatrically, in the memory theatre that is the Globe, while the revenge is frozen into the threefold "A-dieu," a putting and leaving it "to god" (à-dieu) in lieu of remembering the ghost's "me." The ghost's "it" says "me," if only linguistically so, as the grammatical subject of the ghost's speaking.

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[10] Frances A. Yates, The Art of Memory (London and Chicago IL: Routledge and Kegan Paul, Chicago University Press, 1966), 346.

The commandment refers to the entry of a password that is the word "remember" itself, while the "me" to be re-membered remains the "it" of the ghost who needs and claims to be restituted as a king and father. The commandment marks the access code ("remember") to what is to be worked through in the theatre that is announced as memory-theatre, enacted repeatedly and experimentally in the mise en abîme of what there is to be remembered. After all, Hamlet cannot prove what he did not witness, the murder of his father. Therefore, it cannot be mourning and melancholia, it is curiosity that is aroused by the ghost, a curiosity masked by its opposite, melancholy (and as such, in such mutual masking, is treated in Burton's Anatomy). Being asked to remember what preceded and escaped his conscious perception, Hamlet cannot but follow the Ghost's intimation. In asking for revenge, however, the Ghost commands Hamlet to "wipe away" first in order to re-member and restitute, the dead father as father. Thus when the Ghost both implicates the mother and wants to exclude her from the revenge, what was never -- or was it ever? -- a question, comes to nurture a suspicion quite opposite to what Hamlet used to know and is about to wipe away, the suspicion that things might be otherwise: "O my prophetic soul! My uncle!" (I.v.41) Hamlet recognizes retroactively, in a mime of typological figuration, what is not exhausted, and never to be exhausted, by the mere factum brutum par excellence, of murder.

Not the least among Nietzsche's readers, Deleuze and Guattari identify commandment as the most general plateau upon which Austin's speech acts

take place, the source from which their 'illocutionary force' stems.[11] Austin's well known ambivalence toward the theatricality of speech acting (not to mention 'pretending' in particular) is documented in his citation from Greek tragic verse (from Euripides whose Senecean ghost Hamlet is to shake off).[12] In Deleuze and Guattari's confidence in the originary force of commandments the same (unacknowledged) pattern, or typology, of origin comes to the fore that unsettles Nietzsche's design in the Birth of Tragedy. It is Nietzschean to the extent that it harps on the origin of function rather than the functioning of origins. In contrast, old Hamlet's ghost im-personates, resonates in that it gives a persona to the voice of commandment, in order to institute as origin what is not origin, but instituted qua origin; therefore it needs to be re-stituted through re-membrance. Far from being a matter of contemplation, Hamlet's memory-theatre is the institution of such re-institution, and one against the grain of the coinstitutionalized forgetting of what it takes to restitute. One might venture to say, in giving resonance to the voice of the dead father, the play of Hamlet exposes institution as reiteration. But, in questioning the legitimacy of succession, not just the pre-textuality of any 'origin' is exposed; rather, the origin as 'principle' of reiteration is unsettled or, to put it in Horatio's dealing with the the ghost, "crossed." This is how 'history' is kept at bay, but keeps threatening, from the margins of a meta-historical drama that presents the tragical history of all drama.

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[11] Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia [II] (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987).

[12] See Stanley Cavell, A Pitch of Philosophy (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), 88.

Like the mechané of the ghost, the dumb show is a technical device mostly underrated. Taken as part of the mnemotechnics of Hamlet's theatre, it reveals the materiality of the voice whose mediality was on Nietzsche's mind when he called Hamlet the 'Dionysian man' par excellence. The mnemonics of Hamlet works through staging. Consequently, the inner-stage performance triggered by the ghost's message is repetitious; the players enact in a dumb show something to be seen (without words), after it has been heard of (only words). It foreshadows what is to be played later, to be "heard and seen," if only in a fragmentary fashion, as the murder-story of Gonzago.[13] In spite of the fact that Hamlet calls the play "The Mouse-trap" and plays around with the trap-tropology as presenting an evident "image" (III.ii.224-5), it is Shakespeare's audience rather than Hamlet's in Hamlet that gets trapped in the allegory. For both the cool and detached detective critic, as well as the empathic and paranoia-sharing reader hero in Shakespeare's audience, it comes down to the same thickening of the revenge plot. And the price to be paid in Hamlet's curious attempt to remember is the revenge asked for by the ghost; it is to be given up. Or, what may be the same, it turns out to be not revenge anymore. What remains important in Hamlet is maybe not even that justice is done, since in the end the one looks dreadfully like the other. I leave aside here the question of the ghost's whereabouts. Judged from "its" rhetoric, it must be a place like Dante's Inferno rather than the Purgatorio it pretends to come from, and that would be most consonant with Machiavelli's reading of Dante. The vicious circle of Dante's infernal irony provides the model for all possible ironies of history, or "Listen der Vernunft" in the Hegelian sense, notably the one of the

13 See Lee Sheridan Cox, Figurative Design in Hamlet: The Significance of the Dumb Show (Ohio State University Press, 1974).

"ethical order" in the Phenomenology of Spirit, in which Hamlet figures as the "purer consciousness" ["reineres Bewußtsein"] (and is not to be confused with a "cleaner conscience").[14] Not even justice is to remain what it "seems" in the ethical order; in the end, revenge looks dreadfully like it.

Sharpening Nietzsche's intuition, Derrida has emphasized that Hamlet, because "he saw through all of this something that he cannot even say or admit to himself," he must have "glimpsed such a terrifying thing, the Thing itself, that he decides to make no further move: he will remain but a discouraged witness, paralyzed, silent, made desperate by the being 'out of joint' of time, by the disjoining, the discord, the terrible dis-membering of the world in its present state: originary Dionysianism, the Dionysiac itself." Except that the paralysis is not what it seems: that it is an attitude not without courage, even is courage when it comes to remember what is not to be remembered, "the thing" under erasure. Hamlet, as I have said, is on neither side of the audience; he is, as Derrida has portrayed him, a witness on his own; his testimonial experiment proceeds against the grain of the obvious, his madness is not without method. The ghost's cry carries his performance in that it in-forms what is to be proven. But what the dumb show produces is not some evidence given, but an 'idea' carried through, per-formed. Like the medium that is said to be the message, what is only to be seen in the dumb show is what was only to be heard from the ghost. The murderer Claudius, as we come to see and hear after the dumb show, after king and queen came to "hear and see" (III.i.23), did not see or hear a thing; in short, he did not get it. Trying hard to bear witness, Hamlet

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14 See Michael Schulte, Die 'Tragödie im Sittlichen' (Munich: Fink, 1992), 321-323.

was wrong, while the matter to be witnessed proved the more valid. It may be only in the end, as Cavell suggests, when we see Hamlet force his uncle to drink the poison, that we come to know and see how the murder was performed.

This, however, is not "it," not the only, and in the end no longer the relevant thing to be known for Hamlet. Here Freud may have added, or begun to add, to Nietzsche's Dionysian intuition the necessary supplement. Analogous to Freud's notion of 'deferred action' ['Nachträglichkeit'], Cavell has called Hamlet's dramatic structure of delay one of 'deferred representation'. What is represented belatedly in Hamlet and brought out with his end, has been figuratively, trapologically and tropologically, anticipated in a 'forward repetition' on stage. Kierkegaard rather than Nietzsche is to be invoked here for the consequences of what in Hegel appears as "reineres Bewußtsein." Hamlet comes to know as he comes to die. But the death whose ghost he had encountered is as foreseeable as it is unknown. The death of his father he could not very well "just not-know;" but what the denial of this knowledge, the "disowning knowledge" according to Cavell, entailed he would never know and his audience never admit. Or so it seems. Let me add the Freudian supplement.

"Speak the speech, I pray you," Hamlet introduces his memory theatre (III.ii.1), and the Player Queen, before the Player King puts her straight with "Purpose is but the slave to memory," confesses:

> The instances that second marriage move
> Are base respects of thrift, but none of love.
> A second time I kill my husband dead,

When second husband kisses me in bed. (177-80)

The tautology of 'killing dead', even though idiomatic, remains telling: dead is the husband, according to the son's account, through the secondary killing that fulfills the second husband's deed; as such, the ghost has inscribed it into the son's memory -- as a double death, which counts on account of this secondary inscription. Since fatherhood is always uncertain -- pater semper incertus or, as Stephen has it in Ulysses, "paternity may be a legal fiction" -- the loss of this father has become a double loss, and fatherhood doubly uncertain. How to give up a father (and turn into a satyr)? The Player Queen's verse now reads the other way round: "A second time I kill my husband dead" may very well refer back to the first time, when the now second husband may have, not to say must have, "kissed her in bed."

Nietzsche, who could not see that much in Hamlet but saw enough as to see in him the Dionysian setting, concludes (sec. 7): "Conscious of the truth he has once seen, he now sees everywhere only the horror or absurdity of existence […] now he understands the wisdom of the sylvan god Silenus," that is, the wisdom quoted before (sec. 3), that "the best of all," as it were, is "not to be born, not to be, to be nothing" ["nicht geboren zu sein, nicht zu sein, nichts zu sein"] The emphasis is Nietzsche's; he translates Hamlet's "to be or not to be" by shifting the emphasis from "being" to "not," inscribing into Hamlet's text what is not explicitly there, though it is elsewhere in this text and, needless to say, eminently Shakespearean, that thing "nothing." Schlegel's translation serves as a mediator, since "Sein oder Nichtsein," being or non-being, is close to, but not exactly "Nichts." It still allows for what neither "Nichts" nor "Nothing" allow for, but effectively foreclose, the 'quiddity' ["Was"] of both, "Sein" as well as "Nichtsein;" to be or not to be what else but the one thing "to be born" or "not to be born." Hamlet own words "that it were better my mother

had not borne me" [III.i.123] are read by Nietzsche as the latent undercurrent of Hamlet's monologue; to be born or not to be born, is Hamlet's quest and question for Nietzsche (as it was, by the way, also Jason's in Medea).

Whom else would the revenge hit, any father's revenge, but Hamlet the son himself? "Nietzsche turned his back on the tragic theories of the epigones [after Aristotle] without refuting them," was Benjamin's judgement on The Birth of Tragedy, the precursor to his own Origin of German Trauerspiel for which the Hamlet question was the more or less obvious pretext.[15] "There is no question whatever," in Hamlet, writes Benjamin, "of a restitution of the 'moral order of the universe';" there is no "ethical order," in Hegel's sense, into which a son could be born "to set it right."

III Supplement (Freud)

Let me return therefore, and add to the Freudian supplement. The 'name of the father', as Lacan's apt metaphor puts it, signifies the law according to which the son whose name is the father's is to act. In Hamlet's case, to re-member the father can only mean revenge, it seems, and the false surmise of this understanding, sustained by the ghost's haunting, remains operative in Shakespeare's play upon the Hamlet-material. But the delay and dramatic distancing of this material's immediate concern are due not to the hero's or the author's resistance to the tragic scheme of revenge, but to this scheme's 'nullification' – i.e. 'Aufhebung' in Nietzsche's resumption of the Hegelian term – in favor of some other 'justice' to be approached. Heidegger's Nietzsche lectures

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[15] Walter Benjamin, The Origin of German Tragic Drama [1928], trans. John Osborne (London: Verso, 1977), 104, 110.

end with the archaeology of a more fundamental conception of such justice in the later work of Nietzsche.

Freud, on the other hand, had a clear idea of the 'material' (his word) worked through in Hamlet and why it resisted thematization. Indeed, any encounter with Hamlet seems fairly well characterized by the aporia of either explaining in vain the delay of revenge on the grounds of some groundless melancholy, or else, after Freud, of grounding the inexplicable in some systematically hidden design, which accounts for what appears to be the particular weakness or 'vicissitude' of an individual fate ['Triebschicksal'] as well as why it necessarily remains inexplicable.[16] It goes without saying that much of the attraction of Freud's and Jones' solution is due to the smooth transformation it offers from older concepts and images of the melancholy man to that intricate domain of mourning, for which Freud was to resume the theme of melancholia. But the uncanny passage between mourning and melancholia does not lead eo ipso, intrinsically, "beyond the pleasure principle;" on the contrary, the metamorphosis from the one to the other, the older to the newer melancholia in Freud, seems rather like a process of 'fixation', as in a photographic film still, and Hamlet, after Freud, appears to be but the after-image of such a 'development'.

After Freud, the Freudian supplement, in order to take over, leads us back to where we were left with Nietzsche's intuition; that is, not after Oedipus, as was Freud's concern, but a far cry before Oedipus from where the ghost of Hamlet's stage originates: the primordial crime of patricide according to Totem and Taboo. It was not just after Oedipus that Hamlet came into play with Freud, but

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[16] See Ernest Jones, Hamlet and Oedipus [1910-1949] (New York: Norton, 1976), 57, 91.

decidedly after Hamlet that Oedipus came into play in Freud.[17] The uncertainty of the father semper incertus, threatening from the ghost's message and underlying its commandment to re-member, is a matter of origin and succession; it informs the question of how "rotten" the state of Denmark is. Hamlet's chance, and Renaissance man's chance, "to set it right" is minimal. Shakespeare's refutation of Senecean tragedy is carried by a Tacitean pathos. The name of Claudius whom Seneca had made fun of, if only in order to fall for Nero afterwards, is enough of an indication. "It [the name of Claudius] was evidently suggested," Harold Jenkins remarks in his notes to the Arden Shakespeare, "by that of the Roman emperor who married Agrippina, his niece and the mother of Nero [...] and in the incestuous marriage and the uncle-stepfather the analogies with Hamlet are obvious. Equally obvious," however, "since the emperor was murdered by his wife, who was murdered by her son," Jenkins thinks, "one must resist the temptation to extend [the analogies]."[18] A formidable piece of resistence, if one comes to think of it, especially in light of the Virgin Queen's sexual politics which were asking for -- as a project to which Shakespeare had contributed, or was to contribute, testifies -- Love's Martyrs.

So, what is the temptation, if not to fall for the 'family romance' that is evoked by the ghost? Hamlet's involvement in, and curiosity for the "incest-business is so important," Ernest Jones agreed with Dover Wilson, "that it is scarcely possible to make too much of it."[19] The psychoanalytic interiorization of the phantasmatic family in Hamlet cannot but continue the suppression of the once

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[17] See Julia Reinhardt Lupton, Kenneth Reinhardt, After Oedipus: Shakespeare in Psychoanalysis (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993).

[18] See Marc Shell, Children of the Earth (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 108-8.

[19] Dover Wilson, What Happens in Hamlet (New York NY: MacMillan, Cambridge University Press, 1935), 43.

repressed. Even Lacan's exemplification cannot but deepen and, that means, it does not transcend the 'allegory of reading' to which the play Hamlet had lent itself all along, melancholia. One of the most beautiful results, however, of Lacan's deepening of the allegory is the implication that the ghost's account of the king's being poisoned in sleep and his dying "in sin" can be taken to represent the reverse of the preceding betrayal "in bed" (including its travel by hearsay, through the ear).[20] Some 'consideration of representability' ['Rücksicht auf Darstellbarkeit'] is exposed, whose curious investigation Hamlet is to pursue on stage beginning with the dumb show. Again, we have to acknowledge in Hamlet's acting the "superfluous industry," as it is described in Burton's echo of the old verdict on curiosity, "of longing […] to know that secret which should not be known."[21]

So what is the secret in the romance? It is not, and cannot be, the 'patricide' as such, although without it there would be no reason to distrust the reiterative principle that is at stake in this, as in any origin. What is to be restituted and re-instituted is the other of the king's two bodies. Or, as Hamlet remarks on the occasion of Polonius's body to be disposed of:

> The body is with the King, but the King is not with
> the body. The King is a thing … (IV.ii.26-27)

Lacan, who ends his seminar in April 1959 on this note, explains: "the body is with the King" (even this body, Polonius's the king's man's body, and even this king's, Claudius's body), insofar as this body is indeed engaged ["engagé"] by

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[20] Jacques Lacan, "Desire and the Interpretation of Desire in Hamlet," Yale French Studies 55/56 (1977), 11-52: 43.

[21] Robert Burton, Anatomy of Melancholy [1621] I-III, ed. Hollbrook Jackson (London: Dent, 1932/ New York: Random House, 1977), I: 365-66.

the phallus as principle of origin, whereas this principle as such "is bound to nothing"; namely the king's second body 'of state' is not bound, and least bound, to this king's physical existence.[22] Guildenstern's most literal-minded bewilderment "A thing, my lord?" is bewildered further by Hamlet's cool reply "Of nothing" -- the phrase quite common for something "of no consequence." Without succession, a king is a man like any other -- "a thing of nothing" -- and Jenkins, in his notes, is right to quote from the Prayerbook: "Man is like a thing of naught: his time passeth away like a shadow" (Psalm 154). The ghost's haunting is about "a thing of nothing" and that is of no consequence; it needs to be re-membered, re-instituted through the remembrance that is representation. Thus, it becomes a question of veracity or certainty (the ghost's veracity, following Cavell, or Hamlet's certainty, following Lacan).[23]

The brainwashing of memory on behalf of the ghost brings out the family romance, although one cannot say that this devilish fall into the phantasmatic order leaves Hamlet in a state of paralysis. At first, in his doubt of the ghost's true identity, he shows a certain anxiety that this might be his fate, and he decides, to this extent true to the ghost's 'familial' prescription, to use what appears to be an only too plausible disguise. After all, to keep up appearances is a most familiar reason for ghosts to appear; their origin is a family matter in the sense of the feudal familia, its ties as well as its feuds.

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[22] See Ernst Kantorowicz, The King's Two Bodies: An Essay in Political Theology (Princeton University Press, 1957).

[23] See Jacques Lacan, The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis [1964] (New York: Norton, 1978), 35.

As an antidote to, rather than struggle with paralysis, what Hamlet undertakes under the guise of his fate is an exercise in the parapraxis of irony. A student of Wittenberg, he is well versed in the art of literalizing the figurative; he discards the metaphor in which he finds himself implied, in order to investigate the allegory, in which he finds himself engendered. A consequential exposition of the dramatic irony in play is given right in the beginning: "I know not 'seems'" he answers his mother's complaint about his being "so particular" (I.ii.75-76), and starts to enumerate "all forms, moods, shapes of grief" (82) that he might be wearing on the occasion, only to end with "that within which passes show" (85). It is as if the King's, of all people, response to this ("'Tis sweet and commendable…") had to be taken for the right explanation, while it is meant, of course, as pure denial: "that within which passes show" in Hamlet's words is the reversal of the Queen's and King's commonsense. There is no reason to denounce the rhetoric of the "that within" because it only pretends, as it were, to be what surpasses the 'show'. That wouldn't be far from the King's denial. Hamlet's pretense of interiority, no doubt, "remains gestural;" "there is, in short, nothing," Francis Barker and Catherine Belsey agree on Hamlet's interior.[24] But this does not mean, as they think it proves, that Hamlet is "not an agent." He is an agent of 'show'. There is truly "nothing," that is, nothing "of consequence." The 'showing' of which, nonetheless, is everything but paralysis; 'tis the praxis of theatre.

Dionysian rather than Apollinian, Hamlet presents us with a 'satyrical', a satyr-like performance rather than with a Hyperion's remembrance and

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[24] Francis Barker, The Tremulous Private Body (London: Methuen, 1984), 36-37; Catherine Belsey, The Subject of Tragedy (London: Methuen, 1985), 41-42.

representation. Ironically, it is Claudius's the satyr king's performance that gives us the melancholy picture of an impeccable king, of an actor who is acting as king: the imposture that is all sovereignty on stage and makes it look exactly like the real thing. Which brings me to a tailpiece of Lacanian dimensions, Queen Gertrude, "imperial jointress" in her own right, who not just represents, in this world of appearances, but is the phallus: the simulacrum, in other words, in which coincide, in a joint venture, the stage and the world, the re-membrance of re-presentation and what haunts it as 'origin' from the beginning.

The Lacanian tailpiece, then. Hamlet's stage brings to the fore the theatrical condition of the world; Nietzsche calls it tragedy, Lacan comedy. To see the comedy in it, as Dante in the Divine Comedy, asks for some superior point of view, call it divine. So what is it that renders Freud's rather than Nietzsche's point divine? Ironically, it is the allegory involved, the allegory of origin in Nietzsche, the irony of reversal in Freud. In a reversal of what provides the superior, divine insight into the world's theatrical workings, the post-theological motif of genesis in Nietzsche yields to the pre-christian simulacrum of the phallus in Lacan. The irony of this reversal that is irony consists in a switching of terms according to the negative logic whose exemplary instance is the phallus according to Lacan: The King to be re-membered as king and father was maybe not the real father at all, although it looks, as he appears, exactly like it. The justice done to him is maybe not the revenge he had asked for, but comes down to the same. The actual king and maybe even actual father, whose right is uncertain and whose succession is doubtful, impersonates what he is to represent, king and father, nonetheless and alike. While the Queen, on the

other hand, declared "jointress of this warlike state" – a state, by the way, bordering the state of exception – is queen and mother beyond any doubt, and thus the 'principle' which makes both the king the king and the son the son, but separates the king's and the father's role and function from their being it, being born to it. As mother and queen she marks the difference qua representation and origin. "In this respect, it must be remembered that," as Samuel Weber reminds us, "whatever else it may be, the phallus is first of all the idea of something that in reality has never existed: the maternal penis."[25]

Hamlet's own view of this, as he has it presented by the Player Queen, is "base respects of thrift, but none of love." (III.ii.178) However, that he is maybe "nothing of consequence" to the old king and father, does not prevent him from remaining of equal consequence within the succession anyhow; a product "of thrift, but none of love," he remains a child of love in any event. "That within which passes show" is a regard for something beyond the symbolic; and the "Nothing," consequently, of which Hamlet reminds Ophelia (III.ii.119), and Cordelia Lear, is both no thing and female genitals at the same time. What it presents us with, this "nothing," is no simple absence of presence, but the non-presentable 'principle' – that is, with respect to the thrift rather than the 'origin' of things, the non-principle – of show.

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[25] Samuel Weber, Return to Freud: Jacques Lacan's Dislocation of Psychoanalysis [1978], trans. Michael Levine (Cambridge University Press, 1991), 146.