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klaren Knaben in seinem Kardinalrat erinnerten, und wie er am Eingang seiner Jünglingschaft Bischof geworden und mit kaum achtzehn Jahren in einer Ekstase seiner Vollendung gestorben war. Man begegnete Totgewesenen: denn die Luft an seinem Grabe, in der, frei geworden, pures Leben lag, wirkte lange noch auf die Leichname. Aber war nicht etwas Verzweifeltes selbst in dieser frühreifen Heiligkeit? War es nicht ein Unrecht an allen, daß das reine Gewebe dieser Seele nur eben durchgezogen worden war, als handelte es sich nur darum, es in der garen Scharlachküpe der Zeit leuchtend zu färben? Empfund man nicht etwas wie einen Gegenstoß, da dieser junge Prinz von der Erde absprang in seine leidenschaftliche Himmelfahrt?⁵⁰² Warum verweilten die Leuchtenden nicht unter den mühsamen Lichtziehern? War es nicht diese Finsternis, die Johann den Zweiundzwanzigsten dahin gebracht hatte, zu behaupten, daß es *vor* dem jüngsten Gericht keine ganze Seligkeit gäbe, nirgends, auch unter den Seligen nicht? Und in der Tat, wieviel rechthaberische Verbissenheit gehörte dazu, sich vorzustellen, daß, während hier so dichte Wirrsal geschah, irgendwo Gesichter schon im Scheine Gottes lagen, an Engel zurückgelehnt und gestillt durch die unausschöpfliche Aussicht auf ihn.⁵⁰³

⁵⁰² Cf Goethe's potential »feurige[] Himmelfahrt« (MLB, Paper LVII, p.599).

⁵⁰³ MLB, Paper LXI, p.610.

klaren Knaben in seinem Kardinalrat erinnerten, und wie er am Eingang seiner Jünglingschaft Bischof geworden und mit kaum achtzehn Jahren in einer Ekstase seiner Vollendung gestorben war. Man begegnete Totgewesenen: denn die Luft an seinem Grabe, in der, frei geworden, pures Leben lag, wirkte lange noch auf die Leichname. Aber war nicht etwas Verzweifeltes selbst in dieser frühreifen Heiligkeit? War es nicht ein Unrecht an allen, daß das reine Gewebe dieser Seele nur eben durchgezogen worden war, als handelte es sich nur darum, es in der garen Scharlachküpe der Zeit leuchtend zu färben? Empfand man nicht etwas wie einen Gegenstoß, da dieser junge Prinz von der Erde absprang in seine leidenschaftliche Himmelfahrt?⁵⁰² Warum verweilten die Leuchtenden nicht unter den mühsamen Lichtziehern? War es nicht diese Finsternis, die Johann den Zweiundzwanzigsten dahin gebracht hatte, zu behaupten, daß es *vor* dem jüngsten Gericht keine ganze Seligkeit gäbe, nirgends, auch unter den Seligen nicht? Und in der Tat, wieviel rechthaberische Verbissenheit gehörte dazu, sich vorzustellen, daß, während hier so dichte Wirrsal geschah, irgendwo Gesichter schon im Scheine Gottes lagen, an Engel zurückgelehnt und gestillt durch die unausschöpfliche Aussicht auf ihn.⁵⁰³

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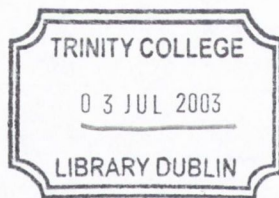
**THE
FEAR AND
TREMBLING
OF
MALTE LAURIDS
BRIGGE**

In Two Volumes: Volume Two

Daragh Anthony Downes

**Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor in
Philosophy**

**The University of Dublin,
Trinity College
2002**



THESIS

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CHAPTER FOUR

*Die vielen Würmer meiner
Vermutungen*

IV.i

»Dies war das Wesentliche an seiner

Geschichte, eine Kleinigkeit«:

Malte and the Medical Student.

The episode with the medical student is preceded by the story of Nikolaj Kusmitsch, a neighbour during Malte's sojourn in St. Petersburg. The problematic of the neighbour is introduced at the beginning of the 49th fragment:

Es giebt ein Wesen, das vollkommen *unschädlich* ist, wenn es dir in die Augen kommt, du merkst es kaum und hast es gleich wieder vergessen. Sobald es dir aber *unsichtbar auf irgendeine Weise ins Gehör gerät*, so entwickelt es sich dort, es kriecht gleichsam aus, und man hat Fälle gesehen, wo es bis ins Gehirn vordrang und in diesem Organ verheerend gedieh, ähnlich den Pneumokokken des Hundes, die durch die Nase eindringen. / Dieses Wesen ist der Nachbar.¹

Note the effect secured by Malte's holding back of the word *Nachbar*: delay on the syntagmatic axis enacts the very process being semantically described, thus leaving the reader to hear about this strange *Wesen* before actually seeing the word that identifies it. Malte writes that this *Wesen* is *vollkommen unschädlich* if seen directly, its virulence being a direct function of its invisibility. This is a familiar pattern in the *Aufzeichnungen*: invisibility as a

¹ MLB, Paper XLIX, p.572, emphases added.

mode of mystification, visibility as one of demystification; the phenomenon thematised not on its own qualities but in terms of the degree of its coming-to-light. As such, the Neighbour draws Malte into one psychoacoustic challenge after another, each partition between self and other leaving him with blind scenarios involving »Interferenzen im auditiven Feld«:²

Nun, ich habe, seit ich so vereinzelt herumkomme, unzählige Nachbarn gehabt; obere und untere, rechte und linke, manchmal alle vier Arten zugleich. Ich könnte einfach die Geschichte meiner Nachbarn schreiben; das wäre ein Lebenswerk. Es wäre freilich mehr die Geschichte der Krankheitserscheinungen, die sie in mir erzeugt haben; aber das teilen sie mit allen derartigen Wesen, daß sie nur in den Störungen nachzuweisen sind, die sie in gewissen Geweben hervorrufen.³

Malte, a mutated version of Plato's figure in the cave, sits in a room and perceives acoustic shadows, from which he tries to reconstruct a visual scenario in the neighbouring room.⁴ The *Nachbar*-problem is thus a more sustained, formalised treatment of the *Nachtgeräusche*-problem of Paper II.⁵

² Uwe Steiner, *Zeit der Schrift*, p.391.

³ *MLB*, Paper XLIX, p.573.

⁴ In the *Träume eines Geistersehers* Kant gives considerable to to the psychoacoustic patterns of spectral experiences (p.152). The uncanny mutual invisibility of neighbours in the metropolis is noted by Simmel, who writes of »jene[] Reserve, infolge deren wir jahrelange Hausnachbarn oft nicht einmal von Ansehen kennen [...]« (”Die Grossstädte und das Geistesleben”, p.234). Simmel also ponders the anomaly that »körperliche Nähe« in the city often correlates with »geistige Distanz« (ibid., 237). Might we not see Malte's parapsychologism in Paris as an attempt to use the anonymous city as an ideal laboratory in which to overcome this *geistige Distanz* by means of *geistige Technik*? Which is not to say that the city *causes* his problems, but that it *tempts* him into such experimentation - recall his words in the *Briefentwurf* of Paper XXII: »Es ist eine große Stadt, groß, voll merkwürdiger Versuchungen« (*MLB*, p.504).

⁵ Malte lying on his bed and listening with awful fascination to the sounds outside his open window. (*MLB*, pp.455f.). The rôle played by sound in Malte's experiences is missed by Huyssen (”Paris / Childhood”, pp.130f.) when he writes »that Malte's childhood experiences mesh with his experiences of the modern city for which Simmel and Benjamin have emphasized the prevalence of vision over hearing. It is perhaps primarily this concern with the problematics of vision that places Rilke's novel squarely within the culture of early twentieth-century modernism« (”Paris / Childhood”, pp.130f.). Huyssen himself will of course limit serious talk of >vision< in the *Malte* strictly to the province of the non-supernatural.

This psychoacoustic torture inflicted upon Malte by his neighbours explains why he presents the story of Nikolaj Kusmitsch as a strangely comforting one. He tells us how his growing speculative fixation on his St. Petersburg neighbour was mercifully relieved one day when a student friend of Kusmitsch mistakenly entered Malte's room and gave him the details that were to put him out of his misery of suspense:

[...] Gott weiß, was da ausgekrochen wäre, wenn nicht der Student, der ihn zuweilen besuchte, sich eines Tages in der Tür geirrt hätte. Er erzählte mir die Geschichte seines Bekannten, und es ergab sich, daß sie gewissermaßen beruhigend war. Jedenfalls war es *eine wörtliche, eindeutige Geschichte, an der die vielen Würmer meiner Vermutungen zugrunde gingen*.⁶

The very Gogolian⁷ story of how Kusmitsch's attempt to commodify time leads him into manic aporia is a cautionary tale about capitalistic chronometry - »die rechnerische Exaktheit des praktischen Lebens« (Simmel),⁸ the »Subsumtion der gesamten menschlichen Existenz unter formal-quantifizierende Prinzipien [...]« (Dieter Schiller).⁹ Kusmitsch's literalisation of the mercantile motto *Zeit ist Geld* draws him into a

⁶ *MLB*, Paper XLIX, pp.573f.

⁷ I suspect that the hapless Akaky Akakievich, from the Petersburg Tale *The Overcoat*, may be the prime inspiration behind Kusmitsch. (Beckett's later monomaniacal creation, Murphy, springs to mind also as a kindred spirit.)

⁸ Simmel, "Die Grossstädte und das Geistesleben", p.230.

⁹ Dieter Schiller, "Der Einsame und seine Welt", p.145. Towards the close of her study (*Zeit und Raum*, p.161) Wyler-Zimmerli singles out Kusmitsch as the extreme victim of the Dialectic of Enlightenment: »Rilke hat die Verhaftung des Menschen in eine beschränkende, gezählte Zeit und in einen bemessenen Raum gesehen. Beides findet seinen Ausdruck in einer Sprache, die beherrscht ist von blind geglaubter und übernommener Begrifflichkeit, die den Menschen und die erfahrene Welt einengen, weil diese Sprache wie ein Koordinatennetz, in dem alles, was Zeit und Raum hat, auf einen Punkt festgelegt wird, die Wirklichkeit vereinfachend einschränkt auf Wörter und Sätze, die oft mehr Macht bekommen als die Wirklichkeit. / Nikolaj Kusmitschs Leiden an der gezählten Zeit wurde veranlasst durch ein Leiden an der Sprache, der er sich blind anvertraut und die ihn in seine verzweifelte Zeitrechnung stürzte« (*Zeit und Raum*, p.161). Cf Baudelaire's thematisation in the prose-poem "Les Dons des fées" of: »[...] la terrible loi du Temps et de son infinie postérité, les Jours, les Heures, les Minutes, les Secondes« (*Oeuvres complètes I*, p.306).

phantasmagorical drama of what Bergson, in the second chapter of his *Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience* (1889), says we do when we contaminate experiential time with an »admixture of extensity«.¹⁰ Yet this theme becomes almost secondary to *Malte's reception of the story*. Had Kusmitsch's student friend not filled in the *Leerstellen* in the narrative, Malte would have found himself left with the perplexing acoustic datum of a man declaiming Russian poetry with mathematical metricality. There would have been simply no way a normal consciousness, relying on just the five senses, could possibly deduce from these recitations the circumstances which had led up to them. Malte would have been drawn into yet another speculative, subjunctive-mood agony triggered by a neighbour. Consequently, his appreciation of the Kusmitsch story relates more to clarification than to content: »Ich erinnere mich dieser Geschichte so genau, weil sie mich ungemein beruhigte. Ich kann wohl sagen, ich habe nie wieder einen so angenehmen Nachbar gehabt, wie diesen Nikolaj Kusmitsch, der sicher auch mich bewundert hätte«.¹¹

For the Malte of the Paris experiences, however, such *Beruhigung* cannot offer lasting relief. The ambition behind his *Sehenlernen* project involves far more than a mimetic cultivation of direct observation or a

¹⁰ Henri Bergson, *Time and Free Will. An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness*, translated by Frank L. Pogson (London: 1913), p.102. Cf in the same volume: »[...] surreptitiously bringing in the idea of space [...], we project time into space, we express duration in terms of extensity, and succession thus takes the form of a continuous line or a chain, the parts of which touch without penetrating one another« (ibid., pp.100f.). Kassner writes of Rilke's fascination with the nexus of mathematics and spatiality, the idea »daß die Zahlen einen Kontur, einen Rand von Raum besitzen« (*Rilke. Gesammelte Erinnerungen 1926-56*, p.17).

¹¹ *MLB*, Paper XLIX, pp.577f.

narrative synthesis of verbally relayed facts, for it includes in its scope supra-sensuous perception, *Hellseherei*, excitation of transmundane faculties. What is striking, then, about the remarks that usher in the episode with the neighbouring *Medizinstudent*¹² is Malte's resigned acknowledgment of more mundane, non-intuitive limits to perception. Malte first recalls the impact of the Kusmitsch story on him. It taught him the importance of privileging the soothing finitude of established facts over the bad infinity of speculation: »Ich nahm mir nach dieser Erfahrung vor, in ähnlichen Fällen immer gleich auf die Tatsachen loszugehen. Ich merkte, wie einfach und erleichternd sie waren, den Vermutungen gegenüber«.¹³ The words which follow foreshadow the end of his dream of Faustian magic:

Als ob ich nicht gewußt hätte, daß alle unsere Einsichten nachträglich sind, Abschlüsse, nichts weiter. Gleich dahinter fängt eine neue Seite an mit etwas ganz anderem, ohne Übertrag. Was halfen mir jetzt im gegenwärtigen Falle die paar Tatsachen, die sich spielend feststellen ließen. Ich will sie gleich aufzählen, wenn ich gesagt haben werde, was mich augenblicklich beschäftigt: daß sie eher dazu beigetragen haben, meine Lage, die (wie ich jetzt eingestehe) recht schwierig war, noch lästiger zu gestalten.¹⁴

[*W*]ie ich jetzt eingestehe: the parenthesised qualifier opens up a gap between Malte's *jetzt*-perspective and his *damals*-perspective. What might have happened in the episode whose narration is to follow (*im gegenwärtigen Falle*) to induce such sobriety in Malte's understanding of his psycho-acoustic

¹² The close reading of this episode which follows owes much to the shrewd and extremely detailed analyses offered by Antonowicz ("*Cet infernal couvercle*", *passim*) and Henninger ("*Quelques aspects du non-dit dans Les Cahiers de Malte Laurids Brigge*", pp.157ff.).

¹³ *MLB*, Paper L, p.578.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

response patterns? What might have led him to diagnose an exacerbation of his already difficult situation?

Als ob ich nicht gewußt hätte... The wording makes it clear: Malte *now* consciously realises what he did not *then* (after the Kusmitsch experience) admit to himself: ...*daß alle unsere Einsichten nachträglich sind, Abschlüsse, nichts weiter*. This structure of *Nachträglichkeit* - a non-coincidence of present-tense perception and *post hoc* reflective understanding (*Einsicht*) - is precisely the epistemological wound which paranormal faculties are meant to heal. The limits imposed upon the subject by space and time are transcended only in a præternatural act of heightened consciousness. Malte is now admitting that every single one of his¹⁵ insights is gained in entirely immanent, limited ways. He, a common man and no wondrous scion of the Brahe family tree, has proven incapable of making his metaphysics practical (as Bacon would put it). The *nichts weiter* bleakly registers his own failure to find a paranormal *supplement* to ordinary perception. The only supplement to hand for such an

¹⁵ Significantly, though, Malte embeds himself in a depressively common third person plural (*unsere Einsichten*).

ordinary consciousness is the *Nachtrag* of text, narrative and reflective synthesis *a posteriori*.¹⁶

Gleich dahinter fängt eine neue Seite an mit etwas ganz anderem, ohne Übertrag. Malte's ledger-book metaphor - generated surely by the economic categories deployed in the preceding Kusmitsch episode, with its »beamtenhaft rechnerische Einteilung der Zeit« (Dieter Schiller)¹⁷ - conveys this lack of magical surplus. Malte is trapped in the regulated economy of banal perception, in which income (incoming data from sense perception and narrative) and expenditure (reflective understanding's use of these data) are held in prudent check, *ohne Übertrag*. Malte's cognitive nightmare is that he must balance the books, he cannot generate insight surplus to direct experience, he cannot reliably *see* more than he is shown. Just as Nikolaj Kusmitsch was dismayed to find that he could not break the ledger-book's

¹⁶ There is a strong echo here of Poe's detective hero Dupin, generally acknowledged to be the prototype for Conan Doyle's almost praeternaturally gifted Sherlock Holmes. In the tales *The Murders in the Rue Morgue* (1841) and *The Mystery of Marie Rogêt* (1842-3) in which he figures, Dupin personifies the principle of >ratiocination<, whereby his analytic-deductive faculties are so developed as to endow him with »a degree of *acumen* which appears to the ordinary apprehension preternatural« (Poe, *Tales of Mystery and Imagination*, p.411). Thus is the apparently clairvoyant relentlessly demystified under a rationalistic ethos. Dupin is of course the prototype for Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes, who likewise astonishes his colleague, Dr. Watson, with his superhuman powers of deduction. Poe is writing in the context of William Hamilton's associationist investigations around 1836 into the psychology of unconscious mentality (see Neil Campbell Mason, "A tumbling-ground for whimsies? The history and contemporary role of the conscious / unconscious contrast", in: *History of the Mind-Body Problem*, edited by Tim Crane & Sarah Patterson, London: 2000, pp.148-168, here pp.156ff.). The categories which came into play in our discussion of the *flâneur* in Chapter Two become relevant again here, as we see parapsychological credulity being brought under the supervision of analytic, detectivistic procedures. Compare also, in this context of Malte's recognition of the rôle of *Nachträglichkeit* in his own apparent intuitions, Kant's charge in the *Träume eines Geistersehers* (pp.168ff.) of an unholy muddling of *a priori* and *a posteriori* in paranormal discourse.

¹⁷ Dieter Schiller, "Der Einsame und seine Welt", p.145.

end-of-week equation of time received and time expended, so here Malte finds a splenetically dismal equation reigning over him. He sees or understands only what he is shown or told. Everything in his perceptual economy computes.

In the context of the *Nachbar*-problematic, the words: *Gleich dahinter fängt eine neue Seite an mit etwas ganz anderem, ohne Übertrag* assume an ingenious second sense - *Seite* as >side< as well as >page<. Malte's perceptual response throughout the *Aufzeichnungen* has been in one sense blocked and in another sense stimulated by the *Vorwand* that screens the fetishistically hidden X. Malte's arrogation of intuitive powers has been predicated upon an ability to see through the wall, to supplement perception with vision. But here he is acknowledging what his previous texts would indicate only obliquely: I am not sympathetically connected to X *behind* the wall (*dahinter*); instead, in trying to establish a rapport, I come up against sheer exteriority, alterity, non-relation, *etwas ganz andere[s]*. The words *ohne Übertrag* now take on the sense of a failed *transfer* of willpower from one side of the wall to the other. No quantum of consciousness or energy is carried over. Thus, in Doumet's words, »la cloison reste, dans l'univers solipsiste du rêveur, le point d'ancrage d'une alterité radicale«. ¹⁸

The story of the medical student - or more accurately, the story of Malte's *Krankheitserscheinungen* as triggered by him - is in basic form brief to relate. Malte hears an object falling to the ground in the room next door to

¹⁸ Doumet, "Malte devant les parois", p.76.

him, which he takes to be *der Deckel einer Blechbüchse*. It emerges that this is regularly thrown to the ground by the neighbouring medical student in frustration at a *Schwäche* in his right eyelid which causes it to fall, *wie wenn ein Fenstervorhang nicht oben bleiben will*. The student is studying for examinations which he has already twice missed, and so his exasperation grows. Finally, at the height of the crisis, someone moves in on the same floor, next door to Malte's neighbour. When a fresh outburst occurs that night, Malte hears this new neighbour quietly enter the student's room and soothe him. This figure Malte takes to be the student's mother.

The epistemological challenge which the *Nachbar* sets Malte is, so speak, the narrative's angle of incidence. Malte's response to the medical student is an imaginative synthesis of sounds from the adjacent room as well as sounds from the lips of (unidentified) third parties.¹⁹ The activity of the student next door is first signalled to Malte in a sequence of poltergeist-like noises:

Nun also: das ist das Ganze; so ein blecherner Gegenstand fiel nebenan, rollte, blieb liegen, und dazwischen, in gewissen Abständen, stampfte es. Wie alle Geräusche, die sich wiederholt durchsetzen, hatte auch dieses sich innerlich organisiert; es wandelte sich ab, es war niemals genau dasselbe. Aber gerade das sprach für seine Gesetzmäßigkeit. Es konnte heftig sein oder milde oder melancholisch; es konnte gleichsam überstürzt vorübergehen oder unendlich lange hingleiten, eh es zu Ruhe kam. Und das letzte Schwanken war immer überraschend. Dagegen hatte das Aufstampfen, das hinzukam, etwas fast Mechanisches. Aber es teilte den Lärm immer

¹⁹ Including perhaps the concierge, implicit in the words: »Aber das lag vielleicht gerade an den Tatsachen, die ich mir hatte sagen lassen« (*MLB*, Paper L, p.579). Cf: »Unten frage ich zwar zuweilen im Vorübergehen, ob Nachrichten von ihm da sind und welche« (Paper LI, p.581, emphasis added). If the critical fact of an extraneous source of information is not borne in mind, Malte's thoughts about the neighbour will seem wholly speculative (as they do, for example, to Rugg, who suggests that Malte is merely imagining the student's »corporeal weakness«, "A Self at Large", p.51).

anders ab, das schien seine Aufgabe zu sein. Ich kann diese Einzelheiten jetzt viel besser übersehen; das Zimmer neben mir ist leer. Er ist nach Hause gereist, in die Provinz. Er sollte sich erholen. Ich wohne im obersten Stockwerk. Rechts ist ein anderes Haus, unter mir ist noch niemand eingezogen: ich bin ohne Nachbar.²⁰

The painstaking acoustic phenomenology is tagged by an explicit voice speaking from the position of *Nachträglichkeit*. As this voice judiciously processes a mosaic of recollections, the current perspective is privileged over the earlier one:

In dieser Verfassung wundert es mich beinah, daß ich die Sache nicht leichter nahm. Obwohl ich doch jedesmal im voraus gewarnt war *durch mein Gefühl*. Das wäre auszunutzen gewesen. Erschrick nicht, hätte ich mir sagen müssen, jetzt kommt es; ich wußte ja, daß ich mich niemals täuschte. *Aber das lag vielleicht gerade an den Tatsachen, die ich mir hatte sagen lassen*; seit ich sie wußte, war ich noch schreckhafter geworden. *Es berührte mich fast gespenstisch, daß das, was diesen Lärm auslöste, jene kleine, langsame, lautlose Bewegung war, mit der sein Augenlid sich eigenmächtig über sein rechtes Auge senkte und schloß während er las. Dies war das Wesentliche an seiner Geschichte, eine Kleinigkeit.*²¹

Malte traces his response to the sounds back to an unerring intuition (or *[Vor]Gefühl*), before diluting this faculty down to an admixture of anticipation and the extraneous knowledge upon which it is based (*Tatsachen*). Important here is the difference between Malte's faith *then* in his intuitive powers (the praeterite form of *ich wußte ja*) and his acknowledgement *now* of the reliance of his *Gefühl* upon narrative detail garnered from other sources (the *vielleicht* carrying the concessive tone of the present perspective). This mesh of knowledge and sound-data Malte explicitly analogises to the invisible presence of a spectre: uncanny for him is the causal link, which he has *heard*

²⁰ *MLB*, Paper L, p.579.

²¹ *Ibid.*, emphases added.

tell of but which *has not seen*, between the droop of the unfortunate student's eyelid («wie wenn ein Fenstervorhang nicht oben bleiben will»)²² and the sequence of bumps in the night.²³ The notion of not being in error is hammered home by Malte over the course of the Paper: »ich habe mich nie geirrt«, »ich wußte ja, daß ich mich niemals täuschte«.²⁴ Yet the possibility that Malte may repeatedly be drawing erroneous conclusions from partial, degraded eye-witness authority (his own optical *Schwäche*) has already been raised by many earlier episodes.²⁵ In this episode, he sits in the room clinging to his one source of Brahe prestige, only to have his assumption rudely undermined by what follows.

There is an uncharacteristically naked defensiveness to Malte's rhetoric as he introduces the medical student via a self-thematising detour:

Es sei zu meiner Ehre gesagt, daß ich viel geschrieben habe in diesen Tagen; ich habe kramphaft geschrieben. Allerdings, wenn ich ausgegangen war, so dachte ich nicht gerne an das Nachhausekommen. Ich machte sogar kleine Umwege und verlor auf diese Art eine halbe Stunde, während welcher ich hätte schreiben können.²⁶

Now of what does this evasive, guilty behaviour put us in mind of if not the behaviour of a prospective examination candidate who knows he needs to study but is struggling with his own resistance to getting down to it? Even as

²² *MLB*, Paper L, p.580. Cf the »lautlos« movement of »der Vorhang der Pupille« in the *Neues Gedicht "Der Panther"* (KA I, p.469, lines 9f.).

²³ Cf the Schulin episode (Paper XLII, pp.552ff.), where a scent dominates the consciousness of those in the room. In the present case, we find a double layer of invisibility: something unseen (and unheard: the closing of the eyelid) triggering something unseen (but heard: the tin object) triggering associations in Malte's *mentis oculi*. If Gräfin Schulin smells with her ears, then here Malte sees with his.

²⁴ *MLB*, Paper L, pp.578 & 579 respectively.

²⁵ Compare his dubious »ich hatte mich nicht geirrt« in the *crémérie* episode (Paper XVIII, p.489).

²⁶ *MLB*, Paper L, p.578.

Malte goes on to place a categorical divide between himself and the medical student next door, his words serve only to reinforce the parallel:

Ich gebe zu, daß dies eine Schwäche²⁷ war. War ich aber einmal in meinem Zimmer, so hatte ich mir nichts vorzuwerfen. Ich schrieb, ich hatte *mein* Leben, und das da nebenan war ein ganz anderes Leben, mit dem ich nichts teilte: das Leben eines Studenten der Medizin, der für sein Examen studierte. Ich hatte nichts Ähnliches vor mir, schon das war ein entscheidender Unterschied. Und auch sonst waren unsere Umstände so verschieden wie möglich. Das alles leuchtete mir ein. Bis zu dem Moment, da ich wußte, das es kommen würde; da vergaß ich, daß es zwischen uns keine Gemeinsamkeit gab. Ich horchte so, daß mein Herz ganz laut wurde. Ich ließ alles und horchte. Und dann kamm es: ich habe mich nie geirrt.²⁸

It is crucial to bear in mind that the perspective being conveyed throughout this passage is governed by the präterite tense. When Malte writes: *Das alles leuchtete mir ein*, he is maintaining a decisive distance between his current and his earlier understanding of the situation. There is in his outlook *at the time events were happening* an ironic double manoeuvre. Firstly, he was refusing to see the similarity between a) his own travails as a failed scribe trying yet again to overcome his spiritual blindness and break through to the vision necessary for apostolic witness and b) the travails of the failed medical student trying yet again to overcome his partial blindness and break through to the knowledge necessary for his examination. Secondly, he was simultaneously assuming a very different kind of commonality with the

²⁷ *Schwäche* is a word which Malte and the student have in common (cf p.580: »Aber da hatte sich, ein paar Monate vor der Entscheidung, diese Schwäche eingestellt [...]«). Another common element is a decadent enervation: the student's »kleine, unmögliche *Ermüdung*« (p.580, emphasis added); Malte: »ich war aus *Müdigkeit* schon zu Bett gegangen« (ibid., emphasis added). The student's nervous disorder finds a counterpart when Malte attaches a connotation of muscular cramp to his way of writing: »ich habe kramphaft geschrieben« (p.578). Cf the discussion below of linguistic parallelism in the verb *vorwerfen*.

²⁸ *MLB*, Paper L, p.578.

student by positing a sympathetic, intuitive, mesmeric bond. As with his supposed donation of *Wille* to the convulsive in Paper XXI, so here he engages the figure next door in a supportive, psycho-magnetic transfer of energies.

But this is precisely the paradox in his selective *Gemeinsamkeit* with the medical student. Malte is linked to the student next door precisely because *both are getting nowhere with their respective apprenticeships*. But the corollary also holds: because Malte is getting nowhere with his own apprenticeship, *he cannot establish a link to the student next door*. The realisation that: *Gleich dahinter fängt eine neue Seite an mit etwas ganz anderem, ohne Übertrag* has been ironically (because unwittingly) echoed in words that purport to reject the notion of his own failure: *ich hatte mein²⁹ Leben, und das da nebenan war ein ganz anderes Leben*. Malte sits in his room listening to the sounds next door, positing alterity where the reader (along with Malte-*Aufzeichner*) sees similarity, and sympathetic rapport where the reader (along with Malte-*Aufzeichner*) sees alienation.

Knowing about the *Kleinigkeit* of the drooping right eyelid, Malte undertakes his solidaristic transfer of energy:³⁰

Ich bin sicher, daß er wochenlang der Meinung war, man müßte das beherrschen können. Sonst wäre ich nicht auf die Idee verfallen, ihm meinen Willen anzubieten. Eines Tages begriff ich nämlich, daß der seine zu Ende sei. Und seither, wenn ich es kommen fühlte, stand ich da auf meiner Seite der Wand und bat ihn, sich zu bedienen. Vielleicht hätte er das nicht tun dürfen, besonders wenn man bedenkt, daß es eigentlich nichts half. Angenommen sogar, daß wir die Sache ein wenig hinhielten, so bleibt es doch fraglich, ob er wirklich imstande war, die Augenblicke, die wir so

²⁹ Original emphasis.

³⁰ Cf Rugg: »(The permeability of the wall operates as a sign for the permeability of all physical barriers, including the body's skin.)« ("A Self at Large", p.51). Note the engaging self-referential play in her statement.

gewannen, auszunutzen. Und was meine Ausgaben betrifft, so begann ich sie zu fühlen.³¹

In terms of purported powers of *Gefühl* and *Willensübertragung*, Malte is caught in a zero-sum game. On the one side is his claim to have anticipated each new outburst from the student, on the other his claim to have transferred energy across the walls to prevent such outbursts. But if he goes to the wall in anticipation of an outburst, then any ensuing silence will have ambiguous significance - it could signify precognitive accuracy and a subsequently successful energetic transference, *or* - it could signify precognitive failure and a subsequently irrelevant attempt to exert nervous influence. Conversely, however, an immediately ensuing outburst of noise from the rolling tin object will be subject to its own distinct difficulty - if it indicates precognitive accuracy, then it logically indicates also a failed energetic transfer. Even a delayed outburst from next door could be read both ways - as a partially successful precognition or as a partially successful energetic transfer. In other words, neither ensuing silence nor ensuing noise can offer Malte clarity as to his rôle - empathic/ receptive or interventionist/ active - in the medical student's situation. When Malte writes: *mit der Zeit wurde mir klar, daß er darauf einging*, one can only infer as the grounds for this claim the fact that the expected crash of the tin object did not ensue.³² When, further down, Malte concedes *daß es eigentlich nichts half*, one is to infer that the noises returned. As with the spastic man, so here the failure of Malte's *Willensübertragung*

³¹ *MLB*, Paper L, p.580.

³² Cf the allegory of silence as an imminent crash in Paper III (*MLB*, p.456).

ultimately to rescue the recipient is wilfully understood by Malte (at the time) not as grounds for doubting that it actually took place, but as evidence either of his own low energy stocks or of his recipient's inability to put the gift to good account (*ob er wirklich imstande war*).³³

Malte's recurring *Gefühl* that the medical student is about to throw the object to the ground is, it would seem, the most arresting feature of his experience. »Und dann kam es: ich habe mich nie geirrt«, we are told by way of introduction to Malte's first prediction.³⁴ But this is not necessarily the first incidence of the noise. To revisit the turning-point in Malte's relations with his neighbour: »*Bis zu dem Moment, da ich wußte, daß es kommen würde... Ich horchte so, daß mein Herz ganz laut wurde. Ich ließ alles und horchte. Und dann kam es: ich habe mich nie geirrt.*«³⁵ The text which I have italicised is meticulously spun for indeterminacy. Was this the first time the noise (*es*) came (*kommen würde, kam*), or just the first time Malte was to anticipate its arrival?

³³ Rugg ("A Self at Large", p.51) constructs a thought-provoking homology between Malte's transferences to other figures within the fiction and Rilke's own imaginative transferences to his character: »When Malte gives up a piece of himself, attempts to make contact through meshing with another troubled soul, his central identity becomes dispersed. But all of this is an image of what Rilke does to himself in creating Malte. We are told (sometimes explicitly, sometimes implicitly) that the transference that takes place could be a product of Malte's imagination. This makes little difference, since it is the inner life, the fiction of the imagination, that rules Malte's experience. It dominates Rilke's autobiographical project as well; Malte's violation of the bounds of the self have an antecedent in the violation of the parameters of the novel through self-quotation, a method that leaves us in doubt about the final difference between Malte and Rilke« ("A Self at Large", p.51).

³⁴ *MLB*, Paper L, p.578.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, emphasis added.

A first clue as to this question is given when Malte, having launched into his long description of the *blechernes, rundes Ding*, returns to this issue of presentiment:

Obwohl ich doch jedesmal im voraus gewarnt war durch mein Gefühl [...] Erschrick nicht, hätte ich mir sagen müssen, jetzt kommt es; ich wußte ja, daß ich mich niemals täuschte. *Aber das lag vielleicht gerade an den Tatsachen, die ich mir hatte sagen lassen; seit ich sie wußte, war ich noch schreckhafter geworden.*³⁶

Rather a lot hinges on the import of *das* in the italicised text. Does it refer solely to Malte's anxiety, now suddenly intensified by the new facts of the case brought to his attention? Or might it not refer more integrally to the fact that these new, context-establishing facts have somehow given him the key to the noise *and with that the key to anticipating the noise, and with that a heightened tension as he awaits it?*

The idea for this episode originates in a similar scenario experienced by Rilke himself when he was living at 29, rue Cassette in Paris. In his letter to Clara of June 19th 1907, he writes of:

Ein Student, lernend für das Examen, seit Jahren. Da stellt sich, nahe vor den Prüfungen, ein Leiden ein: sein Gesicht trübt sich über den Büchern, die Zeilen schwingen, und das eine Augenlid geht zu, einfach zu, wie ein Rouleau, dessen Schnur gerissen ist. Dieser Zustand hat ihn nervös elend gemacht, und nun, zu der Zeit, als ich einzog, *ging er in seinem Zimmer umher, bei jedem Umdrehen aufstampfend und spät nachts noch, in einer Art trüben Unwillens, Dinge auf den Boden werfend, irgendwelche blecherne Dinge, die wie dafür gemacht waren und weiterrollten, um wieder aufgenommen und hingeworfen zu werden, wieder und wieder.*³⁷

³⁶ MLB, Paper L, p.579, emphasis added.

³⁷ MLB-Materialien, p.35, emphases added.

Ernst Fedor Hoffmann's identification of »Auslassung« as an important strategy in Rilke's movement from letter to fictive récit in the *Malte*-text becomes especially relevant here.³⁸ In Rilke's epistolary account, the student next door is not simply stamping on the ground but also *walking around* in a regular, mechanical orbit, stamping specifically as he turns around at the end of each circuit. Of course, Rilke's student is not Malte's student, there is, as far as our understanding of the counterpart fiction is concerned, in principle nothing binding about his behaviour. Yet when the details of each description are paired off, Rilke's letter does alert the reader to certain possible latencies within the later, fictive text.

Malte, like Rilke, recognises the regular, mechanical quality of his student's *Aufstampfen*: *Dagegen hatte das Aufstampfen, das hinzukam, etwas fast Mechanisches.*³⁹ Unlike Rilke, he does not explicitly link this to the student's perambulations around the room. Might not Rilke's letter suggest the idea that the student's closing eyelid is not followed immediately by the sudden movement of the tin object, rather that an intermediary sound comes into play - the sound of the student standing up from his desk in disgust and *moving around*?

Tucked away in the next Paper (LI) we find a pertinent detail which may strengthen the *internal* evidence that Malte's student elicits some sonic signal before throwing down the tin object: »Mir ist«, writes Malte as he

³⁸ Hoffmann is specifically probing the underclarified *Kausalbeziehung* between the *lautlose Bewegung* of the medical student's eyelid and the ensuing noises. Indeed this ellipsis forms the starting-point of his essay ("Zum dichterischen Verfahren", pp.214ff.)

³⁹ It is noteworthy that mechanical movement is ascribed to the human being, while the individualistic unpredictability of the object's movements is identified.

speculates on the whereabouts of the hypothetically named *Büchse* containing both *Deckel* and main *Büchse*, »als entsänne ich mich, daß sie auf dem Kamin stehn, die beiden, die die Büchse ausmachen. Ja, sie stehn sogar vor dem Spiegel [...]«.⁴⁰ So Malte, in an attempt to hypothesise the tin object's current location, finds a solution in his memory: he *feels that he recalls* the tin object's location as being over the fireplace. Now we know that Malte's room, being the last in the corridor,⁴¹ has no other neighbouring room besides that of the medical student. Thus they share a chimney, with Malte's *Kamin* right behind that of his neighbour.⁴² Thus, in turn, Malte will have been in a position to hear noises being made just on the other side of the wall over the fireplace. When and how might he have been given the idea that the tin object belonged there and not elsewhere in the adjacent room? »Wahrscheinlich hat man aufgeräumt, man hat den Deckel auf seine Büchse gesetzt, wie es sich gehört«⁴³... but *Wahrscheinlich* suggests that Malte is basing this not on having heard this tidying up operation happen, only on a *speculation based upon earlier acoustic clues... such as the sound of a tin object being lifted up from the mantelpiece by the student himself each time he was about to launch into his outbursts*. Without actually telling us, Malte has indicated a possible reason why he now, retrospectively, doubts whether extra-auditory *Gefühl* had really played any

⁴⁰ *MLB*, Paper LI, p.582.

⁴¹ »[...] Unsere Türen waren die letzten im Gang [...]« (*MLB*, Paper L, p.580).

⁴² Antonowicz makes the same deduction: »[...] dans chaque appartement, il y a un miroir au-dessus de la cheminée et c'est ce miroir que vit Malte, quand il essaie de se représenter l'appartement de l'étudiant« ("Cet infernal couvercle", p.103).

⁴³ *MLB*, Paper LI, p.582.

role in his anticipation of the noise of tin clattering against the floor: intermediate sounds had been tipping him off.⁴⁴

But what relevance do such deliberations really hold for the episode? Are we merely to flounder in speculative guesswork? Yes and, *for the very same reason, no*. Yes, because guesswork is precisely the presiding theme of the fragment - Malte's abyssal guesswork and, metatextually, the reader's own vexed guesswork on the basis of cryptic signals; and no, because what is not in doubt is the fact that Malte himself quite candidly makes an issue of the *Büchsendeckel* as an imaginary object serving a strangely compelling symbolic function for him:

Aber ich weiß ganz gut, daß es ein gewisser blecherner Gegenstand ist, der auf mich wartet. Ich habe angenommen, daß es sich wirklich um einen Büchsendeckel handelt,

⁴⁴ Interestingly, Rilke in his letter does not claim predictive response to the sounds, rather making it clear how his nervous receptivity was based entirely upon having identified the regular rhythm of events: »Du weißt, man hätte diesem jungen Menschen keinen empfänglicheren Nachbar verschaffen können. Wie mich das die ersten Nächte, *noch ehe ich wußte, was es bedeutete*, in Anspruch und Atem hielt. Ach: weil ich sofort den *Rhythmus* in diesem Wahnsinn begriff, die Ermüdung in diesem Zorn, die Aufgabe, die Verzweiflung - Du kannst Dir denken« (*MLB-Materialien*, p.35, emphases added). This alerts us to a further peculiarity in Malte's episode with the medical student - the nature of the tin object itself. While both Rilke and Malte identify of the sound as coming from something made of tin - Rilke writes in the plural of *irgendwelche blecherne Dinge*, Malte in the singular of *irgendein blechernes, rundes Ding* - Malte alone launches into a closer determination: *nehmen wir an, der Deckel einer Blechbüchse*. The highly speculative nature of this conjecture is foregrounded by Malte himself in the phrase *nehmen wir an*. And in fact the almost obsessively detailed description of the noises made by this object serves only to threaten this very identification: a tin lid flung to the ground does not normally behave remotely like the object described next door. The disarmingly quiet first contact with the floor, the subsequent choreography of rolling and torquing, with ample time for patterned *Aufstampfen* by the student at regular intervals (*in gewissen Abständen*) - all point indeed to one of what the *letter* calls »Dinge, die wie dafür gemacht waren«. (One thinks surely of a spinning top... used perhaps for auto-hypnotic purposes? Maybe the medical student has visited the Salpêtrière also... Certainly his condition primes him for a visit, as Antonowicz recognises: »Le mouvement de la paupière [...] est le signe de la fatigue neurasthénique qui obligeait les patients de Charcot à interrompre toute occupation intellectuelle«, "*Cet infernal couvercle*", p.104.) But Malte evokes and then frankly points away from any such alternatives, because for some reason he *would have* the object be a *Blechbüchse*. I shall presently suggest an idiomatic motivation for this.

*obwohl ich mich natürlich irren kann. Das beunruhigt mich nicht. Es entspricht nun einmal meiner Anlage, die Sache auf einen Büchsendeckel zu schieben.*⁴⁵

This is remarkably concessive discourse for Malte, proceeding as it does from a consciousness profoundly shaken in its epistemological self-assurance. By this stage, the fallibility of imaginative projection (*sich irren*) is being explicitly factored into each deliberation at source, with each operative *Vermutung* being recognised for its virtual reference.⁴⁶ Malte percipiens now understands, in a way he certainly did not at earlier points seem to, that his blind cognitions amount to a game of probability and little more. In Paper LI, he goes so far as to formulate a negative correlation between acoustic data and accuracy of imaginative-deductive constitution in the mind's eye: »Man kann sich mit Leichtigkeit ein beliebiges Zimmer vorstellen, und oft stimmt es dann ungefähr. Nur das Zimmer, das man neben sich hat, ist immer *ganz anders*, als man es sich denkt.«⁴⁷ Not alone do the sounds emanating from an invisible adjacent room not help one map out that room's dimensions, their deceptively seductive supplement to one's cognition actually throw one of course.

Thus, in a newly sober rhetoric, centred on the thought of blindness, the *Büchsendeckel* is quite self-consciously mobilised as a potent symbol whose

⁴⁵ *MLB*, Paper LI, p.582, emphases added.

⁴⁶ One recalls the less apologetically anti-mimetic subjectivism at the close of Baudelaire's "Les Fenêtres": »Qu'importe ce que peut être la réalité placée hors de moi, si elle m'a aidé à vivre, à sentir que je suis et ce que je suis?« (*Oeuvres complètes I*, p.339). Cf Malte's words on the blind cauliflower-seller in Paper XVIII: »[...] kommt es nicht darauf an, was die ganze Sache für mich gewesen ist?« (*MLB*, Paper 485).

⁴⁷ *MLB*, Paper LI, pp.581f., emphasis added. Recall Paper L: »Gleich dahinter fängt eine neue Seite an mit etwas *ganz anderem* [...]«; »[...] ich hatte *mein* Leben, und das da nebenan war ein *ganz anderes* Leben« (*MLB*, p.578, emphases added, except on the word *mein*).

correspondence to the actual object which caused the commotion in the first place is openly acknowledged to be doubtful.

But if the *Büchsendeckel* is a potent symbol, then of what? Peter Henninger makes an irresistably brilliant suggestion here. He proposes that the word *vorzuwerfen* - in the sentence: »War ich aber einmal in meinem Zimmer, so hatte ich mir nichts vorzuwerfen«⁴⁸ - be read as a pun:

Quel rapport, nous demandera-t-on, avec le bout de phrase de la lettre;⁴⁹ *Dinge auf den Boden werfend*, si ce n'est que »se reprocher quelque chose«, se dit en allemand *sich etwas vorwerfen*, la racine du mot se trouvant être la même dans les deux cas? Cela pourrait n'avoir aucune importance s'il ne se trouvait également que l'étudiant dont il s'agit a non seulement »quelque chose à se reprocher« au sens du terme français »Plusieurs fois déjà il avait laissé passer les examens...« mais tout aussi bien »quelque chose à projeter devant soi« au sens étymologique du mot allemand, tel ce *couvercle de boîte* qu'il ne cesse de faire rouler par terre.⁵⁰

If Henninger is to be followed in this reading, then the parallelism *Malte-Medizinstudent*, already signalled in the double appearance of key words (*Müdigkeit / Ermüdung, Schwäche, ausnützen*), gains further reinforcement with this doubling of *vorwerfen*: to Malte's rising frustration over his own laborious attempts to get down to productive work is added his longing to grab hold of his suffering neighbour's tin object himself and fling it to the ground.⁵¹

⁴⁸ *MLB*, Paper L, p.578.

⁴⁹ Referring to Rilke's letter to Clara of June 19th 1907, which I have just been citing.

⁵⁰ Henninger, "Quelques aspects du non-dit dans *Les Cahiers de Malte Laurids Brigge*", pp.161f.

⁵¹ When Malte writes of these days: »ich habe kramphhaft geschrieben« (*MLB*, Paper L, p.578), he may even be hinting at a *physical* ailment of his own to match the medical student's hysterical tic - namely, an hysterical muscular contracture or convulsion of the hand. This would throw new light on the gestures used by the Salpêtrière medic to describe Malte's symptoms to his colleagues: »[...] sagte ein paar Worte, die er mit einer waagerechten, schwankenden Handbewegung begleitete« (*MLB*, Paper XIX, p.494).

This *Büchsendeckel* - the true focus of Malte's fixation with next door - is the perfect, polymodal symbol of Malte's frustrations with his »Lage, die (wie ich jetzt eingestehe) recht schwierig war [...]«:⁵²

-At a *first* level of signification, Malte wants to *throw it down in front of him* (*vorwerfen*) because, as the student episode has bitterly shown him, he has a very real failure to *reproach himself with* (*vorwerfen*) - failed writing, failed rapport, failed insight, failed vision.

-At a *second* level of signification, the *Büchsendeckel* symbolises Malte's multiple failure *because it itself might be only a figment of his non-paranormal imagination*. To extend a passage already cited:

Mir ist, als entsänne ich mich, daß sie [= Büchse + Deckel, D.D.] auf dem Kamin stehn, die beiden, die die Büchse ausmachen. Ja, sie stehn sogar vor dem Spiegel, so daß dahinter noch eine Büchse entsteht, eine täuschend ähnliche, imaginäre. Eine Büchse, auf die wir gar keinen Wert legen, nach der aber zum Beispiel ein Affe greifen würde. Richtig, es würden sogar zwei Affen danach greifen, denn auch der Affe wäre doppelt, sobald er auf dem Kaminrand ankäme. Nun also, es ist der Deckel dieser Büchse, der es auf mich abgesehen hat.⁵³

⁵² MLB, Paper L, p.578.

⁵³ MLB, Paper LI, p.582. Cf Rilke's equally Lichtenbergian image in his letter to Heinrich Vogeler of September 17th 1902, where he is evoking >life< as lived in Paris: »Aber dieses Leben ist ein niedlich eingerahmter Spiegel, in dem nichts drin ist als der, der jeweilig hineinschaut. Und - wie Spiegel sind - im Grunde, streng genommen, ist auch der nicht drin, niemand, nichts; - und der, dem es einfällt, dahinterzulangen, ist ein Affe, der die anderen amüsiert...« (*Briefe in zwei Bänden I*, p.139). It is hard to ignore Antonowicz' inspired reading of Malte's ape as a parodic redeployment of the monkey which figures in the *Dame à la Licorne* tapestry (see "Cet infernal couvercle", p.106), all the more so given the common specular motif. Cf the image of an ourang-outang in Poe's above-mentioned story *The Murders in the Rue Morgue*: »Razor in hand, and fully lathered, it was sitting before a looking-glass, attempting the operation of shaving, in which it had no doubt previously watched its master through the keyhole of the closet« (*Tales of Mystery and Imagination*, p.442).

The *Deckel dieser Büchse* clearly refers back to the *Büchse* labelled *imaginär*[]. If, as suggested above, one >sees< Malte's *Kamin*⁵⁴ resting just on the other side of his neighbour's *Kamin*, then the curious image of the ape and the mirror reveals its ingenuity. The tin object standing on the mantelpiece over the fireplace and in front of the mirror is reflected in that mirror; but its reflection is located in the virtual space within the depth-dimension of the mirror; this virtual space corresponds to the actual space behind the mirror's surface - that is, within and behind the wall in front of which the mirror is placed (*so daß dahinter noch eine Büchse entsteht, eine täuschend ähnliche, imaginäre*); but this actual space *dahinter* is none other than the beginning of Malte's room; now, an ape standing in front of the student's mirror will in turn be reflected in the mirror at an even greater depth than the tin object; the position of this reflected, virtual ape corresponds exactly to the actual space which a figure in Malte's room would occupy if it were standing close to the joining wall; but Malte has already informed us that, »wenn ich es kommen fühlte, stand ich da auf meiner Seite der Wand und bat ihn, sich zu bedienen«;⁵⁵ thus, Malte, in this stance as he tries to effect a transfusion of will, is occupying in actual space precisely the same space occupied in virtual space by the virtual ape >inside< the mirror; Malte describes the specular, *imaginäre* [...] *Büchse* as one, *auf die wir gar keinen Wert legen, nach der aber zum Beispiel ein Affe greifen würde*; if an ape were to grab a *Büchse*, what would it be expected to do if not roughly dismantle it and throw it to the ground; Malte's careful image does not

⁵⁴ Cf the stove mentioned at the start of Paper VIII (MLB, p.484).

⁵⁵ MLB, Paper L, p.580.

however quite allow the ape to grab the *Büchse* - instead, the ape, failing to understand the nature of the specular object-image relation, stupidly tries to grab not the actual *Büchse* but the virtual, mirror-image counterpart of the *Büchse*; if it does this, its hand will encounter only the frustratingly impenetrable surface of the mirror; and this doomed attempt of an actual ape reaching for a virtual tin yields the pathos of the final image: *Richtig, es würden sogar zwei Affen danach greifen, denn auch der Affe wäre doppelt, sobald er auf dem Kaminrand ankäme* - for if one stands before a mirror and tries to touch the image of an object placed before the mirror, then the result will be that neither one's real hand nor one's mirror-image hand⁵⁶ will be able to transgress their respective sides of the mirror's surface. Rilke is surely playing with an experiment carried out at the Salpêtrière on Charcot's *reine des hystériques*, Blanche Wittmann:

Blanche was [...] inclined to be contentious in the mirror experiment, in which the subject is given the hallucination of an object, say, a butterfly. A mirror being positioned behind the supposed location of the object, the subject usually >sees< a hallucinatory reflection of the butterfly in the mirror. When told to pick up the second butterfly, Blanche would try a few times and, after striking the mirror with her hand a few times, would absolutely refuse to try further declaring, >I cannot do it.<⁵⁷

The ape's vexed negotiations with the mirror function as a rich allegory of Malte's own general and episode-specific failure to go beyond the limited objective space-time continuum and step through the looking-glass into altered perception and experience.⁵⁸ Truly, the specular structure within

⁵⁶ Overtones here of the *Hand*-episode of Paper XXIX as well as of Mallarmé's "Le Démon de l'analogie".

⁵⁷ Owen, *Hysteria, Hypnosis and Healing*, pp.187f.

⁵⁸ Cf the unicorn myth in Paper XXXVIII (MLB, p.546).

which Malte's imagination performs its troubled *Nachäfferei* »provoque une véritable mise-en-abyme des catastrophes narcissiques« (Antonowicz).⁵⁹

-At a *third* level of signification, the image of the *Büchsendeckel* is, over the coming number of *Aufzeichnungen*, exhaustively mined as a symbol of the disengaged self⁶⁰ enjoying no happy vocation, experiencing utter discomfort in its *Lebenswelt*:

Die Menschen, nämlich, wenn es angeht, sie ganz vorübergehend mit solchen Deckeln zu vergleichen, sitzen höchst ungerne und schlecht auf ihren Beschäftigungen. Teils weil sie nicht auf die richtigen gekommen sind in der Eile, teils weil man sie schief und zornig aufgesetzt hat, teils weil die Ränder, die aufeinander gehören, verbogen sind, jeder auf eine andere Art. Sagen wir es nur ganz aufrichtig: sie denken im Grunde nur daran, sobald es sich irgend tun läßt, hinunterzuspringen, zu rollen und zu blechern. Wo kämen sonst alle diese sogenannten Zerstreungen her und der Lärm, den sie verursachen?⁶¹

Noteworthy once again is Malte's candid self-consciousness as he deploys the image as a metaphor (*vergleichen*). The *Büchse* has been refined before our eyes into a gratifyingly suggestive symbol, so much so that its suitability - the way, one might say, it fits with elastic rightness the concept onto which it is being placed - overrides the minimal requirement that it even have primary ontological status as an object in the real world of the student's room. If, as Liu argues, it functions as a general »Parodie des Menschen« bereft of vocation,⁶² then it would seem to parodically symbolise above all Malte's own transcendental homelessness, his predicament as a man alone in the world

⁵⁹ Antonowicz, "Cet infernal couvercle", p.105.

⁶⁰ Cf a similar image in the *Spiegel*-episode (Paper XXXII, p.529): »Eine Dose, aus der Bonbons rollten, die aussahen wie seidig eingepuppte Insekten, hatte ihren Deckel weit von sich geworfen, man sah nur seine eine Hälfte, die andere war überhaupt fort«.

⁶¹ *MLB*, Paper LI, pp.582f, emphasis added.

⁶² Liu, *Suche nach Zusammenhang*, p.173.

without the healing joy of a context in which to embed himself, without sound vocation in the world and without the spiritual peace of finding the ground of Being.

-Finally, at a *fourth* level of signification, Malte's generic description in Paper LI fragment of the notional >fit< of *Deckel* and *Büchse* carries a strongly erotic charge:

Einigen wir uns darüber: der Deckel einer Büchse, einer gesunden Büchse, deren Rand nicht anders gebogen ist, als sein eigener, so ein Deckel müßte kein anderes Verlangen kennen, als sich auf seiner Büchse zu befinden; dies müßte das Äußerste sein, was er sich vorzustellen vermag; eine nicht zu übertreffende Befriedigung, die Erfüllung aller seiner Wünsche. Es ist ja auch etwas geradezu Ideales, geduldig und sanft eingedreht auf der kleinen Gegenwulst gleichmäßig aufzuruhen und die eingreifende Kante in sich zu fühlen, elastisch und gerade so scharf, wie man selber am Rande ist, wenn man einzeln daliegt.⁶³

Auf jede Büchse paßt ein Deckelchen... Malte's eroticisation of the *Büchsen-Deckel* couple suggests that events next door to Malte may reward renewed scrutiny. Paper L reaches its climax with the arrival of a new party on Malte's floor. In the course of this narrative, Malte makes some oddly detached remarks about the social traffic in his neighbour's room:

[...] gerade an dem Nachmittag, als jemand in unserer Etage ankam. Dies ergab bei dem engen Aufgang immer viel Unruhe in dem kleinen Hotel. Eine Weile später schien es mir, als trete man bei meinem Nachbar ein. Unsere Türen waren die letzten im Gang, die seine quer und dicht neben der meinen. Ich wußte indessen, *daß er zuweilen Freunde bei sich sah, und, wie gesagt, ich interessierte mich durchaus nicht für seine Verhältnisse.* Es ist möglich, daß seine Tür noch mehrmals geöffnet wurde, daß man draußen kam und ging. *Dafür war ich wirklich nicht verantwortlich.*⁶⁴

⁶³ *MLB*, Paper LI, p.582.

⁶⁴ *MLB*, Paper L, p.580, emphases added.

Malte's disavowal of interest in this matter is quite perplexing given the monomaniacal alertness he has been showing to every other aspect of the goings on next door. What could be motivating this cold disaffection in relation to the student's *Freunde*?

Listening to the new neighbour entering the student's room that night after a fresh outburst, Malte will reach a sudden conclusion as to the new person's identity: »Lieber Gott, dachte ich, seine Mutter ist da«. ⁶⁵ Yet, as Birgit Giloy points out, this is purest conjecture on Malte's part, based only the figure's extraordinarily quiet footsteps in the corridor. ⁶⁶ Yet right up to the point where Malte happens upon this conjecture of »un étrange bonheur œdipien« (Doumet), ⁶⁷ the shadowy »neue Mieter« ⁶⁸ is unmistakably brought into relation with the *Freunde* mentioned above and referred to quite consistently as a male *er*-figure. Yet again in the *Aufzeichnungen*, the text raises an image only to withdraw it, the after-image serving as a meta-textual cue to the reader. Here, the *er*-figure who is at the last moment unconvincingly deleted from Malte's speculation shows a pattern of behaviour that invites us

⁶⁵ *MLB*, Paper L, p.581. The new lodger's behaviour suddenly becomes interpretable: compare the maternally-themed, detectivistic *éclairci* at the end of Baudelaire's "La Corde": »>Et alors, soudainement, une lueur se fit dans mon cerveau, et je compris pourquoi la mère tenait tant à m'arracher la ficelle et par quel commerce elle entendait se consoler« (*Oeuvres complètes I*, p.331, emphasis added).

⁶⁶ As noted by, amongst others, Antonowicz: »Qui est ce nouveau voisin? Un ami, un médecin, un Dieu de la grande ville? On ne le sait pas, l'oreille ne fournit pas ce genre de précisions« ("Cet infernal couvercle", p.108). Antonowicz notes the deviation from Rilke's own experience: »Dans la lettre à Clara, l'étudiant reçoit en effet la visite de sa mère, mais dans le roman cela n'est pas le cas: il n'y a que le voisin qui entre« (ibid.) and concludes that Malte's identification of the mother is an »écho mentale« from childhood: »[...] ce sont les pas de la mère qui vient au lit du petit Malte pour interrompre ses cauchemars nocturnes« (ibid., referring to *MLB*, Paper XXIII, p.507).

⁶⁷ Doumet, "Malte devant les parois", p.77.

⁶⁸ *MLB*, Paper L, p.580.

to postulate relations with the student altogether different from the maternal:

»Auch der neue Mieter war natürlich gestört«, writes Malte on the night of the climactic outburst:

Jetzt: das mußte *seine* Tür sein. Ich war so wach, daß ich *seine* Tür zu hören meinte, obwohl *er* erstaunlich vorsichtig damit umging. Es kam mir vor, als näherte *er* sich. Sicher wollte *er* wissen, in welchem Zimmer es sei. Was mich befremdete, war *seine* wirklich übertriebene Rücksicht. *Er* hatte doch eben bemerken können, daß es auf Ruhe nicht ankam in diesem Hause. *Warum in aller Welt unterdrückte er seinen Schritt? Eine Weile glaubte ich ihm an meiner Tür; und dann vernahm ich, darüber war kein Zweifel, daß er nebenan eintrat. Er trat ohne weiters nebenan ein.*⁶⁹

Malte's interpretive turn in the closing lines of the Paper explains *das leise Gehen draußen auf dem Gang* as the tender footsteps of maternal solicitude - »als ob er etwas wüßte, was er nicht wissen kann« (Ryan).⁷⁰ Yet the description of the footsteps conveys behaviour so secretive as to make one wonder as to why the notional mother would evince such caution. The gentle opening of the door two down from Malte; the pause outside Malte's door, as if to check that he is sleeping; the painstakingly quiet opening of the student's door - this has about it the dynamic not of a maternal visit but of a clandestine tryst.⁷¹

⁶⁹ *MLB*, Paper L, pp.580f, emphases added. Note that Malte does not slip into the >man< modus which he is customarily will use when referring to figures of unspecified gender. As Antonowicz notes ("Cet infernal couvercle", pp.107f.), the footsteps outside Malte's room are suggestively prefigured in Paper II: »Jemand steigt die Treppe. Kommt, kommt unaufhörlich. Ist da, ist lange da, geht vorbei« (*MLB*, pp.455f.).

⁷⁰ Ryan, ">Hypothetisches Erzählen<", p.258.

⁷¹ Cf Rilke's early short story, *Die Näherin* (written 1894-5), which tells of erotic trysts with a neighbour (KA III, pp.20-28). This Hoffmannesque tale would reward a very close comparative reading with the present episode, given its enactment of a magnetic-erotic rapport between neighbours who make and listen to noises and enter bedrooms unexpectedly.

Und nun (ja, wie soll ich das beschreiben?), nun wurde es still. Still, wie wenn ein Schmerz aufhört. Eine eigentümlich *fühlbare, prickelnde Stille*,⁷² als ob eine Wunde heilte [...] Sie saß neben dem Licht, sie redete ihm zu, vielleicht hatte er den Kopf ein wenig gegen ihre Schulter gelegt. *Gleich würde sie ihn zu Bett bringen*.⁷³

That Malte hears the >mother< speaking is placed within the same speculative brackets as his mental picture of her sitting by the lamp or of the student laying his head against her shoulder. Malte records his memory that »Jemand sprach nebenan«⁷⁴ without offering any mention of the voice being female: the vocal volume is evidently too low to betray the speaker's gender. At no point, significantly, does *Malte-Aufzeichner* openly support the interpretation that he gave himself *at the time* as to the character of the visitor next door. And, as will become apparent when Paper LII is considered below, the mother's supposed presence is no longer his lasting association from the episode.⁷⁵

The medical student's ophthalmic condition - »das Wesentliche an seiner Geschichte, eine Kleinigkeit«⁷⁶ - brings him into intratextual relationship with two other male characters in the *Malte*. The first, and by far the more prominent, is Erik Brahe: »von seinen schönen dunkelbraunen Augen war nur das eine beweglich«.⁷⁷ The second, mentioned only in passing, is one Henrik Holck. Both Erik and Henrik make an appearance in Paper XXXIV, where

⁷² Another case of silence as intensely felt presence - the theme inaugurated in Paper III (*MLB*, p.456).

⁷³ *MLB*, Paper L, p.581, emphases added.

⁷⁴ *Ibid*.

⁷⁵ The change in perspective from Malte then to *Malte-Aufzeichner* now, marked in the parenthetical words »wie ich jetzt eingestehe« in the opening paragraph of Paper L (*MLB*, p.578), reasserts its relevance here.

⁷⁶ *MLB*, Paper L, p.579.

⁷⁷ *MLB*, Paper XV, p.473.

both are unmissably tagged with homoerotic connotations. Of Erik Malte writes: »Ich konnte es nicht hindern, daß er den Arm um meinen Hals legte [...] Er umarmte mich nun völlig und streckte sich dabei«;⁷⁸ in the next Paper, he goes on to write wistfully: »Lieber, lieber Erik; vielleicht bist du doch mein einziger Freund gewesen. Denn ich habe nie einen gehabt. Es ist schade, daß du auf Freundschaft nichts gabst«.⁷⁹ Meanwhile, the potted biography of Henrik Holck, whose portrait Malte studies in the gallery at Urnekloster earlier in the episode (just before the homoerotic encounter with Erik), is a masterpiece of phallic insinuation:

Und dieser da, mit dem einen schwarzübermalten Auge, konnte wohl Henrik Holck sein, der mit dreiunddreißig Jahren Reichsgraf war und Feldmarschall, und das kam so: ihm träumte auf dem Wege zu Jungfrau Hilleborg Krafse, es würde ihm statt der Braut ein bloßes Schwert gegeben; und er nahm sich zu Herzen und kehrte um und begann sein kurzes, verwegenes Leben, das mit der Pest endete.⁸⁰

The medical student joins this pair of figures which Malte has placed under a decadent correlation of ophthalmic abnormality and sexual unorthodoxy. Malte's disdainful protest of disinterest in the student's *Freunde* comes under the selfsame suspicion as his earlier protestations of difference from the

⁷⁸ MLB, Paper XXXIV, p.536.

⁷⁹ MLB, Paper XXXV, p.537. Shades here of Thomas Mann's Tonio Kröger and, in Erik's fusion of bullying behaviour and homoeroticism, Musil's *Törleß*. Stephens notes with some puzzlement: »[d]aß die Begegnung mit Erik aus keinem ersichtlichen Grunde Akzente eines geschlechtlichen Verhältnisses annimmt [...]« (*Strukturanalyse*, p.153). In Jacobsen's *Niels Lyhne*, the young Niels falls in love with his friend Erik, leading the narrator to ask: »Ob es wohl unter all den Gefühlsbeziehungen im Leben auch nur eine einzige gibt, die zarter, edler und inniger ist als die unbezwingliche, zugleich so durch und durch scheue Verliebtheit eines Knaben in einen anderen? Eine liebe, die niemals sich ausspricht, niemals sich hervorwagt in einer Liebesbezeugung, in einem Blick oder in einem Wort, eine Liebe aus der Entfernung [...]« (*Niels Lyhne*, p.288)

⁸⁰ MLB, Paper XXXIV, pp.534f., emphases added. Just above this is mentioned one »Hans Ulrick, von dem die Frauen in Spanien meinten, daß er sich das Antlitz male, so voller Blut war er [...]« (MLB, p.534). Cf Stahl (MLB-Kommentar, pp.952f.) on a connection here with Jacobsen's *Frau Maria Grubbe* (MLB-Kommentar, pp.952f.).

student, leaving the reader to decode protest is a case either of disgust - or of alienated identification.

If the the *Medizinstudent* episode does insinuate a narrative of homosexual relations going on next door to Malte,⁸¹ then the trauma for Malte has increased by one more factor. The episode, condensed in the virtuoso symbol of the *Blechbüchse*, now can be seen to have humiliated him in its exposure of his dubious powers of intuition; depressed him in its crushing insistence that he is no further on than his wretched neighbour; offered him *qua* vocational nobody a symbol of his uselessness in the world, *qua* confirmed celibate an allegory of sexual frustration.⁸²

⁸¹ One might even suggest that the closely described accelerating sound of the *Deckel* as it gradually rolls to a standstill on the floor proleptically mimics the accelerating rhythm of the sexual act. Interesting too that the only other place where Malte describes himself falling asleep is in Paper II, where the sound of a *Hahn* - traditional symbol not merely of the banishing of ghosts but also of virility - produces the soporific effect (*MLB*, Paper II, p.456). Incidentally, the great anti-hero of modern American fiction, Holden Caulfield, has a similar experience to Malte in a New York hotel, which he discovers is »lousy with perverts« (J. D. Salinger, *The Catcher in the Rye*, New York: 1951, p.55), and where he is awoken in the early hours: »All of a sudden, while I was laying there smoking, somebody knocked on the door. I kept hoping it wasn't *my* door they were knocking on, but I knew damn well it was. I don't know *how* I knew, but I knew. I knew *who* it was, too. I'm psychic« (ibid., p.90).

⁸² And possibly sexual anxieties too. Huyssen, reading Malte's recollection of his childhood alter ego >Sophie< (*MLB*, Paper XXXI, p.524), looks closely into »Malte's powerful and deeply problematic identification with femininity [...]« (»Paris / Childhood“, p.123) by reading from biography: »As has been amply documented, Phia Rilke was the harsh mother who was both unaccepting of her son (>guilty< of being second-born to a girl who had lived only a few weeks after birth) and overprotective and all-embracing« (p.124). This leads Huyssen to an ingenious conclusion: »The anger and hatred that Rilke harbored for his mother is well known, but it is not matched by anything in the novel [...] Rilke creates the figure of an ideal mother (Malte's), but [...] the real mother (Rilke's) is inscribed into the text via Malte's psychic disturbances, which have to be read as narratively displaced from the real subject to the fictional subject« (ibid.). The mother-*imago* which Malte sees in woman after woman might take on new relevance in this light, as for that matter the phallic pencil shown to Malte by the *Fortgeworfene* in Paper XVI (*MLB*, pp.481f). The so-called >Berner Taschenbuch< shows that Rilke originally envisaged a section in the *Aufzeichnungen* on »der Sinn der Knabenliebe« (cf *MLB*, editorial apparatus, p.879). Cf Kassner's comment that Rilke »die Frau von der Frau aus empfand« (Rilke. *Gesammelte Erinnerungen 1926-56*, p.10).} Cf Rasch (*Die literarische Décadence um 1900*, p.38) on how *l'effémination des mâles* in decadent literature commonly occurs in the *Adelssprößling*.

The idea that the *Medizinstudent* is triggering in Malte a return of the repressed - Thomas Mann might use the word *Heimsuchung*⁸³ - the logical progression from Papers L and LI, dealing with the *Blechbüchse* symbol, to Paper LII, which opens by evoking an eroticised object world (à la Bosch or Bruegel):

Wie begreif ich jetzt die wunderlichen Bilder, darinnen Dinge von beschränkten und regelmäßigen Gebrauchen sich ausspannen und sich lüstern und neugierig aneinander versuchen, zuckend in der ungefähren Unzucht der Zerstreuung. Diese Kessel, die kochend herumgehen, diese Kolben, die auf Gedanken kommen, und die müßigen Trichter, die sich in ein Loch drängen zu ihrem Vergnügen. Und da sind auch schon, vom eifersüchtigen Nichts heraufgeworfen, Gliedmaßen und Glieder unter ihnen und Gesichter, die warm in sie hineinvomieren, und blasende Gesäße, die ihnen den Gefallen tun.⁸⁴

Kessel, Kolben and Trichter: more eroticised tin objects, only here the association is even more graphically and blatantly (anal-)erotic than was the case with the *Blechbüchse*. (Although one might revisit the latter in a specifically anal-erotic light: ...sich auf seiner Büchse zu befinden ... *geduldig und sanft eingedreht auf der kleinen Gegenwulst gleichmäßig aufzuruhen und die eingreifende Kante in sich zu fühlen, elastisch und gerade so scharf, wie man selber am Rande ist, wenn man einzeln daliegt...*) Here Malte identifies with the figure of the saint (Anthony, one presumes), whom the tin objects deflect from his task of sublimating sexual energy into a holistic summation of energy not confined to the genitals:

⁸³ Thomas Mann, "On Myself" [1940], *Gesammelte Werke in Dreizehn Bänden. Bd.XIII* (Frankfurt/M: 1974), pp.127-169, here: p.136. Malte's work ethic, which he defensively emphasises in the *Medizinstudent* Paper, recalls that of Mann's latently homosexual von Aschenbach.

⁸⁴ *MLB*, Paper LII, pp.583f.

Und der Heilige krümmt sich und zieht sich zusammen; aber in seinen Augen war noch ein Blick, der dies für möglich hielt: er hat hingesehen. Und schon schlagen sich seine Sinne nieder aus der hellen Lösung seiner Seele [...] Sein Geschlecht ist wieder nur an einer Stelle, und wenn eine Frau aufrecht durch das Gehudel kommt, den offenen Busen voll Brüste, so zeigt es auf wie ein Finger.⁸⁵

The latent, repressed, alienated sexuality of the *Medizinstudent* episode seems to, as it were, discharge itself in this succeeding Paper - and who is to say whether his peculiar tone in discussing his neighbour's *Freund(e)* might not have contained a more than a soupçon of envious resentment? or what the exact nature of the mesmeric *frisson* was that he felt to have passed through the walls? or whether one lonely *Deckel*, hearing another attach itself to a *Büchse*, may not be rolling around in pathetic solo imitation?...

[...] er fällt kurz auf, rollt auf dem Rande weiter und wird eigentlich erst unangenehm, wenn der Schwung zu Ende geht und er nach allen Seiten taumelnd aufschlägt, eh er ins Liegen kommt [...] Es konnte heftig sein oder milde oder melancholisch; es konnte gleichsam überstürzt vorübergehen oder unendlich lange hingeleiten, eh es zu Ruhe kam. Und das letzte Schwanken war immer überraschend.⁸⁶

⁸⁵ *MLB*, Paper LII, p.584. In the next Paper, the saintly figure of *der Einsame* will, like Malte, be >tempted< by the voices of his neighbours next door (*MLB*, Paper LIII, pp.584f.).

⁸⁶ *MLB*, Paper L, p.579. (Might not such thoughts send us back yet again to the »waagerechte[], schwankende[] Handbewegung« with which the Salpêtrière doctor accompanies his explanation of Malte's evidently embarrassing symptoms?)

IV.ii

»so bist du also«:

Malte and the Newspaper Vendor

The episode with the medical student became pathological for Malte precisely because it was an episode *without* the medical student. That is, the stranger next door eluded Malte's observational range, living, moving and having his being in a realm beyond verification, epistemological settling. As such, it became, at least on one important level, a trauma of *homeless conjecture*. Several Papers later, the episode involving a newspaper vendor outside the Jardin du Luxembourg⁸⁷ brings home to Malte with utter unambiguity the danger which has menaced his entire observational repertoire to date: that any given hypothetical intuition-deduction he cryptoscopically makes might be straightforwardly falsified by a clear view of the X which has hitherto remained hidden.

Malte becomes aware of the diminutive figure of the *Zeitungsverkäufer*:

Ich habe niemals gewagt, von ihm eine Zeitung zu verkaufen. Ich bin nicht sicher, daß er wirklich immer einige Nummer bei sich hat, wenn er sich außen am

⁸⁷ Betz notes that Rilke never allows Malte to penetrate the interior of this beloved garden: »als ob Rilke hätte vermeiden wollen, den Garten den er mit solcher Frische und Zärtlichkeit in seinen Briefen erwähnte, in die traurigen Erlebnisse seines Helden einzubeziehen« (*Rilke in Frankreich*, pp.124f.). This is consistent with Rilke's general strategy of keeping Malte uncontaminated by the pleasant. Cf Rainer Warning's discussion of the Jardin du Luxembourg in this episode as a Foucaultian >heterotopia< which, bordered by the perimeter railings, carries a rich metatextual signal ("Der Zeitungsverkäufer am Luxembourg", pp.261ff.).

Luxembourg-Garten langsam hin und zurück schiebt den ganzen Abend lang. Er kehrt dem Gitter den Rücken, und seine Hand streift den Steinrand, auf dem die Stäbe aufstehen. Er macht sich so flach, daß täglich viele vorübergehen, die ihn nie gesehen haben. Zwar hat er noch einen Rest von Stimme in sich und mahnt; aber das ist nicht anders als ein Geräusch in einer Lampe oder im Ofen oder wenn es in eigentümlichen Abständen in einer Grotte tropft. Und die Welt ist so eingerichtet, daß es Menschen giebt, die ihr ganzes Leben lang in der Pause vorbeikommen, wenn er, lautloser als alles was sich bewegt, weiter rückt wie ein Zeiger, wie eines Zeigers Schatten, wie die Zeit.⁸⁸

Out of a mixture of fear and self-tantalisation, Malte joins the ranks of those who >disregard< the man by consigning him to anonymous invisibility. Instead, and true to form, he fixates on the sounds emitted by the hidden figure's *Rest von Stimme*:⁸⁹

Wie unrecht hatte ich, ungerne hinzusehen. Ich schäme mich aufzuschreiben, daß ich oft in seiner Nähe den Schritt der andern annahm, als wüßte ich nicht um ihn. Dann hörte ich es in ihm »La Presse« sagen und gleich darauf noch einmal und ein drittes Mal in raschen Zwischenräumen. Und die Leute neben mir sahen sich um und suchten die Stimme. Nur ich tat eiliger als alle, als wäre mir nichts aufgefallen, als wäre ich innen überaus beschäftigt.⁹⁰

For the first time in the entire book, Malte's play with the seductions of the unseen becomes a prelude to an actual act of looking. Thus, he is engaging in a *psycho-acoustic experiment that is easily falsifiable*. Experimenting first on a *Nichtgesicht*, he proceeds to put his mental picture to the test of

⁸⁸ MLB, Paper LIX, pp.599f.

⁸⁹ Malte writes that the man, in crying *La Presse*, *mahnt*. This word, which puts one in mind of the Old Testament prophets or the early Christian desert fathers like Saint Simeon Stylite, the fifth-century anchorite, gives an early clue as to his imminent religious significance for Malte. Cf the *Neue Gedichte* "Ein Prophet" and "Der Stylit" (*Neue Gedichte anderer Teil*, KA I, p.521 & p.532 respectively).

⁹⁰ MLB, Paper LIX, p.600.

correspondence, reference, objectivity.⁹¹ The result (as we saw in the Introduction) replicates Lichtenberg's anti-Lavaterian findings:

Ich wußte sofort, daß meine Vorstellung wertlos war. Die durch keine Vorsicht oder Verstellung eingeschränkte Hingegebenheit seines Elends übertraf meine Mittel. Ich hatte weder den Neigungswinkel seiner Haltung begriffen gehabt noch das Entsetzen, mit dem die Innenseite seiner Lider ihn fortwährend zu erfüllen schien. Ich hatte nie an seinen Mund gedacht, der eingezogen war wie die Öffnung eines Ablaufs. Möglicherweise hatte er Erinnerungen;⁹² jetzt aber kam nie mehr etwas zu seiner Seele hinzu als täglich das amorphe Gefühl des Steinrands hinter ihm, an dem seine Hand sich abnutzte. Ich war stehengeblieben, und während ich das alles fast gleichzeitig sah, fühlte ich, daß er einen anderen Hut hatte und eine ohne Zweifel sonntägliche Halsbinde; sie war schräg in gelben und violetten Vierecken gemustert, und was den Hut angeht, so war es ein billiger neuer Strohhut mit einem grünen Band. Es liegt natürlich nichts an diesen Farben, und es ist kleinlich, daß ich sie behalten habe. Ich will nur sagen, daß sie an ihm waren wie das Weicheste auf eines Vogels Unterseite. Er selbst hatte keine Lust daran, und wer von allen (ich sah mich um) durfte meinen, dieser Staat wäre um seinetwillen?⁹³

The italicised words chime the shameful, hitherto suppressed, potential within Malte's entire *Sehenlernen* project: error.⁹⁴ In a way that did not happen

⁹¹ Malte's opening words in Paper XXVIII (MLB, p.513) are interesting in this light: »Damals zuerst fiel es mir auf, daß man von einer Frau nichts sagen könne; ich merkte, wenn sie von ihr [Ingeborg] erzählten, wie sie sie aussparten, wie sie die anderen nannten und beschrieben, die Umgebungen, die Örtlichkeiten, die Gegenstände bis an eine bestimmte Stelle heran, wo das alles aufhörte, sanft und gleichsam vorsichtig aufhörte mit dem leichten, niemals nachgezogenen Kontur, der sie einschloß. Wie war sie? fragte ich dann« (MLB, p.513). For a deft linkage of the *Zeitungsverkäufer* episode, this passage and the Ingeborg Paper see Haag, "Apprendre à voir la femme", pp.115ff. Direct description is renounced here for the same reason that direct observation of the *Zeitungsverkäufer* was initially renounced: in order to leave a *Leerstelle* which clairvoyance can fill in without cognitive distraction. One finds an analogy in Kassner's 1956 essay, "Zen, Rilke und ich", where Kassner expresses his admiration for the principles of Zen archery: »eine[] Schule, [...] darin es die Meister dazu brächten, blind, will sagen: geschlossenen Auges das Ziel, jedes gegebene, die Scheibe mit dem Pfeil zu treffen [...] Das Ziel blind treffen - wer das vermag, muß er es nicht in sich selber haben?« (Rilke. *Gesammelte Erinnerungen 1926-1956*, pp.68f, emphasis added). To set up a blind target in this way is the securest method of confirming or disconfirming the integrity of an intuition. This approach is still of course placed at the centre of parapsychological research methodology.

⁹² Cf the Man in the Tuileries (MLB, Paper XI, p.466).

⁹³ MLB, Paper LIX, pp.601f, emphasis added.

⁹⁴ Cf Paper XVIII (MLB, p. 489: »denn ich hatte mich nicht geirrt«) and Paper L (p.578: »ich habe mich nie geirrt« & p.579: »ich wußte ja, daß ich mich niemals täuschte«).

in the case of the woman felt to be tearing her face from her head, or of the man felt to be dying in the *crémérie*, or of the figure taken to be the ghost of Christine Brahe, or of the figure taken to be the medical student's mother - the *Zeitungsverkäufer* is humbly (for Malte) reduced from the subjunctive to the indicative, the virtual to the actual, the obscene to the scene. Malte, determining for the first time to overcome what he calls »meine[] Feigheit, nicht hinzusehen«⁹⁵ puts himself out of his misery: »[ich] entschloß, die zunehmende Fertigkeit meiner Einbildung durch die auswärtige Tatsache einzuschüchtern und aufzuheben«.⁹⁶ That Malte even acknowledges - nay, expects - a diremption of subjective *Einbildung* and objective *auswärtige Tatsache* is tantamount to an admission of defeat in symbolist-paranormalist conceit of correspondent vision. As such, the act of looking at the *Zeitungsverkäufer* constitutes nothing less than a final confirmation of the epistemological tragi-comedy in which Malte has been an unwitting (or self-deluding) player.

The episode also offers Malte another practical demonstration of his new-found belief in the *Nachträglichkeit* of our insights. For he retrospectively realises that the mental picture he had been developing of the as yet unseen man⁹⁷ had involved unconsciously synthesised *memories* involving pictures of

⁹⁵ *MLB*, Paper LIX, p.601.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ A decisive point apparently lost on Stephens, who speaks of »diese *Änderung* an der Gestalt des Blinden« (*Strukturanalyse*, p.196, emphasis added) and »subtile[] Änderungen an der Wirklichkeitsoberfläche« (*ibid.*, p.199, emphasis added), as though Malte's original mental picture were itself somehow referentially based. Malte admits that his *Vorstellung* - which Stephens himself has correctly (if rather inconsistently) classed among Malte's »autonome Phantasiebilder« (*ibid.*, p.199) - was *völlig wertlos*, having been based upon »keine Beweise« (*MLB*, Paper LIX, p.600). Similarly Bradley, who opens her account of Malte's full frontal view of the man with the words: »Wenn er den Mann zum zweiten Mal anschaut, ist es Frühling und

iconic types⁹⁸ rather than paranormal *intuitions* drawn from more præternatural sources. By stereotyping the face of another, he has, like Brentano's Wehmüller, been breaking some intimate ethical law:

*Ich weiß jetzt, daß es mir ein wenig half, an die vielen abgenommenen Christusse aus streifigem Elfenbein zu denken, die bei allen Althändlern herumliegen. Der Gedanke an irgendeine Pietà trat vor und ab -: dies alles wahrscheinlich nur, um eine gewisse Neigung hervorzurufen, in der sein langes Gesicht sich hielt, und den trostlosen Bartnachwuchs im Wangenschatten und die endgültig schmerzvolle Blindheit seines verschlossenen Ausdrucks, der schräg aufwärts gehalten war.*⁹⁹

ein Sonntag« (*Zu Rilkes Malte Laurids Brigge*, p.52, emphasis added). Bradley does make the interesting point though that the image of a blind man selling a newspaper represents the ultimate in alienated labour (ibid.). Christian Klein points out the uncanny pairing off of the blind newspaper vendor with the blind cauliflower vendor of Paper XVIII ("Le carnet 38, ou la Licorne", p.84). I am struck even more however by the remarkably Hofmannesque continuity of description between the *Zeitungsverkäufer* and a certain other figure who has also had an electrifying effect upon him; who also wore a *Wintermantel* and, for that matter, a *Halstuch*; whom Malte also associated with the word *Entsetzen* as a cipher for utter cognitive estrangement; who also had a severely compressed mouth and a bent posture; whom Malte also took to possess a pair of defunct eyes (- and is it absolutely clear that the *Zeitungsverkäufer* is himself blind? an *unambiguous* statement to this effect from Malte *after* he has seen the man directly is lacking)... I mean the >dying< man in the *crémérie* (MLB, Paper XVIII, pp.489f.). Like a *Doppelgänger redivivus*, the *Zeitungsverkäufer* would be making a springtime, Sunday, paschal appearance to Malte, who *recognises* him (»erkannte«: MLB, Paper LIX, p.601). Would not such a shadow reading of the episode place a more literal frame around Malte's exclamation: »[...] so bist du also. Es giebt Beweise für deine Existenz« (ibid., p.602)? I also wonder might there not be an oblique allusion in the theophanic figure of the *Zeitungsverkäufer* to the angel of kabbalistic lore, who can only make an earthly appearance if he first disguises himself in a *malbush* (garment). Cf Moshe Idel, *Abolishing Perfections. Kabbalah and Interpretation* (New Haven & London: 2002), pp.144 & 188.

⁹⁸ Liu cogently notes the typological strain in Malte's act of imagination, which he characterises as an archetypal transposition (*Suche nach Zusammenhang*, p.176).

⁹⁹ MLB, Paper LIX, p.600, emphasis added. That this man, associated with Christ's physiognomy, cries out the words *La Presse* lends it an amusing intertextual dimension. Baudelaire's Preface to the 1862 *La Presse* series of *Le Spleen de Paris* is addressed with heavy irony to Arsène Houssaye, literary editor of that newspaper. In this Preface, Baudelaire cites Houssaye's mediocre piece "Chanson du Vitrier": »Vous-même, mon cher ami, n'avez-vous pas tenté de traduire en une *chanson* le cri strident du *Vitrier*, et d'exprimer dans une prose lyrique toutes les désolantes suggestions que ce cri envoie jusqu'aux mansardes, à travers les plus hautes brumes de la rue?« (*Oeuvres complètes I*, p.276). In Houssaye's unimpressive *tentative* (which Baudelaire is archly setting up as a foil for his own "Le Mauvais Vitrier"), the figure emitting a plaintive cry is described as: »[...] un homme de trente-cinq ans, grand, pâle, maigre, longs cheveux, barbe rousse: - Jésus-Christ et Paganini« (Houssaye, printed in editorial notes, ibid., p.1309).

This story, like that involving the medical student, is not fresh. Only now is Malte bringing himself round to relating it.¹⁰⁰ As the words *Ich weiß jetzt* intimate, the benefit of hindsight allows him to demystify his own faculties of intuition and imagination, dissociating them into their finite and intelligible component parts.¹⁰¹

Yet if this is demystification, then it would seem to sit uncomfortably with the deeply Rilkean *Umschlag* which brings the Paper to its epiphanous - and theophanous - close:

Mein Gott, fiel es mir mit Ungestüm ein, so *bist* du also. Es giebt Beweise für deine Existenz. Ich habe sie alle vergessen und habe keinen je verlangt, denn welche ungeheurere Verpflichtung läge in deiner Gewißheit. Und doch, nun wird mirs gezeigt. Dieses ist dein Geschmack, hier hast du Wohlgefallen.¹⁰² Daß wir doch lernten, vor allem aushalten und nicht urteilen. Welche sind die schweren Dinge? Welche die gnädigen? Du allein weißt es.¹⁰³

[H]ier hast du Wohlgefallen: this man is God's son, in whom He is pleased. Various theological (and theodical) lines have been drawn from Malte's *Gottesbeweis* back to the pathos-filled figure of the *Zeitungsverkäufer*.¹⁰⁴ It seems to fashion an incomprehensible, if moving, *non sequitur*. The next Paper, however, gives us a neglected clue as to Malte's logic. There, he writes

¹⁰⁰ Note the cohesion of calendar information in Paper LIX (»Wenn es wieder Winter wird [...]«, *MLB*, p.602) and Paper LXI (»[...] es ist Winter, ich friere [...]«, *MLB*, p.604).

¹⁰¹ Again one can draw a firm line from Poe's Dupin to Rilke's Malte in this respect.

¹⁰² Cf Luther's rendition of Christ's Transfiguration: »Und siehe, eine Stimme vom Himmel herab sprach: Dies ist mein lieber Sohn, an welchem ich Wohlgefallen habe« (Matthew 3:17).

¹⁰³ *MLB*, Paper LIX, p.602.

¹⁰⁴ See for example Seifert: »Dieser blinde Zeitungsverkäufer geht gesteigert in der Gestalt Christi auf« (*Das epische Werk*, p.287), Stephens: »eine[] Transparenz für Gott« (*Strukturanalyse*, p.201), & Engelhardt: »Stoisch feiert, dem die Welt zur Qual wurde, das ihm gegenständlich begegnende Entsetzen als Hoffnung auf Erlösung. Daß das Urteilen verboten und gleichzeitig nach einem Beweis für die Existenz Gottes gesucht wird, zeigt das Dilemma Maltes und auch Rilkes« (»Der Versuch, wirklich zu werden«, p.120).

of the newspaper vendor's fellow *Fortgeworfenen* that they are so far removed from normal physical existence that only one figure could bear to love them: »Ich glaube, nur Jesus ertrüge sie, der noch das Auferstehen in allen Gliedern hat«. ¹⁰⁵ Throughout Paper LX, the *Fortgeworfenen* come across like yogic adepts or Catholic charismatics transplanted to an incongruous modern urban setting:

Es ist nicht, daß ich mich von ihnen unterscheiden will [...] Ich bin nicht so weit. Ich habe nicht das Herz zu ihrem Leben. [...] Nein, es ist nicht, daß ich mich von ihnen unterscheiden will; aber ich überhübe mich, wollte ich ihnen gleich sein. Ich bin es nicht. Ich hätte weder ihre Stärke noch ihr Maß. Ich ernähre mich, und so bin ich von Mahlzeit zu Mahlzeit, völlig geheimnislos; sie aber erhalten sich fast wie Ewige. Sie stehen an ihren täglichen Ecken, auch im November, und schreien nicht vor Winter. Der Nebel kommt und macht sie undeutlich und ungewiß: sie sind gleichwohl. Ich war verreist, ich war krank, vieles ist mir vergangen: sie aber sind nicht gestorben. ¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁵ *MLB*, Paper LX, p.604. I share Kruse's thesis that we see in Malte's *evolving* response to the *Fortgeworfenen* a gradual »Umwertung« of their status, such that the later discussions describe them as belonging to »einer anderen Dimension« (*Auf dem extremen Pol der Subjektivität*, pp.148f). Kruse's ancillary point, however, that there is a double order of *Fortgeworfenen*, those who enjoy transcendent status and those who simply endure a »nicht existentiell-religiös vertiefte[] Armut« (*ibid.*, p.149), seems to me somewhat less warranted. The *Fortgeworfenen* are surely portrayed *en bloc* as standing >ecstatically< outside the human sphere. In Paper XXV, for instance, the *Vögelfütterer* are portrayed as being closer to the angelic than the terrestrial state as they proffer their almost eucharistic bread: »Wenn die Zuschauer nicht wären und man ließe ihn lange genug dastehn, ich bin sicher, daß auf einmal ein Engel käme und überwände sich und äße den alten, süßlichen Bissen aus der verkümmerten Hand. Dem sind nun, wie immer, die Leute im Wege. Sie sorgen dafür, daß nur Vögel kommen; sie finden das reichlich, und sie behaupten, er erwarte nichts anderes.« (*MLB*, p.510). (This description of the *Vögelfütterer* may be in part inspired by a delightfully eccentric uncle of Rilke in Prague: see Kassner, *Rilke. Gesammelte Erinnerungen 1926-1956*, p.9. The bird-feeder's >animal< magnetism puts one in mind also of a charming anecdote which Ellenberger relays about Mesmer: »When Justinus Kerner visited Meersburg in 1854, he heard wondrous stories from old people who had known the great man. He was told that when Mesmer went to the island of Mainau, flocks of birds would fly toward him, following him wherever he walked, and settling around him when he sat down«, *Discovery of the Unconscious*, p.68.)

¹⁰⁶ *MLB*, Paper LX, pp.602f.

These physical prodigies seem wholly transported, ex-static, cataleptically entranced - they seem to live from air (charismatic inedia),¹⁰⁷ in a kind of suspended animation, as if warmed only by internal heat. Their state seems no less otherworldly than the yogic samadhi or the somnambulistic *sommeil lucide*. It will be recalled from Paper XVI that Malte interpreted their attentions as initiatory gestures. Now, in the context of his own deepening immiseration, he wonders whether they might not be offering him overtures to join their number in an apprenticeship whose terrifying harshness he is beginning to grasp. Sokel characterises Malte's ambivalence well: »Disguised as mesmerizing anxiety, an overpowering temptation issues forth from the castaways«. ¹⁰⁸ Malte feels keenly the contrast between his own all-too-human enmeshment in physical and temporal coordinates and the near timelessness (*fast wie Ewige*) of their destitution. He writes that his mode of living is mundanely *geheimnislos* - that is, explicable under non-religious models of body and psyche. And this he casts as a measure of his own spiritual underdevelopment. The *Fortgeworfenen*, by contrast, have somehow transcended normal existential coordinates, falling down so low in worldly terms that, by virtue of an outrageous paradox, they have made a *dunkle Himmelfahrt*. These human beings are so transcended that, though still enfleshed in time, their spirits have all but departed from the world. Time, in Sokel's limpid

¹⁰⁷ Cf Murphy, *The Future of the Body*, pp.483, 503 & 465. In *Das Rätsel des Menschen*, du Prel talks of the necessary »Depotenzierung des leiblichen Lebens« in order that the transcendental state be achieved (*Rätsel des Menschen*, p.81). On the inedia topos, compare Kafka's *Hungerkünstler* figure.

¹⁰⁸ Sokel, "The Devolution of the Self", p.174.

formulation, »no longer occurs in them«. ¹⁰⁹ They have died, yet they continue to live. *This, it will be recalled, is precisely the Musilian >other< condition described in Malte's death meditation after the cr merie episode:*

Wenn meine Furcht nicht so gro  w re, so w rde ich mich damit tr sten, da  es nicht unm glich ist, alles anders zu sehen und doch zu leben. Aber ich f rchte mich, ich f rchte mich namenlos vor dieser Ver nderung. Ich bin ja noch gar nicht in dieser Welt eingew hnt gewesen, die mir gut scheint. Was soll ich in einer anderen? Ich w rde so gerne unter den Bedeutungen bleiben, die mir lieb geworden sind, und wenn schon etwas sich ver ndern mu , so m chte ich doch wenigstens unter den Hunden leben d rfen, die eine verwandte Welt haben und dieselben Dinge. ¹¹⁰

To go through mystical voiding as a result of mortification of the flesh ¹¹¹ and isolation from all sociality is to >die< to the ordinary world and attain consciousness of the >other<. This notion of *Jenseits*, as we have seen in Kant and du Prel, evokes not so much a (w)hol(l)y other world to be entered upon physical death but another consciousness of and within *this* world: *alles anders zu sehen und doch zu leben*. In anticipating this mental event, this *Ver nderung* involving the loss of familiar *Bedeutungen*, Malte asks for the society of dogs, *die eine verwandte Welt haben und dieselben Dinge*. Canine sensitivity to spectral realities forms, of course, the centrepiece of Paper XXVIII (and, less strongly,

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., p.176.

¹¹⁰ MLB, Paper XVIII, p.490.

¹¹¹ The *Charles le Fou* narrative in the next Paper (LXI) contains a graphic description of the King's self-mortification: »Das war damals, als von Zeit zu Zeit M nner fremdlings, mit geschw rztem Gesicht ihn in seinem Bette  berfielen, um ihm das in die Schw ren hineingefaulte Hemde abzurei en, das er schon l ngst f r sich selber hielt. Es war verdunkelt im Zimmer, und sie zerrten unter seinen steifen Armen die m rben Fetzen weg, wie sie sie griffen. Dann leuchtete einer vor, und da erst entdeckten sie die j sige Wunde auf seiner Brust, in die das eiserne Amulett eingesunken war, weil er es jede Nacht an sich pre te mit aller Kraft seiner Inbrunst; nun stand es tief in ihm, f rchterlich kostbar, in einem Perlensaum von Eiter wie ein wundertuender Rest in der Mulde eines Reliqu rs. Man hatte harte Handlanger ausgesucht, aber sie waren nicht ekelfest, wenn die W rmer, gest rt, nach ihnen her berstanden aus dem flandrischen Barchent und, aus den Falten abgefallen, sich irgendwo an ihren  rmeln aufzogen« (MLB, pp.604f.). Cf Engelhardt's notes on Malte's *Auratisierung* of Charles le Fou ("Der Versuch, wirklich zu werden", p.117).

Paper XLVIII). The creaturely ability to straddle both the visible spectrum and, as it were, the ultra-violet realm of super-sensuousness means that the animals hold citizenship of world and spirit dimensions - *at one and the same time*.¹¹² Malte, in anticipating a need for the companionship of dogs, is anticipating his own dual citizenship after he will have gone through the feared and longed-for loss of world-bound selfhood.¹¹³ Sokel describes this cosmicisation of consciousness represented by the *Fortgeworfenen* as an »expansion of the self to a cosmic dimension [which] can only proceed by the devolution of the empirical personality or ego«. ¹¹⁴

In *Das Rätsel des Menschen*, du Prel advances the startling argument that *human beings are themselves supreme spiritistic phenomena, indisputable spectral manifestations*:

Aber ist der Mensch denn etwas anderes als eben eine Geistererscheinung, als die Inkarnation eines transzendentalen Subjekts, also die materiellste aller

¹¹² This will evolve into the theme of Rilke's eighth *Duineser Elegie*.

¹¹³ Note that cats deputise for Saint Julien-l'Hospitalier in performing this companionship rôle for the *Fortgeworfenen*: »Nur verlorene Katzen kommen abends zu ihnen in die Kammer und zerkratzen sie heimlich und schlafen auf ihnen. Manchmal folge ich *einer* zwei Gassen weit. *Sie* gehen an den Häusern hin, fortwährend kommen Menschen, die *sie* verdecken, *sie* schwinden hinter ihnen weiter wie nichts« (Paper LXI, p.604, emphases added: do the italicised words refer to the cats or the female *Fortgeworfenen*? Both seem equally alienated from the *Menschen*...). Compare the *Buch von der Armut und vom Tode*: »Die Menge drängt und denkt nicht sie zu schonen, / obwohl sie etwas zögernd sind und schwach, - / nur scheue Hunde, welche nirgends wohnen, / gehn ihnen leise eine Weile nach« (KA I, p.236, lines 10-13). Cf Luke 16: 20-21. According to Betz, Rilke marvelled at the otherworldly character of cats: »[...] als ob wir nur in unserer Einbildung vorhanden wären, ein Schatten, den ihre Pupille überhaupt nicht wahrnahm. Diese Unabhängigkeit der Katzen erschien ihm als Tugend, denn sie gestattete ihm, sich an ihre fast imaginäre Gegenwart zu gewöhnen, die nicht mehr belastete als die eines Schattens« (*Rilke in Frankreich*, p.162; cf the association of spectral and feline in the poem "Schwarze Katze", *Neue Gedichte anderer Teil*, KA I, p.545). Man's domestication of dogs, Rilke tells Betz in words that could serve as a gloss on Kafka's *Rotpeter*, has slowly robbed them of their otherness: »>Weder Mensch, noch Tier, [...] ein klägliches und rührendes Zwitterwesen, [...] von der Welt unserer Beziehungen unendlich angezogen [...]« (*Rilke in Frankreich*, p.163).

¹¹⁴ Sokel, "The Devolution of the Self", p.188.

Materialisationen und schon darum die wunderbarste, weil sie viel länger dauert als eine spiritistische?¹¹⁵

In Malte's eyes, the *Fortgeworfenen* manifest this deepest truth of human existence, that we are spirits in the material world, ghost enfleshed awhile. The *Fortgeworfenen* offer proof that one *can* do what Malte prays will be possible: *alles anders zu sehen und doch zu leben*.¹¹⁶ Existing in an almost extrasomatic body, they give evidence that transcendental consciousness can replace ordinary consciousness *before physical death has occurred*,¹¹⁷ and that a supernatural *Hülfe* will indeed sustain those who have gone over to this other side. (In a marginal addition to Paper LX, Malte wonders at the ability of schoolchildren to get through the harsh daily round. Someone somewhere *must*, he reasons, be sustaining them, offering them »Beistand«.)¹¹⁸

The great spiritual challenge for Malte has been to leave the normal world and, via the path of renunciation and purgation, go through a »Bewußtseinstod« (Saalmann)¹¹⁹ to *das anders angeschaute Diesseits*. I submit that this has been the inner meaning of his parapsychological *Sehenlernen* project, this the »veränderte Welt« heralded in his »Briefentwurf«,¹²⁰ this the

¹¹⁵ Du Prel, *Rätsel des Menschen*, p.108. See also p.115.

¹¹⁶ Compare Baudelaire's spiritualising apostrophe to the "Petites Vieilles" of Paris in the poem of the same name: »Telles vous cheminez, stoïques et sans plaintes, / À travers le chaos des vivantes cités [...] Honteuses d'exister, ombres ratatinées, / Peureuses, le dos bas, vous côtoyez les murs; / Et nul ne vous salue, étrangères destinées! / Débris d'humanité pour l'éternité mûrs!« (*Ouvres complètes I*, p.91, emphases added).

¹¹⁷ Pace Giloy p.59.

¹¹⁸ *MLB*, Paper LX, p.603.

¹¹⁹ Saalmann, *Würfelwurf nach dem Absoluten*, p.64.

¹²⁰ »Eine vollkommen andere Auffassung aller Dinge hat sich unter diesen Einflüssen in mir herausgebildet, es sind gewisse Unterschiede da, die mich von den Menschen mehr als alles Bisherige abtrennen. Eine veränderte Welt. Ein neues Leben voll neuer Bedeutungen« (*MLB*, Paper XXII, pp.504f.).

»Zeit der anderen Auslegung« prophesied in the light of the *crémérie* episode.¹²¹ In this latter passage, Malte writes: »Ich bin der Eindruck, der sich verwandeln wird. Oh, es fehlt nur ein kleines, und ich könnte das alles begreifen und gutheißen. Nur ein Schritt, und mein tiefes Elend würde Seligkeit sein.«¹²² In *Der Spiritismus*, du Prel writes of the one small change that will transform everything: »Eine kleine Korrektur, an unserem Gehirn vorgenommen, würde das ganze Weltbild verändern. Es wäre noch dieselbe Welt, aber anders angeschaut und nicht mehr zu erkennen.«¹²³ *Alles anders zu sehen und doch zu leben* is thus to be understood not as »der bildungspolitische Imperativ« of a self in need of modernisation (Neumeyer),¹²⁴ but as an ideal of spiritual transmutation. In order to see the world from a purely spiritual perspective, *Malte realises he must become more ghost than man while still alive.*¹²⁵

¹²¹ *MLB*, Paper XVIII, p.490.

¹²² *Ibid.*, pp.490f.

¹²³ Du Prel, *Spiritismus*, p.8.

¹²⁴ Neumeyer, *Der Flaneur*, p.221.

¹²⁵ Allemann is not on firm ground, in my view, when he insists that the idea of *Tod* as »die Daseinsform des Tot-Seins« - as opposed to the more literal »Vorgang des Sterbens [...], das Ableben« - belongs only to late Rilke (*Zeit und Figur beim späten Rilke*, p.193). Kruse (*Auf dem extremen Pol der Subjektivität*, p.35) comes rather close to the idea behind the death-theme in the *Malte* when he collocates subject-annihilating »Elend« and an »Ekstase des Todes« (*Auf dem extremen Pol der Subjektivität*, p.35). This does, however, veer too closely to an ideal of the death of *all* consciousness. Although to the ego the *Grenzüberschreitung* into a different state of consciousness will be experienced as annihilation, this is not to equate such a transition with a pan-psychic or Dionysiac extinction of all sense or selfhood. Death, on the monistic model, introduces not the end of sense but a higher, suprarational, transcendental sense - not *das Chaos des Auslegens* but *die andere Auslegung*. (Rather as Jung's spiritual alchemy sees the *nigredo* stage as »une phase de [...] >noirceur< marquant la perte momentanée du sens« - Christine Maillard, "Le >mystique< et la psyché", p.90, emphasis added). *Malte's Todessehnsucht* represents a desire not for extinction but for radical expansion of consciousness. (Cf Ellenberger, *Discovery of the Unconscious*, p.205, on a similar idea in the philosophy of Gotthilf Heinrich von Schubert.) Rimbach writes: »bei Rilke verweist das Nicht-Rationale nie auf ein Versinken im Chaos. Das verborgene Innere ist, ganz im Gegenteil, das grosse, unerkannte Ordnungselement« ("Zum Begriff der Äquivalenz", p.137). While the general applicability of this is problematical - one thinks immediately of Rilke's treatments of id-sexuality, for instance - it is valid as a characterisation of Rilke's Hartmannian understanding of the transcendental (not Freudian) Unconscious. Saalman I think fundamentally misunderstands *Malte's* notion of death when he writes of the »Bewußtseinstod« which he sees *Malte* as *already* achieving in the *Igitur*-like symbolist *acte*

But when he surveys the *Fortgeworfenen* and their transcendence of factual austerity, he realises he cannot yet be one of their number: »[...] ich überhübe mich, wollte ich ihnen gleich sein. Ich bin es nicht.«¹²⁶ This is why Malte does not show sympathy for them: *Mit-Leid* is beyond him. He is below them.¹²⁷

The objection might well be made that the foregoing still does not adequately explain why it is that Malte suddenly accords *this* figure such extraordinary, seemingly excessive significance. What is it about this »ruine d'homme«¹²⁸ that produces such a response in Malte? We have seen that his appearance exceeds anything Malte had expected. The infinite gap between what Malte had expected to see (the stereotypical picture of his *Einbildung*: Impoverished Blind Man) and what his eye actually met (*die auswärtige Tatsache*) is, in this respect, indeed a rich telegraphy from spirit. But to promote this to a proof of God's existence seems a little enthusiastic, to say

d'auto-destruction: »Der Tod gestattet die Rückkehr zum uranfänglichen Chaos« (*Würfelnach dem Absoluten*, p.64). The place of Graf Brahe as an exemplar of the monistic ease around the issue of death becomes all the more intelligible in this light. Giloy, citing the Graf's characterisation of death as »ein kleiner Zwischenfall« [*MLB*, Paper XV, p.475], paraphrases it as »eine unwesentliche Transformation der Seele von einer materiellen in eine spirituelle Existenz« (*Aporie des Dichters*, p.56). The dead, in the Graf's cosmology, enter a mediate zone in which their metaphysical individuality is preserved. (Cf for instance the theory of the >bardo< realms in the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*, as elucidated by Sogyal Rinpoche, *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying*, 2nd edition San Francisco & London: 2002, pp.106ff.)

¹²⁶ *MLB*, Paper LX, p.603. When Kruse writes that Malte »zählt sich *am Ende* unter die >Fortgeworfenen« (*Auf dem extremen Pol der Subjektivität*, p.30, emphasis added), he rather misses the salient point that his identification with them remains theoretical. In a letter of October 19th 1907 to Clare, Rilke anticipates the essence of Malte's »Schicksal«: »Ist es nicht das, daß diese Prüfung ihn überstieg, daß er sie am Wirklichen nicht bestand, obwohl er in der Idee von ihrer Notwendigkeit überzeugt war [...]« (*MLB-Materialien*, p.40).

¹²⁷ This reading of the *Fortgeworfenen* is diametrically opposed to that of Giloy, who writes: »Malte bedauert nicht etwa die Fortgeworfenen, deren Leben er als uneigentlich charakterisiert, sondern befürchtet, zu ihnen zu gehören« (*Aporie des Dichters*, p.59).

¹²⁸ As Baudelaire's *Je* calls his *vieux saltimbanque* in the piece of that name (*Oeuvres complètes I*, p.296).

the least. And is the riddle really solved by reference either to the aesthetic richness of the impression made by the man's attire¹²⁹ or to the unanticipated extent of his immiseration?

Mein Gott, fiel es mir mit Ungestüm ein, so bist du also. Es giebt Beweise für deine Existenz. The addressee of this apostrophe has generally, if not indeed universally, been taken to be *Gott*. But Malte has a habit throughout the *Aufzeichnungen* of using the word *Gott* in different senses according to context, in some cases evoking the reality of God, in others using his name for purely rhetorical effect, and frequently doing both at once.¹³⁰ If, in the present case, we charge *Mein Gott* with just such a double connotation, making it at once referential *and* exclamatory, then Malte's *du* further on in the sentence sets a semantic pendulum swinging between God *and the newspaper vendor himself*. This possibility is supported by a crucial linguistic detail in the passage: *Es giebt Beweise für deine Existenz*. The mention of *Beweise* sends the reader back to a sentence from the earlier, >blind< phase of the experiment: »Denn ich mußte ihn machen wie man einen Toten macht, für den keine *Beweise* mehr da sind, keine Bestandteile; der ganz und gar innen zu leisten

¹²⁹ As Manfred Engel argues in his editorial *Nachwort* to the Reclam-edition: »[...] das Sich-Schmücken für einen Feiertag ist in seinem ästhetischen >Überschuß< ein Akt elementarer Lebensbejahung - und eben dafür steht ja, schon im *Stunden-Buch*, fern von aller christlichen Orthodoxie, der Name >Gott< ein« (*Die Aufzeichnungen des Malte Laurids Brigge*, edited by M. E., Stuttgart: 1997, p.336, footnote 34).

¹³⁰ Kruse, following Wagner-Egelhaaf (*Mystik der Moderne*, p.79), writes: »Gut 60 mal wird das Wort *Gott* in den *Aufzeichnungen* verwendet, sehr häufig aber beiläufig, in einer Redensart versteckt: >Weiß Gott<, >lieber Gott<, >mein Gott< u.ä.« ("Zur ästhetischen Religiosität", p.62. In a note - no.58, pp.67f - Kruse counts some 21 cases of »[e]ine *auf den ersten Blick* eher beiläufige, meist redensartige Verwendung des Wortes >Gott<«, emphasis added). Clearly, given Malte's epistemological crisis, *Weiß Gott* is not without point: God *alone* knows the answer to these questions.

ist«.¹³¹ When Malte now writes that *Beweise* for the man's *Existenz* do after all exist, he admits: *Ich habe sie alle vergessen und habe keinen je verlangt...* At an elementary level, this is easily intelligible: the Imagined Man had become so intensely real for Malte as he blindly passed him by day in day out that his *Existenz* as an Actually Existing Man had been forgotten. Malte is now recognising the man's independent reality, his alterity, reimbursing him with the right to surprise, to transcend the categories of expectation and assumption and deduction which a fellow human being's *Einbildung* will bring to him.¹³²

But is Malte's epiphany finally explained with this reimbursal of the Other with a degree of existential autonomy? Hardly. *Es giebt Beweise für deine Existenz* - a deeper, more mysterious criterion of existential authenticity seems to be evoked here. *So bist du also*: Malte is not stressing *So*, which would lend it ostensive force; rather he is reducing *So* to a *Füllwort* and awarding the emphasis to an ontological or existential *bist*: not so much >You are *thus*< as, more primordially, >You *are*<.)¹³³ So what *has* been >proven< by the appearance of the man? How to make sense of the *ungeheure Verpflichtung* imposed by the man's *certain* existence? And what unspoken leap in ethical deduction is Malte making when he declares the inviolable autonomy of the

¹³¹ *MLB*, Paper LIX, p.600, emphasis added.

¹³² Engelhardt ("Der Versuch, wirklich zu werden", p.107) perceptively defines Rilke's concept of >reality< as involving a transcendence of expectation: »Das Wirkliche [...] ist das, was das Erwartete nicht mehr verstellt. Es ist negativ bestimmt, das, was sich aus den vertrauten Bedeutungen löst« ("Der Versuch, wirklich zu werden", p.107).

¹³³ Cf Malte's apostrophe to the spirit of Bettine von Arnim just two Papers back »Eben warst du noch, Bettine; ich seh dich ein« (*MLB*, Paper LVII, p.598).

other's perspective on tribulation and grace (*die schweren Dinge [...] die gnädigen*)?

Malte's reaction contains a curious coda which was not quoted above:
»Wenn es wieder Winter wird und ich muß einen neuen Mantel haben, - gieb mir, daß ich ihn *so* trage, solange er neu ist«. ¹³⁴ With these words, he places all-important distance between himself and the man, just as in the next Paper he will stress his own inability to join the *Fortgeworfenen*. What separates Malte from the *Zeitungsverkäufer* is this: the former is more anxious than the latter about what he will wear. This is of course a *Kryptozitat* of Christ's counsel to his brethren (Matthew 6: 25-34) not to seek such things as the heathen seek: »Und warum sorget ihr für die Kleidung?«. These words point us in the direction of a second Christian intertext - Kierkegaard's homily on this homily, entitled "The Anxiety of Lowliness", which made a demonstrably lasting impression on Rilke when, in 1906 at the latest, he read it under the German title *Die Sorge der Armut*. ¹³⁵

Now how might the *Zeitungsverkäufer* be connected to Kierkegaard's discourse on Matthew? We must look again at the man's attire:

¹³⁴ *MLB*, Paper LIX, p.602. Compare the coat motif in Kierkegaard's *Repetition*: »The blind man at the Brandenburger Tor, my harpist - for I probably was the only one who cared about him - had acquired a coat of mixed gray in place of the light green one for which I was pensively nostalgic and in which he looked like a weeping willow - he was lost to me and won for the universally human« (*Repetition*, pp.170f.).

¹³⁵ Bollnow: »Die Erinnerung an Kierkegaard begleitet ihn auch nach Paris [1906], wo er von der >reinen Bereitschaft und sorglosen Heiterkeit wie der Vogel, der 'diese Sorge nicht hat' < schreibt, in einem ausdrücklichen Zitat auf Kierkegaards "Sorge der Armut" anspielend, und daß er es im Brief an Clara Rilke so selbstverständlich, ohne erläuternde Namensnennung, gebrauchen kann, beweist, wie vertraut beiden der dänische Denker ist. Es gibt zugleich einen ersten Hinweis auf die Richtung, in der ihm Kierkegaard zuerst wichtig geworden ist. Noch über ein Jahr später wiederholt sich dieselbe Anspielung. Er spricht auch hier vom >Nicht-Vorsorgen, das der Vogel bei Kierkegaard vor uns voraushat< (*Rilke*, p.23).

Ich war stehengeblieben, und während ich das alles fast gleichzeitig sah, fühlte ich, daß er einen anderen Hut hatte und eine ohne Zweifel sonntägliche Halsbinde; sie war schräg in gelben und violetten Vierecken gemustert, und was den Hut angeht, so war es ein billiger neuer Strohhut mit einem grünen Band. Es liegt natürlich nichts an diesen Farben, und es ist kleinlich, daß ich sie behalten habe. Ich will nur sagen, daß sie an ihm waren wie das Weicheste auf eines Vogels Unterseite. Er selbst hatte keine Lust daran, und wer von allen (ich sah mich um) durfte meinen, dieser Staat wäre um seinetwillen. / Mein Gott, fiel es mir mit Ungestüm ein, so *bist* du also. Es giebt Beweise für deine Existenz.

The first thing to note is that the man is wearing his Sunday best (*eine ohne Zweifel sonntägliche Halsbinde*).¹³⁶ His appearance is a doxological act marking the Sabbath, a gesture of world-denial, astonishing in the light of the man's immiseration. No wretchedness of body and mind can drown out his soul's song of praise. »[W]hat love for God,« exclaims Johannes de Silentio in Kierkegaard's *Fear and Trembling*, »to be willing to let oneself be healed when from the very beginning one in all innocence has been botched, from the very beginning has been a damaged specimen of a human being!«.¹³⁷ This is the *Sorge der Armut* (this last word to be taken in the broadest sense of worldly lowliness), which forms the theme of Kierkegaard's above-mentioned Christian Discourse. Malte draws attention to the play of colours created by the newspaper vendor's *Halsbinde* and *Strohhut*: *Ich will nur sagen, daß sie an ihm waren wie das Weicheste auf eines Vogels Unterseite*. In his homily, Kierkegaard picks up on Christ's imagery of the lilies of the field and the

¹³⁶ Cf Malte's earlier indication that this episode takes place on a Sunday: »Es mußte ein Sonntag sein« (*MLB*, Paper LIX, p.601).

¹³⁷ Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, p.104. A little further down, de Silentio anticipates Rilke's comment to Pongs (given above) on the perennial figures of the dwarf and beggar, when he refers to those »malformed creatures« whom existence has damaged (*ibid.*, p.106).

birds of the air, homing in on the image of the *straw upon which the bird sits* as a symbol of its freedom from the anxieties of station which so plague human beings.¹³⁸ In seeing a bird-like grace in the man's appearance, Malte is tacitly citing both Christ's reassurance and Kierkegaard's exploration of that reassurance. The difference between the lowly bird and the lowly Christian, elaborates Kierkegaard, is that the latter »is aware of the distinction lowly / superior«. ¹³⁹ Unlike the bird, the lowly human being does not have a naturally given identity, but must fight his way through the social self-consciousness imposed by a world that ascribes identity in terms of lowly / superior. To come out on the other side of this struggle is to win through to a subjective existence grounded authentically in the relationship to God:

Oh, how difficult is the beginning of *existence* or of coming into *existence*: to *exist*, thereupon to continue in *existence*, and only after all that to *exist*; ah, cunningly hidden snare which is not spread for any bird! For it seems indeed as if, in order to be himself, a man must first be expertly informed about what the others are, and thereby learn to know what he himself is - in order then to be that. However, if he walks into the snare of this optical illusion, he never reaches the point of being himself.¹⁴⁰

The lowly Christian, continues Kierkegaard, has won through to *existence* because he

has learned to know from the world or from the others that he is a lowly man, but he has not abandoned himself to this knowledge, he does not lose himself in it after a

¹³⁸ Kierkegaard, "The Anxiety of Lowliness", in: S. K., *Christian Discourses and The Lilies of the Field and the Birds of the Air and Three Discourses at the Communion on Fridays*, translated with an introduction by Walter Lowrie (London, New York & Toronto: 1939), pp.40-50, here p.41. Kierkegaard makes a play on the idiom >high upon a straw<, meaning >in high station<, renaturalising the image to convey Christ's original evocation of the spontaneous freedom from care of the bird.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, p.42.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, emphases added.

worldly fashion, he does not altogether realize it, by holding on to God with the tenacity of eternity he has become himself.¹⁴¹

Malte's *Zeitungsverkäufer* does not wear his Sunday best to pleasure the eyes of his social superiors, the more affluent >others< who pass him coldly by :
...wer von allen (ich sah mich um) durfte meinen, dieser Staat wäre um seinetwillen?
He has dressed up purely *ad majorem Dei gloriam*, the bird-like beauty of his colours betokening an arduously won ability to leave worldly criteria behind and relate himself wholly to his Creator. In this, he displays his *Existenz* before God.

But this proof of the man's >existence< is equally a proof of the existence of the God Whom, despite all, he praises. Through this man's faith, the divinity manifests itself in disguise.¹⁴² All worldly experience and reason to the contrary, the newspaper vendor praises God on the Sabbath, just as the *Fortgeworfenen* survive unthinkably inhuman conditions of existence. Such

¹⁴¹ Ibid., pp.42f.

¹⁴² Not a new idea in Rilke, whose attitude to the beggar confirms Benjamin's dictum: »[...] solange es noch einen Bettler gibt, gibt es noch Mythos« (quoted by Engelhardt, "Der Versuch, wirklich zu werden", p.121). At the close of *Der Bettler und das stolze Fräulein*, one of the *Geschichten vom lieben Gott*, the narrator gently intimates that the beggar outside the church steps was all along none other than God Himself in disguise: »Die Kinder haben auch diese Geschichten vernommen, und sie behaupten, zum Ärger des Herrn Lehrer, auch in *ihr* käme der liebe Gott vor. Ich bin auch ein wenig erstaunt darüber; denn ich habe dem Herrn Lehrer doch versprochen, ihm eine Geschichte ohne den lieben Gott zu erzählen. Aber, freilich: die Kinder müssen es wissen!« (KA 3, p.420. Original emphasis). In the third *Stundenbuch*, we find the same idea in circulation: »Du aber bist der tiefste Mittellose, / der Bettler mit verborgenem Gesicht; / du bist der Armut große Rose, / die ewige Metamorphose / des Goldes in das Sonnenlicht« (KA I, p.245, lines 30-34). Cf Kassner in *Der indische Idealismus* (pp.80ff.) on the *sannyasin* beggar-figure in Indian culture, and Weil on the beggar-figure as a metaphor for the infinite patience with which God issues His invitation to us to leave the world behind: »God waits like a beggar who stands motionless and silent before someone who will perhaps give him a piece of bread. Time is that waiting. / Time is God's waiting as a beggar for our love [...] Beggars who are modest are images of Him« ("The Things of the World", in: *The Simone Weil Reader*, edited by George A. Panichas, translated by Richard Rees, New York: 1977, pp.423-431, here pp.423f.). It should, however, be recalled that Malte, as if to make their destitution transcendently free of terrestrial emergency, explicitly distinguishes the *Fortgeworfenen* from *Bettler* proper in Paper XVI (MLB, p.481).

superordinary faith and resilience would, reasons Malte, be inexplicable in the absence of a superordinary source of strength.¹⁴³

Malte believes that the *kleiner Schritt* would be taken if only he were ready and able to take up the yoke of an *imitatio* of these figures¹⁴⁴ and not cling on to notions of social dignity, not care what >the others< think of him, not be anxious what he shall put on,¹⁴⁵ not fear the coming winter, not doubt

¹⁴³ The intertextual thread connecting Malte's *Zeitungsverkäufer*, Matthew 6: 25-34 and Kierkegaard's "Anxiety of Lowliness" discourse becomes even more taut due to the presence of Christ Himself. Attempting to create a mental picture of the *Zeitungsverkäufer* »wie man einen Toten macht« (MLB, Paper LIX, p.600), Malte's thoughts turn, as we have seen, to the crucified Christ (ibid.). Kierkegaard's lowly Christian is inspired by the »life in lowliness« led by Christ, who »wandered about in the lowly form of a servant, not to be distinguished from other lowly men even by His extraordinary lowliness, until He ended in the utmost wretchedness, crucified as a criminal [...]« ("The Anxiety of Lowliness", p.45). Thus, the lowly Christian models his existence on the »Pattern« of Christ, whose lowliness offers a negative image of His glory: »True, he [the lowly Christian, D.D.] has not himself, with his own eyes, seen the Pattern, but he believes that He existed. There was, in a certain sense, nothing at all to see - except lowliness (for glory is something that must be *believed*), and of lowliness he is well able to form a conception. He has not with his own eyes seen the Pattern, nor does he make any attempt to have the senses construct such a picture. Yet he often sees the Pattern. For as often as in faith's gladness at the glory of this Pattern he completely forgets his poverty, his lowliness, the contempt in which he is held, he sees the Pattern - and he himself approximately resembles it« (ibid., p.46). Rilke seems to have carried over this interplay of mental representation, invisibility, lowliness and Christian faith into Malte's *Zeitungsverkäufer* episode. At the end of Paper LX, however, as though to cut the umbilical cord from the Christian intertexts to which he (and his creator) owes so much, he has Malte launch a peculiarly fierce attack on Christ: »Ich glaube, nur Jesus ertrüge sie, der noch das Aufstehen in allen Gliedern hat; aber ihm liegt nichts an ihnen. Nur die Liebenden verführen ihn, nicht die, die warten mit einem kleinen Talent zur Geliebten wie mit einer kalten Lampe« (MLB, Paper LX, p.604).

¹⁴⁴ Cf Stephens (*Strukturanalyse*, p.200).

¹⁴⁵ Or take off...: in Paper LX Malte describes an unselfconsciously grotesque striptease: »Wenn mir der Arm einginge, ich glaube, ich versteckte ihn. Sie aber (ich weiß nicht, wer sie sonst war), sie erschien jeden Tag vor den Terrassen der Caféhäuser, und obwohl es sehr schwer war für sie, den Mantel abzutun und sich aus dem unklaren Zeug und Unterzeug herauszuziehen, sie scheute der Mühe nicht und tat ab und zog aus so lange, daß mans kaum mehr erwarten konnte. Und dann stand sie vor uns, bescheiden, mit ihrem dünnen, verkümmerten Stück, und man sah, daß es rar war« (MLB, pp.602f.). As Sokel points out, this exhibitionism »does not serve vanity, but indicates the opposite - a complete relinquishing and abandonment of the last remnants of self-regard« ("The Devolution of the Self", p.189, note 10). Could the contrast with Malte be greater? Where the woman does not care a whit about her withered arm, Malte is still fretting over the cleanliness of his wrists (MLB, Paper XVI, p.480). Compare the description of St. Francis' unselfconscious nakedness in the *Buch von der Armut und vom Tode*: »O wo ist der, der aus Besitz und Zeit / zu seiner großen Armut so erstarrte, / daß er die Kleider abtat auf dem Markte / und bar einherging vor des Bischofs Kleid« (KA I, p.251); similarly the linkage of nudity and God-pleasing poverty in "Warum der liebeGott will, daß es arme Leute giebt" (*Geschichten vom lieben Gott*, KA III, pp.361ff.).

that, were the worst to come to the worst, God's sustenance would not be lacking. Is Malte not unnerved enough by the fact that the miraculous has up to this been keeping its distance?

And does he not also know that worldly Highness, even if it were to be granted to him, would only bring its own distinctive repertoire of tortures? Does he not begin to grasp the fact that external glory would leave him no better off? Is it not this insight which makes him turn immediately, in Paper LXI, to King Charles VI of France as an exemplar of "The Anxiety of Highness" - title of Kierkegaard's very next *Christian Discourse*?

Ich weiß, wenn ich zum Äußersten bestimmt bin, so wird es mir nichts helfen, daß ich mich verstelle in meinen besseren Kleidern. Glitt er nicht mitten im Königtum unter die Letzten? Er, der statt aufzusteigen hinabsank bis auf den Grund.¹⁴⁶

Malte's meditations on a series of *Fortgeworfenen* who have mysteriously transcended the Anxiety of Lowliness is complemented by his insights into potentates who proved mysteriously unable to enjoy the power they enjoyed, to shake off the Anxiety of Highness which accompanied that power. If the *Fortgeworfenen* are the lowly wretches, then Grischa Otrepjow, Karl der Kühne, Charles le Fou and Johannes XXII are Malte's superior wretches - or, as Vanoosthuyse calls them, »les sosies sublimes des épaves à la dérive des rues de Paris«.¹⁴⁷

In the next Chapter, the Kierkegaardian heart of this dialectic will be approached in more systematic fashion.

¹⁴⁶ *MLB*, Paper LXI, p.603.

¹⁴⁷ Vanoosthuyse, "L'abject et le sublime", p.143.

Excursus

Transcendental Optimism

The awed metaphysics with which Malte surrounds the *Fortgeworfenen* raises the still heavily controversial issue of Rilke's *apologia pauperum*, both here and elsewhere, whereby *Armut*, in the now notorious phrase from the third *Stundenbuch*, becomes »ein großer Glanz aus Innen«. ¹⁴⁸ Engelhardt sees the Rilkean *Umschlag* of poverty and misery into spiritual epiphany as a reprehensible »Legitimierung dessen, was ist«, transforming »das geschichtlich So-Seiende in einen der Zeit enthobenen Gegenstand, der, an sich gut, Objekt des Rühmens wird«. ¹⁴⁹ In taking exception to »[...] Rilkes Behandlung des Widerwärtigen, in das die spirituelle Erlösung geschoben wird«, Engelhardt is representative of a large body of modern critical opinion. ¹⁵⁰

Kassner, in his 1926 tribute to Rilke, offers his impression that Rilke »liebte die Armen [...], weil sie herausgestellt aus dem Gewöhnlichen, weil sie

¹⁴⁸ KA I, p.244.

¹⁴⁹ Engelhardt, "Der Versuch, wirklich zu werden", p.122.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid. For similar critiques see Pagni, *Rilke um 1900*, pp.87ff., Neumeyer, *Der Flaneur*, pp.233f. and - the opening salvo in the socialistic query - Egon Schwarz, *Das verschluckte Schluchzen. Poesie und Politik bei Rainer Maria Rilke* (F/M: 1972), esp. pp.15ff. & 50f. Reinhold Grimm, in his 1981 polemic *Von der Armut und vom Regen. Rilkes Antwort auf die soziale Frage* (Königstein/Ts.: 1981), pays tribute to Schwarz as »[...] der einzige in der gesamten Forschung, der sich weder durch das suggestive Selbstverständnis des Dichters noch durch die wiederholten Versicherungen von dessen zahlreichen Freunden oder vollends durch die massive Apologetik, ja manchmal absichtliche Vernebelungstaktik der Rilke-Gemeinde hat irreführen lassen« (p.53). For Grimm, the impoverished Malte will be the only literary treatment of poverty in Rilke that so much as gestures beyond an otherwise disgraceful apologetics (ibid., pp.87f.). Yet even Grimm's faint praise here is problematical, as Malte himself is every bit the philosophical accomplice in his author's de-politicisation of poverty.

unbürgerlich sind«. ¹⁵¹ Yet the tendency to idealisation goes deeper than this, all the way in fact into the religious sphere. Rilke's most in-depth, and in recent years notorious, statement on this issue comes in the letter to Hermann Pongs of October 21st 1924, where he explains his »völlige Unlust, ja Abneigung, irgend jemandes Lage zu verändern oder, wie man sich ausdrückt, zu verbessern«. The fact of suffering, elaborates Rilke, becomes an opportunity for progression at the soul level:

Niemandes Lage in der Welt ist so, daß sie seiner Seele nicht eigentümlich zustatten kommen könnte... Und ich muß gestehen, mir ist, wo ich an anderem Schicksal teilzunehmen genötigt war, immer vor allem dieses wichtig und angelegentlich gewesen: dem Bedrückten die eigentümlichen und besonderen Bedingungen seiner Not erkennen zu helfen, was jedesmal nicht so sehr ein Trost, als eine (zunächst unscheinbare) Bereicherung ist. Es scheint mir nichts als Unordnung zu stiften, wenn die allgemeine Bemühung (übrigens eine Täuschung!) sich anmaßen sollte, die Bedrängnisse schematisch zu erleichtern oder aufzuheben, was die Freiheit des anderen viel stärker beeinträchtigt, als die Not selber es tut, die mit unbeschreiblichen Anpassungen und beinahe zärtlich, dem der sich ihr anvertraut, Anweisungen erteilt, wie ihr - - wenn nicht nach außen, so nach innen - zu entgehen wäre. Die Lage eines Menschen bessern wollen, setzt einen Einblick in seine Umstände voraus, wie nicht einmal der Dichter ihn besitzt, einer Figur gegenüber, die aus seiner eigenen Erfindung stammt [...] Die Lage eines Menschen ändern, bessern wollen, heißt, ihm für Schwierigkeiten, in denen er geübt und erfahren ist, andere Schwierigkeiten anbieten, die ihn vielleicht noch ratloser finden.

Rilke turns to two particular victims of the cruelty of existence:

Die Lage eines Menschen ändern, bessern wollen heißt, ihm für Schwierigkeiten, in denen er geübt und erfahren ist, andere Schwierigkeiten anbieten, die ihn vielleicht noch ratloser finden. Wenn ich irgendwann die imaginären Stimmen des Zwerges oder des Bettlers in der Form meines Herzens ausgießen konnte, so war das Metall dieses Gusses nicht aus dem Wunsche gewonnen, der Zwerg oder der Bettler möchte es weniger schwer haben; im Gegenteil, nur durch eine Rühmung ihres unvergleichlichen Schicksals vermochte der zu ihnen plötzlich entschlossene Dichter

¹⁵¹ Kassner, *Rilke. Gesammelte Erinnerungen 1926-1956*, p.10.

wahr und gründlich zu sein, und er müßte nichts mehr fürchten und ablehnen als eine korrigierte Welt, darin die Zwerge gestreckt sind und die Bettler bereichert. Der Gott der Vollzähligkeit sorgt dafür, daß diese Varietäten nicht aufhören, und es wäre die oberflächlichste Einstellung, wollte man die Freude des Dichters an dieser leidenden Vielfalt für eine ästhetische Ausrede halten.¹⁵²

For Rilke, socioeconomic and political factors may indeed be the proximate cause of people's misery, but the ultimate cause is spiritual. Thus, attempts to solve apparently social problems by intervention exclusively at the immanent, human, political level will only serve to invite even greater misery:

In einer Welt, die das Göttliche in eine Art Anonymität aufzulösen versucht, mußte jene humanitäre Überschätzung platzgreifen, die von der menschlichen Hülfe¹⁵³ erwartet, was sie nicht geben kann. Und göttliche Güte ist so unbeschreiblich an göttliche Härte gebunden, daß eine Zeit, die jene, der Vorsehung vorweg, auszuteilen unternimmt, zugleich auch die ältesten Vorräte der Grausamkeit unter die Menschen reißt. (Wir habens erlebt.)...¹⁵⁴

The parenthetical remark clearly refers to recent events in Russia, Rilke advancing a transcendentalist version of Edmund Burke's anti-1789 law of unintended consequences.

In *Das Rätsel des Menschen*, du Prel acknowledges that »diese leidensvolle Welt« seems to provide scant grounds for spiritual hope:

Wenn wir nun den Inhalt des menschlichen Lebens betrachten, den Kampf ums Dasein, der auf der Erde biologisch, geschichtlich und gesellschaftlich wütet, die Not und das Leiden, die mit den allermeisten menschlichen Existenzen verknüpft sind, so erscheint es auf den ersten Blick völlig unbegreiflich, wie die Menschen je das Wort

¹⁵² *MLB-Materialien*, pp.17f.

¹⁵³ Cf Malte's hope for divine succour: »Ich habe ja immer noch geglaubt, es könnte eine Hülfe kommen« (*MLB*, Paper XVIII, p.491).

¹⁵⁴ *MLB-Materialien*, pp.18f. Egon Schwarz, citing this passage, exclaims: »Hier hätte ein Politologe Stoff für reichhaltige Analysen [...] Diese Antwort auf einen harmlosen Fragebogen ist ein unbedingtes Bekenntnis zum *Status quo* in der Gesellschaft« (*Das verschluckte Schluchzen*, p.57).

wagen konnten: „Gott sah an alles, was er gemacht hatte, und siehe da, es war sehr gut“ (1. Mose 1, 31) [...] es sei alles gut, dieser Optimismus, von der Welt des Kampfes ums Dasein als Selbstzweck ausgesagt, wäre eine ruchlose Gesinnung, die nur aus der Blindheit oder Hartherzigkeit ihrer Vertreter erklärt werden könnte.¹⁵⁵

For du Prel, as for Rilke, the affirmation of the world cannot be based upon a denial of the fact of suffering, whether that denial come in the form of aestheticist selectivity, egotistical indifference or political faith in a concrete social utopia. Life must, on the contrary, somehow be affirmed not in spite of but because of the cruelty and misery which are so evidently in abundance. The mistake, for both, is to see any suffering as *wrong*, and thus to fall into the kind of sympathy that would have things otherwise. To feel one's sympathy aroused by the suffering of a fellow human being, writes du Prel, can only lead one into »den irdischen Pessimismus«, which is indeed »die berechtigte Weltanschauung vom Standpunkt der irdischen Person«.¹⁵⁶ Yet, insists du Prel, the earthly standpoint is an error of one-dimensional perception. For if we recognise that the true goal of existence lies not within »der materiellen Weltphase« but »im Transzendenten«, then we are led inexorably »zum transzendentalen Optimismus«.¹⁵⁷ The logic of this position is that every single suffering human being, no matter how horrendous their misery and sorrow, has, *at a transcendental-unconscious-soul level if not an earthly-conscious-ego one*, drawn these afflictions unto themselves or had them ordained by a

¹⁵⁵ Du Prel, *Rätsel des Menschen*, pp.102f.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p.103.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

higher power *for their own transcendental good*. If the existence of the transcendental subject is accepted as real, then it follows,

daß nicht nur die Geburt überhaupt, sondern auch die in die gegebenen individuellen Lebensverhältnisse hinein ein freiwilliger Akt unseres Wesens ist. Auch dann, wenn diese Lebensverhältnisses den Wünschen der irdischen Personen durchaus widersprechen, müssen sie unseren transzendentalen Zwecken entsprechen, und es ist nur unsere eigene individuelle Vorsehung, die unser Schicksal bestimmt hat.¹⁵⁸

The line of argument is common to Rilke and du Prel: the existential horrors experienced by a human being are not mere events of blind fate; at the soul level, the Self is in some sense *at source* in these horrors, authorising or agreeing to them on behalf of the usually unwitting earthly self, in the service of spiritual advancement;¹⁵⁹ thus, to adjudge the situation of a fellow human being as either *schwer* or *gnädig*, cruelly inflicted or mercifully bestowed, unjust or just, is to arrogate unto oneself powers of discernment infinitely beyond ordinary human consciousness; still more, to intervene in the

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., p.102.

¹⁵⁹ Cf Giloy's registration of the recurring word *Schicksal* in Paper XVI, denoting »eine überpersönliche Macht« (*Aporie des Dichters*, p.64; cf Paper XIX, p.496, in the Salpêtrière, where Malte begins to see his dismal fate take shape: »Ja, das Schicksal geht wunderbare Wege« - a fretful echo perhaps *Mannigfache Wege gehen die Menschen* at the beginning of Novalis' *Die Lehrlinge zu Sais*?) One might descry here once again a notion of transcendental tasking of the human being (*Schick-sal*, *Send-ung*), whereby Malte, his poet (Jammes) and the *Fortgeworfenen* have all been sent to their respective situations - or have had these situations sent to them - *for a reason*. For all his envy of Jammes' serene poetic idyll, and his accompanying horror of the *Fortgeworfenen*-habitus, Malte strains to embrace as transcendently ordained his own existential distance from the former and proximity to the latter. The effort to posit God's inscrutable will behind his fate (as, for instance, in Paper LX, p.603: »Vielleicht meinst du, mein Gott, daß ich alles lassen soll und sie lieben«) signals a burning religious *Sendungsbewußtsein* that takes him beyond the consolations of literary achievement. Thus, Wagner-Egelhaaf is missing the intimacy of *Fortgeworfensein* and mysticism when, writing of Malte's Baudelairean »Bitte um die Gnade, schöne Verse schreiben zu können«, she abstracts this from its contiguity to the Job-quotation, privileges over the call to a *Fortgeworfensein*-existence, and refuses to couple the latter with Malte's mystical *itinerarium*: »mit ihr verbindet sich das Bedürfnis nach der Gewißheit, nicht zu den Fortgeworfenen zu gehören« (*Mystik der Moderne*, p.88). By Paper LX, I am arguing, Malte has moved into a theoretical, though not yet experiential, embrace of absolute *povertà*.

situation of another is to risk violating the transcendental purpose which is being played out in that situation.¹⁶⁰ I suggest that Rilke's *Ontodizee*, whose often shockingly enthusiastic affirmation of the world's *Vollzähligkeit* leads to »la transfiguration de l'abject et de la marginalité en sublime« (Vanoosthuysen),¹⁶¹ may owe more than a little to du Prel's formulation of a transcendental optimism.¹⁶²

The strongly Eastern strain in such an ethos of transcendental optimism is unmistakable - and Schopenhauer's doctrine of »transscendente[r] Fatalismus« from the essay "Transscendente Spekulation über die anscheinende Absichtlichkeit im Schicksale des Einzelnen"¹⁶³ surely guides du Prel. When Malte Laurids Brigge draws spiritual inspiration from the *Fortgeworfenen*, he places himself in a long line of tradition. Park writes of the founding moment of the Buddhist religion:

Nach der Überlieferung soll der Siddhartha Gautama, der noch unerleuchtete Buddha, auf mehreren Ausfahrten aus dem lebensüppigen Palast in die Außenwelt der Wirklichkeit des Leidens durch das Erblicken eines Alten, eines Kranken und eines Toten innegeworden sein, so daß er sich beim Anblick eines Bettelmönchs zum

¹⁶⁰ Du Prel, like Rilke after him in the letter to Pongs, warns of the dangers of socialistic attempts to improve material circumstances alone: »[...] je mehr der theoretische Materialismus Überzeugungssache wird, desto mehr wird er sich praktische ausleben und damit den Kampf ums Dasein immer mehr verschärfen, den der Sozialismus doch mildern will [...] Diejenigen Sozialisten, die in der Tat nur die moralische Tendenz haben, den Armen und Elenden aufzuhelfen, werden früher oder später zur Einsicht gelangen, daß der mit der materialistischen Weltanschauung verschmolzene Sozialismus dieses Ziel nie dauernd erreichen kann und daß es nur auf Grund einer metaphysischen Weltanschauung erreichbar ist« (*Rätsel des Menschen*, pp.144f.).

¹⁶¹ Vanoosthuysen, "L'abject et le sublime", p.146.

¹⁶² Fick is not on firm ground, it seems to me, when she writes: »Gewiß heben sich die Schilderungen des Elends und des Todes im *Malte* wie Bilder aus einer anderen Welt von der monistischen Einheitsschau und Verklärung des Lebens ab« (*Sinnenwelt und Weltseele*, p.301). In the monistic metaphysics of du Prel at least, the reality of suffering and death is not merely acknowledged as an existential given, but theorised as a *necessary* consequence of the monistic theory itself.

¹⁶³ Schopenhauer, "Transscendente Spekulation über die anscheinende Absichtlichkeit im Schicksale des Einzelnen", in: *Parerga und Paralipomena I*, pp.211-237, here: p.217.

Aufbruch in die Hauslosigkeit entschloß mit dem innigen Wunsch, für sich und für alles Seiende einen Heilsweg aus dem leidvollen Dasein zu finden.¹⁶⁴

Park proceeds to outline Buddhism's perennialisation of suffering:

Der grundlegende Tatbestand der unheilen Problemsituation des Daseins bleibt, trotz jeglicher großer Zeit- und Raumabstände im wesentlichen unverändert. Denn: Abgesehen davon, daß sich die historische Periode des Buddha durch ein anderes Weltbild und eine bestimmt geringere künstlich-technische Naturergreifung von der Rilkes unterscheidet, ist die Daseinsrealität, welche der historische Buddha mehr als 2400 Jahre vor Rilke erblickt hat, durch dieselben negativen Phänomene: Krankheit, Altern und Tod gekennzeichnet. Der Inhalt der daraus gewonnenen Einsicht stellt sich auch als gleich dar: Es geht um ein und dasselbe Leiden.¹⁶⁵

In Chapter One I queried the general critical fixation on specific socio-historical determination as a core preoccupation of the *Malte*. Park's sketch of a Buddhistic anthropology invites us both to register Rilke's theme of poverty in the modern city, with its specific features, and to grasp that such poverty is represented in the *Malte* as but one historico-cultural instance of a perennial human condition. Malte, like Siddhartha, is journeying into the heart of suffering, encountering the elderly, the sick, the dying and the destitute. For Rilke himself, as for the Buddhist, as indeed for du Prel, to suffer is to partake of the very quintessence of the human - regardless of period, culture or background. Suffering in an earthly sense is part of the structure of *Dasein-in-der-Welt*. The Judeo-Christian theologeme of the Fall stems from the same insight. For all that the historical moment is registered in the seismography of the *Malte*, it does not constitute the *primum mobile* in the account of suffering

¹⁶⁴ Park, *Rilkes Selbstwerdung*, p.69.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.69f.

found there. *I suffer, therefore I am*: this, aprioristically, is the human condition. Only those who go *through* it and recognise it for what it is, transcend it altogether. For the enlightened, *>I< am not, therefore I suffer not*. Sickness, age and death were not ushered in with the industrial revolution, for all the new pathologies which that epochal shift did generate by way of capitalistic class alienation, unprecedentedly monstrous incursions by the abstract-calculative ethos into the human experience, and suchlike. As Malte writes of Charles le Fou at the start of Paper LXI: »[...] es ist Nacht, es ist Winter, ich friere, ich glaube an ihn. Denn die Herrlichkeit ist nur ein Augenblick, *und wir haben nie etwas längeres gesehen als das Elend*«. ¹⁶⁶ The wretched, like Christ's poor, are always with us. God will always find a way of creating dwarves and beggars, for only when humanity is spiritually cleansed will phenomena of wretchedness disappear from our experience.

Malte is thus very much the representative of his monistic author in the manner of his move from a worldly pessimism to a transcendental optimism, with the *Fortgeworfenen* accounted for as human beings crucified out of the worldly and on to the transcendental plane by sheer dint of suffering. Thus, the suffering into which existence plunged them was in fact an infinitely precious spiritual blessing in disguise - *eine (zunächst unscheinbare) Bereicherung*, in the phrase from the Pongs letter.

To endeavour to convey the logic behind Rilke's treatment of the *mysterius paupertatis* is not, I hasten to add, to endorse it personally. It is hard

¹⁶⁶ *MLB*, p.604, emphasis added.

not to find such >ontodicean< *Weltbejahung* cruelly life-denying, abhorrently reactionary and unpardonably quietistic. Pitching itself at a transcendental level, it places itself by definition beyond critique from the rational, the ethical or the political, to all three of which it constitutes the most intimate affront. As such it performs what Kierkegaard would term a >teleological suspension< of these categories.¹⁶⁷ What is immanently dreadful may in fact be transcendently perfect. Who is to know but the divine?

It should however be pointed out, Rilke's transcendental optimism is by no means immune to a critique from the religious side. The problem of suffering, and the compassionate response to it, is of course a particularly live issue in Buddhism, for instance, because the doctrine of karma, at least in its simplistic form, implies that no affliction is ultimately undeserved. The political consequences of this are potentially nauseating: a victim of genocide, sexual abuse or famine, being ultimately *at source* in these calamities, would be said to be poorly served by political, social or personal intervention, for such would interfere with the cosmic karmic drama being played out in a perfect way. The insidious logic of this argument is encapsulated in an Iranian folk proverb which Harold S. Kushner cites: »If you see a blind man, kick him; why should you be kinder than God?«.¹⁶⁸ Such an outlook is however quickly dismissed by most Buddhist scholars as a self-serving travesty of the Buddha's teachings. Thus, to take one such riposte, Sogyal Rinpoche writes in his *Tibetan Book of Living and Dying*:

¹⁶⁷ See Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, pp.54ff.

¹⁶⁸ Harold S. Kushner, *When bad things happen to good people* (London: 1982), p.94.

Both the East and the West have their characteristic ways of evading the responsibilities that come from understanding karma. In the East people use karma as an excuse not to give others a helping hand, saying that, whatever they suffer, it is >their karma< [...] Westerners who believe in karma can be exaggeratedly >sensitive< and >careful<, and say that actually to help others would be to interfere with something they have to >work out for themselves<. What an evasion and betrayal of our humanity! Perhaps it is just as likely that it is our karma to find a way to help.¹⁶⁹

Karma, on this presentation, is inconceivably complex compared to the metaphysical individualism one finds in a du Prelian transcendental optimism: »There are many kinds of karma: international karma, national karma, the karma of a city, and individual karma. All are intricately interrelated, and only understood in their full complexity by an enlightened being«. ¹⁷⁰

Perhaps, though, it might be said that Rilke's transcendental optimism, like Kierkegaard's teleological suspension of the ethical in the service of an infinitely heterogenous divine imperative, sets us the uncomfortable challenge of clarifying the precise grounds, immanentist or transcendentalist, upon which we will theorise our instinctive abhorrence to it.

¹⁶⁹ Sogyal Rinpoche, *Tibetan Book of Living and Dying*, p.102.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p.96.

CHAPTER FIVE

Noch Nicht:

Malte's Chemin de longue estude

»Denn was, am Ende, wäre
mir unbrauchbarer, als ein
getröstetes Leben?«

Rilke

Das Testament

V.i.

The Unhappy Consciousness

By the *Zeitungsverkäufer* episode, at the very latest, Malte's Brahmesque ambitions are in ruins. What Baßler says of Malte's spiritism can be applied to his general occultism:

Die merkwürdige Zwischenstellung des *Malte* liegt also darin, daß [Rilke] die spiritistisch-emphatische Rhetorik poetologisch vertextet, ohne selber die dazu passenden Texturen aufzuweisen. Was der Modernität dieses Textes Abbruch tut, ist, wenn man so will, die Tatsache, daß es darin noch nicht genug spukt.¹

But this is by no means the end of Malte's apprenticeship in Spirit. What is the ultimate significance of his continuing failure to preside over paranormal powers? Why does this experience not simply remain at the level of a devastating humiliation? Why will the phrase epistemological tragi-comedy not hold the full import of his experiences within its compass?²

¹ Baßler, "Maltes Gespenster", p.245. For Baßler, who to all appearances considers the Christine, Ingeborg and hand episodes to be *bona fide*, irony-free instances of the spectral, is referring here to the fact that Malte does not engage in any true *écriture automatique*, contrary to earlier anticipations in the book that such would take place. (Cf *ibid.*, p.240: »Solche ausdrücklichen Versprechungen des Ich-Erzählers in den ersten Abschnitten des Romans laden die Lektüre mit einer erheblichen poetologischen Erwartungshaltung auf«.)

² Cf Rilke's letter of January 28th 1912 to Hedda Sauer: »[ich] fang [...] meinen Malte Laurids neuerdings selbst wieder an zu lesen mit Erstaunen, mit jenem Erstaunen an der Naivität und Bescheidenheit des Großen, das äußerst unzulängliche Anlässe benutzt, gegenwärtig zu werden [...]« (in *MLB-Materialien*, p.97). The infinite is using infinitesimal means to present itself in the book. Once again the point merits emphasis: the transcendental backdrop to Malte's tribulations remains intact, while the dimness with which it manifests itself to Malte is left problematical. That is, the threat of irony hangs not over *das Große* itself, whose existence remains undoubted, but over Malte's attempts to commune with it.

The meaning of Malte's failed apprenticeship in magic is, I would contend, most securely grasped when seen dialectically, as a *moment of negation* which he is required to undergo in order to win through to a higher level of self-understanding and authenticity. An attractive point of entry here is provided by a suggestion which Birgit Giloy makes *en passant* in her monograph: that Malte be regarded as a so-called >Unhappy Consciousness<. Citing Adorno's *marxisant* assent to the characterisation of Kierkegaardian inwardness as »das aus der Dialektik herausgebrochene und fixierte unglückliche Bewußtsein der Hegelschen Phänomenologie«,³ Giloy notes that the section of Hegel's *Phänomenologie des Geistes* (1807) devoted to this figure: »beschreibt auch Malte, der sich im radikalen Dementi alles Auswendigen in ein weltloses Innere begibt und sich dessen Phantasien überläßt«.⁴ Although one must query Giloy's assertion that Malte is denying external reality *per se* rather than his own interior resonance with it, the Hegelian point of reference is most apt.

In the section of *Either/Or I* entitled "The Unhappiest One", Kierkegaard's pseudonymous >A<-figure writes:

In all of Hegel's systematic works there is one section that discusses the unhappy consciousness. One always comes to the reading of such investigations with an inner uneasiness and palpitation of the heart, with a fear that one will learn too much or too little. >The unhappy consciousness< is a phrase that can almost make the blood run cold, the nerves shiver, if it is merely introduced casually into the course of a discussion, and then, uttered deliberately, it can, like that cryptic sentence in a story

³ Adorno, *Kierkegaard. Konstruktionen des Ästhetischen (Gesammelte Schriften Bd.II)*, edited by Rolf Tiedemann (Frankfurt/M: 1962), p.248.

⁴ *Ibid.*

by Clemens Brentano: *tertia nux mors est*, make a person tremble like a sinner. Ah, happy is the one who has nothing more to do with the subject than to write a paragraph about it; even happier the one who can write the next. The unhappy one is the person who in one way or another has his ideal, the substance of his life, the plenitude of his consciousness, his essential nature, outside himself. The unhappy one is the person who is always absent from himself, never present to himself.⁵

The hedged tribute to Hegel's brilliant but, in the grander scheme of his philosophy, almost comically summary treatment of the Unhappy Consciousness in the *Phänomenologie des Geistes* pointedly captures Kierkegaard's philosophic ambivalence, the debt and antipathy which he brings to Hegel. It is in fact scarcely oversimplifying things to describe the entire output, pseudonymous and signed, which lay ahead of Kierkegaard as he wrote these words as both a grandiosely sustained thematisation of the single figure of the Unhappy Consciousness and an unrelenting assault on Hegel's speculative system-building.⁶

The rich soil provided by Hegel's *Phänomenologie* for Kierkegaard's existential philosophy is easily analysed. The work, as Hegel puts it in the *Selbstanzeige* he publishes in the Jenaer Allgemeine Zeitung on 28th October

⁵ Kierkegaard, *Either / Or I*, p.222.

⁶ Niels Thulstrup endorses the theory »that not until the winter of 1838-1839 is it demonstrable that Kierkegaard had read Hegel himself« (*Kierkegaard's Relation to Hegel*, translated from the Danish by George L. Stengren, New Jersey: 1980, p.255). Thulstrup, who accuses Kierkegaard of an often impressionistic and wilful reading of Hegel (*ibid.*, p.256), makes only fleeting reference to the importance of the Unhappy Consciousness figure (*ibid.*, p.251). Mark C. Taylor, by contrast, offers a brilliant account both of Kierkegaard as Hegel's Unhappy Consciousness and of Hegel as Kierkegaard's Unhappiest Man (*Journeys to Selfhood: Hegel and Kierkegaard*, Berkeley, Los Angeles & London: 1980, pp.268ff; see also p.19 & note 58). George J. Stack vehemently counters any »insinuation that Hegel's thought incorporated Kierkegaard's existentialism and that Kierkegaard did not really >go beyond< Hegel in his conception of human existence or the dialectic of life« (*Kierkegaard's Existential Ethics*, Alabama: 1977, p.179, note 3). Stack is responding in particular to Walter Kaufmann's allegation that the description of the self in *The Sickness Unto Death* is »taken straight from [...] the Phenomenology« (quoted *ibid.*).

1807, »faßt die verschiedenen *Gestalten des Geistes* als Stationen des Weges in sich, durch welchen er reines Wissen oder absoluter Geist wird«.⁷ Hegel's *Phenomenology* takes as its focus, in Quentin Lauer's words, »reality's only locus of manifestation, i.e. consciousness«.⁸ It is Hegel's attention both to the appearance of things to consciousness and to consciousness' own appearance to itself that constitutes the specifically phenomenological nature of the exploration. Hegel programmatically claims not to contaminate this phenomenological method with arbitrarily imported metaphysical abstractions. Instead, he is at pains to demonstrate how consciousness itself repeatedly stumbles upon the inescapability of a metaphysical scheme. In this sense he can propose that the categories with which the *Phenomenology* comes to be saturated - categories like *Selbstbewußtsein*, *Vernunft*, *Sittlichkeit* and *Selbstverfremdung* - have been generated by an immanent critique of the forms of consciousness which have presented themselves. This »developmental sequence« of *Gestalten* (Richard Norman)⁹ depicts how consciousness, finding itself riven at every turn with contradiction and inner conflict, is forced to go beyond itself into a more authentic mode of being. In his *Einleitung*, Hegel evokes this great dialectical unrest, the existential violence of which propels consciousness on to each successive stage: »Das Bewußtsein leidet also diese Gewalt, sich die beschränkte Befriedigung zu verderben, von ihm selbst«; there can, insists Hegel, be »keine Ruhe« for the

⁷ Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, p.593.

⁸ Quentin Lauer, *A Reading of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit* (New York: 1976), p.270.

⁹ Richard Norman, *Hegel's Phenomenology. A Philosophical Introduction* (London: 1976), p.16.

not yet fully mature consciousness.¹⁰ Hegel is after the rhythm of existence itself, of that which in his *Vorrede* (written several months after the main text) he calls: »[d]as Element des unmittelbaren Daseins«. ¹¹ As this telling phrase indicates, it is existential immediacy which will form the point of reference throughout the *Phenomenology*. Jean Hyppolite elaborates: »The *Phenomenology* is less a reduction of the experience of the life of consciousness to logical terms than a description of that life, a description which takes a certain logical turn«. ¹² Hegel's thesis is not that the self is to be problematised by a philosophically sophisticated scrutineer, but that, in its enmeshment in real existence, it constantly problematises itself, finding itself harried by a sense of its own inadequacy. To lend conceptual clarity to the various articulations of this painful progression - such is the rôle which Hegel establishes for the phenomenological philosopher who delves into the self.

Mark C. Taylor, in his comparative study of Hegel and Kierkegaard, *Journeys to Selfhood*, succinctly outlines the three major phases in the *Phänomenologie des Geistes*. The first, encompassing chapters on *Bewußtsein*, *Selbstbewußtsein* and *Vernunft*, examines »the human struggle to reintegrate subject and object through theoretical reflection and practical action.« The second, carrying the general title *Geist*, chronicles »the differentiation and re-integration of the particular self and the universal sociocultural totality.« The third, on *Religion*, accounts for »the gradual realisation of the reconciliation of

¹⁰ Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, pp.74f.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p.38.

¹² Jean Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, translated from the French by Samuel Cherniak & John Heckman (Evanston, Illinois: 1974), p.19.

the divine and human.«¹³ It seems clear that Kierkegaard, for all his often venomous invective against the German Idealist and what he sees as the contemptible but depressingly powerful Hegelian *Docenter*,¹⁴ would be quite unthinkable without the specific inspiration of Hegel's *Phenomenology*, at least in its earlier stages. What will have excited Kierkegaard above all is the manner in which the *Gestalten* of consciousness which Hegel so painstakingly interrogates do not emerge from a dry, formal logic of investigation but from an extraordinarily intuitive sensitivity to existential pressures bearing down inexorably on the human subject. The immanent critique in Hegel of a given way of life, a given mode of consciousness, will replicate itself in Kierkegaard's own unremitting dialectical treatments of character-types, most unmistakably perhaps in the terminological *Duktus* of *The Sickness unto Death*.¹⁵ Both Hegel in the *Phenomenology* and Kierkegaard in his entire production are concerned with the >actually existing individual< - akin to Heidegger's >thrown< *Dasein-in-der-Welt* - struggling with concrete, finite human existence.

For Kierkegaard, however, Hegel's philosophy will degrade itself by diluting out of all effectiveness its phenomenological potential. It will fall into the ludicrous grandstanding of abstractly speculative system-building, which, pompously forgetting existential pressure as the very element and limit of human reality, translates everything into a notional realm, as emptily pure as

¹³ Mark C. Taylor, *Journeys to Selfhood*, p.185.

¹⁴ Cf for example Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, pp.62f.

¹⁵ As Anti-Climacus tacitly acknowledges in his short >Preface< to *The Sickness unto Death* (translated from the Danish with introduction and notes by Alastair Hannay, London: 1989), pp.35-6.

the abstract space of mathematical logic, from which the actually existing individual tendentially vanishes. In *The Sickness unto Death*, Anti-Climacus writes excoriatingly of such speculative erosion of existential enquiry:

As for >the particular human being<, speculative¹⁶ philosophy, to be consistent, ought really to deal very slightly with being a particular human being, with being something which cannot be thought. To do anything in that direction, it would have to say to the individual: >Is this anything to waste time on? Try to forget it. To be a particular human being is to be nothing; just think - and then you are the whole of humanity, *cogito ergo sum*.< Might not that possibly be a lie, and in fact the highest be the particular human being and being that particular human?¹⁷

For Kierkegaard, Hegel's sketch of the Unhappy Consciousness figure in the *Phänomenologie des Geistes* marks the most authentic point in his entire philosophy. A's reference (cited above) to the Unhappy Consciousness section of the Phenomenology communicates just this double response: »For this firm limitation, we thank Hegel [...]«, he adds.¹⁸ This is genuine tribute undercut by sarcastic qualification. For what Kierkegaard sees as Hegel's finest (half-) hour is immediately followed in the same book by what, again for Kierkegaard, is a betrayal of the phenomenological-existential promise.

One can imagine that Kierkegaard, as he reads the Phenomenology for the first time, will have sat up in earnest at the point where Hegel makes the statement: »so ist das Bewußtsein *Selbstbewußtsein*«. ¹⁹ This moment has been prepared slowly: from the passive, unreflective model of naïve *sinnliche*

¹⁶ As ever in Kierkegaard, >speculative< here is all but synonymous with >Hegelian<.

¹⁷ Ibid., p.152.

¹⁸ Kierkegaard, *Either / Or I*, p.222.

¹⁹ Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, p.133.

Geißheit Hegel has taken his phenomenological subject into an increasing awareness of the mediate nature of perception, such that, in Adorno's paraphrase, those »vermeintlich elementaren Qualitäten der Unmittelbarkeit treten immer schon als kategorial geformte auf, und dabei lassen sinnliche und kategoriale Momente nicht sich säuberlich als >Schichten< voneinander abheben«. ²⁰ (This insight into the hidden abstraction within sensuality will later help Kierkegaard to harass the aesthetic mode of existence as delivering a mere phantom self-presence.) The subject's active rôle in *Wahrnehmung* has, in good Kantian fashion, disclosed itself as constitutive; the self has found itself ever more deeply implicated in the object, to the point where it realises that to continue »das Schauern des Innern in das Innere« ²¹ - the penetration by the subject of the object - it must look into itself. ²²

Self-consciousness - this will be arable soil for our two Danes. It manifests itself above all, suggests Hegel in the opening of his all-important chapter on *Selbstbewußtsein*, in desire: »Das Selbstbewußtsein [...] ist Begierde überhaupt«. ²³ The experience of »a contrast between the world of which I am aware and the world as I want it to be« (Norman) ²⁴ throws the self into an unrest which, argues Hegel, corresponds to the *Leben* of the objective world with its concrete interrelationships - »die reine achseldrehende Bewegung«. ²⁵

²⁰ Theodor W. Adorno, *Zur Metakritik der Erkenntnistheorie / Drei Studien zu Hegel (Gesammelte Schriften V)*, edited by Gretel Adorno & Rolf Tiedemann (Frankfurt/M: 1970), pp.298f.

²¹ Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, p.135.

²² Cf Malte's childhood apperception: »[...] je mehr man hinaussah, desto mehr Inneres rührte man n sich auf [...]« (MLB, Paper LVI, p.593).

²³ Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, p.139.

²⁴ Norman, *Hegel's Phenomenology*, p.46.

²⁵ Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, p.140.

The conative, appetitive self seeks to overcome alterity by consuming objects, cognition having developed into this »disquiet of the self« (Hyppolite)²⁶ which seeks (with Fichte) to incorporate into the >I< the >Not-I< which it cognises. As Charles Taylor puts it: »desire reflects not just the factual need for an object, but also the fundamental drive for integrity«.²⁷

Now this dialectic of consumptive desire will form the foundation of what Kierkegaard calls the aesthetic mode of existence, whose often hedonistic surface behaviour disguises the unfronted depression, self-disgust and despair lurking underneath. And Hegel's next step will anticipate both Kierkegaard's philosophic anatomy of erotic seduction in *Either / Or I* - particularly in "The Seducer's Diary", which so intrigued Rilke - and Malte's meditation on infinite longing in Papers LXVIII and LXX: the subject, in its drive for integrity, goes beyond the subject-object complex to the sphere of intersubjectivity. Introducing this sudden »Verdopplung des Selbstbewußtseins«, Hegel writes: »Das Selbstbewußtsein erreicht seine Befriedigung nur in einem anderen Selbstbewußtsein«.²⁸ For Jürgen Habermas, this turn to the »intersubjektive Erhaltung der Ich-Identität« represents nothing less than »die Ursprungserfahrung der Dialektik«.²⁹

Hegel has hereby introduced the prospect of the individual consciousness' entry into what he styles the spiritual daylight of

²⁶ Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure*, p.167.

²⁷ Charles Taylor, *Hegel* (Cambridge: 1975), p.151. Cf of course Malte's erotically charged *Büchsendeckel* image (MLB, Paper L, pp.582f).

²⁸ Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, p.144.

²⁹ Jürgen Habermas, *Zur Rekonstruktion des historischen Materialismus* (Frankfurt/M: 1976), p.104.

intersubjective presence - a glaringly unsatisfactory daylight for Kierkegaard, as we shall see presently. However, Hegel's (*Selbst-*)*Bewußtsein* has yet to achieve such mutual recognition experientially. On the contrary: Hegel initiates his intersubjective drama with an account of how self-consciousnesses come to interact in an initially alienated and antagonistic fashion. This, the famous Master and Slave dialectic, emerges out of a »Kampf auf Leben und Tod«³⁰ between two selves, each seeking to compel the other into an act of absolute recognition of the other's sovereignty. The vanquished will be reduced in the eyes of the victor to the status of mere »Dingheit«,³¹ bereft of self-conscious interiority. At stake here are modes of consciousness, with the servile consciousness determined by its fear of being killed by the master consciousness. The result is a loss of all ontological security for the servile consciousness. Hegel's description of this moment merits close attention for its deep resonance both with Kierkegaard's religious themes of Fear and Trembling / *Angst* and with Malte Laurids Brigge's intimations of negative sublimity *qua* intersubjective (rather than natural) phenomenon:³²

³⁰ Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, p.149.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p.150.

³² I am referring to the childhood encounter with the *Mann mit der Faust* described in Paper LXII (*MLB*, p.612): »Ich habe gesagt, daß er groß war. Nun hatte er sich nicht, wie es doch natürlich gewesen wäre, über mich gebeugt, so daß er sich in einer Höhe befand, auf die ich nicht vorbereitet war [...] Es war das Gesicht eines Feindes. Und neben diesem Gesicht, dicht nebenan, in der Höhe der schrecklichen Augen, stand, wie ein zweiter Kopf, seine Faust«. This encounter, which I have earlier placed into comparison with Hoffmann's *Der Sandmann*, gives Malte subjective access in the same Paper to the historical experience of human hatred as exemplified in fourteenth-century France's *Kämpfe auf Leben und Tod* (*ibid.*, pp.612ff). Malte's encounter with the Man harmonises closely with the phenomenology of death and hysterical pathology elsewhere in the *Aufzeichnungen*: see for example Papers VIII (*MLB*, pp.459ff), XVIII (*MLB*, pp.489f), XIX (*MLB*, pp.496ff) and XLVII (*MLB*, pp.569ff). Naturally, such experiences rapidly take on a religious dimension for Malte.

Dies Bewußtsein hat nämlich nicht um dieses oder jenes, noch für diesen oder jenen Augenblick Angst gehabt, sondern um sein ganzes Wesen; denn es hat die Furcht des Todes, des absoluten Herrn, empfunden. Es ist darin innerlich aufgelöst worden, hat durchaus in sich selbst erzittert, und alles Fixe hat in ihm gewebt. Diese reine allgemeine Bewegung, das absolute Flüssigwerden alles Bestehens ist aber das einfache Wesen des Selbstbewußtseins, die absolute Negativität [...]³³

The defeated servile consciousness has undergone a trauma which is cognate with the affective pandemonium of the *mysterium tremendum*.³⁴ In both cases the ego is given a foretaste of utter annihilation. In Hegel, such defeat pushes the servile consciousness into a series of fruitless attempts to deny its absolute defeat. The first is stoicism, with its bogus and insubstantial »Freiheit des Bewußtseins« whereby the self retreats from concrete reality into »*die einfache Wesenheit des Gedankens*«;³⁵ the second, all out-scepticism's »selbstbewußte Negation«,³⁶ a desperate vapourisation of external reality. (This is where Giloy has, somewhat misleadingly it seems to me, located the Unhappy Consciousness and, by extension, Malte.)³⁷ Both strategies fail. Consciousness, still unable to reconcile itself to its real situation, becomes the Unhappy Consciousness.

As this is to form the basis of my existential model for Malte Laurids Brigge, it warrants an exposition of some detail which, I trust, will not seem gratuitous.

³³ Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, p.153.

³⁴ I have portrayed Malte as caught between desire for spiritual transmutation and dread of same. Compare Ib Ostenfeld on Kierkegaard's analysis of *Angst* »as a determination of what he calls spirit; it is a symptom indicating that man both wants and fears to enter this category« (*Søren Kierkegaard's Psychology*, translated from the Danish & edited by Alastair McKinnon, Waterloo, Ontario: 1978, p.19).

³⁵ Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, p.157.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p.161.

³⁷ Giloy, *Aporie des Dichters*, p.14.

The Unhappy Consciousness is internally rent between finitude and infinity, temporality and eternity, matter and spirit, contingency and essence. Hegel describes this split *Gestalt* as: »das Bewußtsein seiner [Einheit] als des gedoppelten, nur widersprechenden Wesens [...das] *unglückliche, in sich entzweite* Bewußtsein«. ³⁸ For the Unhappy Consciousness, the transcendent *Jenseits* is essential, ultimate, real, the immanent *Diesseits* inessential, contingent, factual. The Unhappy Consciousness, under the pressure of existence, places itself »auf die Seite des wandelbaren Bewußtseins«, thus seeing itself as »das Unwesentliche«. ³⁹ As such it comes to despise itself in all its concrete particularity: »Das Bewußtsein des Lebens, seines Daseins und Tuns ist nur der Schmerz über dieses Dasein und Tun, denn es hat darin nur Bewußtsein seines Gegenteils, als des Wesens, und der eigenen Nichtigkeit«. ⁴⁰ This cleft between the subject's own felt inessentiality (its creaturely & human limitations) and »das unerreichbare Jenseits« ⁴¹ of a projected divinity constitutes its deep unhappiness. Like Obstfelder's priest, the Unhappy Consciousness asks itself: »why were we given spirit - that spirit which ever desires to fly?«. ⁴² This is, as Robert C. Solomon comments, »not mere schizophrenia but the ultimate in self-abasement and self-denial«. ⁴³

³⁸ Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, p.163.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p.164.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.164-5.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p.169 (paving the way for Feuerbach and Marx).

⁴² Obstfelder, *A Priest's Diary*, p.8. The priest elaborates: »But if we are intended to transcend this earth - to be *more* than it, if we are beings who walk erect with our eyes turned to the stars because our way leads up there amongst them - then we are surely so alone, so very much alone. The firmament is a burden on every breast, the night a burden on every breast, and we cannot shake them off, cannot take them in our hands and bend them to our will« (*ibid.*, p.9).

⁴³ Robert C. Solomon, *In the Spirit of Hegel. A Study of G. F. W. Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit* (Oxford: 1983), p.468.

In a kind of transcendental version of the appetitive and erotic drive to integrity, the Unhappy Consciousness finds itself stretched beyond any hope of unproblematical or peaceful relationship to actuality, which is seen as exile from spirit. This psychological breach with immanence is both the Unhappy Consciousness' horror and its potential salvation. Initially, however, the former mood prevails in Hegel's account: the increase in existential scope has only been won »auf Kosten der Welt oder seiner eigenen Wirklichkeit, welche ihm beide als das Negative seines Wesens erscheinen«.44 In defensive reaction to this, consciousness seeks to aggrandise itself over against actuality by asserting: »daß alle Wirklichkeit nichts anderes ist als es«.45 This bold attempt at overcoming all alterity (»Anderssein«)46 is the preliminary project of *Vernunft* (title of Hegel's next chapter). But it remains at the level of, so to speak, sub-illocutionary assertion, not genuine experiential authority: »Sie [Vernunft, D.D.] versichert so nur, alle Realität zu sein, begreift dies aber selbst nicht«.47 And so Reason returns in bogus self-confidence to the arena of initial difficulty: sense-certainty, perception and understanding. It has become *die beobachtende Vernunft*.

Cognition on these terms, writes Hegel, has become an attempt by the Unhappy Consciousness to annex everything with which it comes into contact. This is an insane search for *immanent infinity*: »Sie sucht ihr Anderes, indem sie weiß, daran nichts anderes als sich selbst zu besitzen; sie sucht nur

44 Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, p.178.

45 Ibid., p.179.

46 Ibid., p.180.

47 Ibid.

ihre eigene Unendlichkeit«.48 In this hubristically overweening idealism,49 the observing consciousness appoints itself sole sponsor of meaning in its world. Again, this strategy needs to be placed in the context of the defeat which the Unhappy Consciousness has been experiencing: having suffered extreme disappointment and disorientation, it energetically seeks, in its new rôle as narcissistically observing Reason, to claw back some self-esteem.

So far, I would suggest, so very Maltesque. In permanent flight from the overpowering Other which terrifies him, whether humanly personified50 or not, Malte is a frightened consciousness at a loss in the world of determinate actuality. But, as Malte himself recognises, at least in theory, fear and trembling can function as an incomparably efficient spiritual mentor:

Aber seitdem habe ich mich fürchten gelernt mit der wirklichen Furcht,51 die nur zunimmt, wenn die Kraft zunimmt, die sie erzeugt. Wir haben keine Vorstellung von dieser Kraft, außer in unserer Furcht. Denn so ganz unbegreiflich ist sie, so völlig gegen uns, daß unser Gehirn sich zersetzt an der Stelle, wo wir uns anstrengen, sie zu denken. Und dennoch, seit einer Weile glaube ich, daß es *unsere* Kraft ist, alle unsere Kraft, die noch zu stark ist für uns.52

In terms pertinent to Malte's concurrent subjection to and cultivation of a frightened existence, Giloy writes of the rôle played by *Angst* in the development of the Unhappy Consciousness: »Angst nötigt [...] dazu, sich

48 Ibid., p.186.

49 Cf Hegel's anticipatory hint of this, *ibid.*, p.179.

50 Cf his words in Paper XLVII: »Da ich ein Knabe war, schlugen sie mich ins Gesicht und sagten mir, daß ich feige sei. Das war, weil ich mich noch schlecht fürchtete. Aber seitdem habe ich mich fürchten gelernt mit der wirklichen Furcht« (*MLB*, p.571).

51 An echo of a certain Grimm Brothers' tale...

52 *MLB*, Paper XLVII, p.571.

dialektisch auf ein Absolutes zu beziehen«.⁵³ Caught like a caged bird in finitude and temporality, he finds himself stretched by intimations of eternity and infinity which both terrify and attract him. He is terrified by World, by *die Leute*, by »Die Existenz des Entsetzlichen in jedem Bestandteil der Luft«.⁵⁴ In reaction to his sense of insubstantiality and *Nichtigkeit* as a finite and socially marginalised self (»Ich sitze hier und bin nichts«),⁵⁵ Malte attempts a quantum leap of sorts into the infinite propelled by the full repertory of paranormal powers. His *Sehenlernen* project involves the positing of psychic correspondences between inner and outer, such that he repeatedly conjures up comparisons with the Brahe gift for clairvoyance. His Faustian exertions, displaying a refined *concupiscentia ocularum*, can thus be seen as an *occultistically intensified version of Hegel's >beobachtende Vernunft<*.⁵⁶ Such premature transcendence Hegel attacks in the *Vorrede* as »die Begeisterung,

⁵³ Giloy, *Aporie des Dichters*, p.14. Cf Fick (*Sinnenwelt und Weltseele*, p.317) on Kierkegaard's conception of »die wahre Angst« as that which forces the self into an eternal orientation (*Sinnenwelt und Weltseele*, p.317). As George J. Stack writes, Kierkegaard, seeing that »reflection upon the possibility of death« shocks one out of »casual nihilism«, agrees with Schopenhauer »that death is the X-factor in human life, without which man would scarcely philosophize« (*Kierkegaard's Existential Ethics*, p.54).

⁵⁴ MLB, Paper XXIII, p.505.

⁵⁵ MLB, Paper XIV, p.468.

⁵⁶ In *Wie erlangt man Erkenntnisse der höheren Welten?* (p.223), Rudolf Steiner, in the same vein as du Prel, writes of the as yet unevolved human being as »ein Doppelwesen, ein sterbliches und ein unsterbliches«. This split self must, explains Steiner, work its way out of its unhappy split *from the bottom (earth) up*: »[...] erst innerhalb dieser Doppelwelt, die ihren Ausdruck in dem Sinnlich-Physischen findet, eignet er sich die Fähigkeiten dazu an, die Welt der Unsterblichkeit zuzuführen. Ja, seine Aufgabe ist, aus dem Sterblichen selbst die Früchte für das Unsterbliche herauszuholen« (ibid.). Thus the mortal realm is not uncomplicatedly opposed to the immortal realm, as in a more dualistic Unhappy Consciousness. Rather, the mortal realm is, so to speak, mined for its precious ore, which is >brought over< into the realm of spirit (in a reversal of the Hegelian self-alienation of spirit). Rilke will bring his ninth *Duineser Elegie* to a very similar conclusion, answering the Unhappy Consciousness' doubt over the dignity of the human over against the angelic realm by viewing the visible world as that which must be rescued for the invisible realm. This is, incidentally, a perfect inversion of spiritism, which imports the invisible into the visible. For late Rilke, as for Swedenborg, the angels in a sense need us as much as we need them.

die wie aus der Pistole mit dem absoluten Wissen unmittelbar anfängt«. ⁵⁷ The fundamental split characteristic of the Unhappy Consciousness discloses itself as the motive force behind Malte's cognitive overexertions.

It is to be stressed that Malte is an Unhappy *Consciousness*, his misery stemming from the compromising fact that his ordinary consciousness is, so to speak, the enemy within. ⁵⁸ For it does not grant him the ability to preside over transcendent(al) faculties. Caught in the continuum of space-time causality, he is only abstractly aware (along with Kant) that space and time are mere illusions, regulatory forms of intuition, poor constructs of the poor

⁵⁷ Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, p.31 (Hegel undoubtedly attacking Schelling's *Naturmystik*). After the critical *Medizinstudent* episode, Malte will strike a similar note, describing the old saints as those »eifernden Voreiligen, die gleich mit Gott anfangen wollten um jeden Preis«, and adding pointedly: »Wir muten uns dies nicht mehr zu. Wir ahnen, daß er zu schwer ist für uns, daß wir ihn hinausscheiben müssen, um langsam die lange Arbeit zu tun, die uns von ihm trennt. Nun aber weiß ich, daß diese Arbeit genau so bestritten ist wie das Heiligsein; daß dies da um jeden entsteht, der um ihretwillen einsam ist, wie es sich bildete um die Einsamen Gottes in ihren Höhlen und leeren Herbergen, einst.« (MLB, Paper LII, p.584). The theme of premature transcendence and tormented waiting - the *Chemin de longue Estude* (the title of Christine de Pisan's book mentioned in the Charles le Fou Paper LXI, MLB, p.607) which Malte realises to be his spiritual task - becomes increasingly noticeable in the text from this point on, culminating in the magnificent retelling of the *Verlorener Sohn* parable in the final Paper (LXXI, MLB, pp.629ff.), which itself culminates in the words »noch nicht« (MLB, p.635).

⁵⁸ This war within the self is thus more radical than a subject-object alienation. As Adorno writes of Kierkegaard's psychological treatment of the Unhappy Consciousness: »Es gibt bei Kierkegaard so wenig ein Subjekt-Objekt im Hegelschen Sinne wie seinshaltige Objekte; nur isolierte, von der dunklen Andersheit eingeschlossene Subjektivität [...] Im Drang nach transzendentaler Ontologie nimmt Innerlichkeit den >Kampf mit sich selber< auf, von dem Kierkegaard als >Psychologe< berichtet« (*Kierkegaard*, p.45). Park, without using the phrase, identifies the Unhappy Consciousness problematic as a constant in Rilke's own struggle: »Dessen, daß sich das menschliche Bewußtsein und alle Wahrnehmungen und Empfindungen als Verstellung des Zugangs zur letzten Wirklichkeit erweisen, wurde Rilke schon früh gewahr« (*Rilkes Selbstverdung*, p.20). The sense of ordinary consciousness as a wretchedly limited state excluded from - and knowing itself to be excluded from - the non-egoic transport of superordinary consciousness is memorably conveyed in the final stanza of the "Buddha" poem which Rilke wrote in the winter of 1905/6: »Denn das, was uns zu seinen Füßen reißt, / das kreist in ihm seit Millionen Jahren. / Er, der vergißt was wir erfahren / und der erfährt was uns verweist« (KA I, p.462, emphasis added). Park (*Rilkes Selbstverdung*, p.101) comments: »Für ihn [Rilkes >Buddha<, D.D.] existiert keine Trennung zwischen Raum und Zeit, keine Unterscheidung zwischen Vergangenheit, Gegenwart und Zukunft. Darum ist er ewig und wirklich im Gegensatz zum vergänglichen, vom ursprünglichen Ganzen abgefallenen Menschen«. Compare once again Malte's description of Graf Brahe: »Die Zeitfolgen spielten durchaus keine Rolle für ihn [...]« (MLB, Paper XV, p.475).

constructed human brain.⁵⁹ Graf Brahe's purportedly deuteroscopic awareness of the *Gleichzeitigkeit des Ungleichzeitigen* (to abuse Ernst Bloch's phrase)⁶⁰ remains closed to his grandson. This constitutes his metaphysical claustrophobia.⁶¹ Werner Kohlschmidt describes this rent self of Kierkegaard

⁵⁹ On Rilke's first-hand acquaintance with Kant's *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* around 1905, see Arndal, "Ohne alle Kenntnis von Perspektive?", p.106, footnote 6. Cf Wittgenstein: »Die Lösung des Rätsels des Lebens in Raum und Zeit liegt außerhalb von Raum und Zeit«, *Logisch-philosophische Abhandlung / Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, parallel German-English text, with English translation by D. F. Pears & B. F. McGuinness and introduction by Bertrand Russell (London: 1961), 6.4312: p.148. Recall Rilke's letter of August 11th 1924 to Nora Purtscher-Wydenbruck: »Mir stellt es sich immer mehr so dar, als ob unser gebräuchliches Bewußtsein die Spitze einer Pyramide bewohne, deren Basis in uns (und gewissermaßen unter uns) so völlig in die Breite geht, daß wir, je weiter wir in sie niederzulassen uns befähigt sehen, desto allgemeiner einbezogen erscheinen in die von Zeit und Raum unabhängigen Gegebenheiten des irdischen, des, im weitesten Begriffe, weltischen Daseins« (in *MLB-Materialien*, p.128, emphases added, except on *weltischen*). Rilke's final phrase here replicates du Prel's coalition of Kantianism and monism: *das Wesentliche* is projected into *das Jenseits*, with the latter understood not as a wholly separate transcendent realm but, in du Prel's motto, as *das anders angeschaute Diesseits*. For the ordinary consciousness, this radically other state of consciousness does however remain the focus of unhappy longing. Fingerhut elaborates the Kantian logic of Rilke's position: »Durch die Ausbildung der Kategorien des Denkens und Vorstellens, Raum und Zeit, hat der Intellekt die große Mannigfaltigkeit und die Weite des >weltischen Daseins< in ein enges Bezugssystem eingefügt. Die Welt, wie sie sich unserem Geiste darbietet, ist also bereits nicht mehr sie selbst, sondern ein auf unsere Absicht hin geordnetes Abbild« (*Das Kreatürliche im Werke Rainer Maria Rilkes*, p.60). Clearly, such a monistically oriented Unhappy Consciousness is a deeply Romantic type - compare the Romantics' proto-monistic myth of »the >inner< or >universal sense< (*All-Sinn*) by which man, before the fall, was able to cognize nature. Imperfect though this sense had become, it still enabled us, said the Romantics, to gain some direct understanding of the universe, be it in mystical ecstasy, poetic and artistic inspiration, magnetic somnambulism, or dreams« (Ellenberger, *Discovery of the Unconscious*, p.204).

⁶⁰ Cf Ernst Bloch, "Nonsynchronism and Dialectics", in: *New German Critique*, 11 (Spring 1977), pp.22-38. Jutta Goheen, in her essay "Tempusform und Zeitbegriff in R. M. Rilkes Die Aufzeichnungen des Malte Laurids Brigge", *Wirkendes Wort*, 19.Jahrgang 1969, Heft IV, pp.254-267, here: p.254, is correct to suggest that the *Malte* involves the attempt to go beyond »>Chronometerzeit<«. When, however, she locates the desired new order of time in a »höhere Gleichzeitigkeit, die sich aus einer komplementären Verbindung von Gegenwart und Vergangenheit ergibt« (ibid.), she is bracketing out the future and hence translating Malte's goal of transcendental consciousness into a less supernatural (and more Proustian) dimension of psychological time.

⁶¹ I take the phrase from Karl Pestalozzi, as cited in Fick (*Sinnenwelt und Weltseele*, pp.11f): »Karl Pestalozzi sprach jüngst von der >metaphysischen Klaustrophobie< der Moderne. Er meint damit die durch Kants Vernunftkritik gleichsam über den Menschen verhängte Trennung vom >An sich< der Außenwelt, das Eingeschlossensein in die Welt nur der eigenen Erkenntnisformen«. Yet is the Faustian dream of pulling back the veil of the phenomenal world so distinctively modern? Do esotericism's »more comprehensive cognitive mappings of nature and the cosmos, [its] epistemological and ontological reflections of ultimate reality« (Edward A. Tiryakian, cited in Mircea Eliade, "The Occult and the Modern World", in: M. E., *Occultism, Witchcraft and Cultural Fashions. Essays in Contemporary Religions*, Chicago & London: 1976, pp.47-68, here: p.48) represent an even relatively new human endeavour? For

and Rilke well: »Zwischen den Wirklichkeiten steht in Wahrheit der Mensch, gebrochen durch das Bewußtsein, halb in allem. Er ist so wenig geschlossener Geist wie geschlossene Sinnhaftigkeit«. ⁶² Malte can meet external reality and, self-consciously, himself only through this mundane, deficient prism of an all-too-human brain. Like the knife that tries to cut itself or the tooth that tries to bite itself, his brain comes to the disturbing conclusion that it must either die to the world or be murdered to it. That is, it must *change itself* (Paper IV's *Ich verändere mich*) ⁶³ or, less voluntaristically, *be changed by the tremendum of divine intervention*:

Bei aller Furcht bin ich schließlich doch wie einer, der vor etwas Großem steht, und ich erinnere mich, daß es früher oft ähnlich in mir war, eh ich zu schreiben begann. Aber diesmal werde ich geschrieben werden. *Ich bin der Eindruck, der sich verwandeln wird.* Oh, es fehlt nur ein kleines, und ich könnte das alles begreifen und gutheißen. Nur ein Schritt, und mein tiefes Elend würde Seligkeit sein. Aber ich kann diesen Schritt nicht tun, ich bin gefallen und kann mich nicht mehr aufheben, weil ich zerbrochen bin. *Ich habe ja immer noch geglaubt, es könnte eine Hilfe kommen.* ⁶⁴

all the many exaggerated claims of esotericism to represent a *bruchlose Tradition* of initiation techniques (cf Gruber, "Mystik, Esoterik, Okkultismus", p.33), can one in fact identify a time in human history when exceptional individuals did not seek some experience or proof of higher levels of reality? If, as Gruber writes (*Die Seherin von Prevorst*, p.31), modern occultism is characterised by its »Neubau von Transzendenz«, then it takes equal pains to differentiate this purported methodological novelty from the perennial interest of its transcendental topos. Thus, for instance, do we find throughout du Prel's *Das Rätsel des Menschen* an emphasis both on the new clarity of perspective being attained by modern *Geheimwissenschaften* and on the rich occultist lineage stretching back to antiquity - including such (il)luminaries as Solomon, Aristotle, St. Paul (ibid., p.99), Cicero (ibid., p.97) and Agrippa von Nettesheim (ibid., title page).

⁶² "Rilke und Kierkegaard", p.90 (as pointed out in the Introduction, however, Kohlschmidt is interesting himself in the *condition humaine* only as depicted in Rilke's *Spätwerk*). For Kierkegaard, the aesthetic mode is the hopeless attempt to cover up this hybrid identity between spirit and sensuality by taking flight from the first into the second.

⁶³ *MLB*, Paper IV, p.456.

⁶⁴ *MLB*, Paper XVIII, pp.490f, emphases added.

Inviting a quasi-mystical, quasi-monistic mutation of his own brain cells that will turn his consciousness into a more sensitive *organon*, Malte, like Donne, both dreads and prays for the time when God will see fit to break, blow, burn and make him new.⁶⁵ In response to what he thinks has been the total cognitive estrangement experienced *in extremis* by the man in the *crémérie*, involving possible mutation in the brain, he evokes the mystical death-before-death or death-in-life. Malte has just asked himself whether it is possible to die to the self and still continue living: »[...] daß es nicht unmöglich ist, alles anders zu sehen und doch zu leben.«⁶⁶ He now makes it clear that such radical reconstitution of perception would involve not a new world >out there< but a new subjective organ >in here<: *Ich bin der Eindruck, der sich verwandeln wird*. This seems to yield up a double, though intimately interrelated, sense: a) In apperception, consciousness becomes aware of itself as observer and, in this self-conscious awareness, sees itself doubled as observer and observed. This Fichtean style of meditation leads, in Malte's case, to a very unFichtean self-demotion. For Malte's ego-consciousness is problematising itself as a non-transcendental, subjective, fallible processor of sensuous data into dubious (because contingent & provisional) cognitive *Gestalt*. The egoic *esprit* is sending itself back to its maker for repairs, hoping to return transformed as a trans-egoic *âme*-consciousness (to use a Maeterlinckian idiom). b) Consciousness reflects upon its own character as a

⁶⁵ Cf Rilke in his letter of June 26th 1914 to Lou Andreas-Salomé: »Erneuerung. Verwandlung, Heiligung - und die Seele stürzte herüber -, ich weiß. Aber wer macht sich neu und zerschläge sich nicht vorher« (*Briefe in zwei Bänden I*, p.541).

⁶⁶ *MLB*, Paper VIII, p.490.

text-like system which must be amended.⁶⁷ There can be no question of non-transcendental consciousness having access to noumenal >world<, to some sort of transcendental *hors-texte*. Not that the existence of a realm *hors de texte* is being denied. Rather, the ego consciousness has come to see itself as, mysteriously, tabula, stylus and text all at once. Only radical change can alter this *Eindruck*.⁶⁸

Malte's primary spiritual focus in response to his crisis has been on making experiential contact with the *Nachtseite der Natur(wissenschaft)*. He has attempted to overcome his existence as Unhappy Consciousness by developing a paranormal, transcendentalist side.⁶⁹ But let us mention it again: the indications are that his attempt parapsychologically to ground his subjectivity in the echo chamber of external situations fails, a failure crystallised out in the pivotal words of Paper LIX: »Ich wußte sofort, daß

⁶⁷ Cf Freud's "Notiz über den Wunderblock" (*Gesammelte Werke Bd.XIV: 1925-1931*, edited by Anna Freud, E. Bibring, W. Hoffer, E. Kris & O. Isakower, London: 1948, pp.3-8).

⁶⁸ Anti-Climacus, in *The Sickness unto Death*, uses this second figure to describe the despairing self's sinful resentment of its own God-given constitution: »It is, to describe it figuratively, as if a writer were to make a slip of the pen, and the error became conscious of itself as such [...] and as if this error wanted now to rebel against the author, out of hatred for him forbid him to correct it, and in manic defiance say to him: >No, I will not be erased, I will stand as a witness against you, a witness to the fact that you are a second-rate author.« (*Sickness unto Death*, p.105). Compare von Hartmann: »[...] Matter and Consciousness are phenomenal forms of the Unconscious [...]« (*Philosophy of the Unconscious*, Book II, p.223; »[...] consciousness does not belong to the *essence*, but to the *phenomenon* [...]« (ibid., p.226); »Let the Unconscious change the combination of activities or acts of will which constitute *me*, and I have become another; let the Unconscious intermit these activities, and I have ceased to be. I am a phenomenon, like the rainbow in the cloud« (ibid., p.243).

⁶⁹ This specifically parapsychological route taken by Malte differentiates him in a key respect from Obstfelder's *Gottsucher*-priest, who seems to enter spontaneously into mystico-ecstatic states. What in Obstfelder is an inchoate cosmic energy becomes embedded in the *Malte* in a less pantheistic, more metaphysically individualistic framework - this is surely the influence of both Maeterlinck and du Prel. Although such passages as the tribute to Bettine in Paper LVII (*MLB*, p.598) and the Danish singer's second lyric in Paper LXX (*MLB*, p.628) with its substitutive logic, do take on unmistakably nature-mystical elements, Malte does not himself inhabit this >open< dimension.

meine Vorstellung wertlos war«.70 He remains the Unhappy Consciousness, only now all the more unhappy for being deprived of even the hope of transcendentalistic escape. There is to be, for him at least, no quantum leap out of the finite, no direct transcendence of space-time restrictions. The *Nachtseite* remains occult. Malte is, not to put too fine a point on it, caught. Still caught. Still the Unhappy Consciousness. And, like Baudelaire's splenetic, still crying: »N'importe où! n'importe où! pourvu que ce soit hors du monde!«.71

So far, so Hegel, at least on a potent monistic inflection. But the breakdown of the solipsistic, narcissistic model of *beobachtende Vernunft* both for Rilke's Malte and for Hegel's *Bewußtsein* proves the fork in the road at which each goes his separate way. Hegel, insisting that the *Itinerarium mentis in Deum* must progress via a socially achieved concrete universality, a *Gemeinwesen*, immerses his subject in the sociocultural totality: *Geist* will become a supra-individual category. The Unhappy Consciousness is, it turns out, but one moment, albeit a compelling one, within the grand dialectical career of the self-unfolding *Geist*. If, as Hans-Georg Gadamer writes, the Phenomenology represents a teleological drive to »transcend the ontological status of individual subjectivity«,72 then Malte, even after the disenchantment

⁷⁰ *MLB*, Paper LIX, p.601. Although Rugg's claim ("A Self at Large", p.51, already cited in Chapter Four) that the question of whether Malte's transferences are veridical or imaginary »makes little difference« is in a certain sense justified, it is, given Malte's referential defensiveness throughout the Paris Papers, a little casual. As I shall argue below, it is only when Malte turns away from a Parisian and autobiographical field of reference that his subjectivism relinquishes its empirical-objective claims.

⁷¹ Baudelaire, "Anywhere out of the world. - N'importe où hors du monde" (*Oeuvres complètes I*, p.357).

⁷² Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Hegel's Dialectic. Five Hermeneutical Studies*, translated from the German with introduction by P. Christopher Smith (New Haven & London: 1976), p.36.

of the *Sehenlernen* project, proves >singularly< incapable of following in the footsteps of Hegel's *Bewußtsein* as it slowly but surely enters the world of *sittliche Substanz*.⁷³ Instead, he tarries indefinitely as a single individual Unhappy Consciousness.

In this tarrying, Malte is lost to Hegel,⁷⁴ but *won to Kierkegaard*.

For Kierkegaard, Hegel's evocation of the Unhappy Consciousness is a psychological masterstroke - not as a mere stage in spiritual maturation but as the very *nec plus ultra* of mortal human experience. As Frederick Sontag

⁷³ Naturally, discussion of this and of later phases in Hegel's *Phenomenology* becomes otiose for present purposes.

⁷⁴ And, in key respects, to du Prel also - although one must be careful not to overstate this case. It seems to me that *Malte fails to actualise Monism as a personal experiential project, without necessarily ruling it out in principle as an existential possibility*. In the meantime of this failure, this lingering in the modus of possibility, he comes very close to Kierkegaard's basically dualistic conception of Spirit and World - although it would, I think, be more accurate to characterise Kierkegaard's worldview, which includes a belief in the Holy Spirit's providential action in the life of human beings, as >panentheistic< (the Divinity as both immanent in and transcendent to the physical universe: cf Murphy, *The Future of the Body*, p.5). What remains dualistic, however, is Kierkegaard's skepticism about God's presence ever becoming experiential *for the existing human being* - at least outside the exceptional case of apostolic revelation. Yet even the apostle does not enjoy the bliss of mystical union with God while still on earth: »[...] to be an apostle is sheer earthly suffering« (undated journal entry 1850, *Journals & Papers Vol.1*, p.43). The apostle is not himself transmuted by the divine revelation which uses him as a channel: »the revealed teaching cannot be assimilated to the qualifications of his personality« (undated journal entry 1846-7, S. K., *Journals & Papers Vol.2*, translated from the Danish and edited by Howard V. Hong & Edna H. Hong, assisted by Gregor Malantschuk, Bloomington & London: 1970, p.82). In this respect, Malte's evocation in Paper XVIII of *Schriftprophetie* (MLB, pp.490f) as an event akin to lasting psychological death differs significantly from Kierkegaard's understanding of the apostolic calling. Yet Malte never makes this idea experiential, thus remaining in a Kierkegaardian space. Kierkegaard comes closer to Malte's evocation of death-in-life in his account of the >movement of infinite resignation< as a dying to the world: »We shrink from reading about what an animal used for vivisection has to suffer; yet this is only a short-lived picture of the suffering of being a Christian: to be kept alive in the state of death« (undated journal entry 1855, *Journals & Papers Vol.1*, p.340). Note the spectral overtones in Kierkegaard's statement. Whatever the full extent of Malte's post-monism, I do believe that his (and his author's) metaphysics retain key elements of du Prel's system, in particular the very Eastern >transcendental optimism< towards a world which is >all that which is the case<. (See previous Chapter for discussion of this question, and the >Conclusion?< section for further consideration of Kierkegaard's experiential dualism.)

writes of A's discussion of the Unhappy Consciousness in *Either / Or I*: »[...] we see the depths of the origin of unhappiness [...] in the basic disproportion of being«.75 The Unhappy Consciousness registers the absolute incommensurability of world and spirit, *Diesseits* and *Jenseits*.76 To be happy on earth in immediate terms is madness, believes Kierkegaard, for our earthly incarnation is precisely our spirit's exile.77 »An infant,« writes Judge Wilhelm in *Either/Or II*, »[...] can have a tragic effect if one reflects on its coming into the world with a cry, that it takes a long time before it forgets to cry, and that no one has explained this infant crying«.78 »[Y]ou are,« he reminds A, »a stranger and an alien in the world«.79 To despair on this account is, however, madness also, for earthly incarnation is nothing if not the testing ground for spirit's relationship with God, which must not terminate in the sin of despair.

⁷⁵ Frederick Sontag, "Happy / Unhappy", in: *Concepts and Alternatives in Kierkegaard (Bibliotheca Kierkegaardiana Vol.III)*, edited by Niels Thulstrup & Marie Mikulová Thulstrup (Copenhagen: 1980), pp.183-191, here: p.189.

⁷⁶ When Kierkegaard writes in a journal entry from 1845: »[...] as one who knows himself in relationship to God I am more than historical, I am eternal; or the illusory result« (undated, *Journals & Papers Vol.5*, translated and edited by Howard V. Hong & Edna H. Hong, assisted by Gregor Malantschuk, Bloomington & London, 1978, p.275, emphasis added), he is marking precisely the self-doubling of the Unhappy Consciousness into its essential eternal and its inessential temporal parts. The description of the self as *the illusory result* of eternity recalls Malte's »Ich bin der Eindruck, der sich verwandeln wird« (*MLB*, Paper XVIII, pp.490f) as well as Hartmann's insistence that his *Ich* is but a phenomenon. The ego, invoking an infinitely higher ontological *Instanz*, engages in the paradoxical attempt to relativise its own existence under eternal qualifications - a transcendental corrective to Descartes' *cogito ergo sum*.

⁷⁷ Kierkegaard does allow that the exceptional Christian may find joy on earth by virtue of a >Repetition<, a restitution, a *second immediacy* - on the other side of the movement of infinite resignation - in which a restitution of world miraculously takes place. One is reminded of the Zen poem which Jinhyung Park uses as the motto for his Rilke-study: »Bevor du Ch'an [Zen] studierst, / sind Berge Berge / und Flüsse Flüsse // Während du Ch'an studierst, / sind Berge keine Berge, / und Flüsse keine Flüsse mehr // Hast du dann die Erleuchtung erlangt, / sind Berge wieder Berge, / und Flüsse wieder Flüsse« (in *Rilkes Selbstwerdung*, p.7).

⁷⁸ Kierkegaard, *Either / Or. A Fragment of Life, edited by Victor Eremita. Part II. Containing the Papers of B, Letters to A*, translated from the Danish and edited with introduction and notes by Howard V. Hong & Edna H. Hong (Princeton: 1987), p.73.

⁷⁹ Kierkegaard, *Either/Or II*, p.83. Cf Ephesians 2:19 & Hebrews 11:13. Not that Wilhelm's own ethics do justice to his own insight into the heterogeneity of spirit and world (see discussion below).

If the world exists *because* man is in a fallen state, how can this same world provide the escape route from fallenness? As Patrick Gardiner points out, Kierkegaard holds the antithetical basis of the Unhappy Consciousness to be »ontologically fundamental«, giving human existence its »basic orientation«. ⁸⁰ To propose even in principle that this world can provide the individual with a spiritual home of any sort is for Kierkegaard not merely misguidedly utopian but positively sinful - or: sinfully positive.⁸¹ Such a seamless continuity of self and society can only be some blasphemous parody of, or anthropomorphic dress rehearsal for, the true encounter with God in eternity, whose contrariety to the world cannot for a moment be forgotten. Heaven cannot be brought down to earth, whether as Hegel's self-actualising *Weltvernunft* or in any other form, no more than Prometheus could steal fire from the gods without grave consequences. For Kierkegaard, The Ministry of the Interior would refer to a spiritual office alone. Hegel's subject may gain the world through its dialectical movement outwards into the ethical community, but it shall just as

⁸⁰ Patrick Gardiner, *Kierkegaard* (Oxford & New York: 1988), p.105 (& cf p.29). In a paper delivered to a Hegel congress in 1933, Jean Wahl declared: »Kierkegaard is an unhappy consciousness« (in Alastair Hannay, *Kierkegaard*, London & New York, p.19). From the Hegelian perspective, explains Hannay, this signifies Kierkegaard's failure to go beyond the unhappy stage, for »in Hegelian eyes the concept of the unhappy consciousness implies that unless a person transcends the religious viewpoint he cannot be happy« (Hannay, *Kierkegaard*, p.22). From the Kierkegaardian perspective, however, to be an unhappy consciousness is to be an existing human being. Indeed, for Kierkegaard, Hegel's claim to speculative transcendence of the unhappy >stage< is itself a symptom of his *own* unhappy consciousness, which cannot reconcile itself to its actual existential impotence.

⁸¹ Malte's evocation in Paper LXVIII of Ancient Greece as »jene[] frühe Welteinheit«, in which »des Lebens himmlische Hälfte« uniquely joined »die halbrunde Schale des Daseins« to form »eine[] heile[], goldene[] Kugel« (*MLB*, p.622), recalls both Kassner's citation of Parmenides' »wohlgerundete Kugel« figure in *Der indische Idealismus* (p.34) and Hegel's positing of Ancient Greece in the *Phänomenologie* as a >thesis< of immediate harmony and positivity. For both Malte and Hegel, this ideal harmony is breached: Malte writes that this »restlose Verwirklichung« was ultimately a »Gleichnis« only (*MLB*, Paper LXVIII, p.622), while Hegel shows how the polis runs aground on the fact that the universal cannot ultimately reside in the parochial (see Taylor, *Hegel*, p.171).

surely lose its soul. Even a Kaspar Hauser may be closer to spirit than Hegel's hyper-socialised subject.⁸²

For Kierkegaard, consequently, the only spiritual move available to the terminally Unhappy Consciousness is a turn inwards not outwards. Mark C. Taylor summarises Kierkegaard's position: »Instead of being the fulfillment of selfhood, life in community with others is a concession to the human weakness of being unable to bear the isolation of spiritual individuality«.⁸³ Only by means of the infinite inward passion of faith, grounded in the absurd, the paradox, the offence, can spiritual disaster be conquered by the Christian. This is why Kierkegaard so vehemently rules out of court Hegel's nomination of sociality as a solution. Inward passion is fundamentally, categorically, *incommunicable*. Where Hegel posits the Other, aggregated transsubjectively in a social space, as the self's salvation from solipsistic despair, Kierkegaard sees this as an exacerbation of the crisis. The crowd is to his mind the very factor of idiocy, conformity, >levelling<.⁸⁴ The »first consideration«, writes Anti-Climacus in *The Sickness unto Death*,

must be that every human being is an individual human being, becomes conscious of himself as an individual human being. Once people are allowed to merge in what Aristotle terms the animal category - the crowd, then this abstraction (instead of being less than nothing, less than the least significant individual human being) becomes regarded as some thing. And then it isn't long before this abstraction becomes God.⁸⁵

⁸² Although we do need to take great care not to press Kierkegaard's idea too close to that of monasticism. His ideal Knight of the Interior will be in the world but not of it.

⁸³ Mark C. Taylor, *Journeys to Selfhood*, p.180.

⁸⁴ On Kierkegaard's use of the term >levelling<, and its relationship to Heideggerian *Einebnung*, see Alastair Hannay, "Kierkegaard's Present Age and Ours", in: *Heidegger, Authenticity, and Modernity. Essays in Honor of Hubert L. Dreyfus. Volume 1*, edited by Mark Wrathall & Jeff Malpas (Cambridge, Massachusetts & London: 2000), pp.105-122, esp. p.108ff.

⁸⁵ Kierkegaard, *Sickness unto Death*, p.151.

Kierkegaard's alternative is not egoic solipsism. Firstly, because he will shepherd his authentic self through the ethical as a limiting condition on selfishness, although not in such a way that the self will get lost there.⁸⁶ Secondly, because the ego must turn to a different form of intersubjective relation. Kierkegaard will allow only one *I-Thou* to be seen as religiously authentic: that of the single existing human being *before God*.⁸⁷ No actually existing individual living in time, unless he be the very Christ, enjoys anything like the transcendent perspective from which to understand fully the existential inwardness of another actually existing individual. Infinitely more primordial than the social realm is for Kierkegaard the spiritual.⁸⁸ Only before God, who sees all things *sub specie aeternitatis*, can a human being stand

⁸⁶ Kierkegaard's relationship to the ethical is not at all easy to characterise. While in certain senses a Judge Wilhelm is more evolved than an >A<, the later pseudonymous writings seem to allow the bridge of the ethical almost to fall away as the aesthetic is brought into unexpected alliance with the religious. One thus finds in Kierkegaard what Gardiner calls »[t]roublesome suspicions about the self-sufficiency of the ethical outlook and its basic categories« as these emerge in Wilhelm's discourses (*Kierkegaard*, p.54). Kierkegaardian faith, as Terry Eagleton writes, »shatters the smooth mediations of the ethical, subverts the complacently autonomous self and stands askew to all merely civic virtue« (*The Ideology of the Aesthetic*, Oxford & Cambridge, Massachusetts: 1990, p.182). The aesthetic is often closer than the ethical to the >offensive<, non-linear logic on which faith is based. On this question of Kierkegaard's unexpected partial rehabilitation of the aesthetic in the later pseudonyms, see Sylvia Walsh, *Living Poetically, Kierkegaard's Existential Aesthetics* (Pennsylvania: 1994), pp.223-242 and Anthony Rudd, *Kierkegaard and the Limits of the Ethical* (Oxford: 1993), *passim*, esp. pp.121f.

⁸⁷ How is one to be sure that one's inner I-Thou dialogue with God is not a matter of mere narcissistic projection? For Kierkegaard, no such mystical certainty will be made available, for the leap of faith cannot take one beyond faith.

⁸⁸ In a journal entry from 1850 Kierkegaard defends the religious individualist from the political distrust which he awakens in the culture: »Everything is understood politically [...], with the result that the religious person comes to be hated as being proud, aristocratic, and the like. The religious person expresses that there is a God; the life of the religious expresses first of all: Please make room; it is the expression of respect [...] the religious man is as far removed as possible from being proud, aristocratic, etc., that he bows in true humility and adoration seventy times deeper than any politician« (undated entry, S. K., *Journals & Papers Vol.4*, translated from the Danish and edited by Howard V. Hong & Edna H. Hong, assisted by Gregor Malantschuk, Bloomington & London: 1975, p.164).

absolutely, unconditionally naked and transparent. This is precisely the anxiety at the heart of the God relationship, the inherited shame of Adam: »ich bin nackt, darum versteckte ich mich« (Genesis 3:9-11). If the individual mistakes social persona for self, mask for soul, thus allowing worldliness to stick, he will be unable to meet God honestly, without disguise. Such an individual has the words *Weder/Noch* stamped on his brow, inhabiting as he does the no-man's-land of quasi-sociality before others and quasi-relationship before God: *weder Seiender, noch Schauspielender*.⁸⁹ As Judge Wilhelm (somewhat problematically) accuses A:

Your occupation exists in preserving your hiding place, and you are successful, for your mask is the most enigmatical of all; that is, you are a nonentity and are something only in relation to others, and what you are you are only through this relation [...] You yourself are a non-entity, an enigmatical figure on whose brow stands *Either/Or*.⁹⁰

This non-committal *Either/Or - Weder/Noch* will lead to profound self-alienation, for society will brand itself like a mark of Cain on the individual and corrode spirited interiority: »In every person there is something that up to a point hinders him from becoming completely transparent to himself, and this can be the case to such a high degree, *he can be so inexplicably intertwined in the life-relations that lie beyond him*, that he cannot open himself«. ⁹¹ The individual, insists Wilhelm, cannot hide forever. Just as surely as Yahweh God located Adam and Eve under the trees, so too will each individual be

⁸⁹ The closing words of Malte's modern version of the Adamic shame in Paper LXIII: »Und so gehen wir herum, ein Gespött und eine Hälfte: weder Seiende, noch Schauspieler« (*MLB*, p.615).

⁹⁰ Kierkegaard, *Either/Or II*, p.159.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p.160, emphasis added.

brought to existential and spiritual account before himself and, at an infinitely more intimate level, before God: »Are you not aware that there comes a midnight hour when everyone must unmask; do you believe that life will always allow itself to be trifled with; do you believe that one can sneak away just before midnight in order to avoid it?«⁹²

⁹² Ibid., p.160.

V.ii.

The Sickness Unto Death

Let us consider anew, through the lens of a specifically Kierkegaardian psychology, Malte's epistemological exposure. The apprenticeship in magic has failed. Before its collapse, Malte was the Unhappy Consciousness trying to overcome melancholic splittings⁹³ with monistic *réalisation*. After its collapse, he is still the Unhappy Consciousness, only more so - for he is forced into a heightened consciousness of existential aporia.⁹⁴ As such, he suffers - continues to suffer - from what Anti-Climacus terms >The Sickness Unto Death<.⁹⁵

»A human being,« writes Anti-Climacus, »is a synthesis of the infinite and the finite, of the temporal and the eternal, of freedom and necessity. In short, a synthesis. A synthesis is a relation between two terms. Looked at in

⁹³ I borrow the phrase from Wendy Wheeler, who uses it to describe the post-Enlightenment Cartesian split of mind and body in a >mourning< modern world. *A New Modernity? Change in Science, Literature and Politics* (London 1999), p.138.

⁹⁴ The *inaeadequatio* of infinite and finite which so torments Malte's Unhappy Consciousness is well caught by Stephens when he identifies an »Unverträglichkeit zwischen Maltes Wirklichkeit und einer >anderen< Wirklichkeit, die Malte >das Große< oder >das Unerhörte< nennt« (*Strukturanalyse*, p.29). Likewise Saalman, who writes that Malte, like Mallarmé's Igitur, »leide[t] an der Empfindung des Endlichen, am Determinismus von Zeit und Raum« (*Würfelwurf nach dem Absoluten*, p.66) and suffers under the »Widerspruch zwischen extremer Zielsetzung und persönlicher Unzulänglichkeit« (*ibid.*, p.70). Kohlschmidt writes that Kierkegaard and the Rilke of the Elegies both sound »die Klage um die Grenzen des Menschlichen« and accompany this unflinchingly with the »Durchschauen der romantischen und idealistischen Überbrückungsversuche« (*"Rilke und Kierkegaard"*, p.93). Once again, this seems to me to be at least as pertinent to Malte as to the Elegies' *klagendes Ich*.

⁹⁵ The phrase comes from John 11:4, where Lazarus is about to be raised by Christ (see Kierkegaard, *Sickness unto Death*, pp.37f).

this way a human being is not yet a self.«⁹⁶ Selfhood, then, involves the relating of the synthetic relation to itself. There are two opposing possibilities for existential imbalance here, each a form of the Sickness unto Death, or Despair.

The first possibility sees the self place too much value on the side of finitude: »For worldliness is precisely to ascribe infinite value to the indifferent [...] to have lost oneself [...] by being altogether finitized, by instead of being a self, having become a cipher, one more person, one more repetition of this perpetual *Einerlei*.«⁹⁷ Such a self, continues Anti-Climacus, »allows itself to be, so to speak, cheated of its self by >the others<«, because it »finds it much easier and safer to be like the others, to become a copy, a number, along with the crowd«. ⁹⁸ This self-loss in the *Man* (Heidegger), this *prostitution fraternelle* (Baudelaire)⁹⁹ is, argues Anti-Climacus, »finitude's despair«. ¹⁰⁰ Social conformism is thus the behavioural manifestation of »the social pathology of despair« (David J. Gouwens).¹⁰¹ The conformist human being has failed to relativise everything in the world *sub specie aeternitatis*, to grasp the concept of *vanitas mundi*. This type is anaesthetised by its social commerce and tends to be less conscious of the latent unhappiness of its

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.43.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.63.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.63f.

⁹⁹ Baudelaire, "La Solitude" (*Oeuvres complètes I*, p.314).

¹⁰⁰ Kierkegaard, *Sickness unto Death*, p.65. Cf Kierkegaard's attack on bourgeois morality in an undated journal entry from 1854: »To be like the others expresses mankind's degeneration, its degradation to copies, numbers - this is well known. But since this form of existence is the coziest and most convenient, it is hypocritically prettied up to be true moral earnestness« (S. K., *Journals & Papers Vol.3*, translated from the Danish and edited by Howard V. Hong & Edna H. Hong, assisted by Gregor Malantschuk, Bloomington & London: 1975, p.333).

¹⁰¹ David J. Gouwens, *Kierkegaard as Religious Thinker* (Cambridge: 1996), p.156.

existence - though it is, perhaps, all the more stricken for that. This is spiritlessness, »the dissipation of concrete human existence through a relaxation of spiritual tensions essential to authentic individuality« (Mark C. Taylor).¹⁰²

The second type of patient suffering from the Sickness unto Death - and Malte is unignorablely one of their number - reacts against the camouflage of the crowd by placing too much value on the side of an under-mediated infinitude. Anti-Climacus speaks of this as »infinitude's despair«:

For the self is a synthesis in which the finite is the confining factor, the infinite the expanding factor. Infinitude's despair is therefore the fantastic, the boundless [...] The fantastic is, of course, most closely related to the imagination [*Phantasien*], but the imagination is related in its turn to feeling, understanding, and will, so that a person's feelings, understanding and will may be fantastic. Fantasy is, in general, the medium of infinitization.¹⁰³

Malte's *Schwärmerei* proclivities, if left unchecked, pass over into boundlessness, such that the confining thought that correspondence with external reality may be tenuous becomes anxiously suppressed. Malte has time after time deployed the *Nichtgesicht* strategy of not looking. The wilfulness of his phenomenological infinitisations provides a channel for his nervous energy. In Paper XXI he writes of the unidentified, mysteriously polymorphous *Krankheit* which rears its head when nervous volatilisation gets the better of the self:

¹⁰² Mark C. Taylor, *Journeys to Selfhood*, p.53. Cf the psychologist Charles Tart's notion of the »consensus trance« into which »encultured« subjects are socialised as if by hypnotic induction (see Murphy, *Future of the Body*, p.308, footnote). One might fruitfully relate this theory to Hoffmann's social-critical motif of the automaton (e.g. Olympia in *Der Sandmann*).

¹⁰³ Kierkegaard, *Sickness unto Death*, p.60.

Und jetzt auch noch diese Krankheit, die mich immer schon so eigentümlich berührt hat. Ich bin sicher, daß man sie unterschätzt. Genau wie man die Bedeutung anderer Krankheiten übertreibt. Diese Krankheit hat keine bestimmten Eigenheiten, sie nimmt die Eigenheiten dessen an, den sie ergreift. Mit einer somnambulen Sicherheit holt sie aus einem jeden seine tiefste Gefahr heraus, die vergangen schien, und stellt sie wieder vor ihn hin, ganz nah, in die nächste Stunde. Männer, die einmal in der Schulzeit das hülflose Laster versucht haben, dessen betrogene Vertraute die armen, harten Knabenhände sind, finden sich wieder darüber, oder es fängt eine Krankheit, die sie als Kinder überwunden haben, wieder in ihnen an; oder eine verlorene Gewohnheit ist wieder da, ein gewisses zögerndes Wenden des Kopfes, das ihnen vor Jahren eigen war. Und mit dem, was kommt, hebt sich ein ganzes Gewirr irrer Erinnerungen, das daranhängt wie nasser Tang an einer versunkenen Sache. Leben, von denen man nie erfahren hätte, tauchen empor und mischen sich unter das, was wirklich gewesen ist, und verdrängen Vergangenes, das man zu kennen glaubte: denn in dem, was aufsteigt, ist eine ausgeruhte neue Kraft, das aber, was immer da war, ist müde von zu ofttem Erinnern.¹⁰⁴

Interestingly, this multi-symptomatic illness is compared to the hypnotic state (*mit einer somnambulen Sicherheit*). In *Jahrhundertwende* monism, the trance is said to draw out from the subject's *Unbewußtes* a second, transcendental Self. The reference to masturbation, with its fantastical supplements;¹⁰⁵ to the nervous habit of hesitantly turning one's head (to the door where the spectral is about to make its entrance perhaps?);¹⁰⁶ and to the almost schizophrenic upsurge of waking dreams from a past half-real, half-virtual - all symptoms involve an hysterical destabilisation of the conscious self through feeling and

¹⁰⁴ *MLB*, Paper XX, p.498.

¹⁰⁵ Cf Derrida on Rousseau: ">... That Dangerous Supplement ...<", translated from the French by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak & Derek Attridge, in: J. D., *Acts of Literature*, pp.78-109.

¹⁰⁶ Cf Malte's involuntary action in Paper XV (*MLB*, p.479): »In demselben Augenblick, wandten sich meine Blicke unwillkürlich nach der gewissen Türe [...]«.

imagination. Anti-Climacus discusses the centrality of imagination in the constitution of personal identity:

What feelings, understanding and will a person has depends in the last resort upon what imagination he has - how he represents himself to himself, that is, upon imagination. Imagination is the infinitizing reflection, which is why the elder Fichte quite correctly assumed that the imagination is the source of the categories even with regard to knowledge. The self is reflection and the imagination is reflection, the self's representation of itself in the form of the self's possibility. *The imagination is the whole of reflection's possibility; and the intensity of this medium is the possibility of the self's intensity.*¹⁰⁷

When *Einbildung* goes out of control and becomes fantastical, however, the self becomes dangerously volatilised:

The fantastic is generally speaking what carries a person into the infinite in such a way that it only leads him away from himself and thus prevents him from coming back to himself. / When emotion becomes fantastic in this way, the self is simply more and more volatilized and eventually becomes a kind of abstract sensitivity which inhumanly belongs to no human, but which inhumanly participates sensitively,¹⁰⁸ so to speak, in the fate of some abstraction, for example, humanity *in abstracto*.¹⁰⁹

Humanity *in abstracto* here does not seem to refer to a generalized picture of humanity at large (such as would be the case with the proverbial political radical who loves humanity but hates actual, mere, people). Rather, the point is surely that the emotionally fantastical self believes itself to be responding >sensitively<, empathically, if not indeed telepathically to other selves which in truth remain unsounded by his consciousness, opaque to his gaze,

¹⁰⁷ Kierkegaard, *Sickness unto Death*, pp.60f, emphasis added.

¹⁰⁸ Emphasis added.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p.61.

>abstract< through absence of true sympathetic rapport. This nervous illusion of participation in the souls of others - this »vertigo of the invisible« (Anatole France, 1890)¹¹⁰ - is, says Anti-Climacus, a kind of psychic rheumatism:

Just as the rheumatic isn't master of his physical sensations, which are so subject to wind and weather that he cannot help registering changes in the air, etc., so it is with the person whose emotions have become fantastic. In a way he becomes infinitized, but not in such a way as to become more and more himself, for he loses himself more and more.¹¹¹

One thinks here of Malte's sympathetic exhaustion after the vicarious experience with the *Zitterer*: »Was hätte es für einen Sinn gehabt, noch irgendwohin zu gehen, ich war leer. Wie ein leeres Papier trieb ich an den Häusern entlang, den Boulevard wieder hinauf«.¹¹² Malte's nervous participation in the lives of Parisian strangers, for all the energy of experimental immediacy, has been marked as suspiciously abstract - that is, it has not incontrovertibly corresponded to the human objects of his attentions. What Malte - in, significantly, a very late, aesthetically reflective Paper (LXIV) - calls the »die[] ungare Wirklichkeit, die auf den Straßen liegt und in den Häusern«¹¹³ has not responded to his cognitive overtures. The streets have proven *inutile*. Malte's ambitions of a transpersonal *Entgrenzung* of identities with strangers must cede to a new epistemological humility in respect of the invisible interiority of the Other.

¹¹⁰ Quoted in Eliade, "The Occult and the Modern World", p.51.

¹¹¹ Kierkegaard, *Sickness unto Death*, p.61.

¹¹² *MLB*, Paper XXI, p.504.

¹¹³ *MLB*, Paper LXIV, p.617.

Anti-Climacus' anatomy of the personality suffering from infinitude's despair centres on the loss of boundaries: »The self then leads a fantastic existence in abstract infinitization or in abstract isolation, constantly lacking its self, from which it simply gets further and further away«. ¹¹⁴ Malte, lying on his bed diagnosing the return of his hysteroidal *Krankheit*, declares that: »Alle verlorenen Ängste sind wieder da« and gives examples of how he is haunted by infinity, by physical and abstract boundaries disintegrating in his fantastical imagination:

Die Angst, daß ein kleiner Wollfaden, der auf dem Saum der Decke heraussteht, hart sei, hart und scharf wie eine stählerne Nadel;¹¹⁵ die Angst, daß dieser kleine Kopf meines Nachthemdes größer sei als mein Kopf, groß und schwer; die Angst, daß dieses Krümchen Brot, das jetzt von meinem Bette fällt, gläsern und zerschlagen unten ankommen würde, und die drückende Sorge, daß damit eigentlich alles zerbrochen sei, alles für immer; die Angst, daß der Streifen Rand eines aufgerissenen Briefes etwas Verbotenes sei, das niemand sehen dürfe, etwas unbeschreiblich Kostbares, für das keine Stelle in der Stube sicher genug sei; die Angst, daß ich, wenn ich einschlief, das Stück Kohle verschlucken würde, das vor dem Ofen liegt; *die Angst, daß irgendeine Zahl in meinem Gehirn zu wachsen beginnt, bis sie nicht mehr Raum hat in mir*; die Angst, daß das Granit sei, worauf ich liege, grauer Granit; die Angst, daß ich schreien könnte und daß man vor meiner Tür zusammenliefe und sie schließlich aufbräche, die Angst, daß ich mich verraten könnte und alles das sagen,

¹¹⁴ Kierkegaard, *Sickness unto Death*, p.62.

¹¹⁵ Cf his dying mother's hysterical fear of needles (MLB, Paper XXVII, p.514). Compare Hoffmann, *Der Magnetiseur*: »[...] meine Hand blutete wirklich, denn an einer starken in der Bettdecke verborgenen Nadel hatte ich sie aufgerissen« (*Fantasiestücke in Callot's Manier. Werke 1814*, edited by Hartmut Steinecke with Gerhard Allroggen & Wulf Segebrecht, Frankfurt/M: 1993, p.189).

wovor ich mich fürchte, und die Angst, daß ich nichts sagen könnte, weil alles unsagbar ist, - und die anderen Ängste...die Ängste.¹¹⁶

Despair takes the subject in the direction either of hypertrophied finitude or of hypertrophied infinitization. Anti-Climacus reformulates this danger in terms of a second set of variables: either »Necessity's despair is to lack possibility« or »Possibility's despair is to lack necessity«.¹¹⁷

In the first case, the individual is »absorbed in the probable«, living a dismally actuarial existence keyed to a calculus of probability and allowing but a »tiny place«¹¹⁸ for possibility, which Anti-Climacus calls the great »awakener from spiritlessness«:¹¹⁹

But spiritlessness, too, is despair [...] Devoid of imagination, as the bourgeois always is, he lives within a certain orbit of trivial experience as to how things come about, what is possible, what usually happens, no matter whether he is a tapster or a prime minister [...] to be aware of his self and of God, a man's imagination must whirl him up higher than the dank air of the probable, it must tear him out of that and, by making possible what exceeds the *quantum satis* of all experience, teach him to hope and fear, or fear and hope. But imagination is what the petty bourgeois mentality does not have, will not have, shrinks from with horror.¹²⁰

¹¹⁶ *MLB*, Paper XX, pp.498f. Emphasis added. Cf Erich von Kahler on the way in which modern, post-Machian physics actually lends credence to the hysterical subject's deep ontological insecurity in the material world: » *Es gibt nichts mehr, was wir als restlos stabil annehmen dürfen*. Diese durchdringende Erfahrung, die uns ebenso von den handgreiflichen Ereignissen der fundamentalen Naturwissenschaft, der Physik, eingepägt wurde, hat die üblichen Begriffe, mit denen wir uns die Kunstbetrachtung zu erleichtern gewohnt waren, unweigerlich erschüttert [...] Die moderne Physik hat uns gelehrt, daß ein Stein, unser letzter Anhalt an Festigkeit und Stabilität, nur eine Erscheinungsform, ein Phänomen unserer praktischen Menschensinne ist und daß unter dieser uns gebräuchlichen Stabilität nichts als Bewegung und Verwandlung vor sich geht« (in Fick, *Sinnenwelt und Weltseele*, p.1). This spiritualisation of matter strengthened the hand of the spiritists: if in modern physics all that is solid melts into air, might not the process be reversed in the materialisations of a séantistic session?

¹¹⁷ Kierkegaard, *Sickness unto Death*, p.68 & p.65 respectively.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.71.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.72.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, p.71.

Existence, as ever with Kierkegaard, is a perplexing balancing act between world and spirit, with disequilibrium in either direction carrying its own distinctive pathologies. Here, the notion of spiritless insulation from authentic experience entails a depressing foreshortening of existential horizons. In order to be deepened spiritually, to »transcend the parrot-wisdom of banal experience«,¹²¹ the individual must suffer, must undergo the existential stretching of a »suffering which no human wisdom can alleviate«. ¹²² This is not a matter of masochistic self-laceration. The point rather is that comfort and contentment, the hallmarks of poor imagination and what Schopenhauer calls »metaphysische Bedürfnislosigkeit«,¹²³ is anathema to spiritual awakening because they suppress the angry dialectic of world and spirit. As Kierkegaard writes in an 1854 journal entry: »Spiritually no step forward is truly made in which the matter becomes easier [...]«. What is needed is a »sharpening«. ¹²⁴

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Undated journal entry 1849, *Journals & Papers Vol.3*, p.199.

¹²³ As quoted in du Prel, *Rätsel des Menschen*, p.49.

¹²⁴ Undated, *Journals & Papers Vol.1*, p.338. Compare an entry from 1850 (undated): »[...] in order to become spirit one must go through crises which make us, from a human point of view, as unhappy as possible. / But an objection could be made here that, on the contrary, the angels sang a song of joy at the birth of Christ. To this must be replied: It is the angels who are singing« (S. K., *Journals & Papers Vol.6*, translated from the Danish and edited by Howard V. Hong & Edna H. Hong, assisted by Gregor Malantschuk, Bloomington & London: 1978, pp.353f). Kierkegaard's point is that we are sent into the world in order to overcome our adherence to it and go home to God. Happiness within the world would thus take us on a tragic detour.

We have seen how Malte has set great store in the upbuilding thoughts that *es könnte eine Hülfe kommen*,¹²⁵ and *daß es nicht unmöglich ist, alles anders zu sehen und doch zu leben*.¹²⁶ Possibility is the pre-eminent existential modality in the *Aufzeichnungen*, nowhere more obviously than in the seven *große Fragen*, where Malte frames each meditation with the refrain-like formula: *Ist es möglich, daß...? Ja, es ist möglich*. This momentarily important programmatic sequence, with its extensive probing of fundamental questions of existence and spirituality, represents an effort on Malte's part to embolden himself by keeping alive the very possibility of possibility as an »antidote to despair« (Anti-Climacus):¹²⁷ »Wenn aber dieses alles *möglich* ist, auch nur *einen Schein von Möglichkeit* hat, - dann muß ja, um alles in der Welt, etwas geschehen«.¹²⁸ The *Sehenlernen* project thus involves a desire to go beyond the mere necessity of the ordinary mortal consciousness caught in the world and break through into a more transcendent state. In this, possibility is his hope and his tantalisation.¹²⁹

¹²⁵ *MLB*, Paper XVIII, p.491. Compare Kierkegaard's journal entry from 1848 (undated): »Faith is essentially this - to hold fast to possibility. This was what pleased Christ so much about the sufferer, that after suffering for many, many years, he persistently believed with the same originality and youthfulness *that in God help was possible*. The demoralising aspect of the suffering is the paralysis of foundering in hopelessness: It is too late now; it is all over, etc.« (*Journals & Papers Vol.2*, p.13, emphasis added). The doxological figure of the *Zeitungsverkäufer* comes to mind here.

¹²⁶ *MLB*, Paper XVIII, p.490.

¹²⁷ Kierkegaard, *Sickness unto Death*, p.70.

¹²⁸ *MLB*, Paper XIV, p.470, emphases added.

¹²⁹ Again an unacknowledged Kierkegaardian influence on Heidegger is hard to deny. In *Sein und Zeit*, possibility is affirmed as a constitutive feature of *Dasein-in-der-Welt*: »Dasein ist nicht ein Vorhandenes, das als Zugabe noch besitzt, etwas zu können, sondern es ist primär Möglichsein. Dasein ist je das, was es sein kann und wie es seine Möglichkeit ist« (*Sein und Zeit*, p.143). Cf Stack both on this issue of Heidegger's debt (*Kierkegaard's Existential Ethics*, p.44) and on the place in Kierkegaard's philosophy of the theme of possibility (*ibid.*, pp.44ff). For Stack, Kierkegaard's conception of possibility is »his most important contribution to philosophy as such« (*ibid.*, p.46), superimposing as it does »Aristotle's metaphysical account of possibility and actuality upon the dialectic of man's moral development« (*ibid.*, p.45). Stack

Accordingly, Malte's problem is not that he swears full allegiance to the kingdom of the necessary, rather the very opposite. He experiences the force of Anti-Climacus' related diagnosis of this inversion, this alternative extreme: »Possibility's despair is to lack necessity«. ¹³⁰ The human being who attempts to take a monistic leap out of common earthly necessity - although of course the monist will say that the >paranormal< is just as >earthly< as the >normal<, only at a different frequency of vibration - falls back to earth, subjected once again to necessity as »the constraining factor in relation to possibility«. ¹³¹ The individual who, in the words of the sub-Faustian charlatan Graf Rostro, »mit seinen natürlichen Kräften nicht zufrieden, etwas Besseres ahndet, etwas Höheres begehrt«, ¹³² is from a Kierkegaardian point of view

draws out the radical existential implications of this valourisation of potentiality as the potent shadow of actuality: »The very futurity of the becoming of an individual suggests that the present being of that individual is not exhaustive of what he is. Hence one can say that an individual >is< what he is (what he has been up to the present and what he is at present) and is also what he is not yet, but what he is becoming. In this sense, then, the possibilities of an individual are significant aspects of his total being« (ibid., p.48). As Adorno points out in his 1940 paper on "Kierkegaard's Lehre von der Liebe", Kierkegaard's appreciation of possibility challenges psychology to avoid freezing the human subject into an object and instead adopt a more existentially expansive concept of the self: »Die Lehre von der Möglichkeit richtet sich vorab gegen das >Wissen<. Im Zusammenhang von Kierkegaards gesamter Philosophie ist das nicht, wie bei seinen Epigonen, anti-intellektualistisch zu verstehen. Das Wissen, das er bekämpft, ist das Bescheidwissen um das, was schon immer so gewesen sei und unabänderlich so bleiben müsste: das bloß nachkonstruierende Wissen, welches das Nichtgewesene tabuiert. Dem gilt sein Kampf gegen die Psychologie. Er analysiert sie als Mißtrauen gegen die Möglichkeit [...]« ("Kierkegaard's Lehre von der Liebe", in *Kierkegaard*, pp. 217-236, here: p.231. This is Adorno's own translation of a lecture he gave in English in New York on February 23rd 1940). Kierkegaard's priority of becoming over being, and his concomitant stress on possibility, has strong affinities with Romanticism (see Ellenberger, *Discovery of the Unconscious*, pp.200f). One might return in this light to Malte's account of the death of Kammerherr Detlev Brigge in Paper VIII (*MLB*, pp.459ff), where unexpressed potentials within the self, and unactualised shadow selves, suddenly erupt as the ego nears death. Ulsgaard thus plays host to the ungenteel ventilation of an inhibited man's despair: »Alles Übermaß an Stolz, Willen und Herrenkraft, das er selbst in seinen ruhigen Tagen nicht hatte verbrauchen können [...]« (ibid., p.463).

¹³⁰ Kierkegaard, *Sickness unto Death*, p.65.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Johann Wolfgang Goethe, *Der Groß-Cophta* (III.9), in: J. W. G., *Poetische Werke. Vollständige Ausgabe Bd.III* (Stuttgart: 1953), p.918. Cf Müller-Seidel, "Cagliostro und die Vorgeschichte der deutschen Klassik", pp.146f.

simply taking flight from the *necessary* ethical and spiritual pressure of existence. Such an individual cannot ground his courtship of the kingdom of possibility in the land of necessity. He lacks »actuality« as »the unity of possibility and necessity« and his existence becomes an »atmospheric illusion«:

Thus possibility seems greater and greater to the self; more and more becomes possible because nothing becomes actual. In the end it seems as though everything were possible, but that is the very moment that the self is swallowed up in the abyss. Even a small possibility needs some time to become actual [...] Just when one thing seems possible some new possibility arises, and finally these phantasms succeed one another with such speed that it seems as though everything were possible, and that is the very moment the individual has finally become nothing but an atmospheric illusion.¹³³

The fault here, elaborates Anti-Climacus, is not simply a »lack of strength« but a lack of accurate discrimination as to the parameters of one's actual existence: »What is really missing is the strength to obey, to yield to the necessary in one's self, what might be called one's limits«.¹³⁴ The critique here corresponds closely to the stage of Hegel's subject under its regime of *beobachtende Vernunft*: with this character type, the error of inflated self-valuation comes into evidence. Kierkegaard's insistence on the value of the limits placed upon the human is also deeply Kantian. The issue for both is epistemological and experiential rather than ontological: the spirit world exists but we cannot know or experience it immediately. To do so would be to

¹³³ Kierkegaard, *Sickness unto Death*, p.66.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.66f.

go beyond the human.¹³⁵ (Kierkegaard adds one exception to this rule, apart of course from Jesus Himself: the apostle.)

A childhood experience which Malte recounts in detail in Paper XXXII involves a play of possibilities that goes horrendously out of control. The Paper opens with an attack on »das überaus gemeinsame Leben« of the adult world. The young Malte finds their horizons remarkably narrowed: completely absorbed in the probable, as Anti-Climacus would put it, they squeeze possibility, surprise, excess out of their daily lives: »[...] wo jeder im Gefühl unterstützt sein wollte, bei Bekanntem zu sein, und wo man sich so vorsichtig im Verständlichen vertruug. Da wurde etwas *erwartet*, und es kam oder es kam nicht, *ein Drittes war ausgeschlossen*.«¹³⁶ The child's claustrophobia in this speciously stable kingdom of necessity and calculative rationality sends him to the Schillerian kingdom of play as an arena of Possibility, where he hopes to find the banished *Drittes* of surprise and ambiguity: »Wenn man aber allein spielte, wie immer, *so konnte es doch geschehen*, daß man diese vereinbarte, im ganzen harmlose Welt unversehens überschritt und unter Verhältnisse geriet, die völlig verschieden waren und *gar nicht abzusehen*.«¹³⁷ Disappearing upstairs to one of the guest-rooms, Malte pulls out some old costumes from a large adjacent *Eckraum*. He tries on the costumes one by one, going for different combinations, delighting in the random play of identities:

¹³⁵ That is, to become a spirit being while still on earth - the ecstatic state, it will be recalled, which Malte associates with the *Fortgeworfenen*.

¹³⁶ *MLB*, Paper XXXII, pp.524f, emphases added.

¹³⁷ *MLB*, Paper XXXII, p.525, emphases added.

Und nun war es etwas sehr Überraschendes, Fremdes, ganz anders, als man es sich gedacht hatte, etwas Plötzliches, Selbständiges, das man rasch überblickte, um sich im nächsten Augenblick doch zu erkennen, *nicht ohne eine gewisse Ironie, die um ein Haar das ganze Vergnügen zerstören konnte*. Wenn man aber sofort zu reden begann, sich zu verbeugen, wenn man sich zuwinkte, sich, fortwährend zurückblickend, entfernte und dann entschlossen und angeregt wiederkam, *so hatte man die Einbildung auf seiner Seite, solange es einem gefiel*.¹³⁸

Malte is walking a tight rope between possibility and necessity here, allowing possibility to take the play of identity a certain distance before reining it in, thus re-establishing the sovereignty of the self and re-grounding the game in minimally necessary necessity (the self's >limits<). The dynamic of the masquerade lies in the give-and-take of irony (detachment from self, self-reflexive *dédoublement*) and self-identity (re-cognising oneself with re-established ontological security) and back again.¹³⁹ Coming up with a final elaborate costume, including an old mask in which he mummifies himself, Malte enters unsuspectingly into the mirror's endgame. He spills a *Flacon* out of which comes »herausgespritzt« a pungent *Essenz*, an homuncular allegory of *Ich-Entgrenzung*.¹⁴⁰ Trying to extricate himself from the costume, he loses his equanimity:

Heiß und zornig stürzte ich vor den Spiegel und sah mühsam durch die Maske durch, wie meine Hände arbeiteten. Aber darauf hatte er nur gewartet. Der Augenblick der Vergeltung war für ihn gekommen. Während ich in maßlos zunehmender Beklemmung mich anstrengte, mich irgendwie aus meiner Vermummung hinauszuzwängen, nötigte er mich, ich weiß nicht womit, aufzusehen

¹³⁸ *MLB*, Paper XXXII, pp.526f, emphases added.

¹³⁹ »[...] the pleasure of seeing himself seeing himself - as Lacan puts it with reference to Valéry's *La Jeune Parque* [...]« (Huyssen, "Paris / Childhood", p.128).

¹⁴⁰ *MLB*, Paper XXXII, p.529. With Malte's disgust at the stain he has made (»ein[] Fleck von sehr widerlicher Physiognomie auf dem klaren Parkett«, p.529) perhaps carrying a hint too of that other kingdom of rôle-play fantasy: masturbation anxiety.

und diktierte mir ein Bild, nein, eine Wirklichkeit, eine fremde, unbegreifliche monströse Wirklichkeit, mit der ich durchtränkt wurde gegen meinen Willen: denn jetzt war er der Stärkere, und ich war der Spiegel. Ich starrte diesen großen, schrecklichen Unbekannten vor mir an, und es schien mir ungeheuerlich, mit ihm allein zu sein. Aber in demselben Moment, da ich dies dachte, geschah das Äußerste: ich verlor allen Sinn, ich fiel einfach aus. Eine Sekunde lang hatte ich eine unbeschreibliche, wehe und vergebliche Sehnsucht nach mir, dann war nur noch er: es war nichts außer ihm. / Ich rannte davon, aber nun war er es, der rannte. Er stieß überall an, er kannte das Haus nicht, er wußte nicht wohin; er geriet eine Treppe hinunter, er fiel auf dem Gange über eine Person her, die sich schreiend freimachte.¹⁴¹

The amnesiac defamiliarisation, captured here in the switch to an *Er*-perspective, is an insistent motif which we have already encountered in the book.¹⁴² Added to this is a layer of gothic suggestion from an earlier point in the episode, where Malte identifies the psychometric »Einfluß [...], der unmittelbar von einer bestimmten Tracht ausgehen kann«¹⁴³ before describing something akin to a demonic possession:¹⁴⁴

Kaum hatte ich einen dieser Anzüge angelegt, mußte ich mir eingestehen, daß er mich in seine Macht bekam; daß er mir meine Bewegungen, meinen Gesichtsausdruck, ja sogar meine Einfälle vorschrieb; meine Hand, über die die Spitzenmanschette fiel und wieder fiel, war durchaus nicht meine gewöhnliche Hand; sie bewegte sich wie ein Akteur,¹⁴⁵ ja, ich möchte sagen, sie sah sich selber zu, so übertrieben das auch klingt.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴¹ *MLB*, Paper XXXII, pp.529f.

¹⁴² »Ich wußte nicht, in welcher Stadt ich war [...]« he writes of his flight from the Salpêtrière (Paper XIX, p.498); »[...] alles Tägliche und Nächste wird unverständlich geworden sein, fremd und schwer« he imagines of the dying man in the Crémérie (Paper XVIII, p.490); he runs down »die Gasse einer fremden Stadt« after the encounter with the man with the fist (Paper LXII, p.612). The subject is as if magnetised in these episodes. One might also recall Malte's third-person distancing from his own ego as he brackets the *große Fragen* in Paper XIV (*MLB*, pp.468 & 470).

¹⁴³ *MLB*, Paper XXXII, p.527. Cf Dohm, "Neue Heilslehren in der Literatur um 1900", p.10, and du Prel, *Rätsel des Menschen*, p.113.

¹⁴⁴ Rather than a *unio mystica*, as Wagner-Egelhaaf suggests (*Mystik der Moderne*, p.84). Note Malte's idiomatic blend of spiritism (*diktierte*) and demonism (*monströs*).

Not just old clothes but mirrors too are dangerous things for Malte.¹⁴⁷ Here, standing in front of one in his fabulous costume (»Vermummung«),¹⁴⁸ he loses comfortable cognitive control to such a degree that his self gets lost in the mirror of possibility. A second, monstrously alien self supplants it.¹⁴⁹ In an off-guard moment, the object (image) suddenly displays a structure of subjectivity, the subject (source) a structure of objectivity. Malte, a momentary *Leerstelle*, longs for himself - the royal figure for Kierkegaard's despair. The section in *The Sickness unto Death* devoted to »Possibility's despair« contains a passage on the mirror as a metaphor for the loss of the self in possibility:

[...] through this self's fantastically reflecting itself in possibility, he lost himself. Even to see oneself in a mirror one must recognize oneself, for unless one does that, one does not see oneself, only a human being. *But the mirror of possibility is no ordinary mirror; it must be used with the utmost caution.*¹⁵⁰ For in this case the mirror is, in the

¹⁴⁵ Compare the manual *automatisme* prophesied in Paper XVIII: »Aber es wird ein Tag kommen, da meine Hand weit von mir sein wird, und wenn ich sie schreiben heißen werde, wird sie Worte schreiben, die ich nicht meine« (MLB, Paper XVIII, p.490).

¹⁴⁶ MLB, Paper XXXII, p.527.

¹⁴⁷ And for Brahes generally: the Gräfin Öllegaard Skeel, a maternal aunt, was burned to death »da sie sich vor einem Balle am Leuchterspiegel die Blumen im Haar anders anstecken [! D.D.] wollte« (MLB, Paper XXVIII, p.516). Cf Malte's fear of the two bookmarked pages of the green book: »Jedenfalls hatte ich eine Scheu vor den beiden Seiten, wie vor einem Spiegel, vor dem jemand steht« (MLB, p.586: note the *vicarious* rather than personal fear suggested in the word *jemand*). Baßler perceptively connects »Maltes sich im Spiegelbild verselbständigende Maskerade auf dem Dachboden« to »Christine, die sich, ebenfalls auf dem Dachboden, als Gespenst nicht im Spiegel sehen kann« (»Maltes Gespenster«, p.249). As Saalman points out, Malte's interest in specularity affiliates him strongly with a symbolist aesthetic (*Würfelwurf nach dem Absoluten*, pp.57ff).

¹⁴⁸ MLB, Paper XXXII, p.529.

¹⁴⁹ This represents a terrifying breakdown in Malte's hubristic belief at the outset of the game that *Ich-Entfremdung* could be playfully skirted but ultimately avoided: »Diese Verstellungen gingen indessen nie so weit, daß ich mich mir selber entfremdet fühlte; im Gegenteil, je vielfältiger ich mich abwandelte, desto überzeugter wurde ich von mir selbst. Ich wurde kühner und kühner; ich warf mich höher und höher [...]« (MLB, Paper XXXII, p.527). Huyssen rightly counsels against drawing a straight line between this mirror-scene and Lacan's famous mirror-stage scenario: »[...] Malte is not just looking at his plain self but is actually playing dress-up in front of the mirror, which adds yet another level of complication, the conscious play with identity« (»Paris / Childhood«, p.127).

¹⁵⁰ Emphasis added.

highest sense, a false one. The fact that in the possibility of itself a self appears *in such and such a guise*¹⁵¹ is only a half-truth; for in the possibility of itself the self is still far from, or only half of, itself.¹⁵²

Possibility as an existential category generates an ironic dualism within the self. The game of possibility, if taken too far, will exploit this fact and suddenly turn nasty, claiming the participating self as its casualty. Malte's experience seems to literalise (and in turn re-allegorise) Anti-Climacus' specular metaphor for this danger, as if drawing out the gothic overtones in the latter's treatment of phantasms.

Malte's physiognomic, phenomenological & paranormal experiments in Paris have centred on an attempted experimental expansion of his connection to the kingdoms of freedom and possibility. But why, given Rilke's own undisputed monistic leanings, the ironisation, as I have read it, of Malte's *Sehenlernen* as a species of *Schwärmerei*?

The Purtscher-Wydenbruck letter of August 11th 1924 offers an enormously revealing clue. Nora is the niece of the Fürstin Marie von Thurn und Taxis-Hohenlohe, in whose circle Rilke engaged in spiritistic activities in the early teens of the century. Responding to Nora's report of her own participation in séances, Rilke outlines his theory of the transcendental *Bewußtseinspyramide* and mentions the inclusion of this topic in the *Malte*. This

¹⁵¹ Emphasis added.

¹⁵² Kierkegaard, *Sickness unto Death*, p.67.

mention of the book is immediately accompanied by a long explanation of Rilke's personal ambivalence towards paranormal phenomena:

Jene Séancen nun, mit allen ihren störenden oder beirrenden Nebenerscheinungen, mit ihren fatalen Unbeholfenheiten, Halbheiten und (darüber kann kein Zweifel sein) ihren zahllosen Mißverständnissen..., liegen auf dem Weg zu solchen Einsichten, - und konnten mich, da diese, ahnungsweise, in mir schon vorgebildet waren, nicht übergehen; sie haben, da ich eine *Vollzähligkeit des Möglichen*¹⁵³ anzunehmen immer geneigt war, mein Welt-Bild nicht irgendwie verändert: es müßte mir nur eben gefehlt haben, dergleichen *nicht* vorkommen zu sehen. Aber gerade weil, gewissermaßen, die Natürlichkeit dieses Ungeheueren in meine inneren Zusagen und Zugeständnisse schon einbegriffen war, lehnte ich es auch ab, zu solchen Aufschlüssen *mehr* überzugehen als zu sonst einem Geheimnisse des Daseins; sie sind mir *ein* Geheimnis unter zahllosen Geheimnissen, die alle mehr an uns Teil haben, als wir an ihnen.¹⁵⁴

The thought here seems to be that séantistic phenomena, whilst often connected to genuinely transmundane realities, risk seducing the investigator into a distracting fetishism. Rilke states that his »leidenschaftlichstes Staunen« is reserved for certain »Bewegungen in der Natur, *mehr noch* als etwa bei den medialen Begebnissen, so ergreifend sie mir ab und zu geworden sind«. The danger of such mediumism he relates to something approaching a loss of autonomy, an imbalance in favour of other-worldly forces:

Aber ich habe gerade diesen gegenüber, während ich sie gehorsam, ernst und ehrfürchtig hinnehme, den merkwürdigen Instinkt, ihnen sofort, wenn sie in mich ein- und übergehen, Gegengewichte in meinem Bewußtsein aufzuwecken: nichts wäre mir fremder, als eine Welt, in der solche Mächte und Eingriffe die Oberhand hätten.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵³ Emphasis added.

¹⁵⁴ *MLB-Materialien*, pp.128-9.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p.129.

Now Rilke does not do with his Malte what this notion might easily have led him to do, and what Rodenbach does with Hugo Viane, to wit: subject the spiritistic character not only to epistemological ironisation but also to neo-Faustian demonic tendencies.¹⁵⁶ No: Malte falls under the sign of anti-climax without taking any demonic turn. If anything, the turn in the later phase of the book has him probing ever more deeply into the mystery of love. What then is the dangerous potential within Malte's occultism? To return to Rilke's letter:

Sie [jene séantistischen Ereignisse, D.D.] wollen, scheint mir, eher vertragen sein, als anerkannt; eher nicht abgelehnt, als gerufen; eher zugegeben und geliebt, als gefragt und ausgenutzt sein. *Ich bin, zum Glück, medial vollkommen unbrauchbar*,¹⁵⁷ aber ich zweifle keinen Augenblick, daß ich mich auf *meine* Weise den Einflüssen jener oft heimatlosen Kräfte eröffnet halte und daß ich nie aufhörte, ihren Umgang zu genießen oder zu erleiden. Wie viele Worte, wie viele Entschlüsse oder Zögerungen mögen auf Rechnung ihrer Einwirkung zu schreiben sein! Im Übrigen gehört es zu den ursprünglichen Neigungen meiner Anlage, das Geheime *als solches* aufzunehmen, nicht als ein zu Entlarvendes, sondern als das Geheimnis, das *so* bis in sein Innerstes, und überall, geheim ist, wie ein Stück Zucker an jeder Stelle Zucker ist. Möglicherweise, so aufgefaßt, löst es sich unter Umständen in unserm Dasein oder in

¹⁵⁶ Cf Dohm, "Neue Heilslehren in der Literatur um 1900", pp.11f. In the nineteenth century, notes Dohm, »Bruges galt [...] als heimliche belgische Hauptstadt des Satanismus - nicht anders als Rom, Paris, Lyon und Châlon im übrigen Europa« (p.12). The demonic is an important category in Kierkegaard, who calls it >inclosing reserve< to convey the demonic self's inward turn away from both man and God (cf for example *Fear and Trembling*, p.105), as it is of course in Baudelaire, for whom *l'esprit satanique* is closely related to a Faustian *goût de l'infini*. In *Le Poème du hachisch* from *Les Paradis artificiels*, for instance, Baudelaire writes of Maturin's Melmoth as an »admirable emblème« for this type: »Son épouvantable souffrance gît dans la disproportion entre ses merveilleuses facultés acquises instantanément par un pacte satanique, et le milieu où, comme créature de Dieu, il est condamné à vivre [...] *En effet, tout homme qui n'accepte pas les conditions de la vie, vend son âme* [...] L'homme a voulu être Dieu, et bientôt le voilà, en vertu d'une loi morale incontrôlable, tombé plus bas que sa nature réelle« (*Oeuvres complètes I*, p.438, emphasis added). Not just occultistic ambitions but also occultistic *disillusionment*, such as that being suffered by Malte, can itself lead to demonic tendencies - as happens, for example, with the Prince in Schiller's *Der Geisterseher*. In a case like this, the lack of occultistic breakthrough unmasks the spiritual despair lying underneath all along.

¹⁵⁷ Emphasis added. I will return to this admission in the >Conclusion?< section.

unserer Liebe, während wir sonst nur *eine mechanische Zerkleinerung des Geheimsten erreichen, ohne daß es eigentlich in uns überginge*.¹⁵⁸ Ich bin (das wäre am Ende die einzige Stelle in mir, wo eine langsame Weisheit anzusetzen vermöchte) völlig ohne Neugier dem Leben, meiner eigenen Zukunft, den Göttern gegenüber... Was wissen wir von den Jahreszeiten der Ewigkeit und ob gerade Erntezeit wäre! Wie viele Früchte, die für uns gemeint waren oder deren Gewicht es einfach mit sich gebracht hätte, daß sie uns zugefallen wären, - wieviel solcher Früchte haben *neugierige Geister*¹⁵⁹ im Reifen unterbrochen, *eine voreilige, verfrühte Kenntnis*,¹⁶⁰ oft ein Mißverständnis davontragend, um den Preis einer zerstörten (späteren) Erbauung oder Ernährung.¹⁶¹

It would seem that the mediaeval *curiositas* figure has made its entry into Rilke's thinking here, except as a category not of demonic sin but of spiritual self-hindrance, interfering in the soul's maturation on - or from¹⁶² - earth.¹⁶³ Seen in this light, Malte's ironised occultism (taken in the broadest sense to span the entire parapsychological range of his activities) may be a parable simply on the dangers of spiritistic impatience (>enthusiasm<) and its (rather

¹⁵⁸ Emphasis added.

¹⁵⁹ Emphasis added.

¹⁶⁰ Emphasis added.

¹⁶¹ *MLB-Materialien*, pp.129-30.

¹⁶² For Rilke, of course, maturation from earth would be a matter of liberation from the egoic entrapment at a gross-material vibratory level: thus for example a sudden and unprecedented awareness of the »fast unmerkliche Schwingungen« of a tree signals to the figure in *Erlebnis I* that he is penetrating »die andere Seite der Natur« (KA IV, pp.666 & 667 respectively).

¹⁶³ I am reminded of Weber's sharp comment, in "Religious Rejections of the World and Their Directions", on the »Janus-face« of magically-oriented asceticism: »on the one hand, abnegation of the world, and on the other, mastery of the world by virtue of magical powers obtained by abnegation« (in: M. W., *Essays in Sociology*, translated from the German and edited with an introduction by H. H. Gerth & C. Wright Mills, with a new preface by Bryan S. Turner, orig. 1948, reprint with new preface, London: 1991, p.327).

ironically) *positivistic demand for evidential exteriorisation of spirit*¹⁶⁴ - what Rilke in the letter calls *eine mechanische Zerkleinerung des Geheimsten*. Rilke cultivates not a rationalisation of the occult but, as Gruber says of Jung, »eine Vermehrung und Affirmation des >Geheimnischarakters< der Welt«. ¹⁶⁵ Yet at no point in the *Malte* are spiritual realities themselves thrown into ontological doubt. *Malte* remains, in this respect, >faithful<. Much earlier in the letter to Purtscher-Wydenbruck, Rilke has carefully conveyed the nuanced ambivalence of his »Einstellung« towards psychic phenomena, which he says found confirmation in the »sehr besonderen Erfahrungen, die mir zuteil

¹⁶⁴ Cf Kierkegaard's echo of John 4:48: »[...] the highest form of faith is indeed to believe without seeing signs and miracles« (undated journal entry 1848, *Journals & Papers Vol.2*, p.13). For Adorno, who is of course advancing an *immanentist* critique of occultism as a late- (not high-) capitalist (epi)phenomenon, the contemporary »Regression auf magisches Denken« (»Thesen gegen den Okkultismus«, p.272) marks the failure of consciousness, »das Unbedingte zu denken und das Bedingte zu ertragen« (ibid., p.271). The >occult< phenomenon represents to Adorno's eye the laughably facile, because unmediated, >materialisation< of the essentially non-factual: »Das Unbedingte wird zum Faktum, das Bedingte unmittelbar wesentlich« (ibid.). This »faule Zauber« is »nicht anders als die faule Existenz« (ibid., p.275), for it completely evades the long hard work of responding to the negativity of being. Indeed, argues Adorno, occultism is a covert endorsement of facticity as a value in itself. It thus embeds itself with suspicious ease into the affirmative culture of late capitalism, annihilating alterity with its scientific-empiricist masquerade: »Die Objekte [...] sollen zugleich die Möglichkeit von Erfahrung übersteigen und erfahren werden [...] Die Kardinalsünde des Okkultismus ist die Kontamination von Geist und Dasein, das selber zum Attribut des Geistes wird« (ibid., p.276). Rather as Kierkegaard satirises Adler's mystography as a *reductio ad absurdum* of Hegel's speculative philosophy, so here Adorno spies in modern occultism the influence of Hegel's embrace of World as positive exteriorisation of Spirit: »Der Übergang zum Dasein, stets >positiv< und Rechtfertigung der Welt, impliziert zugleich die These von der Positivität des Geistes, seine Dingfestmachung, die Transposition des Absoluten in die Erscheinung. Ob die ganze dinghafte Welt, als >Produkt<, Geist sein soll oder irgendein Ding irgendein Geist, wird gleichgültig und der Weltgeist zum obersten Spirit, zum Schutzengel des Bestehenden, Entgeisteten. Davon leben die Okkulten: ihre Mystik ist das enfant terrible des mystischen Moments in Hegel. Sie treiben die Spekulation zum betrügerischen Bankrott. Indem sie bestimmtes Sein als Geist ausgeben, unterwerfen sie den vergegenständlichten Geist der Daseinsprobe, und sie muß negativ ausfallen. Kein Geist ist da« (ibid., pp.277f). Not just Kierkegaard's Adler-critique is recalled here, but also his more general dualistic rejection of Hegel's *Weltgeist* as a category mistake - though in that case on the explicitly religious grounds that the World is by definition the fallen *contra* of Spirit.

¹⁶⁵ Gruber, *Die Seherin von Prevorst*, p.224.

geworden sind« in the circle of Marie von Thurn und Taxis over a decade earlier:

Ich bin überzeugt, daß diese Erscheinungen, wenn man sie hinnimmt, *ohne sich in sie zu flüchten*, und willens bleibt, sie immer wieder in das *Ganze* unseres Daseins einzuordnen, das ja voll nicht minder wunderbarer Geheimnisse ist in allen seinen Ereignissen -, ich bin, sage ich, überzeugt, daß diese Erscheinungen nicht einer falschen Neugier in uns entsprechen, sondern uns tatsächlich *unbeschreiblich angehen* und (wenn man sie ausschlösse) doch immer wieder an irgendeiner Stelle sich geltend zu machen fähig wären. Warum sollten sie nicht, wie alles noch Unerkannte oder überhaupt Unerkennbare, ein Gegenstand unserer Bemühung, unseres Staunens, unserer Erschütterung und Ehrfurcht sein?¹⁶⁶

The phenomena themselves are affirmed ontologically and existentially, yet surrounded with caveats relating to imbalance and flight from life. Rilke does not contradict his critique later in the letter of *neugierige Geister* (a nicely ambiguous phrase...) in his words here about *falsche Neugier*: he does not say that spiritistic research is free of false curiosity, but that spiritistic phenomena (*Erscheinungen*) themselves can be a locus of something authentically spiritual. Nor does he write that they should become *ein Gegenstand unserer Erkenntnis*. On the contrary, he classifies them as *alles noch Unerkannte, oder überhaupt Unerkennbare* and associates them with affective responses beyond rational cognitive control (*Bemühung, Staunen, Erschütterung, Ehrfurcht*). Like the iconostasis screening the divine space¹⁶⁷ or the Mosaic prohibition on graven

¹⁶⁶ *MLB-Materialien*, pp. 127f.

¹⁶⁷ Cf *MLB*, Paper LXIV, p.616.

images, we find here a resistance, Kantian in all but name, to spiritism's attempted *Vereindeutigung* of the numinous.¹⁶⁸

I believe that Rilke denies Malte unequivocal psychic experience for the same reason he denies him poetic genius or a Jammesian *Dichteridylle*: in order to block up the escape routes through which Malte might try to flee (*ohne sich in sie zu flüchten*), in order to turn the screw on his character - *in order to force the Kierkegaardian issue*. No more than Rilke doubts the existence of poetic genius, does he doubt the existence of the spirit dimension. But any consolation, relief, even interest¹⁶⁹ or action¹⁷⁰ provided by clairvoyant gifts would distract from the nature of the Malte-figure's existence as spiritual trial.¹⁷¹ In this »*refus absolu du divertissement*« (Vanoosthuyse),¹⁷² Malte's parapsychological *ennui* becomes quintessentially Kierkegaardian. This is not to conclude, however, that Malte starts to become a Kierkegaardian figure - in

¹⁶⁸ Towards the close of *Träume eines Geistersehers*, Kant makes a plea for a kind of deferred occultism: »Wir müssen also warten, bis wir vielleicht in der künftigen Welt durch neue Erfahrungen und neue Begriffe von denen uns noch verborgenen Kräften in unserm denkenden Selbst werden belehrt werden« (*Träume eines Geistersehers*, pp.185f); »Es war auch die menschliche Vernunft nicht gnugsam dazu beflügelt, daß sie so hohe Wolken teilen sollte, die uns die Geheimnisse der andern Welt aus den Augen ziehen, und denen Wißbegierigen, die sich nach derselben so angelegentlich erkundigen, kann man den einfältigen aber sehr natürlichen Bescheid geben: daß es wohl am ratsamsten sei, wenn sie sich zu gedulden beliebten, bis sie werden dahin kommen« (ibid., p.188). Kassner, echoing Ralph Waldo Emerson, accuses the elder Swedenborg of over-systematising the mystical realm: »sein mystisches System [ist] beinahe unangenehm klar [...] Swedenborg wird immer eine Gemeinde haben, solange es Menschen geben wird, die theure Waare billig haben wollen« (*Die Mystik, die Künstler und das Leben*, p.28; see also *Der indische Idealismus*, p.23). Cf Gruber on occultism's »Phantasie empirischer Beweise des Transzendenten oder absoluter intersubjektiver Verifizierbarkeit« (*"Mystik, Esoterik, Okkultismus"*, p.34). Interesting to note that this is a *Phantasie* (in Gruber's rather *parti pris* term) from the perspective not alone of sceptics (for obvious reasons) but also of believers (for whom the numinous will not permit itself to be instrumentalised by scientific, calculative rationality).

¹⁶⁹ An important category in Kierkegaard - cf for example *Repetition*, pp.147-8.

¹⁷⁰ Cf Malte's prayer in Paper LXIII: »sind wir nicht ohne Handlung?« (*MLB*, p.615).

¹⁷¹ *Prøvelse* in Kierkegaard (see *Fear and Trembling / Repetition*, p.341 editors' note 2).

¹⁷² Vanoosthuyse, "L'abject et le sublime", p.136. Vanoosthuyse appends the rider: »- sans la promesse consolatrice du christianisme [...]« (ibid.). (Kierkegaard would of course take umbrage at the adjective.)

the sense both of one suffering from agonies diagnosed by Kierkegaard and of one seeing existence in Kierkegaardian terms - only after the collapse of his self-cosmicisation. For his turn to the prospect of a spiritistic quantum leap out of the space-time continuum is motivated precisely by the pain of his existence as he arrives in Paris. From the first, he is in existential crisis and understands both that this is the case and what it is that is at stake in the desperately vertiginous turn to infinitude and possibility of the *Sehenlernen* project. When this project implodes, his Kierkegaardian outlook is not challenged but deepened. Anti-Climacus writes of the double-sided, paradoxical character of despair: »[...] it is an infinite merit to be able to despair. And yet not only is it the greatest misfortune and misery actually to be in despair; no, it is ruin«.¹⁷³ The conviction of an individual that he is not in despair is, insists Anti-Climacus, the surest sign of a pathologically deep immersion in despair: »a person must first despair with a vengeance, despair to the full, so that the life of spirit can break through from the ground up«.¹⁷⁴ There must be an »escalation«¹⁷⁵ of despair, the »rising fever in this sickness of the self«,¹⁷⁶ which is both a curse and, if responded to courageously and clear-sightedly, a way of bringing the individual into the »infinite gain« of the God-relationship by first coming »through despair«.¹⁷⁷ Thus, when Rilke tells Lou Andreas-Salomé that Malte »ja zum Teil aus meinen Gefahren gemacht ist« - shades of the Goethe-Werther complex here - and writes of the

¹⁷³ Kierkegaard, *Sickness unto Death*, p.45.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p.91.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p.132.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p.49.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p.57.

»Inständigkeit seiner [Maltes, D.D] *Verzweiflung*«,¹⁷⁸ this may have nothing to do with aesthetico-tragic pathos, and everything to do with a Kierkegaardian insight into the dialectic of spiritual growth. Likewise Rilke's existential theology in the letter to Rudolf Zimmermann of February 3rd 1921, where he is discussing the *Malte*: »Das Einsehen unserer Trostlosigkeit wäre zugleich der Moment, in dem jene eigentliche religiöse Produktivität einsetzen könnte,

¹⁷⁸ Letter to Lou Andreas-Salomé of December 28th 1911, in *MLB-Materialien*, p.88 (emphasis added). Cf Rilke's letter to Marie von Thurn und Taxis-Hohenlohe of August 30th 1910: »Mir graut ein bißchen, wenn ich an all die Gewaltsamkeit denke, die ich in Malte Laurids durchgesetzt habe, wie ich mit ihm in der konsequenten *Verzweiflung* bis hinter alles geraten war, bis hinter den Tod gewissermaßen, so daß nichts mehr möglich war, *nicht einmal das Sterben*« (in *MLB-Materialien*, p.84). Did Rilke have the following words of Kierkegaard in mind when he wrote this?: »[...] the torment of despair is precisely the inability to die. In this it has much in common with the condition of the mortally ill person who is in the throes of death but cannot die [...] to die means that it is all over, while to die death itself means to live to experience dying [...] The despairer cannot die [...]« (*Sickness unto Death*, p.48). Incidentally, at the end of his letter to the Fürstin, Rilke writes: »Jetzt lese ich Kierkegaard, es ist herrlich, wirklich Herrlichkeit, er hat mich nie so ergriffen« (*MLB-Materialien*, p.85). Kierkegaardian >death<, as P. Lønning writes, refers to the passage of the soul »into another order of things« ("The Christian Death", in: *The Sources and Depths of Faith in Kierkegaard. Bibliotheca Kierkegaardiana Vol.II*, edited by Niels Thulstrup & Marie Mikulová Thulstrup, Copenhagen: 1978, pp.168-178, here: p.169). For Malte, as seen at the close of Chapter Four, the despair of not being able to die relates to his failure to die while physically alive, to experience the eternal, *to achieve a ghostlike transcendence of gross consciousness*. For all his egoic terror at the thought of losing his familiar bearings, he is in despair at remaining >human, all-too-human<. (Cf Kassner's Kierkegaardian comment on Hamlet in *Der indische Idealismus*, p.26: »Dichternatur ist hier alles, was weder recht leben noch recht sterben kann [...]«.) Interesting in this context is a remark from Giloy (*Aporie des Dichters*, pp.13f): »Die Differenz von Innen und Außen erfährt Malte als >Versuchungen< [MLB, Paper XXII, p.504] und gebraucht damit den ins religiöse gewendeten Begriff der Verzweiflung aus Kierkegaards *Krankheit zum Tode*, wie ja auch Malte seine Versuchungen als >Krankheitserscheinungen< [MLB, Paper XLIX, p.573] versteht« (*Aporie des Dichters*, pp.13f). Kierkegaard's morbidity has disturbed commentators from Adorno (see "Kierkegaards Lehre von der Liebe", pp.221ff) to P. Lønning, who is prompted by »the life-denying motif in Kierkegaard's thought as a whole« to ask an extreme question: »Can it be said that Kierkegaard develops a necrophilia which even breaks with the faith in God as the giver of life?« ("The Christian Death", p.176). See also, in the same volume (Thulstrup & Thulstrup, ed., *The Sources and Depths of Faith in Kierkegaard*, pp.160-167), Marie Milulová Thulstrup's essay, "The Significance of Mortification and Dying away (to)". Kierkegaard's thanatotic tendency has been seen by some as revealing the prism of depression through which he looks at and philosophises about life, death and God. As we shall see in the >Conclusion?< section, this *Schwermut* does not escape Rilke's notice.

die allein zwar nicht zum Troste, aber zum redlichen Entbehrenkönnen aller
Tröstung führt!«¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁹ In *MLB-Materialien*, p.124.

V.iii.

The Kierkegaardian Self

Es ist noch nichts geschehen: the God(ot) of experiential monism has not kept its appointment with Malte, who remains, as Guy Michaud says of Mallarmé's *Igitur*, »le héros d'un conte où il ne se passe rien«¹⁸⁰ - or, to paraphrase the reviewer of Beckett's great play:¹⁸¹ the hero of a story where nothing happens, many times. This *Noch Nicht* will be reinscribed in the closing words of the book under a more general mystical sign: *[Gott] aber wollte noch nicht*. Yet Malte's plight does not turn him from the quest, does not leave him, like Huysmans' shattered *des Esseintes* at the end of *À rebours*, »sous un firmament que n'éclairent plus les consolants fanaux du vieil espoir«.¹⁸² Malte's God may appear to have absconded, but He is not dead: Malte somehow sustains a faithful and religious orientation within his resignative movement. He becomes only more deeply Kierkegaardian, lingering in that painful space between renunciation and religious experience indicated in Görner's words: »Wen die Zeit verläßt, der empfindet deswegen nicht unbedingt schon ein Gefühl von Ewigkeit; zunächst schmerzt ihn dieser

¹⁸⁰ Cited in Saalman (*Würfelwurf nach dem Absoluten*, p.67). Cf Rilke's expression of *ennui* to Lou Andreas-Salomé in his letter of August 8th 1903 from Paris: »Tage gehen hin, und manchmal höre ich das Leben gehen. Und noch ist nichts geschehen, noch ist nichts Wirkliches um mich [...]« (*Rilke - Andreas-Salomé Briefwechsel*, p.98).

¹⁸¹ Did Beckett perhaps read Malte's Maeterlinckian remarks about drama before writing *En attendant Godot*? They read like a programme note.

¹⁸² Huysman, *À rebours*, p.269.

Verlust«.183 What is the worldview, what are the characteristics, of the Kierkegaardian self - the Unhappy Consciousness which, aware that it is caught in the impossible tension of its own existence, being equally unable to reconcile itself to time and to escape from time into eternity, tarries awhile in this agony of self-conscious despair? What does it mean to be existentially and spiritually authentic or, as Kierkegaard likes to put it, *serious*? By such Kierkegaardian selfhood I understand essentially the following:184

183 Görner, "Im Innern des Nirgendwo", p.385.

184 It is to be stressed that what follows does not claim to convey with strict fidelity the scope and complexity of Kierkegaard's thought. Rather I am offering an ideal-typical character sketch of the >Kierkegaardian self< - a compound of Kierkegaard's own writings, his personality (particularly as mediated in Kassner's essay, which Rilke read) and the Kierkegaardian >type< as it was perceived in late nineteenth and early twentieth-century European letters. Perhaps the most serious simplification I inflict on Kierkegaard's ideas relates to the >movement of infinite resignation<. The Kierkegaardian self I portray below makes this movement, relinquishing all hope that world reflect spirit. This, I believe, does indeed represent the >ur-Kierkegaardian< Unhappy Consciousness. It would, nevertheless, be a rude abbreviation of Kierkegaard's thought not to point to the way in which, through Johannes de Silentio in *Fear and Trembling*, Constantin Constantius in *Repetition* and Anti-Climacus in *The Sickness unto Death*, Kierkegaard posits a movement even higher than that of infinite resignation: the movement of faith. The Knight of Faith does not give up *all* hope of world reflecting spirit - or more accurately: he does give up all hope *and then*, contrary to everything his reason tells him, somehow stops giving up hope. Mark C. Taylor explicates this great return to the world of the world-denying Knight of Faith: »[...] Kierkegaard argues that the believer negates the negation of infinite resignation by reappropriating the world of finite experience as the free creation of the omnipotent Lord« (*Journeys to Selfhood*, p.259). The movement of faith, sometimes referred to as >Religiousness B< (as opposed to the more resignative >Religiousness A<), is exemplified most powerfully in the stories of Abraham and Job, who never gave up believing that »for God everything is possible at every moment« (*Sickness unto Death*, p.70) - even if it is quite impossible on every human criterion. (Rudd's account of such >Religiousness B< is the most lucid I have come across in the literature: *Kierkegaard and the Limits of the Ethical*, pp.154ff, esp. pp.159f.) For Kierkegaard, there comes a point when the religious believer must assent to a *sacrificium intellectus*, to the foolishness of a »mühsam errungene und starrsinnig festgehaltene zweite Einfalt« (Adorno, "Kierkegaards Lehre von der Liebe", p.219), and acknowledge that God's Reason is of a different order altogether to human reason. Thus, as Adorno points out, is philosophy humbled at the altar of *credo quia absurdum*: »Philosophie wird vor die paradoxe Aufgabe gestellt, sich selbst wieder an den verlorengegangenen Platz der Ancilla Theologiae zu versetzen und zu abdizieren« ("Kierkegaards Lehre von der Liebe", p.217). It is crucial to stress that Kierkegaard does not see faith as a facile bypassing of the difficulties of finite human existence. Rather, as Bettina Faber brings out lucidly in a recent article, authentically religious existence can only spring up *after* the self has faced up to the arduousness of its own finitude: »[...] diese sozusagen *im und nach* dem Durchgang durch die Möglichkeiten menschlichen Existierens und Selbstverstehens aufbrechende Perspektive, in der der dänische Denker alle seine Anstrengungen kulminieren sah, [handelt] keinesfalls um einen banalen >Sprung< in die rettenden Arme des Obskuren und Irrationalen eines Glaubens im Sinne des Marxschen >Opiums< oder der ungefähr

- α) The Kierkegaardian self is the single existing individual.
- β) The Kierkegaardian self has experienced the collapse of any notion of correspondence between interior and exterior realms.
- γ) The Kierkegaardian self, relinquishing any lingering hope or expectation that world reflect spirit, turns inward.
- δ) The Kierkegaardian self, as passionately inward, subjective, single existing individual, stands alone before God and over against the world.
- ε) Exile is the natural condition of the Kierkegaardian self.
- ζ) The Kierkegaardian self is the suffering one who comes to understand that adversity is prosperity.
- η) The Kierkegaardian self, as melancholic single existing individual, is the outsider, the exception, *par excellence*.
- θ) The Kierkegaardian single individual grasps the inner secret of unhappy love.

gleichzeitig mit Kierkegaard von Feuerbach kritisierten Projektion [...]« ("Büchner und Kierkegaard - eine Wahlverwandschaft?", in: Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte, 3/2002, pp.403-445, here: p.441, footnote 119). Eagleton writes of Kierkegaard's faith: »In abandoning the finite for the infinite, it opens up an abyss between outer and inner; but this gesture is shadowed by a movement of hope which rediscovers a sort of workaday commensurability with the world, accepting the finite for what it is in the ironizing light of infinity« (*Ideology of the Aesthetic*, p.183). What Eagleton misses here, however, is that the return to the world which comes after the >movement of infinite resignation< is based not on irony but on faith in the >absurd<, the >paradox<, the >offence<, the >marvel<: Abraham, as Silentio writes in awe, »did not have faith that he would be blessed in a future life but that he would be blessed here in the world [...] to be able to lose one's understanding and along with it everything finite, for which it is the stockbroker, and then to win the very same finitude again by virtue of the absurd - this appalls me, but that does not make me say it is something inferior, since, on the contrary, it is the one and only marvel« (*Fear and Trembling*, p.36). This is scarcely a matter of >workaday commensurability<.

1) The Kierkegaardian single individual responds with passionate subjunctive subjectivity to the exempla, positive and negative, of other authentic single individuals.

Let us flesh out this list, tentatively fastening the bonds between Kierkegaard's and Rilke's creations - though cognisant that what follows may be unpalatably Procrustean in its synthetic eagerness to schematise intertextuality.

α) The Kierkegaardian self is the single existing individual

Faith, for Kierkegaard, is »this paradox that the single individual is higher than the universal«. ¹⁸⁵ Throughout his writing, Kierkegaard has in his sights the tendency of human beings to seek cover from the awful responsibility of subjective existence in the camouflaged abjection of groupings, whether of state, politics, family, class, career or, most scandalously of all, organised >positive< religion (the *Christendom* which Kierkegaard opposes to true *Christianity*). ¹⁸⁶ »[T]he public is numbers«, as one journal entry puts it. ¹⁸⁷ The individual cannot hope to find value in the >universal<, by which term Kierkegaard means not infinity but the *sittliche Substanz* of the community, which Hegel has advanced in the *Phänomenologie* as the necessary supercession of individual limits. Johannes de Silentio celebrates instead »the person who lives under his own surveillance alone in

¹⁸⁵ Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, p.55.

¹⁸⁶ Kierkegaard's complaint here is that, in Mark C. Taylor's words, »Christendom's objective religiosity effects no inner transformation of individuals« (*Journeys to Selfhood*, p.63).

¹⁸⁷ Undated entry 1854, *Journals & Papers Vol.3*, p.340.

the big wide world«.188 In the later pseudonymous writings, the figure of Judge Wilhelm in *Either/Or II* is exposed for the complacency of his faith. As Terry Eagleton writes: »If the ethics of a Judge Wilhelm are an aestheticized version of religious belief, reflecting a pleasurable, instinctual conformity to universal law, that belief for his author is at once too dramatically individualist and too perpetually in crisis to oil the wheels of daily social life«.189 A Wilhelm, for all his insight and dialectical sharpness, is a little too cosily embedded in job, family and civic duty to have a real sense of »the distress, the anxiety, the paradox«190 at the heart of life and faith. Any accommodation with worldly values that goes beyond the minimally pragmatic or functional will, for Kierkegaard, oversee the incommensurability of inner self and outer persona.

In the sixth *große Frage* Malte asks: »Ist es möglich, daß man von den Mädchen nichts weiß, die doch leben?191 Ist es möglich, daß man >die Frauen< sagt, >die Kinder<, >die Knaben< und nicht ahnt (bei aller Bildung nicht ahnt), daß diese Worte längst keine Mehrzahl mehr haben, sondern nur unzählige Einzahlen?«192 The thought here that thought (*weiß*) cannot meet existential reality (*leben*), for all thought's sophistication (*bei aller Bildung*), inspires Malte's linguistic skepsis about the referential good faith of assigning plural nouns to existing human individuals. (Note that only human nouns are

188 Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, p.75.

189 Eagleton, *Ideology of the Aesthetic*, p.184.

190 Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, p.65.

191 Cf Francis Jammes' strange gift: »Er weiß von Mädchen, die vor hundert Jahren gelebt haben; es tut nichts mehr, daß sie tot sind, denn er weiß alles« (*MLB*, Paper XVI, pp.482f).

192 *MLB*, Paper XIV, p.469.

included in Malte's list: he is being firmly existential here.)¹⁹³ This insight will spur Malte to seek preconscious, magnetic rapport with individuals, without going through the good offices of the schematising signifier. In *The Sickness unto Death*, Anti-Climacus writes:

the particular human lies below the level of the concept: one cannot think an individual human being, but only the concept >man<. That is why speculative philosophy promptly alludes to the doctrine of the generation's *superiority* over the individual; for one cannot expect speculation to acknowledge the concept's *powerlessness* in relation to actuality.¹⁹⁴

Both Malte and Anti-Climacus are gesturing towards the great vulnerability of metaphysics since Plato to the simple question: Does thought correspond to reality or being?¹⁹⁵ *Was ist wirklich gewesen?* The religious existentialist finds in the *wirklich* as much question-begging as specification. And no single existing human being enjoys the transcendental vantage point that would grant him access to answers. The Kierkegaardian critique of metaphysics, as Michael Weston admirably expresses it, »rests [...] on the contrast between the objective conception of life, where it is seen as if it were already in the past and so complete and surveyable at least in principle, and the subjective, that way one's life is seen from *within* it, from the point of view of the one who has

¹⁹³ An important point of difference with Lord Chandos' *Sprachkrise*.

¹⁹⁴ Kierkegaard, *Sickness unto Death*, p152. Emmanuel Levinas will richly develop the idea that a human being is exterior to conceptual thought, with the Face inviting a »disengagement from all objectivity« - a sort of mysteriously inverted *Physiognomik* (*Totality and Infinity. An Essay in Exteriority*, translated from the French by Alphonso Lingis, Pittsburgh: 1969, p.70).

¹⁹⁵ Cf a journal entry by Kierkegaard on Schelling's Berlin lecture of 11th November 1841 on Revelation: »The embryonic child of thought leapt for joy within me as in Elizabeth, when [Schelling] mentioned the word >actuality< in connection with the relation of philosophy to actuality [...] This one word recalled all my philosophical pains and sufferings« (*Journals & Papers Vol.5*, p.181).

to live it«. ¹⁹⁶ Thus Johannes Climacus' attack on the speculative *cogito* in the

Concluding Unscientific Postscript:

An abstract thinker exists to be sure, but this fact is rather a satire on him than otherwise. For an abstract thinker to try to prove his existence by the fact that he thinks, is a curious contradiction; for in the degree that he thinks abstractly he abstracts from his own existence. ¹⁹⁷

The absurdly abstract *cogito* soon gets lost in the »bloodless universals of collective thought« (Gardiner), ¹⁹⁸ which Kierkegaard identifies as his era's anti-existential tool of choice. Thus does speculative philosophy's »eclipse of the individual« (Hannay) ¹⁹⁹ buttress the age's »characteristic depravity« - its »dissolute pantheistic contempt for the individual man«, whereby »no one wants to be an individual human being«. ²⁰⁰ Kassner writes of the moment Kierkegaard found his *Form* in the figure of the *Einzelne*: »das war sein größter, sein unsterblicher Augenblick«. ²⁰¹ The individual became the great explanatory matrix for his religious existentialism: »so legte Kierkegaard

¹⁹⁶ Michael Weston, *Kierkegaard and Modern Continental Philosophy* (London & New York: 1994), p.31.

¹⁹⁷ Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, translated by David F. Swenson & Walter Lowrie (Princeton: 1941), p.281. Compare Malte's own sense of the comic gap between his grandiose metaphysical speculation (*cogito*) and his lowly station as single existing individual (*ego*): »Es ist lächerlich [...] Ich sitze hier und bin nichts. Und dennoch, dieses Nichts fängt an zu denken [...]« (*MLB*, Paper XIV, p.468). As suggested in Chapter Three, Malte is here speaking *as if* from the subject position of a transcendental self - a conceit which of course can only humiliate the egoic self.

¹⁹⁸ Gardiner, *Kierkegaard*, p.36.

¹⁹⁹ Hannay, *Kierkegaard*, p.142. As Steven Shakespeare points out, Kierkegaard's »separation of thought from being in human existence« goes further than an attack of metaphysics alone: it also disqualifies *all* claims of »thought, intuition or poetic creativity« to capture »God's presence in the world« (*Kierkegaard, Language and the Reality of God*, Aldershot: 2001, p.178). Kierkegaard zealously protects God's absolute alterity from the operations and emanations of human consciousness. Cf Gouwens on how Kierkegaard seeks to »pry us from the idea that >knowing< the good and God are like a neutral, uninvolved >representing< of reality« (*Kierkegaard as Religious Thinker*, p.106).

²⁰⁰ Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, p.317.

²⁰¹ Kassner, *Kierkegaard*, p.91.

alles, was in der Welt herumlag, in den Einzelnen - weil er Ordnung und nicht alles in der Welt herumliegen lassen wollte«. ²⁰² The *Ich*-form of Kierkegaard's pseudonymous writings duly reflects this championing of subjective individual experience.

The *Ich*-form of the *Aufzeichnungen* offers a phenomenology of lived individual experience, the private quality of the notebook adding to the (illusion of) confessional immediacy. Malte is in so many ways the epitome of individual existence, »ein einzelnes Herz« ²⁰³ severed from family, country, friendship, vocation and all further arenas of association. This reality is brought home in the text not merely through direct description and thematisation of loneliness, but by the almost ²⁰⁴ complete absence of conversation between Malte and other human beings in Paris. Perhaps more than anything else, it is this severance of Malte's vocal cords that lends him a spectral detachment from sociality. Allied to this is his almost exclusive focus on the individual as the monadic principle of life. He is horrified at the nomothetic ease with which so many people disappear into type. When he

²⁰² Kassner, *Kierkegaard*, p.92. Cf Malte on Felix Arvers' deathbed correction of a mispronunciation: »Er war ein Dichter und haßte das Ungefähre; oder vielleicht war es ihm nur um die Wahrheit zu tun; oder es störte ihn, als letzten Eindruck mitzunehmen, daß die Welt so nachlässig weiterginge. Das wird nicht mehr zu entscheiden sein. Nur soll man nicht glauben, daß es Pedanterie war« (*MLB*, Paper XLVIII, p.572).

²⁰³ Malte's self-description after his father's *Herzstich*: »An mein Herz dachte ich nicht. Und als es mir später einfiel, wußte ich zum erstenmal ganz gewiß, daß es hierfür nicht in Betracht kam. Es war ein einzelnes Herz. Es war schon dabei, von Anfang anzufangen« (*MLB*, Paper XLV, p.566). Compare the last sentence here with the apprenticeship theme in the *Briefentwurf*: »Ich bin ein Anfänger in meinen eigenen Verhältnissen« (*MLB*, Paper XXII, p.505).

²⁰⁴ As Zimmermann points out ("Malte Ludens", p.55), the encounter with the Salpêtrière doctors represents Malte's »only appearance in direct discourse« (at least in present-tense Paris). Yet even that is not quite accurate, as the immediacy of Malte's speech is already lost in translation: »Ich dachte, daß ich in Weinen ausbrechen würde, aber ich hörte mich französisch sagen: >Ich hatte bereits die Ehre [...]<« (*MLB*, Paper XIX, p.494). On this point, see also Becker, *Urbanität und Moderne*, p.124.

looks around, however, his idiographic eye seeks out individuals; when he thinks, he speculates on individuals, when he narrates, he narrates on individual existences.²⁰⁵ For Malte, life is an arena in which the single existing individual struggles to resist the pressures of the collective and keep a space open for authentic experience. Thus, for instance, Paper LIII is devoted entirely to the theme of *Der Einsame* who is tormented by »die Leute«,²⁰⁶ Paper LXXI to the exertions of the *verlorener Sohn* to avoid being reduced to »das gemeinsame Wesen«,²⁰⁷ the lowest common denominator of other people's ideas about him.

β) The Kierkegaardian self has experienced the collapse of any notion of correspondence between interior and exterior realms.

Spirit is inward. From this insight flows the cultivation of inwardness and the concomitant problematisation of exteriority in Kierkegaard and the *Malte*.

One of the practices which Hegel targets in his *beobachtende Vernunft* topic is Physiognomy, which, as we have seen, is rendered critical in the *Aufzeichnungen*. Hegel, endorsing Lichtenberg, brands physiognomy »etwas End- und Bodenloses«²⁰⁸ for its assumption of a necessary semiotic link between signifier and signified.²⁰⁹ On the trope of *face, voice or expressive feature as materialisation of the soul within* is founded the whole physiognomical

²⁰⁵ This marks a critical difference to Roquentin in Sartre's *La Nausée*, whose anti-bourgeois eye is almost exclusively attuned to contemptibly inauthentic social types.

²⁰⁶ *MLB*, Paper LIII, p.584.

²⁰⁷ *MLB*, Paper LXXI, p.630.

²⁰⁸ Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, p.242.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, pp.239f.

project, with the Lavaterian rider that the face represents, by some mysterious, Swedenborgian correspondence, man's *Gottesebenbildlichkeit*.²¹⁰ In *Fear and Trembling*, Johannes de Silentio gives an account of the Knight of Faith walking down the public thoroughfare:

I move a little closer to him, watch his slightest movement to see if it reveals a bit of heterogenous optical telegraphy from the infinite, a glance, a facial expression, a gesture, a sadness, a smile²¹¹ that would betray the infinite in its heterogeneity with the finite. No! I examine his figure from top to toe to see if there may not be a crack through which the infinite would peek. No! He is solid all the way through.²¹²

Might we not add this text to the *flâneur* canon surveyed earlier?²¹³ Like Poe's Man of the Crowd, the Knight of Faith *läßt sich nicht lesen*, for his inward passion is heterogenous to his external aspect. The *flâneur* must invest in notions of telepathy if he is to believe in the reality of his readings on the streets.

The experience of the sign's *Gleichgültigkeit*²¹⁴ over against what it is taken to signify (the inner person) has truly shocking repercussions if generalised to include presentation of self to self via language and behaviour.²¹⁵ Intersubjective relations become a hall of mirrors in which one false exterior meets another and deception or misprision are installed into

²¹⁰ Already alluded to in the Introduction and in Chapter 2.

²¹¹ Once again, compare the >*Subrisio Saltat*.< in the fifth *Elegie* (KA II, p.216, lines 56-61).

²¹² Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, p.39.

²¹³ Cf Roger Poole's humane evocation of Kierkegaard's own Copenhagen *flâneries* in *Kierkegaard: The Indirect Communication* (Charlottesville & London: 1993), pp.165ff.

²¹⁴ Cf Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, pp.239-40.

²¹⁵ Observational psychology is included in Hegel's critique of *beobachtende Vernunft*: see *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, pp.230ff.

relations as an uncontainable structural possibility. This undermines the Lavaterian analogy of inner and outer in the human being which has underwritten key elements of symbolistic and monistic discourse. Malte's childhood initiation into deceit comes when he feels compelled to feign delight on his birthday²¹⁶ - a vexation he passes on to the *verlorener Sohn*.²¹⁷ The theme of *Betrug* will reappear presently.

But the heterogeneity of inner and outer goes even deeper than intersubjective opacity. When Malte writes at a very early stage in his *Aufzeichnungen*: »es geht alles tiefer in mich ein und bleibt nicht an der Stelle stehen, wo es sonst immer zu Ende war«,²¹⁸ he is pondering a strange congruence of *Weltinnenraum* and empirical outer world. The self, whose subjective reality is grounded in the strange region of the Unconscious, thinks to find correspondences on the external plane. In Malte's case, as we have seen however, such correspondences become doubtful. For all that the world might trigger inner responses, however intense, objective action and subjective reaction do not seem to correlate. And this chasm is categorical, not unfortunate or contingent. The self cannot ground itself in the world, *nor even in itself*, but only in the mystery of a God whose love operates in the depths of the psyche. The pain generated by this insight, which in Kierkegaardian terms is a genuine insight and not a meretricious Romantic hyperbole, leads to the next characteristic of the single individual:

²¹⁶ Papers XXXII (*MLB*, p.525) & XLIII (*MLB*, pp.556f).

²¹⁷ *MLB*, Paper LXXI, p.631.

²¹⁸ *MLB*, Paper IV, p.456.

γ) The Kierkegaardian self, relinquishing any lingering hope or expectation that world reflect spirit, turns inward

The inward torsion of the Kierkegaardian self, based on a movement of »infinite resignation«²¹⁹ from worldly allegiances, is the inward torsion both of melancholy and of faith (as though the former were educating one into the latter). »When inwardness is missing,« writes Kierkegaard in his journal, »the spirit is finitised - inwardness is the eternal.«²²⁰ Thus Kierkegaard adopts and champions »[...] the genuine, strenuous life of the spirit which comes only with introspection [...]«.²²¹ Frederick Sontag, having placed this advocacy of inwardness in a long tradition, writes: »As the prophet of >the second reformation<, Kierkegaard takes it as his task to stress the inner or the spiritual life, its hidden and unseen qualities [...]«.²²² This *Innerlichkeit* seems to move within an intermediate zone of psychological introspection and spiritual *Innenschau*.²²³ To neglect the first would for Kierkegaard be unexistential; to neglect the second, autological.

Malte's evocation in Paper LVI of his introduction to the world of reading contains a meditation on the strange status of childhood in the world:

²¹⁹ Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, p.38.

²²⁰ Undated entry 1844, *Journals & Papers Vol.2*, p.460.

²²¹ Undated journal entry 1850, *Journals & Papers Vol.2*, p.466.

²²² Frederick Sontag, "Inwardness", in: Thulstrup & Thulstrup (ed.), *The Sources and Depths of Faith in Kierkegaard*, pp.105-113, here: p.105. Cf Stack's definition of Kierkegaardian inwardness: »the passionate sense of the subjective specificity of one's own existence, a specificity that eludes abstract categorization or objective thought« (*Kierkegaard's Existential Ethics*, p.159). Ib Ostenfeld even suggests a link between Kierkegaard's subjective existentialism and the new-found centrality of the observer in twentieth-century, post-Bohr physics (*Søren Kierkegaard's Psychology*, p.65).

²²³ Cf Gruber, *Die Seherin von Prevorst*, p.17.

In der Kindheit kam mir das Lesen vor wie ein Beruf, den man auf sich nehmen würde, später einmal, wenn alle die Berufe kamen, einer nach dem andern. Ich hatte, aufrichtig gesagt, keine bestimmte Vorstellung, wann das sein könnte. Ich verließ mich darauf, daß man es merken würde, wenn das Leben gewissermaßen umschlug und nur noch von *außen* kam, so wie früher von *innen*. Ich bildete mir ein, es würde dann deutlich und eindeutig sein und gar nicht mißzuverstehen. Durchaus nicht einfach, im Gegenteil recht anspruchsvoll, verwickelt und schwer meinetwegen, aber immerhin *sichtbar*. Das eigentümlich Unbegrenzte der Kindheit, das *Unverhältnismäßige*, das Nie-recht-Absehbare, das würde dann überstanden sein. Es war freilich nicht einzusehen, wieso. Im Grunde nahm es immer noch zu und schloß sich auf allen Seiten, und *je mehr man hinaussah, desto mehr Inneres rührte man in sich auf: Gott weiß, wo es herkam*. Aber wahrscheinlich wuchs es zu einem Äußersten an und brach dann mit einem Schläge ab. Es war leicht zu beobachten, daß die Erwachsenen sehr wenig davon beunruhigt wurden; *sie gingen herum und urteilten und handelten*, und wenn sie je in Schwierigkeiten waren, so lag das an *äußeren Verhältnissen*.²²⁴

In *Fear and Trembling* we find the following passage: »In Hegelian philosophy, *das Äussere (die Entäusserung)* is higher than *das Innere*. This is frequently illustrated by an example. The child is *das Innere*, the adult *das Äussere* [...] But faith is the paradox that interiority is higher than exteriority [...]«.²²⁵ A *Catcher in the Rye avant la lettre*, Silentio is rebutting the false teleology of the *Lebenslauf*. If it is the case that only the inward is authentically passionate in spiritual terms, then the child is typically higher than the adult. Note that the teleology is not simply reversed in a static way: the child is not *essentially* higher than the adult as such, only higher than the typical adult who has forfeited his own interiority in the procession from childhood into adulthood. As Hannay writes of the despair of spiritlessness: »Despair is not [adolescent]

²²⁴ *MLB*, Paper LVI, pp.593f (all emphases added).

²²⁵ Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, p.69.

sickness unto adulthood; quite the contrary, it is something people grow into as they settle down into spiritually sterile adult complacency«.226 The Christian credentials of this idea are of course impeccable.227 This correlation of childhood and interiority adds to the cogency of Malte's words in Paper IV: »Ich lerne sehen. Ich weiß nicht, woran es liegt, es geht alles tiefer in mich ein und bleibt nicht an der Stelle stehen, wo es sonst immer zu Ende war. Ich habe ein Inneres, von dem ich nicht wußte. Alles geht jetzt dorthin. Ich weiß nicht, was dort geschieht.«228 If Tycho Brahe looked upwards and outwards, then his descendant will tend to look inwards, downwards and, in the recursion to childhood, backwards. That the proximate occasion of such intro- and retrospection seems to be the search for powerfully occult experiences in the autobiographical field does not negate the principle that Malte considers childhood the prime site of authenticity.229 Soon (in Paper XX) he will write: »Ich habe um meine Kindheit gebeten, und sie ist wiedergekommen, und ich fühle, daß sie immer noch so schwer ist wie damals und daß es nichts genützt hat, älter zu werden.«230 The idea that the return of sometimes hysterical childhood anxieties in the grown man is not a regression but an existential wake-up call follows Kierkegaard's dialectical rhythm. The point, in both Kierkegaard and Rilke, is that a retrogression to childhood be seen not as a

²²⁶ Hannay, *Kierkegaard*, p.196.

²²⁷ Luke 18:17 & Matthew 18:22. But cf the caveat which Kierkegaard-Climacus, following 1 Corinthians 13:11, inserts in the section "Conclusion. About Childish Christianity" of *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* (pp.520-544): Christ's words extolling the child must not be taken to annul the essential difficulty of being a Christian - its character as existence-*task*. Yet the Rilkean understanding of the authentic childhood is precisely that the child is authentic because it has not yet been trained out of its instinctive sense of life's mysterious *Schwere*.

²²⁸ *MLB*, Paper IV, p.456.

²²⁹ Cf Fick on the similarity to Obstfelder's Priest here: *Sinnenwelt und Weltseele*, p.311.

²³⁰ *MLB*, Paper XX, p.499.

disastrously infantile regression, nor as a nostalgic-sentimental flight from the complicated challenges of adult life, but as a potentially redemptive return to a degree of passionate inwardness last experienced in childhood.²³¹ Malte is an unusual adult precisely in his rapport with his >inner child<, for he does not delude himself that the overwhelming questions of childhood have been resolved or outgrown. The term *Erwachsenen* as it appears in Malte's autobiographical flashbacks becomes synonymous with complacency, triviality, inauthenticity, s(t)olidity - in short, an erasure of *das Innere* and the sale of one's spirit to *das Äussere*.²³² Accordingly, when Malte senses that stimuli from the external world are beginning to go more deeply into him, he must learn not to turn them back outwards for confirmatory resonance with »die auswärtige Tatsache«,²³³ but to continue to let them plumb the depths of his psyche. Externalities are to be received, converted into *Weltinnenraum* and

²³¹ In an undated journal entry of 1849 Kierkegaard writes of the journey within as a journey back to the childlike state: »[...] the increase of inwardness in the relationship to God is indicated by the fact that it goes backward for a person; one does not come closer to God directly; on the contrary, one discovers more and more deeply the infinite distance. Therefore one does not begin by being a child and then become progressively more intimate as he grows older; no, one becomes more and more a child« (*Journals & Papers Vol.1*, p.122). Compare the reason Malte gives for the return home of the religiously palpitating *verlorene Sohn*: »Er dachte vor allem an die Kindheit, sie kam ihm, je ruhiger er sich besann, desto ungetaner vor; alle ihre Erinnerungen hatten das Vage von Ahnungen an sich, und daß sie als vergangen galten, machte sie nahezu zukünftig« (*MLB*, Paper LXXI, p.634).

²³² We find in the *Geschichten vom lieben Gott* this same »critical stance toward the adults as an all-inclusive group« (Bradley, "Rilke's *Geschichten vom lieben Gott*", p.4), a stance which bears upon that book's intricate narratology in interesting ways. Bradley quotes from a letter from to Friedrich Huch dated July 6th 1902: »[...] darum hat mein Buch vom lieben Gott auch den Nebentitel gehabt: für Kinder erzählt an Große [...] ich wußte, daß ich nur über diese schwankenden Brücken [...] zu den Lieblingen kommen kann, die mich verstehen, wenn ich etwas von Gott zu sagen versuchte [...]« (quoted *ibid.*, pp.1f). On Rilke's interest in pedagogical reform as a means of helping the child to set out »auf dem Wege zur großen Individualität«, see Naumann, *Gesammelte Malte-Studien I*, pp.40f. See also Joachim Storck, "Emanzipatorische Aspekte im Werk und Leben Rilkes", in: *Rilke heute. Beziehungen und Wirkungen*, edited by J. S. & Ingeborg Solbrig (Frankfurt/M: 1975), pp.247-285, here: pp.257ff.

²³³ *MLB*, Paper LIX, p.601.

cultivated as ever-intensifying inward passion.²³⁴ Experiences are to be digested not regurgitated.²³⁵ Thus, Rimbach is surely missing the grammar of Malte's education when he writes: »Malte [...] lernt, dass alles, was wir Aussen nennen, im sog. Innern verankert ist, und dass dieser Prozess auch in umgekehrter Richtung verlaufen kann.«²³⁶

δ) *The Kierkegaardian self, as passionately inward, subjective, single existing individual, stands alone before God and over against the world.*

Spiritual earnestness is measured in Kierkegaard according to the self's honesty, nakedness and transparency before God - and protected by the self's accompanying posture of deception before the world. The relation of the single existing individual to others is overshadowed by what Paul R. Sponheim calls Kierkegaard's »insistence that primitively the human subject was made for another - God«. As a consequence, anything that disturbs »the

²³⁴ Kierkegaard associates extensity with time, intensity with eternity: »The temporal is the retardation which spreads out in time and space; the eternal is the intensity which hastens toward death« (undated journal entry 1854, *Journals & Papers Vol.4*, p.475). Thus to centre oneself outside in the world of relative, >penultimate< goals, however lofty or refined, is to engage in a massive self-distraction from the true goal of self-orientation to ultimate spiritual ends. The temporal must be harvested by the self as it works its way (back) into eternal categories. This is not, however, to understand Kierkegaard's existential inwardness as a matter of tapping directly into transcendental consciousness, in the gnostic manner. In this, it differs radically from the Rilkean affirmation of the open *Weltinnenraum* (see further in >Conclusion?< section).

²³⁵ Cf Malte's distinction in Paper XIV between immediate and unconsciously recuperated experiences, with the latter alone resulting in true verse (*MLB*, p.467). Art for Malte, as for the Romantics, is - or more accurately: *would be* - a species of spirit materialisation, a precious *Versinnlichung des Unsichtbaren*. Dieter Schiller sees »die strukturelle Bedeutung« of the book's spiritistic motifs in their character as »Extremformen« of what occurs when the artist achieves »[d]as ästhetische Heraussetzen des Inneren in ein Äußeres« (*Der Einsame und seine Welt*, p.151). Indeed, as we have already seen, the Brahesque notion of *wirkliches Erzählen* is a version of magical-magnetic suggestion whereby the storyteller either transfers his own interior picture to the listener's consciousness or even materialises it on the external plane (see *MLB*, Paper XLIV, pp.557ff).

²³⁶ Rimbach, "Zum Begriff der Äquivalenz", p.134.

autopathetic individual alone with God« can only be spiritual anathema.²³⁷ Kassner anatomises this inscrutability of Kierkegaard's melancholic: »Die Schwermut kann vieles, alles, Wunderbares, ja sie tut unaufhörlich Wunder, der Mensch darf sie nur nicht, um keinen Preis, um kein anderes Wunder mit einem anderen Menschen teilen«. ²³⁸ Truth in Kierkegaard, as we have seen, is not a matter of conceptual comprehension in an abstract intellectual sense but of subjectively appropriated understanding in an experiential sense. Insight he sees not as an addition of cognitive material to the brain but as *metanoia*, change to the very texture of life as one experiences it - a change of self.²³⁹ Experience at this level is non-transferable, non-communicable, whether through language or ostensive behaviour.

Malte, having announced the reality of »ein Inneres, von dem ich nicht wußte« in Paper IV, immediately deduces the absurdity of telling another soul, »daß ich mich verändere«. ²⁴⁰ His conviction that Truth as Subjectivity cannot be shared goes back to his grandfather, Graf Brahe, whose ideas are

²³⁷ Paul R. Sponheim, "Kierkegaard's View of a Christian", in: *Kierkegaard's View of Christianity (Bibliotheca Kierkegaardiana Vol.1)*, edited by Niels Thulstrup & Marie Mikulová Thulstrup (Copenhagen: 1978), pp.182-191, here p.185.

²³⁸ Kassner, *Kierkegaard*, p.51. Cf an enigmatic entry Kierkegaard makes in his journal (undated, 1843): »After my death no one will find in my papers the slightest information (this is my consolation) about what really has filled my life; no one will find the inscription in my innermost being that interprets everything and that often turns into events of prodigious importance to me that which the world would call bagatelles and which I regard as insignificant if I remove the secret note that interprets them« (*Journals & Papers Vol.5*, p.226). The >secret note< obviously recalls Pascal.

²³⁹ Recall the figure of self as correctible text in both Rilke and Kierkegaard (*Sickness unto Death*, p.105; *MLB*, Paper XVIII, pp.490f.). Reading Jung's idea of >Individuation<, one is put strongly in mind of Kierkegaardian inwardness, as though Kierkegaard's conception of the self in *The Sickness unto Death* as »the relation which relates to itself« (p.43) has been revitalised in occult-psychoanalytical terms (cf Christine Maillard, "Le >mystique< et la psyché", pp. 86 & 88).

²⁴⁰ *MLB*, Paper IV, p.456.

recalled by Abelone (whose recollection is, in turn, recalled by Malte):²⁴¹ »Er hielt es für Einbildung, wenn jemand behauptete, das Leben mit andern zu teilen. (>Ja, teilen -<, sagte er.)«.²⁴² The Graf's hero is the Marquis de Belmare, whose life he honours as a testament to the incommunicability and indivisibility of the individual experience:

»Er hätte gut mit einer Wahrheit leben können, dieser Mensch, wenn er allein gewesen wäre. Aber es war keine Kleinigkeit, allein zu sein mit einer solchen. Und er war nicht so geschmacklos, die Leute einzuladen, daß sie ihn bei seiner Wahrheit besuchten; die sollte nicht ins Gerede kommen: dazu war er viel zu sehr Orientale. >Adieu, Madame<, sagte er ihr wahrheitsgemäß, >auf ein anderes Mal. Vielleicht ist man in tausend Jahren etwas kräftiger und ungestörter. Ihre Schönheit ist ja doch erst im Werden, Madame<, sagte er, und das war keine bloße Höflichkeit. Damit ging er fort und legte draußen für die Leute seinen Tierpark an, eine Art Jardin d'Acclimatation für die größeren Arten von Lügen, die man bei uns noch nie gesehen hatte, und ein Palmenhaus von Übertreibungen und eine kleine, gepflegte Figuerie falscher Geheimnisse. Da kamen sie von allen Seiten, und er ging herum mit Diamantschnallen an den Schuhen und war ganz für seine Gäste da.«²⁴³

This Cagliostro-like charlatanry the Graf sees as a profoundly authentic superficiality: »>Eine oberflächliche Existenz: wie? Im Grunde wars doch eine Ritterlichkeit gegen seine Dame, und er hat sich ziemlich dabei konserviert.<«²⁴⁴

²⁴¹ A narratological scenario that leads to an internal contradiction: Malte's purportedly verbatim transcription of Abelone's transcription of the Graf's words is undermined by the detail that Abelone herself had not been able keep up with the Graf's dictation: »Abelone strich durch und schrieb. Aber der Graf sprach so schnell weiter, daß man nicht mitkonnte« (Paper XLIV, pp.560ff).

²⁴² *MLB*, Paper XLIV, p.558.

²⁴³ *MLB*, Paper XLIV, p.561.

²⁴⁴ *MLB*, Paper XLIV, pp.561f. Graf Brahe's mystification of St. Germain in this Paper is quite close to the tale which Schiller's *Sizilianer* claims his grandfather told him about the *Armenier* (see *Der Geisterseher*, p.74).

Graf Brahe's (reported) description of Belmare's *Tierpark* of deception as an act of *Ritterlichkeit* towards the truth could stand as a fine metaphor for Kierkegaard's pseudonymous production, in which misleadingly >indirect communication< becomes the central aesthetic strategy.²⁴⁵ Kassner writes of the centrality of *Betrug* to Kierkegaard's life and thought:

Die Schwermut war Kierkegaards Element [...] Und diese wunderbare, einzige Schwermut, die nur begreift, wer sie besitzt, hat eine Tugend, die ebenso wunderbar und einzig ist wie sie selbst. Gleichwie die Kindlichkeit sich in Wünschen äußert und der Wunsch wirklich, auch vor Gott, die Tugend des Kindes ist, genau so äußert sich die Schwermut im Betrug. Ist das nicht einzig und wunderbar? Zwischen dem Kinde und allem Fremden, der großen, fremden Welt, lebt der Wunsch; zwischen der Schwermut und dem Fremden, der großen, fremden, stets geteilten Welt, lebt der Betrug.²⁴⁶

The self as masquerade, persona: just as the child protests against facticity and *mondanité* by meeting them with the optative energy of a counter-factual wish, so the melancholic self protests against the delusive exterior world of intersubjective, social relations by meeting it with a mask, a performance. Malte recalls his mother's melancholy words: »>Vergiß nie, dir etwas zu

²⁴⁵ Kierkegaard's cultivation of a ludic aesthetic strategy has earned him loud applause in the postmodernist theatre - whereby the clause that his ironic aestheticism is anything but autotelic tends to be placed in parenthesis. Eagleton writes sharply of Kierkegaard's very undeconstructive deconstructivism: »[...] Kierkegaard combines his devotion to difference, sportive humour, play with pseudonyms and guerilla-raids on the metaphysical with a passionately one-sided commitment, by which few of our modern ironists are likely to feel anything but unsettled« (*Ideology of the Aesthetic*, p.173). Faber too is suspicious of the postmodern embrace of Kierkegaard, diagnosing in much of it a covert »Wunsch nach dem identifikatorisch-entlastenden und letztlich mehr im Sinne einer Kritikimmunisierung wirkenden Sich-Wiedererkennen-Dürfen [...]« ("Büchner und Kierkegaard - eine Wahlverwandschaft?", p.404).

²⁴⁶ Kassner, *Kierkegaard*, p.52. Cf Kierkegaard in an undated 1846 journal entry: »As long as I live I will never and can never be recognized simply because I apply half my energies to preventing it« (*Journals & Papers Vol.5*, p.329). This will become the ethos of Malte's *verlorener Sohn* in Paper LXXI.

wünschen, Malte. Wünschen, das soll man nicht aufgeben. Ich glaube, es giebt keine Erfüllung, aber es giebt Wünsche, die lange vorhalten, das ganze Leben lang, so daß man die Erfüllung doch gar nicht abwarten könnte.<«. ²⁴⁷ The wish and the lie: two great defenses of the self against a fallen actuality.

That one will be subjected to the violence of (mis)recognition by others is, for the Kierkegaardian self, a given. The task is to take the initiative and actively *choose* a persona under which to take cover. The gravest peril is that one would identify so much with the mask as to forget, amidst the fretful stir unprofitable of worldly life, *that* it is only a disguise, a provisional prop. There must come a point when the self, in meditation or prayer, can discard the layer of falsity, the mask, the make-up, and stand in naked reverence before God:

Aber innen und vor Dir, mein Gott, innen vor Dir, Zuschauer: sind wir nicht ohne Handlung? Wir entdecken wohl, daß wir die Rolle nicht wissen, wir suchen einen Spiegel, wir möchten abschminken und das Falsche abnehmen und wirklich sein. Aber irgendwo haftet uns noch ein Stück Verkleidung an, das wir vergessen. Eine Spur Übertreibung bleibt in unseren Augenbrauen, wir merken nicht, daß unsere Mundwinkel verbogen sind. Und so gehen wir herum, ein Gespött und eine Hälfte: weder Seiende, noch Schauspieler. ²⁴⁸

Kierkegaard's pseudonymity, as Kassner shows, simply re-enacts on a literal level the circumstance that he is already, existentially, a pseudonym amongst other pseudonyms, an actor amongst other actors:

²⁴⁷ *MLB*, Paper XXVIII, p.515. One might term Maman's doctrine a doctrine of the >intransitive wish<, anticipating as it does Malte's later doctrine of intransitive love. Compare Kassner: »[...] der Schwermütige muß die ganze und jede einzelne Möglichkeit gewünscht haben, wie nur ein Kind wünschen kann, um also seinen Wunsch, *der ihm nie erfüllt wurde*, zu bereuen« (*Kierkegaard*, p.57, emphasis added).

²⁴⁸ *MLB*, Paper LXIII, p.615.

Was man so im allgemeinen Schwermut nennt, das ist gewöhnlich der Vorwand für etwas sehr Irdisches, Zeitliches, oft auch nur für einen Band Gedichte. Kierkegaards Schwermut war anders, sie war kein Vorwand oder, wenn man will, nur der Vorwand eines Göttlichen. Aber das Göttliche kann der Mensch auf die Dauer nicht betrügen, und um den Betrug am Göttlichen los zu werden, mußte Kierkegaard das Menschliche betrügen - und das war seine Schwermut. Um sich zuletzt nicht selbst zu betrügen, mußte Kierkegaard die Menschen betrügen, sich selbst in den Menschen betrügen - das war, noch einmal, seine Schwermut, sein Doppelsinn.²⁴⁹

Malte's advice to the »Junger Mensch irgendwo« shows a Kierkegaardian appreciation of the spiritual insulation provided by pseudonymity: »Nimm einen andern [Namen] an, irgendeinen, damit Gott dich rufen kann in der Nacht«.²⁵⁰ Wearing a mask outside without cultivating a hidden religious sensitivity inside would be mere depressive aestheticism (closer perhaps to pre-Reading Wilde than to Kierkegaard). For the Kierkegaardian subject, duplexity in the service of spirit is the only sane response to the unhappy cognisance that one partakes of two dimensions at once - the inessential realm of worldliness and the essential realm of interior spirit.²⁵¹ To lose sight of their heterogeneity is only to aggravate the wound of one's amphibious nature.²⁵²

²⁴⁹ Kassner, *Kierkegaard*, p.53. Cf Görner, "Im Innern des Nirgendwo", p.387, on the relevance for Rilke of Nietzsche's notion in *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* of self-masking as a necessary safeguard of philosophical integrity (»Jeder tiefe Geist braucht eine Maske [...]«).

²⁵⁰ *MLB*, Paper XXVI, p.511.

²⁵¹ Kierkegaard takes this idea so far that he even denounces the mediaeval monastic movement as *excessively worldly*: »The error of the medieval monastic movement was this. Asceticism, renunciation and the like, were still an expression of an infinite passion and of Christianity's heterogeneity with the world. Therefore it all should have been done very simply; it should have been explained to the monastic candidate that this alone was the requirement. / But instead something else occurred. The monastic candidate nevertheless made himself homogenous with the world, for he allowed himself and his [conduct] to be regarded as the extraordinary, which was directly honored with the admiration of his contemporaries« (undated journal entry 1852, *Journals & Papers Vol.3*, p.214, emphasis added). This sentiment is rehearsed in Malte's account of how the hermit's latent need for »Ruhm« is flushed out by the applause of »die Leute« (*MLB*, Paper LIII, pp.584f).

²⁵² This will be the grounds for Malte's almost obsessively recurrent interest in victims of exteriority: Charles le Fou (Paper LXI), Die Duse (Paper LXV), Verlorener Sohn (Paper LXXI).

Stephan Porombka's forceful characterisation of Malte's enforced loneliness in the world captures this aspect of the Kierkegaardian self superbly:

[...] die Strategie des Autors - und zugleich das Erfolgsgeheimnis des Romans - ist, immer wieder und mit aller Wortgewalt darauf zu insistieren, daß Held und Welt so quer durcheinander stehen, daß der Held schwer daran zu leiden hat und die Welt nichts davon merkt oder merken will. Seinen Malte konfrontiert Rilke fortwährend mit dem Schlimmsten, er läßt ihn von Traumatisierung zu Traumatisierung taumeln, er schickt ihn durch ein psychologisches und soziales Säurebad, um seinen Charakter freizulegen.²⁵³

ε) Exile is the natural condition of the Kierkegaardian self

The Kierkegaardian self experiences what Lukács memorably calls the »ancient sadness of never belonging anywhere«.²⁵⁴ This is more than a matter of Durkheim's *anomie*, the individual lost in an atomised social world, as it involves a transcendental homelessness in the world, aprioristically

²⁵³ "Lachen mit Rilke", p.64. Porombka sees the aftermath of the *Spiegel*-episode (Paper XXXII, p.530), when the terrified Malte begs for help only to meet with incomprehending laughter, as the paradigmatic moment in his alienation from others: »Hier bricht nicht nur Malte zusammen, sondern auch seine letzte Hoffnung, daß die anderen ihn vor seinen Ängsten retten könnten. Die Ängste werden nicht nur ignoriert, sie werden grausam verlacht und verschlimmert« ("Lachen mit Rilke", p.68). As mentioned in the Introduction, Porombka relates this biographically to Rilke's own fear of being rendered laughable. Rilke, so runs the argument, by and by learns to convert this fear into a self-serving martyr-complex: »Er muß sich in die Rolle des Märtyrers hineinspielen, der zwar das Lachen hört, sich aber mit aller Kraft und Sicherheit jenseits des Lachens bewegt« (p.78). If one reads Kierkegaard's Journals, especially those written in the wake of the traumatic *Corsair* affair of 1845-6, during which he was publicly pilloried and, famously, followed down the street by groups of children chanting *Either/Or! Either/Or!*, one encounters the martyr-scenario which Porombka sees haunting Rilke. The misanthropic scars left by the *Corsair* affair are still in evidence in a journal entry of 1854: »In the purely human world the rule is: Seek help among men. Christianity says: Beware of men« (undated, *Journals & Papers Vol.3*, p.355).

²⁵⁴ Quoted in Arpad Kadarkay, *Georg Lukács. Life, Thought, and Politics*. Oxford: 1991, p.98.

regardless of empirical socio-historico-cultural variables.²⁵⁵ Kierkegaard's most moving treatment of exile is found in *Fear and Trembling* with the figure of Abraham, whom Johannes de Silentio places even above Ovid in the pantheon of the exiled:

By faith Abraham emigrated from the land of his fathers and became an alien in the promised land. He left one thing behind, took one thing along: he left behind his worldly understanding, and he took along his faith. Otherwise he certainly would not have emigrated but surely would have considered it unreasonable. By faith he was an alien in the promised land, and there was nothing that reminded him of what he cherished, but *everything by its newness tempted his soul to sorrowful longing*.²⁵⁶

Let us look again at the *Briefentwurf* which Malte writes to an unnamed person, talking of his exile in the promised land of Paris and of the temptations offered by the newness of the experience:

Ich bin in Paris, die es hören freuen sich, die meisten beneiden mich. Sie haben recht. Es ist eine große Stadt, groß, voll merkwürdiger *Versuchungen*.²⁵⁷ Was mich betrifft, ich muß zugeben, daß ich ihnen in gewisser Beziehung erlegen bin. Ich glaube, es läßt sich nicht anders sagen. Ich bin diesen Versuchungen erlegen, und das hat gewisse Veränderungen zur Folge gehabt, wenn nicht in meinem Charackter, so doch in meiner Weltanschauung, jedenfalls in meinem Leben. Eine vollkommen andere Auffassung aller Dinge hat sich unter diesen Einflüssen in mir herausgebildet, und es sind gewisse Unterschiede da, die mich von den Menschen mehr als alles Bisherige abtrennen. Ein veränderte Welt. Ein neues Leben voll neuer Bedeutungen. *Ich habe es*

²⁵⁵ Cf Erich Neumann's characterisation of >Mystical Man< and his *transcendental* disorientation in the world: »[...] the mystical man [...] is the only man whose creative unrest cannot be appeased by narcotics which bring him peace within a fragmentary, provisional shell where the ego may take refuge« (*"Mystical Man"*, in: *The Mystic Vision. Papers from the Eranos Yearbooks*, translated by Ralph Manheim, edited by Olga Froebe-Kapteyn [London: 1969], pp.375-415, here p.412). For Kierkegaard, the social round constitutes one such >narcotic<. Society, one might say, is the opium of the individuals.

²⁵⁶ Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, p.17 (emphasis added).

²⁵⁷ Earlier I suggested that these *Versuchungen* relate principally to a Rodenbachesque spectralisation of the urban space.

*augenblicklich etwas schwer, weil alles zu neu ist. Ich bin ein Anfänger in meinen eigenen Verhältnissen.*²⁵⁸

Paris for Malte represents a locus of discomfort and unfamiliarity: »Aber es ist anders gekommen, Gott wird wissen warum. Meine alten Möbel faulen in einer Scheune, in die ich sie habe stellen dürfen, und ich selbst, ja, mein Gott, ich habe kein Dach über mir, und es regnet mir in die Augen.«²⁵⁹ Perhaps we need to give *Gott wird wissen warum* its full ambiguous weight: Malte, like Abraham, faithfully refers everything to God, in whose near-inscrutable will he tries desperately to trust.²⁶⁰ In Paper LX, treating of the *Fortgeworfenen*, he again tries to discern in his own wretched situation a divine *Aufgabe* or *Auftrag*:²⁶¹ »Vielleicht meinst du, mein Gott, daß ich alles lassen soll und sie lieben.«²⁶² Divine governance has placed Malte here, bereft of comfort, distraction and, critically, the consolation of ultramundane faculties. Malte must do as Abraham does: discern the demand of spirit and unquestioningly follow it. His response to the *Fortgeworfenen* attests a further feature of the Kierkegaardian spiritual trial - namely, the conversion, »by virtue of the absurd«,²⁶³ of the curse of poverty into the blessing of lowliness. This is the next criterion:

²⁵⁸ *MLB*, Paper XXII, pp.504f (emphases added).

²⁵⁹ *MLB*, Paper XVI, p.483. Compare Luke 9:58.

²⁶⁰ The repeated concession in the *Aufzeichnungen* that *God alone knows* functions as an insistent reminder of Malte's general epistemological humiliation (e.g. Paper XVI, *MLB*, p.480 & Paper LIV, *MLB*, p.586).

²⁶¹ Cf the first *Duineser Elegie*: »Das alles war Auftrag«, (KA II, p.202, line 30).

²⁶² *MLB*, Paper LX, p.603 - Malte here speculating on whether he is being assigned a rôle similar to that of Flaubert's Saint-Julien-l'Hospitalier (rather than that of Flaubert himself!) (cf *MLB*, Paper XXII, p.505).

²⁶³ Kierkegaard *Fear and Trembling*, p.37.

ζ) The Kierkegaardian self is the suffering one who comes to understand that adversity is prosperity

In the *Christian Discourse* entitled “The joy of it - that misfortune is good fortune”, Kierkegaard reinforces the theme of the discourse on “The anxiety of lowliness.” The Gospel inversion of first and last, lowest and highest, is homiletically explicated, Kierkegaard taking as his starting-point this trope of inversion:

For eternity knows of but one method: to look at everything inversely. So let us then look at the situation inversely, and thereby find

THE JOY OF IT - THAT MISFORTUNE IS GOOD FORTUNE.

But let us proceed in such a fashion that we strive first to get the sufferer in the right attitude, so that he may get an eye for this inverted prospect, and that he may be willing to abandon himself to this view and permit it to exercise power over him - then surely the joy follows of itself. / What is good fortune? Good fortune is what helps me to attain my goal, what leads to the goal; and misfortune is what would prevent me from attaining my goal.²⁶⁴

Kierkegaard proceeds to define the goal of existence in terms of a simple but all-important choice between the values of the world and the values of God: »The one goal is that of temporal existence, the other is that of eternity; these are contrary the one to the other, but good fortune and misfortune must also be inverted in correspondence with them«. ²⁶⁵ Christ’s Beatitudinal paradoxes (Matthew 5:1-8) are evoked in Kierkegaard’s refrain that eternity places everything under a law of sheer inversion: »[...] to the sufferer eternity says

²⁶⁴ Kierkegaard, “The joy of it - that misfortune is good fortune”, in: S. K., *Christian Discourses* pp.154-163, here: p.155.

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p.156.

[gently, sympathetically], >Oh, do but turn about.<«.266 This law has a consequence which, depending on one's perspective, is either devastating or liberating - that happiness in this world, worldly happiness in temporal terms, is *sub specie aeternitatis* a prodigious affliction:

Let us now make it quite clear to ourselves that what they ordinarily call good fortune and misfortune do not equally well lead to *the* goal, but that what ordinarily is called misfortune does alone or at least principally lead to *the* goal. What is it that may prevent a man from attaining *the* goal? Why precisely the temporal. And how does it most seriously prevent him? When good fortune so called leads him to the attainment of the goal of temporal existence. For when by means of good fortune a man attains the goal of temporal existence, he is farthest from attaining *the* goal. Man is to strive for the goal of eternity, but by means of good fortune temporal existence has delayed him. By the fact that good fortune accompanies him he is not led to the eternal, and so not to *the* goal. If there is anything that does this, it must be exactly the reverse, namely, that the temporal goes against him. But the opposition of the temporal is what one is accustomed to call misfortune.²⁶⁷

Kierkegaard's paradox of faith²⁶⁸ tells those who are afflicted by existence that they are tantalisingly close to eternal joy, if they only knew it. Indeed he declares elsewhere that it is a >thesis< of Christianity that »to suffer, to be

²⁶⁶ Ibid., p.157.

²⁶⁷ Ibid., p.159. Kierkegaard's logic here owes much to Boethius, who is latently present as an intertext in Paper LXI of the *Malte*. There, Charles le Fou finds solace in Christine de Pizan's *Le Livre du chemin de long estude* (1402-3), which is dedicated in the first place to him: »Das Buch schlug sich ihm immer an den einfachsten Stellen auf: wo von dem Herzen die Rede war, das dreizehn Jahre lang wie ein Kolben über dem Schmerzfeuer nur dazu gedient hatte, das Wasser der Bitternis für die Augen zu destillieren; er begriff, daß die wahre Konsolation erst begann, wenn das Glück vergangen genug und für immer vorüber war. Nichts war ihm näher, als dieser Trost« (MLB, p.607). Christine is an exemplar of affliction and unhappy love, her husband's death in 1389 having left her disconsolate (and almost destitute). Writing of herself as »the lowest of all« (*The Path of Long Study*, translated by Kevin Brownlee, in: *The Selected Writings of Christine de Pizan*, edited by Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski, New York & London: 1997, pp.59-87, here: p.62), she recounts how she gleaned temporary relief from Boethius' *De Consolatione Philosophiae* (ibid., pp.63f). Note, incidentally, the alchemical analogy - not Christine's own - which Malte deploys to portray the transmutation of her sorrow.

²⁶⁸ Although it must be said that the syllogistic progression of Kierkegaard's argument in this discourse does not share the unthinkable quality of the great Kierkegaardian paradoxes. After all, a simple inversion does not amount to a paradox in the fullest sense.

unhappy, is precisely the sign that God loves you [...]».²⁶⁹ A little like Jastrow's rabbit-duck silhouette, the life of the suffering one requires but a simple shift in perspective: »>Oh, do but turn about.<«.²⁷⁰

This startling idea that the wretched are just one >conversion< away from enlightenment makes new sense of a cryptic remark which Malte makes in Paper V: »Wenn arme Leute nachdenken, soll man sie nicht stören. Vielleicht fällt es ihnen doch ein«.²⁷¹ In both the *Aufzeichnungen* and in *Fear and Trembling*,²⁷² the registration of human damage becomes a central project.²⁷³

Malte, for instance, writes of:

diese Puppen, mit denen das Leben gespielt hat, ihnen Frühling um Frühling für nichts und wieder nichts die Arme auseinanderschlagend bis sie locker wurden in den Schultern. Sie sind nie sehr hoch von einer Hoffnung gefallen, so sind sie nicht zerbrochen; aber abgeschlagen sind sie und schon dem Leben zu schlecht. Nur verlorene Katzen kommen abends zu ihnen in die Kammer und zerkratzen sie heimlich und schlafen auf ihnen.²⁷⁴

Likewise Johannes de Silentio in *Fear and Trembling*, who discusses the pathos of those caught in »the nightmares of existence«,²⁷⁵ those »malformed person[s]« of whom it can be said that »existence itself has damaged them«:²⁷⁶ »[...] what love for God it takes to be willing to let oneself be healed when

²⁶⁹ Undated journal entry 1852, *Journals & Papers Vol.4*, p.409.

²⁷⁰ Kierkegaard, "The joy of it - that misfortune is good fortune", p.157.

²⁷¹ *MLB*, Paper V, p.457.

²⁷² The latter very much a continuation in this respect of themes already found in the *Diapsalmata* fragments of *Either/Or I*.

²⁷³ Cf Baudelaire, "Les Veuves": »[...] le poète et le philosophe [...] se sentent irrésistiblement entraînés vers tout ce qui est faible, ruiné, contristé, orphelin« (*Oeuvres complètes I*, p.292). As in Hoffmann's *Des Vettters Eckfenster*, however, the Baudelairean eye is generally colder than that of Malte, who sees the figures as more than aesthetic fodder.

²⁷⁴ *MLB*, Paper LX, pp.603f.

²⁷⁵ Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, p.105.

²⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p.106.

from the very beginning one in all innocence has been botched, from the very beginning has been a damaged specimen of a human being!«²⁷⁷ As we saw in Chapter IV, the *Zeitungsverkäufer* of Paper LIX is wearing his Sunday best, demonstrating that despite - or perhaps rather because of - his botched existence his spirit still praises God. If one finds oneself brutally forced, by the »ethicoreligious suffering«²⁷⁸ of poverty, inherited deformity,²⁷⁹ twist of fate or psychological vulnerability to go beyond the values of the world, then one is closer to the movement of infinite resignation than the person enjoying all the comfort and good fortune that the world has to offer. Neither Rilke nor Kierkegaard will have any truck with a social response to the problem of the wounded. Society cannot heal spirit, no more than paint can colour the air. As

²⁷⁷ Ibid., p.104. Silentio, like Malte, gives especial attention to female figures who have not found love. Cf a journal entry from 1854: »Christianly, God chooses and is closest to the despised, the cast-offs of the race, one single sorry abandoned wretch, a dreg of humanity« (undated, *Journals & Papers Vol.4*, p.194).

²⁷⁸ Gouwens, *Kierkegaard as Religious Thinker*, p.163 (& cf pp.163ff on the relation of Kierkegaardian suffering to Simone Weil's *malheur*).

²⁷⁹ For Rilke, as for Kierkegaard, afflictions established already in the maternal womb hold particular illustrative power, for they cannot easily be related to a socio-political matrix.

Silentio says of Shakespeare's »rudely stamp'd« Richard III: »Natures such as Gloucester's cannot be saved by mediating them into an idea of society«.²⁸⁰

Under the trope of inversion, Rilke's use of the phrase *gegen den Strom* in the letter to Artur Hospelt of February 11th 1912 takes on a meaning supplementary to that of Malte's ironised viewpoint. To recall, Rilke writes there of the *Malte*: »erfreuend wird es wesentlich nur denen werden, die es gewissermaßen *gegen den Strom* zu lesen unternehmen«.²⁸¹ The deeper Malte's Orphic descent to the existential underworld, the higher his spiritual ascension. As Kierkegaard puts it in a journal entry, »[...] one whom God

²⁸⁰ Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, p.106. For a leftist critique of Kierkegaard as »a full-blooded apologist for the forces of political reaction«, see Eagleton, *Ideology of the Aesthetic*, pp.191ff. Gouwens argues strongly that Kierkegaard's notion of *Imitatio Christi* »is not a private gnostic flight of the soul to God, but is a call to discipleship in the social matrix« (*Kierkegaard as Religious Thinker*, p.229 & ff). For the Kierkegaard of *Works of Love*, the return to a world bathed in the apostolic light will call forth spontaneous loving action that is literally a world away from immanentist political activism. Kierkegaard acknowledges that »[f]rom a Christian point of view I do not have the right to ignore one single man« (undated journal entry 1849, *Journals & Papers Vol.4*, p.159), but insists that love of neighbour places the stress on *one single* neighbour at a time. Thus he recoils, in a way that again anticipates Levinas somewhat, from any notion of love of neighbour as a collective, >numerical<, associative-aggregative, impersonal, in brief: *political* programme. Gregor Malantschuk, comparing Kierkegaard to Marx, argues that »Kierkegaard's anthropology [...] depicts a deeper form of alienation that is rooted in spiritual factors« (*The Controversial Kierkegaard*, translated from the Danish by Howard V. Hong & Edna H. Hong, Waterloo, Ontario: 1980, p.14). If the ultimate ground of reality is transmundane, and the ultimate cause of human suffering equally transmundane, then immanent solutions cannot hope to bring this suffering to an end.

²⁸¹ *MLB-Materialien*, p.99.

blesse religiously he *eo ipso* execrates in a secular way«.²⁸² The recurring paradoxical play of *Untergang* and *Himmelfahrt* in Rilke's retrospective *Selbstkommentar* on the book makes perfect sense under Kierkegaard's figure of inversion.²⁸³ Rilke's task in the *Malte* may thus be compared with that eloquently identified by Denis Donoghue with reference to T. S. Eliot's *Four Quartets*: »how to evacuate practically all the areas in which his readers live [...] to propose the voiding of all human allegiances [...] to translate this voiding into renunciation«²⁸⁴ - and thus, one might add, to offer an *Existenzentwurf* on the arduousness of redemption.

²⁸² Undated 1843, *Journals & Papers Vol.1*, p450. Cf also e.g.: undated entry 1847: »Straightforwardly, to lose is to lose; inversely, to lose is to gain« - a point which Kierkegaard illustrates with a simile: »As the butterfly gains by losing its cocoon« (*Journals & Papers Vol.1*, pp.352f); undated entry 1852: »[...] when everything goes against you and there is continual suffering and new suffering, be assured that this is God's love, and that it is because God is love. [/] How can this be and why? Because God in infinite love wants to help you so that you may be able to love him. [/] Therefore you must die to the world, and this is his aim with suffering, because without dying to the world you can never love God. It will be sheer agony for you - but consider what infinite love, that God in love wants to help you to love him so that you can be genuinely blessed in this love, which is possible only when you die to the world [...] So God in infinite love has compassion for you - because he loves you! - and he presses down heavily with suffering in order that you may go through, through death.« (*Journals & Papers Vol.4*, pp.415f); undated entry 1854: »[...] to have it easy in this world, to have no suffering, and thereby to be happy and satisfied, is achieved quite simply by - mediocrity, by avoiding every relation to spirit« (*ibid.*, p430); undated entry 1854: »[...] if you want to love God in truth, you must show it by gladly, adoringly letting yourself be totally shattered by God in order that he can unconditionally advance his will« (*Journals & Papers Vol.2*, p.455).

²⁸³ Although not working from a Kierkegaardian perspective, Stephens brings out this idea with gratifying clarity: »[...] so stellt sich heraus, daß der Autor niemals bestritten hat, daß Maltes Versagen an der ihm auferlegten Prüfung den nächstliegenden Sinn des Buches ausmacht, sondern lediglich darauf aufmerksam gemacht, daß man Maltes Leidensweg und endgültiges Scheitern von einem anderen Standpunkt aus >im aufsteigenden Sinne< verstehen könnte. Dieser Standpunkt ließe sich dadurch gewinnen, daß man imstande wäre, das Buch >gegen den Strom zu lesen<, also von seiner nächstliegenden Bedeutung und Tendenz Abstand zu gewinnen und durch einen Standpunktwechsel das offenbar Negative daran ins entsprechend Positive umzudeuten« (*Strukturanalyse*, pp.23f); »Die *Malte*-Kritik hat es im allgemeinen vorgezogen, diese >Himmelfahrt< als eine faktische Rettung des Helden durch seine Entwicklung zum reifen Künstler zu sehen. Wenn Rilke aber sagt, die positiven Werte werden nur in der Negativität des Verlustes sichtbar, so erhellt daraus, warum er einerseits immer wieder auf dem Untergang Maltes besteht, und andererseits auf die Möglichkeit hinweist, hinter diesem Untergang die Umriss einer eigenartigen Seligkeit wahrzunehmen« (*ibid.*, p.138).

n) The Kierkegaardian self, as melancholic single existing individual, is the outsider, the exception, par excellence.

In his "Concluding Letter" in *Repetition*, Constantin Constantius writes of »the dialectical battle in which the exception arises in the midst of the universal«: »[...] if one really wants to study the universal, one only needs to look around for a legitimate exception; he discloses everything far more clearly than the universal itself«. ²⁸⁵ The individual who finds himself situated outside the socio-cultural mainstream is still placed into dialectical relation with this mainstream. For to bypass the (socio-cultural) universal, the *sittlich*, is to be a living protest against its values. The exceptional individual is thus a danger to society because of the Socratic or even Christlike inner freedom he has from that society. For Kierkegaard political - to say nothing of revolutionary or violent²⁸⁶ - opposition to the system breaks the tension of this dialectic, for it acknowledges the very reality of the *sittliche Substanz* even as it seeks to change it. Political activism is after all still *intelligible* to the very universal it challenges. Far more unsettling is the uncanny figure of the outsider. Kierkegaard's religiousness lies in a full preparedness to bypass the

²⁸⁴ Denis Donoghue, "T. S. Eliot's *Quartets*: A new reading", in: *T. S. Eliot. Four Quartets. A Casebook*, edited by Bernard Bergonzi. London & Basingstoke: 1969, pp.212-236, here: pp.231f.

²⁸⁵ Kierkegaard, *Repetition*, p.227. Compare Malte's third *große Frage* on the importance of the outsider figure for an understanding of the past: »Ist es möglich, daß die ganze Weltgeschichte mißverstanden worden ist? Ist es möglich, daß die Vergangenheit falsch ist, weil man immer von einem Zusammenlauf vieler Menschen erzählte, statt von dem Einen zu sagen, um den sie herumstanden, weil er fremd war und starb?« (*MLB*, Paper XIV, p.469).

²⁸⁶ Adorno concedes that Kierkegaard's mistrust of collective action is not a wholly reactionary reflex, inoculating him against totalitarian delirium: »In den Versammlungen der achtundvierziger Zeit hat er das Echo der Lautsprecher antezipiert, die erst hundert Jahre später die Sportpaläste füllten« ("Kierkegaards Lehre von der Liebe", p.230).

social, to institute if need be »a teleological suspension of the ethical«. ²⁸⁷ The individual who can sustain this lonely alterity without actually dying stands justified on the border territory between the poetical and the religious (Wilhelm's ethics having all but fallen away). Constantius' exposition on the exception turns into a meditation on the figure of the poet as an important type of exception in the world:

Eventually one grows weary of the incessant chatter about the universal and the universal repeated to the point of the most boring insipidity. There are exceptions. If they cannot be explained, then the universal cannot be explained, either. Generally, the difficulty is not noticed because one thinks the universal not with passion but with a comfortable superficiality. The exception, however, thinks the universal with intense passion. / When one does this, a new order of rank results, and the poor exception, *if he has any competence at all*, once again, like the girl spurned by the stepmother in the fairy tale, enjoys favor and honor. / Such an exception is a poet, who constitutes the transition to the truly aristocratic exceptions, to the religious exceptions. ²⁸⁸

The question of legitimation of the exceptional individual, and specifically the poet, over against the crowd is the theme of the passage from Baudelaire's prose poem "À une heure du matin" which Malte writes out at the end of the Crémérie episode:

>Mécontent de tous et mécontent de moi, je voudrais bien me racheter et m'enorgueillir un peu dans le silence et la solitude de la nuit. Âmes de ceux que j'aimes, âmes de ceux que j'ai chantés, fortifiez-moi, soutenez-moi, éloignez de moi le mensonge et les vapeurs corruptrices du monde; et vous, Seigneur mon Dieu! accordez-moi la grâce de produire quelques beaux vers qui me prouvent à moi-même

²⁸⁷ Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, pp.54-67.

²⁸⁸ Kierkegaard, *Repetition*, pp.227f, emphasis added.

que je ne suis pas le dernier des hommes, que je ne suis pas inférieur à ceux que je méprise.<²⁸⁹

Baudelaire's *Je*, seeking justification not in spite of but on account of his position outside the universal, can commune only with the souls of the beloved and the celebrated dead and, in prayer, with God. In his loneliness - although to read the full prose poem from which the lines are excerpted is to see just how much more radical the loneliness of the Malte-figure is²⁹⁰ - Baudelaire's splenetic self turns to the aesthetic for redemption.

But Malte laconically admits in the grandly programmatic fourteenth fragment that he presides over no such poetic *competence* (Constantin's word) and has not yet produced any genuine *beaux vers*. Yet, as has been suggested above, this admission of lyric (as well as dramaturgical and art-critical) failure affects him at this early stage of the *Aufzeichnungen* in much the same way as his later sense of parapsychological failure will come to affect him: deprived of consolation, he is spurred on to intensify his existential and religious searching. When he writes: »Dieser junge, belanglose Ausländer, Brigge, wird sich fünf Treppen hoch hinsetzen müssen und schreiben, Tag und Nacht. Ja er wird schreiben müssen, das wird das Ende sein«,²⁹¹ the announcement of a Rodinesque *atelier* ethos of *toujours travailler* is tied not to poetic-literary technique but to a primarily spiritual commission. *Malte's >Aufzeichnungen< are not scraps of lyrical or dramatic drafts*. Malte is not Rilke. He has not written

²⁸⁹ *MLB*, Paper XVIII, p.491 (& Baudelaire, *Oeuvres complètes I*, p.288).

²⁹⁰ If anything, Baudelaire's biliously misanthropic *Je*, here as so often elsewhere, is far closer to Dostoevsky's *Underground Man* than to Malte.

²⁹¹ *MLB*, Paper XIV, p.470.

a *Buch der Bilder* or a *Neue Gedichte*, nor an impressive monograph on Rodin.²⁹² (Then again, as there was occasion to note elsewhere, Rilke is not yet Rilke, >channel< or >clairaudient< of the *Elegies* and *Sonnets*... a point to which I shall return in the >Conclusion?< section.) This weakness increases the atmospheric pressure of his existence. I have read the *Ende* of which he speaks in this passage as, at least in part, the spiritual *telos* aimed at by the soul seeking to end its reincarnationary journey to God. It is fundamentally the same spiritual »goal« as that which Kierkegaard presents in the “Misfortune is good fortune” homily (though within a specifically Christian dogmatics):²⁹³ the soul seeks its peace through transforming existentially passionate reflection into a qualitative spiritual change, or >leap< within the self. Kassner, in the section of the *Kierkegaard*-essay entitled “Die innere Tat”, writes of this *Ende*:

Wenn einer an zu viel Reflexion leidet, so ist das ein Zeichen, daß seine Reflexion unvollkommen ist, und wenn er es vermag, muß er sie vollkommen machen, denn dann erst ist sie mehr als Reflexion, dann erst wird sie zur Tat, zur inneren Tat. Kierkegaard mußte sich also zu *Ende* reflektieren, wenn er die Reflexion, sein Leiden loswerden wollte.²⁹⁴

For all Kierkegaard’s distaste for the kind of Buddhism and Hinduism advocated by Schopenhauer, the dynamic which Kassner describes is not a million miles away from Eastern meditative practice:²⁹⁵ if I become aware of

²⁹² Arguably, only Malte’s dramaturgical self-critique has convincing autobiographical point here.

²⁹³ In *Repetition* (p.184) Constantin Constantius makes a curious reference to reincarnation: whether facetiously or not, he explains a male’s poetic nature by »his having been a woman in a previous existence«.

²⁹⁴ Kassner, *Kierkegaard*, p.60.

²⁹⁵ Such practice is of course something of a specialist subject for Kassner himself.

myself in all my finitude as thinker, then the thinker becomes indistinguishable from the thought, the observer from the observed, and so the thinker-observer disappears as a separate, existent entity, thus clearing a space for non-rational, non-conceptual, even non-cognitive energies to flow through my being. My preparation for mystical experience proceeds wholly *modo negativo*, as I void myself of egoic-conscious personality - of *Eigenschaft* in the Eckhartian sense so influential for Musil.²⁹⁶ George Pattison describes the dialectic of self-transcendence in Kierkegaard's religious discourses: »[...] the self must wrestle itself to a standstill and, in doing so, discover its actual inability to be itself [...] the achievement of authentic selfhood depends utterly and solely on divine grace. The annihilation of the individual is his transfiguration in God.«²⁹⁷

Kassner's Kierkegaard is an heroic *poète manqué* who has made a painful choice between a *Dichterexistenz* deeply congenial to his character and a religious primitivity that renounces, in the service of *die innere Tat*, the gratifications and externalisations of poetry:

Kierkegaard mußte den Dichter in sich überwinden - so hoch wurde bei ihm gespielt - um sich selbst zu kommen. Denn auch die Dichtung wäre für ihn nur eine äußere Tat geblieben. Er durfte also auch damit seine Reflexion nicht unterbrechen, daß er schnell ein Gedicht machte, wozu ihm mittelmäßige Ästhetiker auf alle Fälle geraten hätten, nein: seine Reflexion mußte vollkommen sein und alle mögliche Dichtung gleichsam aufkaufen. Und in der Tat, Kierkegaards Reflexion bestand keineswegs in einer Menge kleiner Skrupeln, sondern war *die herrliche Einbildungskraft eines großen Dichters, so man diese umkehrt* [...] Kierkegaard brauchte sich also nicht zu fragen: Wie komme ich zu einem Gedicht?, sondern er, der in jedem Augenblicke sich

²⁹⁶ Cf Wagner-Egelhaaf, *Mystik der Moderne*, p.8 & pp.108-147.

²⁹⁷ Pattison, *The Aesthetic and the Religious*, pp.168f.

reproduzierte, mußte die Frage so stellen: Wie gewinne ich überhaupt Dasein, wie werde ich primitiv, wie gewinne ich Religion? [...] *Seine Religion war keine unglückliche Liebe zur Dichtertextistenz, wie das schnelle Kritiker oft wiederholen - das wäre ihm für ein ganzes Leben zu billig gewesen - sondern die unglückliche Liebe zu Gott, zum primitiven Dasein.*²⁹⁸

A similar thesis, it will be recalled, was advanced in the opening chapter of the present study in relation to Malte Laurids Brigge. To argue that Malte's crisis is *in the first instance* poetological, a *poetical* writer's block, is reductive: after Malte has diagnosed his own aesthetic mediocrity in Paper XIV, he launches into not a poetological statement of intent but the Kierkegaardian question: *Wie gewinne ich überhaupt Dasein, wie werde ich primitiv, wie gewinne ich Religion?* The seven *große Fragen* inaugurate an existential and spiritual search which in its first phase takes the route of occult *Arbeit*, involving paranormal transcending of ordinary experience through magnetic rapport, clairvoyance, *écriture automatique*²⁹⁹ and *Geisterbeschwörung*. (In this miscellany

²⁹⁸ Kassner, *Kierkegaard*, pp.60-1.

²⁹⁹ If there is to be a spiritual breakthrough involving a pen, then this will happen only when *the spirit moves his hand*: »[...] es wird ein Tag kommen, da meine Hand weit von mir sein wird, und wenn ich sie schreiben heißen werde, wird sie Worte schreiben, die ich nicht meine« (MLB, Paper XVIII, p.490). This is the language of receptivity rather than self-expression - or »Selbstverwirklichung« (Bradley, *Zu Rilkes Malte Laurids Brigge*, p.48). It is the language of *écriture automatique*, suited as much to the planchette-user or slate-writer as to the inspired poet. (I find Kruse's detection of a word-play convincing: »Das der Macht über seine Hand verlustig gegangene Subjekt kann nicht mehr >hand-eln<, ist demnach kein Subjekt mehr, sondern ein Instrument nur, das die Offenbarung empfängt und aufzeichnet [...]«, *Auf dem extremen Pol der Subjektivität*, p.112.) Malte's reflection continues: »Die Zeit der anderen Auslegung wird anbrechen, und es wird kein Wort auf dem anderen bleiben, und jeder Sinn wird wie Wolken sich auflösen und wie Wasser niedergehen« (ibid.). One must read this image carefully. Critics generally seem to see a *Sinn* which evaporates up into *Wolken* in a very postmodern sky where *all* meaning is disrupted. But this ignores the downpour. As I read the sentence, the *Sinn* which breaks up like clouds does not refer to *the meaning of an already written text*, which now suffers semantic dispersal à la Derridean *différance* (evaporation into clouds). Rather, I take *jeder Sinn* to refer to *transcendental meaning of a primordial, non-linguistic nature* - the clouds *already* in the heavens - which, using Malte as a channel, will compress itself to the density of humanly intelligible language and come down to earth as text. Thus we have the expressive (rather than >interpretive<) *Aus-Legen* of a spiritual communiqué, without this in any way involving self-expression on Malte's part. (Cf Rilke's usage of *Auslegung* synonymously with *Ausdruck* in the first part of *Auguste Rodin*: »War nicht

wieder eine Zeit gekommen, die nach diesem *Ausdruck* drängte, nach dieser starken und eindringlichen *Auslegung* dessen, was in ihr unsagbar war, wirr und rätselhaft?«, KA IV, p.408, emphases added. On Malte's use of the word *Sinn* to mean transcendental sense, compare Rilke in his letter of June 1st 1923 to the Gräfin Margot Sizzo, expressing doubts over his own qualifications as an interpreter of the *Sonette an Orpheus*: »[...] manchmal ringe ich selbst um den Sinn, der sich meiner bedient hat, um sich menschlich durchzusetzen, und das Licht einzelner Stellen besitze auch ich nur in einzelnen begnadeten Augenblicken«, *Briefe in zwei Bänden II*, p.306). In the Beethoven-Paper, Malte will refer to such a process of spiritual compression as *Selbstverdichtung* (MLB, Paper XXIV, p.508). Indeed the dominant imagery of the Paper will follow precisely the same logic: the cosmic associated with height, vapour, cloud, *Himmel*; the humanly intelligible with dropping-down, precipitation, rain, *Welt* (ibid.). (Betz' recollection of Rilke's insistence on scientific precision in translating *sich niederschlägt* not as *se dépose* but as *se condense* should not go unmarked: *Rilke in Frankreich*, pp.115f. Is it irrelevant that >precipitation<, as well as carrying alchemical overtones, is synonymous with >materialisation< in spiritistic discourse?) Malte pictures Beethoven transported into the desert so that he can play his *Hammerklavier* to the cosmos - and, miraculously, *reverse the channelling process* by *re-vapourising unsere Niederschläge* (that is, our poor attempts to draw cosmic energy down to our level) so that the energy is sent *back up* to the heavens in a form pure enough for it to rise from the earth (»an das All zurückgebend, was nur das All erträgt«, MLB, p.584). The same image of condensation as a *reduction* of the numinous to the level of the human is given in Paper LII, where the saint is erotically tempted *down* from the spiritual to the human: »[...] er hat hingesehen. Und schon *schlagen sich* seine Sinne *nieder* aus der hellen Lösung seiner Seele« (MLB, p.584, emphasis added). As Goheen comments (»Tempusform und Zeitbegriff«, p.264), this eroticisation of the saint's consciousness effects a »Veränderung, die den Heiligen im Wirkungsbereich eines Gesetzes des menschlichen Lebens zeigt. Er gehört damit nicht an die Seite eines ewigen Gottes, sondern des zeitbedingten Menschen«. - [E]s wird kein Wort auf dem anderen bleiben. If this image evokes the collapse of an established human text or discourse, then it does so in order not to finalise this collapse but to present it as necessary for the formation of a clearing in which the transcendental can make its entry into discourse. Now the very palimpsestic image of words set atop other words is itself palimpsestic at a metatextual level - a fact noted by Neumeyer: »Maltes Schreibprogramm ist ein Palimpsest; es ergeht auf der Folie eines Subtexts, der die Endzeit verheißt: / >Und während er aus dem Tempel ging, sagte einer seiner Jünger zu ihm: Meister, siehe, was für Steine und was für Bauten! Und Jesus sprach zu ihm: Siehst du diese grossen Bauten? *Kein Stein wird auf dem anderen bleiben, der nicht zerstört würde.*< [Mark 13: 1-2] / Malte prophezeit die Zerstörung der Worte und des Sinns; Jesu weissagt die Zerstörung Jerusalems« (*Der Flaneur*, pp.229f, emphasis added; cf Stahl, *Rilke-Kommentar. Zu den Aufzeichnungen des Malte Laurids Brigge, zur erzählerischen Prosa, zu den essayistischen Schriften und zum dramatischen Werk*, München: 1979, p.178; and Uwe Steiner, *Zeit der Schrift*, pp.359f). But Christ is proclaiming the destruction of Jerusalem as a precursor to the establishment of the *New Jerusalem*. Neumeyer draws out the intertextual implication: »[...] in Maltes Projekt [meint] die Zerstörung von Wort und Sinn nur das >Ende< des *bisherigen* Erkennens und Sagens von Sinn [...]« (*Der Flaneur*, p.230, emphasis added). Scanning down the Gospel intertext, Neumeyer comes to these words of Jesus in the same speech: »>Wenn sie euch dann hinführen, um euch zu überliefern, so sorget euch nicht zum voraus darum, was ihr reden sollt, sondern was euch in jener Stunde gegeben wird, das redet! *Denn nicht ihr seid es, die reden, sondern der heilige Geist*<« (Mark 13:10-11, emphasis added). This gives us a compelling sense of the reasons why Malte determines to sit in his room and write »Tag und Nacht« (MLB, Paper XIV, p.470). Neumeyer: »Buchstabiert man die Analogie aus, dann wird Maltes Schreiben, >da meine Hand weit von mir sein wird<, zur Offenbarung des göttlichen Heilsplans. Der Dichter avanciert so zum Sprachrohr Gottes, und Kunst wird in den Rang einer Religion erhoben, der die Funktion der Erlösung und Sinnverkündung zukommen. Damit allerdings rekurriert Maltes Schreibprogramm deutlich auf eine Funktionsbestimmung von Kunst, von der ihn zeitlich mehr als ein Jahrhundert trennt - die frühromantische Kunstreligion, wie sie am ausgeprägtesten erstmals in den *Herzenergießungen eines kunstliebenden Klosterbruders* von Wackenroder und Tieck vorgelegt wurde« (*Der Flaneur*,

we see Malte's true modernity.) The second phase of the search, after the (semi-implicit) breakdown of the parapsychological model, concentrates on a mode of being that takes the self's unprecedented cognisance of the *categorical* tension between world and spirit and promotes inwardness as a good in itself. The single individual learns to cherish his exceptional status as outsider as a way to remain undistracted by the social and focussed on the true goal: passionate subjectivity *innen und vor Gott, dem Zuschauer*.³⁰⁰

p.230). If Malte longs to be a writer - and I accept that this does appear to be *one* of his cherished ambitions, at least in the earlier phase of the *Aufzeichnungen* - then the writerly praxis of which he dreams would have nothing whatsoever to do with his own imaginative and aesthetic talent, nothing whatsoever to do with even the kind of profoundly assimilated subjective experiences outlined in the programmatic *Verse*-statement of Paper XIV (*MLB*, pp.466f). It would instead be an apostolic calling involving spiritistic-type dictation. (Of the prophets and apostles, and for that matter of the automatic writers examined by the Institute for Psychical Researchers, how many were >creative artists-?) *I do not consider the lyrical X-event described in Paper XIV to be co-referential with the scribal Y-event prophesied in Paper XVIII.* The genial production of »das erste Wort eines Verses« (ibid.) is not imagined in a way that suggests an existential and psychological apocalypse. Its spontaneous flow from the wellsprings of deep subjectivity, proximate to the Myersian notion of the >subliminal uprush<, simply does not have the subject-annihilating, sphere-of-heteronomy associations of the Y-event. Nor do I take it as read that Malte, by the time he arrives in Paris, continues to identify himself *as an artist first and foremost*. True, he transcribes the longing of Baudelaire's prose poet to produce *quelque beaux vers*. But immediately underneath this passage he transcribes the rather less poetological cry of Job. What these two figures have in common is not a desire for artistic first-fruits - whether in the form of *beaux vers* or harp or pipe melodies (*MLB*, Paper XVIII, p.492) - but the agonising cry of *Eli, eli, lama sabachthani*? Is it not possible that Malte's self-diagnosis in Paper XIV of artistic failure signals that he is considering a new vocation altogether? If so, then Malte asks to be approached not as a writer who spends a good deal of time searching for God but as a *Gottsucher* who spends a good deal of time writing. There is, I suggest, a world of difference between the two.

³⁰⁰ Cf *MLB*, Paper LXIII, p.615. Cf Stephens on Malte's fear of the »in jeder menschlichen Gemeinsamkeit vorhandenen Einschränkung der Entelechie des Einzelnen« (*Strukturanalyse*, p.160).

θ) The Kierkegaardian single individual grasps the inner secret of unhappy love³⁰¹

Malte's paranormal experiments both stemmed from and threw him into great passion. From the Kierkegaardian point of view, such passion is not to be simply dismissed as bogus because it turns out to be questionably grounded in objective reality. When Malte, for example, feels »die Existenz des Entsetzlichen in jedem Bestandteil der Luft«,³⁰² or when he rushes out of the cr merie in shock at what he takes to be the cognitive estrangement suffered by a man at the point of death,³⁰³ these emotions are valid and real *as intentional acts uncoupled from the absolute question of reference*. If something external, whether understood or misunderstood, triggers passion, then this passion is to be welcomed as energy and intensified to the nth degree in the service of spiritual inwardness. (Adorno will criticise this as the world-denyingly abstract, »objektlose Innerlichkeit« of Kierkegaard's thought.)³⁰⁴

Kassner defines Kierkegaard's understanding of what it means to be a Christian in a very Nietzschean formula: »man kann den Christen definieren als den Menschen, der so leidenschaftlich ist, da  die Leidenschaft ihm zu Geist werden mu , wenn er an ihr nicht sterben will«. ³⁰⁵ The same logic of an infinite potentiation of passion drives Malte's at first glance rather masochistic doctrine of *intransitive Liebe*, which assumes great importance

³⁰¹ The present section, as I am happy to concede, can hope to offer little more than footnotes to the superb opening chapter of Bridgham's *Urbild und Verzicht* (pp.1-35).

³⁰² *MLB*, Paper XXIII, p.505.

³⁰³ *MLB*, Paper XVIII, pp.489f.

³⁰⁴ Adorno, *Kierkegaard*, pp.45ff. From this, Adorno brings Kierkegaard into dialogue with Fichte on the latter's concept of the *Ansto *.

³⁰⁵ Kassner, *Kierkegaard*, p.84.

towards the end of the book. Passion, writes Malte, must be intensified, not gratified, for any gratification is in fact an abortion of the cosmic energies being stirred up by the passion and seeking to raise the self into a higher consciousness:³⁰⁶

Schlecht leben die Geliebten und in Gefahr. Ach, daß sie sich überstünden und Liebende würden. Um die Liebenden ist lauter Sicherheit. Niemand verdächtigt sie mehr, und sie selbst sind nicht imstande, sich zu verraten. In ihnen ist das Geheimnis heil geworden, sie schreien es im Ganzen aus wie Nachtigallen, es hat keine Teile. Sie klagen um einen; aber die ganze Natur stimmt in sie ein: es ist die Klage um einen Ewigen. Sie stürzen sich dem Verlorenen nach, aber schon mit den ersten Schritten überholen sie ihn, und *vor* ihnen ist nur noch Gott. Ihre Legende ist die der Byblis, die den Kaunos verfolgt bis nach Lykien hin. Ihres Herzens Andrang jagte sie durch die Länder auf seiner Spur, und schließlich war sie am Ende der Kraft; aber so stark war ihres Wesens Bewegtheit, daß sie, hinsinkend, jenseits vom Tod als Quelle wiedererschien, eilend, als eilende Quelle.³⁰⁷

This description of an Ovidian metamorphosis of self into pure flowing energy - Byblis literally cries herself into a spring³⁰⁸ - flows into a celebration of the great female lovers of the unhappy love:

Was ist anderes der Portugiesin geschehen: als daß sie innen zur Quelle ward? Was dir, Heloïse? was euch, Liebenden, deren Klagen auf uns gekommen sind: Gaspara Stampa; Gräfin von Die und Clara d'Anduze; Louise Labbé, Marceline Desbordes, Elisa Mercœur? Aber du, arme flüchtige Aïssé, du zögertest schon und gabst nach.

³⁰⁶ Bridgham demonstrates just how much Rilke's poeticisation of the Don Juan figure owes to Kierkegaard. In both, the great seducer is not a one-dimensional exploiter of women. Instead, by awakening and then anguishing erotic feeling, he helps to liberate his bewildered >conquests< into the task of >becoming subjective< (Bridgham, *Urbild und Verzicht*, pp.19ff).

³⁰⁷ *MLB*, Paper LXVI, pp.618f.

³⁰⁸ Cf the image in the tenth *Duineser Elegie* of the lacrimal as a transfiguration of the self: »Daß mich mein strömendes Antlitz/ glänzender mache« (KA II, p.230, lines 5f).

Müde Julie Lespinasse. Trostlose Sage des glücklichen Parks: Marie-Anne de Clermont.³⁰⁹

Malte's logic is in fact perfectly coherent. One might, by way of metaphoric explication, characterise his dynamic of unhappy love as follows. A small magnet responds to the polar attraction of another small magnet, but rather than joining with this other magnet it shoots past it in the direction of a gigantic lodestone so distant and powerful that the journey to it is infinitely long - a journey of infinitised, intransitive longing. The small magnet turns out to have been not the ultimate attractor but merely the tiny pretext needed for *direction and movement* to have been established. For Malte, and for the Kierkegaardian self, the God-energy is this infinitely distant lodestone - not so much object as pure energy source:³¹⁰

³⁰⁹ *MLB*, Paper LXVI, p.619. Naumann presents a detailed intertextual argument for seeing the *Dame à la Licorne* of Paper XXXVIII as Malte's first great unhappy lover, whose intimate connection to Abelone is thereby explained: »Indem die achtunddreißigste Aufzeichnung etwas von der Sehnsucht (>désir<) und von der Hohen Minne vermittelt, wie sie aus dem Mittelalter in die Neuzeit nachklingen, verschweigen und verraten sie zugleich alles über Abelone« (see *Gesammelte Malte-Studien, Erster Teil*, pp.117ff, here: p.129).

³¹⁰ Metaphors, no less than lies, will inexorably return to haunt one. Certainly the >lodestone< creates cognitive dissonance. To resolve the paradox of a loving God >before< whom one stands *yet* who is >within< *yet* who is >infinitely distant< would require both an unknotting of the distinct metaphors, mine and Malte's, and a meditation in negative theology well beyond the scope of this study. Malte's *Gott* hovers between loving personality and impersonal alterity - though this, I would argue, does not give adequate grounds for driving a wedge between his onto-theology and a monotheistic belief system, still less for declaring him an atheist. Compare a journal entry of Kierkegaard: »God is at one and the same time infinitely close to man and infinitely far away. / To come into relation to God is a voyage of discovery somewhat comparable to an expedition to the North Pole, so rarely does a man ever actually press forward on this way, to the discovery [...] But if this journey of discovery of God is an *inland journey*, the main point of it is specifically to preserve one's individuality and then inwardly simply to remove the obstructions, push them aside« (undated 1854, *Journals & Papers Vol.2*, p.154; cf Gertrud Höhler, *Niemandes Sohn. Zur Poetologie Rainer Maria Rilkes*, München: 1979, pp.125f). Dieter Schiller speaks for quite a large constituency when, with scant textual basis, he strips Malte's God of all transcendental ontology and translates him/it into human project and projection: »Maltes >Gott< ist nicht gegeben, keine außerirdische Macht, sondern ein weltimmanenter Begriff, gebunden an die Entfaltung der Subjektivität der Menschen. Als allgemeinsten Ausdruck dieser Subjektivität ist er damit für den Menschen eine Aufgabe, eine innere Forderung, die sich aus seinem unentfalteten, eingeschränkten Wesen ergibt. Er ist ein werdender Gott, der nie eine fixe Form erhalten kann. Es wird also

hier ein religiös-emotionalisiertes Verhältnis zur Wirklichkeit, eine weltimmanent gerichtete Pseudoreligion entwickelt« (*„Der Einsame und seine Welt“*, p.157). The *werdender Gott* idea which Schiller cites here can be found in a rejected *Aufzeichnung* on Tolstoy (>Aus dem Nachlaß: Ursprünglicher Schluß der Aufzeichnung: Tolstoj<, *MLB*, p.652), which opens with the words: »Wenn Gott ist, so ist alles getan und wir sind triste, überzählige Überlebende, für die es gleichgültig ist, mit welcher Scheinhandlung sie sich hinbringen«. (Compare Nietzsche in *Götzen-Dämmerung* on the need to face up to the death of God in order to rediscover »die Unschuld des Werdens« - *Werke Bd. VI.3*, edited by Giorgio Colli & Mazzino Montinari, Berlin: 1969, p.91. Jacobsen's Niels Lyhne, too, strongly anticipates the *werdender Gott* theologumenon in his Feuerbach-inspired discourse to Gerda, where he repudiates a: »[...] Gott, der nicht sein Licht von der Menschheit empfangt, sondern aus sich selbst heraus Licht ausstrahlen sollte, ein Gott, der nicht in Entwicklung war, sondern erstarrt im historischen Kalk der Dogmen, der war nicht länger ein Gott, sondern ein Götze [...]«, *Niels Lyhne*, p.437). Now in the Tolstoy Paper Malte is resisting God as a *finished concept* - with an equal stress on both words - to which the human need only relate himself in an objective, conceptual way. Hence Rilke's advocacy of religious creativity in his letter to Marie von Thurn und Taxis-Hohenlohe of May 16th 1911: »Ich kann religiöse Naturen nicht begreifen, die Gott als das Gegebene hinnehmen und nachfühlen, ohne sich an ihm produktiv zu versuchen« (*Rainer Maria Rilke - Marie von Thurn und Taxis Briefwechsel*, edited by Ernst Zinn, Zürich: 1951, p.38). This idea might fruitfully be related to Kierkegaard's governing conviction that, in Steven Shakespeare's words, »there is an openness in the divine life which static categories distort« (*Kierkegaard, Language and God*, p.194; cf Anthony Rudd: »Attempts to know God objectively miss the living God by turning Him into an object or a purely conceptual being«, *Kierkegaard and the Limits of the Ethical*, p.61). A *werdender Gott* might even be seen as an extension of Kierkegaard's priority of becoming and possibility over being and actuality to God Himself. All the same: Kierkegaard's Christian existentialism would not of course sanction an extension of this principle into the non-existential realm of eternity itself, where categories like becoming and possibility lose all meaning. It seems to me, in the final analysis, that the most telling aspect of the *werdender Gott* Paper is quite simply its absence from the final text. For some reason, Rilke has found it inappropriate as a closing statement. It is thus methodologically unsound to grant the Tolstoy Paper honorary status as an *Aufzeichnung des Malte Laurids Brigge* (>a.D.<) and use it to bring Malte's religious perspective into line with what is perceived to have been that of Rilke. (Thus, for instance, Höhler's error in seeing Malte's *verlorener Sohn* parable as a concordant reworking of the Tolstoy Paper's theological premise - see *Niemandes Sohn*, p.139. It is nothing of the sort.) If one restricts oneself to what presents itself in the final *Malte*-text, then the claim that Malte anywhere doubts the existence of a benign, divine force behind the universe becomes untenable. Nowhere do we find an echo of the open doubt of Obstfelder's priest: »Do I believe in a god? / I do not know« (*A Priest's Diary*, p.61). Still less does Malte turn to the resigned atheism of a Niels Lyhne. »[H]at er [Malte] denn je überhaupt an seiner [Gottes] Existenz gezweifelt?« asks Stephens with considerable justification, expanding in a useful footnote: »In Maltes Äußerungen zu diesem Problem ist es vorwiegend das Ungewisse an seiner Beziehung zu Gott und nicht die Frage nach Gottes Existenz, was ihn unmittelbar zu quälen scheint« (*Strukturanalyse*, p.201 main text & footnote 15). Whatever Rilke himself may have believed - and this issue will be briefly addressed in the >Conclusion?< section - he has created in Malte a troubled and discouraged believer, but a believer none the less. Naumann writes: »Rilkes nachkatholische Religiosität verschiebt die Begriffe des Heiligen, des Engels, der Himmelfahrt in einen Zwischenraum zwischen Ontologie und Psychologie« (*Gesammelte Malte-Studien, Erster Teil*, p.26). This characterisation seems judicious. But *Malte Laurids Brigge's* Kierkegaardian stress on human inwardness should not be mistaken for a doctrine that the intra-human constitutes the alpha and omega of religious reality. Furthermore, and related to the *werdender Gott* question, Rilke has excised from Malte's religiousness his own recurring religious idea, from the *Tagebücher der Frühzeit* on, of the artist as the creator of God. For Rilke this is the idea that promises to rescue the dignity of the human over against the divine. This demotion of God to the status of »>Sohn< des Künstlers« (Höhler, *Niemandes Sohn*, p.131), is both wholly alien to a Kierkegaardian theology and quite absent from *Malte's Papers*. Saalman's talk of »die Anwesenheit Gottes als Metapher des Schöpferischen, ebenso

die Abwesenheit des Göttlichen, die Tatsache, daß Gott die wesentliche Aufgabe bleibt« (*Würfelwurf nach dem Absoluten*, p.66) thus has little or relevance to the *Malte* (which Saalman is discussing). I believe that Rilke has made Malte not in his own image, but in the image of that part of him which tends towards a Kierkegaardian faith. His Malte is humiliated, bereft, demeaned, helpless, waiting. If he undertakes the *Arbeit an Gott*, then this refers not to the creation of God (in any remotely objective genitive sense) but to the path of seeking a God who waits. (As indicated, the question as to why Rilke could not himself be wholeheartedly Kierkegaardian in this respect will be tentatively explored in the >Conclusion?< section.) The degree to which Malte's God-discourse is shadowed by that of Kierkegaard is suggested by Malte's final *große Frage*: »Ist es möglich, daß es Leute giebt, welche >Gott< sagen und meinen, das wäre etwas Gemeinsames? -Und sieh nur zwei Schulkinder: es kauft sich der eine ein Messer, und sein Nachbar kauft sich ein ganz gleiches am selben Tag. Und sie zeigen einander nach einer Woche die beiden Messer, und es ergibt sich, daß sie sich nur noch ganz entfernt ähnlich sehen, - so verschieden haben sie sich in verschiedenen Händen entwickelt. (Ja, sagt des einen Mutter dazu: wenn ihr auch gleich immer alles abnutzen müßt. -) Ach so: Ist es möglich, zu glauben, man könne einen Gott haben, ohne ihn zu gebrauchen?« (*MLB*, Paper XIV, pp.469f). This is not a critique of God but of God as instrumental concept (the schoolchildren are refugees from Rilke's earlier fable *Wie der Fingerhut dazu kam, der liebe Gott zu sein*, where a thimble rather than a knife is elevated to the status of God: see *Geschichten vom lieben Gott*, KA III, pp.398f). Sokel ("The Devolution of the Self", p.173), noting the Kierkegaardian overtones in Malte's words, contrasts them with a seemingly contradictory statement later on in the book: »(Laßt uns doch aufrichtig sein, wir haben kein Theater, so wenig wir einen Gott haben: dazu gehört Gemeinsamkeit [...])« (*MLB*, Paper LXIV, p.617). Sokel's English translation contains the phrase »>[...] any more than we have a God [...]<«, from which it follows that we have >no God<. But the contradiction is relieved considerably if we translate Malte's *einen Gott* not as *a God* but as *one God* - that is, a common God founded upon genuine intersubjective commonality. For Malte, such commonality, if it ever existed, has certainly not been seen since antiquity; for Kierkegaard, it will not be enjoyed until we enter into eternity. For both, the individual path is at present the only viable path to God for the existing human being. (See also Uwe Steiner, *Zeit der Schrift*, p.359, on the negative dialectic at play in Malte's »Signifikatschwund des Wortes >Gott<«.) Malte's seventh *große Frage* also echoes a comment by Kierkegaard's pseudonym >Inter et Inter< in *The Crisis and A Crisis in the Life of an Actress* (p.84): »No, mankind is similar [...] to the children in the marketplace. When they realize that they possess something, that they are allowed to keep it, then they become ungrateful, or if not downright ungrateful then at least sluggish from the habit of admiration. Towards no one is mankind therefore so ungrateful as it is towards God, just because people have the sluggish notion that one can always have Him [...])« (ibid.). Finally, Paper XXXIII (*MLB*, pp.531f) is of some interest for this question of Malte's thematisation of God. There he evokes the contrasting religious temperaments of his parents - the father's establishment - »Höflichkeit« towards God versus the mother's longing for more Catholic expressions of faith. Malte allies himself with the latter: »Ziemlich in Ruhe gelassen, machte ich frühzeitig eine Reihe von Entwicklungen durch, die ich erst viel später in einer Zeit der Verzweigung auf Gott bezog, und zwar mit solcher Heftigkeit, daß er sich bildete und zersprang, fast in demselben Augenblick. Es ist klar, daß ich ganz von vorn anfangen mußte hernach. Und bei diesem Anfang meinte ich manchmal, Maman nötig zu haben, obwohl es ja natürlich richtiger war, ihn allein durchzumachen. Und da war sie ja auch schon lange tot« (ibid.). Narrated here is not a collapse in God's existence, but a snapping apart of the God-concept which Malte had constructed out of his *Entwicklungen*. The target of Malte's critique is thus not religion itself, but his own juvenile *Heftigkeit* in that sphere. His talk of a need to begin all over again signals not an unflinching atheism but a new apprenticeship in spirituality (anticipating that taken by the Prodigal Son in the final Paper).

Manchmal früher fragte ich mich, warum Abelone die Kalorien ihres großartigen Gefühls³¹¹ nicht an Gott wandte. Ich weiß, sie sehnte sich, ihrer Liebe alles Transitive zu nehmen, aber konnte ihr wahrhaftiges Herz sich darüber täuschen, daß Gott nur eine Richtung der Liebe ist, kein Liebesgegenstand? Wußte sie nicht, daß keine Gegenliebe von ihm zu fürchten war? Konnte sie nicht die Zurückhaltung dieses überlegenen Geliebten, der die Lust ruhig hinausschiebt, um uns, Langsame, unser ganzes Herz leisten zu lassen?³¹²

For Malte, such infinite deferral of *Gegenliebe* is rudely interrupted by the love even of Christ himself: »Oder - wollte sie [Abelone] Christus vermeiden? Fürchtete sie, halben Wegs von ihm aufgehalten, an ihm zur Geliebten zu werden? Dachte sie deshalb ungern an Julie Reventlow?«³¹³ Christ's offer of redemptive mediation is polemically rejected by Malte as an intrusion into the direct mystical relationship of the soul with God:

Fast glaube ich es, wenn ich bedenke, wie an dieser Erleichterung Gottes³¹⁴ eine so einfältige Liebende wie Mechthild, eine so hinreißende wie Therese von Avila, eine so wunde wie die Selige Rose von Lima, hinsinken konnte, nachgiebig, doch geliebt. Ach, der für die Schwachen ein Helfer war, ist diesen Starken ein Unrecht; wo sie schon nichts mehr erwarteten, als den unendlichen Weg, da tritt sie noch einmal im spannenden Vorhimmel ein Gestalteter an und verwöhnt sie mit Unterkunft und

³¹¹ Rilke explains this metaphor to Inga Junghanns, his Danish translator: »Kalorie hat auch im deutschen Gebrauch die rein physikalisch geprägte Bedeutung von >Wärmeeinheit< [...] Es wird ein Maaß gesucht für Abelones Gefühl und man kommt auf das wissenschaftlich festgestellte Maaß für eine eigentlich unmeßbare Elementarerscheinung: die Wärme« (*Rainer Maria Rilke - Inga Junghanns Briefwechsel*, Wiesbaden: 1959, p.49).

³¹² *MLB*, Paper LXX, p.628. Bridgham comments: »>Sich leisten< is here synonymous with what Kierkegaard [in the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*] calls >the task of becoming subjective [...] the highest task confronting a human being<« (*Urbild und Verzicht*, p.34). Liu (*Suche nach Zusammenhang*, pp.143 & 144) notes the Abelone-figure's »besondere Nähe zum Überirdischen« and the »kosmische Bezug« which Malte associates with her.

³¹³ As seen in the Introduction, Julie Reventlow, mentioned in Lavater's *Reisetagebuch nach Copenhagen* as a saintlike figure, is depicted with awe by Graf Brahe as a mystical stigmatic (*MLB*, Paper XLIV, p.563). Cf Stahl's *MLB-Kommentar*, pp.972f.

³¹⁴ Rilke explains to Inga Junghanns: »Ja, Christus ist die >Erleichterung Gottes<, indem er es leichter, zu leicht macht, zu Gott zu kommen, zu leicht für die, die auch ohne ihn Gott zu erreichen vermöchten« (*Rilke - Junghanns Briefwechsel*, p.50).

verwirrt sie mit Mannheit.³¹⁵ Seines stark brechenden Herzens Linse nimmt noch einmal ihre schon parallelen Herzstrahlen zusamm, und sie, die die Engel schon ganz für Gott zu erhalten hofften, flammen auf in der Dürre ihrer Sehnsucht. / *(Geliebtsein heißt aufbrennen. Lieben ist: Leuchten mit unerschöpflichem Öle.³¹⁶ Geliebtwerden ist vergehen, Lieben ist dauern.)³¹⁷

Malte's anti-Christ polemic brings into the foreground a key divergence between Rilke and Kierkegaard. Both would reject Hegel's humanised, *sittlich* solution to the Unhappy Consciousness. But Kierkegaard, unlike Rilke, does not accept mystical-monistic claims that the Self-God schism can be bridged on earth,³¹⁸ nor the validity of the aesthetic's claim to exteriorise what is spiritually inward. For Kierkegaard, both escape-routes are finite, facile and premature in their sensualistic dilution of the world-spirit, human-divine heterogeneity. Rilke, for his part (through Malte), rejects Kierkegaard's own Christian solution as being in its own way *too eager to see spirit mediated vicariously in human form*. If the cultivation of longing is to be infinitised, then not even Christ himself can intercept it.³¹⁹ Rilke's / Malte's

³¹⁵ Cf Rilke on Christ as »ein süßes Männlichkeitssurrogat«, letter to Clara, September 3rd 1908 (*Briefe in zwei Bänden I*, p.308).

³¹⁶ Compare the description of a *Vögelfütterer* in Paper XXV: »Wie ein Leuchter steht er da, der ausbrennt, und leuchtet mit dem Rest von Docht und ist ganz warm davon und hat sich nie gerührt« (*MLB*, p.510; see Allemann, *Zeit und Figur beim späten Rilke*, pp.75f & p.316, footnote 24). Cf Madame Blavatsky on the burning sepulchral lamps in alchemical lore: »Among the ridiculed claims of alchemy is that of the *perpetual lamps*« (*Isis Unveiled, Vol.1 - Theology*, p.226).

³¹⁷ An editorial note glosses the parenthesised words as »*Im Manuskript an den Rand geschrieben« (*MLB*, Paper LXX, pp.628f).

³¹⁸ »Mysticism does not have the patience to wait for God's revelation« (Kierkegaard's journal entry for July 11th 1840, *Journals & Papers Vol.3*, p.234).

³¹⁹ Recall Malte's critical comment in the *Fortgeworfenen* Paper (LX): »Ich glaube, nur Jesus ertrüge sie, der noch das Auferstehen in allen Gliedern hat; aber ihm liegt nichts an ihnen. Nur die Liebenden verführen ihn, nicht die, die warten mit einem kleinen Talent zur Geliebten wie mit einer kalten Lampe« (*MLB*, p.604).

repudiation of Christ³²⁰ should not however screen the salient point that erotic and romantic longing as a profound energisation of the self is a cardinal

³²⁰ Kohlschmidt, aligning Rilke with the »entdogmatisierte[] [...] Kierkegaard-Auffassung« which became current in German letters, warns against the notion of »ein kryptochristlicher Rilke« (”Rilke und Kierkegaard”, p.93). Rilke’s anti-Christianism is deeply monistic - Fick writes of the »Ablehnung Christi (als Sohn Gottes)« as »ein Grundzug des >Monismus< als (frei-)religiöser Bewegung« (*Sinnenwelt und Weltseele*, p.311). In a letter to Alexander N. Benois, written on 28th July 1901, Rilke indicates his antipathy to institutional Christianity: »Das Leben Jesu Christi und das Dostojewskis sind unvergeßliche Erscheinungen und große Beispiele. Aber das *nicht* dogmatisch gewordene menschliche Wort des letzteren wird für Rußland viel wirksamer sein, als das in großen Systemen eingeschobene Wort des Jesus von Nazareth für Europa war« (*Briefe in zwei Bänden I*, p.89). The bold parallel indicates just how gravely Rilke distrusts dogmatic commitment - and how highly he places the artist (and philosopher, in the context of the letter: *ibid.*, pp.88-91). To Marie von Thurn und Taxis-Hohenlohe he writes from Ronda on December 17th 1912: »[...] ich bin seit Cordoba von einer beinah rabiaten Antichristlichkeit«, and, in unmistakably spiritistic terms, explains his preference for the great channelled writings of Mohammed over »das Telephon >Christus<, in das fortwährend hineingerufen wird: *Holla, wer dort?*, und niemand antwortet« (*Briefe in zwei Bänden I*, pp.447-8) - a metaphor which Kassner declares »über jedes Maß geschmacklos[]« (*Rilke. Gesammelte Erinnerungen 1926-1956*, p.60. Cf Kassner’s account of a conversation with Rilke in June 1914 on this issue: »Rilke wollte nur den Vater«, *ibid.*, pp.5f. See also Rilke’s *Der Brief des jungen Arbeiters*, KA IV, pp.736f). As Fick shows in detail, Malte is nowhere closer to his Obstfelderian counterpart than in his rejection of Christ as mediator (*Sinnenwelt und Weltseele*, pp.307 & 311; see *A Priest’s Diary*, pp.27f; cf von Hartmann’s rejection of mediation of the Unconscious realm in the guise of Christ, Mary and the saints: *Discovery of the Unconscious*, Book II, p.264). The young Niels Lyhne, too, before his conversion to atheism, raises a similar objection to Christ: »er hatte in Jesus nur den gesehen, der nach des Vaters Willen tat, der nur Gottes Sohn war, nicht selber Gott, und darum war es Gottvater, zu dem er gebetet hatte [...]« (Jacobsen, *Niels Lyhne*, pp.282f; cf the young Niels’ preference for »der mächtige alttestamentliche Gott« over the etiolated God of Christian theology: *ibid.*, p.282). Both *Fear and Trembling* and *Repetition* have little or nothing to say about Christ, concentrating instead on the massive religious ordeals of the Old Testament figures Abraham and Job. Nor does Christ figure largely in either volume of *Either/Or*. This makes sense in terms of Kierkegaard’s strategy of indirect discourse: he is working his way up to the explicit Christian apologetics of the later pseudonymous works. (Indeed, even in such a programmatically Christian work as *The Sickness unto Death*, full-blown Christian dogmatics do not take centre stage until the second half of the book.) The sublime figures of the earlier texts, for all that they are written by a devout Christian, remain profoundly congenial to Rilke. The chief problem which Rilke has with Christianity is that Christians, instead of seeing Jesus as an exemplar, along with the Buddha perhaps *the* exemplar, of spiritual realisation, turn Him into their sole Mediator-Saviour whose rôle in the atonement *does the work of spiritual realisation on their behalf*. This makes of Jesus a glorious fetish rather than a summons to true *imitatio*. Rilke is in this sense not so much anti-Christ as anti-Christian, believing that Christianity has missed the kernel of Christ’s own teaching: that he points the way rather than being the way itself (cf *Der Brief des jungen Arbeiters*, KA IV, p.737). Rilke can thus venerate Francis of Assisi because the *seraphische Heilige* emulates rather than takes cover under the life of Jesus. As Park writes of Rilke’s lifelong endeavour to model his life on that of Francis: »allerdings hat dieses sein Bestreben keinen direkten Bezug zum Christlich-Kirchengeschichtlichen, sondern es hängt vor allem mit seiner geistigen Veranlagung zusammen, im >Sich-Entäußern<, >Sich-Schälen<, also in der >Armut< im Geiste des Franziskus ein gültiges Prinzip für sein Schaffen und Leben finden zu wollen« (*Rilkes Selbstwerdung*, p.116). Rilke shares the sentiments of Obstfelder’s priest: »Christianity came to ease the burdens. Should it be eased? Life is after all not easy. Its purpose is not easy. Human nature is not easy. / Perhaps Christianity is idolatry

theme common to the *Malte* and to the pseudonymous Kierkegaard - and under remarkably similar categories.³²¹ In the section of *Either/Or I* entitled

like all the others?» (*A Priest's Diary*, p.27). It does bear pointing out that such an understanding of Christ's Messianic rôle as alleviative is explicitly repudiated by Kierkegaard too as a perversion of the Christian faith: »As soon as this variation makes its appearance: he (Christ) has suffered and now the rest of us will have it easy, Christianity is *eo ipso* altered and is transposed from what it is in the New Testament (to be a Christian is to suffer, is to be martyred) into this human villainy: to let one person or a few be martyred agonizingly - in order that the others can have it easy. The animal nature, the bestiality of man really sticks out clearly in this invention« (undated Journal entry 1854, *Journals & Papers Vol.4*, p.431). For Kierkegaard, authentic Christianity has been stifled by institutional Christendom's »secular indifference« (undated journal entry 1848, *Journals & Papers Vol.6*, p.71), just as for Rilke is has been perverted into a bourgeois *métier* (*Der Brief des jungen Arbeiters*, KA IV, p.737). In his letter to Ilse Erdmann of August 18th 1915, Rilke praises Kierkegaard as perhaps the only Christian left: »Ob Sie Kierkegaard kennen? Hier ist Christentum, wenn es irgendwo noch ist, dieser wahrhaft innere Mensch strahlt es in die Zukunft hinüber [...] er ist ein Pathos, Stimme und einsame Landschaft, ein unendlicher Anspruch ans Herz, ein Diktat, ein Donner und eine Stille wie die Stille der Blumen [...]« (in Lorenz, *Schweigen in der Dichtung*, p.146, footnote 71, emphasis added).

³²¹ Bridgham's central thesis, that Kierkegaard's own amatory biography had a lasting impact upon Rilke's attitude to eros and relationship (as it would upon Lukács too), centres on breaking of the engagement with Regina Olsen, which represented a turning-point in Kierkegaard's life and career (see *Urbild und Verzicht*, pp.1ff). In the *Briefentwurf* (Paper XXII) Malte indicates a recent breaking off of a relationship with his anonymous addressee: »Ich versuche es, Dir zu schreiben, obwohl es eigentlich nichts giebt nach einem notwendigen Abschied« (*MLB*, p.504). At twenty-eight (*MLB*, Paper XIV, p.466) he is exactly the same age as Kierkegaard was when he broke off his engagement to Regine Olsen (October 11th 1841). Kierkegaard's famous *Regina*-paper, dated February 2nd 1839 trumpets the presentiment that he will ultimately have to leave Regine, the »sovereign queen« of his heart, for the religious passion which she herself has awakened in him: »You blind god of erotic love! You who see in secret, will you disclose it to me? Will I find what I am seeking here in this world, will I experience the conclusion of all my life's eccentric premises, will I fold you in my arms, or: / **Do the Orders say: March on?** / Have you gone on ahead, you, my longing, transfigured do you beckon to me from another world? O, I will throw everything away in order to become light enough to follow you« (*Journals & Papers Vol.5*, pp.127f). This reads almost like a rhetorical paraphrase of Malte's meditations on >intransitive love<. Roger Poole evokes Kierkegaard's state of mind after Regine Olsen gets engaged to Fritz Schlegel in June 1843: »Wild with relief to be free of the human, Kierkegaard steps, like his own Antigone, into the silence and loneliness of the tomb« (*The Indirect Communication*, p.62). Rather more sympathetic is Ib Ostfeld's characterisation of the decision: »He must obey the sealed orders that commanded him to pursue the ideas of his mind and aspire toward the final religious breakthrough along the winding path of suffering and paradox« (*Søren Kierkegaard's Psychology*, p.12). The Young Man in *Repetition*, like the Seducer in "The Seducer's Diary" in *Either / Or I*, is indubitably autobiographically conceived, dramatising as he does Kierkegaard's own dilemma with Regine. The Young Man first breaks off with the girl because »she is a reality too small for him« (Poole, *The Indirect Communication*, p.65). Later, as he prepares himself for marriage, he writes: »I sit and clip myself, take away everything that is incommensurable in order to become commensurable. Every morning I discard all the impatience and infinite striving of my soul - but it does not help, for the next moment it is there again« (*Repetition*, p.214). Rilke's fascination with Kierkegaard's duplicitous letters to Regina Olsen is only too easily understood as a case of self-recognition: »In 1904 he was still something of a beginner in amatory equivocation, although his letters to Clara already disclose how deliberate he could be in defending his attitude« (Bridgham, *Urbild und Verzicht*,

“The Unhappiest One”, for instance, the nihilistic aesthete A, delivering his address to the Συμπαρανεκρωμενοι (>Fellowship of the Dead<), slowly ratchets up his rhetoric as he searches out the unhappiest consciousness of all.

As he approaches his climax, he turns to the category of unhappy lover:

Is this an actual person or is it an image; is it a living person who is dying or a dead person who is living - it is Niobe. She lost everything all at once; she lost that to which she gave life; she lost that which gave life to her! Look up at her, dear Συμπαρανεκρωμενοι; she is standing only a little higher than the world, like a monument on a burial mound. But no hope beckons her, no future motivates her, no prospect tempts her, no hope perturbs her - hopeless she stands, turned to stone in recollection. She was unhappy for a moment; in the same moment she became happy, and nothing can take her happiness from her; the world changes, but she knows no change, and time comes, but for her there is no future time. / Look over there, what a beautiful union! The one generation offers a hand to the other! Is it an invitation to blessing, to faithful solidarity, to a happy dance? It is the outcast family of Oedipus, and the blow is transmitted and it crushes the last one - it is Antigone. But she is provided for; the grief of a family is enough for a human life. She has turned her back on hope; she has exchanged its fickleness for the faithfulness of recollection. Stay happy, then, dear Antigone! We wish you a long life, as meaningful as a deep sigh. May no forgetfulness rob you of anything! May the daily bitterness of sorrow be offered to you abundantly.³²²

Byblis, Malte’s mythical figure of unhappy love, turned into a spring bubbling under a black oak because of the pain of an unhappy incestuous love. As such, she is something of a composite version of A’s two figures: Niobe, who was turned into a stone image that wept continuously, and Antigone, who

p.2). The rejection by Lou Andreas-Salomé is surely the defining event for Rilke in this area, after which the relationship with Clara (and Ruth) becomes a pathetic saga of Rilke’s refusal to become, on his own terms, >commensurable<. Perhaps the *Briefentwurf* of Paper XXII, which I do not read as being addressed to Abelone, offers another such example of epistolary escapology?

³²² Kierkegaard, *Either/Or I*, p.227.

was stricken by the inherited shame of incest (being the daughter of the incestuous union between Oedipus and Jocasta).

The loss of hope, as A states elsewhere, is the minimal condition for poeticisation of the self: »Not until hope has been thrown overboard does one begin to live artistically; as long as a person hopes, he cannot limit himself«. ³²³ This insight will not be dropped by Silentio, Constantius or Anti-Climacus, rather it will accrue an all-important religious clause: Not until hope *in the worldly* has been thrown overboard does one begin to live religiously; conversely, as long as a person harbours worldly hopes, he cannot make the movement of infinite resignation, still less the subsequent absurd movement of faith. The loss of hope forces one into what A calls >reflective sorrow< or >anxiety<. In an earlier discussion of Antigone, or rather his updated version of her, he writes:

[...] an anxiety is a reflection and in that respect is essentially different from sorrow. Anxiety is the vehicle by which the subject appropriates sorrow and assimilates it. Anxiety is the motive power by which sorrow penetrates a person's heart [...] As a passionately erotic glance craves its object, so anxiety looks cravenly upon sorrow. Just as the quiet, incorruptible eye of love is preoccupied with the beloved's object, so anxiety's self-preoccupation is with sorrow. But anxiety has an added factor that makes it cling even harder to its object, for it both loves and fears it. Anxiety has a double function; in part it is the exploring movement that continually makes contact and by this groping discovers sorrow as it circles around it. Or anxiety is sudden; all the sorrow is lodged in one instant, yet in such a way that this instant immediately dissolves in a consecutive series. ³²⁴

³²³ *Either/Or I*, p.292. Cf Malte's outcast women for whom even disappointment would be too high a condition: »Sie sind nie sehr hoch von einer Hoffnung gefallen, so sind sie nicht zerbrochen; aber abgeschlagen sind sie und schon dem Leben zu schlecht« (Paper LX, pp.603f).

³²⁴ Kierkegaard, *Either/Or I*, p.155.

Anxiety, then, is the reflective response to sorrow, such that what it relates to directly is not the occasion of the sorrow but the sorrow itself. In other words, anxiety is non-objective - or intransitive - passion:

That anxiety is a reflection category is shown by language itself, for I always say that I am anxious about something, and I thereby distinguish between the anxiety and that about which I am anxious, and I can never use >anxiety< objectively; whereas when I say >my sorrow<, I can be expressing as much about what I am grieving over as about my sorrow over it.³²⁵

This passionate response to passion, this passion raised to the second power, is what differentiates A's >modern<, inward, solitary Antigone from the original Antigone, whose tragedy is embedded far more in the larger drama of social ethics (*Sittlichkeit*). Antigone's re-entry into A's discourse alongside Niobe in "The Unhappiest One" makes clear A's anatomy of anxiety: the anxiety of the unhappy lover relates not to the beloved, but, at one remove from the beloved, to the sorrowful passion which the beloved has triggered.

Where unhappy love is in A's dissertations a matter of pathos, however profound, it gains in *Fear and Trembling* and *Repetition* a new

³²⁵ Ibid.

religious resonance - but essentially on the same grounds as in *Either/Or I*.³²⁶

In A's view, the death of the unhappy lovers' hope brings them (Niobe, Antigone, Marie Beaumarchais, Donna Elvira, Margarete) into the tragic territory of nihilistic, depressive melancholia; in the view of Silentio, Constantius and the Young Man, it brings them (the knight of sorrowful recollection, Agnes, Sarah, the Young Man) into the agonising but redemptive dialectic of faith.

For both the Kierkegaardian melancholic and Malte, then, one of the most powerful vehicles of existential stretching is the experience of unhappy love, followed by the cultivation of objectless love. As Bridgham develops the

³²⁶ In the non-pseudonymous *Works of Love* we find Christian *agape* replacing *eros* as the dominant meaning of the word >love<. It is this treatment of love which Adorno is attacking on three counts in "Kierkegaards Lehre von der Liebe". Firstly, Kierkegaard's Christian love is, like Kantian duty, aprioristically *gesollt*. Thus do spontaneity, inclination and subjectively felt passion yield to a wholly abstract love of neighbour ("Kierkegaard's Lehre von der Liebe", pp.219ff). (But does a *a priori* commitment to loving the other necessarily mean abstraction in *praxi*? Kierkegaard's central argument is that one may not be personally selective about whom one loves.) Secondly, Kierkegaard's stress on the subjective interiority of the Christian lover all but annuls the reality of the other who is to be loved, rendering the love *intransitive*: »Der andere Mensch wird für die Liebe das, was in Kierkegaards Philosophie die ganz äußere Welt ist, ein bloßer >Anstoß< für die subjektive Innerlichkeit. Diese kennt eigentlich keine Objekte: die Substantialität der Liebe ist objektlos« (ibid., p.219). For Adorno, this represents an unholy alliance of revived Fichteanism and elevated Don Juanism: »Das Goethesche: >Wenn ich dich liebe, was geht's dich an<, das Kierkegaard als >ästhetisch< würde verworfen haben und das dem *Tagebuch des Verführers* zugrunde liegt - dies >unmittelbar< Erotische reproduziert sich gewissermaßen in seiner religiösen Lehre von der Liebe, wo es auch den christlich Geliebten nichts angeht, wenn er geliebt wird, insofern er über diese Liebe eigentlich nichts vermag. Diese Dialektik der Liebe grenzt an Lieblosigkeit« (ibid., p.221). Bridgham, who cites Adorno as evidence that Kierkegaard's conception of >Nächstenliebe< has attracted »the same undisguised hostility that has become familiar in Rilke-criticism« (*Urbild und Verzicht*, p.6; cf p.11, footnote 1), develops Adorno's case that Kierkegaard's »re-direction of love« from *eros* to *agape* »is much less radical than might be expected« (ibid., pp.6f). The central idea, argues Bridgham, is carried over by Kierkegaard from the aesthetic to the ethical sphere: »[...] even in the >ethical< context [of love of neighbour], love retreats into >pure inwardness< - an existential isolation which for Kierkegaard (if not for Adorno) is justified as the essential prerequisite for entry into the highest category - the religious« (ibid., p.7). Yet it seems to me that the move from *eros* to *agape* is radical in that it entails a loss of Kierkegaard's typical lexis of impassioned pain, of energetically sorrowful longing, of, in short, unhappy consciousness. In fact one could argue that the sorrow of erotic and romantic love is for Kierkegaard more psychologically homologous to the self's attempts to love God than is his call to deontic love of neighbour.

dialectic: desire becomes split from its immediate object, whether through rejection, misfortune or death; this generates a tension³²⁷ in the self which, if allowed to develop to a maximal point, reaches an *Umschlag*, whereby »intensity becomes a positive value in its own right«; this intransitive intensity becomes »a state of pure subjectivity, in which the divine is the only possible goal of love«.³²⁸ The authentic self can take no refuge in relationship. Instead longing is to be sustained as longing, kept moving inwardly as *potential* rather than *kinetic energy*, as »the passion of possibility«.³²⁹ One is to welcome longing, but take it beyond the level of romantic-aesthetic or even erotic

³²⁷ Cf Bridgham on the Kierkegaardian inspiration behind Rilke's perennial figure of the bow and arrow (*Urbild und Verzicht*, p.8 & pp.18ff).

³²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.6, 13 & 16 respectively.

³²⁹ Kierkegaard, *Repetition*, p.154. Cf Malte's almost Tantric diagnosis of the saint's temptation in Paper LII: »Sein Geschlecht ist wieder nur an einer Stelle [...]« (*MLB*, p.584) - an image which will be reprised in the complaint of the *junger Arbeiter* at the localisation of sexual energy in the genital area (*KA IV*, pp.745f). See also Fick on monism's psychophysical »Hypostasierung des Geschlechtlichen zum (quasi) Metaphysischen« (*Sinnenwelt und Weltseele*, p.9). As Fick notes, there is evidence that Rilke shared this *erotische Mystik*: »Erwähnen wir nur die Bilder von Félicien Rops: Rilke hat als ihren Gegenstand die Identifikation des >Geschlechts< mit dem >jenseitigen< Urgrund der Welt erkannt: >Rops schreibt als erster riesengroß über sein Werk und über die Welt: *Gott, das Geschlecht*<« (*ibid.*, quoting Rilke, "Der Salon der Drei" [1898], *KA IV*, p.138). Compare the intransitive mystical eroticism of Obstfelder's priest, who is incandescent with sexual energy: »Why all this white heat within me - heat that seems to want to burn my pores to ashes? / If there is no-one to love! If with all my mind and body and soul I cannot enfold with a million arms some other being more splendid than me? Yes, there are days in the sun and nights in the dark when I feel as though every part of my body - its cells and the very souls of those cells - were stretching out millions of ardent arms. But they find nothing« (*A Priest's Diary*, pp.60f).

affectivity, so that the energy will be sublimated³³⁰ - not repressed - into a spiritual resource.³³¹

The old man conjured up by Malte in Paper LXVIII - interestingly, Friedrich Wilhelm Wodtke has proposed Kierkegaard himself as a possible

³³⁰ In his letter to Clara of September 3rd 1908 Rilke relays Rodin's musings on the sublimatory ideal: »Daß jedes Ding das Geschlechtliche übersteigt und in seiner sinnlichsten Fülle ins Geistige überschlägt, mit dem man nur noch mit Gott beisammen liegen kann« (*Rainer Maria Rilke. Briefe aus den Jahren 1907 bis 1914*, edited by Ruth Sieber-Rilke & Carl Sieber, Leipzig: 1933, p.42). Malte's celibacy draws the *Malte* into the company of the symbolist *roman célibataire*. Celibacy, as Jean-Pierre Bertrand and Daniel Grojnowski write in relation to that genre, »permet d'entourer le personnage d'un vide qui signale l'absence de déterminisme« ("Présentation" to Rodenbach's *Bruges-la-Morte*, p.39). Malte's celibacy however seems to me to come closer to that of Kierkegaard, who would have viewed the *fin de siècle* type as trapped in the >aesthetic< phase of selfish >freedom< from commitment (not that either Kierkegaard's or Rilke's treatment of women in their own lives could be described as ethically unproblematical). What is common to Rilke, Kierkegaard and the symbolists, however, is an erotic, social and psychological problematisation of the young male. Cf Kassner's comment on Rilke's unhappy relationship to the masculine: »Der Mann blieb in Rilkes welt Eindringling, darin waren nur Kinder, Frauen und Alte zu Hause« (*Rilke. Gesammelte Erinnerungen 1926-1956*, p.6).

³³¹ Stephens (*Strukturanalyse*, pp.263f) adopts a highly critical stance towards Malte's doctrine of >intransitive love<, which he situates within what he sees as Malte's general decline into vacuous narcissism: »[Es] bleibt, als weiteres Symptom der Verarmung von Maltes Erlebnisfeld, dem Leser die Lehre von der >besitzlosen Liebe< nur allzu deutlich im Gedächtnis. Nicht das Sterile und Enthumanisierte an dieser Liebeslehre beeinträchtigt die künstlerische Wirkung des Werkschlusses so sehr, als die unumgängliche Tatsache, daß diese Doktrin implizite als >Lösung< der Problematik des Werkes geboten wird. Angesichts der inneren Widersprüchlichkeit und ideologischen Hohlheit dieser Lehre kann sie nur als zusätzlicher Beweis von Maltes endgültigem Versagen bezeichnet werden« (*Strukturanalyse*, pp.263f). Yet this critique seems sound *only inasmuch as one abstracts from - or rejects on ideological grounds - the religio-mystical horizon against which it is outlined*. At the very least one must allow that Malte's doctrine, far from being wildly idiosyncratic, is of a piece with the ideal of *eros*-sublimation which is a near-constant in spiritual traditions East and West. A similar argument can be made against Giloy's analysis of the »einfache Reduktion« behind the *intransitive Liebe* doctrine: »Wenn nämlich Liebe Zuwendung zu Menschen und Dingen ist und wenn diesem Trieb das Objekt genommen wird, so bleibt schließlich eine Stimmung übrig, die er [Rilke] sich als unbestimmte Bereitschaft denkt, alles Vorhandene aufzunehmen und zu verklären« (*Aporie des Dichters*, p.9). This, according to Giloy, leads to a diffusely world-affirming, vaguely pantheistic, but ultimately poetic *epoché*: »Liebe, die nicht mehr unterscheidet und wählt, sondern sich in eine Zuständlichkeit modifiziert, soll zu Medium werden, in dem alles Einzelne wie in einem Wasser des Lebens aufgenommen ist. Intransitive Liebe ist ein Äther der Dinge oder das qualifizierende Worin ihres Erscheinens. In Frage steht also eine Dichtung, die alles, was ist, in der Weise, wie es ist, rühmend vorstellt« (*ibid.*). One must query two things here. a) The primary relevance which Giloy, with scant textual evidence, accords to *Dichtung* within Malte's doctrine of intransitive love (Giloy will later devote a chapter to what she terms »Poetische Liebe«, pp.126ff). b) The withdrawal of a spiritual teleology, thus reconfiguring *intransitive Liebe* as a rather masochistically penitential, inhumane and passive affair. This robs the doctrine of its celebration of *affective direction*: Malte uses >intransitive< to mean >without a finite object<, and *not* >diffuse< or >without direction<.

model for this mysterious figure³³²- brings this idea into his tribute to Sappho. She is understood here not as the archetypal lesbian but as the archetype of the woman who does not allow herself to be loved (and hence, in Malte's terms, reduced) by men: »[...] wie sehr im Recht jene Liebende war: wenn sie wußte, daß mit der Vereinigung nichts gemeint sein kann, als ein Zuwachs an Einsamkeit; wenn sie den zeitlichen Zweck des Geschlechtes durchbrach mit seiner unendlichen Absicht. Wenn sie im Dunkel der Umarmungen nicht nach Stillung grub, sondern nach Sehnsucht«.³³³ The self will be galvanised by the forward-orientated, potential energy of an unstilled *Sehnsucht*, an

³³² Cf Stahl's *MLB-Stellenkommentar*, KA3, p.1032. I myself prefer to read this figure as a subjunctive Malte Laurids Brigge returned to the homestead (»[...] in meiner Heimat [...] ein älterer Mann, der in seiner Jugend gereist ist und längst als Sonderling gilt [...]«), *MLB*, pp.620f).

³³³ *MLB*, Paper LXVIII, p.623. Fick is surely deducing too much when she writes: »Die Sappho-Passage zeigt, daß die intransitive Liebe den Geschlechtsakt einschließt, daß der körperliche Vollzug sogar wesentlich ist« (*Sinnenwelt und Weltseele*, p.315). Cf Bridgham on Rilke's later ambivalence towards sexuality in the *Briefwechsel in Gedichten mit Erika Mitterer*: »Rilke both dismisses renunciation as an artificial restraint on what is natural: >als zu lang schon / heuchelnd verhaltene Lust< [...] and deplores the age-old demands of sex: >Aus der Ferne des / Geschlechtes kommen alte Forderungen ... Das Ich versagt am Es< [...]. It is impossible to determine exactly when he is making a virtue of necessity and when he is freely proposing an absolute ideal [...]« (*Urbild und Verzicht*, p.29). Rilke does however give the young poet Rudolf Bodländer a pellucid account of his monistic philosophy, presenting renunciation and consummation as a false dichotomy: »Liebes-Absage oder Liebes-Erfüllung, beide sind nur dort wunderbar und ohne Gleichen, wo das ganze Liebeserlebnis mit allen seinen voneinander kaum unterscheidbaren Entzückungen (die untereinander so alternieren, daß Seelisches und Leibliches gerade dort nicht mehr sich trennen läßt) eine zentrale Lage einnehmen darf: dort wird ja dann auch (in der Hingerissenheit einiger Liebender oder Heiliger aller Zeiten und aller Religionen) Absage und Ausfüllung identisch. Wo das Unendliche ganz eintritt (sei es als Minus oder Plus), fällt das Vorzeichen weg, das, ach, so menschliche, als der vollendete Weg, der nun gegangen ist, - und was bleibt, ist das Angekommensein, das Sein! - Dies ist, Lieber, ungefähr, was sich von unserem größten innigsten Geheimnis, wenn man gefragt wird (vorläufig) bekennen läßt« (letter of March 23rd 1922, *Briefe in Zwei Bänden II*, p.245). Noteworthy in the specific context of Malte's philosophy is the virginal status of the *Dame à la Licorne* (see for instance Klein, "Le carnet 38, ou la Licorne", p.85). In Christine de Pizan's *Le Livre du chemin de long estude*, incidentally, the Cumaean Sibyl divulges to Christine (herself one of Malte's unhappy lovers) the secret behind her »gift of longevity«: a refusal to accede to Phoebus' desire to »take my virginity« (*The Path of Long Study*, p.67).

unreciprocated passion, an infinitely deferred orgasm.³³⁴ There may be some value in the *Deckel* remaining indefinitely sundered from its *Büchse*.

1) The Kierkegaardian single individual responds with passionate subjunctive subjectivity to the exempla, positive and negative, of other single individuals

It is a large challenge for Kierkegaard to put the Christian case that the life of an obscure Galilean Jew some nineteen hundred years ago could possibly have relevance, let alone seismic significance, for those currently living. Kassner identifies Kierkegaard's origination of a modern, individualistic, interior historiography as the solution to this challenge: »Kierkegaard allein rettete die kostbare Ausnahme«.³³⁵ Kierkegaard many times makes the point that his true contemporaries are not those living in the present age, but rather, within some mysteriously synchronic dimension of existential solidarity, those individual figures from previous ages, stretching back to Greek antiquity, who bore sharpest witness to human individuality and inwardness. »Out with history,« he proclaims, »In with the situation of contemporaneity«.³³⁶ For Kierkegaard, Socrates becomes the highest specimen produced in paganism, to be superseded only by Jesus, who explodes the very meaning of the human. In order to understand the past, inasmuch as it

³³⁴ Cf the preference voiced in the first *Duineser Elegie* for the »Verlassenen« over »die Gestillten« (KA II, p.202, lines 38f).

³³⁵ Kassner, *Kierkegaard*, p.62.

³³⁶ 1848 Journal entry (quoted in editors' notes to *Repetition*, p.360).

can be understood, Kierkegaard turns away from the aggregative - literally: flock-like - behaviours and customs of the collective, the mass, the crowd, and examines instead the exceptional individuals who crop up in every age. This he does not out of some Carlylean fixation on the Caesars or Napoleons or even Goethes who bestride the world stage with monumental profile, but out of the conviction that the nature of a given age is most clinically and relentlessly exposed by the person who goes most cleanly against its grain - even, or especially, if such passionately lived accusation of the universal leads to the death of the individual at the hands of the accused. Kierkegaard's outsider, as he takes pains to point out and as Kassner carefully explains, is on no account to be confused with the hero, tragic or otherwise. The latter is engaged in great deeds on the external, visible plane, whereas the Kierkegaardian knight is occupied wholly with »die innere Tat« (Kassner).³³⁷ The figure of Hamlet, of course, stands as a towering anomaly here, immortally perplexed between these poles.³³⁸

Now the eminently transcendentalist quality of Malte's *große Fragen* has already been pointed out in some detail. But Malte's third *große Frage* combines du Prel's metaphysical individualism with a characteristically Kierkegaardian existential individualism:

Ist es möglich, daß die ganze Weltgeschichte mißverstanden worden ist? Ist es möglich, daß die Vergangenheit falsch ist, weil man immer von ihren Massen gesprochen hat, gerade als ob man von einem Zusammenlauf vieler Menschen

³³⁷ See Kassner, *Kierkegaard*, pp.59-65.

³³⁸ Hence Kassner's interest in Hamlet throughout *Der indische Idealismus*.

erzählte, statt von dem Einen zu sagen, um den sie herumstanden, weil er fremd war und starb?³³⁹

The figure of the individual exception around whom people congregate *weil er fremd war und starb*, recalling the assaulted illumination of a Socrates or a Christ (Mark 9:12-13),³⁴⁰ becomes Malte's »charakteristische[] Situation« (Dieter Schiller).³⁴¹

But in order to commemorate the knight of interiority, a massive epistemological and aesthetic difficulty presents itself. If greatness is invisible inwardness, how can it be perceived, let alone evoked, expressed or shown? How can the historian or artist of the interior possibly find an external action correlative to the internal without lapsing into a performative paradox? *Either/Or's* A articulates the aesthetic and epistemological problem finely:

[...] *the subject for artistic portrayal must have a quiet transparency so that the interior rests in the corresponding exterior. The less this is the case, the more difficult becomes the task for the artist, until the distinction asserts itself and teaches him that this is no task for him at all [...] it is easy to perceive that joy is far easier to depict artistically than sorrow. By no means does this deny that grief can be depicted artistically, but it certainly does say that there comes a point where it is essential to posit a contrast between the interior and the exterior, which makes a depiction of it impossible for art. This in turn is due to the singular nature of sorrow. By nature, joy wishes to disclose itself; sorrow wishes to conceal itself, indeed, at times even to deceive.*³⁴² Joy is communicative,

³³⁹ *MLB*, Paper XIV, p.469.

³⁴⁰ Or of a Kierkegaard. Kassner's account of the death will have been known to Rilke: »[...] eines Tages fiel er ohnmächtig auf der Straße zusammen, man trug ihn ins Spital, wo er bald darauf verstarb, von fast allen seinen Freunden verlassen« (*Kierkegaard*, pp.46f). Cf Kierkegaard's journal entry on the extraordinary individual: »[...] he is thrust back away from men; it is not he who haughtily scorns men, no, he loves them; no, it is men who partly out of misunderstanding, partly out of plain nastiness, push him away from themselves.[/] They cannot devitalize him, for, indeed, he has been designed for the extraordinary [...]« (undated entry 1854, *Journals & Papers Vol.1*, pp.479f). Elsewhere Kierkegaard writes: »[...] only a person who is bitten by men becomes an apostle [...]« (undated entry 1854, *ibid.*, p.47).

³⁴¹ Dieter Schiller, "Der Einsame und seine Welt", p.144.

³⁴² Recall Kassner's linkage of *Schwermut/Betrug* (*Kierkegaard*, p.52).

sociable, open, wishes to express itself. Sorrow is inclosingly reserved, silent, solitary, and seeks to return into itself. Surely no one who has made life the object of any observation at all will deny the correctness of this [...] [Joy] is much easier to observe than [sorrow]. In the first, *one sees the manifestation; the interior motion is visible in the exterior*. In the second, one has an intimation of the interior motion. *The exterior pallor is, as it were, the interior's good-bye, and thought and imagination hurry after the fugitive, which hides in the secret recesses* [...] This sorrow cannot be depicted artistically, for the interior and the exterior are out of balance, and thus it does not lie within spatial categories.³⁴³

Sorrow withdraws the self into the shadows, interrupting the Lavaterian commerce of inner and outer. Given that both the Kierkegaardian self and Malte experience life as exile from spirit, in which ecstatic religious experience seems such a long way off, sorrow is for them a more natural and authentic mode of being than worldly joy. One thinks again of the words with which Malte leads into his first Charles le Fou Paper (LXI): »[...] die Herrlichkeit ist nur ein Augenblick, und wir haben nie etwas Längeres gesehen als das Elend«. ³⁴⁴ The depiction of sorrow, a more inward condition than joy, becomes the necessary but contradictory endeavour.

This bind constitutes the burden of Paper XXVI's lyrical apostrophe to Ibsen (who, though unnamed, is unmistakably the addressee):

[...] dort weiltest du und warst gebückt, wo *unser Geschehen* kocht und *sich niederschlägt* und die Farbe verändert, *innen*. *Innerer als dort, wo je einer war*; eine Tür war dir aufgesprungen, und nun warst du bei den Kolben im Feuerschein [...] Dein Theater entstand. Du konntest nicht warten, daß dieses fast raumlose von den Jahrhunderten zu Tropfen zusammengepreßte Leben von den anderen Künsten gefunden und allmählich *versichtbart* werde für einzelne, die sich nach und nach zusammenfinden zur Einsicht und die endlich verlangen, gemeinsam die erlauchten

³⁴³ Kierkegaard, *Either/Or I*, pp.169f, emphases added.

³⁴⁴ *MLB*, Paper LXI, p.604.

Gerüchte bestätigt zu sehen im Gleichnis der vor ihnen aufgeschlagenen Szene [...] in solchen Vorgängen war jetzt das Leben, unser Leben, das in uns hineingeglitten war, das sich nach innen zurückgezogen hatte, so tief, daß es kaum noch Vermutungen darüber gab. / So wie du warst, auf das Zeigen angelegt, ein zeitlos tragischer Dichter, mußt du dieses Kapillare mit einem Schlag umsetzen in die überzeugendsten Gebärden, in die vorhandensten Dinge. Da gingst du an die beispiellose Gewalttat deines Werkes, das immer ungeduldiger, immer verzweifelter unter dem Sichtbaren nach den Äquivalenten suchte für das innen Gesehene.³⁴⁵

This impossible attempt to square the aesthetic circle ended, says Malte, in valiant failure: »Da konntest du nicht mehr. Die beiden Enden, die du zusammengebogen hattest, schnellten auseinander; deine wahnsinnige Kraft entsprang aus dem elastischen Stab, und dein Werk war wie nicht.«³⁴⁶ (T. S. Eliot's notorious verdict on *Hamlet* - »most certainly an artistic failure«³⁴⁷ - will rest on the perception of just such an *inaequetio* of outer action to inner character.) Significantly, Malte has allegorised Ibsen, his ideal-typical artist, as a great modern alchemist working in the laboratory to transmute interiority into purest outer distillate.³⁴⁸ The recursion to the magus-image puts one in mind of another apprentice mage - Malte himself.³⁴⁹ Everything Malte has

³⁴⁵ *MLB*, Paper XXVI, pp.511f., emphases added.

³⁴⁶ *MLB*, Paper XXVI, p.513. As Schofield points out, the compliment which Rilke is paying here to the recently deceased Ibsen († May 1906) is »very limited or even backhanded [...]« (»Rilke and Strindberg«, p.161) .

³⁴⁷ T. S. Eliot, »Hamlet and his Problems«, p.24.

³⁴⁸ Cf Kassner's comment on the difficulty of conveying the »System der Begeisterung« which was developed in post-Bhagavadgita Yoga to hasten the transmutation of the self: »Ich bedauere, nichts von Chemie zu verstehen, um in ihren künstlich-natürlichen Prozessen ein Analoges zu finden« (*Der indische Idealismus*, p.8).

³⁴⁹ Stephens plausibly identifies the Ibsen Paper as a landmark in Malte's cognitive relationship to Paris: »Daß Maltes Abkehr von der Pariser Wirklichkeit mit seiner Darstellung von Ibsen im Zeichen des Scheiterns zusammenfällt, kann kaum zufällig sein« (*Strukturanalyse*, p.142). From this point on, only the *Medizinstudent* and *Zeitungsverkäufer* episodes will be Paris-bound (if one excludes the anomalous Paper devoted to the *Dame à la licorne*-tapestry in the Musée de Cluny which, I shall suggest presently, represents a borderline, semi-empirical Parisian moment). As I heavily emphasised in Chapter Four, both of these episodes are narrated in retrospect. Hence it is conceivable that they have already happened *before* Malte writes the Ibsen Paper.

diagnosed in Ibsen applies, *mutatis mutandis*, to his own frantically magical attempts to bridge inner and outer. In Malte's textual inscriptions of material from his Parisian *Sehenlernen* and his remembered childhood, the attempt to bring the ends together overstretches the bow and snaps it asunder. Rilke, in his letter to Witold von Hulewicz of November 10th 1925, indicates the element of self-commentary in Malte's treatment of Ibsen:

[...] wie etwa Ibsen (sagen wir Ibsen, denn wer weiß, ob er wirklich so empfand...?),³⁵⁰ wie ein gestriger Dramatiker für das in uns unsichtbar gewordene Ereignis sichtbare Belege aufsucht, so verlangt es auch den jungen M. L. Brigge, das fortwährend ins Unsichtbare sich zurückziehende Leben über Erscheinungen [! D.D.] und Bildern sich faßlich zu machen; er findet diese bald in den eigenen Kindheits-Erinnerungen, bald in seiner Pariser Umgebung, bald in den Reminiszenzen seiner Belesenheit. Und es hat alles das, wo es auch erfahren sein mag, dieselbe Wertigkeit für ihn, dieselbe Dauer und Gegenwart.³⁵¹

Rilke stresses to Hulewicz that the referential accuracy of Malte's treatment of historical or mythical figures is no criterion of their value for him:

[...] es kommt nicht darauf an, daß man mehr von den Beschworenen weiß, als der Scheinwerfer seines Herzens eben erkennen läßt. Sie sind nicht historische Figuren oder Gestalten seiner eigenen Vergangenheit, sondern *Vokabeln seiner Not*: darum lasse man sich auch ab und zu einen Namen gefallen, der nicht weiter erläutert wird, wie eine Vogelstimme in dieser Natur, in der die inneren Windstillen gefährlicher sind als die Stürme. / Darum könnte es nur beirrtlich werden, die nur angedeuteten Figuren namentlicher herauszustellen; belege sie jeder auf seine Art, und wer sie nicht zu belegen vermag, erfährt immer noch genug aus der Spannung dieser Anonymitäten.³⁵²

³⁵⁰ Rilke studiously taking care here not to lapse into the performative contradiction of forgetting the opacity of one subjective interior to another: he admits he can only *posit* such feeling in Ibsen.

³⁵¹ *MLB-Materialien*, p.131.

³⁵² *Ibid.*

In this retrospective note, Rilke scans Malte's triple *sujet* - *Pariser Umgebung*, *Kindheits-Erinnerungen* and *Reminiszenzen seiner Belesenheit*³⁵³ - and releases Malte's topical praxis from referential responsibility. But this must not take the sting, so to speak, out of Malte's definitive veridical difficulties over the course of the *Aufzeichnungen*. For Rilke has left implicit the *Pointe* in the parallel: the fact that Ibsen failed. The parallel places Malte too under the sign of a failure to prosecute an organic correspondence of inner and outer. Both Ibsen *and* Malte have been resorting to forced allegories. Malte's epistemological difficulties in the Paris and childhood episodes have stemmed from the ontological correspondences *he has been positing* between subjective intuition and objective reality. His increasingly manifest attraction in the last third of the book to texts and narratives and mythical figures makes sense only in the light of the earlier discouragements.

Malte's occult phenomenology came up against aporetic limits: what was seen stood in often antagonistic relation to what remained unseen; the rôle of the observer revealed itself to be distortive, leading to a kind of phenomenological >uncertainty principle<;³⁵⁴ selection, sequencing and deductive reasoning (*Nachträglichkeit*) turned out to be more central to the procedures of insight than Malte had initially cared to recognise; time and

³⁵³ Note how Rilke has casually disturbed the chronology in his sequence, placing all three *sujet* sources on the same epistemological level: Paris and Memory, one can infer, are no more tied in to their referentiality than the Myths.

³⁵⁴ As, for instance, in the tactful decision of the angel to keep its distance from the *Vögelfütterer*: »Wenn die Zuschauer nicht wären und man ließe ihn lange genug dastehn, ich bin sicher, daß auf einmal ein Engel käme und überwände sich und äße den alten, süßlichen Bissen aus der verkümmerten Hand« (*MLB*, Paper XXV, p.510, emphasis added).

narrative patterning supervened insistently and necessarily on the act of *Erkenntnis*; the seen habitually required an unseen supplement. In short, epistemological crisis became the dominant feature of the entire enterprise of *Sehenlernen*, an immanent critique of which was offered as Malte's textual testimony related a series of modes of seeing *in absentia*: reading, listening to narrative voice, memorial *Vergegenwärtigung*, the synaesthetic drawing of visual conclusions from auditive stimuli, and so forth. The virtual spatiality opened up by *imag-inatio* (*Einbildung*), by the cultivation of mental pictures, became vulnerable to questions of ontological correspondence with the >original< intentional object. Until, that is, Malte's turn to the *Reminiszenzen seiner Belesenheit* in the final phase of the book. This turn to linguistic (and, in the case of the *Licorne* tapestries, pictorial)³⁵⁵ stimulation of *phantasia* in the mind's eye is motivated by Malte's need for the peculiar power of the virtual *Innenräume* thus generated. Malte, in other words, needs to fathom the mysteries of existence by adopting an imaginative praxis that, unlike the *Pariser Eindrücke* and the *Kindheitserinnerungen*, will not find itself cross-examined in the court of verification, truth-testing, ontological reliability, correspondence, reference. Having presented themselves to Malte in all their open constructedness *qua text, qua artefact*, these texts (and textiles) assist him much in the manner that Gospel pretexts assist Ignatius de Loyola in his spiritual exercises: they allow him to enter the »path of imagining in search of

³⁵⁵ The *Teppiche* of Paper XXXVIII constitute a median point in two senses: textually, they come right in the middle of the book (*MLB*, pp.544ff; cf Klein, "Le carnet 38, ou la Licorne", pp.83f); topographically, their position in the Cluny museum creates a threshold area between Malte *flâneur* (out and about in Paris) and Malte as Knight of Interiority (indoors introspection). In this second aspect they recall the library space of Paper XVI (*MLB*, pp.479ff).

experiential origins«³⁵⁶ to enjoy »the magic of quasi-possession«³⁵⁷ of the object-as-image, to *re-represent* mythopoeically, in the form of new textual constructs or *Aufzeichnungen*, a range of already represented spaces and figures.

To recapitulate. Malte's sense of the inadequacy of mere actuality (or his access to it) as a sponsor of psychic and psychological response worried his Papers. Equally vulnerable to anti-climax, despite all the real-world grotesquerie of the big city, were his attempts to find *commensurate* visible extremity and funereal extravagance in his Paris observations. Not until the turn to imaginative-psychological narrative experiments in the tales of others will Malte finally *find his form*, his fluency,³⁵⁸ his style, a mode of writing no longer harrassed by the anxiety of verification, reality-testing, recourse to the *Instanz* of objective accuracy, the dogma of Truth as Objectivity or

³⁵⁶ Antonio T. de Nicolas, *Powers of Imagining. Ignatius de Loyola. A Philosophical Hermeneutic of Imagining Through the Collected Works of Ignatius de Loyola. With a Translation of these Works* (New York: 1986), p.61. De Nicolas mounts a credible case that Ignatius' spiritual exercises can only be grasped if one brings to them a clear distinction between »the two reading technologies of cognition and imagination« (p.31). One might also follow Wagner-Egelhaaf in drawing a comparison with the hermeneutic originality which Meister Eckhart brings to canonical texts (see *Mystik der Moderne*, pp.105f).

³⁵⁷ Paul Ricoeur, "The Function of Fiction in Shaping Reality", translated by David Pallauer, in: *A Paul Ricoeur Reader. Reflection and Imagination*, edited by Mario J. Valdés (New York & London: 1991), pp.117-136, here: p.122.

³⁵⁸ This fluency is clear apart from anything else on a simple text-quantitative level.

Exteriority.³⁵⁹ The truth of Malte's experimental meditations, the remarkable silhouettes which he creates of far-flung existences, is the truth of his own subjectivity, indeed the truth that Truth *is* Subjectivity.³⁶⁰

Silhouettes, Experiments, Truth as Subjectivity. This is, of course, Kierkegaardian terminology. In the section of *Either/Or I* bearing the unmistakably Lavaterian title "Silhouettes", A follows his reflection upon the aesthetic vicissitudes of depicting interior sorrow with a positive poetological model:

It is this reflective sorrow that I aim to single out and, as far as possible, have emerge in a few pictures. I call them silhouettes,³⁶¹ partly to suggest at once by the name that I draw them from the dark side of life and partly because, like silhouettes, they are not

³⁵⁹ Baßler writes: »Maltes Schreibhand verselbständigt sich gar nicht, das Projekt einer *Écriture automatique* wird - wie gesagt - im Text nicht ausgeführt, sein >Zitieren< *bleibt* bei einer Umschrift überkommener historischer und biblischer Texte stehen« ("Maltes Gespenster", p.245, emphasis added). The word *bleibt* here implies stasis, whereas I am suggesting that Malte's increasing turn to >Umschrift< text-type comes as a damage-limitation response to his increasing sense of failure in the parapsychological sphere. Thus, he does not hope that his exercises in *phantasia* will *solve* his existential problem as such, but that they will *thematise* it while he waits for a breakthrough at the level of existence. And the only breakthrough thinkable would be one that came on God's initiative, not his own. He is thus not trying to >write himself< out of existence, still less to God. Nor does he not finalise the meaning of his existence in the writing of this experimental prose. While he waits, he writes. For Dieter Schiller the turn which takes place in the *Aufzeichnungen* away from exteriority involves a deepening on Rilke's part of the Hanno-complex in *Buddenbrooks*: »Was bei Thomas Mann den Endpunkt einer Entwicklung bezeichnet, ist bei Rilke der Ausgangspunkt. Und darin besteht eine folgenschwere Wendung zur Introversion des gesamten epischen Materials« ("Der Einsame und seine Welt", p.142). Further down, Schiller terms this introversion a »>Lyrisierung< des Romans« (ibid., p.151). From Schiller's Lukácsian perspective, such world-denial leads disastrously »zur Hypertrophie der Entfremdung, zur Unmöglichkeit individueller Existenz und zum Salto mortale in eine (mystisch-religiöse, wenn auch innerweltliche) Subjekt-Objekt-Einheit, die im Kunstwerk manifest werden soll« (ibid., p.174, emphases added to indicate supplementary points of dissent).

³⁶⁰ For Stephens, Malte's turn to such »Darstellungen«, which function »zielbewußt als Analogie zu Maltes gegenwärtiger Lage«, constitutes a major artistic failure - on both his and his creator's part (*Selbstanalyse*, p.140). Stephens sees here only hollowly narcissistic subjectivism, a disappointing falling-short of the Cézanne ideal of >anonymous< art. Whether or not such an ideal is even being put forward in the *Aufzeichnungen* in the first place seems not to preoccupy Stephens. If, as I am arguing, the *Malte* is a classic work of existential fiction, then the aesthetic criteria by which one judges the work ask to be correspondingly recalibrated.

³⁶¹ The Danish *Skyggerids* literally means *shadow outlines*.

immediately visible [...] the picture I want to show here [is] an interior picture that does not become perceptible until I see through the exterior. *Perhaps there is nothing striking about the exterior, but when I look through it, only then do I discover the interior picture, which is what I want to show, an interior picture that is too delicate to be externally perceptible, since it is woven from the faintest moods.*³⁶²

A's evocation here of »the subtle interior picture, too psychological, as it were, to be seen immediately«³⁶³ recalls the reconstitution of microscopic inner action on a more visible scale in Ibsen's aesthetic laboratory.³⁶⁴

Along with the *Silhouette* model in *Either/Or I*, one finds in the subtitle of the later *Repetition* a crucial clue as to that book's genre: *A Venture in Experimenting Psychology*. In their Historical Introduction to the Princeton edition, Howard V. Hong and Enda H. Hong elucidate this singular designation: »In Danish, the word *Experiment* in its various forms is a loan word,«³⁶⁵ incorporating the Latin senses of *experimentum* and *experientia*. The Hong's cite Kierkegaard's pseudonym Frater Taciturnus in "The Activity of a Traveling Esthetician" (*The Corsair Affair*), who says he will »experiment a character [*experimentere en Figur*]«, and explain: »Kierkegaard's uncommon understanding and use of the transitive verb [*experimentere*, D.D.] must be used to define it as >imaginatively constructed< or >imaginatively cast in an

³⁶² *Either / Or I*, pp.172-3. Emphasis added. In his letter to Manon zu Solms-Laubach of April 11th 1910, Rilke writes of the *Malte* as »ein Daseinsentwurf und ein *Schattenzusammenhang* sich rührender Kräfte« (*MLB-Materialien*, p.82, emphasis added). Compare his comment on the letters of Adele Schopenhauer: »Was für ein ernstes heldisches Mädchen darin erscheint wie als *Silhouette*, zur Gestalt kommt es nicht« (letter to Anton Kippenberg, March 25th 1910, *MLB-Materialien*, p.81). The *silhouette*, as an elliptical mode of representation, might be related to *Malte's* tendency towards an aesthetic based on the strategy *Auslassung*.

³⁶³ Kierkegaard, *Either / Or I*, p.173.

³⁶⁴ Ironically, given his detraction of *Malte's* later efforts, Stephens' insistence on the relevance of a *Vorwandsästhetik* in the *Malte* is confirmed here - as, a little less directly, is Lorenz' espousal of the >indirect communication< model.

³⁶⁵ Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling / Repetition*, editors' Historical Introduction, p.xxi.

experiential mode³⁶⁶. Suggesting as an inspiration for Kierkegaard Socrates' anti-mimetic declaration in Plato's *Phaedo* that: »a poet, if he is to be worthy of the name, ought to work on imaginative themes, not on descriptive ones [...]«,³⁶⁷ the Hongs go on to offer a meticulous genealogy and anatomy of the concept of Experiment in Kierkegaard.

Given the central place I wish to accord to *Experiment* as a generic and/or explanatory model for Malte's later *Aufzeichnungen* (as well indeed as for Rilke's *Aufzeichnungen* book itself), and given the massive and often disparaging critical attention which this strange turn in the book has attracted in *Malte-Forschung*, I propose to quote in full the Hongs' invaluable programmatic *Orientierung*:

Numerous entries in the journals and papers may be summarized to indicate what Kierkegaard and the pseudonymous writers meant by >imaginary construction< [*Experiment*] and >imaginatively constructing< [*experimentierende*] and how these terms crystallize an epistemology and a philosophy of art involving Aristotle, Plato, and Lessing - and Kierkegaard, who at the last minute added the word to the subtitle of *Repetition*. The task of the poet includes the philosophic task of casting private and shared experience into reflection, of penetrating it and grasping its internal coherence and meaning, the universally human. History and actuality are thereby transcended, and thus poetry, as well as all art, science, and philosophy, deals only with possibility, >not in the sense of an idle hypothesis but possibility in the sense of ideal actuality<. Therefore the poet is >one who makes<, who construes, constructs, and composes hypotheses as do philosophers and scientists. What distinguishes the poet is a kind of imagination that shapes the possibles in palpable form, in the form of >ideal actuality<. The poet's mode is not the discursive, demonstrative, didactic [*docerende*] mode of the scientist and philosopher or the strict narrative mode of the historian. His mode is that of imaginative construction in the artistic illusion of actuality, or, to borrow a phrase from Climacus in [*Philosophical*] *Fragments*, it is to

³⁶⁶ Ibid., p.xxii.

³⁶⁷ Quoted ibid., p.xxiii.

construct imaginatively or to hypothesize *in concreto* rather than to use the scientific and philosophic mode of abstraction in his presentation.

The poet in this view is an imaginative constructor [*Experimentator*] who presents the possible in experiential (the two words have a common root) verisimilitude. For the existential philosopher, >the portrayal of the existential is chiefly either realization in life or poetic presentation, *loquere ut videam* [speak that I may see]<. Kierkegaard is therefore the poetic *Experimentator* who makes or fashions the various pseudonymous, poetic, imaginative constructors, *who in turn imaginatively shape characters, scenes, situations, and relations expressive in various ways of the hypothesis(es)* [sic, D.D.] *informing the work. Experimentere is therefore a transitive verb: imaginatively and reflectively to construct a hypothesis and imaginatively to cast it and its implications in the constructed poetic illusion of experiential actuality. Therefore, the task of Frater Taciturnus is to >experiment a character<, not to experiment with or on a character. Likewise, Johannes de Silentio is >a poetic [experimented, imaginatively 'made'] person who exists only among poets< and who in turn is the dialectical poet who poeticizes or >experiments< ethical-religious issues in the form of ideal actuality in the imaginatively constructed work titled *Fear and Trembling*. Accordingly, Aage Henrikson quite justifiably calls that work a novel,³⁶⁸ a category in which he includes "The Seducer's Diary" in *Either/Or*, *Repetition*, and ">Guilty?</>Not Guilty?<" in *Stages [on Life's Way]*.³⁶⁹*

It is crucial to clarify that Kierkegaard's *Experimenter* refer both to the creation of his imaginary pseudonyms and to their imaginary constructions of other figures *within the pseudonymic text itself*. In terms of the first qualification, although *Die Aufzeichnungen des Malte Laurids Brigge* does bear Rilke's own name, his relationship to the text bears the other structural and qualitative hallmarks of the pseudonymous production. Indeed, as far as the question of authorial signature in the case of Kierkegaard goes, Louis Mackey wisely warns against our placing too much emphasis on Kierkegaard's own hiddenness behind his texts:

³⁶⁸ Cf the discussion in Chapter One on the question of genre.

³⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, pp.xxv-xxvi, emphases added.

A Kierkegaardian pseudonym is a *persona*, an imaginary person created by the author for artistic purposes, not a *nom de plume*, a fictitious name used to protect his personal identity from the threats and embarrassments of publicity. When Kierkegaard signed his books with impossible names like Johannes de Silentio (John of Silence) and Vigilius Haufniensis (Watchman of Copenhagen), no one in the gossipy little world of Danish letters had any doubt about their origin. Nor did he mean they should; his purpose was not mystification but distance. By refusing to answer for his writings he detached them from his personality so as to let their form protect the freedom that was their theme.³⁷⁰

It might be remarked that Rilke, for his part, will often talk of Malte as though he were an existing person, as if the passionate subjectivity with which he inhabits his creator had earned him the right to an *als ob* existence.³⁷¹

Thus, I am proposing that we see in the *Aufzeichnungen* the *Experimentator* at work on two related but discreet levels: a) Rilke as the creator of Brigge, who »n'existe que comme délégué par le premier dans un monde possible« (Vanoosthuysse),³⁷² and b) Brigge as the creator in his own right of silhouettes and experimental profiles. Rilke experiments a character, Malte, who in turn hypothesises *in concreto*, imaginatively (re)constructing the psychological-existential truths in the stories of individuals who, like himself, appear as outsiders, exceptions, figures outside the universal. By imaginatively casting their stories in an experiential mode, he experiments character after character, offering readings which are insomniacally, restlessly

³⁷⁰ Louis Mackey, *Kierkegaard. A Kind of Poet* (Philadelphia: 1971), p.247.

³⁷¹ To take just one example of this tendency towards prosopopoeia, Rilke's reference to Malte as »Malte (mon seul ami pendant tant d'années de douleurs et de tentations) [...]« (to Merline, December 16th 1920, *MLB-Materialien*, p.120).

³⁷² Vanoosthuysse, "L'abject et le sublime", p.129.

in the service of interiority,³⁷³ not of observable, consensually verifiable history.³⁷⁴ Readings, that is, that are in the service of the paradox that subjective inwardness is higher than objective outwardness.³⁷⁵

I wish to stress two points in particular here.

One. Malte does not simply tell stories, in the sense of imaginative constructions *de novo*. Only his own autobiographical story is newly >invented<, but not by him: for he is a wholly original character, »ganz erfunden«,³⁷⁶ »(eine[] durchaus erfundene[] Gestalt)«,³⁷⁷ just like A, Wilhelm, de Silentio, Constantius and The Young Man. Rather, like Kierkegaard's pseudonyms, *he subjectively appropriates narratives that have already come his way in one form or another.*³⁷⁸ He is not a fiction-writer in the normative sense: in line with Kierkegaard's innovation, he is himself a fiction who sets about semi-fictionalising historical, mythical, artistic and literary figures. Thus, for example, the imaginative reconstruction of the death of Kammerherr Brigge

³⁷³ In Paper LVI, Malte writes of his earliest experiences of reading: »Daß sich einem [...] das Haar verbog und verwirrte, als ob man darauf gelegen hätte, daß man glühende Ohren bekam und Hände kalt wie Metall, daß eine lange Kerze neben einem herunterbrannte und in den Leuchter hinein [...]« (MLB, p.594). Cf Kierkegaard on the intensity of subjective appropriation with which a genius reads: »A thesis: great geniuses are essentially unable to read a book. [/] While they are reading, their own development will always be greater than their understanding of the author« (undated journal entry 1837, *Journals & Papers Vol.2*, p.81).

³⁷⁴ Cf Steven Shakespeare on the rationale behind Kierkegaard's indirect, narrative-based communication strategy: »The stories we tell of people and of God do not rely on factual truth for their power to change lives, awaken people to possibilities, encourage their self-activity« (Kierkegaard, *Language and the Reality of God*, p.239).

³⁷⁵ On the subjunctive as the point of departure for Kierkegaard's pseudonymous authorship, cf Anton Hügli's article, "The Subjunctive", in: *Concepts and Alternatives in Kierkegaard*, pp.239-244.

³⁷⁶ Letter to Manon zu Solms-Laubach, April 11th 1910 (MLB-Materialien, p.82).

³⁷⁷ Letter to Rudolf Zimmermann, February 3rd 1921 (ibid., p.125).

³⁷⁸ Issues of narrative dissemination and reception come to the fore in the frame narratives of Rilke's *Geschichten vom lieben Gott*. The germs of an experimental prose (in the Kierkegaardian sense) based on an *historical* figure can also be found in this volume, in the Michelangelo story *Von Einem, der die Steine belauscht* (KA III, pp.390ff).

in Paper VIII reveals itself as an early experiment in experiment. The narrative fluency of that episode over the constriction of the related couple preceding it gave us a first clue as to the limiting factor in Malte's imaginative response to world: *the witness of his eye*. This negative proportionality of first-hand experience and fluency of poetic response can now be understood as anything but accidental. For Malte's *Sehenlernen* will, ironically, come to mean: *knowing how to close one's eyes*. Second sight will come to mean not so much parapsychological vision as the faculty of heightened *phantasia*. Here once again the Ignatian spiritual exercise offers a rich point of comparison: the scenic imagination is stimulated by the text, which becomes the pretext for an intense exercise of the inner, spiritual eye.³⁷⁹

Two. Malte's experimental praxis must be understood under the banner of Truth as Subjectivity, for it grows out of his epistemological crisis with Objectivity. The motivation behind Kierkegaard's turn to silhouette and experiment is his need (again not unlike that of Ignatius) for an existentialist Gospel hermeneutics. Kierkegaard refuses to allow the issue of Jesus' historicity to place him on the defensive as an advocate of the Christian faith. The appropriate response, as he argues in the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, is not to turn positivist and trouble oneself with Straussian queries as to historical veracity, but to make the Christ-phenomenon subjectively contemporary. For Truth as Subjectivity is defined by Kierkegaard thus: »*An objective uncertainty held fast in an appropriation-process of the most passionate*

³⁷⁹ Which is not to say that a Jesuit would be likely to meditate on Christ's parable of the Prodigal Son in quite the same way as Malte...

inwardness is the truth, the highest truth attainable for an *existing individual*.³⁸⁰ »The truth,« writes Kierkegaard, »is precisely the venture which chooses an objective uncertainty with the passion of the infinite [...] the inwardness becomes as intense as it is, for it embraces this objective uncertainty with the entire passion of the infinite.«³⁸¹ Even if Jesus had elected to (re-)incarnate in nineteenth-century Copenhagen (or, in Dostoevsky's great scenario,³⁸² Seville at the height of the Inquisition), the infinite subjective response to Him would have been no less of a challenge even given His incarnate Presence.³⁸³ Through this insight into the the >issue of contemporaneity< and the nature of Truth as Subjectivity, Kierkegaard develops his pseudonymous aesthetic, whereby he empowers a fictive *I*-character to experiment mythical, literary and historical figures.³⁸⁴

Malte's subjectivism no longer compromises him as soon as he channels it into mythopoeisis.³⁸⁵ In the Paris and childhood episodes, Malte responded with passion to events and situations that remained *objectively uncertain* in terms of his interpretation. The later Papers relinquish referential conscientiousness altogether: by reconstituting figures like Grischa Otrepjow,

³⁸⁰ Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, p.182.

³⁸¹ *Ibid.*

³⁸² Cf Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, translated from the Russian with an introduction by David Magarshack (London: 1982), pp.290ff.

³⁸³ As Kierkegaard writes in his journal, what the world »cannot tolerate is contemporaneity with greatness« (undated entry 1845, *Journals & Papers Vol.2*, p.81).

³⁸⁴ This enlistment of the aesthetic by a religiousness that cannot show itself directly is what engines Kierkegaard's >indirect communication< strategy. Cf an undated journal entry from 1854: »Imagination is what providence uses to take men captive in actuality, in existence, in order to get them far enough out, or within, or down into actuality. And when imagination has helped them get as far out as they should be - then actuality genuinely begins« (*Journals & Papers Vol.2*, pp.313f). For Kierkegaard, aestheticist claims to have grasped, let alone created, actuality betray a demonic presumptuousness.

³⁸⁵ It should be noted that all of the major experimental narratives are situated subsequent to the *Medizinstudent* episode (Paper L).

Charles le Fou, Sappho and The Prodigal Son in the same intensely imaginative experimentalism that A applies to Faust (*Either/Or I*), Johannes de Silentio to Abraham (*Fear and Trembling*) or the Young Man to Job (*Repetition*),³⁸⁶ he cultivates inwardness without lapsing into existentially abstract navel-gazing.

³⁸⁶ A generous quotation from the Book of Job is also to be found in Obstfelder (*A Priest's Diary*, pp.18f) - with the difference that the words quoted are spoken not by Job himself but by God (a point stressed by Fick, *Sinnenwelt und Weltseele*, p.311). Given the lack of explicit existential identification with Job himself here, it can be argued that the thematic and structural affinities of the respective Job-citations in Rilke and Kierkegaard are a good deal more striking. Tangentially one might mention that Malte's Job-citation may resonate also with contemporary monistic and occult readings. Thus for example Madame Blavatsky's esoteric interpretation: »The *Book of Job* is a complete representation of ancient initiation, and the trials which generally precede the grandest of all ceremonies. The neophyte perceives himself deprived of everything he valued, and afflicted with foul diseases« (*Isis Unveiled*. Vol.2 - *Theology*, pp.494f).

V.iv.

The Experiments

To give a taste of the common narratology of Malte Laurids Brigge and the Kierkegaardian pseudonyms, one might usefully start with the fact that an anxiety to lend subjective and existential immediacy to a twice-told tale forms the matrix of the experimental narrative. Johannes de Silentio sums up the mood when he says of Abraham's preparations for the sacrifice of Isaac: »Anyone who looks upon this scene is blinded. And yet it perhaps rarely happens that anyone is paralyzed or blinded, and still more rarely does anyone tell what happened as it deserves to be told.«³⁸⁷ The experiment involves a distillation of the individual's story down to what might be called its nuclear point - typically, although not always, »the frightfulness of the struggle« being »concentrated in one moment«.³⁸⁸ In Paper XLVIII Malte emulates his father in studying the behaviour of those at the prime existential nuclear point of death.³⁸⁹ He marvels at the vocational integrity maintained by Felix Arvers and Jean de Dieu even *in extremis*.³⁹⁰ We find in *Fear and Trembling* this same imaginative attention to death as »the decisive moment«

³⁸⁷ Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, p.22.

³⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p.19.

³⁸⁹ *MLB*, Paper XLVI, pp.568f.

³⁹⁰ *MLB*, Paper XLVIII, p.572.

in which the eminent individual »consummates himself«.³⁹¹ Elsewhere, too, narrative nuclear points are amplified masterfully: the *horror religiosus* inspired by Abraham poised with the knife above Isaac on Mount Moriah;³⁹² the »suprahuman self-possession« of Job sitting steadfastly by the fire;³⁹³ Grischa Otrepjaw standing between Marina Mniczek's denial of him and his death;³⁹⁴ Johannes XXII preaching his heretical sermon;³⁹⁵ Charles le Fou confusing life and art at the *Passionsspiel* performance;³⁹⁶ the Prodigal Son returning home only to find himself faced with recognitive love (»Die Liebe. Mein Gott: die Liebe«).³⁹⁷

As mentioned, a strong topos of narratorial self-doubt will typically grow around these moments. Silentio says of Abraham's struggle: »If it fell to my lot to speak about him, I would begin by showing [...] Next I would describe how [...] I hope to describe it in such a way that [...]«.³⁹⁸ At the heart of his narrative is an admission that the paradox of Abraham's story is quite beyond his powers of understanding and narration: »I cannot think myself into Abraham; when I reach that eminence, I sink down, for what is offered me is a *paradox*«.³⁹⁹ The beggaring of belief informs Malte's account of Grischa

³⁹¹ *Fear and Trembling*, p.116ff. Malte's *eigener Tod* topos is also adumbrated here. In the letter to Lotte Hepner of November 8th 1915 (discussed in Chapter One), Rilke associates his literarisation of death with Tolstoy's *The Death of Ivan Ilyich* (MLB-Materialien, pp.113f). The climax of the story, Ilyich's painful overcoming in his last moments of »his former habitual fear of death« to realise that »Death is over« (Leo Tolstoy, *The Death of Ivan Ilyich*, translated from the Russian by Rosemary Edmonds, London: 1960, pp.88-9), did not move Rilke alone. It had a demonstrable influence on Heidegger's notion of *Sein zum Tode*.

³⁹² Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, p.61.

³⁹³ Kierkegaard, *Repetition*, p.197.

³⁹⁴ MLB, Paper LIV, p.588.

³⁹⁵ MLB, Paper LXI, pp.610f.

³⁹⁶ MLB, Paper LXII, p.615.

³⁹⁷ MLB, Paper LXXI, p.634.

³⁹⁸ Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, p.31.

³⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.33, emphasis added.

Otrepjow's death scene: »Dies, scheint mir, wäre zu erzählen gewesen [...] Es wäre jetzt ein Erzähler denkbar, der viel Sorgfalt an die letzten Augenblicke wendete [...] Bis hierher geht die Sache von selbst, aber nun, bitte, einen Erzähler, einen Erzähler: denn von den paar Zeilen, die noch bleiben, *muß Gewalt ausgehen über jeden Widerspruch hinaus*«. ⁴⁰⁰ The narrative, at the heart of which lies a shocking imponderable of characterological motivation, constitutes an offence to logic and a crucifixion (or >crucifiction<) of reason. Faced with Grischa's absurd (im)posture, Malte tries to press on into the territory of the unthinkable. Behaviour which cannot be accounted for rationally holds the rare pulse of »heterogenous optical telegraphy from the infinite«. ⁴⁰¹ Through each act shines a beacon of transcendent absurdity, an almost divine foolishness.

It might be remarked here that the *Experimentator's Ich*, both in Kierkegaard as a rule ⁴⁰² and throughout the *Aufzeichnungen*, remains quite securely in place as the governing subject position at the scene of writing - and this amidst all the poetic involvement in the stories of others. At a purely grammatical level his subject position remains inviolate: he never slips into a >foreign< *Ich* without clearly signifying the slippage; still less does he disappear entirely into his characters. ⁴⁰³ Hence - and this point was addressed in passing in Chapter One - talk of Malte's later narratives as evincing a quasi-

⁴⁰⁰ *MLB*, Paper LIV, pp.587f, emphasis added.

⁴⁰¹ Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, p.39.

⁴⁰² One must however acknowledge the narratological earthquake which Constantin Constantius' "Concluding Letter" detonates within *Repetition* (see pp.223ff). Again I make the point that Rilke's prose fiction is, in this respect, less radical than that of Kierkegaard, Hoffmann, Jean Paul or Sterne.

⁴⁰³ As claimed by Uwe Steiner, *Zeit der Schrift*, p.401.

schizoid identity crisis seems exaggerated.⁴⁰⁴ The coherence of the character is far more in evidence than any psychic breakdown into a society of selves. The strange wilfulness of Malte's experiments is not the result of utter loss of ego-boundaries: he does not somehow delude himself that he *is* the character he is writing about, he does not as it were go the full Pessoa distance.⁴⁰⁵ Indeed, it could be argued that Malte is dispirited *precisely because he is still so egoically intact*. For all that the neophyte mystic dreads *The Change*, the continuing dominance of ego-consciousness will be experienced as a mark of Cain.

⁴⁰⁴ Vanoosthuysse, for example, is underestimating Malte's Silentio-like narratorial (self-) control when he sees a fusion of subject positions in the Prodigal Son *Aufzeichnung*: »[...] l'instance narrative jusque là stable tend à s'effacer et [...] s'accomplit à peu près la métamorphose du sujet de l'énonciation en sujet de l'énoncé, autrement dit la transfiguration de Malte en fils prodigue [...]« ("L'abject et le sublime", p.145). Whatever the destabilisations of Malte's *Ich* in, for example, the Sophie recollection (Paper XXXI), the fever episodes (Paper XX) or the mirror game (Paper XXXII), none of these relate to the scene of writing, and none are the result of writing as such. If anything, the act of writing helps Malte to centre himself.

⁴⁰⁵ Pessoa's >heteronyms< do however come strongly to mind in the figure of >Graf C. W.<, who, Rilke claims, >dictated< to him between the November 27th and 30th 1920 some »[k]uriose Sachen, für die ich, angenehmster Weise, gar keine Verantwortung habe« (letter to Nanny Wunderly-Volkart, November 30th 1920, quoted KA II, p.564). This *écriture automatique* - which the editors of the *Kommentierte Ausgabe* are quick to casually sprinkle with rationalist disinfectant (»[...] die spielerischen Mystikfikationen [...] Rollenfiktion [...]«, *ibid.*, pp.567f) - Rilke describes with happy perplexity in letters to Marie von Thurn und Taxis-Hohenlohe: »Es war sehr merkwürdig -, die Feder wurde mir buchstäblich >geführt< Gedicht für Gedicht, bis auf ein paar Stellen, wo man *mich* erkennen würde [...]« (December 15th 1920, quoted *ibid.*, p.564); »[...] *ich bin's nicht*, es war so völlig >Auftrag<, einschließlich der Initialen C. W., die ich nicht auszuschreiben wüßte, und jener Anmerkung >Palermo 1862< -, das diktierte sich so *malgré moi*, wie die Gedichte selbst, fliegend [...]« (March 6th 1921, quoted *ibid.*, p.565).

Malte's subjunctive⁴⁰⁶-subjective projections into *Vokabeln seiner Not* stem from the conscious insight that his task is not to establish objectively certain facts in the world or in historical documents, rather to mine for subjective truths. This is, as Engelhardt phrases it, »Geschichte« - and mythos -, »existentiell aktualisiert«.⁴⁰⁷ In >experimental< prose, what preoccupies the narrator is »not the beautiful tapestry of imagination but the shudder of the idea«.⁴⁰⁸ Existential appropriation is the sole reason for retelling these tales, which are *Vokabeln der Not* rather than mere instances of the >interesting<.

⁴⁰⁶ Malte's turn to experiment signals a *conscious* manipulation of an already active subjunctive mood, only one which has hitherto held him in *its* thrall. In Paper XX, recall, Malte includes in his list of hysterical symptoms the production of virtual, subjunctive >memories<: »Und mit dem, was kommt, hebt sich ein ganzes Gewirr irrer Erinnerungen [...] Leben, von denen man nie erfahren hätte, tauchen empor und mischen sich unter das, was wirklich gewesen ist, und verdrängen Vergangenes, das man zu kennen glaubte [...]« (MLB, p.498). Such a tendency toward the subjunctive was termed the >mythopoeic< function by Frederic Myers, being (in Ellenberger's words) »a >middle region< of the subliminal self where a strange fabrication of inner romances perpetually goes on« (Ellenberger, *Discovery of the Unconscious*, p.318). In the hysterical (or somnambulistic) state, the subject is seen to be accessing a process that is usually occult to the conscious self: »In this conception the unconscious seems to be continually concerned with creating fictions and myths, which sometimes take the form of daydreams that evolve spontaneously in the background of the subject's mind (a fact hinted at by Charcot)« (ibid.). In actively writing experimental prose in a subjunctive key, Malte's ego seeks to wrest the mythopoeic initiative from his unbridled subliminal self.

⁴⁰⁷ Engelhardt, "Der Versuch, wirklich zu werden", p.116. Confining his remarks to the historical figures, whose experiments he does not see as being of a piece with those involving mythical figures, Engelhardt elaborates: »Die kalendarische Chronologie fällt aus, und im Expressionsfragment verschmelzen historisches Datum und es selber als Intention Maltes untrennbar miteinander. Das Ende Grischa Otrepjows und Karl des Kühnen, die Beschwörung Karl VI. und Johann des XXII. drücken den verschwiegenen Malte aus und sind [...] Epiphanien seines Bedürfnisses [...] und doch historisch verbürgt« (ibid.). (Are Malte's figures *historisch verbürgt*? Not as he reads them, surely.) What might seem a narcissistic arbitrariness on Malte's part becomes, if read as a Kierkegaardian existentialism, an authentically subjective appropriation of historical and mythic material. The >contemporaneity< of Malte and his experimented figures is grammatically reflected, as in Kierkegaard, in the »häufige Verbindung von Präsens und Präteritum« which Goheen has carefully itemised ("Tempusform und Zeitbegriff", p.261). See also Goheen's note on Malte's existential mode of writing, in which »Elemente des menschlichen Lebens«, exemplified in historical figures, are brought together »in der Vertikalen« - that is, off the horizontal axis of traditional historicist chronology (ibid., p.266, footnote 52). This imaginative freedom from linear time is the closest Malte seems to get to a transcendental perspective. It certainly cannot, however, be confused with the latter, at least as conceived in strongly supernatural terms.

⁴⁰⁸ Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, p.9.

Malte recalls his first exposure to Bettine's letters to Goethe, and describes in quasi-initiatory terms their delayed reaction with his soul: »Ich weiß nicht, was ich davon verstand, aber es war, als würde mir feierlich versprochen, dieses alles einmal einzusehen«. ⁴⁰⁹ The Young Man says of his reading of Job: »And yet anxiety comes over me, as if I still did not understand what someday I would come to understand, as if the horror I was reading about was waiting for me, as if by reading about it I brought it upon myself, just as one becomes ill with the sickness one reads about«. ⁴¹⁰ Here, as elsewhere in the experiments, a true reception of an existential narrative involves its visceral appropriation by the reader or auditor, such that the crisis facing the individual within the narrative becomes psychologically and existentially >contemporary< for the narrative's recipient-turned-experimenter. ⁴¹¹ The

⁴⁰⁹ *MLB*, Paper LVII, p.597.

⁴¹⁰ Kierkegaard, *Repetition*, p.206.

⁴¹¹ Cf Poole's Eliotic formulation of the importance of Job for the Young Man: »Job has become some sort of objective correlative« (*The Indirect Communication*, p.76).

experiment is a sort of echo chamber in which the experimenter finds *amplified self-vocalisation* in the tale of another.⁴¹²

⁴¹² In his *Schlussbetrachtung (Strukturanalyse, pp.263ff)*, Stephens delivers an excoriating verdict on the book's closing phase: »[...] die letzten Aufzeichnungen - etwa nach der Darstellung Karls VI. [Paper LXI] - [nehmen] auf ästhetischer Ebene etwas von der Negativität von Maltes eigenem existentiellen Zustand an« (ibid., p.264). Seeing this phase as »die eigentliche Schwäche des Werkes«, Stephens voices his regret »daß kein Ende möglich war, das dem künstlerischen Range anderer Romanteile angemessen wäre« (ibid.). Stephens believes the ultimate reason for the narcissistic stasis of »Abstraktheit, Wirklichkeitsferne und Schematisierung« in which Malte remains enmeshed at the end to lie in Malte's *erroneous ambition*: »[...] Maltes Entschlossenheit zum >neuen Leben voll neuer Bedeutungen< [mußte] wegen der Unzulänglichkeit und Widersprüchlichkeit ihrer Voraussetzungen ziemlich weit hinter dem Ziele zurückbleiben [...]« (ibid.). Yet the *neues Leben voll neuer Bedeutungen* citation indicates the very mystical-monistic discourse which Malte is towards the end of the Papers learning to modify into a more Kierkegaardian patience. By failing to embed Malte's yearnings firmly within a thoughtfully mystical-monistic existential project, Stephens, like so many other readers, can proceed to accuse Rilke's character of a vague and unaware neo-Romanticism. By failing to note the renunciatory, Kierkegaardian turn in the book's latter stages, Stephens can find Malte guilty of an adolescent, Novalis-like (!) *failure to be modern*: »[...] die Kategorien, die Rilke bei der Aufstellung seines Persönlichkeitsmodells verwendet, [sind...] im Grunde romantischer Art und Herkunft. So >modern< gewisse Aspekte von Maltes Wirklichkeitserfahrung immer noch anmuten mögen, die Bausteine von Rilkes werkimmanenter Psychologie weisen den gleichen Grad *spekulativer Ungenauigkeit und gefühlsbestimmter Eigenwilligkeit* auf, wie etwa Novalis' Vorstellung vom >Weg nach innen« (ibid., p.264, emphasis added). Stephens closes his study with the words: »Wenn sich auch ohne Zweifel ein neues Wirklichkeitsgefühl im *Malte-Roman* durchgesetzt hat, so dürfen wir doch nicht aus der Sicht verlieren, daß das gedankliche Gerüst des Werkes *im Romantischen verankert bleibt*. So wie man Rilkes ganzes Werk als Übergangsphänomen zwischen Romantik und Moderne bezeichnen darf, so liegt die Größe dieses Werkes darin, die Krise *einer nicht ganz gelungenen Emanzipation vom 19. Jahrhundert* mit einmaliger Genauigkeit festgehalten zu haben« (ibid., p.265, emphasis added, except on [Gefühl]). Malte, it would seem, has not *gone beyond* the agony of his Unhappy Consciousness. Nor has he *gone beyond* faith. Nor has he *gone beyond* the transcendentalism of the Romantics. To excavate the (to put it mildly) under-reflected progressivist ideology buried in Stephens' critique would scarcely be an unthinkable demanding task. I am reminded of Seifert's now notorious assertion - cited with bemusement by Stephens himself, ironically enough (in *Strukturanalyse, p.19*) - that Malte »[seine] geschichtsphilosophische Legitimation überschritten [habe]«! Huysen is even more casual in his neutralisation of religious themes in the closing phase of the *Malte*: »It is *easy enough*,« he avers, »to interpret Malte's reflections on the divine, on transcendent love, on the necessity of loving rather than being loved, on the prodigal son's relation to God as Malte's way of overcoming fragmentation and working toward fusion, symbiosis, reconciliation of everything that is split or shattered« (*"Paris / Childhood"*, p.136, emphasis added). As Huysen's line of argument will make clear, it is *easy enough* to see that Religiousness = Flight From Reality. Because Malte's religiousness is a cry of pain, *it must be delusory*. We can thus comfortably take it as read, à la (Yale-) Derrida and de Man, that »the desire to get out of the structures of desire and temporality and to enter into a realm of purity of language and vision is a dead end, both theoretically and aesthetically«, and see that the *Malte*-text itself demonstrates this inevitable cul de sac (ibid., p.131). In Chapter One, I suggested that Malte at no point sees >purity of language< as a goal in the first place. Instead, Lorenz's discussion of a realm of mystical *experience* - or >vision<, to use a word in Huysen - more primordial than and irreducible to linguistic expression were cited as a more useful model for approaching Malte's spiritual >dream<. Malte is after purity of *source*, which would perhaps employ language (with Malte as channel) to convey an eternal state, a state that would remain

Each of Malte's experiments elegantly expresses a Kierkegaardian constellation of paradoxes, each treats of figures suffering from the related despair of having a self and not having a self.

So intensely must Grischa Otrepjow (Paper LIV) imagine himself into the rôle of the true Demetrius that the elaboration of this inner identity requires that the outer world be set at naught. Objectively this man is the false tsar; subjectively he is exactly who he says he is. Malte throws out of court the received cynicism that Otrepjow is simply staging an elaborate hoax in order to win power. Such manipulative behaviour would entail an implicit acknowledgement of the all-embracing truth of objectivity. Malte instead recasts his experimental figure as a Knight of Absurdity, whose larger-than-life self-belief sovereignly refuses the limits of the given world. Hence the stunning paradox of the mother's false recognition. When Marie Nagoi comes to Moscow and recognises this Pseudo-Demetrius as her son, the external legitimation serves only to disrupt the identity that has flowered in inwardness:

Ob aber seine Unsicherheit nicht gerade damit begann, daß sie ihn anerkannte? Ich bin nicht abgeneigt zu glauben, die Kraft seiner Verwandlung hätte darin beruht,

ultimately *hors de texte*. Huyssen, dismissing the *Malte's* ending as »the end of a dead end« (ibid., p.137), writes: »The best thing that can be said about the end of *Malte* is that reconciliation is only anticipated, not realized. *But reconciliation is nevertheless false [...]*« (ibid, emphasis added). This last pronouncement is issued with the apodictic, transcendental certainty of *one who knows*. To the maturely demystifying eye of the immanentist cognoscente, it would seem, a Kierkegaardian struggle to become subjective can only ever amount to a shabbily evasive exercise in »dematerialization«, »flight from the reality of [...] experiences and [...] subjectivity« (ibid.). If only Rilke had not been so pre-modern as to send his character spinning on such a ludicrous ghost-dance...

niemandes Sohn zu sein. / (*Das ist schließlich die Kraft aller jungen Leute, die fortgegangen sind.).⁴¹³

When the »Zarin-Mutter« later retracts her recognition, the inwardly fashioned identity becomes more passionately true than ever:

Bis hierher geht die Sache von selbst, aber nun, bitte, einen Erzähler, einen Erzähler: denn von den paar Zeilen, die noch bleiben, muß Gewalt ausgehen über jeden Widerspruch hinaus. Ob es gesagt wird oder nicht, man muß darauf schwören, daß zwischen Stimme und Pistolenschuß, unendlich zusammengedrängt, noch einmal Wille und Macht in ihm war, alles zu sein. Sonst versteht man nicht, wie glänzend konsequent es ist, daß sie sein Nachtkleid durchbohrten und in ihm herumstachen, ob sie auf das Harte einer Person stoßen würden. Und daß er im Tode noch die Maske trug, drei Tage lang, auf die er fast schon verzichtet hatte.⁴¹⁴

At this nuclear point between denial and death, Grischa Otrepjow becomes - *by virtue of the absurd, the paradox, the offence,*⁴¹⁵ *the incommensurability of worldly logic and subjectively held faith* - the true Demetrius. As with Silentio's mesmerised response to Abraham's faithful preparedness to plunge the knife into Isaac, so here the reader is invited to ponder an action of awesome, world-transcending grandeur. The men who desecrate Grischa Otrepjow's corpse do so not out of fury at having been treasonably deceived but because they are perplexed and unnerved by the subjective alchemy that has taken place before their eyes. The remarkable fact *daß sie sein Nachtkleid durchbohrten und in ihm herumstachen*, a testimony to the dead man's almost superhuman

⁴¹³ MLB, Paper LIV, p.587. The asterisk directs the reader to an editorial footnote: »*Im Manuskript an den Rand geschrieben.«

⁴¹⁴ MLB, Paper LIV, p.588.

⁴¹⁵ Cf the dismissal in Baudelaire's "Les Dons des fées" of »ces raisonneurs si communs, incapable de s'élever jusqu'à la logique de l'Absurde« (*Oeuvres complètes I*, p.307).

wilfulness, recalls perhaps nothing so much as Thomas' haptic verification of Christ's resurrection body.⁴¹⁶

But Grischa is not a wholly positive exemplar. In *The Sickness unto Death*, Anti-Climacus anatomises Caesar Borgia as the archetypal »power-crazed person« who, by placing the motto *Aut Caesar aut nihil!* at the heart of his existence, only displays his latent despair at not having a self. This need for a substitute identity to compensate for the hollowness of one's given identity is shown by Anti-Climacus to be a subjective despair of the highest intensity: to desire a grandiose substitute-self is (in Hannay's words) merely to »indicate[] that the room is empty« in the first place.⁴¹⁷ Malte's Grischa does not simply take Borgia's flight into a compensatory will-to-power: Grischa's assumption of the tsar's very identity is a *literalisation* of Borgia's drive to be »rid of himself« by »becoming Caesar«. For Borgia, >Caesar< is the political title he needs to fill in order to have a substitute self; for Grischa, even more radically, >Demetrius< is the substitute self itself.⁴¹⁸

As Huiru Liu points out, the Karl der Kühne experiment (Paper LV) reverses the Grischa Otrepjow binary: the Duke of Burgundy's crisis is not

⁴¹⁶ Compare also a claim made in support of the *Armenier's* mystique in Schiller's *Der Geisterseher* (p.74): »Keines Degens Spitze kann ihn durchbohren [...]«.

⁴¹⁷ Hannay, *Kierkegaard*, p.195.

⁴¹⁸ Kierkegaard, *Sickness unto Death*, p.49. Cf Stephens on the negativity of the Grischa-figure: »er soll keineswegs als nachzuahmendes Beispiel verstanden werden« (*Strukturanalyse*, p.185). Even more emphatic is Liu, who reads Grischa as a negative exemplar of »die tragische Konstellation von Verwandlungsfähigkeit und Konkretisierung der Persönlichkeit« (*Suche nach Zusammenhang*, p.160). For Liu, Otrepjow's death scene is designed to show how his »Pseudoidentität letzten Endes als ein gänzlicher Ich-Verlust aufgedeckt wird [...]« (ibid., p.163). Yet does this wholly negative view do justice to Malte's *ambivalence* of horror and awe at the imposter's heroically absurd self-fashioning?

that he is subjectively who he objectively is not but that he cannot muster up an inner greatness commensurate to his grandiose factual outer rôle.⁴¹⁹ At the outset of this meditation on the freezing of identity, Karl is described as »Einer [...], der Gleiche, hart und nicht zu ändern wie ein Granit [...]«. ⁴²⁰ Yet this consistency of persona in the potentate masks an inner despair (»verzweifelt«).⁴²¹ For Karl's greatness is a function entirely of the phylogenetic influence of his blood - »dieses behende, halbportugiesische Blut, das er kaum kannte«. ⁴²² After the defeat at Granson, his blood, having engineered his will-to-power, begins to abandon him: »Aber damals schlief sein Blut. In seinen sinnlosen letzten Jahren verfiel es manchmal in diesen schweren, tierischen Schlaf. Dann zeigte es sich, wie sehr er in seiner Gewalt war; denn wenn es schlief, war er nichts.«⁴²³ Karl's last years condemn him to vacillate between a depressive, inclosing reserve at low blood-tide⁴²⁴ and an equally depressive attempt to convince his blood of his personal greatness by donning the full trappings of regal power:

Denn er wollte seinem Blut einreden, daß er Kaiser sei und nichts über ihm: damit es ihn fürchte. Aber sein Blut glaubte ihm nicht, trotz solcher Beweise, es war ein mißtrauisches Blut. Vielleicht erhielt er es noch eine Weile im Zweifel. Aber die Hörner von Uri verrieten ihn. Seither wußte sein Blut, daß es in einem Verlorenen war: und wollte heraus.⁴²⁵

⁴¹⁹ Liu: »[...] beide erweisen sich gleicherweise als unfrei; was dem falschen Zaren das Außen ist, ist dem Herzog von Burgund das Innen: Er ist seines Blutes Untertan« (ibid., p.163).

⁴²⁰ *MLB*, Paper LV, p.588.

⁴²¹ *Ibid.*

⁴²² *Ibid.*, p.589.

⁴²³ *Ibid.*

⁴²⁴ *Ibid.*: »Dann durfte keiner von seiner Umgebung herein; er begriff nicht, was sie redeten. Den fremden Gesandten konnte er sich nicht zeigen, öd wie er war. Dann saß er und wartete, daß es [das Blut, D.D.] aufwachte. Und meistens fuhr es mit einem Sprunge auf und brach aus dem Herzen aus und brüllte«. Compare the roaring of Kammerherr Brigge's death in Paper VIII (*MLB*, pp.462f).

⁴²⁵ *MLB*, Paper LV, p.589.

The fanfare of the Swiss enemy instills terror into him - an inner weakness which no subsequent appeal to garish exteriority can make good. His blood has given up on this decadent scion. (Whence surely the pertinence of the tale as a *Vokabel der Not* for Malte Laurids Brigge, another *Verlorener*.)⁴²⁶ Yet from the first he has existed in heteronymy, being either an automaton doing the bidding of the demonic force within or an automaton consigned to the catatonia of that inner force's withdrawal.

In the account of the Duke's death, Malte develops once again his favoured paradox that absence and invisibility are privileged modalities of presence. After the calamitous battle at Nancy, the Duke is nowhere to be found. This absence of both a living body and a corpse places his existence into a compelling subjunctive mood: »Er fror diese Nacht, und es war, als fröre auch die Idee, daß er sei; so hart wurde sie. Und Jahre und Jahre vergingen, eh sie sich auflöste. Alle diese Menschen, ohne es recht zu wissen,⁴²⁷ bestanden jetzt auf ihm«. ⁴²⁸ When his corpse is finally found in the fields, it is subjected to the rude violence of exteriority. In the first place, the

⁴²⁶ Blood as a carrier of character and memory proves a central motif in Graf Brahe's discourse (*MLB*, Paper XLIV, p.561). Arndal points out the Judaeo-Christian roots of this idea (">Ohne alle Kenntnis von Perspektive<?", p.131). Cf Kassner's remark on Kleist: »Alle Helden Heinrich von Kleists leiden an dem Zwiespalt von Blut und Gedanken« (*Der indische Idealismus*, p.11).

⁴²⁷ Compare the epistemological leap on Malte's part, also relating to demotic mood, noted in the Kammerherr Brigge Paper (*MLB*, Paper VIII, p.463: »[...] ganz ohne es zu wissen [...]«).

⁴²⁸ *MLB*, Paper LV, p.590. This peculiar sociological phenomenon is by no means confined to missing fifteenth century dukes - for modern equivalents in popular culture consider the >missing body< mythicisation of Nicholas and Alexandra after 1917, Hitler after 1945 - or, more recently, the truly bizarre posthumous career of Elvis Presley (cf Greil Marcus, *Dead Elvis. A Chronicle of a Cultural Obsession*, Cambridge, Massachusetts & London: 1999).

face is torn off in the ice;⁴²⁹ in the second, the body is laid out »im Hause eines gewissen Georg Marquis« in such a way that the *Nichtgesicht* is tagged by a crown: »Und daß das dort oben ein Kopf war, darüber konnte kein Streit entstehen, sobald man die Krone sah. Es war eine große Herzogs-Krone mit irgendwelchen Steinen.«⁴³⁰ A man whose sickness unto death involved an inadequation of interiority and exteriority is now, in death, reduced wholly to the faux exteriority of rôle, position, (faceless!) persona - a dismal evacuation of subjective integrity noted only by his faithful Fool, Louis-Onze: »>Gut angekleidet<<, sagte er schließlich anerkennend, »>vielleicht eine Spur zu deutlich.< Der Tod kam ihm vor wie ein Puppenspieler, der rasch einen Herzog braucht.«⁴³¹ The sphere of heteronymy has extended to Karl's career as a corpse.

Bettine Brentano is celebrated, along with Sappho, as the exemplary intransitive lover. Her letters to Goethe become a witness to the unilateral outpouring of energy. That this flux of energy is not reciprocated is understood at one level as personal tragedy, at another as blessed good

⁴²⁹ *MLB*, Paper LV, pp.591f: »Lupi mit einigen Dienern versuchte den Leichnam zu wenden, denn er lag vornüber. Aber das Gesicht war eingefroren, und da man es aus dem Eis herauszerrte, schälte sich die eine Wange dünn und spröde ab, und es zeigte sich, daß die andere von Hunden oder Wölfen herausgerissen war; und das Ganze war von einer großen Wunde gespalten, die am Ohr begann, so daß von einem Gesicht keine Rede sein konnte.« (Emphasis added: there can finally be talk of a *Nichtgesicht*, thus redeeming in imaginative experiment the unseen *Nichtgesicht* of Paper V, *MLB*, pp.457f. Or is it that the memory of the green book's Burgundy narrative played an unconscious rôle in Malte's response to the old woman in Paris?)

⁴³⁰ *MLB*, Paper LV, pp.592f. Contrast the masking of the dead Pseudo-Demetrius (*MLB*, Paper LIV, p.586 & p.588).

⁴³¹ *MLB*, Paper LV, p.593. Cf the metaphor of the inauthentic death as clothing in Paper VII, *MLB*, p.459. It is worth noting that the Fool's protestant presence during the hunt for the corpse and at the laying-out in the tent is entirely Rilke-Malte's invention (see Stahl, *MLB-Kommentar*, p.991).

fortune. For, as Antonowicz writes, Malte has come to see »l'éros cosmogonique« as »la seule forme d'économie intérieure qui reste [...] possible«. ⁴³² Malte recalls reading one of Bettine's letters from the *Briefwechsel mit einem Kinde* in Abelone's presence. But Abelone forbids him to read Goethe's deflationary response: »>Nein, nicht die Antworten<, unterbrach mich Abelone [...]«. ⁴³³ Abelone recognises, as Malte later will too, that Bettine's declarations of love, being self-resonant, transcend the need for external response: »Solche Liebe,« writes Malte, »bedarf keiner Erwiderung, sie hat Lockruf und Antwort in sich; sie erhört sich selbst«. ⁴³⁴

Bettine's paradox is that unhappy love is the happiest love of all, for the energy of her unmet love cosmicises her:

Sie hat von Anfang an sich im Ganzen so ausgebreitet, als wär sie nach ihrem Tod. Überall hat sie sich ganz weit ins Sein hineingelegt, zugehörig dazu, und was ihr geschah, das war ewig in der Natur; dort erkannte sie sich und löste sich beinahe schmerzhaft heraus; erriet sich mühsam zurück wie aus Überlieferungen, beschwor sich wie einen Geist und hielt sich aus. ⁴³⁵

The spectral discourse can hardly be incidental to Malte's tribute, being a preferred code in the *Aufzeichnungen* for transcendental subjectivity.

⁴³² Antonowicz, "Cet infernal couvercle", p.111.

⁴³³ *MLB*, Paper LVI, p.597. Cf Rilke's letter to Sidonie Nádherný von Borutin of 5.9.1908: »Ich lese, ich weiß nicht wieso, mitten in den Vorbereitungen zu einer neuen Arbeit die Briefe der Bettine Arnim an Goethe; ich nenne nur die; denn seine traurigen verlegenen Antworten machen mir Müh und Kummer.« *Briefe an Sidonie Nádherný von Borutin*, edited by Bernhard Blume, Frankfurt/M: 1973, p.77.

⁴³⁴ *MLB*, Paper LVII, p.598.

⁴³⁵ *Ibid.*, emphases added.

Abelone's intransitive love will draw from the same lexical set.⁴³⁶ Yet so evolved is Bettine, so much more spiritually expansive in her being than the ordinary embodied human being, that even to be a ghostly *self* would necessitate a compression rather than a liberating vapourisation. For Malte, Bettine is nothing less than an *Elementargeist*:⁴³⁷

Du selber wußtest um deiner Liebe Wert, du sagtest sie laut deinem größten Dichter vor, daß er sie menschlich mache; denn sie war noch Element. Er aber hat sie den Leuten ausgedet, da er dir schrieb. Alle haben diese Antworten gelesen und glauben ihnen mehr, weil der Dichter ihnen deutlicher ist als die Natur.⁴³⁸ Aber vielleicht wird es sich einmal zeigen, daß hier die Grenze seiner Größe war. Diese Liebende ward ihm auferlegt, und er hat sie nicht bestanden. Aber demütigen hätte er sich müssen vor ihr in seinem ganzen Staat und schreiben was sie diktiert, mit beiden Händen, wie Johannes auf Patmos,⁴³⁹ knieend. Es gab keine Wahl dieser Stimme gegenüber, die >das Amt der Engel verrichtete<; die gekommen war, ihn einzuhüllen

⁴³⁶ *MLB*, Paper LXX, p.629: »Es ist gleichwohl möglich, daß Abelone in späteren Jahren versucht hat, mit dem Herzen zu denken, um unauffällig und unmittelbar mit Gott in Beziehung zu kommen. Ich könnte mir vorstellen, daß es Briefe von ihr giebt, die an die aufmerksame innere Beschauung der Fürstin Amalie Galitzin erinnern; aber wenn diese Briefe an jemanden gerichtet waren, dem sie seit Jahren nahestand, wie mag der gelitten haben unter ihrer Veränderung. Und sie selbst: ich vermute, sie fürchtete nichts als jenes gespenstische Anderswerden, das man nicht merkt, weil man beständig alle Beweise dafür, wie das Fremdeste, aus den Händen läßt«.

⁴³⁷ Cf Rilke's explanation to Junghanns of the lyric of the *chanteuse* in Venice, "Dich einzig kann ich vertauschen [...]": »vertauschen: wo Du mir plötzlich zu viel bist, kann ich Dich, ohne Dich fortzugeben, vertauschen mit irgend etwas, mit dem Rauschen des Windes, des Meeres, mit einem Duft. Du bist verwandelbar und so kann ich allein sein, ohne Dich zu verlieren« (*Rilke - Junghanns Briefwechsel*, p.49, citing *MLB*, Paper LXIX, p.628). The substitutive logic by which Malte >sees< Abelone in this woman (»fühlte ich dich und sah dich ein«, *MLB*, Paper LXIX, p.623) is expressed within the latter's song itself.

⁴³⁸ Emphasis added. Malte's polemical words here about Goethe recall his remark several lines above about Bettine's forced self-compression into a ghost-like state of being (»[...] beschwor sich wie einen Geist [...]«, *MLB*, Paper LVII, p.598).

⁴³⁹ As Wagner-Egelhaaf points out, this misreading on Malte / Rilke's part of Hans Memling's apocalyptic Patmos image of 1479 (which Rilke saw in Bruges in 1906) is an example of how »Unkenntnis« can become »mythenbildend«: Memling's John is holding not a second *Feder* but a *Federmesser* (*Mystik der Moderne*, pp.98f). Du Prel's citation of the report of a Dr. Wolfe on a curious case of what the latter terms >Doppelschreiben< may be an unconscious influence on Rilke here: »>Ich habe Mr. Mansfield zwei Kommunikationen in demselben Augenblick schreiben sehen, die eine mit der rechten, die andere mit der linken Hand, und beide in einer Sprache, von der er keine Kenntnis hatte [...]« (in du Prel, *Der Spiritismus*, p.46).

und zu entziehen ins Ewige hinein. Da war der Wagen seiner feurigen Himmelfahrt. Da war seinem Tod der dunkle Mythos bereitet, den er leer ließ.⁴⁴⁰

That Malte sees the energy of Bettine's love in spiritual terms hardly implies an *absence of religion* in his own world-view, as Engelhardt suggests critically:

Bruchlos geht das Verhältnis von Bettina und Goethe in das von Gott und Johannes auf Patmos über. *Absenz von Religion wird zur Allgegenwärtigkeit ihres Surrogats*. Die Kunst baut es auf und sucht die Modifikation religiöser Motive so zu geben, daß Kunst sowohl an der Würde der Überlieferung teil hat wie die Leere der subjektiven Mythologie überspielt.⁴⁴¹

The characterisation here of the rôle of *Kunst* as *Ersatzreligion* is simply not supported by Malte's text. It is true that, as Engelhardt puts it, Malte mythologises Bettine into a »Gefäß religiöser Offenbarung«,⁴⁴² but this is because he has just criticised Goethe as a *mere poet* who could not rise to the level of her nature: *daß er sie menschlich mache ... Element ... weil der Dichter deutlicher ist als die Natur ... die Grenze seiner Größe...*⁴⁴³ We read here a clearly transcendental philosophy of art as the *expressive translation into human signs*

⁴⁴⁰ *MLB*, Paper LVII, pp.598f. The *Himmelfahrt* here may be a hidden kabbalistic motif: »The Book of Ezekiel involves the visions of that prophet written during the Babylonian repression of the eighth century BCE [of] the divine chariot which, so it was written, took the prophet Elijah to heaven in the era of the later Kings - post Solomon of the eleventh century BCE. Elijah, it is written, went to heaven *without actually dying* by means of the mystically-understood divine chariot. This became the foundation of what Jews later call the Kabbala - the Tradition - in this case the mystical retreat into the Other World through meditation [...].« (Justine Picardie, *If the Spirit Moves You. Life and Love After Death*, London, Basingstoke & Oxford: 2001, p.130, emphasis added). Cf Idel, *Abolishing Perfections*, pp.187f.

⁴⁴¹ Engelhardt, "Der Versuch, wirklich zu werden", p.128, emphasis added.

⁴⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴⁴³ Compare Jung's ontological subordination of art to nature as he quizzes his clairaudient >Phantasien<: »Während ich an den Phantasien schrieb, fragte ich mich einmal: >Was tue ich eigentlich? Bestimmt hat es mit Wissenschaft nichts zu tun. Also was ist es dann?< Da sagte eine Stimme in mir: >Es ist Kunst.< [...] Mit Nachdruck und voller Widerstände erklärte ich der Stimme, daß meine Phantasien mit Kunst nichts zu tun hätten. Da schwieg sie, und ich fuhr fort zu schreiben. Dann kam eine nächste Attacke - die gleiche Behauptung: >Das ist Kunst.< Wiederum protestierte ich: >Nein, das ist es nicht. Im Gegenteil, es ist Natur.<« (quoted in Gruber, *Die Seherin von Prevorst*, pp.238f).

of energies which are cosmically *primordial*.⁴⁴⁴ (Is it coincidental that this recalls Rilke's criticism, in the letter to Nora Purtscher-Wydenbruck, of the way in which spiritism seeks to make comprehensible what is in essence numinous?) It is as a passionate *human being*, not as an artist, that Bettine has outstripped Goethe, who is not even worthy to be her mystograph.⁴⁴⁵ And it is this which earns her Malte's tribute.

It seems to me that, in all of his Papers, Malte credits only one artist⁴⁴⁶ with the full achievement of tuning into primordial energies: Beethoven.⁴⁴⁷ Significantly, given the later critique of Goethe's overly humanising artistry, Malte pays tribute to Beethoven's music by insisting that it is too sublime for human ears:

⁴⁴⁴ Again one is reminded of Rilke's words to the Gräfin Sizzo of June 1st 1923: »[...] manchmal ringe ich selbst um den Sinn, der sich meiner bedient hat, um sich menschlich durchzusetzen [...]« (*Briefe in Zwei Bänden II*, p.306, emphasis added).

⁴⁴⁵ It is with astonishment that one reads Betz tell of *his* astonishment when Rilke confessed to him that, in hindsight, he considered Malte's treatment of Bettine absurdly idealised and the disparaging portrayal of Goethe an iniquity to the sagacious poet (*Rilke in Frankreich*, pp.167f). On the amanuensis motif, compare Graf Brahe's early morning dictations to Abelone (*MLB*, Paper XLIV, pp.557ff; cf Uwe Steiner, *Zeit der Schrift*, p.381).

⁴⁴⁶ Cf Malte's laudatory reference to Flaubert in his *Briefentwurf*: »Hältst Du es für einen Zufall, daß Flaubert seinen Saint-Julien-l'Hospitalier geschrieben hat? Es kommt mir vor, als wäre das das Entscheidende: ob einer es über sich bringt, sich zu dem Aussätzigen zu legen und ihn zu erwärmen mit der Herzwärme der Liebesnächte, das kann nicht anders als gut ausgehen« (*MLB*, p.505). To see Flaubert rather than the saint as the chief focus of Malte's tribute is surely a category mistake. Malte is asking himself whether he might one day *live* what Flaubert only writes about - an existential question which will be posed anew in Paper LX with reference to the »verblichenen, alternden Mädchen« of Paris: »Vielleicht meinst du, mein Gott, daß ich alles lassen soll und sie lieben« (*MLB*, p.603). But cf Rilke's *Cézanne*-letter of October 19th 1907, where artist's state of being is the precondition for his authentic treatment of the holy: »Dies sich-zu-dem Aussätzigen-Legen und alle eigene Wärme bis zu der Herzwärme der Liebesnächte, mit ihm teilen: dies muß irgendwann im Dasein eines Künstlers gewesen sein, als Überwindung zu seiner neuen Seligkeit« (KA IV, p.624). My argument is that Malte, in terms of his *own* vocation, is stressing the praxis of love of neighbour rather than the poetic expression of such.

⁴⁴⁷ *MLB*, Paper XXIV, pp.507ff. Bridgham's reflections on Kierkegaard's concept of the >musical erotic< and its possible influence upon Rilke's »equation of music with the unjustified dissipation of the self« (*Urbild und Verzicht*, p.5) are all the more interesting given Malte's recourse to erotic imagery at the end of the Beethoven Paper (»[...] da strahlt Samen aus [...]«, *MLB*, Paper XXIV, p.508 & f).

Deine Musik: daß sie hätte um die Welt sein dürfen; *nicht um uns*. Daß man dir ein Hammerklavier erbaut hätte in der Thebaïs; und ein Engel hätte dich hingeführt vor das einsame Instrument, durch die Reihen der Wüstengebirge, in denen Könige ruhen und Hetären und Anachoreten. Und er hätte sich hoch geworfen und fort, ängstlich, daß du begännest. / Und dann hättest du ausgeströmt, Strömender, ungehört; *an das All zurückgebend, was nur das All erträgt*.⁴⁴⁸

As this last phrase makes clear, Beethoven has not *created* what his art is expressing. He has *tapped into its energies* and, through his music, is now sending them *back out (zurückgebend)*. Beethoven, Bettine and John on Patmos: each in their own way a spiritistic-type conduit for the divine, each almost shamanically missioned, like V.-E. Michelet's sacerdotal poet, by »l'impénétrable infini avec des nouvelles pour nous«. ⁴⁴⁹ In his letter of March 23rd 1922 to Rudolf Bodländer, Rilke makes reference to the »Hingerissenheit einiger Liebender oder Heiliger *aller* Zeiten und *aller* Religionen [...]«. ⁴⁵⁰ This ecstatic transport, which Rilke emphatically refuses to finalise in any particular culture, period or doctrine, is ascribed to the evolved lover and saint. I believe we need to specify carefully the conditions under which *Künstler* might be added to make up a triumvirate. ⁴⁵¹ Malte dreams of becoming, like Christine de Pizan's Cumaean Sibyl, one of »the scribes of

⁴⁴⁸ *MLB*, Paper XXIV, p.508, emphases added.

⁴⁴⁹ V.-E. Michelet, *De l'Esotérisme dans l'Art* (1891), in: Guy Michaud, *Message poétique du symbolisme*, Paris: 1947, p.716.

⁴⁵⁰ *Briefe in Zwei Bänden II*, p.245.

⁴⁵¹ Recall the letter on Cézanne of October 19th 1907 where Rilke brings saint, lover and artist into alignment: »Hinter dieser Hingabe beginnt, mit Kleinem zunächst, die Heiligkeit: das einfache Leben einer Liebe, die bestanden hat, die ohne sich dessen je zu rühmen, zu allem tritt, unbegleitet, unauffällig, wortlos. Die eigentliche Arbeit, die Fülle der Aufgaben, alles fängt erst hinter diesem Bestehen an [...]« (KA IV, pp.625).

God's secrets«.⁴⁵² He dreams of scribing a new Patmos-Revelation, a new *Livre des esprits* - or a new *Koran*... Ingeborg Solbrig persuasively speculates that the following account of Mohammed's *Berufung* in Henri de Boulainvilliers' 1730 *La vie de Mahomed* made a keen impression on Rilke around 1907: »Il se trouva debout, & l'Ange lui présenta un papier en lui disant, *Prens & lis au nom de Seigneur, il a donné l'écriture aux hommes pour leur apprendre ce qu'ils ignorent; Loue ton Seigneur, exalte ton Seigneur à jamais* [...]«.⁴⁵³ As Annemarie Schimmel points out in the course of an examination of Rilke's 1907 *Neues Gedicht "Mohammeds Berufung"*, Mohammed is elected to be the scribal medium because he does *not* belong to the artistic or cognitive élite:

Man muß daran denken, daß der Islam den Propheten gern als *ummi*, >illiterat< bezeichnet (Sura 7/157-8): genau wie Maria in der Begegnung mit dem Engel der Verkündigung als unberührte Jungfrau erscheint, um das menschgewordene Wort Gottes aufnehmen zu können, so durfte der Prophet des Islam, dem sich Gott als >buchgewordenes Wort< offenbarte, nicht durch eine frühere Beschäftigung mit Lesen und Schreiben befleckt sein, sondern die Verkündigung, die durch ihn geschehen sollte, als unbeflecktes Gefäß aufnehmen.⁴⁵⁴

Schimmel shows conclusively how the final stanza of "Mohammeds Berufung" - »Da las er: so, daß sich der Engel bog. / Und war schon einer, der gelesen *hatte* / und konnte und gehorchte und vollzog«⁴⁵⁵ - proves familiarity

⁴⁵² Christine de Pizan, *The Path of Long Study*, p.68. Malte's stylisation of Bettine into Goethe's Muse may owe something to Christine's visit to the (Ovidian) Fountain of Helicon (see *The Path of Long Study* see pp.72f).

⁴⁵³ Quoted in Ingeborg Solbrig, "Gedanken über literarische Anregungen zur verfremdenden Engelkonzeption des mittleren und späten Rilke", in: *Modern Austrian Literature*, Volume 15, Number 3/ 4, 1982, pp.277-290, here: p.283.

⁴⁵⁴ Annemarie Schimmel, ">Ein Osten, der nie alle wird<. Rilke aus der Sicht einer Orientalistin", in: Storck & Solbrig (ed.), *Rilke heute. Beziehungen und Wirkungen*, pp.183-206, here: p.185.

⁴⁵⁵ KA I, p.583, lines 12ff.

on Rilke's part with this tradition. I suggest that Malte, in like wise, is awaiting the *Zeit der anderen Auslegung* as a call not to poetry (as generally understood) but to mystography. Or, to reiterate the distinction in Kierkegaardian language, at stake is not a genial but an apostolic vocation, having no ties to the human personality or capability of the apostle.

Malte celebrates the great saints, lovers and artists. The common charism here is not the Literary but the Holy, the divestment of the egoic self that prepares one to enter into the heart of what Rilke, in his letter to Bodländer, calls »das >Sein< (das heißt [...] die Erfahrung der möglichst vollzähligen inneren Intensität) [...]«.⁴⁵⁶

Charles le Fou is experimented into an exemplar of the agony of exteriority and ennui (Papers LXI & LXII). As King, he is (like Karl der Kühne) both a symbolic and an actually existing man, bearing >the king's two heads<.⁴⁵⁷ When he stands on the balcony at the Hôtel de Saint-Pol, the »Geheimnis seiner Sichtbarkeit« reaches its zenith.⁴⁵⁸ He becomes, in that moment of recognition, pure emblem, pure persona, pure exteriority. This

⁴⁵⁶ *Briefe in Zwei Bänden II*, p.245. Haag, in her discussion of Rilke's philosophy of »l'amour sublime«, aptly quotes the following words of Rilke to Franz Xaver Kappus: »Und tatsächlich liegt ja künstlerisches Erleben so unglaublich nahe am geschlechtlichen, an seinem Weh und seiner Lust, daß die beiden Erscheinungen eigentlich nur verschiedene Formen einer und derselben Sehnsucht und Seligkeit sind« (in "Apprendre à voir la femme", p.119, quoting KA IV, p.521).

⁴⁵⁷ Cf Ernst H. Kantorowicz' brilliant investigation of this doctrine as developed by English jurists of the Tudor period, *The King's Two Bodies. A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology* (Princeton: 1957). The division of the monarch into the glorified *principalis* (the >perpetual Dignity< of his office) and the *instrumentalis* (the mortal king), the *persona idealis* and the mere *persona personalis* (p.400), leads to a violent severance of the two elements of the king's existence.

⁴⁵⁸ *MLB*, Paper LXI, p.607.

fate he shares with Eleonora Duse, the subject of Malte's experimental tribute in Paper LXV, who is depicted as a victim of the public's medusa glance:

Aber, schautest du dann vorsichtig auf, so war kein Zweifel, daß sie dich die ganze Zeit gesehen hatten, alle in dem häßlichen, hohlen, äugigen Raum: dich, dich, dich und nichts anderes./ Und es kam dich an, ihnen den Arm verkürzt entgegenzustrecken mit dem Fingerzeichen gegen den bösen Blick. Es kam dich an, ihnen dein Gesicht zu entreißen, an dem sie zehrten.⁴⁵⁹

Rilke may have Kierkegaard's 1848 essay, *The Crisis and a Crisis in the Life of an Actress*, in mind as he filters these thoughts through Malte's pen. In that work, Kierkegaard's pseudonym >Inter et Inter< writes of the violence of exteriority to which the actress is subjected: »[...] it lays a prodigious burden on a person to have to support the illusion of the stage and the weight of everyone's eyes«. ⁴⁶⁰ Where Malte writes of the struggle of die Duse to protect her interiority from the corrosive glare of her public, an outraged Inter et Inter addresses the public's prejudices against the ageing actress (Fru Heiberg), whose interior youthfulness is actually becoming more and more manifest the older she gets. Interestingly, Kassner, in his 1935 tribute to Rilke on what would have been the poet's 60th birthday, applies the precise burden of Inter et Inter's reflections on Fru Heiberg *to die Duse herself*:

Jede Handlung der Seele ist Verwandlung; was nottut, ist allein die Seele oder die Wirklichkeit und das ganz und gar Unersetzliche der Seele, deren reine Magie. Die Verwandlung stellt sich dann ganz von selbst ein. Darum durfte, um das noch zu sagen, die Duse jugendliche Rollen im eigenen, früh grau gewordenen Haar ohne Perücke spielen.⁴⁶¹

⁴⁵⁹ MLB, Paper LXV, p.618. Compare this last line with the *Nichtgesicht* motif in Papers V (MLB, pp.457f) & LV (MLB, pp.591f)

⁴⁶⁰ Kierkegaard (>Inter et Inter<), *The Crisis and a Crisis in the Life of an Actress*, in: S. K., *Crisis in the Life of an Actress and other Essays on Drama*, translated with an introduction by Stephen Crites, London: 1967, pp.65-91, here: p.77.

⁴⁶¹ Kassner, *Rilke. Gesammelte Erinnerungen. 1926-1956*, p.18, emphasis added.

Inter et Inter is making a broader point about the way in which public prominence and fame attack the inner integrity of their subject. Just as Malte, in Paper XXVI, counsels the »[j]unger Mensch irgendwo« to beware »die listige Feindschaft [...] des Ruhms«,⁴⁶² so does Inter et Inter write of the public's devious requisition of the famous, exceptional person: »Yes, human rejoicing over the exception is strange; almost from the first and highest moment of rejoicing, inquisitiveness begins to plot the ambush«. ⁴⁶³ In both cases, *Publikum* is cast as a collective resistance to the shudder of alterity which the exceptional person brings - and which gave the exceptional person their prominence in the first place.

As already indicated, Kierkegaard's *Crisis* essay also elucidates the dialectic of Charles VI's relationship to his subjects as he stands on the balcony of the Hôtel de Saint-Pol. Using the example of a different royal (Henry IV's address to Prince Hal in Shakespeare's *Henry IV, Part I*, III.ii), Inter et Inter talks of how the public is mesmerised by what is seldom seen: »[...] they see him so rarely that this rare appearance produces a fantastic effect«. ⁴⁶⁴ Yet the mystifying exteriority which sponsors Charles VI's secular apotheosis becomes, by the same token, his existential undoing. *As King* he is as subjectively, humanly unreal as a playing card, engaged in power struggles with other playing cards. ⁴⁶⁵ *As Man*, he suffers the despair of not having an

⁴⁶² *MLB*, Paper XXVI, p.511.

⁴⁶³ Kierkegaard, *The Crisis and a Crisis in the Life of an Actress*, p.79.

⁴⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p.81.

⁴⁶⁵ *MLB*, Paper LXI, p.608.

inner self, a subjective spontaneity, an identity free of the emblematic.⁴⁶⁶ In 1392 Charles, twelve years into his reign and unable to bear any longer the nightmare of being a cipher (total *Schauspieler*, nil *Seiender*), retreats into madness as the last remaining inner sanctum for a hunted inwardness: »Ist nicht dieser der Einzige, der sich erhielt unter seinem Wahnsinn wie Wachtblumen unter einem Glassturz?«.⁴⁶⁷ Only in the religious *Passionsspiele* of the *Missionsbrüder* can he find something remotely commensurate to his inner passion, experiencing a moment of existential extravagance when, *by virtue of the absurd*, the play's spiritual action becomes more real than the lack of action in the real world. This nuclear moment, where he is on the threshold of going through the looking-glass, is forcibly arrested by his courtiers, who tear him away from the play: »Aber sie waren stärker, und sie schoben ihn langsam hinaus«.⁴⁶⁸ Inhuman voices wake him. He drowns.

It is hard to resist the sense that Malte's idiosyncratic recasting of the *verlorener Sohn* parable in the last of the *Aufzeichnungen* constitutes not merely the book's end-point but also its summative moment. This experiment, surely more than any other, re-draws and sharpens the Kierkegaardian contours of Malte's condition. The opening line boldly announces a metatextual move:

⁴⁶⁶ Compare Malte's thematisation in the same Paper (*MLB*, Paper LXI, pp.609ff) of the Avignon Pope's dual identity: figurehead (>Johannes XXII<) and man (>Jakob von Cahors<).

⁴⁶⁷ *MLB*, Paper LVI, p.604. Yet again, Hamlet is the archetype here. Both men are plagued by the sense of a lack of action, which each attempts to alleviate dramaturgically (»Es gab keine Handlung, außer bei den Missionsbrüdern«, *MLB*, p.614).

⁴⁶⁸ *MLB*, Paper LXII, p.615.

»Man wird mich schwer davon überzeugen, daß die *Geschichte* des verlorenen Sohnes nicht die *Legende* dessen ist, der nicht geliebt werden wollte.«⁴⁶⁹

Hypothetical re-narration is to displace fidelity to original narrative. (The switch from *Geschichte* to *Legende*, as noted in Chapter Two, recalls word for word Baudelaire's programmatic progression in the prose-poem "Les Fenêtres" from *histoire* to *légende*.⁴⁷⁰ The latter word emits hagiographical connotations too, of course.)⁴⁷¹ Malte is launching into an experiment that will bring the experimented figure down to a core existential truth *which Malte himself experiences*: the desire not to be loved by another human being.⁴⁷² In the previous Paper, which we visited earlier, Malte parenthetically deploys a very Gospel metaphor to convey the difference between loving and being loved: »(*Geliebtsein heißt aufbrennen. Lieben ist: leuchten mit unerschöpflichem Öle. Geliebtwerden ist vergehen, Lieben ist dauern.)«.⁴⁷³

The counterposition of an enervating, consumptive being-loved and an energising, self-replenishing being-loving is itself a rehearsal of the passionate tribute to Bettine in Paper LVII.

As with Malte's experimented figures generally, the Prodigal son is crucified on the cross of despair described in *The Sickness unto Death*: he both has a self (inauthentically) and has not got a self (authentically).

⁴⁶⁹ *MLB*, Paper LXXI, p.629, emphases added.

⁴⁷⁰ Baudelaire, *Oeuvres complètes I*, p.339.

⁴⁷¹ Cf Kassner (*Der indische Idealismus*, p.16): »Indien besitzt keine Persönlichkeiten, Indien hat Heilige. Der Heilige ist wesentlich unhistorisch, und die Legende ist ihm natürlich, seine Erfahrung gleichsam«.

⁴⁷² Compare the dying Niels Lyhne's reflection: »Das ganz Traurige war, daß eine Seele immer allein ist. Lüge war dieser Glaube an ein Verschmelzen der Seelen. Nicht mit der Mutter, die einen auf ihren Schoß nahm, nicht mit einem Freunde, nicht mit der Gattin, die einem am Herzen ruhte...« (Jacobsen, *Niels Lyhne*, p.448).

⁴⁷³ *MLB*, Paper LXX, p.629. Cf Matthew 25: 1-13.

In the first instance, he resembles die Duse, Karl der Kühne and Charles le Fou in finding himself tormented by the violence of exteriority to which foreign eyes reduce him. Alone in the fields, he experiences inner, aesthetic joy at the expansive multiplication of potential selves which are intensively actualised in rôle-play (the thrill of Malte before the mirror). Upon his return home, however, he suffers the fixating glance of family: »Das erste Fenster oben faßte einen ins Auge [...]«.⁴⁷⁴ Big Brother is watching you - along with Father, Mother, Sister (and Dog). The familial panopticon, the domestic *regard de l'autre*, reduces one to an »Erkannte«.⁴⁷⁵ Thus, like the false *Bekannte* whose false recognition Malte flees in Paper IV,⁴⁷⁶ the Prodigal Son's family members enforce a well-intentioned but nonetheless brutal scopic regime which vetoes the possibility of dynamic personal change. The Prodigal Son finds himself in despair at having an inauthentic, exterior, always-already->interpellated< self. Social surveillance pressurises him into the degradation of sustained self-plagiarism. This is *Schicksal* in the most antipathetic sense: the claustrophobia of shared enmeshment.

Yet this is, as indicated, but one side of the equation of despair. The Prodigal Son's decision to leave home - »Fortgehen für immer«⁴⁷⁷ - inaugurates a *chemin de longue étude*, the goal of which is a selfhood grounded authentically in God: »Ich sehe mehr als ihn,« writes Malte, »ich sehe sein Dasein, das damals die lange Liebe zu Gott begann, die stille,

⁴⁷⁴ *MLB*, Paper LXXI, p.630.

⁴⁷⁵ *MLB*, Paper XXI, p.634.

⁴⁷⁶ *MLB*, Paper IV, p.456.

⁴⁷⁷ *MLB*, Paper LXXI, p.631.

ziellose Arbeit«. ⁴⁷⁸ The misunderstanding to which the Prodigal Son has been subjected has only increased his inwardness. For, as Frederick Sontag argues in his essay on Kierkegaardian inwardness: »To experience misunderstanding is to be driven more deeply into yourself and possibly then to the search for God as he alone who can understand«. ⁴⁷⁹ Like Malte, the Prodigal Son has taken a *notwendigen Abschied* from human society in order to heat to boiling-point his passionate subjectivity before God. And, again like Malte, he undergoes in the first phase a humiliating apprenticeship: »Es war nichts auszudenken, was demütigender sein konnte als diese Anfängerschaft«. ⁴⁸⁰ Tellingly, Malte has recourse to an alchemical analogy in order to evoke the frustration of the subject who, having gone through the *nigredo* stage, indeed having even turned base metal into the gold of a passionate inner freedom from the normal trammels of human existence, still comes up against a devastating *Noch Nicht*: »Er hatte den Stein der Weisen gefunden, und nun zwang man ihn, das rasch gemachte Gold seines Glücks unaufhörlich zu verwandeln in das klumpige Blei der Geduld«. ⁴⁸¹ This is the apophatic

⁴⁷⁸ *MLB*, Paper LXXI, p.633. That the work is *ziellos* recalls the declaration in Paper LXX (*MLB*, p.628) that »Gott nur eine Richtung der Liebe ist, kein Liebesgegenstand«.

⁴⁷⁹ Sontag, "Inwardness", p.106.

⁴⁸⁰ *MLB*, Paper LXXI, p.633. Cf Malte's self-description: »Ich bin ein Anfänger in meinen eigenen Verhältnissen« (Paper XXII, p.505).

⁴⁸¹ *MLB*, Paper LXXI, p.633. Cf Obstfelder's priest, at an early point in his diary, reflecting upon God's distance: »I wonder if there is perhaps a kind of philosopher's stone in our being so alone - I wonder if that is one of the mysteries of life here below?« (*A Priest's Diary*, p.12). Another echo of Obstfelder can be heard in Malte's very next image for the Prodigal Son: »Er, der sich dem Raum angepaßt hatte, zog wie ein Wurm krumme Gänge ohne Ausgang und Richtung« (*MLB*, Paper LXXI, p.633). Compare *A Priest's Diary*, p.24: »Am I expected to drag myself along in the dust like some miserable worm?« & p.28: »Why do I exist? What is it all for? Why do I encompass worlds when my body is a worm?«

experience of »Gottes äußersten Abstand«,⁴⁸² of the utter heterogeneity of Kierkegaard's Lord.

Now if the case is to be pressed for reading the *verlorener Sohn* Paper as Malte's experimentation on his *own* crisis - that is, as a *Vokabel seiner Not* - in what sense can Malte, given his esoteric and mystical humiliation, be said to have himself found the *Stein der Weisen*? Quite simply thus: he has grasped the concept of renunciation. Writing to Hedda Sauer on January 28th 1912, Rilke makes a truly extraordinary comment on the *Malte*:

Nächstens erhalten Sie die Übertragung eines merkwürdigen, ganz unbekanntem (dem Bossuet zugeschriebenen) Sermons, "L'amour de Madeleine", eines Diskurses von sublimer Größe, der, wenn ich ihn gekannt hätte, *mir möglicherweise den Malte erspart hätte*: so sehr liegt er in der Richtung dieses Herzens und geht bis ans Ende, nur übertrifft er den armen Brigge bei weitem.⁴⁸³

In a handwritten dedication to Lou Andreas-Salomé, Rilke even refers to the translation as »eine Art *Supplement* zu *Malte Laurids*«. ⁴⁸⁴

What is the insight contained in the *Madeleine*, one so powerful that it might have given him a shorter route to the condition so tortuously approached by Malte / *Malte*?

The *Madeleine* is an exploration of »das Myster der Liebe«⁴⁸⁵ as exemplified in the seemingly cruel distance which Christ continually places,

⁴⁸² *MLB*, Paper LXXI, p.633.

⁴⁸³ In *MLB-Materialien*, pp.97f, emphasis added. Rilke translated the work in the spring of 1911: »<gefunden in Paris Ostern 1911, gleich darauf übersetzt>« (quoted in editorial note, *Rilke - Andreas-Salomé Briefwechsel*, p.270).

⁴⁸⁴ Quoted *ibid*.

⁴⁸⁵ Rilke, *Die Liebe der Magdalene*, in: R. M. R., *Übertragungen* (Leipzig: 1930), pp.71-102, here: p.98. Not having seen the original French, I quote from Rilke's translation. It would, one speculates, be a far from redundant exercise to scrutinise the degree of creative intervention which Rilke's German brings to this text.

and indeed increases, between Himself and Mary Magdalene. In the first phase, the living Jesus awakens in Mary a passion qualitatively beyond any she has felt before:

Geh, Herz, erschöpftes, müdes, das nie nichts gefunden hat, groß genug, um darin die unermessliche Menge seiner Liebe unterzubringen, geh, ergieß dich in den Ozean; verlier dich im Unendlichen; laß dich einnehmen vom All. Da kommt in dem Herzen Magdalenens ich weiß nicht was auf, eine Zärtlichkeit, eine Leidenschaft, die nur noch auf Jesum Christum anwendbar ist [...].⁴⁸⁶

This passion soon escalates into the ultimate in unhappy love, with Jesus carefully nurturing Mary's erotic intentionality in order precisely *not* to satisfy it with a reciprocal love of his own, *not* to allow it transitive gratification. Not even the risen Christ's appearance to Mary bestows upon her the awaited consummation: »O Gott, was für ein Liebhaber, der seiner Liebenden nur erscheint, um ihr zu sagen, daß er jetzt geht«. ⁴⁸⁷ From the story of Magdalene, the narrator of the sermon generalises to the relationship of every Christian to Christ:

Es ist in der Tat die Absicht dieses heiligen Gemahls, uns beständig in Erwartung zu halten, in einer Erwartung, die stöhnt und sehnlich nach ihm verlangt. Er hat einen einzigen Trost für uns, mit dem er uns hinhält: Noch eine Weile, noch eine Weile.⁴⁸⁸

The burden of the sermon is that the divinity, out of pure love, intensifies our longing to an unendurable pitch of intensity rather than quenching it:

[Jesus] knüpft uns inniger an sich, gerade in der Zeit, da alle unsere Sinne nichts wahrnehmen, als Entfernung und Scheidung. Wahrscheinlich muß die Liebe, solange diese Pilgerschaft dauert, so behandelt sein. Es ist nötig, daß sie sich nähre vom Glauben; daß sie lebe vom Hoffen; daß sie heranwachse unter dem tödlichsten Im-

⁴⁸⁶ Ibid., pp.83f.

⁴⁸⁷ Ibid., p.89.

⁴⁸⁸ Ibid., p.93.

Stich-Gelassensein, unter den tödlichsten Entziehungen; denn sie soll ja nicht allein sterben, sie soll zugrunde gehn als Martyrer Jesu Christi; ihre eigenen Glutten soll ihr Martyrium sein und der Geliebte selbst ihr Tyrann.⁴⁸⁹

Magdalena's story is the exemplary case of

[...] die Liebe derer, die unterwegs sind; Gott teilt sich in ihr nur mit, indem er sich verbirgt; nicht um zu stillen, sondern um die Liebe zu reizen. Denn, solange diese Verbannung dauert, ist er niemals gegenwärtiger, als wenn er sich so weit zu entfernen scheint, daß man ihn aus dem Gesicht verliert, und nie ist seine Herrlichkeit stärker über uns, als wenn er sie nimmt und vernichtet, bis wir sie nicht mehr sehen.⁴⁹⁰

For Magdalena, the great breakthrough comes with her realisation that God's absence is the highest form of His presence that an existing human being can experience before entry into eternal life:

So hat auch die erlauchte Geliebte endlich an Erfahrungen verstanden, daß es Gott gefällt, sich zu geben, indem er sich entzieht, daß seine Fluchtversuche Lockungen sind, sein Wartenlassen eine Art Ungeduld, seine Absagen Geschenke und seine Härten Zärtlichkeiten; sie hat eingesehen, daß sie ihn nie besser besaß, als da sie meinte, ihn zu verlieren; ihre Prüfungen haben sie eingeweiht in das Myster dieser Liebe im Exil, so daß sie schließlich, erschöpft vom vielen Rufen, die Ausbrüche ihres Liedes wieder aufnimmt mit den Worten: >Fliehe, mein Geliebter, fuge, dilecte mi<.⁴⁹¹

⁴⁸⁹ Ibid., p.98.

⁴⁹⁰ Ibid., p.100.

⁴⁹¹ Ibid.

Is not this the vehicle of Malte's *dunkle Himmelfahrt*, in which he suffers the martyrdom of faith in the face of failure, silence, *absconditas*, distance? Is it not also the space inhabited by Kierkegaard's faithful Christian?⁴⁹²

⁴⁹² This readiness to take >no< for a *spiritually* meaningful answer constitutes, it seems to me, the cardinal difference between the renunciatory religiousness just outlined and the melancholic world-view of Jens Peter Jacobsen - with whom, as Elena Balzamo points out, Rilke tends to be far too vaguely compared ("Jens Peter Jacobsen et Rainer Maria Rilke en miroir", p.25). As Balzamo remarks, Rilke's own nebulous self-stylisation as a post-Jacobsenian writer lies at the root of this problem (*ibid.*, pp.24f). For Jacobsen takes from his philosophic mentor Kierkegaard the movement of infinite resignation without however moving through any subsequent movement of faith. In *Niels Lyhne*, a cycle of longing, hope, disappointment, resignation and death repeats itself over and over with almost mechanical predictability. The insight into the fragility of worldly goods (»[...] ein jedes Schloß des Glücks, das sich erhebt, hat auch Sand in seinem Grund«, *Niels Lyhne*, p.385) can in principle lead just as logically to nihilism as to faith. Niels Lyhne is serially put through the experience of heartfelt prayers going unanswered. When his aunt Edele is dying, the young Niels storms heaven on her behalf. But she dies anyway, plunging Niels into a defiant atheism: »[...] es war Gottvater, der ihn in seiner bitteren Not so enttäuschte. Nun, hatte Gott sich von ihm gewandt, so konnte auch er sich von Gott abwenden. Hatte Gott kein Ohr, so hatte er keine Lippen, war bei Gott keine Gnade, so hatte er keine Anbetung; und er trotzte und verwies Gott aus seinem Herzen« (*ibid.*, p.283). Niels' embrace of »das Neue, der Atheismus, die heilige Sache der Wahrheit« (*ibid.*, p.445) solidifies into a polemically held article of faith. »>Es ist kein Gott; und der Mensch ist sein Prophet!<«, he announces to the dismay of his religious friend Hjerrild (*ibid.*, p.359). His young wife Gerda hangs on his every word as he descants upon his favourite theme: »[...] wie der Glaube an einen persönlichen Gott, der alles zum besten lenkt und in einem anderen Leben straft und belohnt, eine Flucht sei aus der rauhen Wirklichkeit, ein schwächerer Versuch, der trostlosen Willkür des Daseins den Stachel zu nehmen« (*ibid.*, p.437). When his young son falls ill toward the end of the novel, Niels relapses into fervent prayer for divine intervention. Again, the loved one dies, leaving Niels with nothing but self-reproach for having troubled deaf heaven with bootless cries: »Es konnte nichts nützen, daß er jenes Gebet, das er zu Gott hinaufgesandt hatte, eines Vaters wahnsinnigen Ruf um Hilfe für sein Kind nannte, obgleich er wußte, daß niemand den Ruf hören konnte« (*ibid.*, p.445). Where Kierkegaard's Job and Rilke's Malte show faith in the face of heaven's >no< to all entreaties for protection from worldly calamity, Jacobsen's Niels refuses to make the infinite movement. Instead, with Beckettian bitterness, he resigns himself to God's bastardly refusal to exist (cf Samuel Beckett, *Endgame*, in: S. B., *The Complete Dramatic Works*, London: 1986, p.119) before resigning himself to an alienated mysticism (cf Balzamo, "Jens Peter Jacobsen et Rainer Maria Rilke en miroir", p.27). Despair over the worldly becomes not a stimulus to faith in the eternal but an *ultima thule* in itself. The nihilistic side of Jacobsen draws some revealingly sharp words from Rilke in his dialogue with Betz, as though the Dane had let his nihilism slip into an inauthentically, almost decadently doctrinal matter: »>einen kranken, verbitterten Mann, der im Grunde sehr unglücklich war, der geneigt war, an allem zu zweifeln, und gegen den Tod und die Macht der Krankheit mit immer gehässigerem Spott ankämpfte, der schließlich dennoch besiegt wurde und nach und nach von sich selbst Abschied nahm<« (in Betz, *Rilke in Frankreich*, p.188). Balzamo describes the chasm between the two writers brilliantly: »[...] l'*homo religiosus* en Rilke lui interdit de souscrire au désespoir absolu de Jacobsen [...] cet alter ego, ce frère ténébreux de Rilke lui sert de point de départ, de tremplin permettant de se lancer à la conquête des >espaces angéliques<«. Balzamo, "Jens Peter Jacobsen et Rainer Maria Rilke en miroir", pp.38f.⁴⁹²

Malte writes of the courageous journey within taken by the Prodigal Son: »Er ging ganz darin auf, zu bewältigen, was sein Binnenleben ausmachte [...]«. ⁴⁹³ This *Binnenleben*, which could without difficulty be related to the *Inneres* given first oblique mention in Paper IV, represents the invisible locus of, variously, the Unconscious, the still-unachieved childhood, the potential self, the divine energy - in brief: all that the egoic self is not. The Kierkegaardian self-severance from family, relationship, association, career and confession has constituted for both Malte and the Prodigal Son the necessary *via purgativa*. Each is now left with the agonising wait for the *via illuminativa*, which to the Unhappy Consciousness seems endlessly to beckon, endlessly to defer itself: »Was wußten sie [die Familienmitglieder], wer er war. Er war jetzt furchtbar schwer zu lieben, und er fühlte, daß nur Einer dazu imstande sei. Der aber wollte noch nicht«. ⁴⁹⁴ After the existential vivisection that weans the self from the world, the matter of spiritual transmutation still remains the sole prerogative of God. The self-activity of a Pelagian voluntarism has no place from this point on. *Amor dei*: in the objective genitive sense, this remains a task for the single existing individual; in the subjective genitive sense, however, it remains entirely in God's gift.

⁴⁹³ *MLB*, Paper LXXI, p.634.

⁴⁹⁴ *MLB*, Paper LXXI, p.635.

Thus does the human being's despair continue in hope, his hope in despair.⁴⁹⁵ Rilke, situating Malte's hope in this space of infinite *différance*,⁴⁹⁶ subjects his character to a very Kierkegaardian negative theology: the Unhappy Consciousness must realise that God's *Noch Nicht* may be absolute for the existing human being, that mysticism within human existence may prove never more than prospective.⁴⁹⁷

⁴⁹⁵ Cf the interesting parallels drawn by Görner between Rilke and the >anticipatory consciousness< of Ernst Bloch, whose principle of hope centres on an »Ontologie des Noch-nicht-seins, deren Zentrum die Kategorie der Möglichkeit bildete« (»Im Innern des Nirgendwo«, p.392). Because Malte's Prodigal Son returns to the homestead *before* he has enjoyed mystical illumination, his >return to the world< cannot, *pace* Naumann (*Gesammelte Malte-Studien I*, p.26), in itself be interpreted as a saintly move. That is, it does not qualify as a case of Kierkegaardian >repetition< (at least not in the replete sense). That the religious introversion of Malte's figure only increases when he does return home marks a key difference with Gide's *Retour de l'enfant prodigue* of 1907, in which dialogue between the Prodigal Son and members of his family plays the central rôle. As Forget notes, the return home of Gide's figure represents a »retour à l'ordre«, a »renoncement à la dissemblance«, a feature wholly expunged in Malte's account (»Du sens comme un à la coerrance«, p.173).

⁴⁹⁶ Cf Forget, »Du sens comme un à la coerrance«, p.186.

⁴⁹⁷ According to Betz, Rilke summarised Obstfelder's *Priest's Diary* as follows: »Sein Tagebuch eines Priesters ist die Geschichte einer Seele, die trotz ihren verzweifelten Versuchen, sich Gott zu nähern, sich immer mehr von ihm entfernt und schließlich in fiebrigen Nervenleiden zugrundegeht« (*Rilke in Frankreich*, pp.108f). It is doubtful that Betz' recollection represents Rilke's words accurately: Obstfelder's priest documents experiences of a mystical-ecstatic type which are not *unambiguously* signalled as Lenz-like psychopathological delirium (or Nietzsche-like debilitation). Unlike Malte, who tries in vain to attain transcendental consciousness by a primarily spiritistic and parapsychological route, the priest seems spontaneously to enter into transpersonal states of consciousness. And, as Fick notes in agreement with Kohlschmidt (*Sinnenwelt und Weltseele*, p.302), the priest's diary ends »mit einem triumphalen Schluß«. Indeed, there is an almost Zarathustran exuberance in the priest's decision at the very end to descend »from the ice-fields to the people« (Obstfelder, *A Priest's Diary*, p.70). To my knowledge, only Fick has fully appreciated the contrastingly negative theology of the *Malte*. Identifying »ein geistiger Impuls, der [...] inhaltlich die *Aufzeichnungen* abrückt von Obstfelders Werk«, she pertinently outlines the attack which Rilke is mounting on *premature transcendence*: »Das Erlebnis der >Seligkeit<, das dem Priester zuteil wird, ist Malte versagt, wobei hierin nicht nur der Ausdruck seiner Ohnmacht, sondern auch ein Zeichen seiner Kraft, seiner Berufung geradezu, zu sehen ist. Denn es geht um die *Vermeidung des zu frühen Umschlags vom >Elend< zur >Seligkeit<*; fast könnte man davon sprechen, daß es um die *Vermeidung von Lösungen geht, die noch im Endlichen angesiedelt sind*. Der Tod und das >Nichts< nehmen in Maltes Gesichtskreis den Platz ein, den im *Tagebuch eines Priesters* das >All-Leben< innehat« (*Sinnenwelt und Weltseele*, pp.311f, emphases added). That this is the Kierkegaardian estate, however, Fick seems to ignore, claiming at a later point, »daß Rilke in dem entscheidenden Punkt, der Definition des Verhältnisses von >Sinnlichkeit< und >Geist<, eine zu derjenigen Kierkegaards entgegengesetzte Position einnimmt« (*ibid.*, p.317, footnote 122). But the point is that Rilke does not allow Malte to directly *experience* the monistic incursions of spirit which Rilke himself may believe are attainable. This much Fick herself concedes: »Zwar führt die schonungslose Verweigerung einer seichten

Harmonisierung immer wieder in die Nähe dualistischer Anschauungsweisen« (ibid., p.317, main text). In Malte, Rilke has created a Kierkegaardian figure forced into the impossible dualism of a faith which cannot go beyond itself qua faith, a faith based on hope in a mystical experience which may remain infinitely deferred, a faith schooled in the *Noch Nicht* of God's infinite heterogeneity, his *äußerster Abstand*. Thus when Fick concludes that Rilke is unKierkegaardian inasmuch as he »kann und will [...] sich nicht auf eine geistige Instanz berufen, die, als ein Transzendentes, in Widerspruch stünde zur sinnlichen Basis« (ibid., p.318), she is a) ignoring the religious affectivity of the *mysterium tremendum* to be found in Kierkegaardian >fear and trembling< as well as in his ideas of apostolic revelation; b) leaving out of account the absolute centrality to Kierkegaard's theology of the infinitely paradoxical, supra-ethical Christ-Incarnation (the God-in-Time mystery); c) simplifying Kierkegaard's insistence on God's infinite heterogeneity into a straightforwardly dualistic theism (if not indeed deism); and, most critically, d) confusing the question of the *geistige Instanz* to which Rilke *himself* might appeal in his own existence (*sich berufen*) with the question of why he elects to throw his fictive character into the particular spiritual trial documented in the *Malte*. On the other hand, however, Fick's characterisation of Kierkegaard as an unreconstructed dualist is correct inasmuch as he rejects any question of Eastern-type mystical-monic affectivity being treated as an authentic transcendence of human existential finitude. Such experiences, he argues against Schopenhauer, are too existentially abstract, too free of >character-tasking<, to be spiritually meaningful: »There appears at times a phenomenon which spiritually is quite comparable to a vegetative, digestive dozing off into a pleasant convalescent feeling. Consciousness appears as an overarching moon reaching from the front of the stage to the back. One dozes, as it were, in the totality of things (a pantheistic element, without producing strength as does the religious) in an oriental reverie of the infinite, in which everything appears to be fiction - and one is reconciled as in a grand poem: the being of the whole world, the being of God, and my own being are poetry in which all the multiplicity, the wretched disparities of life, indigestible for human thought, are reconciled in a misty, dreamy existence. But then, regrettably, I wake up again, and the very same tragic relativity in everything begins worse than ever, the endless questions about *what I am*, about my joys and other people's interest in me, in what I am doing, and at the same time perhaps millions are doing exactly the same thing« (undated entry 1837, *Journals & Papers Vol.1*, p.448). Cf Judge Wilhelm's long excursus on mysticism as an aesthetico-erotic scene of falsely luminous »instants« (as opposed to the existentially achieved »succession« of the ethical, *Either/Or II*, pp.241-250, here: p.249). Just as Constantin Constantius is rudely ejected from such a transport of »microcosmic bliss« by an irritation in the eye (*Repetition*, pp.173f), so too is the mysticism of Obstfelder's priest vulnerable to material nausea. For Kierkegaard, world and spirit are incommensurable, with the corollary that world cannot itself be a site of transcendence. For this is the point of the world's existence, to be an arena in which the soul learns to leave behind its fallenness and go home to eternity. Kierkegaard is thus a vehemently, dogmatically *Unhappy* Consciousness, forcefully resisting the possibility of a personal experience of the numinous that, though not emanating from consciousness, would be experienced there: »If on the whole the mystic does not esteem actuality, it is not clear why he does not regard with the same mistrust that moment in actuality when he was stirred by something higher« (*Either/Or II*, p.247). While he does (rather problematically) allow for the possibility of revelation, he balks at the monistic somatisation of spirit into a humanly experiential reality. That this is not reconcilable with Rilke's nature mysticism or his later invocations of *das Offene*, is obvious. Park writes of the latter: »Das >Offene< stellt sich [...] als eine transzendent-immanente Wirklichkeit dar. Denn die darin kulminierende, ganzheitliche Weltansicht Rilkes kennzeichnet sich nicht zuletzt durch bedingungslose Bejahung des Daseins mit all seinen Leiden und Widersprüchen. Dies aber ist eher buddhistisch zu verstehen als phänomenologisch« (*Rilkes Selbstwerdung*, p.103). Yet the reason why Malte can be seen as a Kierkegaardian figure is that his creator has refused to grant him any of this as an *experiential* reality. Malte's worldview is only ever aspirationally monistic and mystical. For all that he wonders at those who have broken through the hell of samsara-consciousness, he himself remains dualistically entrapped in his own lower mind.

There is, however, one more figure brooding in the pages of the *Aufzeichnungen*, a figure perhaps even more deeply Kierkegaardian than the Prodigal Son. Writing to Lou Andreas on February 7th 1912, Rilke diagnoses in Kierkegaard an »immense, überlebensgroße Schwermuth«. This man's unhappiest of Unhappy Consciousnesses would, surmises Rilke, be a cause of grief even in the afterlife (»auch noch im Himmel ein Hindernis«).⁴⁹⁸ Hegel's sketch of the Unhappy Consciousness has generally been deciphered as an account of Mediaeval Christianity.⁴⁹⁹ In *Fear and Trembling*, de Silentio comments on the figure of the »doubter« who is »judged severely because he speaks«.⁵⁰⁰ Malte's Johannes XXII is just such a figure, delivering in 1331 an Allhallows homily of such seditious doubt that the horrified listeners in the congregation »schrieen [...] ihn an. Ganz Europa schrie: dieser Glaube war schlecht«.⁵⁰¹ The Pope vanishes, returns, recants and lives out his days in the monomaniacal recital of this recantation. But the unthinkable cannot be unsaid.

If Malte Laurids is an Unhappy Consciousness plunged into an abyss of doubt as to whether he will ever enjoy the direct *visio beatifica* of Paradise, then I suggest that the Johannes XXII affair and the dialectic of its aftermath provides him with the richest *Vokabel* of all for his *Not*:

Jakob von Cahors hatte widerrufen. Und man könnte meinen, Gott selber hätte seine Irrung erweisen wollen, da er so bald hernach jenen Sohn des Grafen von Ligny aufkommen ließ, der seine Mündigkeit auf Erden nur abzuwarten schien, um des Himmels seelische Sinnlichkeiten mannbar anzutreten. Es lebten viele, die sich dieses

⁴⁹⁸ Rilke - *Andreas-Salomé Briefwechsel*, pp.267f.

⁴⁹⁹ Charles Taylor, *Hegel*, p.160.

⁵⁰⁰ Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, p.110.

⁵⁰¹ *MLB*, Paper LXI, p.610.

klaren Knaben in seinem Kardinalrat erinnerten, und wie er am Eingang seiner Jünglingschaft Bischof geworden und mit kaum achtzehn Jahren in einer Ekstase seiner Vollendung gestorben war. Man begegnete Totgewesenen: denn die Luft an seinem Grabe, in der, frei geworden, pures Leben lag, wirkte lange noch auf die Leichname. Aber war nicht etwas Verzweifeltes selbst in dieser frühreifen Heiligkeit? War es nicht ein Unrecht an allen, daß das reine Gewebe dieser Seele nur eben durchgezogen worden war, als handelte es sich nur darum, es in der garen Scharlachküpe der Zeit leuchtend zu färben? Empfand man nicht etwas wie einen Gegenstoß, da dieser junge Prinz von der Erde absprang in seine leidenschaftliche Himmelfahrt?⁵⁰² Warum verweilten die Leuchtenden nicht unter den mühsamen Lichtziehern? War es nicht diese Finsternis, die Johann den Zweiundzwanzigsten dahin gebracht hatte, zu behaupten, daß es *vor* dem jüngsten Gericht keine ganze Seligkeit gäbe, nirgends, auch unter den Seligen nicht? Und in der Tat, wieviel rechthaberische Verbissenheit gehörte dazu, sich vorzustellen, daß, während hier so dichte Wirrsal geschah, irgendwo Gesichter schon im Scheine Gottes lagen, an Engel zurückgelehnt und gestillt durch die unausschöpfliche Aussicht auf ihn.⁵⁰³

⁵⁰² Cf Goethe's potential »feurige[] Himmelfahrt« (MLB, Paper LVII, p.599).

⁵⁰³ MLB, Paper LXI, p.610.

CONCLUSION?

»[...] das nun schon so alte Buch (in gewissem Sinne alt: während manches von einem Erfundenen, dem Malte, drinnen Gewagte, Erkannte, Angestimmte, mir, dem Seienden, erst noch ganz zu versuchen bevorsteht) [...], welches, kann ich mir denken, oft ungeduldig macht; indem es sich da und dort und immer wieder mit Schwierigkeiten abzugeben scheint, die es sich selber bereitet, die es erfindet und sich einredet und so lange übertreibt, bis sie mit einem Endchen Wesens wirklich da sind und natürlich allem quer.«

Rilke to Hedda
Sauer, January 12th
1912.

»Mein Vater lachte: >Wir steigen hier herum wie die Gespenster<, und er half uns wieder die Stufen zurück.«

*Die Aufzeichnungen
des Malte Laurids
Brigge, Paper XLII.*

»Eine Hauptsache in Rilkes Prosabuch zu nennen ist tatsächlich schwer [...]«

Helmut Naumann.

»Wie wundervoll sind diese Wesen,
Die, was nicht deutbar, dennoch deuten,
Was nie geschrieben wurde, lesen,
Verworrenes beherrschend binden
Und Wege noch im Ewig-Dunklen finden.«

Hugo von
Hofmannsthal,
Der Tor und der Tod.

»Mehr stand nicht auf dem Blatt. Ich las es mehrere Male, ehe ich es verbrannte.«

*Die Aufzeichnungen
des Malte Laurids
Brigge, Paper XLVI.*

In Paper XIV, it will be recalled, Malte sends out each of his seven *große Fragen* with the words: *Ist es möglich, daß...?* Are these questions wholly rhetorical? Or is it possible that they have an addressee who is not Malte? Each time Malte asks a question, a paragraph shift separates the interrogative mark from the unvarying response: *Ja, es ist möglich*. Now what exactly is marked out in this space between *Ist es möglich, daß...?* (question) and *Ja, es ist möglich* (response)? Is it possible that the space records not a meditative pause, during which Malte ponders his own question, but an expectant caesura, during which an answer is awaited? But what sort of answer does the actual response *Ja, es ist möglich* constitute? *Ist es möglich...? / Ja, es ist möglich*: The *es ist möglich* seems gratuitous, tautological even: had the answer *Ja* been given, then this would surely have amounted to the same thing: *Ja [d.h.: es ist möglich]*. The wording with which Malte closes off each *große Frage* seems curiously inefficient, otiose. Rather than confirming the substance of each question, it merely acknowledges the mode of possibility with which each question started out. The answer, instead of offering a meaningful *Bejahung*, complicates the simple *Jawort* in a way that signals that the question has not been materially moved forward by the reply.

Is it possible that Malte, like the *Kopenhagener Kreis* which Lavater visited, or like Allan Kardec in his *Livre des Esprits*, is catechising the spirits? That, unlike Kardec but like Lavater, his *Arbeit*¹ is graced with »Kein

¹ The word *Arbeit* is used with consistent emphasis by the Copenhagen circle to refer to their questioning of the oracular light, which would in turn respond either *Ja* or *Nein* via a simple code of light-pulses: »Eine *Arbeit* ist's doch, das Fragen, weil alles nur durch *Ja* und *Nein* geht« (Lavater, June 16th 1793, *Reisetagebücher II*, p.174); »Keine Stimme, sondern ein sichtbares, konstantes, leuchtendes Zeichen, das sich beständig als *Ja* u. *Nein* legitimirt, beweist, u. sich

Antwortchen« whatsoever?² That the the tautology of the words *Ja, es ist möglich* draws the autological circle of Malte's disappointedly non-committal reply to his own question? In Copenhagen, Lavater's associates develop a procedure for dealing with ambiguity on the spirit's part: »Wenn die Antwort, welches oft geschieht, unbestimmt *Ja u. Nein* ist, so heißt das: Frage weiter! entwickle die Frage noch mehr. Dieß geschieht dann, u. der geübte Frager vereinfacht dann die Frage, bis ein ganz einfach entscheidendes *Ja* oder *Nein* darauf folgt«.³ In like manner, each of Malte's *große Fragen* comes in two parts - opening gambit ... (pause) ... refinement or elaboration. Yet, for all his persistence, Malte is met by what Schiller's similarly disenchanted Prince calls »ein hohler Widerschall der Frage, als ob man in eine Gruft gerufen hätte«.⁴ Malte must make do with the empty silence of a *Jein* rather than the positive signal of a *Ja* - or, we might say, a *Ouija*.

*Qui est là?*⁵ ... *Es ist kein anderer da*. Without the perceptible society of either a discarnate, transcendental self or a tutelary spirit, the mundane incarnate consciousness of this young nobody >Malte Laurids Brigge< must, in full cognisance of its own nothingness, sit day and night and write by its own dim lights - all the while hoping and praying that these lights will soon be outshone by an apostolic blaze.

über alle Zweýdeutigkeit erheben kann« (Lavater, February 9th - 12th 1794, *ibid.*, pp.324 = Hegner's *Abschrift*).

² *Ibid.*, p.362 (Hegner's *Abschrift*).

³ *Ibid.*, p.325.

⁴ Schiller, *Der Geisterseher*, p.124.

⁵ The question with which the Hugos would invite the spirits during their Jersey sessions (Gruber, *Die Seherin von Prevorst*, p.202).

Kein Antwörtchen. The time of the *Malte* is the time of no reply. Abelone, hearing Malte read out the heading »An Bettine«, prevents him from continuing: »>Nein, nicht die Antworten<«, she interrupts.⁶ To read Goethe's replies would be to contaminate the nonpareil intransitivity of Bettine's passion. The time of no reply is the time of intransitivity, of the non-exhaustion of subjective longing in finite gratification. As we have seen, Maman counsels Malte on the concurrent need to wish wishes and not expect them to be fulfilled: »Wünschen, das soll man nicht aufgeben. Ich glaube, es giebt keine Erfüllung, aber es giebt Wünsche, die lange vorhalten, das ganze Leben lang, so daß man die Erfüllung doch gar nicht abwarten könnte«. ⁷ The *Noch Nicht* with which the *verlorene Sohn* is confronted, like the *Noch eine Weile* with which, so the *Madeleine* sermon tells us, God shows us His infinite love, is charged with this same affirmation of >NO< as the greatest spiritual resource available to the existing human being. The logic of this >NO< - of what a dejected Lavater calls God's »Strenge des Schweigens«⁸ - governs Malte's Kierkegaardian excruciation,⁹ with artistic, occultistic and spiritual

⁶ *MLB*, Paper LVI, p.597.

⁷ *MLB*, Paper XXVIII, p.515.

⁸ Lavater, *Reisetagebücher II*, p.362 (Hegner's *Abschrift*).

⁹ Cf the words of Niels Lyhne's aunt Edele to her hapless suitor, Herr Bigum: »[...] man will nicht das Nein hören, das den eigenen Wünschen entgegentönt, man will die tiefe Kluft vergessen, die sich einem auftut zwischen der Sehnsucht und dem, was man ersehnt. Man will seinen Traum fördern. Aber das Leben rechnet nicht mit Träumen; es gibt keine einzige Schwierigkeit, die sich aus der Wirklichkeit hinausträumen läßt, und so liegt man zu guter Letzt jammernd an jenem Abgrund, der unverändert ist, ganz so, wie er immer war; aber man ist selbst verändert, weil man mit den Träumen alle seine Gedanken aufgeregt und seine Sehnsüchte in die höchste, allerhöchste Spannung getrieben hat. Aber die Kluft ist nicht schmaler geworden, und alles in einem sehnt sich so schmerzlich danach, hinüberzugelangen. Aber nein und abermals nein, immer dasselbe.« (*Niels Lyhne*, p.276). Once again, this is unmistakably Kierkegaardian - with the all-important difference that the movement of resignation which life's >NO< provokes leads not to a deepening of faith but to outright nihilism.

goals all failing to find objective correlative. Malte is given nothing that would take him out of his crisis. He has literally no *data* with which to work.

I have argued that Malte cannot make his monism experiential, leaving him with a chasm between the continuing aspiration of a monistic *Weltbild* and the continuing experience of a dualistic spirituality. To what extent this chasm can be said to represent a >Rilkean< position is a delicate question, not least because of Rilke's own fluctuating outlook from phase to phase. Kierkegaard's depressivism, inherited from his father, biases his philosophy of life into a forbiddingly stringent theological dualism of world and eternity. The Unhappy Consciousness, giving up all hope of personal joy in this life, sees its own condition as categorical and non-contingent. To live in the world means quite simply not to live in the fullness of time. And this extends to what often comes across as a rather chill alienation from Nature on the part of Kierkegaard, which he never approaches romantically as a possible locus of spirit, an authentic *Umwelt*. From a human point of view, the *a priori* law of spiritual fulfilment is *Noch Nicht ... Kein Antwortchen ... Noch eine Weile ...* Rilke's sardonic comment about Kierkegaard's *Schwermuth* suggests that, even in the afterlife, Kierkegaard (rather like Johannes XXII) will disbelieve St. Peter as he turns the key to open the pearly gates.¹⁰ Kierkegaard's God intervenes in our lives by refusing to console us, even to the point of ratcheting up our affliction so that we will come home to Him. Thus, from the

¹⁰ Compare Rilke's letter to Ilse Erdmann of October 9th 1915: »Darum schließt auch Kierkegaard uns in den Ernst des Todes ein, ohne darüber hinaus uns Frist oder ewige Zukunft zuzuschreiben« (quoted in Allemann, *Zeit und Figur beim späten Rilke*, p.308, footnote 3).

Kierkegaardian point of view, existence educates us by blessing us with an experiential dualism between longing and fulfilment.

This, I have suggested, is the outlook for Malte Laurids Brigge by the end of the *Aufzeichnungen*. It is perhaps no coincidence that the letter in which Rilke writes of Kierkegaard's *Schwermuth* opens with a reference to the overwhelming »Wunder« through which the first *Duineser Elegien* have been offering themselves for Rilke's mediumistic »Empfangen«:

Ja, liebe Lou, [Gebe Gott Leben]¹¹ Dabei wird sich schließlich immer herausstellen, was Christus mit so viel Rücksicht der Seeligen Angela von Foligno beweist: daß er täglich so viel bereiter war, zu geben, als sie zu empfangen. Das Schlimme ist nur, daß mich jetzt, rein körperlich, das Empfangen fast ebenso angreift wie das Nicht-Empfangen-Können. Ach ich alte Kalesche, früher war ich so fein gefedert, und jetzt - wenn das Wunder mal eine halbe Stunde in mir fährt, ich wunder mich, daß es nicht aussteigt: ich stoße und rüttle wie die ärmste Teljega [ein russischer Bauernwagen, D.D.] und geh darüber beinah selbst aus den Fugen.¹²

Unlike Kierkegaard, Rilke does not ultimately renounce the hope of affectively experiencing the »Physik des Mystikers«.¹³ And with such breakthroughs as the *Duino diktat* in the winter of 1911/12 and the momentous glimpse of *die andere Seite der Natur* recounted in *Erlebnis I*, Rilke's fear of getting no further than dualistic experience seems to recede, at least temporarily (the war years will mark another traumatic lacuna). There is some evidence that, up until the great Duino breakthrough, Rilke has *never* quite enjoyed the sort of transcendent experiences that would confirm his imaginative intuition that such experiences constitute the true goal of

¹¹ Rilke writes this phrase in Russian.

¹² Rilke - Andreas-Salomé *Briefwechsel*, pp.267f.

¹³ Kassner's definition of *Metaphysik* in *Die Mystik, die Künstler und das Leben*, p.61.

existence and art. Andrea Pagni, as we have seen, identifies a collapse in Rilke's monistic project in the second half of 1900, the long aftermath of which will involve Rilke's desperate chase after the still maintained idea of an organic *Seinstotalität*. In other words, Rilke finds his monism only at the conceptual, imaginative and vaguely sensual level. Quite where the *Malte* fits into Pagni's otherwise cogent narrative remains under-specified. In my view, the *Malte*-text represents for Rilke the height of the monistic crisis: Malte's travails are in part an expression of Rilke's own fear that the spirits will remain in abeyance forever.

Kierkegaard becomes a key philosophical resource in this crisis. But we may note a decisive divergence between the >experimental< prose of Rilke and that of Kierkegaard. Unlike Kierkegaard, who will claim to have written his pseudonymous texts in the service of an already worked out theology, Rilke engages in the act of writing partly in order to work out his own worldview. Whereas Kierkegaard regards his pseudonymous texts as covert »guerilla-raids on the reader's false consciousness« (Eagleton),¹⁴ as a communication strategy whose dialectic draws the reader into an already prepared final stance,¹⁵ Rilke's text stems more heuristically from a

¹⁴ Eagleton, *The Ideology of the Aesthetic*, p.187.

¹⁵ Cf Roger Poole on »the great tradition of misreading« of Kierkegaard's pseudonymous works, in which pseudonymic utterances are facilely conflated with Kierkegaard's own final position on a given topic (*The Indirect Communication*, p.162). In "A First and Last Declaration", appended to Climacus' *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, the author >Søren Kierkegaard< finally comes forward and simultaneously claims and dissociates himself from the pseudonyms: »My wish, my prayer, is that, if it might occur to anyone to quote a particular saying from the books, he would do me the favor to cite the name of the respective pseudonymous author [...]« (Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, p.552). >Kierkegaard< pleads with his reader to spare him »an ill-conceived intrusion upon my factual personality« (ibid., p.553), before rendering thanks to »Governance« (divine providence) for guiding him through the years of the pseudonymous production (ibid.).

provisional, fluid, and anxious authorial disposition. The irony to which Malte is subjected is not coldly supercilious but fraught with discomfort.¹⁶

It seems to me that Kierkegaard and Rilke problematise each other deeply.

From a Kierkegaardian point of view, the Rilke who devotes his life to the search for and cultivation of poetic inspiration is a Christian *manqué*, too immersed in the poetic to enter fully into the religious orientation. In a journal entry from 1840, Kierkegaard writes of the deceptively positive link between poetic fertility and mystic-type affectivity:

It is a curiously sad feeling which grips one when he sees the poetic making its appearance in the development of an individual. For the poetic is the divine woof of the purely human existence; it is the cord through which the divine holds fast to existence. Therefore one could believe that they are the blessed, those gifted individuals, *those living telegraph wires between God and men*. But this is most certainly not true. Madness is their lot; yes, and envy, lostness, in short, the annihilation of their personal existence as being incapable of enduring the touch of the divine. And thus they go through the world misunderstood, neglected, criticized (can anything more ridiculous be imagined!) - yet, misunderstood, for must not everyone who understands the poet also undergo the same experience of being burned? And this is the glory of the world; this is the highest and the best on earth: the poet - this illustrious name to which one attaches the most elevated conceptions, the most lofty expectations - and yet this is his fate: to know a thirst which is never satisfied. The poetic life in the personality is the unconscious sacrifice*,¹⁷ the *molimina* of the divine, because it is first in the religious**¹⁸ that the sacrifice becomes conscious and the misrelationship is removed.¹⁹

¹⁶ Cf Vanoosthuyse, "L'abject et le sublime", pp.132f.

¹⁷ Here Kierkegaard adds a footnote: »*Just as for the Jews fertility was the epitome of the highest blessedness, so is the poetic for every man in whom something higher stirs, and yet Rachel deservedly upbraided God, saying: If this is what being pregnant means, why did I get this way?«.

¹⁸ In a second footnote Kierkegaard writes: »**Therefore Goethe is less appealing, because he is too self-confident to be a sacrifice and not profound enough to want to be«. Compare Malte's attack on Goethe's arrogance towards Bettine (*MLB*, Paper LVII, pp.598f.).

¹⁹ Undated entry 1840, *Journals & Papers Vol.1*, pp.449f.

On this view, the poetic, while it may bring one to the threshold of an authentic religiousness, cannot be confused with the religious proper. Like Adler, who presents Denmark with a purportedly direct revelation from Christ Himself, the poet suffers from a lack of subjective readiness for the touch of the divine. Furthermore, as Kierkegaard writes elsewhere, the poet distorts the religious by feeling the need to filter it through his own aesthetic imagination: »The point of the essentially Christian is that it is presence. For this reason no poet and no speaker can portray it, for they use too much imagination«. ²⁰ In *The Sickness unto Death*, Anti-Climacus stigmatises the poet even more vehemently: »From the Christian viewpoint, every poet-existence (all aesthetics notwithstanding) is sin, the sin of writing instead of being, the sin of relating oneself in imagination to the good and true instead of being it, or rather, of striving existentially to be it«. ²¹ And in this the positive exemplar is of course Christ himself, who only ever wrote in sand. For Kierkegaard, the case of Rilke, precisely on account of the unusually strong presence of religious themes in his work, would represent a dangerous cross-fertilisation of the categories of *genius* and *apostle*, a misguidedly hybrid profession of immanent and transcendent >authority<. No matter how beautiful the genius' poesis, the very distinction of being a >genius<, which is a matter of talent and *human* brilliance, is as nothing in the eternal scheme. Noting the etymological root of the word >apostle< in the Greek *apostolia* (>one who is

²⁰ Undated journal entry 1848, *Journals & Papers Vol.1*, p.353.

²¹ *Sickness unto Death*, p.109.

sent forth<), Kierkegaard insists on the missioning aspect of apostolic duty as overriding all determinations of personality or character. Thus, to turn to the aesthetic as the organon of transcendence is to get lost, or *distrain*, in a Romanticist no-man's-land.

From the mid-1890s right up to his death in 1926, Rilke will, as a rule, repudiate such a prohibition on the fusion of genial and apostolic rôles in the artist figure. Much like Wassily Kandinsky in *Über das Geistige in der Kunst* (1911/12), he will tend spontaneously to place the artist at the very top of the spiritual pyramid, higher even than the spiritist or theosophist.²² The reason for this - and Nietzsche's celebration of the aesthetic is of course a key influence here - comes down to the equation of the divinity with creativity. A purely deontic apostolic calling, in which no space for creative autonomy is left to the human individual, would represent an unthinkable curtailment of the principle of poiesis. For Rilke, as for Bergson, human beings must respond at some level to »the responsibility [...] for deciding if they want merely to live, or intend to make just the extra effort required for fulfilling, even on their refractory planet, the essential function of the universe, which is a machine for the making of gods«. ²³ If man truly enjoys *Gottesebenbildlichkeit*,

²² Cf Baßler's summary of Kandinsky's position: »Die Spiritisten (und Theosophen etc.) bewohnen in dieser Darstellung der geistigen Bevölkerungsstruktur um 1900 eine Zwischenschicht zwischen den naturwissenschaftsgläubigen Materialisten, Positivisten und Naturalisten einerseits und den modernen Künstlern andererseits [...] Sie bringen die überkommenen Ordnungen ins Wanken, lassen wieder >geistige< Perspektiven zu, stoßen aber noch nicht zu den radikal neuen Formen durch, die allein der Künstler an der Spitze der Pyramide medial direkt aus dem Geistigen empfängt« (*"Maltes Gespenster"*, pp.241f, emphases added).

²³ Bergson, *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, translated from the French by R. Ashley Andra & Cloudesley Brereton, with the assistance of W. Horsfall Carter (London: 1935, French orig. 1932), p.275.

then this must be so not least in his partaking of the divine gift of creation. In *Wie erlangt man Erkenntnisse der höheren Welten?*, Rudolf Steiner advances a similar thesis that human beings' spiritual underdevelopment is *holding up the further development of the invisible realm*. The *Geheimschüler*, writes Steiner,

sieht, daß er selbst, *bevor* er zum ersten Male in diese sinnliche Welt gekommen ist, einer übersinnlichen angehört hat. Aber diese einstige übersinnliche Welt *brauchte* den Durchgang durch die sinnliche. Ihre Weiterentwicklung wäre ohne diesen Durchgang nicht möglich gewesen. Erst wenn sich innerhalb des sinnlichen Reiches Wesen entwickelt haben werden mit entsprechenden Fähigkeiten, kann die übersinnliche wieder ihren Fortgang nehmen. Und diese Wesenheiten sind die Menschen. Diese sind somit, so wie sie jetzt leben, einer unvollkommenen Stufe des geistigen Daseins entsprungen und werden selbst innerhalb derselben zu derjenigen Vollkommenheit geführt, durch die sie dann tauglich sein werden zur Weiterarbeit an der höheren Welt.²⁴

Steiner is happy to concede to the artist a prominent rôle in this process of awakening »die in jedem Menschen schlummernden höheren Fähigkeiten [...]«²⁵

²⁴ Steiner, *Wie erlangt man Erkenntnisse der höheren Welten?*, p.222. Clearly, there is a strong concordance between Steiner's position and Rilke's *werdender Gott* theologumenon. One might also point out in passing the proximity of a) Rilke's attempts, in the *Neue Gedichte* and elsewhere, to approach *Dinge* with the openness of a *Wesensschau* and b) Steiner's treatment of *Dinge* in *Wie erlangt man Erkenntnisse der höheren Welten?*: »Was die Dinge bedeuten, das soll nicht [der Geheimforscher] mit spekulierendem Verstande ausmachen wollen, sondern er soll es sich von den Dingen selbst sagen lassen« (ibid., p.49). Significantly, it is to this statement that Steiner appends his footnote on the importance of the artistic disposition (quoted above). Steiner's occult pupil steps out on his esoteric path by contemplating animals, plants, inanimate objects and actions: »Er soll [...] in solchen Augenblicken in aller Stille nachklingen lassen, was er erlebt hat, was ihm die äußere Welt gesagt hat. Jede Blume, jedes Tier, jede Handlung wird ihm in solchen stillen Augenblicken ungeahnte Geheimnisse enthüllen« (ibid., pp.27f.). This reads like a programme statement for Rilke's *Dinggedichte*. It also chimes with Malte's thoughts on authentic *Lyrrik* in Paper XIV (*MLB*, pp.466f.). To miss the occultistic backdrop to either is, in my view, to miss their point. Worthy of mention also is Steiner's formulation of what we have come to think of as a deeply Rilkean complaint: »In alten Zeiten, die vor unsrer >Geschichte< liegen, waren die Tempel des Geistes auch äußerlich sichtbare: heute, wo unser Leben so ungeistig geworden ist, sind sie nicht in der Welt vorhanden, die dem äußeren Auge sichtbar ist. Aber sie sind geistig *überall* vorhanden; und jeder, der sucht, kann sie finden« (*Wie erlangt man Erkenntnisse der höheren Welten?*, p.19).

²⁵ Ibid., p.34.

Bemerkt soll werden, daß *künstlerisches* Empfinden, gepaart mit einer stillen, in sich versenkten Natur, die beste Vorbedingung für die Entwicklung der geistigen Fähigkeiten ist. Dieses Empfinden dringt ja durch die Oberfläche der Dinge hindurch und gelangt dadurch zu deren Geheimnissen.²⁶

For Rilke too, the aesthetic is, *contra* Kierkegaard, not a distraction from the spiritual but its most potent realisation.²⁷ This »Verständnis des Künstlers als fachmännischer Vollender göttlicher Schöpfung«, in Konstantin Imm's words, often draws from Rilke statements that can be construed as a »naïve Blasphemie«.²⁸

Yet, reading the detailed (if overly immanentist) accounts of Rilke's attitude to the word *Gott* given by Gertrud Höhler in *Niemandes Sohn* and Heinrich Imhof in *Rilke's Gott*, I am struck by a counter-narrative. For the energy which Rilke devotes year in year out to developing an apologetics for artistic preeminence over all else - even over >God<, whose >completion< is frequently identified as the greatest artistic task of all²⁹ - betrays a deep vocational unease, if not indeed guilt. In the *Moderne Lyrik* essay of 1898, for

²⁶ Ibid., p.49 (footnote).

²⁷ Cf Kassner on Arjuna's God in *Der indische Idealismus* (p.40): »Die Existenz Gottes ist ewiges Tun«. Rilke will have been moved by Kassner's description in the same book of how the Indian saint is blessed by the fact that his *poiesis* becomes existentially real: »Wenn das Große geschehen ist und alles sich in der Zeit erfüllt hat und der Heilige geworden ist, wohin soll jetzt die Dichtung, die immer geflohen ist? [...] Bei dem Heiligen wird sie das Unmögliche und das Wunder, die Dichtung schlägt in das Leben um und wird wirklich und des Heiligen Erfahrung« (ibid., pp.53f.).

²⁸ Quoted in Arndal, »>Ohne alle Kenntnis von Perspektive?«, p.106. Imm is referring specifically to a comment made by Rilke in one of his *Briefe über Cézanne* (written on October 11th 1907). As Arndal demonstrates, however, Imm's complaint is based upon a misreading of Rilke's point.

²⁹ Cf Park (*Rilkes Selbstwerdung*, pp.44ff.) on the »scheinbare Widerspruch in Rilkes Gottesvorstellung, Gott nicht nur als den Schöpfer, vor dem die Menschen sich selbst aufgeben, sondern auch als ein Geschöpf, das erst erschaffen werden muß, zu sehen [...]«. Park's suggestion that the contradiction is only *scheinbar* if one appreciates Rilke's broad spiritual outlook does not quite succeed in rendering Rilke's oscillation unproblematical.

instance, he raises and then only partially withdraws an acknowledgement of the danger of hypertrophying the aesthetic:

Denn vergessen Sie nicht, daß die Kunst nur ein Weg ist, nicht ein Ziel.³⁰ Es müßte sonst die letzte Absicht des Malers sein, Farben in die Welt zu setzen, und der Musiker müßte seine tiefste Erfüllung darin begründen, aus seinen Tönen Klangpaläste zu bauen, was doch schließlich nichts bedeutete, als die Harmonie des Alls, die eine große Ordnung durch diese unzulänglichen Miniaturen zu stören und nachzuäffen [...] Die Zeit, welche diesen Aberglauben erweckt, schafft zugleich auch immer von neuem diese scheinbare Kluft zwischen der künstlerischen Betätigung und dem Leben.³¹

Is art to be accorded ultimacy or primacy as an end in itself? Or is it just one of several techniques of illumination? Or perhaps merely the royal road for some sensibilities to *express* rather than create experiences of the supramundane? Is the goal fixed in the work of art or in the altered state of *consciousness*, the higher state of *being*? Or are these false alternatives? Here is Rilke in a letter of November 26th 1921:

Denn so sehr der Künstler in einem auch das Werk meint, seine Verwirklichung, sein Dasein und Dableiben über uns hinaus -, ganz gerecht wird man erst, wenn man einsieht, daß auch diese dringendste Realisierung einer höheren Sichtbarkeit, von einem endlich äußersten Ausblick aus, nur als Mittel erscheint, ein wiederum Unsichtbares -, einen heileren Zustand in der Mitte des eigenen Wesens zu gewinnen.³²

It would, regrettably, breach the compass of the present study to undertake a careful and systematic appraisal of what Höhler calls Rilke's »Rechtfertigungsmühsal« and his »kultivierte Entwicklung eines eigenen

³⁰ As Görner notes, this statement »sollte zu Rilkes bleibenden Überzeugungen werden« (”Im Innern des Nirgendwo”, p.385).

³¹ KA IV, p.62.

³² Quoted in Park, *Rilkes Selbstwerdung*, p.13.

Rechtfertigungssystems«.³³ But, to restrict the matter to the matter of *Die Aufzeichnungen des Malte Laurids Brigge*, we might wonder whether Rilke, under cover of his fictive alter ego, has not given powerful voice to his own deepest vocational unease as a writer trying to pass the customs gate into a religious zone. It is as though he both takes away from Malte all the consolations which he himself is clinging to (artistic eminence, access to a network of patronage bulwarking him against poverty and invisibility, high-profile participation in European letters, etc.) and refuses to accord him the consolation *which he himself has not (yet) enjoyed* (to wit, the breakthrough into mystical experience, as recorded in *Erlebnis I*, and into mediumistic *Empfangen*, as finally experienced in the granting of the first verses at Duino in 1911/12). Is it possible that Rilke, through Malte, is asking himself the questions: What would *I* be left with if even my poetic vocation were taken from me? Would *I* be able to answer the call of *absolute, anonymous, Franciscan* >povertà<? Will *I* ever experience the divine touch? In his letter to Clara of October 19th 1907, Rilke implies that Malte's inscription of an existential event is qualitatively lower than a personal leap into the actuality of that event: »er schrieb den Tod des Kammerherrn, aber wie ein Raskolnikov blieb er, von seiner Tat aufgebraucht, zurück, nicht weiter handelnd im Moment, wo das Handeln erst beginnen mußte«.³⁴ Might not Rilke be anticipating his own

³³ Höhler, *Niemandes Sohn*, pp.312 & 58 respectively. Höhler makes the critical point that Rilke's need for legitimation »viel stärker ausgeprägt war als das der französischen absoluten Poeten« (ibid., p.52). Rilke's letter to Clara of December 17th 1906, written in Capri, is perhaps the most powerful apologia for the artistic vocation he ever wrote (*Briefe in zwei Bänden I*, pp.225-7). Indeed, its core message is that the artist is entitled to bypass (what Kierkegaard calls) the ethical stage altogether and proceed directly to the source of transcendental power.

³⁴ *MLB-Materialien*, p.40.

inability to actualise the condition into which he has inscribed his fictive scout?

As is well known, the completion of the *Malte* plunges Rilke into a dire crisis - not his first³⁵ - leaving him face to face with the unthinkable: »Als ich mitten in den >Aufzeichnungen< stand,« he writes to Marie von Thurn und Taxis-Hohenlohe in 1910, »dachte ich oft, daß ich hernach keine Bücher mehr machen würde, sondern ich würde etwas Einfaches und Gleichmäßiges thun und mich im Übrigen nach innen ziehen.«³⁶ Interesting in the context of this rather Wittgensteinian impulse is Rilke's concurrent interest in the mysticism of Martin Buber. Siegfried Mandel writes:

The boundless wonder of existence and the oneness that comes of self and world through ecstasy are necessities that Buber speaks of in his *Ekstatische Konfessionen*

³⁵ If Pagni's central thesis of a »Wendung des monistischen in ein dualistisches Weltbild in der zweiten Hälfte des Jahres 1900 ohne die Aufgabe des Glaubens an eine organische Ordnung« (*Rilke um 1900*, p.5) is correct, then the Rilke who faces into the writing of the *Malte* holds a monism which is no longer a confidently held *worldview* but a utopian *hope*. In this »Interaktion zwischen organischem Weltbild und existentieller Verunsicherung« (ibid., 102), Rilke finds himself philosophically monistic, existentially Kierkegaardian. That this tension becomes the inner drama of the *Malte* makes strong autobiographical sense. See also Pagni's comments on Rilke's disappointed expectations of an inspirational *Diktat* for the *Stundenbuch* (*Rilke um 1900*, p.4), as well as her suggestion that the *Neue Gedichte* represented a virtuoso evasion of the entire monistic crisis that was haunting Rilke (ibid., p.173). Michel Vanoosthuyse points up the dangers of too neat an autobiographical timeline by quoting a remarkably Maltesque entry in Rilke's *Schmargendorfer Tagebuch* from the night of December 13th 1900: »Solche Hoffnungslosigkeit, Atemnöte der Seele [...] Wenn man das >ich< nennen müßte, dieses unsäglich zusammenhanglose Bewußtsein, das in sich hineinfällt wie in einen leeren Brunnen, wie in die Tiefe eines Teiches mit stehendem Wasser und Tieren, welche aus Fäulnis geboren werden. Was ist man dann? [...] Was helfen die Anstrengungen, die man immer lässiger [...] versucht, überredet vom Ekel? [...] Flach, ohne Gefühl und ganz nur Furcht vor allem Geschehen und Nichtgeschehen, vor dem, was ist, und vor der Veränderung dessen, was man kaum erträgt. Kriecht vor jedem Zufall des Tages, nimmt ihn auf wie einen Gast, feiert ihn, enttäuscht sich an seiner Grimasse, sucht die Enttäuschung zu verbergen [...], hintergeht sich selbst [...], kommt immer tiefer in Verworrenheiten und Wahnsinn, träumt, wacht auf, wünscht sich eine Erbschaft, einen Fürstentitel, Ruhm, Armut und Allmacht, alles zugleich [...]« (in Vanoosthuyse, "L'abject et le sublime", pp.130f). That this prolepsis on the *Malte's* very programme is written at the end of 1900 - before Paris - only strengthens Pagni's case of a pre-metropolitan crisis in Rilke's monistic outlook, and at precisely this time.

³⁶ Quoted in Wagner-Egelhaaf, *Mystik der Moderne*, p.73.

(1901); Rilke's readings of the >confessions< inspired him to note *in April of 1910* his own need for a productive experience of God (»produktives Erleben Gottes«).³⁷

Significantly, it is also around this time that Rilke's spiritistic interests are redoubled. And even after the Duino breakthrough Rilke will periodically experience the ebbing of his vocational self-confidence, turning anxiously to thoughts of a different calling closer to the Franciscan ascetic ideal: »Nein, wenn ich manchmal durch ein kleines Loch in der Mauer meiner Apathie hinauschaue ins Wirkliche, einen Augenblick lang, - so staune ich, wie weit ich vom >poverello< jetzt bin [...]«.³⁸

Rudolf Kassner was too immersed in Kierkegaard not to pick up the *Legitimationskrise* shadowing Rilke's entire literary career: »Rilke aber wollte im Grunde mit der Dichtung eines: die Dichtung überwinden, darüber hinauskommen [...]«.³⁹ Like Adorno's paradoxical deployment of Reason to show up its own limits, Rilke's highest poetic language, far from being an aestheticist religion unto itself, may offer an intimate gesture beyond itself.⁴⁰

It seems to me that only Jinhyung Park, in his book *Rilkes Selbstwerdung in buddhistischer Sicht*, has adequately picked up on the momentous

³⁷ Siegfried Mandel, "Rilke's Readings and Impressions from Buber to Alfred Schuler", p.263, emphasis added.

³⁸ Letter to the Fürstin Marie von Thurn und Taxis, May 18th 1914 (*Briefe in zwei Bänden I*, p.529).

³⁹ Kassner, *Rilke. Gesammelte Erinnerungen 1926-1956*, p.59. Cf Görner's linkage of vocational and ethical issues to a Kierkegaardian awareness on Rilke's part of the unavoidable religious question: »Zu gründlich hatte Rilke seinen Kierkegaard studiert, um nicht zu wissen, daß die Dialektik zwischen Ästhetik und Ethik nur (wenn überhaupt) im Religiösen aufgehoben werden könnte. Und diese Suche nach dem aufhebenden Religiösen bestimmte sein Schaffen im Zeitalter des - nach Nietzsche - >toten< Gottes« (editor's "Einleitung" to *R. M. R. Wege der Forschung*, pp.1-9, here: p.4).

⁴⁰ This is the Rilke of the later period whose religious disposition is so penetratingly examined in the fourth chapter of Lorenz' *Schweigen in der Dichtung*.

implications of this possibility: that Rilke was not always so securely confident that poetry »constitue la seule tâche spirituelle« (Mallarmé).⁴¹ But Park's study needs to be supplemented. A comparably broad exploration of Rilke's life and work from a distinctively paranormalist perspective remains, in my view, an urgent *Forschungsdesiderat*.

But if Kierkegaard's critique of the poetic personality problematises Rilke, then there is no reason to grant Kierkegaard himself diplomatic immunity from Rilkean interrogation.

In the first instance, Kierkegaard's own relationship to the aesthetic is far from unproblematical. To identify writing as sin, all the while devoting one's entire adult life to the production of texts fictive, philosophical and homiletic, is, putting it mildly, to court performative contradiction. How much of Kierkegaard's rhetoric against the aesthetic invites decoding as a frenetic working through by the poet *manqué* of his own sense of guilt at *not-being-able-to-stop-writing-instead-of-being*? If Rilke is haunted by the idea of *Nicht-mehr-schreiben-können*, then might not Kierkegaard be haunted by that of *Nicht-mehr-nicht-schreiben-können*?⁴² For all his insistence that his pseudonymous productions constitute a maieutic communication entirely in the service of the divine, Kierkegaard seems at times to protest too much on

⁴¹ Mallarmé's response in 1886 to Léo d'Orfer's request for a definition of poetry (quoted in Michaud, *Message poétique du symbolisme*, p.715.

⁴² Cf Steven Shakespeare (*Kierkegaard, Language and the Reality of God*, pp.211ff.) on Kierkegaard's guilty poet-personality.

this score. Adorno writes that »Redseligkeit« is »die Gefahr von Kierkegaards Produktion insgesamt: die Redseligkeit eines unendlichen Monologs [...]«.⁴³

The security of Kierkegaard's philosophical watchtower is imperiled not only by the example of Rilke's immersion in the aesthetic, but also by Rilke's refusal, despite an experiential deficit, to banish monism from the heart of his spirituality. If Kierkegaard is haunted by the temptations of a poet-existence, then he may be no less haunted by the pain of not being a mystic, an apostle, one of the called. I suspect that personal experience lies behind Anti-Climacus' characterisation in *The Sickness unto Death* of the poet-type who places all his religious longing into his writing:

In relation to the religious he is an unhappy lover, that is, he is not in the strict sense a believer; he has only the first requirement of faith: despair; and in it an intense longing for the religious. His conflict is really this: Has he been called? Is the thorn in his flesh a sign that he is to be put to extraordinary use? [...] *But enough of this. I can say with emphatic truthfulness, >Who is it I'm speaking to?< >who bothers with psychological inquiries like this in the nth degree?<.*⁴⁴

Who is Climacus speaking to? Is it possible that Kierkegaard's own pseudonym is impudently mocking his creator?

In this light, we might ask, along with George Steiner in his illuminating essay "The Wound of Negativity", whether Kierkegaard really does banish the ghost of Magister Adler. Steiner audaciously (and, to my knowledge, quite originally) reverses the received wisdom on *The Book on Adler*, contending that Kierkegaard's manifest contempt for the prelate's

⁴³ Adorno, "Kierkegaards Lehre von der Liebe", p.218.

⁴⁴ Kierkegaard, *Sickness unto Death*, p.110, emphasis added.

claims to divine revelation masks »a particular terror« - a *Doppelgängerscheu* (redolent of that experienced by Kant in relation to Swedenborg):

On almost every page of the Adler book, we observe Kierkegaard labouring, sometimes with satiric confidence, but more often in barely muffled *Angst*, to shake off the intimacy of his scandalous familiar, of the >house-demon< who is also his twin.⁴⁵

On this reading, Kierkegaard the genius is incandescent with envy at the thought that this ungenial shadow has upstaged him with an apostolic claim. For Steiner, Kierkegaard's critique of Adler is spectacularly unconvincing: because Adler does not conform to Kierkegaard's dogmatic conception of how a divinely authorised Christian should behave, he must be either prey to delusion or guilty of perpetrating a hoax. Unlike Pascal, Kierkegaard has not left us with a scrap of paper recording a Christ-revelation. Indeed, he emphatically speaks of himself in the journals as a genius and not an apostle. By what authority, therefore, does he presume to pass judgment on the authority of Adler? If Rilke's double vocational fear is that he may not be called to the inspired poet-existence he chooses, and, even were inspiration to come, that poetry might still not represent the *most* authentic path to ultimate Being, then Kierkegaard's double vocational fear might be that he can neither renounce the aesthetic nor win through to the type of religious experience betokening genuine religious authority. It is as if aesthetic and monistic drives, latent and suppressed in Kierkegaard's existence, are given a chance to be lived out in Rilke's existence.

⁴⁵ George Steiner, "The Wound of Negativity: Two Kierkegaard Texts", in: *Kierkegaard: A Critical Reader*, edited by Jonathan Rée & Jane Chamberlain (Oxford: 1988), pp.103-113.

But to pass off as in any way authoritative a series of judgments pertaining to crises of authority in either Rilke or Kierkegaard is a hubristic affair - not least in relation to the *Malte*. For in order to bring Malte to the Kierkegaardian point that I have identified as his final disposition, I have depicted his occultism as enmeshing him in a rich epistemological tragi-comedy. The Kierkegaardian dimension has been undergirded by my contention that the spectral appears in the *Malte* with both more (numerical) and less (ontological) presence than hitherto acknowledged. *Hypocrite lecteur?* Might not my reader be tempted to detect here a case of a blind reader banishing Malte's ghosts in order to banish the ghost of hermeneutic anarchy? Of a reader finding irony in the cognitive behaviour and blindness of a fictive figure whose cognitive behaviour he himself, ironically enough, mimics, and whose blindness he himself emulates? Of a reader accusing Malte of falling prey to epistemological tragi-comedy, all the while repressing his own epistemological vulnerability? Of the projections which Malte beams at *Vorwand* upon *Vorwand* finding their analogue in the projections which Malte's reader thinks to beam at »la page murale« (Doumet)?⁴⁶ I spent Chapters Two, Three and Four walking around Malte's Paris, sitting in his room, revisiting his childhood - and, like Malte, attempted to extract from these spaces a certain cognitive mood. That Malte's mood has been one of

⁴⁶ Doumet, "Malte devant les parois", p.78.

occultistic mystery, mine a contrary one of demystification, alters precisely nothing in the circumstance that I am, as far as cognitive habits are concerned, Malte's *frère* and *semblable*. We both dream of semiotic cohesion.

Is it possible that Malte's Papers do not constitute anything like the progressive sequence which underwrites my interpretation of his Kierkegaardian tribulation? Is it possible that the spectre of Christine Brahe really does appear on four occasions to the assembled company in the dining-room at Urnekloster? Is it possible that the hand which the very young Malte encounters under the table is not a shadow but a supernatural intruder? Is it possible that Graf Brahe's deuteroscopy is authentic? Is it possible that the recently departed spirit of Ingeborg does pay a visit to Ulsgaard and that Cavalier does accurately tune in to her presence? Is it possible that the man in the *crémèrie* really is dying and that this fact is being telegraphed to a praeternaturally intuitive Malte? Is it possible that Malte's magnetic sympathy with the *Zitterer* on the street and with the medical student next door really does sustain each a little while longer? All of this is possible because none of it is possible. *There is nothing real there*. The >ghosts of ghosts< within this text are themselves the product of a purely phantom existence. By what ontological absurdity could one speak of Malte Laurids Brigge as >real< and his ghosts as >unreal<?

Is it possible that I have misunderstood *Die Aufzeichnungen des Malte Laurids Brigge*? Is it possible to understand them? But how, precisely, can it be possible to *misunderstand* them? One writes the questions and receives no

reply. Not from the »archival burial ground«⁴⁷ of the *Malte* itself, whose serial ambiguity makes it impossible to discern a ghost in the machine of the text. Not from Rilke, who to all appearances remains unavailable for further comment.⁴⁸ Yet even were Rilke to take control of one's hand and dictate a reply, would that ghostly entity known as >authorial intention< necessarily establish a *Zeit der anderen Auslegung* in which the ghost of textual perplexity would finally be laid to rest? There is no guarantee that we would not behave with a spirit-Rilke as participants at the Hugos' séances did with >Shakespeare< and >Molière<, querying their identity or, more improperly, getting into semantics with them on their own texts. For, as Gruber notes of such constrictions on the spirit: »Auch der tote Autor hat mit seinem Text konsistent zu sein [...]«.⁴⁹ For the selfsame reason, Rilke's pre-posthumous letters cannot offer us a secure settlement either. If, as Moritz Baßler has persuasively argued, both the ideologeme of intransitive love and the paradigm of spectrality constitute important poetological moments within the *Malte*, then we must resign ourselves to the fact that Rilke has written a text that mercilessly taunts its reader with intransitive signifiers and ephemeral significations. In other words, it humiliates us more mercilessly than most fictions for the absurd suspensions of disbelief which we bring to it. The

⁴⁷ Cf Julian Wolfreys, *Victorian Hauntings. Spectrality, Gothic, the Uncanny and Literature* (Basingstoke & New York: 2002), p.xii. Wolfreys' sophisticated treatment of the current vogue for »spectralization of narrative theory« (ibid., p.81, cf pp.ix ff. &77ff.) has influenced me considerably in the present section.

⁴⁸ At least as far as his *Malte* is concerned. See Eudo C. Mason's account (*Rilke, Europe, and the English-Speaking World*, Cambridge: 1961, pp.52ff.) of »a curious epilogue«: in Autumn 1932, Nora Wydenbruck purportedly begins to receive séantistic communications from Rilke, in which the departed poet offers guidance on the translation of the *Duineser Elegien* into English...

⁴⁹ Gruber, *Die Seherin von Prevorst*, p.202.

central strategy becomes manifest here in the way in which - as Malte writes of the interiors of the *Droschken* hidden by *Milchglasfenster* in Paper VI - the reader's *Vermutungen* soon become *geradezu unbegrenzt*. Rilke's text seems to have been seeded with tantalising clues as to undecidable possibilities. Yet if one succumbs to the temptation to follow this dissemination of meaning, this *Produktion des Rätselhaften*,⁵⁰ there is no end to the outlandish ideas one might find growing uncontrollably inside one's head, ideas that do not merit to be entertained in serious scholarly discourse.⁵¹

⁵⁰ Cf Gruber, *Die Seherin von Prevorst*, pp.213f, footnote 86.

⁵¹ For fear that, like Malte, I may draw down upon myself the suspicion of unbridled *Beziehungswahn* - see Bollnow, *Rilke*, p.40 - I footnote away, under interrogative cover, one such sequence of no doubt laughable speculations:

Why exactly does Malte's father visit Urnekloster several years after his wife's death? Why does he not react visibly when Malte touches his leg under the dining table? Does he even know that the touch is coming from his son and not, for instance, from a certain lady seated beside him? Who exactly is this »entfernte Cousine meiner Mutter« [Paper XV, p.472]? Is there any hidden significance in the fact that she reminds Malte uncannily of his departed mother, rather in the manner in which, as Malte observes in Paper V, people put on new faces as they go through life? If she reminds Malte of his dead mother, might she not also remind Malte's father of his dead wife? Now what was the nature of the relationship between Malte's parents? What is the significance of the photographs of women which Malte finds in his father's *Nachlaß*? Amongst these photographs is one of Ingeborg. What was the nature of the relationship between Malte's father and Ingeborg? Were they lovers? (see Stahl's interesting speculations on this score: *MLB*, editorial essay on *Deutungsaspekte*, p.895f.) Why does Ingeborg die so young? Is it a coincidence that Malte's mother also dies unusually young, a fact driven home with strange insistence in Paper XXXVI (p.541)? What goes through Malte's father's mind when he sees Cavalier's reaction to what is apparently the ghost of Ingeborg, *who died too young*? Is Cavalier dead after his convulsions around the invisible figure? If not, what does Malte's father do with him after carrying him into the house so decisively? Why does he respond to the dog's behaviour so quickly? Is he unusually troubled by the notion of a revenance, real or imagined, from this dead woman? What motivates his fury years later when he sees a woman in white passing through the Urnekloster dining-room, »langsam wie eine Kranke«, accompanied by »ein einziger wimmernder Laut [...] wie eines alten Hundes« (Paper XV, p.479)? Does he initially believe that he is being provoked with a staged appearance from the >ghost< of his wife, *who died too young*? Have not Graf Brahe's peculiar references to her, »als fragte er nach ihr« (ibid., p.474), prepared him for such an event? Now why would the family of this *défunte* want to provoke her widower like this? When Graf Brahe, responding to the Jägermeister's query (»>Wer ist das?<«, ibid., p.477), identifies the figure as Christine Brahe, the behaviour of Malte's father changes from rage to sullen passivity - and, in the final apparition scene, compliance. Is this a sign of relief? What power does Graf Brahe hold over his son-in-law that he can prevail upon him to visit Urnekloster for such a long time? What lies behind Graf Brahe's knowing smile? What is it that keeps Malte's father up all night after the first appearance, pacing the floor of his bedroom? If a ghost seems to appear to a group of the living, who amongst these will be likely to start like a guilty thing,

Recall the image of the *hohle Form* which Rilke deploys in his letter of November 8th 1915 to convey the inner meaning of *Malte Laurids*.⁵² One is put in mind of the casts which began to emerge from séances around the middle of the nineteenth century. These casts record not the *presence* of the now-absent spirit, but its precise anti-presence, for the space which was fleetingly occupied by, for example, the hand is precisely the space which is *not* now

then explode with rage? Why does Malte never lay the ghost of his mother to rest? The dying Kammerherr Brigge desired to be carried into the room in which *his* mother had died twenty-three years ago. The chronology of Malte's childhood narratives shows that approximately twenty-three years have passed since Malte's own mother passed away. Is there something about her death that needs to be revisited? ... The narrative *repetition* of Malte's childhood memories threatens to change the meaning of those >same< memories. Yet the old meanings are not securely replaced by new ones. The domestic background to Malte's childhood is like a reworked scenario of Hoffmann's *Das öde Haus*, except there is no Dr. K. at the end to ease the analytic tension. Angeloz suggests that the *Malte* is in fact Rilke's own experiment in Kierkegaardian repetition (*Rainer Maria Rilke. Leben und Werk*, p.239). It would be an interesting research project to examine microscopically the complex play of repetition in this book: a) Repetition as a Freudian-type linguistic compulsion (*Wiederholen wir: >Hab ich es schon gesagt? Hab ich es schon gesagt? ... Chou-fleur, Chou-fleur ... La Presse, La Presse ... gesehen, gesehen ... avant, a-v-a-n-t ... cf Kierkegaard, Repetition, p.150*). b) Repetition as anamnesis, whereby events of childhood both repeat themselves and do not repeat *themselves* in the adult self: »Ich habe um meine Kindheit gebeten, und sie ist wiedergekommen [...]« (*MLB, Paper XX, p.499*). c) Repetition as spectral revenance. d) Repetition as *Doppelgängertum*. Here Hoffmann and Kierkegaard enter into powerful coalition in Rilke's text, both in the uncanny doubling of people and in the intratextual correspondence of motifs and scenarios. e) Repetition as intertextuality, cryptocitation, palimpsestic-parasitic tribute to earlier writers. After all, what is anxiety of influence if not a species of *Doppelgängerscheu*? What is *zitieren* in the normal sense if not a form of *zitieren* in the superordinary sense? And would not the death of the author through intertextuality operate only on the basis of the spectral *survival* (or revival) of other >authors<? f) Repetition as a problematic of specularity (such as the moment when the young Malte's mirror in Paper XXXII »wollte, schläfrig wie er war, nicht gleich nachsprechen, was man ihm vorsagte«, *MLB, p.526*). g) Repetition in the full Kierkegaardian sense of a restitution to the religiously enlightened self who has reached the other side of the trial of faith. I believe that Malte adumbrates this idea when he muses on the possibility of »alles anders zu sehen und doch zu leben« (*MLB, Paper XVIII, p.490*). Of the seven senses of repetition listed here, it seems to me that items d) and e) would repay especially close attention. I believe that a *systematic* archaeological dig for embedded Hoffmann texts in the *Malte* would yield dividends. A *Vorstufe* to such a >dig< might involve a close reading of some early prose fictions in the Rilkean *oeuvre* (I am thinking of such occult tales as *Eine Tote* of 1896, *Die Geschwister* of 1899 and *Der Totengräber* of 1899/1903). If, as I have argued, the *Malte* has been subjected to a persistent >paradigm-blindness<, then there would surely be much to gain in turning to Hoffmann studies and drawing on some of the hermeneutic resources developed so brilliantly there over the past number of decades and applying them to Rilke's text(s). Perhaps then the naïve >anti-apparitionism< of my reading, itself a symptom perhaps of resistance to the energy of ambiguity, might quickly be superseded in favour of a more refined registration of paranormal motifs.

⁵² *Briefe in zwei Bänden I*, pp.599f.

occupied by the cast. This space must be left unfilled in order that it may signal itself after the event as a negative trace of vanished presence. In like manner, the *Malte Papers* record only the negative form of this fictional man's spirit - and of the spirit which created him. At the level of motif too, Malte's Papers rework a fascination with this grammar of absence - a Woman whom one may describe only circumlocutiously (Malte's »negative Theologie der Weiblichkeit«, as Uwe Steiner calls it),⁵³ a dog describing the contours of Ingeborg, an empty *Schmucketui* of which the young Malte saw »nur, woraus die Leere bestand« (Paper LXVI),⁵⁴ Malte's armchair containing the indentation left by the head of previous tenants (Paper XVIII).⁵⁵ This text, itself a material form of some vanished spirit, seems to want to show us the outside contour of a profound spiritual mystery.

Kierkegaard-Climacus writes in the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*: »Without risk there is no faith. Faith is precisely the contradiction between the infinite passion of the individual's inwardness and the objective uncertainty«. ⁵⁶ To commit oneself to a global or local interpretation of *Die Aufzeichnungen des Malte Laurids Brigge* is to enter a secular arena of abyssal objective uncertainty and to make a leap of faith. If both Kierkegaard's >faith< and Malte's >intransitive Liebe< pivot on the idea of a maximal tension within the self due to the fact that one's desire remains objectless, ungratified, unanswered, then perhaps the strange, near-masochistic pleasure

⁵³ Uwe Steiner, *Zeit der Schrift*, p.346.

⁵⁴ *MLB*, p.619.

⁵⁵ *MLB*, p.488.

⁵⁶ Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, p.182.

of the *Malte*-text lies in the hermeneutic renunciation into which it forces us. »Trotz allem Licht, das man auf die *Aufzeichnungen des Malte Laurids Brigge* werfen mag,« wrote Angelloz a half-century ago, »bleibt es doch ein problematisches Buch und wird es immer bleiben«. ⁵⁷ The sense of an »unerhörte Geschichte« lying back of this book both arouses and denies the reader's desire for analytic gratification. To interpret the *Malte* from within this hermeneutic abyss is at the same time to try to *continue* its narrative. Thus the critic doubles as weaver of supporting fictions. The book's fragmentary quality, a result of Rilke's refusal to tie up so many loose ends, tantalises in the manner of Schiller's *Der Geisterseher* or Dickens' *Edwin Drood* - two unfinished fictions of the paranormal that have inspired readers to try their hand at sequels or endings. Little wonder, then, that Rilke's problematical book is already close to surpassing the *siècle* of scholarly toil which Joyce famously ordained for *Finnegan's Wake*.

Can we ever be very reliably at home in the interpreted text of *Malte's* world? Are we even meant to be? Or is it that this book is an existential rather than a critical challenge? By excruciating our analytic faculty it comes into its own as an >existence-communication<, forcing us, in the passion of an objective uncertainty, to register its resonance with our *own* lives. Like a certain archaic torso, this work of art smokes us out of our safe hermeneutic vantage point and, turning our gaze back upon us, issues its existential communication.

Hypocrite lecteur! Mon semblable, mon frère!

⁵⁷ Angelloz, *Rainer Maria Rilke. Leben und Werk*, p.246.

Predictably, I must leave the last word of - and on - the present study
to Malte:

*Ist es möglich, [...] daß man noch nichts Wirkliches und Wichtiges gesehen,
erkannt und gesagt hat?*

[...]

[Wiederholen wir:]

*Ist es möglich, [...] daß man noch nichts Wirkliches und Wichtiges gesehen,
erkannt und gesagt hat?*

[...]

Ja, es ist möglich.

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