

*Julia Kristeva*

BLACK SUN

DEPRESSION AND MELANCHOLIA

*Translated by Leon S. Roudiez*

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY PRESS  
NEW YORK

## CONTENTS

1. Psychoanalysis—A Counterdepressant	I
2. Life and Death of Speech	31
3. Illustrations of Feminine Depression	69
Cannibalistic Solitude	71
To Kill or to Kill Oneself:	
The Enacted Wrongdoing	80
A Virgin Mother	87
4. Beauty: The Depressive's Other Realm	95
5. Holbein's Dead Christ	105
6. Gérard de Nerval, the Disinherited Poet	139
7. Dostoyevsky, the Writing of Suffering, and Forgiveness	173
8. The Malady of Grief: Duras	219
<i>Notes</i>	261
<i>Index</i>	285

For those who are racked by melancholia, writing about it would have meaning only if writing sprang out of that very melancholia. I am trying to address an abyss of sorrow, a noncommunicable grief that at times, and often on a long-term basis, lays claims upon us to the extent of having us lose all interest in words, actions, and even life itself. Such despair is not a revulsion that would imply my being capable of desire and creativity, negative indeed but present. Within depression, if my existence is on the verge of collapsing, its lack of meaning is not tragic—it appears obvious to me, glaring and inescapable.

Where does this black sun come from? Out of what eerie galaxy do its invisible, lethargic rays reach me, pinning me down to the ground, to my bed, compelling me to silence, to renunciation?

The wound I have just suffered, some setback or other in my love life or my profession, some sorrow or bereavement affecting my relationship with close relatives—such are often the easily spotted triggers of my despair. A betrayal, a fatal illness, some accident or handicap that abruptly wrests me away from what seemed to me the

normal category of normal people or else falls on a loved one with the same radical effect, or yet . . . What more could I mention? An infinite number of misfortunes weigh us down every day . . . All this suddenly gives me another life. A life that is unlivable, heavy with daily sorrows, tears held back or shed, a total despair, scorching at times, then wan and empty. In short, a devitalized existence that, although occasionally fired by the effort I make to prolong it, is ready at any moment for a plunge into death. An avenging death or a liberating death, it is henceforth the inner threshold of my despondency, the impossible meaning of a life whose burden constantly seems unbearable, save for those moments when I pull myself together and face up to the disaster. I live a living death, my flesh is wounded, bleeding, cadaverized, my rhythm slowed down or interrupted, time has been erased or bloated, absorbed into sorrow . . . Absent from other people's meaning, alien, accidental with respect to naive happiness, I owe a supreme, metaphysical lucidity to my depression. On the frontiers of life and death, occasionally I have the arrogant feeling of being witness to the meaninglessness of Being, of revealing the absurdity of bonds and beings. ✓

My pain is the hidden side of my philosophy, its mute sister. In the same way, Montaigne's statement "To philosophize is to learn how to die" is inconceivable without the melancholy combination of sorrow and hatred—which came to a head in Heidegger's *care* and the disclosure of our "being-for-death." Without a bent for melancholia there is no psyche, only a transition to action or play.

Nevertheless, the power of the events that create my depression is often out of proportion to the disaster that suddenly overwhelms me. What is more, the disenchantment that I experience here and now, cruel as it may be, appears, under scrutiny, to awaken echoes of old traumas,

to which I realize I have never been able to resign myself. I can thus discover antecedents to my current breakdown in a loss, death, or grief over someone or something that I once loved. The disappearance of that essential being continues to deprive me of what is most worthwhile in me; I live it as a wound or deprivation, discovering just the same that my grief is but the deferment of the hatred or desire for ascendancy that I nurture with respect to the one who betrayed or abandoned me. My depression points to my not knowing how to lose—I have perhaps been unable to find a valid compensation for the loss? It follows that any loss entails the loss of my being—and of Being itself. The depressed person is a radical, sullen atheist.

### *Melancholia—Somber Lining of Amatory Passion*

A sad voluptuousness, a despondent intoxication make up the humdrum backdrop against which our ideals and euphorias often stand out, unless they be that fleeting clear-mindedness shredding the amorous hypnosis that joins two persons together. Conscious of our being doomed to lose our loves, we grieve perhaps even more when we glimpse in our lover the shadow of a long lost former loved one. Depression is the hidden face of Narcissus, the face that is to bear him away into death, but of which he is unaware while he admires himself in a mirage. Talking about depression will again lead us into the marshy land of the Narcissus myth.<sup>1</sup> This time, however, we shall not encounter the bright and fragile amatory idealization; on the contrary, we shall see the shadow cast on the fragile self, hardly dissociated from the other, precisely by the loss of that essential other. The shadow of despair.

Rather than seek the meaning of despair (it is either obvious or metaphysical), let us acknowledge that there is

meaning only in despair. The child king becomes irredeemably sad before uttering his first words; this is because he has been irrevocably, desperately separated from the mother, a loss that causes him to try to find her again, along with other objects of love, first in the imagination, then in words. Semiology, concerned as it is with the zero degree of symbolism, is unavoidably led to ponder over not only the amatory state but its corollary as well, melancholia; at the same time it observes that if there is no writing other than the amorous, there is no imagination that is not, overtly or secretly, melancholy.

#### Thought—Crisis—Melancholia

Nevertheless, melancholia is not French. The rigor of Protestantism or the matriarchal weight of Christian orthodoxy admits more readily to a complicity with the grieving person when it does not beckon him or her into *delectatio morosa*. While it is true that the French Middle Ages rendered sadness by means of delicate tropes, the Gallic, renescent, enlightened tone tended toward levity, eroticism, and rhetoric rather than nihilism. Pascal, Rousseau, and Nerval cut a sorry figure—and they stand as exceptions.

For the speaking being life is a meaningful life; life is even the apogee of meaning. Hence if the meaning of life is lost, life can easily be lost: when meaning shatters, life no longer matters. In his doubtful moments the depressed person is a philosopher, and we owe to Heraclitus, Socrates, and more recently Kierkegaard the most disturbing pages on the meaning or lack of meaning of Being. One must, however, go back to Aristotle to find a thorough reflection on the relationship philosophers have maintained with melancholia. According to the *Problemata* (30, 1), attributed to Aristotle, black bile (*melaina kole*) saps

great men. The (pseudo-)Aristotelian reflection focuses on the *ethos-peritton*, the exceptional personality, whose distinctive characteristic would be melancholia. While relying on the Hippocratic notions of four humors and temperaments, Aristotle breaks new ground by removing melancholia from pathology and locating it in nature but also and mainly by having it ensue from *heat*, considered to be the regulating principle of the organism, and *mesotes*, the controlled interaction of opposite energies. This Greek notion of melancholia remains alien to us today; it assumes a "properly balanced diversity" (*eukratos anomalia*) that is metaphorically rendered by froth (*aphros*), the euphoric counterpoint to black bile. Such a white mixture of air (*pneuma*) and liquid brings out froth in the sea, wine, as well as in the sperm of man. Indeed, Aristotle combines scientific statement with mythical allusions as he links melancholia to spermatoc froth and eroti, with explicit references to Dionysus and Aphrodite (953b, 31-32). The melancholia he evokes is not a philosopher's disease but his very nature, his *ethos*. It is not what strikes the first Greek melancholy hero, Bellerophon, who is thus portrayed in the *Iliad* (VI, 200-3): "Bellerophon gave offense to the gods and became a lonely wanderer on the Aleian plain, eating out his heart and shunning the paths of men." Self-devouring because forsaken by the gods, exiled by divine decree, this desperate man was condemned not to mania but to banishment, absence, void . . . With Aristotle, melancholia, counterbalanced by genius, is coextensive with man's anxiety in Being. It could be seen as the forerunner of Heidegger's anguish as the *Stimmung* of thought. Schelling found in it, in similar fashion, the "essence of human freedom," an indication of "man's affinity with nature." The philosopher would thus be "melancholy on account of a surfeit of humanity."<sup>2</sup>

This perception of melancholia as an extreme state and

as an exceptionality that reveals the true nature of Being undergoes a profound transformation during the Middle Ages. On the one hand, medieval thought returned to the cosmologies of late antiquity and bound melancholia to Saturn, the planet of spirit and thought.<sup>3</sup> Dürer's *Melancholia* (1514) was a masterful transposition into graphic art of theoretical speculations that found their highest expression with Marsilio Ficino. Christian theology, on the other hand, considered sadness a sin. Dante set "the woeful people who have lost the good of the intellect" in "the city of grief" (*Inferno*, III). They are "wretched souls" because they have lost God, and these melancholy shadows constitute "the sect of the wicked displeasing both to God and to His enemies"; their punishment is to have "no hope of death." Those whom despair has caused to turn violent against themselves, suicides and squanderers, are not spared either; they are condemned to turn into trees (*Inferno*, XIII). Nevertheless, medieval monks did promote sadness: as mystical ascesis (*acedia*) it became essential as a means toward paradoxical knowledge of divine truth and constituted the major touchstone for faith.

Changing in accordance with the religious climate, melancholia asserted itself, if I may say so, in religious doubt. There is nothing more dismal than a dead God, and Dostoyevsky himself was disturbed by the distressing sight of the dead Christ in Holbein's painting, contrasted with the "truth of resurrection." The periods that witness the downfall of political and religious idols, periods of crisis, are particularly favorable to black moods. While it is true that an unemployed worker is less suicidal than a deserted lover, melancholia does assert itself in times of crisis; it is spoken of, establishes its archeology, generates its representations and its knowledge. A written melancholia surely has little in common with the institutional-

ized stupor that bears the same name. Beyond the confusion in terminology that I have kept alive up to now (What is melancholia? What is depression?), we are confronted with an enigmatic paradox that will not cease questioning us: if loss, bereavement, and absence trigger the work of the imagination and nourish it permanently as much as they threaten it and spoil it, it is also noteworthy that the work of art as fetish emerges when the activating sorrow has been repudiated. The artist consumed by melancholia is at the same time the most relentless in his struggle against the symbolic abdication that blankets him . . . . Until death strikes or suicide becomes imperative for those who view it as final triumph over the void of the lost object . . .

### *Melancholia/Depression*

I shall call *melancholia* the institutional symptomatology of inhibition and asymbolia that becomes established now and then or chronically in a person, alternating more often than not with the so-called manic phase of exaltation. When the two phenomena, despondency and exhilaration, are of lesser intensity and frequency, it is then possible to speak of neurotic depression. While acknowledging the difference between melancholia and depression, Freudian theory detects everywhere the same *impossible mourning for the maternal object*. Question: impossible on account of what paternal weakness? Or what biological frailty? Melancholia—we again encounter the generic term after having demarcated psychotic and neurotic symptomatologies—admits of the fearsome privilege of situating the analyst's question at the intersection of the biological and the symbolical. Parallel series? Consecutive sequences? A dan-



gerous crossing that needs to be clarified, another relationship that needs to be thought up?

The terms melancholia and depression refer to a composite that might be called melancholy/depressive, whose borders are in fact blurred, and within which psychiatrists ascribe the concept of "melancholia" to the illness that is irreversible on its own (that responds only to the administration of antidepressants). Without going into details about various types of depression ("psychotic" or "neurotic," or, according to another classification, "anxious," "agitated," "retarded," or "hostile"), or concerning myself with the promising but still imprecise field in which one studies the exact effects of antidepressants (monoamine oxidase inhibitors, tricyclics, and heterocyclics) or thymic stabilizers (lithium carbonates), I shall examine matters from a *Freudian point of view*. On that basis, I shall try to bring out, from the core of the melancholy/depressive composite, blurred as its borders may be, what pertains to a common experience of *object loss* and of a *modification of signifying bonds*. These bonds, language in particular, prove to be unable to insure, within the melancholy/depressive composite, the autostimulation that is required in order to initiate given responses. Instead of functioning as a "rewards system," language, on the contrary, hyperactivates the "anxiety-punishment" pair, and thus inserts itself in the slowing down of thinking and decrease in psychomotor activity characteristic of depression. If temporary sadness or mourning on the one hand, and melancholy stupor on the other are clinically and nosologically different, they are nevertheless supported by *intolerance for object loss* and *the signifier's failure* to insure a compensating way out of the states of withdrawal in which the subject takes refuge to the point of inaction (pretending to be dead) or even suicide. Thus I shall speak of depression and

melancholia without always distinguishing the particularities of the two ailments but keeping in mind their common structure.

*The Depressive Person: Full of Hatred or Wounded, Mourned "Object" and Mourned "Thing"*

According to classic psychoanalytic theory (Abraham, Freud, and Melanie Klein),<sup>4</sup> depression, like mourning, conceals an aggressiveness toward the lost object, thus revealing the ambivalence of the depressed person with respect to the object of mourning. "I love that object," is what that person seems to say about the lost object, "but even more so I hate it; because I love it, and in order not to lose it, I imbed it in myself; but because I hate it, that other within myself is a bad self, I am bad, I am non-existent, I shall kill myself." The complaint against oneself would therefore be a complaint against another, and putting oneself to death but a tragic disguise for massacring an other. Such logic presupposes, as one can imagine, a stern superego and a whole complex dialectic of idealization and devalorization of self and other, the aggregate of these activities being based on the mechanism of *identification*. For my identification with the loved-hated other, through incorporation-introjection-projection, leads me to imbed in myself its sublime component, which becomes my necessary, tyrannical judge, as well as its subject component, which demeans me and of which I desire to rid myself. Consequently, the analysis of depression involves bringing to the fore the realization that the complaint against oneself is a hatred for the other, which is without doubt the substratum of an unsuspected sexual desire. Clearly such an advent of hatred within transference entails risks for the analysand as well as the analyst, and the

therapy of depression (even the one called neurotic) verges on schizoid fragmentation.

Melancholy cannibalism, which was emphasized by Freud and Abraham and appears in many dreams and fantasies of depressed persons (see chapter 3), accounts for this passion for holding within the mouth (but vagina and anus also lend themselves to this control) the intolerable other that I crave to destroy so as to better possess it alive. Better fragmented, torn, cut up, swallowed, digested . . . than lost. The melancholy cannibalistic imagination<sup>5</sup> is a repudiation of the loss's reality and of death as well. It manifests the anguish of losing the other through the survival of self, surely a deserted self but not separated from what still and ever nourishes it and becomes transformed into the self—which also resuscitates—through such a devouring.

Nevertheless, the treatment of narcissistic individuals has led modern analysts to understand another form of depression.<sup>6</sup> Far from being a hidden attack on an other who is thought to be hostile because he is frustrating, sadness would point to a primitive self—wounded, incomplete, empty. Persons thus affected do not consider themselves wronged but afflicted with a fundamental flaw, a congenital deficiency. Their sorrow doesn't conceal the guilt or the sin felt because of having secretly plotted revenge on the ambivalent object. Their sadness would be rather the most archaic expression of an unsymbolizable, unnameable narcissistic wound, so precocious that no outside agent (subject or agent) can be used as referent. For such narcissistic depressed persons, sadness is really the sole object; more precisely it is a substitute object they become attached to, an object they tame and cherish for lack of another. In such a case, suicide is not a disguised act of war but a merging with sadness and, beyond it,

with that impossible love, never reached, always elsewhere, such as the promises of nothingness, of death.

### *Thing and Object*

The depressed narcissist mourns not an Object but the Thing.<sup>7</sup> Let me posit the "Thing" as the real that does not lend itself to signification, the center of attraction and repulsion, seat of the sexuality from which the object of desire will become separated.

Of this Nerval provides a dazzling metaphor that suggests an insistence without presence, a light without representation: the Thing is an imagined sun, bright and black at the same time. "It is a well-known fact that one never sees the sun in a dream, although one is often aware of some far brighter light."<sup>8</sup>

Ever since that archaic attachment the depressed person has the impression of having been deprived of an unnameable, supreme good, of something unrepresentable, that perhaps only devouring might represent, or an *invocation* might point out, but no word could signify. Consequently, for such a person, no erotic object could replace the irreplaceable perception of a place or preobject confining the libido or severing the bonds of desire. Knowingly disinherited of the Thing, the depressed person wanders in pursuit of continuously disappointing adventures and loves; or else retreats, disconsolate and aphasic, alone with the unnamed Thing. The "primary identification" with the "father in individual prehistory"<sup>9</sup> would be the means, the link that might enable one to become reconciled with the loss of the Thing. Primary identification initiates a compensation for the Thing and at the same time secures the subject to another dimension, that of imaginary adher-



ence, reminding one of the bond of faith, which is just what disintegrates in the depressed person.

With those affected by melancholia, primary identification proves to be fragile, insufficient to secure other identifications, which are symbolic this time, on the basis of which the *erotic Thing* might become a captivating *Object of desire* insuring continuity in a metonymy of pleasure. The melancholy Thing interrupts desiring metonymy, just as it prevents working out the loss within the psyche.<sup>10</sup> How can one approach the place I have referred to? Sublimation is an attempt to do so: through melody, rhythm, semantic polyvalency, the so-called poetic form, which decomposes and recomposes signs, is the sole "container" seemingly able to secure an uncertain but adequate hold over the Thing.

I have assumed depressed persons to be atheistic—deprived of meaning, deprived of values. For them, to fear or to ignore the Beyond would be self-deprecating. Nevertheless, and although atheistic, those in despair are mystics—adhering to the preobject, not believing in Thou, but mute and steadfast devotees of their own inexpressible container. It is to this fringe of strangeness that they devote their tears and jouissance. In the tension of their affects, muscles, mucous membranes, and skin, they experience both their belonging to and distance from an archaic other that still eludes representation and naming, but of whose corporeal emissions, along with their automatism, they still bear the imprint. Unbelieving in language, the depressive persons are affectionate, wounded to be sure, but prisoners of affect. The affect is their thing.

The Thing is inscribed within us without memory, the buried accomplice of our unspeakable anguishes. One can imagine the delights of reunion that a regressive daydream promises itself through the nuptials of suicide.

The looming of the Thing summons up the subject's life force as that subject is in the process of being set up; the premature being that we all are can survive only if it clings to an other, perceived as supplement, artificial extension, protective wrapping. Nevertheless, such a life drive is fully the one that, *at the same time*, rejects me, isolates me, rejects him (or her). Never is the ambivalence of drive more fearsome than in this beginning of otherness where, lacking the filter of language, I cannot inscribe my violence in "no," nor in any other sign. I can expel it only by means of gestures, spasms, or shouts. I impel it, I project it. My necessary Thing is also and absolutely my enemy, my foil, the delightful focus of my hatred. The Thing falls from me along the outposts of signifi<sup>11</sup> where the Word is not yet my Being. A mere nothing, which is a cause, but at the same time a fall, before being an Other, the Thing is the recipient that contains my dejecta and everything that results from *cadere* [Latin: to fall]—it is a waste with which, in my sadness, I merge. It is Job's ashpit in the Bible.

Anality is summoned during the process of setting up this Thing, one that is our own and proper Thing as much as it is improper, unclean. The melancholy person who extols that boundary where the self emerges, but also collapses in deprecation, fails to summon the anality that could establish separations and frontiers as it does normally or as a bonus with obsessive persons. On the contrary, the entire ego of those who are depressed sinks into a *diseroticized* and yet jubilatory anality, as the latter becomes the bearer of a jouissance fused with the archaic Thing, perceived not as a significant object but as the self's borderline element. For those who are depressed, the Thing like the self is a downfall that carries them along into the invisible and unnameable. *Cadere*. Waste and cadavers all.

*The Death Drive as Primary Inscription of Discontinuity  
(Trauma or Loss)*

Freud's postulate of a *primary masochism* is consonant with aspects of narcissistic melancholia in which the dying out of all libidinal bonds appears not to be a simple matter of turning aggressiveness toward the object back into animosity against the self but is asserted as previous to any possibility of object positioning.

Brought up by Freud in 1915,<sup>12</sup> the notion of "primary masochism" became established in his work after the "death drive" turned up, particularly in "The Economic Problem of Masochism" (1924).<sup>13</sup> Having observed that living beings appeared later than the nonliving, Freud thought that a specific drive must reside in them, which tended toward "a return to an earlier state."<sup>14</sup> After *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), which established the notion of the death drive as a tendency to return to the inorganic state and homeostasis, in opposition to the erotic principle of discharge and union, Freud postulated that one part of the death or destructive drive is directed toward the outside world, notably through the muscular system, and is changed into a purely destructive drive, one of ascendancy or strong willpower. In the attendance of sexuality it constitutes sadism. Freud points out nevertheless that "Another portion does not share in this transposition outwards: it remains inside . . . and becomes libidinally bound there. It is in this portion that we have to recognize the original, erotogenic masochism."<sup>15</sup> Since hatred of the other was already considered "older than love,"<sup>16</sup> would such a masochistic withdrawal of hatred point to the existence of a yet more archaic hatred? Freud seems to imply that: indeed, he considers the death drive as an intrapsychic manifestation

✓ of a phylogenetic inheritance going back to inorganic matter. Nevertheless, aside from those conjectures that most analysts since Freud do not endorse, it is possible to note if not the anteriority at least the strength of the disintegration of bonds within several psychic structures and manifestations. Furthermore, the frequency of masochism, the presence of negative therapeutic reaction, and also various pathologies of early childhood that seem to precede the object relation (infantile anorexia, merycism, some forms of autism) prompt one to accept the idea of a death drive that, appearing as a biological and logical inability to transmit psychic energies and inscriptions, would destroy movements and bonds. Freud refers to it thus:

If we take into consideration the total picture made up of the phenomena of masochism immanent in so many people, the negative therapeutic reaction and the sense of guilt found in so many neurotics we shall no longer be able to adhere to the belief that mental events are exclusively governed by the desire for pleasure. These phenomena are unmistakable evidence of the presence of a power in mental life which we shall call the aggression or destruction drive, and which we trace back to the original death drive of living matter.<sup>17</sup>

Narcissistic melancholia would display such a drive in its state of disunity with the life drive. The melancholy person's superego appears to Freud as "a cultivation of death drive."<sup>18</sup> And yet the problem remains: is this melancholy ✓ diserotization opposed to the pleasure principle? Or is it, on the contrary, implicitly erotic? This would mean that the melancholy withdrawal would always be an overturning of the object relation, a metamorphosis of the ✓ hatred against the other. The work of Melanie Klein, who attached the greatest importance to the death drive, seems



to have it depend, for the most part, on object relation, masochism and melancholia appearing then as imagos of the internalized bad object. Nevertheless, the Kleinian argument acknowledges situations in which erotic bonds are severed, without clearly stating whether they have never existed or have been broken off (in the latter case it would be the projection's introjection that would lead to such a withdrawal of erotic cathexis).

We shall take note particularly of the Kleinian definition of splitting introduced in 1946. On the one hand it moves backward from the depressive position toward a more archaic, paranoid, schizoid position. On the other, it distinguishes a binary splitting (the distinction between "good" and "bad" object insuring the unity of the self) and a parcellary splitting—the latter affecting not only the object but, in return, the very self, which literally "falls into pieces."

#### *Integration/Nonintegration/Disintegration*

For our purpose it is absolutely essential to note that such falling into pieces may be caused either by a drive-related *nonintegration* impeding the cohesion of the self, or by a disintegration accompanied by anxieties and provoking the schizoid splitting.<sup>19</sup> In the first hypothesis, which seems to have been borrowed from Winnicott, *nonintegration* results from biological immaturity; if it is possible to speak of Thanatos in this situation, the death drive appears as a biological unfitness for sequentiality and integration (no memory). In the second hypothesis, that of a disintegration of the self consequent to reversing the death drive, we observe "a Thanatic reaction to a threat that is in itself Thanatic."<sup>20</sup> Rather close to Ferenczi's concept, this one emphasizes the human being's tendency toward fragmen-

tation and disintegration as an expression of the death drive. "The early ego largely lacks cohesion, and a tendency towards integration alternates with a tendency towards disintegration, a falling into bits . . . the anxiety of being destroyed from within remains active. It seems to me in keeping with the lack of cohesiveness that under the pressure of this threat the ego tends to fall into pieces."<sup>21</sup> If schizoid fragmentation is a radical, paroxysmal manifestation of parceling, melancholy inhibition (psychomotor retardation, deficiency in sequentiality) can be considered another manifestation of the disintegration of bonds. How so?

Following upon the deflection of the death drive, the *depressive affect* can be interpreted as a defense against parceling. Indeed, sadness reconstitutes an affective cohesion of the self, which restores its unity within the framework of the affect. The depressive mood constitutes itself as a narcissistic support, negative to be sure,<sup>22</sup> but nevertheless presenting the self with an integrity, nonverbal though it might be. Because of that, the depressive affect makes up for symbolic invalidation and interruption (the depressive's "that's meaningless") and at the same time protects it against proceeding to the suicidal act. That protection, however, is a flimsy one. The depressive denial that destroys the meaning of the symbolic also destroys the act's meaning and leads the subject to commit suicide without anguish of disintegration, as a reuniting with archaic nonintegration, as lethal as it is jubilatory, "oceanic."

Hence, schizoid parceling is a defense against death—against somatization or suicide. Depression, on the other hand, does without the schizoid anguish of fragmentation. But if depression is not fortunate enough to rely on a certain *erotization of suffering* it cannot act as a defense against the death drive. The relief that precedes some

suicides perhaps translates the archaic regression by means of which the act of a denied or numbed consciousness turns Thanatos back on the self and reclaims the nonintegrated self's lost paradise, one without others or limits, a fantasy of untouchable fullness.

The speaking subject can thus react to trouble not only through defensive parceling but also through slowing down—inhibition, denial of sequentiality, neutralization of the signifier. Some immaturization or other neurobiological features tending toward nonintegration may condition such behavior. Is it a defensive one? Depressed persons do not defend themselves against death but against the anguish prompted by the erotic object. Depressive persons cannot endure Eros, they prefer to be with the Thing up to the limit of negative narcissism leading them to Thanatos. They are defended against Eros by sorrow but without defense against Thanatos because they are wholeheartedly tied to the Thing. Messengers of Thanatos, melancholy people are witness/accomplices of the signifier's flimsiness, the living being's precariousness.

Less skillful than Melanie Klein in presenting a new repertory of drives, the death drive in particular, Freud nevertheless seems drastic. As he sees it, the speaking being, beyond power, desires death. At this logical extreme, desire no longer exists. Desire becomes dissolved in a disintegration of transmission and a disintegration of bonds. Be it biologically predetermined, following upon preobject narcissistic traumas, or quite simply caused by inversion of aggressiveness, the phenomenon that might be described as a *breakdown of biological and logical sequentiality* finds its radical manifestation in melancholia. Would the death drive be the primary (logically and chronologically) inscription of that breakdown?

Actually, if the death drive remains a theoretical specu-

lation, the experience of depression confronts the observer as much as the patient with the enigma of mood.

### *Is Mood a Language?*

- ✓ Sadness is the fundamental mood of depression, and even if manic euphoria alternates with it in the bipolar forms of that ailment, sorrow is the major outward sign that gives away the desperate person. Sadness leads us into the enigmatic realm of *affects*—anguish, fear, or joy.<sup>23</sup> Irreducible to its verbal or semiological expressions, sadness (like all affect) is the *psychic representation of energy displacements* caused by external or internal traumas. The exact status of such psychic representations of energy displacements remains, in the present state of psychoanalytic and semiological theories, very vague. No conceptual framework in the relevant sciences (particularly linguistics) has proven adequate to account for this apparently very rudimentary representation, presign and prelanguage. The "sadness" mood triggered by a stimulation, tension, or energy conflict within a psychosomatic organism is not a *specific* answer to a release mechanism (I am not sad as a response to or sign for X and only X). Mood is a "generalized transference" (E. Jacobson) that stamps the *entire* behavior and all the sign systems (from motor functions to speech production and idealization) without either identifying with them or disorganizing them. We are justified in believing that an archaic *energy signal* is involved, a phylogenetic inheritance, which, within the psychic space of the human being, is *immediately* assumed by verbal representation and consciousness. Nevertheless, such an "assumption" is not related to what occurs when the energies that Freud calls "bonded" lend themselves to verbalization, association, and judgment. Let us say that representations germane to



affects, notably sadness, are *fluctuating* energy cathexes: insufficiently stabilized to coalesce as verbal or other signs, acted upon by primary processes of displacement and condensation, dependent just the same on the agency of the ego, they record through its intermediary the threats, orders, and injunctions of the superego. Thus moods are *inscriptions*, energy disruptions, and not simply raw energies. They lead us toward a modality of signifi-  
cance that, on the threshold of bioenergetic stability, insures the pre-conditions for (or manifests the disintegration of) the imaginary and the symbolic. On the frontier between animality and symbol formation, moods—and particularly sadness—are the ultimate reactions to our traumas, they are our basic homeostatic recourses. For if it is true that those who are slaves to their moods, beings drowned in their sorrows, reveal a number of psychic or cognitive frailties, it is equally true that a diversification of moods, variety in sadness, refinement in sorrow or mourning are the imprint of a humankind that is surely not triumphant but subtle, ready to fight, and creative . . .

Literary creation is that adventure of the body and signs that bears witness to the affect—to sadness as imprint of separation and beginning of the symbol's sway; to joy as imprint of the triumph that settles me in the universe of artifice and symbol, which I try to harmonize in the best possible way with my experience of reality. But that testimony is produced by literary creation in a material that is totally different from what constitutes mood. It transposes affect into rhythms, signs, forms. The "semiotic" and the "symbolic"<sup>24</sup> become the communicable imprints of an affective reality, perceptible to the reader (I like this book because it conveys sadness, anguish, or joy) and yet dominated, set aside, vanquished.

### *Symbolic Equivalents/Symbols*

Assuming that affect is the most archaic inscription of inner and outer events, how does one reach the realm of signs? I shall accept Hanna Segal's hypothesis, according to which, beginning with separation (let us note that a "lack" is necessary for the *sign* to emerge), the child produces or uses objects or vocalizations that are the *symbolic* equivalents of what is lacking. Later, and beginning with the so-called depressive position, it attempts to signify the sadness that overwhelms it by producing within its own self elements alien to the outer world, which it causes to correspond to such a lost or shifted outerness; we are then faced with *symbols* properly speaking, no longer with equivalencies.<sup>25</sup>

Let me add the following to Hanna Segal's position: what makes such a triumph over sadness possible is the ability of the self to identify no longer with the lost object but with a third party—father, form, schema. A requirement for a denying or manic position ("no, I haven't lost; I evoke, I signify through the artifice of signs and for myself what has been parted from me"), such an identification, which may be called phallic or symbolic, insures the subject's entrance into the universe of signs and creation. The supporting father of such a symbolic triumph is not the oedipal father but truly that "imaginary father," "father in individual prehistory" according to Freud, who guarantees primary identification. Nevertheless, it is imperative that this father in individual prehistory be capable of playing his part as oedipal father in symbolic Law, for it is on the basis of that harmonious blending of the two facets of fatherhood that the abstract and arbitrary signs of communication may be fortunate enough to be tied to the

affective meaning of prehistorical identifications, and the dead language of the potentially depressive person can arrive at a live meaning in the bond with others.

Under the totally different circumstances of literary creation, for instance, the manic position as sheathing of depression—an essential moment in the formation of the symbol—can be manifested through the establishment of a symbolic lineage. We may thus find a recourse to proper names linked to a subject's real or imaginary history, with that subject declaring itself their heir or equal; what they truly memorialize, beyond paternal weakness, is nostalgic dedication to the lost mother (see chapter 6 on Nerval).

At the outset we have objectal depression (implicitly aggressive), and narcissistic depression (logically previous to the libidinal object relation)—an affectivity struggling with signs, going beyond, threatening, or modifying them. Starting from such a setting, the line of questioning that I shall pursue could be summed up as follows: aesthetic and particularly literary creation, and also religious discourse in its imaginary, fictional essence, set forth a device whose prosodic economy, interaction of characters, and implicit symbolism constitute a very faithful semiological representation of the subject's battle with symbolic collapse. Such a literary representation is not an *elaboration* in the sense of "becoming aware" of the inter- and intrapsychic causes of moral suffering; that is where it diverges from the psychoanalytic course, which aims at dissolving this symptom. Nevertheless, the literary (and religious) representation possesses a real and imaginary effectiveness that comes closer to catharsis than to elaboration; it is a therapeutic device used in all societies throughout the ages. If psychoanalysts think they are more efficacious, notably through strengthening the subject's cognitive possibilities, they also owe it to themselves to enrich their practice by

paying greater attention to these sublimatory solutions to our crises, in order to be lucid counterdepressants rather than neutralizing antidepressants.

### *Is Death Nonrepresentable?*

Having posited that the unconscious is ruled by the pleasure principle, Freud very logically postulated that there is no representation of death in the unconscious. Just as it is unaware of negation, the unconscious is unaware of death. Synonymous with absence of jouissance, imaginary equivalent of phallic dispossession, death could not possibly be seen. It is, perhaps, for that very reason that it opens the way to speculation.

And yet, as clinical experience led Freud to the notion of narcissism, ending in the discovery of the death drive and the second topography,<sup>26</sup> he compelled us to recognize a vision of the psychic apparatus in which Eros is threatened with domination by Thanatos and where, consequently, the possibility of representing death should be examined from a different standpoint.

*Castration fear*, glimpsed until then as underlying the conscious death anguish, does not disappear but is overshadowed by the *fear of losing the object or losing oneself as object* (etiology of melancholia and narcissistic psychoses).

Such an evolution in Freudian thought leaves us with two problems that have been emphasized by André Green.<sup>27</sup>

First, what about the *representation* of the death drive? Unknown to the unconscious, it is, with the "second Freud," a "cultivation of the superego," as one might put it in turning Freud's phrase around. The death drive splits the very ego into one component that is unaware of such drive while being affected by it (that is, its unconscious component) and another component that struggles against

it (that is, the megalomaniac ego that negates castration and death and fantasizes immortality).

More basically, however, does not such a splitting cut across all discourse? The symbol is established through a negation (*Verneinung*) of the loss, but a disavowal (*Verleugnung*) of the symbol produces a physis inscription as close as one can get to hatred and a hold over the lost object (see chapter 2). That is what one deciphers in the blanks of discourse, vocalizations, rhythms, syllables of words that have been devitalized and need to be restored by the analyst on the basis of an apprehended depression.

Thus, if the death drive is not represented in the unconscious, must one invent another level in the psychic apparatus where—simultaneously with jouissance—the being of its nonbeing would be recorded? It is indeed a production of the split ego, made up of fantasy and fiction—in short, the level of the imagination, the level of writing—which bears witness to the hiatus, blank, or spacing that constitutes death for the unconscious.

### *Dissociations of Forms*

Imaginary constructions change the death drive into eroticized aggression against the father or terrified loathing of the mother's body. We know that at the same time as he discovered the power of the death drive Freud shifted his interest not only from the theoretical model of the first topography (conscious/preconscious/unconscious) toward that of the second topography, but especially, and thanks to the shift, turned toward the analysis of imaginary productions (religions, arts, literature). He found in them a kind of representation of death anxiety.<sup>28</sup> Does this mean that dread of dying—which henceforth is not summed up in castration fear but includes it and adds to it the wounding and perhaps even the loss of integrity of the body and

the self—finds its representations in formations that are called “transconscious” in the imaginary constructions of the split subject, according to Lacan? Doubtless so.

The fact remains that another reading of the unconscious itself might locate within its own fabric, such as certain dreams disclose it for us, that nonrepresentative spacing of representation that is not the *sign* but the *index* of death drive. Dreams of borderline patients, schizoid personalities, or those undergoing psychedelic experiments are often “abstract paintings” or cascades of sounds, intricacies of lines and fabrics, in which the analyst deciphers the dissociation—or a nonintegration—of psychic and somatic unity. Such indices could be interpreted as the ultimate imprint of the death drive. Aside from the images of the death drive, necessarily displaced on account of being eroticized, the work of death as such, at the zero degree of psychicism, can be spotted precisely in the *dissociation of form* itself, when form is distorted, abstracted, disfigured, hollowed out: ultimate thresholds of inscribable dislocation and jouissance . . .

Furthermore, the unrepresentable nature of death was linked with that other unrepresentable—original abode but also last resting place for dead souls, in the beyond—which, for mythical thought, is constituted by the female body. The horror of castration underlying the anguish of death undoubtedly accounts in large part for the universal partnership with death of the penis-lacking feminine. Nevertheless, the death drive hypothesis compels a different reasoning.

### *Death-Bearing Woman*

For man and for woman the loss of the mother is a biological and psychic necessity, the first step on the way to becoming autonomous. Matricide is our vital necessity,



the sine-qua-non condition of our individuation, provided that it takes place under optimal circumstances and can be eroticized—whether the lost object is recovered as erotic object (as is the case for male heterosexuality or female homosexuality), or it is transposed by means of an unbelievable symbolic effort, the advent of which one can only admire, which eroticizes the *other* (the other sex, in the case of the heterosexual woman) or transforms cultural constructs into a “sublime” erotic object (one thinks of the cathexes, by men and women, in social bonds, intellectual and aesthetic productions, etc.). The lesser or greater violence of matricidal drive, depending on individuals and the milieu’s tolerance, entails, when it is hindered, its inversion on the self; the maternal object having been introjected, the depressive or melancholic putting to death of the self is what follows, instead of matricide. In order to protect mother I kill myself while knowing—phantasmatic and protective knowledge—that it comes from her, the death-bearing she-Gehenna . . . Thus my hatred is safe and my matricidal guilt erased. I make of Her an image of Death so as not to be shattered through the hatred I bear against myself when I identify with Her, for that aversion is in principle meant for her as it is an individuating dam against confusional love. Thus the feminine as image of death is not only a screen for my fear of castration, but also an imaginary safety catch for the matricidal drive that, without such a representation, would pulverize me into melancholia if it did not drive me to crime. No, it is She who is death-bearing, therefore I do not kill myself in order to kill her but I attack her, harass her, represent her. . .

~ For a woman, whose specular identification with the mother as well as the introjection of the maternal body and self are more immediate, such an inversion of matri-

cidal drive into a death-bearing maternal image is more difficult, if not impossible. Indeed, how can She be that bloodthirsty Fury, since I am She (sexually and narcissistically), She is I? Consequently, the hatred I bear her is not oriented toward the outside but is locked up within myself. There is no hatred, only an implosive mood that walls itself in and kills me secretly, very slowly, through permanent bitterness, bouts of sadness, or even lethal sleeping pills that I take in smaller or greater quantities in the dark hope of meeting . . . no one, unless it be my imaginary wholeness, increased with my death that accomplishes me. The homosexual shares the same depressive economy: he is a delightful melancholy person when he does not indulge in sadistic passion with another man.

The fantasy of feminine immortality perhaps has its basis in the feminine germinal transmission, capable of parthenogenesis. Furthermore, the new techniques of artificial reproduction endow the female body with unsuspected reproductive possibilities. If that feminine “all-mightiness” in the survival of the species can be undermined through other technical possibilities that, or so it seems, might make man pregnant as well, it is likely that this latter eventuality could attract only a small minority, even though it fulfills the androgynous fantasies of the majority. Nevertheless, the essential component of the feminine conviction of being immortal in and beyond death (which the Virgin Mary so perfectly embodies) is rooted less in those biological possibilities, where it is hard to discern the “bridge” to the psyche, than in “negative narcissism.”

In its climax, the latter weakens the aggressive (matricidal) affect toward the other as well as the despondent affect within oneself and substitutes what one might call an “oceanic void.” It is a feeling and fantasy of pain, but anesthetized, of jouissance, but in suspense, of an expect-

tation and a silence as empty as they are fulfilled. In the midst of its lethal ocean, the melancholy woman is the dead one that has always been abandoned within herself and can never kill outside herself (see chapter 3). Modest, silent, without verbal or desiring bonds with others, she wastes away by striking moral and physic blows against herself, which, nevertheless, do not give her sufficient pleasures. Until the fatal blow—the definitive nuptials of the Dead Woman with the Same, whom she did not kill.

One cannot overemphasize the tremendous psychic, intellectual, and affective effort a woman must make in order to find the other sex as erotic object. In his philogenetic musings, Freud often admires the intellectual accomplishment of the man who has been (or when he is) deprived of women (through glaciation or tyranny on the part of the father of the primal horde, etc.). If the discovery of her invisible vagina already imposes upon woman a tremendous sensory, speculative, and intellectual effort, shifting to the symbolic order *at the same time* as to a sexual object of a sex other than that of the primary maternal object represents a gigantic elaboration in which a woman cathezes a psychic potential greater than what is demanded of the male sex. When this process is favorably carried out, it is evidenced by the precocious awakening of girls, their intellectual performances often more brilliant during the school years, and their continuing female maturity. Nevertheless, it has its price in the constant tendency to extol the problematic mourning for the lost object . . . not so fully lost, and it remains, throbbing, in the "crypt" of feminine ease and maturity. Unless a massive introjection of the ideal succeeds, at the same time, in satisfying narcissism with its negative side *and* the longing to be present in the arena where the world's power is at stake.

2

## *Life and Death of Speech*

Let us keep in mind the speech of the depressed—repetitive and monotonous. Faced with the impossibility of concatenating, they utter sentences that are interrupted, exhausted, come to a standstill. Even phrases they cannot formulate. A repetitive rhythm, a monotonous melody emerge and dominate the broken logical sequences, changing them into recurring, obsessive litanies. Finally, when that frugal musicality becomes exhausted in its turn, or simply does not succeed in becoming established on account of the pressure of silence, the melancholy person appears to stop cognizing as well as uttering, sinking into the blankness of asymbolia or the excess of an unorderable cognitive chaos.

*The Shattered Concatenation: A Biological Hypothesis*

Inconsolable sadness often conceals a real predisposition for despair. It is perhaps biological in part: too much speed or too much slowing down of neural flow unquestionably depends on given chemical substances that are present in each one of us in varying degrees.<sup>1</sup>



It has been medically attested that the succession of emotions, gestures, actions, or words considered normal because statistically prevalent becomes hampered during depression. The rhythm of overall behavior is shattered, there is neither time nor place for acts and sequences to be carried out. If in the nondepressive state one has the ability to concatenate, depressive persons, in contrast, riveted to their pain, no longer concatenate and, consequently, neither act nor speak.

*"Psychomotor Retardation": Two Models*

There are many who have emphasized the psychomotor, affective, and ideational retardation that is characteristic of the melancholy/depressive state.<sup>2</sup> Even psychomotor agitation and delirious mania or more generally the depressive mood appear to be indissociable from simple retardation.<sup>3</sup> Language retardation partakes of the same pattern: speech delivery is slow, silences are long and frequent, rhythms slacken, intonations become monotonous, and the very syntactic structures—without evidencing disturbances and disorders such as can be observed in schizophrenics—are often characterized by nonrecoverable elisions (objects or verbs that are omitted and cannot be restored on the basis of the context).

Many models have been suggested in order to think out the processes underlying the depressive retardation state. One of them "learned helplessness," is based on the following observation: when all escape routes are blocked, animals as well as men learn to withdraw rather than flee or fight. The retardation or inactivity, which one might call depressive, would thus constitute a learned defense reaction to a dead-end situation and unavoidable shocks. Tricyclic antidepressants apparently restore the ability to

flee, and this leads one to assume that learned inactivity is linked to noradrenergic depletion or cholinergic hyperactivity.

According to another model, all behavior would be governed by an autostimulation system, based on reward, that would condition the inception of responses. One ends up with the notion of "positive or negative intensification systems" and, assuming that the latter would be disturbed during the depressive state, one studies the structures and transmitters that are involved. One succeeds in putting forward a dual explanation for the disturbance. Since the intensification structure, the telencephalon's median network, having a noradrenergic transmission role, is responsible for the response, the depressive retardation and withdrawal would be caused by its dysfunctioning. In similar fashion, a hyperfunctioning of the prefrontal "punishment" systems with a cholinergic transmission role would be the source of anxiety.<sup>4</sup> The role of the *locus coeruleus* of the telencephalon's median network would be essential to noradrenergic autostimulation and transmission. In experiments involving the suppression of a response in expectation of punishment, serotonin, in contrast, would increase. Antidepressive treatment would then call for a noradrenergic increase and a serotonergic decrease.

The *locus coeruleus'* essential role is emphasized by many as being

a relay center for an "alarm" system inducing "normal" fear or anxiety. . . . The LC receives innervations directly from pain pathways throughout the body, and the LC shows sustained responses to repeated presentations of "noxious" stimuli even in anesthetized animals. . . . In addition, there are pathways to and from the cerebral cortex which provide feed-back loops that

explain the apparent influence that the *meaning or relevance of a stimulus* may exercise on the response. These same feed-back loops provide access to areas that may underlie the *cognitive experience of the emotional state* (or states).<sup>5</sup>

### Language as "Stimulation" and Reinforcement"

At the current stage of attempts to think out the two channels—psychic and biological—of affects, it is again possible to formulate the question of language's central importance to human beings.

Within the experience of separation without resolution, or unavoidable shocks, or again pursuits without result, and unlike animals whose only recourse is in behavior, the child can find a fighting or fleeing solution in psychic representation and in language. The child imagines, thinks out, utters the flight or the fight and a full intermediate gamut as well, and this can be a deterrent from withdrawal into inactivity or playing dead, wounded by irreparable frustrations or harms. Nevertheless, for this nondepressive solution to the melancholy dilemma, *flight/fight: learned helplessness*, to be worked out, the child needs a *solid implication* in the symbolic and imaginary code, which, then and only then, becomes stimulation and reinforcement. In that case, responses to a given action are generated, and they are also implicitly symbolic, oriented by language or within the working of language alone. If, on the contrary, the symbolic dimension proves to be insufficient, subjects find themselves back at the dead-end of a helplessness leading to inaction and death. In other words, language in its heterogeneity (primary and secondary processes, ideational and emotional carrier of desire, hatred, conflicts) is a powerful factor that, through un-

known mediations, has an activating (as well as, conversely, an inhibiting) effect on neurobiological networks. Within that perspective, several points are still unclear.

Is the symbolic breakdown one notices in depressed persons one component among others of a psychomotor retardation, which is clinically observable, or does it appear among its essential prerequisites? Is it conditioned by a dysfunction of the neuronal and endocrinal network that underlies (but in what fashion?) psychic representations and, particularly, word representations, and also the channels that link them to hypothalamic nuclei? Or still is it an inadequacy of symbolic impact that would be due merely to the family and social environment?

Without excluding the first hypothesis, the psychoanalyst will be concerned with shedding light on the second. We shall thus ask ourselves what *mechanisms erase symbolic impact* within the subject, who nevertheless has achieved an adequate symbolic ability, often apparently consonant with social norms, remarkably effective at times. I shall try, by means of the cure's dynamics and a specific economy of interpretation, to give its optimal power back to the imaginary and symbolic dimension of the heterogeneous set constituted by the speaking body. That will lead me to consider the problem of the depressed's *denial of the signifier* and also the role of primary processes in depressive as well as in interpretative speech as "imaginary and symbolic graft" through the agency of primary processes. Finally, I shall ponder the importance of *narcissistic recognition* and *idealization* for the purpose of facilitating, in the patient, an anchoring of the symbolic dimension, and this often amounts to a new acquisition of communication as parameter of desire and conflict, and even hatred.

To mention one last time the problem of "biological



limit," which I shall henceforth put aside, I shall posit that the register of psychic and, particularly, linguistic representation is neurologically transferred to the physiological occurrences of the brain, in the last instance through the hypothalamus' multiple networks. (The hypothalamic nuclei are connected to the cerebral cortex whose functioning underlies *meaning*—but how?—and also to the limbic lobe of the brain stem whose functioning underlies *affects*.) At present we don't know *how* this transfer takes place, but clinical experience allows us to think that it does *actually* take place (for instance, one will recall the exciting or sedative, "opiate," effect of certain words). Finally, numerous illnesses—and depressions—whose origins can be traced to neurophysiological disturbances triggered by symbolic breakdowns remain set in registers that cannot be affected by language. The facilitating effect of antidepressants is then required in order to reconstitute a minimal neurophysiological base upon which psychotherapeutic work can begin, analyzing symbolic deficiencies and knots and reconstituting a new symbol system.

#### *Other Possible Transfers Between Meaning and Cerebral Functioning*

Interruptions in linguistic sequentiality and even more so their replacement with suprasegmental operations (rhythms, melodies) in depressive discourse can be interpreted as deficiencies in the left hemisphere, which controls linguistic generation, leading to domination—temporary as it may be—by the right hemisphere, which controls affects and emotions as well as their "primary," "musical," non-linguistic inscriptions.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, to those observations should be added the model of a dual cerebral functioning: neuronal, electrical or wired, and digital; and also endo-

crinal, humoral, fluctuating, and analogical.<sup>7</sup> Certain chemical substances in the brain, even certain neurotransmitters, seem to operate in dual fashion—sometimes "neuronal," sometimes "endocrinal." Eventually, and in view of this cerebral duality where passions mainly find their anchoring in the humoral, it is possible to speak of a "fluctuating central state." If one grants that language, within its own register, must also translate that "fluctuating state," it follows that one must locate, in language functioning, those levels that seem closer to the "neuronal brain" (such as grammatical and logical sequentiality) and those that seem closer to the "glandular brain" (the suprasegmental components of discourse). One might thus be able to think out the "symbolic disposition" of signifi-  
 ✓ in relation to the left hemisphere and the neuronal brain,  
 ✓ and the "semiotic disposition" in relation to the right hemisphere and the glandular brain.

And yet there is nothing today that allows one to set up any relation whatsoever—aside from a leap—between the biological substratum and the level of *representations*, be they tonal or syntactic, emotional or cognitive, semiotic or symbolic. Nevertheless one should not ignore the possible ways of linking the two levels, attempting to provoke reverberations, aleatory and unpredictable to be sure, between the one and the other and, with all the more reason, modifications of the one by the other.

To conclude, if a dysfunction of noradrenalin and serotonin or of their reception hampers the synapses' conductivity and *can* condition the depressive state, the role of those few synapses, within the star-like structure of the brain, cannot be absolute.<sup>8</sup> Such inadequacy may be compensated for by other chemical phenomena and also by other external actions (symbolic ones included) on the brain, which adapts to them through biological modifica-

tions. Indeed, the experience of the relationship to the other, its violence or its delights, eventually puts its imprint on this biological terrain and completes the well-known picture of depressive behavior. Without refusing chemical action in the fight against melancholia, analysts have (or will have) at their disposal a wide range of verbalizations concerning that state and going beyond it. While remaining heedful of such interferences, they will confine themselves to the specific changes of depressive discourse as well as to the construction of their own consequent interpretative words.

The psychoanalysts' confrontation with depression thus leads them to ponder the position of the subject with respect to meaning as well as the heterogeneous dimensions of language that are liable to different psychic imprints; the latter, on account of such diversity, would have an increased number of access paths to the multiple aspects of cerebral functioning and hence to the organism's activity. Finally, seen from that standpoint, the imaginative experience will come to light both as evidence of a person's struggle against the symbolic abdication that is germane to depression, and as a range of means likely to enrich interpretative discourse.

#### *The Psychoanalytic Leap: To Concatenate and Transpose*

From the analyst's point of view, the possibility of concatenating signifiers (words or actions) appears to depend upon going through mourning for an archaic and indispensable object—and on the related emotions as well. Mourning for the Thing—such a possibility comes out of transposing, beyond loss and on an imaginary or symbolic level, the imprints of an interchange with the other articulated according to a certain order.

Relieved of the primal object, semiotic imprints are first organized in *series*, according to primary processes (displacement and condensation), then in phrases and sentences, according to the secondary processes of grammar and logic. There is agreement in all branches of linguistics today in recognizing that discourse is *dialogue*: its organization, rhythmic and intonational as well as syntactical, requires two speakers in order to be completed. To that fundamental precondition, which already implies the necessary separation between one subject and another, the following fact must nevertheless be added: verbal sequences turn up only if a trans-position is substituted for a more or less symbiotic primal object, this trans-position being a true reconstitution that retroactively gives form and meaning to the mirage of the primal Thing. That critical task of *transposition* consists of two facets: the mourning gone through for the object (and in its shadow the mourning for the archaic Thing), and the subject's acceptance of a set of signs (signifying precisely because of the absence of object) only thus open to serial organization. Evidence for this can be found in the child's acquisition of language, when that intrepid wanderer leaves the crib to meet the mother in the realm of representations. Depressed persons also provide evidence, contrariwise, when they give up signifying and submerge in the silence of pain or the spasm of tears that celebrates reunion with the Thing.

To transpose corresponds to the Greek *metaphorein*, to transport; language is, from the start, a translation, but on a level that is heterogeneous to the one where affective loss, renunciation, or the break takes place. If I did not agree to lose mother, I could neither imagine nor name her. The psychotic child is acquainted with that drama: such a child, being ignorant of metaphor, is an incompe-



tent translator. As for the discourse of the depressed, it is the "normal" surface of a psychotic risk: the sadness that overwhelms us, the retardation that paralyzes us are also a shield—sometimes the last one—against madness.

Would the fate of the speaking being consist in ceaselessly transposing, always further beyond or more to the side, such a transposition of series or sentences testifying to our ability to work out a fundamental mourning and successive mournings? Our gift of speech, of situating ourselves in time for an other, could exist nowhere except beyond an abyss. Speaking beings, from their ability to endure in time up to their enthusiastic, learned, or simply amusing constructions, demand a break, a renunciation, an unease at their foundations.

The negation of that fundamental loss opens up the realm of signs for us, but the mourning is often incomplete. It drives out negation and revives the memory of signs by drawing them out of their signifying neutrality. It loads them with affects, and this results in making them ambiguous, repetitive or simply alliterative, musical or sometimes nonsensical. At that point, translation—our fate as speaking beings—stops its vertiginous course toward metalanguages or foreign languages, which are like many sign systems distant from the site of the pain. It seeks to become alien to itself in order to discover, in the mother tongue, a "*total word, new, foreign to the language*" (Malarmé), for the purpose of capturing the unnameable. The excess of affect has thus no other means of coming to the fore than to produce new languages—strange concatenations, idiolects, poetics. Until the weight of the primal Thing prevails, and all translatability become impossible. Melancholia then ends up in asymbolia, in loss of meaning: if I am no longer capable of translating or metaphorizing, I become silent and I die.

### *The Denial of Negation*

Listen again for a few moments to depressive speech, repetitive, monotonous, or empty of meaning, inaudible even for the speaker before he or she sinks into mutism. You will note that, with melancholy persons, meaning appears to be arbitrary, or else it is elaborated with the help of much knowledge and will to mastery, but seems secondary, frozen, somewhat removed from the head and body of the person who is speaking. Or else it is from the very beginning evasive, uncertain, deficient, quasi mutistic: "one" speaks to you already convinced that the words are wrong and therefore "one" speaks carelessly, "one" speaks without believing in it.

Meaning, however, is arbitrary; linguistics asserts it for all verbal signs and for all discourse. Is not the signifier LAF completely unmotivated with respect to the meaning of "laugh," and also, and above all, with respect to the act of laughing, its physical production, its intrapsychic and interreactional value? Here is the evidence: I call the same meaning and act *rire* in French, *smeyatsya* in Russian, and so forth. Now every "normal" speaker learns to take that artifice seriously, to cathect it or forget it.

Signs are arbitrary because language starts with a *negation* (*Verneinung*) of loss, along with the depression occasioned by mourning. "I have lost an essential object that happens to be, in the final analysis, my mother," is what the speaking being seems to be saying. "But no, I have found her again in signs, or rather since I consent to lose her I have not lost her (that is the negation), I can recover her in language."

Depressed persons, on the contrary, *disavow the negation*: they cancel it out, suspend it, and nostalgically fall

back on the real object (the Thing) of their loss, which is just what they do not manage to lose, to which they remain painfully riveted. The *denial* (*Verleugnung*) of *negation* would thus be the exercise of an impossible mourning, the setting up of a fundamental sadness and an artificial, unbelievable language, cut out of the painful background that is not accessible to any signifier and that intonation alone, intermittently, succeeds in inflecting.

### What Should Be Understood by Denial and Negation?

I shall call *denial* the rejection of the signifier as well as semiotic representatives of drives and affects. *Negation* will be understood as the intellectual process that leads the repressed to representation on the condition of denying it and, on that account, shares in the signifier's advent.

According to Freud, *denial* or *disavowal* (*Verleugnung*) refers to the psychic reality he deemed to be within the realm of perception. Such a denial would be common in children but becomes the starting point of a psychosis with adults since it focuses on external reality.<sup>9</sup> Ultimately, however, denial finds its prototype in denial of castration and becomes specific as it sets up fetishism.<sup>10</sup>

My broadening the scope of Freud's *Verleugnung* doesn't alter its function of effecting a splitting in the subject: on the one hand it denies archaic representations of traumatic perceptions; on the other it symbolically acknowledges their impact and tries to draw the conclusions.

Nonetheless, my conception modifies the object of the denial. Denial focuses on the *intrapsychic* (*semiotic and symbolic*) inscription of the *want*, be it fundamentally an object want or later eroticized as woman's castration. In other words, denial focuses on signifiers liable to inscribe semiotic traces and transpose them in order to produce meaning in the subject for another subject.

It will be noted that the disavowed value of the depressive signifier translates an impossibility to give up the object and is often accompanied by the fantasy of a phallic mother. Fetishism appears as a solution to depression and its denial of the signifier; with fetishists, fantasy and acting out replace the denial of psychic pain (of pain's psychic representatives) following upon the loss of biopsychic balance due to object loss.

The denial of the signifier is shored up by a denial of the father's function, which is precisely to guarantee the establishment of the signifier. Maintained in his function of ideal father or imaginary father, the depressive's father is deprived of phallic power, now attributed to the mother. Attractive or seductive, fragile and engaging, such a father holds the subject within suffering but does not allow the possibility of a way out by means of idealizing the symbolic. When this takes place, idealization relies on the maternal father and follows the path to sublimation.

*Negation* (*Verneinung*), whose ambiguities Freud maintains and emphasizes in his essay *Die Verneinung*,<sup>11</sup> is a process that inserts an aspect of desire and unconscious idea into consciousness. "The outcome of this is a kind of intellectual acceptance of the repressed, while at the same time what is essential to the repression persists." "With the help of the symbol of negation, thinking frees itself from the restrictions of repression. . . ." "Thus the content of a repressed image or idea can make its way into consciousness, on condition that it is *negated*." This psychic process, which can be observed in patients' defenses against their unconscious desires ("no, I don't love him or her" would signify an acknowledgment of that love in a precisely denied fashion), would be the same as the one that produces the logical and linguistic symbol.

I deem negativity to be coextensive with the speaking being's psychic activity. Its various dispositions, such as

negation, denial, and repudiation (which can produce or modify repression, resistance, defense, or censorship), distinct as one might be from another, influence and condition one another. There is no "symbolic gift" without splitting, and verbal ability is potentially a bearer of fetishism (if only that of symbols themselves) and psychosis (even when remitted).

Nevertheless, the various psychic structures are diversely dominated by the negativity process. If *repudiation* (*Verwerfung*) were to prevail over negation the symbolic framework would collapse and erase reality itself: that is the pattern of psychosis. The melancholy person who can go as far as repudiation (melancholy psychosis) is, during the illness' mild development, characterized by the prevalence of *denial* over *negation*. The semiotic foundations (affect and drive representatives of loss and castration) underlying linguistic signs are denied, and the intrapsychic value of the latter for creating sense for the subject is consequently annihilated. The result is that traumatic memories (the loss of a loved relative during childhood, some other, more recent wound) are not repressed but constantly evoked as the *denial of negation* prevents the work of repression, at least of its representative part. As a consequence, that evocation, that representation of the repressed does not lead to the loss' symbolic *elaboration*, for signs are unable to pick up the intrapsychic primary inscriptions of the loss and to dispose of it through that very elaboration; on the contrary, they keep turning it over, helplessly. Depressed people know that their moods determine them thoroughly but do not allow such moods to pass into their speech. They know they suffer because they are separated from their narcissistic motherly coating but ceaselessly maintain their omnipotence over a hell that is not to be lost. They know their mothers have no penis

but at the same time they have it displayed not only in daydreams but in their "liberated," "shameless" speech, neutral in fact, and in competition, often a death-bearing one, with that phallic power.

At the level of the sign, splitting separates the *signifier* from the *referent* as well as from the drive-related (semiotic) *inscriptions* and devalorizes all three.

At the narcissistic level splitting maintains the omnipotence at the same time as the destructiveness and the anguish of annihilation.

At the level of oedipal desire it wavers between the fear of castration and the fantasy of phallic omnipotence for the other as for the self.

Everywhere denial effects splittings and *devitalizes* representations and behaviors as well.

Unlike what happens with psychotics, however, those who are depressed maintain a paternal signifier that is disowned, weakened, ambiguous, devalorized, but nevertheless persistent until asymbolia shows up. Until they are wrapped up in that shroud and both father and subject are carried away into the solitude of mutism, depressed persons do not forget how to use signs. They keep them, but the signs seem absurd, delayed, ready to be extinguished, because of the splitting that affects them. For instead of bonding the affect caused by loss, the depressed sign disowns the affect as well as the signifier, thus admitting that the depressed subject has remained prisoner of the nonlost object (the Thing).

### *The Affective Perverseness of the Depressed*

If the *denial of the signifier* with depressed persons reminds one of the process of perversion, two remarks seem necessary.



First, in depression, denial has a greater power than perverse denial and affects *subjective identity* itself, not only the *sexual identity* called into question by inversion (homosexuality) or perversion (fetishism, exhibitionism, etc.). Denial annihilates even the introjections of depressive persons and leaves them with the feeling of being worthless, "empty." By belittling and destroying themselves, they exhaust any possibility of an object, and this is also a roundabout way of preserving it . . . elsewhere, untouchable. The only traces of object constancy that depressive people maintain are in affects. The affect is the partial object of depressive persons; it is their "perversion," in the sense of a drug that allows them to insure a narcissistic homeostasis by means of a nonverbal, unnameable (hence untouchable and omnipotent) hold over a nonobjectal Thing. Thus the depressive affect—and its verbalization in analyses and also in works of art—is the perverse display of depressed persons, their ambiguous source of pleasure that fills a void and evicts death, protecting the subject from suicide as well as from psychotic attack.

In similar fashion, the various perversions appear, from this standpoint, as the other facet of depressive denial. Both depression and perversion, according to Melanie Klein, avoid elaborating the "depressive position."<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless, inversions and perversions seem borne by a denial that doesn't affect subjective identity while disturbing sexual identity and allowing for the creation (comparable to a fictional production) of a narcissistic libidinal homeostasis through recourse to autoeroticism, homosexuality, fetishism, exhibitionism, and so forth. Such acts and relations with partial objects preserve the subject and its object from total destruction and provide, with narcissistic homeostasis, a vitality that thwarts Thanatos. Depression is thus bracketed but at the cost of a dependency on perverse

theater, often experienced as atrocious; on that stage one sees a parade of omnipotent relations and objects that prevent a confrontation with castration and shield from the pain of pre-oedipal separation. The weakness of the fantasy that is supplanted by acting out bears witness to the continuousness of the denial of the signifier at the level of mental operations in perversions. That feature is at one with the symbolic weakness as experienced by depressive persons as well as manic excitement through acts that become wild only if they are deemed insignificant.

The alternation of perverse and depressive behavior within the neurotic realm of the melancholy/depressive set is frequent. It points to the articulation of the two structures in a same operation (that of denial) having varied intensities bearing on different elements of the subjective structure. Perverse denial has not affected autoeroticism and narcissism. The latter can therefore be mobilized to oppose emptiness and hatred. Depressive denial, on the other hand, affects even the possibilities of a *representation of narcissistic coherence*, hence depriving the subject of its autoerotic exultation, of its "jubilatory assumption." At that point there remains only the masochistic domination of narcissistic folds by a mediationless superego who condemns the affect to remain without object, even a partial one, and display itself to consciousness only as widowed, plunged into mourning, full of pain. Such affective pain, resulting from denial, is *meaning without signification*, but it is used as a shield against death. When that shield also gives way, what remains as the only possible concatenation or act is the act of severance, of un-concatenation, which imposes the non-meaning of death; this constitutes a *challenge* to the others thus rediscovered as rejects or a narcissistic *strengthening* of the subject that one acknowledges (because the fateful act has been carried out) as

having always been outside the parental symbolic pact, that is, located where denial (be it parental or its own) had pinned it.

Thus the denial of negation that was seen to be central to the avoidance of the "depressive position" with depressed persons does not necessarily endow that affection with a perverse coloring. The depressed are nonconscious perverts; it is even to their advantage to be nonconscious, for their taking action, which no symbolization appears to satisfy, can be so paroxysmal. True, the delights of suffering can lead to a morose suffering not unfamiliar to monks and that Dostoyevsky, closer to us in time, has exalted.

It is mainly in its manic phase, characteristic of bipolar forms of depression, that *denial* takes on its full strength and appears in broad daylight. Admittedly, it has always been there, but secretly: as sorrow's underhanded, consoling companion, the denial of negation constructed a dubious meaning and turned dismal language into an unbelievable seeming. It called attention to its existence in the detached speech of depressed persons who have at their disposal a trick they do not know how to handle: beware of still waters and overly obedient children . . . With manic persons, however, denial goes beyond the double repudiation that supports sadness: it walks on stage and becomes the tool that builds a shield against loss. Far from being satisfied with elaborating a false language, denial henceforth erects variegated arrays of substitutive erotic objects; we are familiar with widows' or widowers' erotomania, the orgiastic compensations for narcissistic wounds connected with disease or disability, and so forth. Aesthetic exultance, rising by means of ideal and artifice above ordinary constructions suitable to the standards of natural language and trivialized social code, can partake of this manic activity. If it remains at that level the work will

stand revealed in its falsity—ersatz, imitation, or carbon copy. On the contrary, the work of art that insures the rebirth of its author and its reader or viewer is one that succeeds in integrating the artificial language it puts forward (new style, new composition, surprising imagination) and the unnamed agitations of an omnipotent self that ordinary social and linguistic usage always leave somewhat orphaned or plunged into mourning. Hence such a fiction, if it isn't an antidepressant, is at least a survival, a resurrection . . .

### *Arbitrary or Empty*

Persons in despair become hyperlucid by nullifying negation. A signifying sequence, necessarily an arbitrary one, will appear to them as heavily, violently arbitrary; they will think it absurd, it will have no meaning. No word, no object in reality will be likely to have a coherent concatenation that will also be suitable to a meaning or referent.

The arbitrary sequence perceived by depressive persons as absurd is coextensive with a loss of reference. The depressed speak of nothing, they have nothing to speak of: glued to the Thing (*Res*), they are without objects. That total and unsignifiable Thing is insignificant—it is a mere Nothing, their Nothing, Death. The chasm that settles in between subject and signifiable objects is translated into the impossibility for concatenations to signify. Such an exile, however, reveals a chasm in the very subject. On the one hand, objects and signifiers, denied to the extent that they are identified with life, assume the value of nonmeaning: language and life have no meaning. On the other hand, on account of splitting, an intense, extravagant value is attributed to the Thing, to Nothing—to the

unsignifiable and to death. Depressed speech, built up with absurd signs, slackened, scattered, checked sequences, conveys the collapse of meaning into the unnameable where it founders, inaccessible and delightful, to the benefit of affective value riveted to the Thing.

Denial of negation deprives the language signifiers of their role of making sense for the subject. While they have a signification in themselves, such signifiers are experienced by the subject as *empty*. That is because they are *not bound* to semiotic imprints (drive-related representatives and affect representations). It follows that such archaic psychic inscriptions, once they are set free, can be used in projective identification as quasi-objects. They give rise to acting out, which replaces language in depressive persons (see chapter 3). The surge of mood, up to the stupor that invades the body, is a return of acting out upon the very subject: such overwhelming mood is an action that is not taken on account of the denial that involves the signifier. Moreover, the feverish defensive activity that shrouds the disconsolate sadness of so many depressed persons, before and up to murder or suicide, is a projection of symbolization remainders; relieved of their meaning through denial, their actions are dealt with as quasi-objects that are expelled outward or turned back upon the self with the greatest indifference of a subject benumbed by denial.

The psychoanalytic hypothesis of the denial of the signifier with depressive persons, which does not exclude resorting to biochemical means to remedy neurological deficiencies, reserves the possibility of reinforcing the subject's cognitive capabilities. By analyzing—that is, by dissolving—the denial mechanism wherein depressive persons are stuck, analytic cure can implement a genuine “graft” of symbolic potential and place at the subject's disposal dual discursive strategies working at the intersec-

tion of affective and linguistic inscriptions, at the intersection of the semiotic and the symbolic. Such strategies are real counterdepressant reserves that the optimal interpretation within analysis places at the disposal of the depressive patient. At the same time, considerable empathy is required between the analyst and the depressed patient. On that basis, vowels, consonants, or syllables may be extracted from the signifying sequence and put together again in line with the overall meaning of the discourse that identification with the patient has allowed the analyst to discover. This is an infra- and translinguistic level that must often be taken into consideration and linked with the “secret” and the unnamed affect of the depressive.

### *Dead Language and the Thing Buried Alive*

The spectacular collapse of meaning with depressive persons—and, at the limit, the meaning of life—allows us to assume that they experience difficulty integrating the universal signifying sequence, that is, language. In the best of cases, speaking beings and their language are like one: is not speech our “second nature”? In contrast, the speech of the depressed is to them like an alien skin; melancholy persons are foreigners in their maternal tongue. They have lost the meaning—the value—of their mother tongue for want of losing the mother. The dead language they speak, which foreshadows their suicide, conceals a Thing buried alive. The latter, however, will not be translated in order that it not be betrayed; it shall remain walled up within the *crypt* of the inexpressible affect, anally harnessed, with no way out.<sup>13</sup>

*A woman patient, prone to frequent bouts of melancholia, came to our first meeting wearing a brightly colored blouse on*



which the word "house" was printed countless times. She spoke to me of her worries concerning her apartment, her dreams of buildings made of heterogeneous materials, and an African house, the heavenly abode of her childhood, lost by the family under dramatic circumstances. "You are in mourning for a house," I told her.

"A house," she answered, "I don't understand; I don't see what you mean, words fail me!"

Her speech became voluble, brisk, feverish, but tense with cold, abstract excitement. She never ceased using language: "My job as teacher," she said, "forces me to talk continuously, but I explain other people's lives, I'm not involved; and even when I speak of my own, it's as if I spoke of a stranger." The object of her sadness is inscribed in the pain of her skin and her flesh, even in the silk of her tight-fitting blouse. It does not, however, work its way into her mental life, it flees her speech, or rather, Anne's speech has abandoned sorrow and her Thing in order to build up its logic and un-affected, split coherence. As one flees suffering by throwing oneself headlong into a job that is as successful as it is unsatisfactory.

The abyss that, with depressive persons, separates language from affective experience reminds one of a precocious narcissistic trauma. It might have drifted into psychosis, but the superego's protection has in fact stabilized it. A rather unusual intelligence and secondary identification with paternal or symbolic agency have contributed to that stability. Consequently, the depressed are lucid observers, watching day and night over their misfortunes and discomforts, and such an inspective obsession leaves them perpetually dissociated from their affective life during the "normal" times between bouts of melancholia. Just the same, they do give the impression that their symbolic armor hasn't been integrated, their defensive shell

not introjected. Their speech is a mask—a beautiful facade carved out of a "foreign language."

### The Tone That Calls the Song

Nevertheless, if depressive speech avoids sentential *signification*, its *meaning* has not completely run dry. It occasionally hides (as will be seen in the following example) in the tone of the voice, which one must learn to understand in order to decipher the *meaning* of affect. Research on tonal modulations of depressed speech already does and will in the future teach us a great deal about some depressive persons who, in their discourse, appear unaffected but, on the contrary, maintain a strong, variegated emotionalism concealed in their intonation; or else it teaches us about others, whose "flattening of affect" even reaches the tonal level that stays (at the same time as the sentence sequence that is broken up into "nonrecoverable elisions") monotonous and weighed down with silences.<sup>14</sup>

In the analytic cure, the importance of speech's suprasegmental level (intonation, rhythm) should lead the analyst, on the one hand, to interpret the voice, and on the other, to disarticulate the signifying sequence that has become banal and lifeless—the purpose being to extract the infrasignifying meaning of depressive discourse that is hidden in fragments of lexical items, in syllables, or in phonic groups yet strangely semanticized.

During analysis Anne complains of states of despondency, despair, of losing the taste for life; this frequently leads her to withdraw for entire days to her bed, refusing to speak or to eat (anorexia can alternate with bulimia), often ready to swallow a vial of sleeping pills—and yet she has never taken that fateful step. This intellectual woman, perfectly integrated in a team of



anthropologists, nevertheless always underrates her profession and accomplishments, describing herself as "incompetent," "useless," "unworthy," and so forth. At the very outset of the cure I analyzed the conflictual relationship with her mother and noted that the patient effected a true swallowing of the hated maternal object thus preserved deep within herself and changed into a source of rage against herself and of a feeling of inner emptiness. Nonetheless, I had the impression, or as Freud says, the counter-transferential conviction that our verbal exchange led to a rationalization of the symptoms but not to a working through (*Durcharbeitung*). Anne confirmed me in that conviction: "I speak," she would often say, "as if at the edge of words, and I have the feeling of being at the edge of my skin, but the bottom of my sorrow remains unreachable."

I may have interpreted those words as a hysterical refusal of the castrating exchange with me. That interpretation, however, did not seem sufficient, considering the intensity of the depressive complaint and the extent of the silence that either settled in or broke up her speech in "poetic" fashion, making it, at times, undecipherable. I said, "At the edge of words, but at the heart of the voice, for your voice is uneasy when you talk about that incommunicable sadness." This interpretation, whose seductive value one clearly perceives, may have, in the case of a depressive patient, the sense of going through the defensive, empty exterior of the linguistic signifier and looking for mastery (*Bemächtigung*) over the archaic object (the preobject, the Thing) on the level of vocal inscriptions. Now, it so happens that this patient, in the early years of her life, suffered from serious skin diseases and was probably deprived of the contact with her mother's skin and identification with the mother's face in the mirror. I continued: "Since you couldn't touch your mother you hid beneath your skin, 'at the edge of the skin'; and in that hiding place you enclosed your desire and hatred of her in the sound of your voice, since you heard hers from afar."

We are here in the area of primary narcissism where the image of the self is built up and where, precisely, the image of the depressive future does not succeed in knitting itself into verbal representation. That is because the mourning for the object is not accomplished in such a representation. On the contrary, the object is as if buried—and dominated—by jealously kept affects, finally concealed in vocalizations. I believe the analyst can and must, through interpretation, reach that vocal level of discourse without fearing to be intrusive. By giving a meaning to affects that were kept secret on account of the mastery over the archaic preobject, interpretation recognizes that affect as well as the secret language the depressive patient endows it with (in this instance, vocal modulation), thus opening up a channel for it at the level of words and secondary processes. The latter—hence language—considered empty up to this point because cut off from affective and vocal inscriptions, are revitalized and may become a space of desire, that is, of meaning for the subject.

Another example taken from the speech of the same patient will show the extent to which an apparent destruction of the signifying sequence removes it from the denial in which the depressed patient was locked and endows it with the affective inscriptions that she is dying to keep secret. Upon returning from a vacation in Italy, Anne related a dream to me. There was a trial, like [Klaus] Barbie's trial: I handled the prosecution, everyone was convinced. Barbie was found guilty. She felt relieved, as if she herself had been freed of possible torture on the part of some torturer or other, but she wasn't there, she was elsewhere, it all seemed hollow to her, she preferred to sleep, founder, die, never wake up, in a grief-laden dream that nonetheless attracted her irresistibly, "without any image". . . I hearkened to the manic excitement surrounding torture that took hold of Anne in her relationship with her mother and sometimes with her partners in between her depressions. But I also heard, "I am elsewhere, a dream of sweetness and pain without image," and I

thought of her depressive complaint of being ill, of being barren. I said: "On the surface there are torturers [tortionnaires]. Further away, however, or elsewhere, where your sorrow lies, there is perhaps: Torse-io-naître/pas naître [torso-I-to be born/not to be born]."

I broke up the word *tortionnaire* into its component parts—I tortured it, so to speak, I inflicted upon it the violence that I heard buried in the often devitalized, neutral speech of Anne herself. Nevertheless, the torture that I revealed in the full daylight of words came from my collusion with her pain—from what I believe to be my close, tonic, rewarding listening to her unnamed discomforts, those black holes of pain of which Anne knows the affective meaning but not the significance. The torso is undoubtedly her own but is coiled up with her mother's in the passion of unconscious fantasy; two torsos that didn't touch when Anne was a baby and now unwind in a rage of words during the two women's quarrels. She—Io—wants to be born through analysis, to give herself another body. But joined without verbal representation to her mother's torso, she cannot name that desire, she does not grasp the significance of that desire. Now, if one does not know the significance of a desire, this means that one is without that very desire. It means one is the prisoner of affect, of the archaic Thing, of the primary inscriptions of affects and emotions. That is precisely where ambivalence holds sway and hatred for the mother-Thing is at once changed into self-depreciation . . . Anne went on to confirm my interpretation: she abandoned the manic problematics of torture and persecution in order to speak of the source of her depression. At that time she was overcome by the fear of being barren and the underlying desire to give birth to a girl: "I dreamt that a little girl came out of my body, the spitting image of my mother, while I have often told you that when I close my eyes I can't bring her face to mind, as if she had died before I was born and carried me along into that death. And now here I am giving birth and it is she who lives again. . . ."

### *Acceleration and Diversity*

Nevertheless, the sequence of linguistic representations, dissociated as it might be from drive-related and affective representatives, can assume with depressed persons considerable associative originality, in keeping with the cycles' rapidity. The psychomotor retardation of depressive persons may be accompanied, contrary to appearances of passivity, by an accelerated, creative cognitive process—witness the studies bearing on the very singular and inventive associations made by depressed persons starting from word lists submitted to them.<sup>15</sup> Such hyperactivity with signifiers reveals itself particularly by connecting distant semantic fields and recalls the puns of hypomanics. It is coextensive with the cognitive hyperlucidity of depressed persons, but also with the manic-depressive's inability to decide or to choose.

Lithium treatment, mastered in the sixties by the Danish doctor Hans Jacob Schou, stabilizes the basic mood and also verbal association and, while maintaining, or so it seems, the originality of the creative process, slows it down and makes it less productive.<sup>16</sup> One might thus agree with those who have conducted those experiments and say that lithium interrupts the diversity process and holds the subject within a word's semantic field, ties him to a significance, and perhaps stabilizes him around an object-referent. On the other hand, one could deduce from those experiments (note that they are limited to depressions that respond to lithium treatment) that certain forms of depression are bouts of associative accelerations that destabilize the subject and afford it an escape route away from confrontation with a stable signification or a steady object.



*A Past That Does Not Pass By*

As the time in which we live is the time of our discourse, the alien, retarded, or vanishing speech of melancholy people leads them to live within a skewed time sense. It does not pass by, the before/after notion does not rule it, does not direct it from a past toward a goal. Massive, weighty, doubtless traumatic because laden with too much sorrow or too much joy, a *moment* blocks the horizon of depressive temporality or rather removes any horizon, any perspective. Riveted to the past, regressing to the paradise or inferno of an unsurpassable experience, melancholy persons manifest a strange memory: everything has gone by, they seem to say, but I am faithful to those bygone days, I am nailed down to them, no revolution is possible, there is no future . . . An overinflated, hyperbolic past fills all the dimensions of psychic continuity. Such a fancy for ephemeral memory is also undoubtedly a means for capitalizing on the narcissistic object, of brooding over it within the enclosure of an exitless personal vault. This particularity of melancholy temporization is the essential datum on the basis of which concrete disturbances of nycthemeral rhythm can develop, as well as the precise dependency of bouts of depression on the specific biological rhythm of a given subject.<sup>17</sup>

Let us remember that the idea of viewing depression as dependent on a *time* rather than a *place* goes back to Kant. Considering the specific variant of depression constituted by nostalgia, Kant asserted that nostalgic persons did not desire the place of their youth but their youth itself; their desire is a search for the *time* and not for the *thing* to be recovered.<sup>18</sup> The Freudian notion of *psychic object*, to which depressive persons would be riveted, partakes of the same

concept: the psychic object is a memory event, it belongs to lost time, in the manner of Proust. It is a subjective construct, and as such it falls within the realm of a memory, elusive to be sure and renewed in each current verbalization, that nevertheless is from the start located not within a physis space but within the imaginary and symbolic space of the psychic system. When I say that the object of my grief is less the village, the mother, or the lover that I miss here and now than the blurred representation that I keep and put together in the darkroom of what thus becomes my psychic tomb, this at once locates my ill-being in the imagination. A dweller in truncated time, the depressed person is necessarily a dweller in the imaginary realm.

Such a linguistic and temporal phenomenology discloses, as I have often emphasized, an unfulfilled mourning for the maternal object.

*Projective Identification or Omnipotence*

In order better to account for it, we must come back to the notion of *projective identification* suggested by Melanie Klein. The study of very young children, and also the dynamics of psychosis, leads one to conjecture that the most archaic psychic processes are the projections of the good and bad components of a not-yet self onto an object not yet separated from it, with the aim less of attacking the other than of gaining a hold over it, an omnipotent possession. Such oral and anal omnipotence is perhaps the more intense as certain biopsychological particularities hamper the ideally wished for autonomy of the self (psychomotor difficulties, auditory or visual disorders, various illnesses, etc.). The behavior of mothers and fathers, overprotective and uneasy, who have chosen the child as a

narcissistic artificial limb and keep incorporating that child as a restoring element for the adult psyche intensifies the infant's tendency toward omnipotence.

Now, the semiotic means through which this omnipotence expresses itself is a preverbal semiology—gestural, motor, vocal, olfactory, tactile, auditory. Primary processes govern that expression of archaic domination.

### Omnipotent Meaning

The subject of a *meaning* is already there, even if the subject of linguistic *signification* has not yet been constructed and awaits the depressive position in order to come into being. The meaning that is already there (one can assume it to be supported by a precocious and tyrannical super-ego) is made up of gestural, acoustic, phonatory rhythms and devices where pleasure is articulated along sensory series that constitute a first differentiation from the Thing, which is exciting as well as threatening, and from autosen-sual confusion. Thus the continuum of the body, which is in the process of becoming "one's own and proper body," is articulated as an organized discontinuity, exercising a precocious and primary mastery, flexible yet powerful, over the erotogenic zones, blended with the preobject, the maternal Thing. What appears on the psychological level as omnipotence is the power of semiotic rhythms, which convey an intense presence of meaning in a presubject still incapable of signification.

What we call meaning is the ability of the *infans* to record the signifier of parental desire and include itself therein in his own fashion; he does so by displaying the semiotic abilities he is endowed with at that moment of his development and which allow him a mastery, on the level of primary processes, of a "not yet other" (of the

Thing) included in the erotogenic zones of such a semi-otizing *infans*. Nevertheless, the omnipotent meaning remains a "dead letter" if it is not invested in signification. It will be the task of analytic interpretation to search for depressive meaning in the vault where sadness has locked it up with the mother, and tie it to the signification of objects and desires. Such an interpretation overthrows the omnipotence of meaning and amounts to working through the depressive position that was denied by the subject having a depressive structure.

It will be recalled that separation from the object starts the so-called depressive phase. Upon losing mother and relying on negation, I retrieve her as sign, image, word.<sup>19</sup> Nevertheless, the omnipotent child does not give up the ambiguous delights of the paranoid-schizoid position of a former projective identification during which all psychic impulses were located within an undissociated, fusional other. Or else the child refuses separation and mourning and, instead of tackling the depressive position and language, takes refuge in a passive position, in fact a schizo-paranoid one, dominated by projective identification—the refusal to speak that underlies a number of language retardations is in fact an assertion of omnipotence and thus of primary ascendancy over the object. Or else, still, the child discovers a compromise in *denial* of the negation, which generally leads to working through mourning by establishing a symbolic system (particularly language). The subject then freezes his unpleasant affects like all others and preserves them in a *psychic inside* thus constituted once and for all as distressed and inaccessible. This painful inner-ness, put together with semiotic markings but not with signs,<sup>20</sup> is the invisible face of Narcissus, the secret source of his tears. The wall of the *denial of negation* then separates the stirrings of the subject from the symbolic makeups



that he nonetheless acquires, often even brilliantly, thanks precisely to the repeated negation. Melancholy persons, with their despondent, secret insides, are potential exiles but also intellectuals capable of dazzling, albeit abstract, constructions. With depressive people, *denial of the negation* is the logical expression of omnipotence. Through their empty speech they assure themselves of an inaccessible (because it is "semiotic" and not "symbolic") ascendancy over an archaic object that thus remains, for themselves and all others, an enigma and a secret.

### *Sadness Holds Back Hatred*

A symbolic construct acquired in such fashion, a subjectivity erected on that basis can easily collapse when the experience of new separations, or new losses, revives the object of primary denial and upsets the omnipotence that had been preserved at the cost of the denial. The linguistic signifier, which was a seeming, is then swept away by the disturbances like a sea wall by ocean breakers. As primary inscription of the loss that persists beyond denial, the affect swamps the subject. My sadness affect is the ultimate yet *mute* witness to my having, in spite of all, lost the archaic Thing of omnipotent ascendancy. That sadness is the final filter of aggressiveness, the narcissistic restraint of a hatred that is unacknowledged not because of simple moral or superego decency, but because in sadness the self is yet joined with the other, it carries it within, it introjects its own omnipotent projection—and joys in it. Sadness would thus be the negative of omnipotence, the first and primary indication that the other is getting away from me, but that the self, nevertheless, does not put up with being abandoned.

The surge of affect and primary semiotic processes comes

into conflict, in depressive persons, with the linguistic armor (which I have called alien or "secondary"), as well as with symbolic constructs (apprenticeships, ideologies, beliefs). Retardations or accelerations turn up, expressing the rhythm of the normally controlled primary processes and, undoubtedly, biophysiological rhythm. Discourse no longer has the capacity to break and even less so to change that rhythm, but on the contrary allows itself to be changed by affective rhythm to the extent of fading into muteness (through too much retardation, or too much acceleration, making the choice of action impossible). When the struggle between imaginary creation (art, literature) and depression is carried out precisely on that frontier of the symbolic and the biological we see indeed that the narrative or the argument is ruled by primary processes. Rhythms, alliterations, condensations shape the transmission of message and data. That being the case, would *poetry* and, more generally, the style that bears its secret imprint bear witness to a (for the time being) conquered depression?

We are thus led to take at least three parameters into consideration in order to describe psychic and, particularly, depressive modifications: *symbolic processes* (the grammar and logic of discourse) and *semiotic processes* (displacement, condensation, alliterations, vocal and gestural rhythms, etc.) along with the supports constituted by *biophysiological rhythms* of transmission and stimulation. Whatever endogenous factors may condition the latter, and however powerful the pharmacological means of effecting an optimal transmission of nerve stimulation may be, the problem of primary and above all secondary integration of stimulation remains.

It is precisely at this place that psychoanalytic treatment comes in. Identifying pleasure and displeasure in their

minute meanderings—and this at the very heart of the transference position, which replicates the primitive conditions of omnipotence and the simulated separation from the object—remains our only means of access to melancholia, that paradoxical formation of the subject. Paradoxical indeed, for the subject, at the cost of a *negation*, had opened up the doors of the symbolic only to shut them through its *denial*, keeping for himself the unnameable jouissance of an omnipotent affect. There is perhaps a chance, then, for analysis to transform such subjectivation and endow discourse with a modifying power over the fluctuations of primary processes and even bioenergetic transmissions, by favoring a better integration of semiotic agitation within the symbolic fabric.

### *The Western Fate of Conveyance*

To posit the existence of a primal object, or even of a Thing, which is to be conveyed through and beyond a completed mourning—isn't that the fantasy of a melancholy theoretician?

Certainly the primal object, the "in-itself" that always remains to be conveyed, the ultimate cause of conveyability, exists only for and through discourse and the already constituted subject. Because what is conveyed is already there, the conveyable can be imagined and posited as in excess and incommensurable. Positing the existence of that other language and even of an other of language, indeed of an outside-of-language, is not necessarily setting up a preserve for metaphysics or theology. The postulate corresponds to a psychic requirement that Western metaphysics and theory have had, perhaps, the good luck and audacity to represent. That psychic requirement is certainly not universal; Chinese civilization, for instance, is not a civilization of the conveyability of the thing in itself;

it is rather one of sign repetition and variation, that is to say, of transcription.

The obsession with the primal object, the object to be conveyed, assumes a certain appropriateness (imperfect, to be sure) to be considered possible between the sign and not the referent but the nonverbal experience of the referent in the interaction with the other. I am able to name truly. The Being that extends beyond me—including the being of affect—may decide that its expression is suitable or nearly suitable. The wager of conveyability is also a wager that the primal object can be mastered; in that sense it is an attempt to fight depression (due to an intrusive preobject that I cannot give up) by means of a torrent of signs, which aims precisely at capturing the object of joy, fear, or pain. Metaphysics, and its obsession with conveyability, is a discourse of the pain that is stated and relieved on account of that very statement. It is possible to be unaware of, to deny the primal Thing, it is possible to be unaware of pain to the benefit of signs that are written out or playful, without innerness and without truth. The advantage of those civilizations that operate on the basis of such a model is that they are able to mark the immersion of the subject within the cosmos, its mystical immanence with the world. But, as a Chinese friend recognized, such a culture is without means for facing the onset of pain. Is that lack an advantage or a weakness?

Westerners, on the other hand, are convinced they can convey the mother—they believe *in her*, to be sure, but in order to convey her, that is, to betray her, transpose her, be free of her. Such melancholy persons triumph over the sadness at being separated from the loved object through an unbelievable effort to master signs in order to have them correspond to primal, unnameable, traumatic experiences.

Even more so and finally the belief in conveyability



("mother is nameable, God is nameable") leads to a strongly individualized discourse, avoiding stereotypes and clichés, as well as to the profusion of personal styles. But in that very practice we end up with the perfect *betrayal* of the unique and in-itself Thing (the *Res divina*): if all the fashions of naming it are allowable, does not the Thing posited in itself become dissolved in the thousand and one ways of naming it? The posited conveyability ends up with a multiplicity of possible conveyances. The Western subject, as potential melancholy being, having become a relentless conveyor, ends up a confirmed gambler or potential atheist. The initial belief in conveyance becomes changed into a belief in stylistic performance for which the near side of the text, its other, primal as it might be, is less important than the success of the text itself.



## *Illustrations of Feminine Depression*



*Fulfilling the Beyond Here and Now*

Naming suffering, exalting it, dissecting it into its smallest components—that is doubtless a way to curb mourning. To revel in it at times, but also to go beyond it, moving on to another form, not so scorching, more and more perfunctory . . . Nevertheless, art seems to point to a few devices that bypass complacency and, without simply turning mourning into mania, secure for the artist and the connoisseur a sublimatory hold over the lost Thing. First by means of prosody, the language beyond language that inserts into the sign the rhythm and alliterations of semiotic processes. Also by means of the polyvalence of sign and symbol, which unsettles naming and, by building up a plurality of connotations around the sign, affords the subject a chance to imagine the nonmeaning, or the true meaning, of the Thing. Finally by means of the psychic organization of forgiveness: identification of the speaker with a welcoming, kindly ideal, capable of removing the guilt from revenge, or humiliation from narcissistic wound, which underlies depressed people's despair.

Can the beautiful be sad? Is beauty inseparable from the ephemeral and hence from mourning? Or else is the beau-

tiful object the one that tirelessly returns following destructions and wars in order to bear witness that there is survival after death, that immortality is possible?

Freud touches on those matters in a brief essay, "On Transience" (1915-1916), inspired by a discussion during a stroll with two melancholy friends, one of whom was a poet.<sup>1</sup> To the pessimist who depreciated the beautiful on the ground that its ephemeral fate led to a decrease in value Freud retorted, "On the contrary, an increase!" The sadness that the ephemeral gives rise to, however, seemed to him unfathomable. "To the psychologist, mourning is a great riddle. . . . But why is it that this detachment of the libido from its objects should be such a painful process is a mystery to us and we have not hitherto been able to frame any hypothesis to account for it."

Shortly afterwards, in *Mourning and Melancholia* (1917), he offered an explanation for melancholia, which, following the model of mourning, would be caused by the introjection of the lost object, both loved and hated, that I discussed earlier (see chapter 1). Here, however, in the essay "On Transience," by linking the themes of mourning, transience, and beauty, Freud suggested that sublimation might be the counterpoise of the loss, to which the libido so enigmatically fastens itself. Enigma of mourning or enigma of the beautiful? And what is their relationship?

Admittedly invisible until mourning for the object of love takes place, beauty nevertheless remains and, even more so, enthralls us. "Our high opinion of the riches of civilization has lost nothing from our discovery of their fragility." There might thus be something that is not affected by the universality of death: beauty?

Might the beautiful be the ideal object that never disappoints the libido? Or might the beautiful object appear as the absolute and indestructible restorer of the deserting

object? That could be due to its having placed itself at once on a different level of the libidinal territory, so enigmatically clinging and disappointing, where the ambiguity of the "good" and "bad" object is displayed. In the place of death and so as not to die of the other's death, I bring forth—or at least I rate highly—an artifice, an ideal, a "beyond" that my psyche produces in order to take up a position outside itself—*ek-stasis*. How beautiful to be able to replace all perishable psychic values.

Since then, however, analysts have asked themselves an additional question: by means of what psychic process, through what alteration in signs and materials, does beauty succeed in making its way through the drama that is being played out between the *loss* and the *mastery* over the self's loss/devalorization/execution?

Sublimation's dynamics, by summoning up primary processes and idealization, weaves a *hypersign* around and with the depressive void. This is *allegory*, as lavishness of that which *no longer is*, but which regains for myself a higher meaning because I am able to remake nothingness, better than it was and within an unchanging harmony, here and now and forever, for the sake of someone else. Artifice, as sublime meaning for and on behalf of the underlying, implicit nonbeing, replaces the ephemeral. Beauty is consubstantial with it. Like feminine finery concealing stubborn depressions, beauty emerges as the admirable face of loss, transforming it in order to make it live.

A denial of loss? It can be so; such beauty is then perishable and vanishes into death, unable to check the artist's suicide, or else fading away from memory at the very moment of its appearance. But not only that.

When we have been able to go through our melancholia to the point of becoming interested in the life of signs,



beauty may also grab hold of us to bear witness for someone who grandly discovered the royal way through which humanity transcends the grief of being apart: the way of speech given to suffering, including screams, music, silence, and laughter. The grandiose would even be the impossible dream, the depressive's other world, fulfilled here below. Outside the depressive space, is the grandiose anything but a game?

Sublimation alone withstands death. The beautiful object that can bewitch us into its world seems to us more worthy of adoption than any loved or hated cause for wound or sorrow. Depression recognizes this and agrees to live within and for that object, but such adoption of the sublime is no longer libidinal. It is already detached, dissociated, it has already integrated the traces of death, which is signified as lack of concern, absentmindedness, carelessness. Beauty is an artifice; it is imaginary.

### *Might the Imaginary Be Allegorical?*

There is a specific economy of imaginary discourses as they have been produced within Western tradition (heir to Greek and Roman antiquity, Judaism, and Christianity); they are constitutively very close to depression and at the same time show a necessary shift from depression to possible meaning. Like a tense link between Thing and Meaning, the unnameable and the proliferation of signs, the silent affect and the ideality that designates and goes beyond it, the *imaginary* is neither the objective description that will reach its highest point in science nor theological idealism that will be satisfied with reaching the symbolic uniqueness of a beyond. The experience of *nameable melancholia* opens up the space of a necessarily heterogeneous subjectivity, torn between the two co-necessary and co-present centers of opacity and ideal. The opacity of things,

like that of the body untenanted by meaning—a depressed body, bent on suicide—is conveyed to the work's meaning, which asserts itself as at the same time absolute and corrupt, untenable, impossible, to be done all over again. A subtle alchemy of signs then compels recognition—musicalization of signifiers, polyphony of lexemes, dislocation of lexical, syntactic, and narrative units—and this is *immediately* experienced as a psychic transformation of the speaking being between the two limits of nonmeaning and meaning, Satan and God, Fall and Resurrection.

Nonetheless, maintaining those two extreme thematics results in a breathtaking orchestration in the imaginary economy. While necessary to the latter, they fade away during times of value crisis that affect the very foundations of civilization, leaving as the only place where melancholia can unfurl nothing save the signifier's ability to be filled with meaning as well as to be reified into nothing (see chapters 5 and 8).

Although intrinsic to the dichotomous categories of Western metaphysics (nature/culture, body/spirit, lowly/elevated, space/time, quantity/quality . . .) the imaginary world as signified sadness but also, the other way around, as nostalgic signifying jubilation over a fundamental, nutritive nonmeaning is nevertheless the very universe of the *possible*. Possibility of evil as perversion and of death as ultimate non-meaning. Furthermore, and on account of the meaning maintained during the fading away period, there is the infinite possibility of ambivalent, polyvalent resurrections.

According to Walter Benjamin, it is *allegory*, which was powerfully handled in Baroque art, particularly in the *Trauerspiel* (literally, mourning play, playing with mourning; actually, it refers to the tragic drama of the Baroque period), that best achieves melancholy tension.<sup>3</sup>

By shifting back and forth from the *disowned meaning*,



still present just the same, of the remnants of antiquity for instance (thus, *Venus*, or the "royal crown") to the *literal meaning* that the Christian spiritualist context attributes to all things, allegory is a tenseness of meanings between their depression/depreciation and their signifying exaltation (*Venus* becomes the allegory of Christian love). It endows the lost signifier with a signifying pleasure, a resurrectional jubilation even to the stone and corpse, by asserting itself as coextensive with the subjective experience of a named melancholia—of melancholy jouissance.

Nevertheless, allegorisis (the genesis of allegory)—through its fate in Calderon, Shakespeare, and down to Goethe and Hölderlin, through its antithetical essence, through its potential for ambiguity, and through the unsettled meaning it sets down beyond its aim to give a signified to silence and to mute things (to the ancient or natural *daimons*)—reveals that allegory's simple figure is perhaps a regional fixation, in time and space, of a broader dynamics—the dynamics of imagination. A temporary fetish, allegory does no more than clarify a number of historical and ideological components of the Baroque imagination. Beyond its concrete moorings, however, this rhetorical figure discovers what Western imagination basically owes to loss (to mourning) and its reversal into a threatened, fragile, spoiled enthusiasm (see chapters 6 and 7). Whether it reappears as such or vanishes from the imagination, allegory is inscribed in the very logic of the imagination, which its didactic oversimplicity has the privilege of revealing ponderously. Indeed, we sense the imaginary experience not as theological symbolism or secular commitment but as flaring-up of dead meaning with a surplus of meaning, in which the speaking subject first discovers the shelter of an ideal but above all the opportunity to play it again in illusions and disillusion . . .

The imaginative capability of Western man, which is fulfilled within Christianity, is the ability to transfer meaning to the very place where it was lost in death and/or nonmeaning. This is a survival of idealization—the imaginary constitutes a miracle, but it is at the same time its shattering: a self-illusion, nothing but dreams and words, words, words . . . It affirms the almightiness of temporary subjectivity—the one that knows enough to speak until death comes.