

A LACANIAN ANALYSIS OF MISS JULIE AND THE BALCONY

A LACANIAN ANALYSIS  
OF  
MISS JULIE BY AUGUST STRINDBERG  
AND  
THE BALCONY BY JEAN GENET

by

CHRISTINE BOYKO-HEAD, B.A.

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AUTHOR:          Christine Boyko-Head, B.A. (Brock University)

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the symbiotic relationship between Jacques Lacan's psycho-analytical concepts and the dramatic genre. Rather than apply Lacan's theories to a wide variety of plays, two dramatic texts - Miss Julie by August Strindberg and The Balcony by Jean Genet - have been chosen for this exercise. The first chapter concentrates on the struggle between master and slave in Miss Julie. Lacan's version of the dialectic, which he borrows from Hegel, generates our discussion of the Name-of-the-Father and feminine sexuality. The chapter outlines the intentional decline of the protagonist as she surpasses the fragmenting Symbolic order and attempts to find contentment in the realm of the Real. The second chapter focuses on Lacan's three orders - the Imaginary, the Symbolic, and the Real - and their manifestation in The Balcony. This discussion concentrates on power: who has it, why they have it, and how they maintain it. Finally, placing the dramatic texts where they belong - on the stage - the third section of this thesis emphasizes Lacan's concept of the Gaze, and outlines its significance in understanding the theatrical experience. By closely analyzing Lacan's theories through two dramatic texts, this thesis hopes to illustrate the practicality of Lacan's concepts for literary criticism, as well as provide readers with a new tool in approaching the dramatic genre.

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## PREFACE

The four works by Lacan used in this thesis will be abbreviated as follows: Écrits: a selection will be É, The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-analysis will be FFC, Feminine Sexuality: Jacques Lacan and the Ecole freudienne will be FS, and "Desire and the Interpretation of Desire in Hamlet" will be referred as "Desire".

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## INTRODUCTION

The work of Jacques Lacan offers a wealth of fresh insight and stimulating implications for dramatic literature. However, when dealing with a particular theory there is always a danger of enforcing a univocal interpretation that restricts the text's vitality. To blindly champion Lacan's concepts naturalizes his theory; to discredit his work unscrupulously ignores his theoretical contributions to literature. As tools in excavating the treasures in Miss Julie by August Strindberg, and The Balcony by Jean Genet, Lacan's concepts illustrate the multiplicity of interpretation and his symbiotic relationship with literature. This thesis, then, attempts to combine all three writers in a relationship that, following T.S. Eliot's view on criticism, "merely puts the reader in possession of facts which he would otherwise have missed" (75).

Lacan's ideas do not solidify the dramatic texts into a single reading; nor do his ideas congeal into a conclusive theoretical statement. In fact, his scattered, elusive and allusive, thoughts might, as Fisher maintains, "bring him closer to post-structural practice, with its tendency to construct texts which defer, resist or avoid any single unitary interpretation" (14). His style is indeed elusive, deferring and menacingly playful; yet, in our struggle to



understand, we play the role of the bondsman, in Hegel, who desires the master's death since "interpretation is always motivated by desire and aggression, by desire to have and to kill" (Gallop 1985 27). By personally modifying Lacan's ideas, the reader initiates the interpretative struggle between herself and the text since, as Roland Barthes says, "every text is eternally written here and now" (145). Lacan's encouragement of the writerly reader is reinforced by Jane Gallop's statement that Lacan "has always told his readers that they must 'y mettre de sien' [contribute some of his, her, their own]" (46). By introducing us to what Shoshana Felman calls "a contemporary way of reading" (1987 9) Lacan challenges us in the communication struggle.

Since French Psycho-analysis spent "a long period of incubation in the world of artists and writers" (Turkle 49) it is perhaps appropriate to return the favour and re-enter the mirror of art through Lacan's critical techniques. The signifier's displacement, as it is directly presented in the theatrical space by the actor's transformation into the character, makes the stage a suitable platform for Lacan's theories. Since he strongly believes that we are shaped by language the performance of drama presents what Juliet Flower MacCannell calls, not a celebration of form ,but a "recognition of its preponderance in and domination of human life" (41) Consequently, by using Lacan's concepts in exploring a dramatic piece of art, we come closer to an

understanding of our aesthetic experience. Lacan's ideas help us to articulate that strangely authentic and communal sensation we experience as our gaze, momentarily, misrecognizes what it sees and we join, perhaps without even realizing it, in the struggle that is presented in the living mirror of theatre.

## CHAPTER ONE

When an artist writes a preface to his art it is evidence of the artist's emotions, philosophy and intentions. August Strindberg's preface to Miss Julie is his interpretation of the drama. Unfortunately, the preface inhibits new interpretations of the text by subjecting the reader to the suppressive "interpretative strategies that are learned, historically determined and thereby necessarily gender-inflected" (Kolodny 243). In utilizing Lacan's concepts as a base for our investigation of Miss Julie, Strindberg's preface becomes a monument not of the text's vitality, but of "the exclusive blind reference to a masculine signified, to phallogocentric meaning" (Felman 1981 27). By exploring the play with Lacan's theories we encounter what Shoshana Felman refers to as "the intervention of sexual difference in the very act of reading" (1981 21) which "opens up into a rereading of the world as well as a rereading of psychoanalysis" (1987 9).

Hegel's master/slave dialectic, necessary for an understanding of Lacan's theories about the ego, is the structuring force behind many dramas. The chapter "Lordship and Bondage" in The Phenomenology of Mind outlines this essential struggle. First, there exists an independent subject who lives for its own sake; this is the Master. There

is also a dependent subject who lives solely for the sake of another; this is the slave. Second, these subjects maintain their relative positions only through a recognition of one another's roles. Paradoxically, the independent master is dependent upon the slave's acknowledgement of his mastery. Third, the master and slave relationship, although peaceful on the surface, is boiling underneath with "aims at the destruction and death of the other" (Hegel 232). This internal hatred is a means by which both parties fearlessly try to, as Hegel says, "prove themselves and each other through a life - and - death struggle" (232). Lacan calls this battle for an independent self-consciousness the fight for pure prestige. Strindberg depicts this life and death conflict in *Miss Julie*. The dramatic interest in displaying such a battle is natural, especially when it is labelled by Strindberg as political:

As for the political planner, who wishes to remedy the regrettable fact that the bird of prey eats the dove, and the louse eats the bird of prey I would ask him: 'Why should this state of affairs be remedied? Life is not so foolishly and mathematically arranged that the great always devour the small. It happens equally often that a bee kills a lion, or at any rate drives it mad (92).

The class struggle, however is not the only conflict in *Miss Julie*. The preface exposes the text's socio-political struggles only at the expense of the socio-sexual dialectic.

The struggle between Hegel's master and slave determines the essential structuring element in *Miss Julie*.

Julie, the representative of the upper class, is in conflict with the servants Jean and Christine. However, Julie's position in the upper class does not automatically make her a master. In fact, her primary role as a female in this class subverts the political dialectic Strindberg so confidently acknowledges in the preface.

The mentality that maintains such a social order is illustrated by the cook Christine who, even after the night's activities, still upholds the importance of class distinctions:

...I don't want to stay any longer in a house where people can't respect their employers... you don't want to work for people who lower themselves, do you? Eh? You lower yourself by it, that's my opinion....If they're no better than we are there's no point our trying to improve ourselves (136).

Christine defines her existence through her relationship with the Count. Since she has no intention of ever risking her life by aiming, as Hegel says, for the "destruction and death of the other" (232), her opinions perpetuate the class system.

Jean, like Christine, is defined by the master's existence. He respects, not Miss Julie, but the position she holds because he aspires to hold a similar title. In her presence he speaks "gallantly...boldly, yet respectfully, ..slowly...politely" (110) and ends their first exchange with the subservient response: "As madam commands. I am at your service" (111). Julie, on the other hand, "flips him in the

face with her handkerchief" (110) and speaks "coquettishly... and sharply" (110). Their exchanges, although at times playful, are always tainted with the formality of their relationship:

MJ: Why don't you sit?  
 J: I wouldn't permit myself to do that in your presence.  
 MJ: But if I order you to?  
 J: Then I shall obey.  
 MJ: Sit, then. (113)

During these exchanges "they recognize themselves as mutually recognizing one another" (Hegel 231). Jean's behaviour reinforces Julie's superiority; her behaviour reinforces his position, in Hegel's argument, as an "unessential object, as object with the impress and character of negation" (231).

Jean changes his attitude during Julie's absence and declares that "she really is mad" (111). Beneath the politeness of Jean's discourse lurks the aggression of the slave. His resentment toward the upper class is motivated by his own struggle to obtain mastery: "Today I'm a servant, but next year I'll own my own hotel, in ten years I'll be a landed gentleman! Then I'll go to Rumania, get a decoration - why, I might - might, mind you - end up with a title" (124). His aspirations are further emphasized by his learning French and upper class etiquette. His concern for Miss Julie's reputation is artificial as he has also acquired the skills to manipulate individuals through the power of language: "...I've read a lot of novels and gone to theatres. And I've heard gentry talk. That's where I've learned most" (120).

The arbitrary and temporal nature of the master makes Jean's bondage bearable, but not passive like Christine's. By emphasizing the slave's aggression towards the master class, Jean preys on Julie's vulnerability as he cunningly destroys her illusions about her loving relationship with the other servants:

- MJ: I know these people, and I love them,  
as I know they love me. Let them come here,  
and I'll prove it to you.
- J: No, Miss Julie. They don't love you. They  
take your food, but once you've turned your  
back they spit at you. Believe me! Listen to  
them, listen to what they're singing! No,  
don't listen! (122).

Pretending to be Miss Julie's "true, loyal and respectful - friend" (122), Jean enters into the 'fight for pure prestige'. This term, which Lacan borrows from Hegel, and which refers to the struggle between master and slave, is an essential stage in the development of an independent self-consciousness:

They must prove themselves and each other through a life-and-death struggle. They must enter into this struggle for they must bring their certainty of themselves, the certainty of being for themselves, to the level of objective truth (Hegel 232).

Jean's sexual conquest symbolically destroys the master by breaking through the barrier that sustains the class system. By dishonouring Miss Julie he arrives at the certainty of his own superiority. Her commonness reinforces the possibility of his successful climb to the top of the social pinnacle:

I can't deny it gratifies me to have found that it was only a gilt veneer that dazzled our humble eyes,

that the eagle's back was as scabbed as our own, that the whiteness of those cheeks was only powder, and those polished fingernails had black edges, that that handkerchief was dirty though it smelt of perfume (128).

Although Jean's attitude towards the upper class is the opposite of Christine's, like her he is not yet willing to risk everything in the struggle. Not prepared to step beyond his prescribed station, for the moment a sexual triumph is all he achieves. The slight anxiety that Jean experiences after this event is not strong enough to carry him beyond the psychical walls of bondage. Jean is still a trapped being and he admits this to Julie:

There are still barriers between us - there always will be, as long as we're in this house. There's the past, there's his lordship - I've never met anyone I respected as I do him - I only have to see his gloves on a chair and I feel like a small boy - I only have to hear that bell ring and I jump like a frightened horse - and when I see his boots standing there, so straight and proud, I cringe (123-124).

His aspirations remain only aspirations; he dreams about leaving while Miss Julie actively prepares for the escape. The image of 'his lordship' still has too much power over Jean for his dreams to become reality. Only when the Count returns does Jean finally encounter the absolute fear that can make him independent. Strindberg sees his gaining of true independence as the ultimate meaning of Miss Julie: "With the brutality of a slave and the indifference of a tyrant he can look at blood without fainting and shaking off misfortune. So he survives the battle unharmed" (97).



However 'the battle' played out in the text is not as straightforward as Strindberg makes it seem. Since it is Miss Julie and not the Count whom Jean encounters, the complexity of the text increases as the political slave turns out to be the sexual master. In fact, the political master - Miss Julie - is symbolically destroyed on the sexual level. Here Jean takes charge by enticing and manipulating the 'naive' Miss Julie as her indiscriminating trust and sexual inferiority accelerate her downfall. But is Julie's fall as unsuspecting as her character makes it seem? Is she merely the means to Jean's ends or is he the unsuspecting dupe of what she has cunningly plotted out for herself?

According to Strindberg the play focuses on Julie's decline as an independent self-consciousness. I propose the drama to be structured around Julie's ego formation rather than its destruction. In never being permitted to create her self-identity Julie admits being a slave to the discourses of others:

I'd learned from her to distrust and hate men - she hated men. And I swore to her that I would never be a slave to any man.... But it was he who brought me up to despise my own sex, made me half woman and half man...I haven't a thought I didn't get from my father, not an emotion I didn't get from my mother (131,144).

When Julie tries to convince Christine to play the role of the mother at Lake Como, she uses Jean's language until she realizes that this too is not her own true voice. In fact, she only finds her voice in her final action.

Rather than the master in the Hegelian dialectic, Julie is the slave; doubly a slave, 1) because she is female and thus raised to believe in her innate deficiency, and 2) because she lacks an authentic consciousness. Julie's parents have victimized her in their own sexual power struggle. Raymond Williams' observation concerning male/female relations helps in understanding the parental turmoil surrounding Julie:

Men and women seek to destroy each other in the act of loving and creating new life, and the new life is itself always guilty, not so much by inheritance as by the relationship it is inevitably born into. For it is used as a weapon and prize in the parents' continuing struggle, and is itself unwanted, not only as itself, in its own right, but continually unwanted, since there is no final place for it where it was born, and yet the loss of this place is an absolute exposure haunted by the desires of an impossible return (108).

Williams' statement explains exactly what Julie suffers. It also is uncannily similar to Lacan's theories of ego development. Not permitted to develop a personal self-consciousness, neither by her mother nor by the class she is born into, Julie surrenders herself to the forces besieging her. However, while being rowed in a boat with a lady friend, Julie's language becomes freer and 'unlady-like'. Jean's surprise at her using such language reinforces Julie's subjugation to alien discourses and Lacan's observation that "the subject, too, if he can appear to be the slave of language is all the more so of a discourse in the universal movement in which his place is already

inscribed at birth, if only by virtue of his proper name" (É 148). Jean does not realize that he is overhearing Julie's struggle against her social position and against her gender determined discourse. The dichotomy between the demands of these two forces makes her unconsciously search for a return to a more peaceful time - a time, possibly, before she was born.

Although Julie's encounter with the mother has been subversive and although there is little evidence that a satisfying dyadic relationship existed between them - "I came into the world, against my mother's wish as far as I can gather" (129) - Julie has extremely ambivalent feelings towards her mother: love, because of the natural bond between a mother and child, and hatred because the mother can not satisfy the child's endless desire. Juliet Mitchell explains that the usual reason for a daughter's hatred toward the mother stems from the "situation in which the girl blames the mother for the fact that she is a girl and therefore without a penis" (57). Thus, as Lacan puts it, the mother-daughter relationship is strained by "the central reproach against the mother for not giving her [a penis] " (FS 102). In contrast, Miss Julie depicts the mother reproaching the daughter for lacking a penis, and as a result the mother creates as well as intensifies the daughter's sense of gender restrictions.

The mother 'misrecognizes' - in Lacan's terminology - the penis as being the desirable object and the wielder of

power. She does not realize that "it is the absence of the penis that turns her into the phallus, the object of desire" (E 322). Since Miss Julie lacks a penis she must masquerade as a male:

She wanted to bring me up as a child of nature,  
and into the bargain I was to learn everything  
that a boy has to learn, so that  
I might be as an example of how a woman can be as  
good as a man. I had to wear boy's clothes...  
(129-130).

When the Count finally takes his position in this defective mother-child relationship, the phallus is established as the "privileged signifier of that mark in which the role of the logos is joined with the advent of desire" (E 287). He takes control away from the mother, and makes Julie a little girl. Rather than having a penis Julie, becoming the object of desire, now gains the status of the phallus. Although this seems to be a natural process, the father is just as subversive as the mother because Julie now finds herself despising her own worth as a female. As an object of desire unable to satisfy the mother, Julie must now satisfy the father and other males; however, she has never been successfully separated from her mother.

It is no wonder that Miss Julie is a decentred individual. She never experiences the completeness of the Imaginary Order, or for that matter, any satisfying relationship. By being a female, she physically lacks a penis which is, mistakenly, what the mother desires. By being raised as a boy, she psychologically lacks being the object

of desire. Thus, Miss Julie becomes an enigma which psychically deprives her of the union with the mother and, more significantly, sexually taints her pleasures in being a woman.

Julie's dream supports her alienated position and demonstrates her manifest quest for a completely different lifestyle. In the dream's latent content a reunion with the inaccessible mother is not desired by Julie; the initial union was unsatisfactory. However, Jean's social inaccessibility becomes the mother-object's substitute in the dream's censored message:

I long to fall, but I don't fall. And yet I know I shall find no peace till I come down, no rest till I come down, down to the ground. And if I could get down, I should want to burrow my way deep into the earth (116).

Painfully separated from the totality of the Imaginary Order, Julie is the phallus in the Symbolic Order. The Father's intrusion in the primary dyad places her, as it were, on the very tip of the phallus - "I've climbed to the top of a pillar, and am sitting there" (116) - a function she neither wants nor knows how to handle. The dream illustrates her role as a woman in the Symbolic world. Lacan asserts that:

The symbolic parity...Girl=Phallus... has its roots in the imaginary paths by which the child's desire succeeds in identifying itself with the mother's want-to-be, to which of course she was herself introduced by the symbolic law in which this lack is constituted (É 207).

Since the mother mistakenly thinks that a penis is necessary

for power, she never recognizes her daughter's role as a phallus and thus, Julie never becomes her mother's pride and joy.

Julie becomes the object of desire for both the Count and Jean. The Count uses her as a weapon against the mother; Jean uses her as a weapon against the Count. The demand placed on Julie as a signifier forces her to search, unconsciously, for the 'true' plenitude of the Imaginary order; a plenitude that must have existed even before the dyadic union of the mother and child. Julie's quest for what obviously passed her by is explained by Lacan as "an act of homage to the missed reality - the reality that can no longer produce itself except by repeating itself endlessly, in some never attained awakening?" (FFC 58). This 'never attained awakening' corresponds with the play's sleep imagery and Julie's emotional and psychical tiredness. Miss Julie's actions, illustrated by the dream's content, are governed by the unconscious desire to unite with the Other, an Other that can not be the biological mother but may be an Other introjected in her imagination as an 'idea' of a mother. Thus her actions, not simply reactions to Jean's aggressivity, make her a slave in Hegel's sense of the word, and in Lacan's terminology a slave to the desires of those who desire the Other as the phallus. Thus, the element of slavery blends the text's socio-political level and the psycho-sexual level.

In Jean's case, his aggression is primarily a

political master/slave conflict. He intentionally plays Miss Julie's games, with token attempts at resistance, taking advantage of her flirtatious mood:

- J: ...I used to see you when I was a child, ...  
I remember one time especially - no, I oughtn't  
to mention that.  
MJ: Oh Yes! Tell me. Come on! Just this once.  
J: No, I really couldn't now. Some other time,  
perhaps (113).

His warnings are balanced by his own sexual games as he gets something in his eye and requires Julie's attention. When the couple emerges from the bedroom their relationship alters as the previous roles are no longer intact: "Miss! Call me Julie! There are no barriers between us now. Call me Julie!" (123). Later when she tries to reinstate her authority Jean's concealed aggressivity surfaces: "servant's whore, lackey's bitch, shut your mouth and get out of here. You dare to stand there and call me foul?" (127). His refusal to re-establish Julie as a pseudo-master is part of his political plan to escape his servitude. Jean, completely dissolving Julie's place in the master class in order to raise his own status, is, however, not strong enough to crush Julie's hidden intentions. According to Lacan, "intended aggressivity gnaws away, undermines, disintegrates; it castrates; it leads to death" (É 10). Similarly, Jean's aggression, not only symbolically castrates Julie, but leads to her death: "Thus the servant Jean, lives; but Miss Julie cannot live without honour" (96).

Since Julie is a slave, her intentions in singling

out the superior-minded male is also an act of aggression. She says: "When I take the floor I want to dance with someone who knows how to lead. I don't want to be made ridiculous" (111). Yet, they dance only twice. In fact, his aggression towards her can not fulfill Lacan's mandate. He can not actually castrate her - she lacks a penis - nor can he shatter her being - she lacks a unified self. His aggression, no worse than the pain of her life, surfaces after their moment of love. Thus she desires to be hurt because if she can't be loved, at least Jean cares enough to mutilate her:

Hit me, trample on me, I've deserved nothing better. I'm worthless - but help me, help me out of this - if there is a way out... Hurt me more (127).

Being a sensitive man, Jean will not make her dancing ridiculous; he will not make her death ridiculous either.

The aggression in the play arises from the characters' frustration with their present conditions. Lacan relates this frustration to the discourse of the subject as he asks: "Is it not rather a matter of a frustration inherent in the very discourse of the subject?" (É 41). Miss Julie and Jean are frustrated by the juxtaposition of who they are forced to be and who they really want to be. The roles they want to play, indicated by their personal discourses as opposed to their social discourses, are beyond their reach. Their aggressivity is not fuelled by a frustration of desire; they satisfied their physical desire during the pantomime. Instead their aggression is, in Hegel's sense, "the



aggressivity of the slave whose response to the frustration of his labour is a desire for death" (É 42). Jean's frustration and aggression are rooted in the socio-political conflict. Julie's frustration and aggression are caused by her sexual-political position as the object of desire - the phallus- and her historically determined sense of being a lack - a female. Each character, then, desiring the imago reflected in the other person, "offers the subject the pure mirror of an unruffled surface" (É 15).

Regression, usually associated with frustration and aggression, is also evident in the play. The discourses before the pantomime expose the characters' wanting-to-be. Jean speaks above his station - "Ceci est mon grand delice " (108) - and drinks "Dijon, four francs a litre" (109). Julie, on the other hand, wants to set aside all rank as she states: "My taste is very simple. I prefer [beer] to wine" (114). Thus their discourses expose their phantasies. But as soon as a hope rises in their voices, it is just as quickly concealed by a return to the character's public discourse. In fact the characters, fearfully and orgasmically testing their phantasies, never fail to remind the other of his/her proper place in the social structure.

In the preface Strindberg depicts Julie as a pitiful victim whose troubled life and substandard intellect contribute to her downfall. However, the gaps in Julie's discourse - in addition to Jean's observation that "Miss

Julie's gone mad again" (107) - severely discredits an interpretation of victimization. In fact Julie, actively deciding on this night as the moment of her struggle for pure prestige, masterminds the revolt and thus becomes the plot's dictator. Lacan speaks of Hegel's 'cunning of reason' which "means that from beginning to end, the subject knows what he wants" (É 301). From the very beginning, Miss Julie knows exactly what she wants. Jean's observations concerning her behaviour emphasize her active participation in the subsequent events: "It's odd, though, that a young lady should choose to stay at home with the servants, on Midsummer Eve eh?" (108).

Julie's aggression focuses on Jean: the virile male with a superior mind and a violent hatred toward the master class. His anger offers Julie an aggressivity that includes a strange kind of narcissism:

The notion of aggressivity as a correlative tension of the narcissistic structure in the coming - into - being of the subject enables us to understand in a very simply formulated function all sorts of accidents and atypicalities in that coming - into - being (É 22).

Jean's self-love attracts the emotionally deprived Julie. Her desire to create an authentic self arises from her need for love, as she transforms the narcissistic Jean into her ideal ego. This transformation is necessary because without self-love or object-love, which has been absent from Julie's life, she can not move towards an independent identity.

Yet Julie can only accomplish a coming-into-being

and a contentment with the self through an aggressive struggle. This aggressivity, caused by the failure of the Name of the Father to introduce the child into the Symbolic order, leads Julie to the narcissistic Jean who unwittingly helps satisfy her self-aggression. In Écrits Lacan, explaining the connection between aggression and narcissism, links the situation to the Father's failure:

This narcissistic moment in the subject... allows us to understand the aggressivity involved in the effects of all regression, all arrested development, all rejection of typical development in the subject, especially on the plane of sexual realization, and more specifically with each of the great phases that the libidinal transformations determine in human life, ...the aggressive turning round of the Oedipal conflict upon the subject's own self was due to the fact that the effects of the complex were first perceived in failures to resolve it (24-25).

Julie's dream illustrates the failure of the Oedipus complex. She does not want to be the object of desire - a woman - because she desires a bond with the mother. Her homosexual feelings toward another woman - her mother - are complicated by her supplementary desire to formulate a feminine identity: "She desires a penis as a crucial sign of difference, to serve as a defense against the undertow of merger with the mother...she has known as all-powerful" (Kahn 76). She fears the loss of her 'mother' while simultaneously fearing a loss of self if she remains connected to the mother. Consequently, she periodically desires men when her identification with the mother is physically unavoidable:

J: ...You hate men, Miss Julie.

MJ: Yes, Most of the time. But sometimes  
 when nature burns-! Oh, God! Will  
 the fire never die? (131).

Her emotional dichotomy results from the Father's absence in the position of the Law. Since "paternity cannot be perceived, proven, known with certainty" (Gallop 47), the Father's right must be established by the mother. Julie can not successfully take her place in the symbolic triad until, according to Lacan, her father takes his: "It is in the name of the Father that we must recognize the support of the symbolic function which, from the dawn of history, has identified his person with the figure of law" (E 67).

Miss Julie's childhood emphasizes that the Name of the Father was never established by the word of the mother. The mother's hate for the father shows her hate for patriarchy and the "authorized possession of the woman" (Gallop 49) implied by accepting the Name of the Father. Ultimately, a hostile attitude towards all males becomes Julie's inheritance.

Initially, the mother establishes no one in the position of the Law. When the Count takes charge of the situation the mother exposes his authority as a mockery and incites his attempted suicide. Jane Gallop maintains, the mother's infidelity "betrays the Name of the Father as the arbitrary imposition it is" (48). The Count's idea of what a Father should be leaves him vulnerable with, as Lacan says: "all too many opportunities of being in a posture of

undeserving, inadequacy, even of fraud, and, in short, of excluding the Name of the Father from its position in the signifier" (É 219). The mother strips the Count of his identity through her infidelity and silence. The Count's absence in the play, mirroring his absence as the Law, illustrates the play's patriarchal deprivation as Julie unrestrictively satisfies her desires.

To return to Hegel's 'cunning of reason', we observe that Julie unconsciously manipulates the evening's events in order to become another. Since the "unconscious is the discourse of the other... and the locus of speech and potentially the locus of truth" (FFC 131,129), Julie and Jean, according to Lacan, reflect their desires in each other:

nowhere does it appear more clearly that man's desire finds its meaning in the desire of the other, not so much because the other holds the key to the object desired, as because the first object of desire is to be recognized by the other (É 58).

While in the process of becoming independent, both characters misrecognize the object that will satisfy their desires. Jean's childhood memory of Julie in the garden illustrates his desire to be rich. Ironically, he sees a beautiful, but emotionally impoverished life. The emptiness of his vision is explained by Lacan:

Everyone knows that envy is usually aroused by the possession of goods which would be of no use to the person who is envious of them, and about the true nature of which he does not have the least idea. Such is true envy - the envy

that makes the subject pale before the image of a completeness closed upon itself, before the idea that the petit a, the separated a from which he is hanging, may be for another the possession that gives satisfaction (FFC 116).

A major rupture appears in the text at this point. Since Miss Julie did not wear dresses until after the great fire, Jean's story may not be accurate. Furthermore, Jean later admits to embellishing the story: "well I had to think up something. Women always fall for pretty stories" (127). In not exposing the contradiction Julie participates in the phantasy. For a brief moment she is stabilized in a consciousness that finds its completion in the slave. Like Jean, she sees the petit objet a in the phantasy as "she transposes or invents her biography, in her discourse, she represents herself as another, as she wishes to see herself, or as she wishes to be seen" (É 15). Thus, Julie sees herself in Jean's lie and in this way the lie contains a potential for truth.

By creating the story of star-crossed love Jean valorizes their sexual encounter. Through their discourse they try to transform each other into what they desire. Jean transforms Julie into an aristocratic lady capable of raising his status; Julie names Jean as the individual capable of loving her: "Tell me you love me" (124). These attempts at transforming the other character is exactly what Lacan describes as the function of speech:

In its symbolizing function speech is moving towards nothing less than a transformation of the subject to whom it is addressed by means of the link that it establishes with the one

who emits it - in other words, by introducing the effect of a signifier (E 83).

During their intoxicating encounter they try to communicate with one another and, although their discourse is filled with lies, they do come close to an appreciation, if not an understanding, of what the other suffers: "Truth is based only on the fact that speech, even when it consists of lies appeals to it and gives rise to it" (FFC 133). Julie and Jean, although this may seem difficult to accept, truly care for one another - they have to. Their love, although consisting of an imaginary recognition, is essential for the action of the play. Strindberg would have us believe that honour is paramount to Julie. However, it is only when she realizes Jean's falseness that she become desperate: "What do I care about that? That's what I'm giving up now. Tell me you love me, otherwise - yes, otherwise - what am I?" (124).

According to Freud's essay "On Narcissism":

a strong egoism is a protection against falling ill, but in the last resort we must begin to love in order not to fall ill, and we are bound to fall ill if, in consequence of frustration, we are unable to love (78).

Is this failure to love the cause of the mother's illness? Jean's phantasy provides Julie with an outlet for her love, a love that until now has only been directed towards obedient animals. When he destroys the phantasy by not responding to her love he simultaneously destroys her imaginary role in the phantasy. When he slaughters her green finch he effectively destroys her misperceptions about living without love.

As already stated, love and aggression are based on the concept of narcissism. In Lacan's words, "the one you fight is the one you admire the most... The ego ideal is also,... the one you have to kill" ("Desire" 31). Julie loves Jean with the type of love commonly experienced in the transference which assumes that, "he whom I suppose to know, I love" (FS 139). His self-assured behaviour deceives Julie into transferring her suffering on to him. Lacan points out that:

To love is, essentially, to wish to be loved. What emerges in the transference effect is opposed to revelation. Love intervenes in its function, revealed here as essential, in its function of deception (FFC 253).

In return, Julie's mistaken love deceives Jean into experiencing a counter-transference. For a moment Jean thinks that he may be able to love Julie. Then in a flash of reality, both realize the love capable of taking them to Lake Como is false: "as a specular mirage, love is essentially deception" (FFC 268). Jean's indifference toward slaughtering the finch illustrates his inability to bear her suffering. As a result, she - as Lacan calls it - "de-supposes him of knowledge" (FS 139) by transforming her loving discourse into animosity instigated by the revelation that she herself is trapped within a cage:

Do you think I can't bear the sight of blood?  
You think I'm so weak - oh, I should like to  
see your blood, your brains on a chopping block -



I'd like to see all your sex swimming in a lake of blood - I think I could drink from your skull, I'd like to bathe my feet in your guts, I could eat your heart, roasted! You think I'm weak - you think I loved you, because my womb wanted your seed, you think I want to carry your embryo under my heart and feed it with my blood, bear your child and take your name!... You think I'm a coward and want to run away? No, now I shall stay. Let the storm break! (139).

Once the deception is exposed Julie takes command of the situation.

In asserting her authority Julie exhibits a love that is deeper than the love of sex or obedience. She respects Jean to the point of integrating her personal struggle with his social struggle. Since she knows exactly what she wants, she illustrates what Lacan calls, "the junction between truth and knowledge... the mobility out of which revolutions come... desire becomes bound up with the desire of the Other, but that in this loop lies the desire to know" (É 301). This desire to know incorporates Miss Julie's revolution against her mother, her father, and the class structure insistent upon sexual difference.

Realizing that Jean is inadequate for providing her with an identity, Julie becomes a master disguised as a slave. However, inundated with desperation, questions, ambiguities and uncertainties, her discourse unconsciously controls, in Lacan's sense of the term, the scenario: "Human language constitutes a communication in which the sender receives his own message back from the receiver in an inverted form... speech always subjectively includes its own

reply" (E 85). Miss Julie's desperate questions direct Jean into voicing the answers she wants. Consequently, it is Julie, not Jean, who is the manipulative slave striving for the master's death, the master being the 'Miss Julie' moulded by inadequate forces. In Lacanian terms:

What I seek in speech is the response of the other.  
 What constitutes me as subject is my question.  
 In order to be recognized by the other, I utter  
 what was only in view of what will be.  
 In order to find him, I call him by a name that he  
 must assume or refuse in order to reply to me.  
 I identify myself in language, but only  
 by losing myself in it like an object.  
 What is realized in my history is not the past  
 definite of what was, since it is no more,  
 or even the present perfect of what has been in what  
 I am, but the future anterior of what I shall have  
 been for what I am in the process of becoming  
 (É 86).

Jean manifests the discourse of the other by responding to Julie's leading questions. In this way, Julie becomes an object at the mercy of Jean's new signifying chain as she moves toward a coming-into-being, an authentic consciousness.

During the process of her own becoming, Julie assists Jean. Placing him in the role of the other that must answer her, Julie shows Jean how to co-opt the master's discourse:

- MJ: Do me this last service, save my honour  
 save his name! You know what I ought to  
 will myself to do, but I can't. Will me  
 to, Jean order me!...
- J: I don't know - now I can't either - I can't  
 order you... I think if his master came down  
 now and ordered me to cut my throat I'd do  
 it on the spot.
- MJ: Then pretend that you are he, and I am you...  
 I am already asleep...
- J: Here's the broom - Go now - while it's  
 light - out to the barn - and - (he whispers  
 in her ear)...It's horrible - But its the

only possible ending. Go! (145-146).

Through a misidentification Jean moves into the position of the other. The anxiety experienced by him after the pantomime is now transformed into the absolute fear of death, a fear which Hegel says liberates the slave by introducing "death, the sovereign master" (237). Contrary to Strindberg's interpretation that "Jean's star is rising and he has the whiphand of Miss Julie simply because he is a man" (97), he needs Julie to help him get past the frightening image of the Master:

I can't... To be so afraid of a bell! Yes, but it isn't only a bell - there's someone sitting behind it - a hand sets it in motion - and something else sets the hand in motion (146).

Miss Julie's focus beyond the Symbolic order provides Jean with the courage to speak the words that also propel him beyond his subservience. The command to "go" (146) transports both characters beyond the reach of the Father.

Julie's suicide illustrates that, for her, life is a void, a nothingness that must be, has to be, filled with something. Her unconventional actions indicate her desire to find this something that will fill the painful emptiness of life. But how can she find what she needs when she does not even have a voice to call its name? Julie must go beyond the void of speech in order to find the truth of her existence. She must make a place for herself in spite of her parent's selfish manipulation. What Lacan calls the Real contains the hope of satisfying and unifying Miss Julie. The Real's

"desexualization...its economy, later, admits something new, which is precisely the impossible" (FFC 167). Julie wants what is impossible for her family to give her: contentment, love and respect as an independent identity. Unwanted by both parents and not permitted to develop into an authentic self-consciousness, Julie does not have even the satisfaction of being a total slave because of her social status. Thus her life is an enigma with death, according to Raymond Williams, as the only possible solution:

The storm of living does not have to be raised, by any personal action; it begins when we are born, and our exposure to it is absolute. Death, by contrast, is a kind of achievement, a comparative settlement and peace (106).

Lacan would define Julie as a "personality that realizes itself only in suicide; a consciousness of the other that can be satisfied only by Hegelian murder" (É 6). By struggling to the death Julie gains a self: "I shall have to bear the blame, carry the consequences " (144). Although the play shows Julie's political slide it also shows her psychological rise to power. She sustains her existence through her death as she comes into being by successfully passing through the non-being of her socio-political bondage. As the play progresses she becomes a master by choosing correctly: "The revelation of the essence of the master is manifested at the moment of terror, when it is to him that one says freedom or death, and then he has obviously only death to choose in order to have freedom" (FFC 220).

Miss Julie is not simply a victim of multiple circumstances. On the contrary, she motivates the drama by her intentional aggressivity towards those who have arrested her development. Her aggression, also aimed at her own acceptance of her enforced sublimation, is a calculated attempt to initiate and win the battle for pure prestige. The cause and effect scenerio outlined by Strindberg's preface is a naive way of interpreting the text and one that clearly does Miss Julie's character a disservice.

Inasmuch as there are no arbitrary actions, the timing of the suicide is intentional and the type of suicide is very precise. Since Julie has been 'mad' before, there must be an explanation for the fact that this particular night ends in her death. Midsummer's Eve is a fertility festival, a period of license. Combined with the Count's absence, it allows her to participate in the activities and have a liaison with the otherwise socially inaccessible Jean. It is obvious from her comments that she recognizes his flair for discourse; yet, she intentionally misinterprets his words and actions. Once the deception of love is exposed their actions become, as Lacan puts it, "a jouissance beyond the phallus... occasionally it can happen that there is something which shakes the woman up [secouer] or helps them out [secourir]" (FC 145). Her sexual intercourse with Jean shakes her loose from her static existence and helps her decide how to escape as "the link between sex and death, sex and the

death of the individual, is fundamental" (FFC 150). Julie stalls for time by asking questions and telling her history: "(She looks at her watch) But we must talk first. We have a little time" (129). Time for what? The train? Morning? The arrival of the Father? Her hesitant yet controlled behaviour illustrates her planned self-aggressivity. By modifying what Lacan says about Hamlet's desire, we obtain an appropriate analysis of our female protagonist:

Not for a moment does she think that her time has come. Whatever may happen later, this is not the hour of the Other, and she suspends her action. Whatever [Miss Julie] may do, she will do it only at the hour of the Other ("Desire" 18).

Julie must wait for two things before she can proceed. She must wait for the return of the Count and she must wait until Jean becomes the Other through his discourse. Once again, by changing the proper nouns in Lacan's "Hamlet" essay, "the important thing is to show that [Miss Julie] can receive the instrument of death only from the other" ("Desire" 32). The knife, taken from Jean who is in the position of the Other, involves him in her death by forcing him to confront the absolute Master and ultimately taking him beyond what Hegel calls an "absorption in the expanse of life" (233).

Her suicide must take place in the temporary absence of the father in order for her to establish the Name of the Father as Law. To kill herself in his presence would once again negate his authority. Thus Miss Julie, making what

Lacan refers to as "the complete sacrifice...of all narcissistic attachments" ("Desire" 51), places herself beyond the Father's desire. In taking a knife, an instrument of castration, Julie separates herself from the imaginary union with the mother and places the father in the symbolic triad. She does this so that, through death, she may surpass the Law and possibly reunite with the inaccessible Real. The suicide, then, is not a case of the "subject's regression to the mirror stage" (É 209); In searching for contentment, Julie goes beyond both the Imaginary and the Symbolic orders.

When she decides on her time to die it appears that the Symbolic order pushes her to lift the blade to her skin. In Écrits Lacan gives this exact interpretation:

Indeed, the Law appears to be giving the order 'Jouis!' to which the subject can only reply 'J' ouis' (I hear), the jouissance being no more than understood (319).

But Julie is not listening to the bell that symbolizes the the Law. Her voice is already beyond the structuring and fragmenting nature of the Symbolic order. By hesitating, she unselfishly provides Jean with time to discover his voice in the Symbolic order. Thus, the last seconds of the play consist of "Two loud rings on the bell " (146), the masterly words of Jean, and the silent Miss Julie walking "firmly out through the door" (146) - beyond the power of the signifier. Julie's silent exit can be seen as a revolutionary act, along the lines suggested by Juliet Flower MacCannell:

Feminine disruption of the Symbolic may consist

in nothing more than deafening the ears to the voice, resisting the seduction of speech. Perhaps the necessary first move is to stop listening - to the voice on high... ( 138).

In fact, Julie listens to a voice beyond the void that is saying: "the first shall be last" (146). This sudden hope in a god helps Julie surpass the Laws oppressing her.

Julie's ecstasy in death is an act of unmasking which exposes the constructed nature of the master/slave dialectic and releases not only Jean from the struggle but her father as well. Julie's God is the god of love and freedom because it is through an act of compassion for the suffering of humanity that Julie is lead to consider her relationship with something 'beyond the phallus' and which makes her satisfaction possible. Her charitable act performed in reverent silence is the voicing of her own self-consciousness in the aura of mercy.

The play's structure displays more than a chain of cause and effect. Julie's suicide could not have taken place at any other time. She chooses the time of the Other to initiate her first, and ironically last, act as an independent subject. She then, moves beyond the restricting language of the Symbolic order and releases the other characters from their bondage. The Count is freed from his position as the Law, because both Julie and Jean are physically and emotionally beyond the inadequate signifiers of the Father. Jean is not the phallogentric subject Strindberg thinks he is. In not privileging sight over his



other senses - "nothing to see becomes nothing of worth" (Gallop 1982 58) - Julie becomes more for Jean than a representative of lack. By accepting his role in her death Jean illustrates his respect for her as a kindred spirit. Like Horatio in Hamlet, Jean will keep Julie's memory alive by retelling her story. Her personal desire for freedom is now eternally intertwined with the symbolic and political freedom of the one she dared to love.

Miss Julie depicts the antagonist struggle between the classes and the sexes. Strindberg was obsessed with this sexual-political struggle. His comments on the character of Julie illustrate his misogyny, his mastery over his degenerate heroine, and his deep-rooted misunderstanding of the character he created. Although Jean's struggle is against the Count, Strindberg's struggle, as Eric Bentley points out, is against women: "woman, being small and foolish and therefore evil...should be suppressed like barbarians and thieves. She is useful only as ovary and womb, best of all as a cunt" (14). Thus Jean, the superior-minded male struggles with the Count's daughter, who is useless as a master because of her sex. But, as the slave of the playwright, Julie will not fade away without a fight. She may die during the course of the play but in doing so she not only escapes her bondage, she becomes an independent consciousness. She refuses to be the incubator for the superior male's seed; she refuses to be the object of desire - the petit objet a; she refuses to be

her mother's double; she refuses to be a slave to the discourses of others. In the end, she escapes from the slave labour of the text's masculine discourse, and rises above the language which pronounces her dead on arrival - arrival as a female. Strindberg's cause and effect is subverted by Miss Julie, while her actions are her own intentional moves toward authenticity. She consolidates her newly discovered identity by linking Jean's independence with her own. Her death, then, represents her experience of the absolute fear necessary for the development of an independent self-consciousness, a consciousness that moves her beyond the control of the Symbolic Father, the Count, Strindberg, the phallogocentric. Miss Julie's death is not simply a tragedy. Ronald Peacock asserts that "actions may technically speaking fulfill the function of a climax, bringing down a curtain, but they are felt to be less significant and less terrible than the state they interrupt" (94-95). Miss Julie's suicide is less terrible than her enigmatic, tortured existence; but it is the most significant act she has ever performed. It is an action inspired by her own desires as an independent consciousness. Thus Miss Julie's death is the only possible conclusion for a character who endlessly searches for her true voice in the realm of the impossible.

## CHAPTER TWO

The balcony, in Genet's play of the same name, is a brothel - it is also a stage. It is a place where manufactured illusions and theatricality are placed before our eyes. For the performance costumes are chosen, characters created, roles played. Life itself follows the same pattern. Irma's direct statement at the end of The Balcony calls attention to the parallel between the theatre and life: "You must now go home, where everything - you can be quite sure - will be falser than here... You must go now. You'll leave by the right, through the alley... (she extinguishes the last light)" (96). It is no accident that Genet's stage is filled with mirrors; they accentuate the mimetic quality of drama. However, in The Balcony mirrors acquire a thematic importance as optic devices not only line the walls, but flesh and cloth mirrors walk upon the floors.

The visitors come to the balcony to live out the phantasies which reflect their unconscious desires to return to the completeness of what Lacan calls the Imaginary order. Lacan links this order with the mirror stage:

The mirror stage is a drama whose internal thrust is precipitated from insufficiency to anticipation - and which manufactures for the subject, caught up in the lure of spatial identification, the succession of phantasies that exceeds from a fragmented body-image to a form of its totality...and, lastly, to the

assumption of the armour of an alienating identity (É 4).

Genet requires three folding screens, a chandelier, a mirror which reflects an unmade bed, a costume and a woman. These elements assist the client in entering Lacan's mirror stage. They help create the manufactured drama that results in the temporary realization of the client's phantasy. The effects produced by the costumes are believed to be real because the clients desire to attain a 'real unity' by re-entering the mirror stage:

The General: (He looks at himself in the mirror)  
Austerlitz! General! Man of war and in full regalia, behold me in my pure appearance Nothing, no contingent trails behind me. I appear, purely and simply (26).

The subject - the inadequate self of the Symbolic order - looks into the mirror and sees the object: the "pure appearance" of the General. The subject gains a sense of completeness by uniting with the object and willingly participating in what Lacan calls a méconnaissance which makes the subject oblivious to the separation between himself and the image of the General: "I appear, purely and simply" (26). Through this méconnaissance, which I will translate as misidentification or misrecognition, the subject is no longer a disseminated individual.

The constructed nature of the illusion is conveniently ignored by the client as he successfully enters the mirror stage. Yet Lacan clearly points out that "Freud...

in touching on the feelings involved in the transference, insisted on the need to distinguish in it a factor of reality" (É 94). Irma and her girls realize that certain tools are necessary in creating the imaginary transference:

Carmen: And what'll the authentic detail be?  
 Irma: The ring. He's got it all worked out.  
 The wedding ring. You know that  
 every nun wears a wedding ring, as  
 a bride of God. That's so, That's  
 how he'll know he's dealing  
 with a real nun.  
 Carmen: What about the fake detail?  
 Irma: It's almost always the same:  
 black lace under the homespun  
 skirt (35).

Quite simply, the balcony inverts the categories of reality and phantasy. The ring is a prop since the nun is not a nun but a whore, the owner of the authentic black lace. However in the Imaginary order misperceptions abound. Only the Chief of Police recognizes that "brothel tricks are mainly mirror tricks" (48). His positioning within the Symbolic order heightens his exclusion from the Imaginary order's satisfaction: "If I come to your place, it's to find satisfaction in your mirrors and their trickery" (50). By being excluded from the imaginary transformation he is willing to openly pronounce the brothel's function. Ironically, once the Chief discovers the imaginary satisfaction of the brothel's tricks, he also ignores the theatrical machinery that makes his misidentification possible.

The attempt to rediscover the ideal image is rooted

in the subject's primary narcissism. Since the satisfaction of the primal scene is lacking in the Symbolic order, the subject displaces his narcissistic tendencies on to an ideal image. At the balcony the clients desire both a narcissistic and an attachment type of love. While the Bishop, General and Judge love "what he himself would like to be" (1914 84), the anaclitic theme also occurs at the balcony: "this time it's the baby who gets slapped, spanked, tucked in, then cries and is cuddled " (47). Although love abounds in the balcony no sexual act is explicitly mentioned in the play. The balcony's conventions encourage the subject's sublimation, which Freud defines as a

process that concerns object-libido and consists in the instinct's directing itself towards an aim other than, and remote from, that of sexual - satisfaction; in this process the accent falls upon deflection from sexuality (1914 88).

The clients displace their ego ideals on to the object they perceive in the mirror. By not showing us any explicit sexual contact Genet presents us with his typical inversion of social values. Freud would probably say that the balcony's psychical illusions help the men avoid repression: "the formation of an ideal heightens the demands of the ego . . . .sublimation is a way out, a way by which those demands can be met without involving repression" (1914 89). By directing the client's energy at role playing, the balcony, then, becomes a necessary social institution.

Freud's concepts of narcissism and sublimation and

Lacan's concept of the Imaginary order are complementary. The subject's experience of the Imaginary order "brings a consolation" (35) that the subject desires to rediscover. In not being permanent however, the satisfaction has a drawback. Carmen states that "their awakening must be brutal. No sooner is it finished than it starts all over again.... They'd like it never to end" (35). The individual, trying to escape the Symbolic order's decentring nature, returns to the Imaginary order which is, nevertheless, pressured by the reality of the Symbolic order. Irma describes the experience's redeeming quality: "When it's over, their minds are clear. I can tell from their eyes. Suddenly they understand mathematics. They love their children and their country. Like you" (35). The clients' misrecognitions are directed toward an object, an object supported by their egos. The fusion of object and ego that defines Lacan's Imaginary order, and the utopian pleasure it affords, is a rewriting of Freud's view that:

The return of the object-libido to the ego and its transformation into narcissism represents, as it were, a happy love once more; and, ... a real happy love corresponds to the primal condition in which object-libido and ego-libido cannot be distinguished (1914 95).

The client's longing to re-enter the Imaginary order recaptures, through phantasy, what he initially lost - an image of satisfying completeness.

The subject disregards his Symbolic identity and focuses on the ideal image he reobtains from the Imaginary order. All the clients want to experience their object-ideals

in a masturbating solitude: "I want to be general in solitude. Not even for myself, but for my image, and my image for its image, and so on. In short, we'll be among equals" (27). This quotation exemplifies the subject's misperceptions. He can not be a General in solitude because his identity as such depends upon the existence of another body. In this case the external trappings, which replace an actual figure, must be present in order for the ideal object/ego to exist. The subject is correct in his experience of equality. The ideal object/ego, secure in its completeness, abolishes difference, which exists only on the Symbolic plane, where the individual is displaced, fragmented and subjected to a pre-existing order determined by Law.

However, the client's satisfaction is not based upon a simple méconnaissance. The men masquerade as active ideals; the women masquerade as passive slaves to the ideals. Lacan states that "the masculine ideal and the feminine ideal are represented in the psyche by... the term masquerade... masquerade...is precisely to play not at the imaginary, but at the symbolic level" (FFC 193). Ironically, the clients, wanting to escape their fragmentation, must resort to the Symbolic's power to name in order to re-enter the Imaginary realm. This power to name is paradoxically the cause of the subject's fragmentation in the first place. As in Miss Julie, the subjects are slaves to a language and a discourse "in the universal movement in which their places are already



inscribed at birth, if only by virtue of his proper name" (É 148). The clients are the most ordinary of men; they are little, old, timid, bald and frightened. While in the brothel they reject these inadequate characteristics and acquire new signifiers that give them bravery, charisma, vigour, hair.

The sessions belong to the Imaginary realm; but the Symbolic controls and organizes the activities since the clients and the prostitutes communicate through language. Scene Two demonstrates that the sessions are scripted - " He reads from the statute book" (17) - and proceed along a course determined by the language of an elusive playwright. In the use of phantasy-specific discourses, the transformations demonstrate the Imaginary and the Symbolic order's symbiosis.

The subject's reunion with his ideal object/ego depends upon the signifiers of the Symbolic order. The signifiers' arrangement in an Imaginary chain completes the transformations as the clients speak in the ideal object's language: " Ornaments! Mitres! Laces! You, above all, oh gilded cope, you protect me from the world" (13). The discourse, authenticated by the disguise, moves beyond the Symbolic order's disseminating power.

We must not forget that the Symbolic order has a dual role at the balcony: it disrupts the euphoria of the Imaginary order, as well as allowing the Imaginary to be named and re-entered by perfecting an ideal object/ego

encapsulated by the perfect signifier, the perfect signifier being an element of the psychical trinity - namely the Real. Connected with the Real is Lacan's idea of a 'tuche' which "is an encounter, an essential encounter - an appointment to which we are always called with a real that eludes us" (FFC 53). The clients want to encounter the Real by perfecting their imagos. To them the image is not constructed; it is, for the duration of the session, real: "It's a true image, born of a false spectacle" (75). The clients want to experience the essence of the imago, and through that essence, the Real that provides the support for the phantasy. Lacan asserts that "the real supports the phantasy, the phantasy protects the real" (FFC 41). Thus the phantasy, supported by the possibility of its realization, allows the client to feel the proximity of a completeness because the imago is more than a function trapped in Symbolic nets; the imago is a real experience:

a function is a function. It's not a mode of being. But a bishop - that's a mode of being. It's a trust. A burden. Mitres, lace, gold-cloth and glass trinkets genuflexions...To hell with the function!... The majesty, the dignity, that light up my person, do not emanate from the attributions of my function. - No more, good heavens! than from my personal merits. - The majesty, the dignity that light me up come from a more mysterious brilliance; the fact that the bishop precedes me... And I wish to be bishop in solitude, for appearance alone...(12).

The client wants to be Bishop; the one and only Bishop. Since the role precedes the subject Lacan assimilates its existence in the Symbolic order with the Law: "It is in the

name of the father that we must recognize the support of the symbolic function which, "...has identified his person with the figure of the law" (E 67). We attribute, then, the ecstasy of being Bishop to the existential power that comes with the title. The brilliance of the position, a brilliance that goes beyond the Symbolic and the Imaginary, incorporates the ultimate Name-of-the-Father. As Lacan states: "the gods belong to the field of the real" (FFC 45).

The clients are not subjected to the Law's castrating effect since in actuality their imagos are signifiers of the Law. By being Bishop, Judge and General the clients are finding perfection in the ultimate signifier: the Father. By ignoring the fact that the function determines the ideal object's power, the men ultimately ignore their own subservience to the Symbolic order.

They want to experience this perfection without hindrance from the function of the ideal object/ego. The function of the ideal would be a painful reminder of their subservience to the Symbolic order. Yet only by performing their functions do the clients become the Law in their phantasies. The Judge demonstrates the relationship between the fulfilment of his phantasy and the function of the imago:

Thus far everything has gone off well.

My executioner has hit hard... for he has his function. We are bound together, you, he and I. For example, if he didn't hit, how could I stop him from hitting? Therefore, he must strike so that I can intervene and demonstrate my authority. And you must deny your guilt so

that he can beat you (15).

These performances, as constructed as the Name of the Father, illustrate the signifier's emptiness and the subject's determination to impregnate the imago's discourse with power.

As we illustrated in our discussion of Miss Julie, the Master's self-consciousness depends upon recognition by another. In The Balcony the Imaginary chain of phantasy-specific signifiers is threatened by the slave's rebellion:

You need only refuse - but you'd better not! - need only refuse to be who you are...for me to cease to be...to vanish, evaporated. Burst. Volatilized. Denied.... You won't refuse to be a thief? That would be criminal. You'd deprive me of being! (19).

Accepting her subservience and the master's precedence, the thief legitimatizes the Judge's power. Bleikensten reminds us that "priority in time is one of the very sources of the father's power" (118). Thus, by subverting the priority principle Genet once again empties the Law's signifiers: "But you, you have a privilege that he hasn't, nor I either, that of priority. My being a judge is in emanation of your being a thief" (19). In essence, an agreement or contract must be made between those who portray the Law and those who are subject to its authority. However, this contract is not infallible; the terms can be breached at anytime.

The refusal by the women to name the clients as the Law is a reminder of the client's inadequacy. The scene with the Bishop illustrates the inevitable move from the state of

gratification back to the Symbolic order's fragmentation. As long as the client is in the Imaginary order his desires reign - "here there's no possibility of doing evil" (10). In creating his own world the client nullifies the exterior Law as well as the question of good and evil.

The women, however, take pleasure in disrupting the Imaginary chain of signifiers. They use the manipulation associated with the anal phase to control the men:

The Woman: Reality frightens you, doesn't it?  
 The Bishop: If your sins were real, they  
                   would be crimes, and I'd be  
                   in a fine mess (10).

They defer what is desired by the men through their temporary refusal to accept the ideal object/ego's authority. They defer the completion of the méconnaissance and then provide the client with the metaphorical gift of themselves. As Freud maintains: "they soon contrive to arrange those actions in such a way as to bring them the greatest possible yield of pleasure" (1905 315). Carmen and Irma's delaying in telling the Chief "the fact that his image does not yet conform to the liturgies of the brothel" (47) gives them a powerful sense of pleasure. They control his satisfaction; they have the power to keep his desires in perpetual flight. And best of all, they know they hold this kind of power. Each scenario displays an anal activity which "suspends the subject's certainties until their last mirages have been consumed " (É 43). Thus the women derive their satisfaction from manipulating the scenarios, while the same manipulation

results in the client's heightened pleasure. The continual disruption of the signifying chain by either the women's refusal to recognize the imagos or by the intrusion of the rebellion keeps the client in constant motion as he eventually moves out of the Imaginary order and back to his displaced role in the Symbolic order.

Once the Symbolic order is introduced to the individual he never escapes its power, not even by returning to the Imaginary order. The Imaginary always consists of a false or artificial connection. If the false becomes real, the illusion is destroyed and the subject becomes accountable to the world. The subject, fearing not only his accountability but his incompleteness, will no longer experience the ecstasy of the ideal object/ego. In fact, he will, in the Symbolic order, be a sinner and require repentance from the Symbolic Fathers or Law of society.

As already stated, the misidentification is based upon a narcissistic tendency. The client loves what he sees in the mirror because it reflects how he wants to be seen: "Mirror that glorifies me! Image that I can touch, I love you.... (The general bows to his image in the mirror... and bows to the audience)" (18-19, 27). The woman exhibits the love of a slave as she becomes a prop for the male's transformation. As a sinner, a thief and a horse, the women love the imagos and recognize their authority - their phallic power - " How I loved you, my hero" (25) - but this love is

deceptive since Lacan's slave "makes an effort to deceive the master by the demonstration of the good intentions manifested in his labour" (É 100). The slave bears her subjugation while she waits in anticipation for the master's death. In The Balcony the woman fulfills her function as a whore by loving the imago; when the session is over she becomes indifferent to the man:

Irma: (very irritated)...I've given  
you every attention while you've  
been here...  
Bishop: ...You don't give a damn about  
my safety. When the job's finished  
you can't give a damn about  
anything (12).

Her love is not the essential element in the scenario; it merely helps the client complete his transformation. Essential for the session's success is that the imago be misrecognized as the petit objet a. In Feminine Sexuality Lacan explains that

What was seen, but only from the side of the man, was that what he relates to is the objet a, and that the whole of his realization in the sexual relation comes down to fantasy... when one is a man, one sees in one's partner what can serve, narcissistically, to act as one's own support (FS 157).

The disguise supporting the client's phantasy creates the objet a necessary for the méconnaissance.

Love - and here we run into the problem of having one signifier with multiple signifieds - is a danger to the scenario. Love emphasizes the deceptive nature of the Imaginary order - an order where deception occurs but is

never acknowledged until the clients leave their special rooms: "It would be a catastrophe if my clients and girls smiled at each other affectionately. It would be an even greater catastrophe than if it were a question of love" (41). Lacan points out that to introduce love or affection in the session - any session - results in the misunderstanding of one's function:

What better way of assuring oneself,  
on the point on which one is mistaken,  
than to persuade the other of the truth  
of what one says!...In persuading the  
other that he has that which may  
complement us, we assure ourselves  
of being able to continue to misunderstand  
precisely what we lack (FFC 133).

Love causes the male to believe in his imago beyond the mirror stage and to misunderstand his lack. The female, then, replaces the costume as she becomes the one who is 'supposed to know'; she becomes the Other that should know exactly what the male desires at all times because his desire is the desire of the Other. Thus in her hands rest the fragile function of creating the male's imago and reflecting it back to him while in the volatile system of language.

The relationship between Chantel and Roger illustrates the deceptive quality of love and its potential for disastrous misrecognitions. Chantel has learned "the art of pretence, of acting" (59). Her discourse of love is a discourse that supports Roger's ego. Love fulfills his phantasy of finding a perfect mirror in the real world. Chantel gives his life false meaning: "Chantel I love



you....You envelop me and I contain you" (58-59). Roger transforms Chantel into his ideal ego since as Freud says, "being in love consists of a flowing over of ego-libido on to the object... It exalts the sexual object into a sexual ideal" (1914 95). Since Chantel embodies what Roger desires he exalts her - the sexual object, the prostitute - as a sexual ideal and places her beyond his grasp. His insistence on loving her transforms her into a virgin:

I didn't steal you for you to become a unicorn or a two-headed eagle.... I've never been able to make love to them. (He caresses her) Nor to you either (57).

By the time he realizes her discourse is false she has already slipped away from him and he must return to the brothel where his solitude follows Lacan's explanation for castration:

I love you, but, because inexplicably I love in you something more than you - the objet petit a - I mutilate you (FFC 268).

Without the phallus Roger can not mutilate the virgin through sexual intercourse and therefore he mutilates the real object of his love - himself. Through his castration Roger becomes - like Chantel - an exotic figure incapable of sexual love.

In addition to the hazard of love, time is also a dangerous element for the méconnaissance. The fee gives the client the privilege of time. The session's duration is based upon the pleasure of the Imaginary order. However the abuse of time can be disastrous for the subject. In essence, the synchronic intersection of the diachronic phantasy is, in

Lacan's thinking, the "moment in which the symbolic and real come together" (É 95). In other words, the moment the client puts on the disguise he steps into the world of the imago and unites his fragmented being with the eternal power of the phantasy. However, the Symbolic order does not play fair and it terminates the possible encounter with the Real: "It's time. Come on! Quick! Make it snappy!" (9).

The client does not participate in the transformation with the foreknowledge of its termination. To consider the session's length of time would inhibit the progress of the scenario. In actuality, the client anticipates the termination of his ego's existence in the public domain and his re-entry into the freedom of the Imaginary realm. This anticipation parallels the slave's waiting for the master's death:

From this moment on he is able to accept his labour for the master and his renunciation of pleasure in the meantime; and, in the uncertainty of the moment when the master will die, he waits (É 99).

Nevertheless, the balcony is a business that requires a quick turnover of clients. Although Irma does limit the time, she does not rush the men. Since "the unconscious needs time to reveal itself" (É 98) they are given time in relation to their scenarios and their individual progress: the Bishop spends two hours and twenty minutes, the Judge has two sessions in half an hour and the Chief of Police takes the entire play. From the session's various lengths, it is

obvious that the balcony does not adhere to the concept of routine time. Time is measured by the individual's capacity to reveal the truth of the scenario: "Everything was carefully planned long ago. It's all been worked out. The rest is up to you" (88).

The client familiarizes himself, through the woman's assistance, with the scenario. Scene nine demonstrates Carmen's function in leading the newcomer into the proper discourse - the discourse of his ideal object/ego.

Roger: And so this is my tomb?

Carmen: (correcting him) Mausoleum (88).

Once the client inaugurates his phantasy the points of significance are scripted and the time limit determined. The Bishop, Judge and General reveal their unconscious through the specific markers outlining the progression of the phantasy. Roger's session is over when he successfully advances through the discourse:

Roger: Is it in prisons? In the wrinkles  
of old people?

Carmen: It is.

Roger: In the curves of roads?

Carmen: You mustn't ask the impossible  
It's time to go, sir. The session's over...  
You've nothing further to do...(92-93).

Going beyond the allotted time is in accordance with Lacan's warning:

The punctuation, once inserted, fixes the meaning; changing the punctuation renews or upsets it; and a faulty punctuation amounts to a change for the worse (E 99).

The statute book fixes the scenario's action. Once the client

has nothing further to do in the role, he must get dressed and go home: "It's late. And the later it gets, the more dangerous it'll be..."(11) for the client. If the client does not get home on time the rebels might kill him: "It's dangerous for anyone to loiter in the streets" (12).

The second danger of violating the time limit relates to the discourse. To go beyond the discourse of the scenario introduces the element of the unexpected into the session: "It's late. And the later it gets, the more dangerous it'll be..."(11) for the discourse. The discourse may take the form of love - a contradiction to the brothel's goals - or it may take the form of the ideal object/ego's fixation. In Écrits Lacan discusses the very dangers we see happening at the balcony:

The indifference with which the cutting up of the 'timing' interrupts the moments of haste within the subject can be fatal to the conclusion towards which his discourse was being precipitated, or can even fix a misunderstanding or misreading in it, if not furnish a pretext for a retaliatory ruse (99).

Carmen's faulty 'punctuating' of the session allows Roger to take his imago to the limit. He misrecognizes the transformation and believes he has completely merged with his ideal object/ego: "I've a right to lead the character I've chosen to the very limit of his destiny...no, of mine... of merging his destiny with mine..." (93). Roger rebels against his inadequacy by taking the scenario's discourse beyond the imaginary identification. In his case, he really does attain

the impossible; he makes the signifier - his castrated body - relate directly to the signified that promotes the emptiness of all signifiers. The scenario's complexity, power, and faulty punctuation leads the discourse on a dangerous path by giving the client too much unrivalled independence: "you wouldn't be the first who thought he'd risen to power..." (93). To reverse the punctuation now is too late. As Lacan illustrates:

we re-establish in the subject his original mirage in so far as he places his truth in us, and that if we then give him the sanction of our authority, we are setting the analysis off on an aberrant path whose results will be impossible to correct (É 96).

The clients' inability to join the Symbolic order on time traps them in the roles of their ideal object/egos. The client "happens to be wearing that robe this evening simply because he was unable to clear out of the studios in time" (81). The men, trapped in their Imaginary phantasy-specific discourses while in the Symbolic world, should be in a state of euphoria, but they are not:

so long as we were in a room in a brothel, we belonged to our own fantasies. But once having exposed them, having named them, having proclaimed them, we're now tied up with this adventure according to the laws of visibility (79).

In the Imaginary order, there exists a singular enjoyment between the subject and the object that ignores the objects' autonomy. Once the narcissism is publicized the individual no longer enjoys the union because Law enters the scene and

organizes the subject's world. The subject's slavery to the system demonstrates his insignificance; the system continues even in his absence - "If the gentleman doesn't fill the bill, then get a dummy" (1958 364). Death does not stop the system; the subject is expendable.

The ideal object/ego lacks power in the Symbolic order. This impotence causes the client's dissatisfaction:

We shall go back to our rooms and there continue the quest of an absolute dignity. We ought never to have left them. For we were content there, and it was you who came and dragged us away. For ours was a happy state. And absolutely safe...we were general, judge and bishop to the point of perfection and to the point of rapture! (79).

Dissatisfaction leads to rebellion as the clients try to make their roles significant:

Are you going to use what we represent, or are we ...going to use you to serve what we represent? ...We're going to live in the light, but with all that that implies.... We're going to act in such a way as to impoverish our ornaments unceasingly! We're going to render them useful! But in order that they be of use, and of use to us - since its your order that we've chosen to defend - you must be the first to recognize them and pay homage to them (79-80).

The men want real power. They truly believe they can add significance to their roles and unite their social egos with the ideal object/egos. But by acquiring roles, in Lacan's view, an aphanisis, or fading occurs making a union between the subject and the object impossible:

They simple exercise, in relation to one another, that function of being pure representatives and, above all,

their own signification must not intervene... they are supposed to represent something whose signification, while constantly changing is, beyond their own persons (FFC 220).

Not to undergo a fading strips the role of its exotic pleasure, and the clients state the banality of their entrapment: "As for my lace, I no longer look forward to it - it's myself...I'm just a dignity represented by a robe...By Jove, I no longer dream" (1960 377). The priority principle endows the roles with power, but the costume displays that power to the world. If the subject shows through the disguise the representation becomes ineffectual. The subject can never attain real solitary power because power, established within the master/slave dialectic, negates the 'total' person by reducing him to an inter-dependent function - "And above God?...Well gentlemen, above God are you, without whom God would be nothing, And above you am I, without whom..." (83). Even the supposed omnipotence of God is dependent upon others. What is Real power? Power is structured through Laws but Real authority is beyond naming.

In effect, the clients become truly powerful only in the mirror stage. Transformed into mirrors, the women allow the males to return to the Imaginary order: "Some men. Drawn by my mirrors and chandeliers, always the same ones. As for the others, heroism takes the place of women....Their seed never ripens in you, and yet...if you weren't there?" (31). The men are drawn - attracted - to the brothel; they are also, in another sense, created by the women. Irma realizes

the function of her girls. The women's sterility makes them the Mother-object, the objet a, by acting as a mother figure and not a penetratable sexual entity. The male's ecstasy arises from his false reunion with the object; the child with the mother; the exterior male with their interior other or femininity. The masquerade illustrates the client's reunion with his femininity. According to Lacan the "masquerade is the very definition of femininity precisely because it is constructed with reference to a male sign" (FS 43). The client masquerades as an Other, an Other being an alternative term for the feminine ideal. The men want to be the feminine ideal because that is precisely what they lack; they lack the phallus. The Other that they choose to represent is, then, the feminine ideal with reference to their masculine desire of possessing the phallus. Thus to be the symbol of power - the phallus, and the Other of themselves - is only possible in the state of masquerading as the Name of the Father. The masquerade, then, connects them with the hidden power of their own interior femininity because it is the Mother who must name the Father and give him power. This means that real power can only be achieved through the reunion of the feminine and the masculine.

Sexual intercourse, although not explicitly mentioned in the text, does precede the masquerade either physically or psychically. The unmade bed's reflection can not be ignored. The theme of Death - "the scenarios are all reducible to a



major theme...Death (87-88) - indicates that some sort of intercourse takes place because the business of sex is, for Lacan, the business of the mortuary: "he knows the signifiers, sex and its significations are always capable of making present the presence of death" (FFC 257). The sexual act emphasizes the individual's separation from the objet a. The Symbolic order's insistence upon this separation continually divides the subject by emphasizing, as Lacan puts it, "the living being, by being subject to sex, has fallen under the blow of individual death" (FFC 205). The men, in striving to fill the void caused by their lost primal love, have sexual relations with women who act as mother substitutes. Lacan, then, scientifically justifies the males' philandering natures:

If...the man finds satisfaction for his demand for love in the relation with the woman, in as much as the signifier of the phallus constitutes her as giving in love what she does not have - conversely, his own desire for the phallus will make its persistent divergence towards 'another woman' who may signify this phallus in various ways, either as a virgin or as a prostitute (E 290).

Wives are inadequate in fulfilling the demands of their husbands because they are capable of producing children. The family, yet another reminder of the male's fragmentation and mortality, frightens him to the balcony where the possibility of illegitimately reproducing another human being intensifies his lack to the point of ecstasy. By accentuating this reality of death - by playing with a social death if he is

caught at the brothel - attempts to destroy the Symbolically defined ego and reproduce the Imaginary ideal.

However, the prostitute's sterility makes the issue of sex and death a mockery. The sterile sexual encounter defers the subject's ecstasy to the scenario:

If I went through wars without dying,  
 went through sufferings without dying,  
 if I was promoted, without dying,  
 it was for this minute close to death....  
 where I shall be nothing, though reflected  
 ad infinitum in these mirrors, nothing  
 but my image (26).

Each client participates in an encounter with Death as "the phantasy of one's death, of one's disappearance, is the first object that the subject has to bring into play in this dialectic" (FFC 214). The client struggles between his symbolic ego and the ideal object/ego he recreates at the balcony. Only, the struggle is rigged; each client helps the ideal object/ego to win.

Death, then, is linked by Lacan to sex. Our interpretation of the play also links death to the subject's return to the mirror stage. However, while in the Imaginary order death is a phantasy because the subject is everything: "The world's continuing existence depends upon my life as much as my life depends upon it" (Eagleton 186). Not only does the Imaginary provide security for the individual, it also gives the universe stability. The General, the Other of the client, can die in the Imaginary order but only figuratively because the imago is the Other. Lacan's Other is

immortal:

It is from the locus of the Other where he installs himself that he follows the game thus rendering any risk inoperant, especially the risk of any contest, in a 'consciousness-of-self' for which death is present only in jest (É 309).

The General participates in his own funeral ritual and revels in the fact that as the client he can go home after.

Another means of attempting to connect with the Real, death exceeds articulation. The Real illustrates the subject's insignificance within the universe. The General's death, an aspect of the Real that can be structured and partially articulated, is narcissistic and false. When Arthur is shot the Real transcends language:

It's make believe that these gentlemen want. The Minister desired a fake corpse. But this one is real, Look at it: it's truer than life. His entire being is speeding towards immobility (61).

Since the dead subject "does not know he is dead" (E 300) his truer than life corpse places him beyond life, beyond words, and into the Real. By living through his imaginary death the General provides his life with a gratifying meaning while conquering all three Lacanian realms.

In the Chief's case gratification is not as simple a process. Since he holds an enviable position in society he can not unite with his ideal ego through masquerading because "there is no Other of the Other" (É 316). The invisible Queen and the Chief are pure signifiers: "For me, the Queen has to be someone. And the situation has to be concrete" (63)

because as Lacan maintains:

a signifier is that which represents the subject for another signifier. This signifier will therefore be the signifier for which all the other signifiers represent the subject: that is to say, in the absence of this signifier, all the other signifiers represent nothing, since nothing is represented only for something else (É 316).

As a signifier of the Law the Chief's hope for glory depends upon the ordinary subject's desire to integrate with the Chief's ideal ego. The Chief brings his

solitude to realization...in the full assumption of his being-for-death... nothing except this inconsistent passage from life to death... leaves forever present in the memory of men this symbolic act of his being - for - death (É 105-104).

Once he is assured that his image will be perpetuated in humanity's phantasies the Chief becomes a symbol in waiting: "I've won the right to go and sit and wait for 2000 years. You! Watch me live, and die" (94). The Chief wins the right to eternal life by being the client's imago; he wins the right to die by provoking what Lacan implies as the imago's ritualized death:

Thus the symbol manifests itself first of all as the murder of the thing, and through death constitutes in the subject the eternalization of his desire.... It is in effect as a desire for death that he affirms himself for others; if he identifies himself with the other, it is by fixing him solidly in the metamorphosis of his essential image, and no being is ever evoked by him except among the shadows of death (É 105).

In murdering their symbolic egos, the clients eternalize their desires by participating in their death phantasies. The Chief proves his independence by constantly asserting that the "people fear him more and more " (48) as he battles to conquer the masses and be the triumphant master:

when the rebellions been put down, and  
 put down by me, when I've the nation behind  
 me, and been appealed to by the Queen,  
 nothing can stop me. Then, and only then,  
 will you see who I now am!...Yes,  
 my dear, I want to build an Empire...  
 so that the empire will, in exchange  
 build me...(49).

Although the Chief continually asserts his power, the méconnaissance would be impossible without the females. In The Balcony the women become figurative mirrors reinforcing the ideal object/egos. This idea of 'woman as mirror' is eloquently and decisively presented in Virginia Woolf's A Room of One's Own:

Women have served all these centuries  
 as looking-glasses possessing the magic  
 and delicious power of reflecting the  
 figure of man at twice its natural size...  
 whatever may be their use in civilized  
 societies, mirrors are essential  
 to all violent and heroic action...  
 if women were not inferior, they would  
 cease to enlarge...and it serves to  
 explain how restless men are under  
 her criticism...For if she begins to tell  
 the truth, the figure in the looking-glass  
 shrinks; his fitness for life is  
 diminished (35).

As mirrors, the women propel the men to great heights by pretending to be the imago's slaves and giving the men power as well as ecstasy. In accordance with Woolf's observation,

the revolution needs a woman to activate its violence and its heroics. Chantel provides the revolution with a guiding image - like the French Revolution's Liberte - as she becomes naturalized into a sign:

Chantel's image is circulating in the streets. An image that resembles her and does not resemble her. She towers above the battles. At first, people were fighting against illustrious and illusory tyrants, then for freedom. Tomorrow they'll be ready to die for Chantel alone (68).

She enlarges the revolutionaries' egos and spurs them into action by becoming the Mother-object. In return, being the role of archetypal mother satisfies her ego's desire now that her prostitution is repressed. Frozen into a symbol of the revolution, Chantel becomes a martyr that can be destroyed only in effigy, in absentia. Like Arthur, she lives eternally through her ignorance of her death and her knowledge of her role as symbol. Thus the revolution is Chantel's mirror, which reflects her ideal image and takes her beyond life and into the Real.

Irma, another archetypal mother-figure, voluntarily participates in a misidentification. She prepares herself for the Chief by playing out a brief scenario with Carmen, and thus demonstrates that they are not dependent upon a male for satisfaction. Carmen dresses Irma in a cream-coloured negligee, transforming her into the frightened madame of a brothel:

Put your hand here (on her breast)

I'm all tense. I'm still wrought up.  
 I knew you were on your way,  
 which meant you were in danger.  
 I waited for you all a-tremble...  
 while perfuming myself... (46).

The Chief, her primary customer, needs to see a larger than life verisimilitude of himself: "My image is growing bigger and bigger. It's becoming colossal. Everything around me repeats and reflects it. And you've never seen it represented in this place?" (48). Irma illustrates her love for the Chief by giving him what he desires; he "Shall be not the hundredth - thousandth - reflection - within - a - reflection in a mirror, but the One and Only, into whom a hundredth thousand want to merge" (80). The Chief wants to be the Absolute signifier, which according to Lacan is only possible through death. Humourously, since his misidentification is delayed he is "advised to appear in the form of a gigantic phallus, a prick of great stature..." (78). This costume would make him a real thing and not a symbol - "one that has not yet been made a symbol but that has the potential of becoming one" ("Desire" 46). The Chief's impatience makes him, with or without the spandex, a thing awaiting death.

Irma coordinates the Chief's complicated transformation. She arranges everything for the ultimate scenario - the Mausoleum Studio: "And it was I who singled you out! I who fished you out of the rooms of my brothel and hired you for his glory" (79). Scene Four's tramp prepares to be the Hero's slave. The rebellion, also her contrivance,

provides the Chief with a cause. Irma's role as Queen, which makes her the phallus, assists in the scenario while simultaneously giving her pleasure. Thus the women satisfy their own desires by participating in the scenarios: "The revels that I indulge in...are to forget theirs" (36).

Through Irma's skill the Chief reunites with the ideal object - the Hero: "It's not true...But where? When? So it's true? It's for me? Gentlemen, I belong to the nomenclature" (86). The Chief transcends the Imaginary and the Symbolic orders by becoming an Other while simultaneously re-entering the Imaginary order through Roger's phantasy: "I've a right to lead the character I've chosen to the very limit of his destiny... no, of mine...of merging his destiny with mine..." (93). The subject and the object are an integrated image as the Imaginary order is re-entered by Roger through masquerade and by the Chief through Roger's subservience to the imago.

The Chief elevates his status because now other men desire to play him. However, the image is a misrepresentation; it is false. By castrating himself Roger reminds us that the image is powerless because its unity and strength is imaginary. The Chief mistakenly thinks that he can still separate himself from his image: "though my image be castrated in every brothel in the world I remain intact" (94). Earlier, however, he says: "I'll know by a sudden weakness of my muscles that my image is escaping from me to



go and haunt men's minds" (82). Roger's scenario destroys the Chief's ego in the Symbolic order by making it a signifier in the field of otherness and "hence the division of the subject - when the subject appears somewhere as meaning, he is manifested elsewhere as 'fading', as disappearance" (FFC 218). Roger's role-playing metaphorically castrates the Chief by mythologizing him into a symbol of sexuality. By being the catalyst for the Chief's transformation, Irma loses him: "but it was I who did everything, who organized everything...Stay...What will..."(94). Her love, impelling her to raise his image and ultimately separate herself from him, transforms her into a petit objet a; the love object that the Chief will always desire. Through her love, the deceptive love of the Hegelian slave, she sacrifices her own happiness for the Chief. Yet, as the archetypal mother, she nourishes and sustains his jouissance, thus epitomizing Lacan's "woman as the possessor of man" (FS 145). Irma is "The Woman...as an absolute category and guarantor of fantasy" (FS 48). She and her girls create the imagos; they fulfill phantasies:

It took so much light... two pounds worth of electricity a day! Thirty-eight studios! Every one of them gilded, and all of them rigged with machinery so as to be able to fit into and combine with each other...And all these performances so that I can remain alone, mistress and assistant mistress of this house and of myself (95).

Ultimately, deceptive love becomes a narcissistic love as she exerts her power and independence in fulfilling the male's

phantasy.

In Genet's The Balcony, mirroring is a significant act. The literal activity of mirroring illustrates a universal psychological need as the subject escapes the Symbolic order's fragmentation by returning to the Imaginary order where he rediscovers the ideal object's totality. The woman as mirror intensifies the male's fear. By telling the clients the truth the women can shatter the ideal object/egos; but they do not. Their seeming defeat is merely superficial as their passive roles are nothing but roles. As Jane Gallop points out "the whore gives man all he wants without ever being broken, tamed, possessed" (1982 89). By giving the clients what they desire the women secure their financial existence and their latent existence as independent masters.

Both the figurative role of women and the literal role of the mirror creates an imaginative completeness and power. The male's instinctual drive to momentarily find the integrated self he once knew places the women in a position of authority. The prostitutes' maternal love results in their manifest exploitation as the sinner, horse and thief. The mise-en-scene, then, cluttered with mirrors and women reflect the male images at twice their natural size.

However, what is reflected is not the ordinary man, but an ideal object/ego. The elaborate costume and corresponding scenario present the client in an image of

powerful perfection. On the surface, this masquerading image appears to epitomize masculine authority and Law. However, Lacan clearly states that a masquerade is a return to the feminine. To clarify this point, we observe that the clients masquerade as what they want to be. They want to be powerful; but, the only time that they felt this power occurred when their narcissistic tendencies were satisfied by their mothers' undivided attention. Thus, the attention of the women and the historical importance of the costumes' functions return the clients to a state before sexual difference shattered their totality.

By naming and enforcing the imagos' authority, the women demonstrate the M(other)'s power and the absolute necessity of her word in establishing the Law. Thus, society's paradigms are only tiny, fragmented, incomplete, lacking individuals who masquerade as significant functions. Since their authority is established by the Other's power to name, as we see in The Balcony, the masqueraders feel the necessity to exaggerate the masculinity of their roles. By failing to acknowledge the importance of the Other, the clients - like patriarchy - have a false perception of their autonomy. Thus, when they retreat into their private Mausoleums it is the job of the latently powerful Others to support the phantasy. Eventually, more clients will - like Roger - blatantly misrecognize the phantasy and castrate their imaginary power. And the silent revolution continues: "In a little while, I'll have to start all over again" (96).

## CONCLUSION

Although Lacan's writings are filled with theatrical allusions and metaphors, he does not directly relate his concepts to the dramatic genre nor to the theatrical experience. A possible reason for this strange oversight appears on page 101 of The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-analysis. Here Lacan talks about the relationship between the function of a painting and the gaze. In his argument he nonchalantly mentions that "it might be thought that, like the actor, the painter wishes to be looked at" (101). He quickly dismisses the connection between the actor and the painter and continues his argument concerning the complexity of the gaze. It seems to me - and this is one of my aims in this thesis - Lacan's concepts are more applicable to the art of theatre than even Lacan himself realizes.

The previous chapter focused on The Balcony's ritual transformations. These transformations emphasize the fact that before a role can be played the client must undergo what Lacan calls "aphanisis", a fading which hides the client from, in this case, his own view. This contextual fading can be taken one step further in relation to theatre.

We would agree, I hope, that the dramatic genre, like other literary genres, presents us with a truth. It may be universal; it may be personal; it may be political, but

something is truthful in what we see or else why bother with theatre as an experience? Theatre differs from a didactic lecture or a sermon by presenting its truthfulness through a mask - a deceptive mask that speaks through lies. What I mean by this is the actor, like Genet's client, must transform, through an eclipsing of the self, into the character that speaks to the audience. Thus the 'I' that speaks is not the same as the subject of the enunciation. For example, William Hutt may be on the Stratford stage but his speech indicates King Lear is in our gaze.

What I have just described is something so natural, so elementary to an audience that it seems redundant to mention it here. However, my purpose is to link this fundamental experience to Lacan's psycho-analysis. Drama's initial lie, then, involves the theatrical transformation of the actor into the character causing an effect on the performative aspect of the play. This necessary event supports Lacan's assumption that "I identify myself in language, but only by losing myself in it like an object" (É 88). The actor identifies himself by losing his self and becoming an object of the drama - a character. The transformation also emphasizes Lacan's questioning of the relationship between the subject and the signifier: "It is not a question of knowing whether I speak of myself in a way that conforms to what I am, but rather of knowing whether I am the same as that of which I speak" (É 165).

Theatrical role-playing draws attention to a similar role-playing going on outside the proscenium arch. The subject, according to LeMaire, "constructs himself in language as he wishes to see himself, as he wishes to be seen, and thereby alienates himself in language" (64). Language, then, - whether it be on or off the stage - is a means of creating a 'representation' of the self. Thus when the curtain goes up we are presented with what Lacan calls a barred subject, and what I call a barred actor who is, through language, disguised as a character - an object. The actor is, according to Lacan, "constituted as secondary in relation to the signifier" (FFC 141), a signifier being "that which represents the subject for another signifier" (É 316). An actor indicates the potential for signification, but only through fading and becoming a barred actor does dramatic signification take place. Star-vehicles often pervert the dramatic integrity of a production by trying to bar the character instead of the actor. By conflating Lacan's scattered thoughts we arrive at the following explanation for the initial lie of theatre:

there results that, at the level of the other signifier, the subject fades away... which... condemns the subject to appearing only in that division which... if it appears on one side as meaning, produced by a signifier, it appears on the other as aphanisis.... The signifier, producing itself in the field of the Other, makes manifest the subject of its signification (FFC 236,210,207).

Thus the conditions for theatrical performances are directly

relational to Lacan's concept of the Gaze.

In Miss Julie Jean's story of gazing into the garden illustrates a lie involving the dramatic context. The barred actor/character, which I described above, begins to loop its signification by being a character now imitating an actor. Jean, and the actor portraying him, lies once again in order to produce an effect on Miss Julie. During his story of the gaze, Julie becomes a representative of the audience by misrecognizing the textual lie to be true. By willingly suspending her disbelief she fully participates in the theatrical, or meta-theatrical, experience by placing herself in his phantasy. By imitating Jean's phantastical girl, Julie affirms Lacan's concept that "at bottom, it is for the subject, to be inserted in a function whose exercise grasps it" (FFC 100).

Naturalistic and realistic drama tries to hide the performative lie by presenting only textual lies. Miss Julie is presented to us as none other than Miss Julie. The process of the creative transformation is ignored as naturalism and realism focus on the finished product. However, as Miss Julie indicates, gaps in the illusion do exist.

Genet's drama, with its meta-theatrical components, emphasizes the performative lie. The ordinary client, a barred actor/character, displays the performative transformation by being presented to the audience while becoming another character or more precisely, the client's

imago. The imago incorporates the ego of the barred actor/character and thus represents the ideal object/ego of the Imaginary méconnaissance. In a compounding equation, the actor as a signifier represents the client as the subject for another signifier which, in this play, is the imago. This domino effect reinforces Lacan's statement that the signifier "functions as a signifier only to reduce the subject in question to being no more than a signifier, to petrify the subject in the same movement in which it calls the subject to function, to speak, as subject" (FFC 207).

The women in The Balcony, like Miss Julie during Jean's story, play the role of the audience. Perhaps the word 'witness' would be more indicative of what occurs during the theatrical experience as well as the dramatic experience. To be acknowledged as a witness implies a participation in an event, and both the theatrical experience and the Imaginary misrecognitions require reciprocal involvement in the activities. By misrecognizing the transformations as temporary truths, the women in the play and the witnesses in the theatre experience similar cognitive misidentifications. Irma portrays a critical witness as she gazes at the desert scenerio with an evil eye - an eye that separates the client from his whore. However she becomes an enthusiastic witness when she puts on her deceptive mask and watches herself in the Mausoleum studio. Genet makes us watch the characters watching themselves who are without a doubt watching us! This



technique parallels Lacan's assertion that "as subjects, we are literally called into the picture and represented here as caught" (FFC 92). In as much as Irma becomes the objet a of the trompe-l'oeil, she functions as 'The Woman' producing the clients satisfactions. Hence, the men desire the object they have been separated from - the objet petit a. Likewise, an audience realizes "by a mere shift of their gaze...that [theatre] is merely a trompe-l'oeil" (FFC 112) and within the trompe-l'oeil is the petit a of their own unconscious.

The end of Scene Nine is meta-theatre at its most pronounced. The performance in the Mausoleum studio mesmerizes and satisfies the characters watching. The Chief is completely inserted in the scenario as Lacan says "the geometral dimension enables us to glimpse how the subject who concerns us is caught, manipulated, captured, in the field of vision" (FFC 92). When Roger castrates his imago the Chief breaks his suspension of disbelief by touching upon the element that separates himself from his double. However, caught and manipulated in the picture, the Chief's symbolic castration equals Roger's physical castration. In Lacan's words, "the privilege of the subject seems to be established here from the bipolar reflexive relation by which, as soon as I perceive, my representations belong to me" (FFC 81). Similarly, Miss Julie breaks the spell Jean has over her when she sees the slaughtered finch. But her tirade, rather than placing her outside the action, inserts her even deeper into

the play's symbolism. Although it is beyond the scope of this thesis, by juxtaposing Julie and the Chief's positions in respect to the gaze - the Chief steps out of the gaze while Julie is drawn further within the gaze - we observe how Lacan's concept illustrates one of the structural differences between dramatic schools.

The Balcony draws our attention to the fact that audiences interpret and judge, even by refusing to judge, none other than themselves. Genet and Strindberg expose our desires and our misrecognitions - through different techniques - by the fact that, as Martin Esslin asserts, "the 'meaning' of the dramatic event, will, of necessity, remain strictly the individual's own, his specific private experience" (174). The experience of theatre's Imaginary misidentifications works toward making the witnesses aware of various issues in order to ultimately transform their behaviour. The drama's success in this endeavour is received in the inverted form of social, political or personal change. These changes also receive inverted replies by further dramas which in turn provoke further responses ad infinitum, ultimately constituting the verbal dialectic between art and life.

Through the various transformations outlined in this thesis, the theatrical 'I' becomes a point of confusion and fusion, ambiguity and clarity. The speaking 'I' becomes a composite of all the egos who have attempted to interpret and

master the signifier while in reality being nothing but signifier. Theatre, then, can be a forum where audiences and actors vicariously, within a controlled setting, satisfy their desires and phantasies through misrecognitions. Consequently the substitution and condensation of signifiers makes the theatrical experience a metaphor of our continual search for the Imaginary order's integrating and satisfying completeness.

In the introduction I said that theatre is necessary for psychical well-being. It is also, like all art forms, a necessary commentary on social and political systems. Thus our health as a society is directly related and reflected in art. It is obvious that Lacan thinks of life as a drama, and individuals as role-players. In "The Freudian Thing" he poetically describes the complexity of answering the question "Who is speaking?" - a question particularly pertinent to the dramatic genre:

The comedy, which I shall interrupt here at the beginning of its second act, is gentler than is usually believed, since, bringing to bear upon a drama of knowledge a buffoonery that belongs only to those who act this drama without understanding it, it restores to such people the authenticity from which they were moving farther and farther away (E 124).

In this instance his theatrical metaphors speak for themselves.

In the "Function and field of speech and language" Lacan's language shows a more subtle use of theatrical allusions: "The subject goes well beyond what is experienced

'subjectively' by the individual, ... Yes, this truth of his history is not all contained in his script, and yet the place is marked there by the painful shock he feels from knowing only his own lines" (É 55). This quotation can be easily co-opted into our discussion of the lies in theatre. The actor only speaks his/her character's lines, yet the character's story is only fully understood after hearing all the scripts in the play. Since the dramatic character speaks through the medium of the actor - "the unconscious of the subject is the discourse of the other" (É 55) - that speech contains information, or what literary critics call subtext, that the character could not possibly realize. The fact that this information is exposed for our analysis involves what Lacan terms "an acting - out... a case of resonance in the communicating network of discourse" (É 55).

These are only two examples of how Lacan uses theatrical metaphors and allusions to explain his psycho-analytical concepts. Clearly, these quotations exemplify the existence of role-playing and shifting signifiers in everyday life. Both Miss Julie and The Balcony exemplify the interesting dialogue that can result when we apply Lacan's concepts to dramatic art. Personally, I find it very odd that Lacan never directed his focus on the dramatic genre. At the same time, I am excited about his oversight since it opens up a new area of investigation for enthusiasts of theory and the dramatic genre. By closely analyzing

Lacan's figurative language in relation to his psycho-analytical theories we can use his ideas as a means of creating new interpretations for dramatic texts. Through further research into Lacan's work we will be able to expand what I have only lightly touched upon in this conclusion. Jacques Lacan may provide us with a modern, scientific explanation for what so many of us take for granted - the primordial nature of the theatrical experience.

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