THE ENIGMA OF GOOD AND EVIL; THE MORAL SENTIMENT IN LITERATURE

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ANNA-TERESA TYMIENIECKA

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THE ENIGMA OF GOOD AND EVIL; THE MORAL SENTIMENT IN LITERATURE

Edited by

ANNA-TERESA TYMIENIECKA

The World Phenomenology Institute, Hanover, NH, U.S.A.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In this collection of studies we bring to the public fruits of our two conferences in Phenomenology and Literature. The first part of the volume gathers papers read at our 27th Annual Conference of the International Society of Phenomenology and Literature, "*The Enigma of Good and Evil*; *The Moral Sentiment in Literature*", held at the Harvard Divinity School on May 14 and 15, 2003.

The second part brings together studies of our 28th Annual Conference of the International Society of Phenomenology and Literature "*Literature in Search of Moral Standards*", held at the Harvard Divinity School on May 12 and 13, 2004.

Our warm thanks go to the participants in these two scholarly gatherings who came from various parts of the world to share their ideas.

I also thank our dedicated secretary, Jeff Hurlburt, and our copy-editor, Ryan Walther, for their contributions toward preparing this volume for publication.

A.-T.T.

A.-T. Tymieniecka (ed.), Analecta Husserliana LXXXV, xi.

Louis Houthakker and Floor Oosting in front of our exhibit at the SPEP 2004.

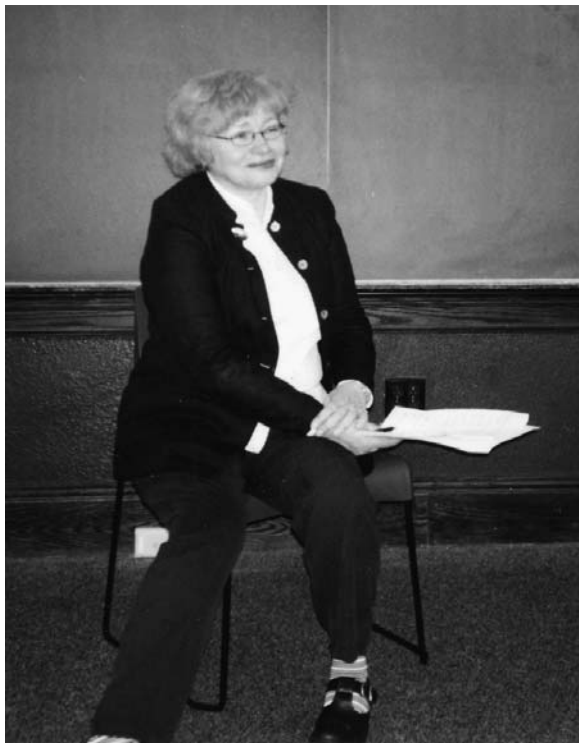
PART ONE

THE ENIGMA OF GOOD AND EVIL

Patricia Trutty-Coohill's picnic.

SECTION I

THE MORAL SENTIMENT



Jadwiga Smith.

ALIRA ASHVO-MUÑOZ

A QUESTION OF INTEREST? BETWEEN GOOD AND EVIL IN *INSTINTO DE INES* BY CARLOS FUENTES

L'hydre, univers tordant son corps écaillé d'astres.

Jorge Luis Borges

Possible and contradictory consequences emerge from streams of consciousness and human actions in the textual activity of Carlos Fuentes' novel, *Instinto de Ines*, which question concepts outside and above the disseminating play of language. The narrative appears as a lament, in a Proustian sense of lost, a recollection or memory story that unites various temporal planes. The novel mixes realities from the leading characters by presenting a fictional other, a creation in the protagonist mind, produced by the consequences of the instinct of Ines. This phantom or entity emerges from inexplicable possibilities, reminiscence of Borges's short story "El otro" in which he quotes Victor Hugo: "*L'hydre univers tordant don corps écaillé d'astres*", which in Fuentes, surfaces in the labyrinthine reflections of a conductor, his oblivious worldview on the face of destiny, life and death.

As he wanders through this inferno the conductor, Gabriel, sees his reflection in unadorned mirrors, sees hell as a destination and inevitable description of reality. A textual unfolding takes place, *an autre*, which refers to the paradoxes of time. Disassociations, contradictory intentions and multiple perceptions form the textual structure. Fear and a sense of treachery are perceived from unexpected events, forming the unknown. This fear of unknowns relates to evil and continues as a constant recurrence until the novel ends. The otherness, "*an autre*," focus on Gabriel's interiority, creating a sense of contradictions and double intentions. It is not the old Christian evil of centuries – the devil – nor an extreme evil but an opportunistic evil emanating from silence and complacency, inherent in our postmodern sense of the normal. Indifference, silence, poisoning, pollution, rapes, murders, genocide and extinction calmly viewed are part of daily occurrences in modern existence. The numbing of all sensation and exclusion from hope is also a kind of evil, an unrecognizable modern personal hell, which presents an inevitable description of today's world. As the characters take walks on the beach and, oddly, converse against

A.-T. Tymieniecka (ed.), Analecta Husserliana LXXXV, 5–15.

a background of falling bombs, one perceives that the language takes an operatic role:

In all his important uses of the word *autre*, it is clear enough, Derrida names by it something completely other, something that cannot be returned to the same form of dialectical sublation or *Aufhebung*. What is somewhat less easy to think or see is the relation of the other to a special and paradoxical kind of speech-act.[1]

Concordantly Fuentes relates these conversations to the events that surround the characters, as in the following:

... el Diablo no es una encarnación *singular-jas*, *jas*, *Mefisto*-sino una hidra colectiva-*hop*, *hop*, *hop*-.[2]

This implicit approval, insinuated by denial, is part of a tolerated subterranean and obdurate ignorance that causes destruction and affects individuals and cultures alike, a discretionary destructive power with official indifference to the value of human life.

Fuentes' narrative is based on Gabriel's romantic encounter with a soprano, Ines Prada, under the falling bombs of the German *Lufwaffe* in wartime London, who later confronts his absolutism. It surpasses the theme of personal confrontations as it is intimately related to musical and literary perception, to forms of interpretation, possession and deliverance rooted in the structure of the musical and literary genres and explores the philosophical mysteries of death and love, good and evil. It also relates to the consequences, manifestations, significance, outcomes and inter-textualities that validate sounds, with the linguistic and the musical. Music as an abstract language is a universal form of communication with the capacity, inherent in its abstract nature, to transcend cultural boundaries; one that acknowledges the empty or non-self-identical nature of the sign.

La música es la imagen del mundo sin cuerpo.[3]

References to musical scores (especially to the opera *Faust*) abound through the narrative, founded in the fluidity and rhythm of musical sounds in the usage of a metonymic chain which appears linked to a range of interpretations. Essential differences and similarities between the two concordant parallel narrations provide links to temporal and spatial frames. The narrative continues as a ghost story, unfolding displacements of *an autre* in a deconstructive sense, parallel to the central storyline. The strategy used by the narrator based on beliefs from the factuality of past

events creates a lament, while the present transforms as a direct result of these previous occurrences. These past eloquent and influential experiences now impose a coherent temporal order in the protagonist's life, and finally he perceives his past and present in a unity as he approaches the final moments of his career, while achieving a displacement of power as the world now seems merely a reflection of the order of things. Aristotle wrote that being is said in many ways: "*to an legetai pollaklos*". It is clearly stated in the narrative that what is culturally perceived as good has a direct correlation to the dominant forces of power. Inserted in the narration at the eve of the final event is Christian primordial time, when the first man and woman existed, whose passion broke the boundaries imposed by behavioral patterns in order to forge history, or the history that endlessly repeats in a spiral linking the narrative metaphorically to the history of mankind.

The prevalent forces at play in the story undermine the personal motives behind good and evil, seen as a primordial dimension in most human actions. Must people see advantages as good and disadvantages as evil, and create a logic for them? This distinctive marker prompts the reader to consider the essential differences between the forces presented. The text uses the visionary genre reminiscent of Fuentes' famous ghost novella, *Aura*. The arrangement in Ines is through Gabriel's stream of consciousness in the detailed presentation of facts, a labyrinth of remembrances intertwined with actualities that produced in Gabriel a *reductis ad absurdum* of life, first as unconscious undermining of his resolution and avoidance of issues that constituted a feasible answer to his difficulties. The denotation of what is good and evil is inferred in the specific references to Hector Berlioz's opera "*La Damnation de Faust*" as well as Goethe's book. Others include *To the Lighthouse* by Virginia Woolf, Giuseppe Verdi, Alexander Dumas and Jean Cocteau. In the internal monologues, in somewhat obscure deliverances, certain characteristics alluding to the protagonist's personality persistently refer to his introspective contradictions. These references to Berlioz's opera infers in the fluidity and swift succession of moods, in its abruptness and transitions from sadness to joy, from earthy brutality to translucent beauty and in a sense of heightened reality; a personal operatic world which creates a haunting view of an artistic reality with a sense of otherness. All conveys a sense of double consciousness leading to the character's final subjugation. This at first started as ironic juxtaposition creating the energetic activity indifferent to his life drama, unfolding as a libretto.

An internal use of emplotment imposes temporal order when the narrator tells a succession of events restructuring time in a transformative mode. In any potentially repercussive event, one must wonder about the choices, repetitions, and consequences that could happen. The evil in question is attested in the normality of evil, in the indifference, silence, ignorance and dominance that leads to destruction when the reader perceives how convenient all of it was for him. Intertwined with Gabriel's remembrances are his priorities that prompted him to choose and to conceal the decisions that propelled them. Hence the text becomes a transformative mode between Literature, Criticism and Philosophy by questioning the role of intentionality in the forces of good and evil. A predicament cannot be fully resolved, due to the inherent complexity and combined qualities that exist in defining evil. Thomas Aquinas explicitly wrote on the importance of intentionality as a major factor in any action:

Et tunc incidit malum ex eo quod aliquis vult illud bonum; sed ex eo quod non vult aliud bonum.[4]

What makes us horrible is intentional cruelty, a direct reflection of our interiority that is the differential factor according to Aquinas. As a practice, the existence of evil in Christianity -the devil- has been shrewdly tolerated as the counterbalancing force to the goodness of God. The contradiction or duality of this dogma was debated in the early years of Christianity as in *Origen* (*Origen contra Celsus*, 7.68). Fuentes specifically refers to this factor of intentionality in ones' actions:

... tu horror es horroroso, carese de grandeza, es un miserable horror porque no entiende, jamás podrà entender, que la inmortalidad, la vida, la muerte y el pecado son espejos de nuestra gran alma interior, de tu pasajero y cruel poder externo ...[5]

It is the horror without grandeur, the difference and complacency that mirrors one's interiority; the silence that tolerates cruelty and its consequences. As beings we have a cruel fleeting external power with the capability for destructive or constructive power, just as life relates to death. Many evils result from frailty or dominance. In Fuentes's text, one feels persuaded that no privileged discourse can claim to speak the truth of its own vision unless it shows its intentions. This style of discourse is also referential to textual production, specifically to the author's role in postmodern literature. This hinges on the ontological status of the narrator and its identity or non-identity with the author, a doubling that shapes the reading experience between author, narrator, and reader. In

Fuentes the narrator subverts the explicit authorial intentions in the process, enabling the narrative to penetrate the reader's mind with ambivalence, by using certain subtle incongruities, time gaps and the character' self delusions, as clues intentionally planted to create the mystery. In the philosophical questioning implicit in the written, musical and spoken, assertions require countervailing statements. One is aware that tensions, inconsistencies, or divisions are more emphatic than are systematic architectonics; the structure of the narrative seems to become an operatic libretto.

The text investigates a complex and sophisticated path, taking issue with the psychological aspects of post-war years, validating and explaining, at first, Gabriel's unique claim to truth. The conductor finally faces the indomittance of Ines' spirit, the devil he once called, when she liberated herself from his authorial power. Later he refers to it as her instinct, her impetuous responses to his indomitable authority. Gabriel had repressed his internal fears of not being able to achieve absolute control during a performance and rehearsal, trying to possess the work in its reenactment, not becoming an instrument at its service. The musical references in the novel point to his unexplained emotions, which language in its explicitness can not profoundly say, making musical sounds a better vehicle for expression, reaching to the core of his incapacity for proper self expression. Music possesses a power, which is not imitation but raises affections to which ideas correspond. This concept was explained by Kant in his *Political Writings*[6] The grandiose defensive rationalization that Gabriel has reflects on his personal claims for dominance, hidden by his anxieties, fears and inabilities. The rational nature of self-evidence appears in progression when Gabriel tries to be logical while exploring the philosophical mysteries of life and death. The narrative requires a level of self-critical awareness, as it deconstructs in argumentative strategy and defines evil as an otherness that summons, complicates and challenges human perceptions.

> ... Certainly deconstruction tries to show that the question of reference is much more complex and problematic than traditional theories supposed. It even asks whether our term 'reference' is entirely adequate for designating the 'other'. *An autre*, the other, which is beyond language and summons language, is perhaps not a 'referent' in the normal sense that linguists have attached to this term. But to distance oneself thus from the habitual structure of reference, to challenge or complicate our common assumptions about it, does not amount to saying that there is *nothing* beyond language ...[7]

The first reference in this paper, a quote of Borges quoting Victor Hugo, guides us through the turns a life could take; the inexplicable

possibilities of its unfolding; "*le univers tordant*". Fuentes relates it to *Faust*, musical and literary, to a reflection in mirrors that seem daunting:

... que el Diablo no es una encarnación singular – *jas*, *jas*, *Mefisto* – sino una hidra colectiva-*hop*, *hop*, *hop*-. Atlán-Ferrara quería, inclusive, renunciar-o al menos creer que renunciaba-a ese poder autoritario que hacía de él, el joven y ya eminente conductor europeo "Gabriel Atlán-Ferrara", el dictador inevitable de un conjunto fluido, colectivo, sin la vanidad o el orgullo que podían estigmatizar al director, sino que lo lavaban del pecado de Luzbel ...[8]

To achieve self-authenticity the protagonist creates arguments, interpretatives pretexts and devices, that deconstruct into allegories of readings, in an effort to access the meaning of truth and to come to terms with good and evil. The narrative presents the individual and collective validations of power equally evil in essence, different in scope and magnitude. It explores that reading as much as writing is a device that cannot be separated from the act of memory (which is a basis for referentiality). The text is a rhetorical construct that activates the act of memory, providing a storyline which engages the reader.

Lisant autant qu'il écrit, déchiffrant ou citant autant qu'il inscrit, cet acte est aussi un acte de mémoire (l'autre est dèjá la, irréductiblement), cet acte prend acte. En te rappelant, il se rappelled. (Reading as much as it writes, deciphering or citing as much as it inscribes, this act is also an act of memory [the other is already there, irreducibly], this act enacts itself. In recalling you, it remembers, it reminds itself, it recalls itself to itself).[9]

Fuentes' narrative as an act of memory points to texts as rhetorical constructs that claim that any reader is guided through and beyond the themes presented in order to question a sense of self-understanding. The anamnemia in the text refers to the protagonist's recollections, a parallel reference created by the narrator, in another, distant time.

The primordial man and woman that appeared in the final episode give the Proustian sense of recaptured time, reflecting a future catastrophic preamble. As a dilemma it shows the past as prognosis for the end of humanity. Several times the human quest for dominance has taken a retrogressive path, a consequence of ignorance, as might be relevant now when an ultimate risk arises in the possible annihilation of the species through a lack of solar protection. When directing an orchestra, Gabriel similarly felt this dilemma:

Situado en el precario equilibrio entre dos creaciones-la del compositor y la del director-la voz debía ser colectiva para inspirar fatalmente la falta individual del heroe y su condena.[10]

As balancing act, this precarious equilibrium maintains a level of good versus the evil, the few and the collective. In the novel, an assemblage of possibilities manifests truth in both assumptions, forming a spiral progression. Repletion, reiteration, anaphora and internal rhyme subvert the narration's linear progress into a circular progression, showing the disjointed world of truths and lies, hidden in the established precepts and protocols. A textual discourse demonstrates, in the resemblance and contrast, a regulative notion of logical consistency that leads to the principle of '*difference*', which underlies the possible and disparate meanings. The previously quoted passage from the novel demonstrates how individual guidance and collective autonomy could be a source of argumentative logic, usually justified by its premises of good or evil. The essence of human nature has remained constant while the capacity for destruction has augmented and the range of cruelty has widened. The idea that written language necessarily has to say what it means or means what it says diverts from the hidden intention. There are valid premises in spoken language, in literature and in human behavior, which includes ambivalence as a valid response. The ambivalent nature of language referred to by Plato, that was taken up by Husserl and Heidegger, questions the dilemma of writing versus speech, as Fuentes similarly questioned.

Throughout the progression of the narrative, the recurrence of repressed possessiveness becomes a sign of Gabriel's deeply ambivalent strategy to achieve excellence by repeating previously established patterns in personal dealings in his instances of conscious searching. They form parts of the internal monologues. The integrity of speech-act develops after the first personal confrontation the conductor had. Digressions of textual complicity between the author and the reader relate, in this novel, to themes and figurations from *Faust*, both the literary and musical, as the protagonist searches for life's meaning and differentiates between good and evil. The most revealing instance, almost at the end of the novel, is when Gabriel surrenders his authority after conducting his last performance of Berlioz's "*La Damnation de Faust*" knowing that his days as a conductor have concluded and his authority has been transferred or reduced to that of an old man at the mercy of a hired nurse; the same person who, while being away at this most honored performance, purposefully destroyed his well-kept symbols of power, a crystal rock as fragile as he is now. His life is almost over and finally he recognizes what is valuable, ironically after a lifetime of misguided efforts. Truth liberates the soul from evil and love joins all temporally, past, present and future, as he concludes that

actions must be accompanied by direction while striving to reach illumination and that all depends upon man's own selection and intention.

Si, Dicke, todo está en su lugar. No necesitas romper más sellos de crystal ...

Hoy dirigí el *Fausto* por última vez. Margarita ascendió al cielo para siempre. Ya no soy prisionero de Inez Prada, mi querida Ulrike ...

– Tranquilízate. Tú sabes muy bien que no tienes rival. En vez de una amante, necesito una criada.[11]

After a lifetime of achievements Gabriel recognizes his vulnerability and understands the reasoning of Ines, why she reacted so instinctively. Mostly he was deceived throughout life by appearances. Derrida wrote about the discrepancies between appearances and realities:

(la phenomenology) ... simplement la réalité de la chose mais la réalité de la chose en tant qu'elle apparaît.[12]

Irony, paradox and ambiguity take issue in the narration. The realm of consciousness in the recollections presented by Gabriel explained and validated his character and also created the otherness. Gabriel's defenses in his personal selections are inextricably inter-twined with truth, purity, art and excellence, logical referential mediums for the emotions and instincts that he excluded.

The novel refers to life and death, good and evil, and to the end of a cycle, a eulogy for Carlos Fuentes Lemus, the author's unfinished future, in a mirror of reversed eras. In "*Mateo XXVI*", Borges wrote about the unity of life with death and the impossibility of separation: "*La muerte es vida vivida, la vida es muerte que viene*". Derrida also wrote about this duality of presence in one's existence:

La mort. Chaque foi c'est la mort puisqu'il s'agit de vie. Le plus grand risqué c'est la mort. [Et encore, je n'en suis plus si sûr].[13]

This everlasting presence of death in life is mostly ignored, but seems inextricably bound to the polarities that exist in good versus evil. Life has a theme of defiance and death is the ultimate risk and validating force that underscores human actions, completing the spiral cycle of existence. The novel ends mysteriously:

Se sentó en la cama y alargó los abrazos, musitando una lengua extraña, como si convocara un parto o una muerte.[14]

Surprisingly Ulrike, the nurse who wants to see Gabriel die ritualistically, sets in motion the imminent possibility for his transcendence. Purposefully left unanswered, this quest follows another strange passage when Gabriel takes his last crystal rock, murmurs some words and inadvertently his consciousness follows into the unknown:

Entre tus pechos cogará el sello de cristal que él te habrá obsequiado antes de amarte … han trastocado los tiempos; le han abierto un campo prohibido a lo que les sucedió antes.[15]

A collision of times has taken place as the reader finds the arrival of the threshold of humanity. The past now is validated in a new cycle and Gabriel finds himself again vulnerable as an infant. The final monologue reiterates that perfection: beauty and power were Gabriel's only quest, disregarding the consequences. The text proposes another deconstructional device that questions the existence of Ines:

He vivido para mi arte, no para las emociones fáciles, adios, Inez. Regresa a donde estás ahora.[16]

Ines is dead or was always non-existent, which served as device for understanding the working of consciousness and the meaning of life itself. In the shifting of the real fantasy exists, since meanings usually relate to a set of specific socio-cultural context. Literature has used the fantastic, the irrational, to dwell in literary verisimilitude since Cervantes, to emphasize the importance of fiction for the understanding of life. The text partakes in a vision from ordinariness to universality by a projection of constantly searching for ultimate beauty and perfection.

Gabriel created an artistic persona that confused control with assurance, forgetting that art is a harmonious principle. As art mirrors life and life mirrors nature, man paradoxically returns to the same vague quest time after time, to identify his self with artistic expression and to find the meaning of life. Here interestingly is a man who mirrors himself in a woman, the one he previously considered the caused of evil.

… le principle des principles de la phenomenology, avec le retour aux choses même, c'est la règle de l'intuition.[17]

Gabriel presents his self-imposed critique of consciousness. Language and truth in the narration were construed as depending on a validating content of intentional actions, to force the reader to appeal to the causes of intentionality in actions and to seek the basic foundation of good or evil. An uncanny double logic causes a reversal, as in Plato's *Pharmakon*,

poison becomes the cure, in a final validating paradox behind the premise of what was Ines' instinct. Approaching death, life is reconciled in oppositions, with the paradoxes and dogmas that have formed so much senseless misunderstanding.

Lo importante no era él, no era el nombre, sino el instinto. ¿Ves?[18]

The final episode presents the prevalence of love and the intentionality for good as the only everlasting quality that surpasses time since the concept of Christianity's original sin. Written in Cartagena de Indias where Gabriel García Marquéz (the author's colleague) is terminally ill, the novel probably points to another eulogy and places literature as a valuable forum to question human endeavors, the motives behind the actions and the good and evil that transform life and death. Fuentes' elegant prose is poetic in both language and scope, creating an irreducible singularity in this text.

Temple University

NOTES

[1] John Brannigan, Ruth Robbins and Julian Wolfreys, *Applying to Derrida* (London: McMillan Press, 1996), p. 155.
[2] Carlos Fuentes, *Instinto de Ines* (México: Alfaguara, 2000), p. 30.
[3] Carlos Fuentes, *Instinto de Ines* (México: Alfaguara, 2000), p. 139.
[4] Ralph McIneerny, *Aquinas on Human Action, a Theory of Practice* (The Catholic UP: Washington D.C., 1985), p. 91.
[5] Carlos Fuentes, *Instinto de Ines* (México: Alfaguara, 2000), p. 130.
[6] Immanuel Kant, *Political Writings*, ed. H. Reiss (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1973).
[7] John Brannigan, Ruth Robbins and Julian Wolfreys, *Applying to Derrida* (London: MacMillan Press, 1996), p. 154.
[8] Carlos Fuentes, *Instinto de Ines* (México: Alfaguara, 2000), p. 30.
[9] John Brannigan, Ruth Robbins and Julian Wolfreys, *Applying to Derrida* (London, MacMillan Press, 1996), p. 166.
[10] Carlos Fuentes, *Instinto de Ines* (México: Alfaguara, 2000), p. 31.
[11] Carlos Fuentes, *Instinto de Ines* (México: Alfaguara, 2000), p. 138.
[12] Jacques Derrida, *Sur Parole, Instantanés Philosophiques* (Paris: Editions de l'aube, 1999), p. 76.
[13] Jacques Derrida, *Sur parole, Instantanés Philosophiques* (Paris: Editions de l'aube, 1999), p. 48.
[14] Carlos Fuentes, *Instinto de Ines* (México: Alfaguara, 2000), p. 141.
[15] Carlos Fuentes, *Instinto de Ines* (México: Alfaguara, 2000), p. 144.
[16] Carlos Fuentes, *Instinto de Ines* (México: Alfaguara, 2000), p. 139.

[17] Jacques Derrida, *Sur Parole, Instantanés Philosophiques* (Paris: Èditions de l'aube, 1999), p. 84.
[18] Carlos Fuentes, *Instinto de Ines* (México: Alfaguara, 2000), p. 50.

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DOROTHY G. CLARK

BEING'S WOUND: EVIL AND EXPLANATION IN *THE KILLER INSIDE ME*

Jim Thompson's 1952 *noir* novel *The Killer Inside Me* is a powerful early postmodern representation of evil – one that reflects the moral catastrophe of WWII and is proleptic of current philosophical discussions. The novel's narrator and protagonist, Lou Ford, is a complex, confounding, ultimately enigmatic sensibility comprised of several voices; Ford spins a narrative out of the cultural imaginary that instructs us in the problematics of evil in the postmodern world. While Iago may have said too little about his evil, and Eichmann too much, Lou Ford falls somewhere in between but tells nothing more than Eichmann or Iago about the sources of evil. Like Iago's acts and Eichmann's bodies, Lou shows rather than tells us about evil; yet paradoxically Lou's evil is inextricably bound up in his narrative, in his telling. In this paper, I will investigate the strategies of this narrative and the ways they gesture towards even as they cover up and obscure the causes of his evil. We can compare Lou's narrative strategy to a psychoanalytic symptom – a symptom attempts to conceal a conflict or the unacceptable. Its every manifestation reveals the very truth it is designed to mask; yet, uncannily, that which it attempts to reveal keeps disappearing. Evil, we will see, is what keeps disappearing, keeps slipping away; in the post-Holocaust world, we have only the material reality of the dead bodies – and in the face of these bodies – no explanation is adequate.

This postmodern uncertainty about the nature of evil typifies what is generally described as the condition brought about by the devastating events of World War II. We remain caught in the literal and metaphoric meanings of Auschwitz. As Susan Neiman describes in *Evil in Modern Thought*, the Holocaust left philosophers and theologians in a state of moral vertigo and helplessness "because our conceptual resources seem[ed] exhausted" and "our trust in the world [was] shattered" (281), for shattered also was our faith in God, in Reason, and in ourselves. Written just a few years after the rupturing events of WWII, and long before its full ramifications had saturated the cultural imaginary, *The Killer Inside Me* surprisingly captures this condition and unveils a world in which making meaning becomes both imperative and impossible. The formulaic narrative structure of pulp/detective fiction with its clear plot

A.-T. Tymieniecka (ed.), Analecta Husserliana LXXXV, 17–28.

devices and ultimate clarifying climatic resolution provides Thompson with a playful and deadly serious way to represent both the desire and impossibility of making sense. We enter a world in which, as Susan Neiman notes, we are homeless and irremediably wounded.

The Killer Inside Me depicts this post-Holocaust world as the *anus mundi*, a world morally devastated, its apparent decency, like its narrator Lou Ford, masking corruption. For Thompson, the tension between reality and appearances was at the heart of his vision; "There is," he said, "only one plot: things are not what they seem" (Polito 7). In *The Killer Inside Me*, this traditional notion becomes a dizzying kaleidoscopic assault of shifting appearances. The novel's setting, Central City, depicts a world, to paraphrase Yeats, where the "center cannot hold" and moral anarchy has been set loose. "Things are not what they seem": Central City – appears the mythic jewel of small town America, but is filled with corruption. As Robert Polito writes, "*The Killer Inside Me* detonates some myths of small-town America the benevolent cop, the kindly physician, the free and open country. The public guardians of morality, justice, and power all are whitened sepulchers, privately depraved or criminal. Ford's family, Central City – each is a stinking prison" (350). Central City is morally eviscerated, a fallen world, and Lou a potent reflection of its corrupt core.

A spectacular representation of this moral cataclysm, Lou Ford's astonishing first-person narrative both proposes and, at the same time, ironically rejects all Grand Narratives about evil in the human character. Unlike Iago, who offers no self-explanation for his actions, Ford is presumably telling us this narrative to explain why and show how he killed, in order to present the proof the authorities could not have – which he tells us is himself. This narrative illuminates the post-war problematic of evil by, first, embodying evil in Ford's "career" as a serial killer, and then by deconstructing all attempts to understand what he has done by using the theoretical templates available in the twentieth century. But Ford does not merely present and then reject attempts to explain his acts. Like a "good" postmodern (anti) hero he shows exactly how each model of explanation can be used to craft a plausible account of his actions, and then he humorously establishes a devastating distance between himself, as impenetrable and inexplicable agent of evil, and all such merely believable explanations.

Through Thompson's impeccable use of the literary device of the unreliable narrator, Ford's every "explanation" is subverted, destabilized and left behind, its inadequacy to be ciphered by the reader. In the final

analysis Ford's evil has no explanation, and his toying with us undercuts all those sober, confident templates that a post-Holocaust world has tried, sometimes with little enthusiasm and certainly with little success, to apply to the phenomenon of evil. Ford is a constant, self-consuming commentator on his own character, a kind of literary critic of his own life narrative, all of whose erudite self-understandings are unmasked as empty. He is always already beyond all the accounts he offers of himself, a Derridean différance a generation before there was a Derrida. Lou, like the evil he ostensibly is trying to explain, keeps disappearing behind his explanations and in the end disappears into the ellipsis of the text – a textual blackhole – a fitting end for an impossible narrative.

Just as Derrida begins his papers by explaining the situation and manner in which they came to be written, so in a similar fashion does Lou begin his story by giving us his narrative strategy and letting us know from the very inception of the impossibility of his enterprise. Lou's ostensive purpose – to explain why he committed his crimes and to present the truth about himself – is continually undercut by the proliferation of personae in a narrative that he self-reflexively critiques for us. He is a writer, a playwright plotting action and constructing characters for himself as actor in a narrative that involves a paradoxical narrative structure – captured by narrative theory in the confounding phrase "Whoever you invented invented you too" (Kenan 95) – but a phrase that well captures the complexity and instability of this narrative.

The first chapter encapsulates his method. A deputy sheriff in the small Texas town of Central City, Lou has constructed a persona that enables him to carry on his police duties and be a member of his community. It is a persona meant to fool his neighbors, to keep them from knowing the truth about him. This persona is a composite of stereotypes and clichés: He is a Hollywood version of a Texas cop, a Gary Cooper spin-off – he is goodness in a Stetson: Kind, compassionate, gentlemanly, always courteous, non-violent (he doesn't wear a gun and has the reputation of talking criminals down), and he is informed by American Enlightenment optimism and belief in reason; there are no bad people – just ones who need guidance; as he tells us: "Anyway, people are people, even when they're a little misguided. You don't hurt them, they won't hurt you. They'll listen to reason" (3). These lines end the novel's first page. Like the citizens of Central City, we are fooled by this too-familiar construction, taken in by ready-at-hand language, ideas, and images from our cultural imaginary. Lou shows his hand in his perverse presentation of what is his persona's signature trait: the utterance of skeins of platitudes;