

THE DIONYSIAN, APOLLONIAN, AND PROMETHEAN: PARALYSIS AND
UNFINALIZABILITY IN THE NOVEL

by

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(Under the direction of Mihai Spariosu)

ABSTRACT

In *The Birth of Tragedy*, Friedrich Nietzsche speaks of all art as a result of the interchange between the Dionysian and the Apollonian, the timeless illusion of music and the measured illusion of order. In *L'instant éternel*, Michel Maffesoli sets up horizontal and vertical time as Dionysian and Promethean. The difference between the Apollonian and Promethean is in the fact that, whereas Apollo escapes mortality in a cyclical illusion, Prometheus pays for his labors. The Dionysian and Apollonian merge in a standstill that is arguably Promethean, whereas Dionysian and Promethean merge to form a dialogue between the illusion of timelessness and the reality of linear time. As a result of this dialogue, the Dionysian becomes an intense escape from the treacherous and often monotonous reality of daily life, and daily life becomes a rest from such intensity.

INDEX WORDS: Myth, Dionysian, Apollonian, Promethean, Unfinalizability, Time, Chessex, Dostoevsky, Proust, Maffesoli, Borges, Bakhtin.

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Introduction

The Dionysian, Apollonian, and Promethean

In *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche proposes that the persistent and continuous development of art results from the Apollonian and Dionysian duality. He claims that the relationship between the two types is comparable to the way in which “procreation depends on the duality of the sexes, involving perpetual strife with only periodically intervening reconciliation.”¹ In comparing the Apollonian and Dionysian duality to something present in nature—the very existence and interaction of the sexes—Nietzsche imbues the two Greek gods with a sense of perpetual relevance within reality. Their respective attributes, including the illusions they procure, have persisted throughout the ages as have the male and the female, and just as children are continually conceived, so art is born forth from the resistance and appeal of one to the other.

Apollo and Dionysus are both artists in a very different sense. Whereas Apollo is associated with the art of sculpture, an art in which the artist chisels away at the object until an image emerges, as if patiently dropping its clothes to reveal its true self, Dionysus is associated with the non-imagistic art of music. Music builds out of careful measurements an effect of delirium, effecting timelessness with the use of measured time. Apollo can stand beside his sculpture so that we may see the separation of art from the artist himself; Dionysus becomes his work of art, disappears into it. It cannot exist without him. Whereas Apollo keeps a measured

¹ Nietzsche, Friedrich. *The Birth of Tragedy and The Case of Wagner*. Trans. Walter Kaufmann. New York: Vintage Books, 1967. (27)

restraint and a freedom from the bedlam of unhindered emotions, of timelessness, Dionysus seeks freedom from such restraint in thoughtless, orgiastic frenzy. The measurements of his music are unperceivable even to him. The two gods come together in the illusions they effect. Nietzsche differentiates the two as follows:

Music is the immediate idea of this [eternal] life. Plastic art has an altogether different aim: here Apollo overcomes the suffering of the individual by the radiant glorification of the eternity of the phenomenon: here beauty triumphs over the suffering inherent in life; pain is obliterated by lies from the features of nature.²

Both gods escape the reality of measured time and of death through their connection to the eternal. Apollo inhabits the illusion of likeness, life breathed into a piece of stone, and the illusion of order, that each thing has its place. Life is seen as a unity by way of the natural cycle of death and rebirth. For Dionysus, it is the illusion of oneness with all things, of timelessness whereby death itself no longer exists.

In *The Birth of Tragedy*, tragedy is born from the intercourse between the Dionysian and the Apollonian. In literature, the Dionysian and the Apollonian—these two methods of escape from the consequences of time—intersect and merge in memory and ritual. The result of this merger is paralysis or death, during which time returns with all of its consequences. The Dionysian and the Apollonian each lose their power, and what replaces them is a return to the linear, Promethean world in which each thing is paid for. In other words, the Dionysian and the Apollonian may be the parents of tragedy, but the tragedy, by way of its linear reality and its temporal consequence, is itself Promethean.

² Nietzsche, Friedrich. *The Birth of Tragedy and The Case of Wagner*. Trans. Walter Kaufmann. New York: Vintage Books, 1967. (104)

In his book *L'Instant éternel*, Michel Maffesoli places literary time on a vertical and horizontal axis. For the vertical axis—in keeping with the division present in *The Birth of Tragedy*—Maffesoli uses the figure of Dionysus. However, unlike Nietzsche, Maffesoli uses the figure of Prometheus rather than Apollo to denote horizontal time. In the Greek myth, Prometheus steals fire from the gods and delivers it as a gift to mankind. Prometheus is a laborer in the service of mankind who, because of his preference for humans and his deception of the gods, has his liver continually eaten out by vultures. His story is both a tragedy and a success. Whereas Nietzsche uses Apollo for his ability to represent the illusion of orderliness, Maffesoli uses Prometheus to display a form of bourgeois social awareness and responsibility lacking in the Apollonian. Nietzsche makes the following observation concerning the consequences of excess:

Because of his titanic love for man, Prometheus must be torn to pieces by the vultures; because of his excessive wisdom, which could solve the riddle of the Sphinx, Oedipus must be plunged into a bewildering vortex of crime.³

In his excess, Prometheus is similar to Dionysus. Whereas Dionysus seeks an excess of emotion to the degree that no physical or productive action is possible, Prometheus already has an excess of love which can only lead him to action which he believes will be of help to mankind.

On his axis, Maffesoli places the Dionysian on a vertical line due to the fact that one in Dionysian time neither progresses nor regresses, but is lifted upwards into a world of sensation. In this timelessness, thoughts of function, productivity, and the future vanish into one single, orgiastic moment which escapes from the forward progression of time. Dionysus is known for heavy drinking, feasting, and frenzied orgies. Thoughts or worries over the outcomes of these

³ Nietzsche, Friedrich. *The Birth of Tragedy and The Case of Wagner*. Trans. Walter Kaufmann. New York: Vintage Books, 1967. (46)

events never enter into vertical time. It may even be said that thoughts vanish altogether and are replaced by an overflow of sensation. In vertical time, one both escapes death by forgetting it and, in the same moment, dies to the life he has formerly known: a horizontal life, a life of function. Vertical time is then necessitated by the obliteration of horizontal time. For the purpose of Maffesoli's axis, it is necessary that horizontal time is Promethean in order that Dionysus may have something from which to escape. If the horizontal axis were Apollonian, one would have no reason to seek Dionysian timelessness, as he would already have escaped the consequences of time.

The Apollonian, when viewed in terms of time, is best imagined as a circle. Although Apollo labors, he labors for the production of an illusion not, like Dionysus, of timelessness, but of time that is complete and cyclical, a time in which everything has already occurred. Maffesoli correctly places Prometheus on a horizontal line, as he is the only one of our three gods who has an unfeigned relationship with time. He does not, like Apollo, actively produce an illusion of time or, like Dionysus, disappear into the effects of time, but is rather subject to time's linearity. By nature of his necessarily slow and diligent art form, Apollo cannot act out of excess, and it is from excess that Prometheus is punished. Whereas Prometheus accomplishes a great feat and necessarily pays for it, Apollo comforts and placates a troubled mankind with the illusion of order and meaning.

If life is divided, as Nietzsche suggests, between waking and sleeping, the Apollonian and the Dionysian, then both must be necessary for existence, both must have their place. But whereas "overweening pride and excess are regarded as the truly hostile demons of the non-

Apollonian sphere,” for Dionysus, “excess [reveals] itself as truth.”⁴ However, in the following remark, Nietzsche stresses the dependency of the Apollonian on the Dionysian:

Despite all its beauty and moderation, his [Apollo’s] entire existence rested on a hidden substratum of suffering and of knowledge, revealed to him by the Dionysian. And behold: Apollo could not live without Dionysus!⁵

Nietzsche claims that Apollo cannot live without Dionysus due to the suffering and knowledge necessary for his art and only revealed to him by the Dionysian. In order to effect order, he must understand the chaos against which he is organizing. However, one cannot be rescued from the realm of illusion by way of another illusion; he must rather gain consciousness of the illusory aspects of his world by way of something that is not altogether an illusion, something which is real. The result of the union between Apollo and Dionysus is restlessness both for an order that cannot be found amidst the chaos and a frenzy that cannot be enacted for one’s want of order. It is by way of this restlessness that one suffers for his illusions. By suffering, or paying for his actions, I argue that the collision of the Dionysian and Apollonian becomes Promethean.

The collision of the Dionysian and the Apollonian can be seen in literature in memory, ritual, and in the authors’ use of the vertical metaphor and the horizontal metonymy and synecdoche. Jacques Chessex’s novel *L’Ogre* and Jorge Luis Borges short story “The Garden of the Forking Paths” both exhibit Dionysian and Apollonian time with the result being the Promethean standstill in the form of either death or regret.

Maffesoli’s dichotomy between Dionysus and Prometheus can be seen in use of what Joseph Frank, in his book *The Idea of Spatial Form*, terms the *spatiality* of time. In making time

⁴ Nietzsche, Friedrich. *The Birth of Tragedy and The Case of Wagner*. Trans. Walter Kaufmann. New York: Vintage Books, 1967. (46)

⁵ Nietzsche, Friedrich. *The Birth of Tragedy and The Case of Wagner*. Trans. Walter Kaufmann. New York: Vintage Books, 1967. (46)

spatial rather than temporal, the author juxtaposes scenes in the present with other scenes in the present, or scenes in the present with scenes in either the past or the future so that, rather than illusions of memory or imagination, the scenes appear before the reader as if they, too, are in the present. For two or more scenes that are already in the present, this juxtaposition serves to make time—as we are seeing it play out separately for our various characters—last longer than it can in the real world. The story becomes an interweaving of many stories rather than one person's illusion of his life. With this technique, the author combats the illusion of Apollonian time—the illusion that all lives are both complete and never-ending—with the present-ness of Promethean time.

At the beginning of Marcel Proust's *A la recherche du temps perdu*, Marcel is transported into his childhood where, rather than experiencing time with the Apollonian illusion of memory, he actually relives his childhood again for the first time. In Virginia Woolf's novel *Mrs. Dalloway*, the narrator spatializes time in that, when Mrs. Dalloway is walking through the park, she moves from one character's internal dialogue and observations to another's. To take the spatialization of time to a greater extent, Woolf produces what Dostoevsky calls *polyphony* wherein everyone in the text is in a dialogic relationship, including the narrator. In this way, the narrator does not know just what the characters will do, but is subject, along with the reader, to their individuality and their ability to change themselves and their opinion at any point. Mikhail Bakhtin uses Dostoyesky as a model for the polyphonic novel. However, in contrasting the polyphonic aspects of the characters with the Apollonian structure of his novel *The Idiot*, I find that the polyphony of the characters does not free them from the tightness of the structure; it is rather the case that the Apollonian structure undermines the polyphony of the characters.

Because Prometheus does not represent an illusion, but rather a service to mankind through which one must suffer in order to gain, he represents a similarly hopeful and tragic reality. As the Dionysian and Apollonian merge in a standstill that is arguably Promethean, the Dionysian and Promethean merge to form a dialogue between the illusion of timelessness and the reality of linear time. As a result of this dialogue, the Dionysian becomes an intense escape from the treacherous and often monotonous reality of daily life, and daily life becomes a rest from such intensity.

Chapter 1

Memory as Dionysian and Apollonian

One intersection of Dionysian and Apollonian time is memory. As recollection is always an illusion, the act of recollection can be divided into Dionysian and Apollonian methods. In a Dionysian recollection, the passive subject is flooded with a memory revealing itself as a group of images coated with sensations. Although it is possible for this subject to recollect his memory as a series of linear events producing one collective emotion or sensation, it principally comes to him as an emotion encompassing the event as a whole. In an Apollonian recollection, on the other hand, the active subject searches for a specific memory and then deliberately brings it into his present consciousness. Whereas he also experiences the ultimate feeling surrounding his recollection—because he has searched his mind and come forth with the memory—it principally exists for him as a series of events. During a recollection, the past is transported through the mind into the present. The present linearity or progression of time is, at least temporarily, overthrown.

Whereas it may be said that memory is the past replaying in the present, in his book *Repetition*, Søren Kierkegaard argues that true recollection is impossible. It is comparable to going a second time to see a play, sitting in the same seat with the same people and expecting an identical reaction. Although the setting may be the same, one is not the same person he was on the night of the first play. He is older; he has thought more thoughts, lived through more days,

spoken with more people. The exact physical, emotional, and mental situation of his previous experience cannot be repeated. When a certain feeling is recollected—when a face passing on the street reminds him of something he once saw or felt—the memory is necessarily experienced anew. Kierkegaard compares recollection to “a discarded garment that does not fit, however beautiful it is, for one has outgrown it.”⁶ This experience of memory is Dionysian in that the subject cannot choose to remember, but is overtaken as by drunkenness, love, or anger. In this way, memory gives the illusion that there is no time, but only an overflow of sensation. Kierkegaard suggests that the greatest element of recollection is its association with erotic love, its Dionysian ability to obliterate time:

It may be true that a person’s life is over and done with in the first moment, but there must also be the vital force to slay this death and transform it to life. In the first dawning of erotic love, the present and the future contend with each other to find an eternal expression, and this recollecting is indeed eternity’s flowing back into the present.⁷

The possibility that “a person’s life is over and done with in the first moment” is Apollonian. With the birth of a child, the timeline must necessarily move towards its end, in the same way that a hunk of stone sitting before the sculptor is in some sense already a completed statue. The Dionysian act of recollection, the act of memory, is viewed here as a rebellion against the death inherent in Apollonian time, the illusion that all things are already complete; all decisions have already been made and there is nothing left to do but watch each situation unfold from the comfort of your porch chair. In this instance, time is specifically Apollonian rather than

⁶ Kierkegaard, Søren. *Fear and Trembling, Repetition*. Trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983. (132)

⁷ Kierkegaard, Søren. *Fear and Trembling, Repetition*. Trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983. (137)

Promethean. It is an illusion. However, life cannot consist entirely of recollection; without the accumulation of experiences in the present, there is nothing to recollect in the future. The memories will run out; they will become memories of memories.

In Jacques Chessex's novel *L'Ogre* (1973), the main character, Jean Calmet, becomes restless and ultimately suicidal on account of his recollections. Jean Calmet is haunted by the memory of his recently deceased father. More so than the individual scenes of which his father is a part, Jean Calmet's memory is overloaded with an overwhelming sense of his father, a Dionysian emotion that smothers him. At the beginning of *L'Ogre*, Jean Calmet is a grown man trying to enjoy his dinner while fighting with memories of his father. The scene reads as follows:

Depuis une heure une image le persécutait. Jean Calmet hésitait à la regarder, il la repoussait, il l'enfonçait dans les couches opaques de sa mémoire parce qu'il savait qu'il allait souffrir au moment où il se la représenterait avec précision. Mais l'image floue refaisait surface, elle insistait, et maintenant Jean Calmet ne pouvait plus l'ignorer sur le fond d'ombre qui la rendait encore plus nette. Soudain sa solitude lui fut insupportable et tout le tableau s'éclaira.⁸

For a time, Jean Calmet is able to fight the memory, to have control over his recollection. But at last there is nothing else he can do to fight it; it eventually overcomes him. The past scene to which Jean Calmet is transported through memory occurs during his childhood, while at a dinner with his family. The narrator describes the scene as follows: "Assis à l'autre bout de la table, Jean Calmet écoutait avec répugnance les bruits de bouche de son père occupé à manger."⁹ The scene suggests that everyone in the family is silenced by the gruesome display set forth by the

⁸ Chessex, Jacques. *L'Ogre*. Paris: Bernard Grasset, 1973. (15)

⁹ Chessex, Jacques. *L'Ogre*. Paris: Bernard Grasset, 1973. (16)

father's mastication of his meal, a particularly violent chewing that brings to mind an ogre: a beast who consumes children for his own pleasure. It is as if the remainder of the family is consumed by the power of the father, the same power that protects and supports all of them. Why should the noises of his father's eating bother the son so many years after its occurrence, even after the father has died? This experience of recollection is Dionysian in that it is beyond the character's control; it overtakes him, like a drug, while the event itself—an orderly dinner in which all of his family is present—is Apollonian in that dinner displays the illusion of family solidarity, of the complete and orderly family with each person in his seat. Jean Calmet imagines himself as the child consumed by his father. In this way, the scene is tragic. There is nothing Jean Calmet can do to help himself, no way in which he can flee the double illusion.

Throughout the novel Jean Calmet's life is interrupted by the distasteful memory of his father. He sees his life as it is now—as a man without a father—and yet, his father is arguably as present to him as he was while he was alive. It is the double working of the Dionysian and the Apollonian that arrests Jean Calmet's life, keeping him from moving either linearly or vertically, blighting each action in his life. He seeks a Dionysian, vertical existence. In the following scene, he invents a dialogue with himself and an alley cat:

Tu n'as rien compris, Jean Calmet. Tu est à moitié vivant. Tu te consumes. Tu est plus cendre que ton père. Et ton sang? Ta chair encore jeune? Ton cerveau plein de bonne folie? Tu veux rire, Jean Calmet. C'est l'esprit de Dionysos ou rien. Pan ou la mort.¹⁰

He cannot live a life of Promethean productivity as a teacher, a life in which he labors for mankind, because he is distracted by the desire to escape in Dionysian ecstasy from the crippling

¹⁰ Chessex, Jacques. *L'Ogre*. Paris: Bernard Grasset, 1973. (114)

memories of his father. He cannot reach Dionysian ecstasy because he can never forget his father; he can never disallow the past entry into the present. When it is put to him “C’est l’esprit de Dionysos ou rien. Pan ou la mort,” the answer, as foreshadowed by his memory of the dinner table, is necessarily *la mort*. He is stretched between Apollonian and Dionysian time until, at last, he breaks. Consequentially, his suicide itself combines elements of both Dionysian sensuality and Apollonian order. It reads as follows:

Tenant fermement la lame entre la pousse et l’index de la main droite, il l’appuya à son poignet gauche et du trenchant, il caressa légèrement les tendons et l’artère saillante à deux centimeter de la main. La lame était très aiguisée. Jean Calmet sentit le fil couper la peau, il frissonna malgré lui et regarda son avant-bras: une petite ligne rouge se remplissant de sang où la lame avait passé . . . C’est alors que son destin se joua. Tout à coup, avec une force extraordinaire qu’il concentrait sur ce seul point, il pressa sur la lame, l’enfonça dans son poignet gauche et trancha lentement l’artère radiale et la chair.¹¹

The tone is slow and measured and each detail is given carefully, as if we, too, are cutting our veins. These elements, as well as the reference to Jean Calmet’s destiny—as though he is led to kill himself by a force out of his control—are Apollonian. However, in the same ordered lines Jean Calmet looks at his arm as though he is struck by its beauty, by the extent of his love for it. In this Dionysian, emotive spirit, he forces the blade into his skin. Without the Dionysian force, Jean Calmet could not have stabbed the blade into his skin; without the Apollonian preparations, he could not have prepared himself for the act. The Dionysian and Apollonian come together in this scene and result in Jean Calmet’s death. His death, because it disproves the immortality

¹¹ Chessex, Jacques. *L’Ogre*. Paris: Bernard Grasset, 1973. (204)

suggested by the Apollonian and the timelessness suggested by the Dionysian, is payment for the illusions of both. As a payment lacking in the illusion of time, Jean Calmet's death is Promethean.

Jorge Luis Borges's short story "The Garden of Forking Paths" is divided between recollection and an account of a recollection. To put this in another way, the entire story is a written historical recollection. Within the historical document are the recollections experienced by the narrator, Dr. Yu Tsun, during the recollected event. The story begins as an academic document separated by time and place from the events situated within the document itself:

On page 22 of Liddell Hart's History of World War I you will read that an attack against the Serre-Montauban line by thirteen British invasions (supported by 1,400 artillery pieces), planned for the 24th of July, 1916, has to be postponed until the morning of the 29th.¹²

The focus on page numbers, place names, and dates depersonalizes the event, turning it into a collection of information for a complete story that lives safely between two covers. The focus on names, dates, and places is specifically Apollonian; it gives the illusion of order, completeness, and safety in a dangerous story. The facts give the illusion of a predestined story. The personal account of our second narrator actually begins in the third paragraph, introduced as a written statement of which the first two pages are missing. Immediately upon beginning this account, the tone of the story changes from one of undeniable historical facts to one of personal recollection. Only a few paragraphs into the account, Tsun writes the following:

Then I reflected that everything happens to a man precisely, precisely now.

Centuries of centuries and only in the present do things happen; countless men in

¹² Borges, Jorge Luis. "The Garden of the Forking Paths." From *Labyrinths: Selected Stories and Other Writings*. New York: Directions Publishing Corporation, 1962. (19)

the air, on the face of the earth and the sea, and all that really is happening is happening to me.¹³

The idea of present-ness is Promethean in that it ties everything to the actions and reactions of the moment, rather than the illusions of the past or future. However, only by reading the remainder of the story do we realize that this statement of timeless time is based on the influence of Tsun's conversation with Dr. Stephen Albert, the man who he kills at the end of his story, the man he has already killed when he begins his recollection. The memory of this murder is fresh in his mind. In order to justly read the narrator's account—to read it as if everything is always in the present and has also already occurred—we must read it always as if we have already read it the first time. All that Tsun recounts has already happened; it exists for him already as Apollo's sculpture: measured and completed. For us to examine it for the first time is to misread the story as Promethean rather than Apollonian in structure.

Dr. Stephen Albert and our narrator speak of a book written by the narrator's great grandfather, a book described both as a labyrinth and as a symbol of time. Albert tells Tsun his epiphany concerning the note left for posterity by the Tsun's great grandfather, a note left as an introduction to the book:

I leave to the various futures (not to all) the garden of the forking paths. Almost instantly, I understood: "the garden of the forking paths" was the chaotic novel; the phrase "the various futures (not to all)" suggested to me the forking in time, not in space. In all fictional works, each time a man is confronted with several alternatives, he chooses one and eliminates the others; in the fiction of Ts'ui Pen,

¹³ Borges, Jorge Luis. "The Garden of the Forking Paths." From *Labyrinths: Selected Stories and Other Writings*. New York: Directions Publishing Corporation, 1962. (20)

he chooses—simultaneously—all of them. He *creates*, in this way, diverse futures, diverse times which also themselves proliferate and fork.¹⁴

The narrator's quote from the beginning of the story can now be viewed as an idea taken from this conversation with Albert. *Everything happens to a man precisely now*. His great grandfather's book is a labyrinth from which man cannot free himself; the present-ness of time—the Promethean nature of time—is the riddle to the labyrinth. The Dionysian and the Apollonian seem at first to converge in this story to produce a fork. In one direction, Tsun goes to Albert's house and it is as if he is talking with a great artist and an old friend in a brief time of Dionysian synthesis and timelessness between the two men. In the other direction, Tsun is a spy who goes to Albert's house and kills him only because his name corresponds to a certain city, because it could be no other way. Whereas the form of the story, as previously noted, is Apollonian, it is undermined by the final lines of the account:

The chief had deciphered this mystery. He knew my problem was to indicate (through the uproar of the war) the city called Albert, and that I had found no other means to do so than to kill a man of that name. He does not know (no one can know) my innumerable contrition and weariness.¹⁵

Tsun's subsequent *contrition and weariness* after murdering Albert disallow the wholeness of the Apollonian as well as the timelessness of the Dionysian. Because Tsun pays for his action—not with his life, but with his regret—the story is left at a standstill which, like that of *L'Ogre*, is Promethean.

¹⁴ Borges, Jorge Luis. "The Garden of the Forking Paths." From *Labyrinths: Selected Stories and Other Writings*. New York: Directions Publishing Corporation, 1962. (26)

¹⁵ Borges, Jorge Luis. "The Garden of the Forking Paths." From *Labyrinths: Selected Stories and Other Writings*. New York: Directions Publishing Corporation, 1962. (29)

Recollection, or memory, is repetition in consciousness, which is always impossible. The failure of recollection is the same as the failure of repetition: whereas one can return to the same theatre with the same people to see the same performance, the original visitation cannot be repeated. In the same way, the experiences cannot be precisely relived in the mind. Jean Calmet cannot recollect his father as a figure of the past. He is, with each recollection, terrorized anew by a powerful man who cannot die. The powerful, Apollonian image of his father establishes a Promethean standstill between the false image of his father and the Dionysian ecstasies that he can only imagine. Tsun recollects his afternoon with Arthur through the changed eyes of the man who murdered him. His only freedom is his ability for contrition.

Chapter 2

Ritual: Another Form of Memory

Ritual exists as a form of repetition which predominates in certain works of literature. As opposed to recollection or memory—a scene relived in a new present—tradition functions as a new present lived as though it were a memory. One obvious example of this is the tradition of the family dinner. Each night at around the same time, the family gathers at the same dinner table with an assortment of food. As with Kierkegaard's second trip to the theatre—a trip in which the original experience is sought while an entirely new one results—each dinner is unrepeatable. However, each consecutive dinner is experienced differently from the first one. With the experience of the dinner presently at hand, one confronts memories of past dinners as well as ideas concerning what a dinner is and how it can be expected to progress. With these ideas concerning the nature of dinner come memories associated with exceptionally fun or remarkable dinners, as well as dinners filled with anguish and anger. Proximity—and, therefore the Promethean—plays a part in one's view of dinner to the extent that yesterday's dinner is closer in one's mind than, for example, a dinner three years prior. Maffesoli comments on the tragic nature of the ritual in the following passage:

Le rituel quotidien, du fait même de la redondance, a bien un goût de tragique: celui de l'éternel recommencement du même, mais c'est un tragique fondateur. Un tragique jouant le même rôle que l'exis ou l'habitus, tels qu'Aristote ou

Thomas d'Aquin en parlent, à savoir ce qui conforte la familiarité, le plein-pied, la proxémie. Le fait de partager et de vivre le même sentiment de finitude ne peut que conforter la commune appartenance à une même nature.¹⁶

In tragedy, as understood by Aristotle and Aquinas, the tragic hero is responsible for bringing about his own downfall. Maffesoli connects the ritual to the tragic in that the ritual contains an air of predestination which can be attributed to the Apollonian. While enacting or returning to a ritual—one escapes his mortality. If he believes that the ritual will always continue and that, therefore, nothing changes or moves forward, then he can never die. This is the very function of the ritual: it frees one from thoughts of his own mortality and thus gives meaning to otherwise ordinary tasks.

Using ritual to escape mortality is a similar idea to that espoused by Paul de Man in his essay “The Rhetoric of Temporality.” De Man notes that, with language taking on subjectivity in the late nineteenth century, writers begin replacing the allegory with the natural symbol as a way of escaping their own mortality in the cyclical and immortal nature of the natural world. De Man argues in favor of the symbol in the following passage:

Allegory appears as dryly rational and dogmatic as its reference to a meaning that it does not itself constitute, whereas the symbol is founded on an intimate unity between the image that rises up before the senses and the supersensory totality that the image suggests.¹⁷

In keeping with Nietzsche's Dionysian and Apollonian duality, De Man sets up a duality between the allegory and the symbol based also on their respective relationships to time. The

¹⁶ Maffesoli, Michel. *L'Instant éternel*. Paris: La Table Ronde, 2003. (82)

¹⁷ De Man, Paul. “The Rhetoric of Temporality.” *Blindness and Insight: Essays in the Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism*. Second Edition, Revised. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983. (189)

symbol is comparable to Dionysian time in that the character or reader is overcome or struck by the mystery and endlessness of meanings inherent in the symbol. The allegory, which has one definite ending, represents an Apollonian time in which each thing contributes an element to the story, and yet, the story exists elsewhere, already as a complete and seamless whole. This whole is not the same as the whole emerging from the symbol, but works rather as a whole in the same way the human body is a whole: it has many parts, but its totality does not suggest a totality on a grander scale. De Man gives the following explanation:

. . . the prevalence of allegory always corresponds to the unveiling of an authentically temporal destiny. This unveiling takes place in a subject that has sought refuge against the impact of time in a natural world to which, in truth, it bears no resemblance . . . In the world of the symbol, it would be possible for the image to coincide with the substance, since the substance and its representation do not differ in their being but only in their extension: they are part and whole of the same set of categories. Their relationship is one of simultaneity, which, in truth, is spatial in kind, and in which the intervention of time is merely a matter of contingency, whereas, in the world of allegory, time is the originary constitutive category.¹⁸

The symbol coincides with its substance just as Dionysus coincides with his music. Both the symbol and the thing represented by the symbol exist at the same time. Their relationship is spatial in that they are not the same thing, but can be imagined side by side, the one lending a mysterious and enlightened meaning to the other. Allegory, however, is a story. All the events

¹⁸ De Man, Paul. "The Rhetoric of Temporality." *Blindness and Insight: Essays in the Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism*. Second Edition, Revised. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983. (207)

line up with other events in another time. In order for the allegory to work, the first events must necessarily lead to the second event, then to the third, and finally to the conclusion.

All of this serves to say that when the family sits down each night at the dinner table, an attempt is made—as with Romantic writers rapt with nature symbolism—to escape their own mortality and see things in terms of a greater whole in which everything has its place. Like Apollo sculpting a man from a hunk of stone, the mother and father take the jagged elements of the family unit and organize it, piece by piece and fork by spoon, into something whole, orderly, and beautiful. In this way, the ritual allows the family to know where they should be at what hour and imbues them with the sense that they have never left the table; it both marks time and evades it.

In the first book of *A la recherche du temps perdu* entitled *Du Côté de chez Swann*, our young narrator is eating dinner with his parents and their friends and is ordered by his father to go to bed. In this scene, two rituals intersect: dinner and bedtime. Whereas typically at dinner, Marcel is allowed to interact freely with his mother, when company is there, he must reign in his emotions and act appropriately. In addition, whereas his mother tucks him into bed on most nights, when they have guests, Marcel is asked to say good-night to her earlier in the evening to save the guests the interruption of his loving display. Before he is asked to go to bed, Marcel knows exactly how the evening must go. He even kisses his mother earlier in the night to lessen the later torment of her absence. The scene reads as follows, beginning with a command from his father:

“Mais non, voyons, laisse ta mere, vous vous êtes assez dit bonsoir comme cela, ces manifestation sont ridicules. Allons, monte!” Et il me fallut partir sans viatique; il me fallut monter chaque marche de l’escalier, comme dit l’expression

populaire, à “contrecœur,” montant contre mon cœur qui voulait retourner près de ma mère parce qu’elle ne lui avait pas, en m’embrassant, donné licence de me suivre.¹⁹

Marcel depends on the ritual of bedtime for his own happiness. He tries to prepare himself for the disruption of this ritual by kissing his mother earlier in the evening, when he is alone with her. However, it offers no comfort. He describes his walk up the stairs—away from the codes of the ritual—with the same tone Jean Calmet takes during his suicide, as though his life has come to a regretful end. Until his mother is in his bedroom, he is filled with intense unrest. In his rituals with his mother, Marcel has taken comfort in an Apollonian cycle. He uses the Apollonian as a way of co-existing with his Dionysian feelings for his mother. Although the ritual of dinner is replaced by the ritual of dinner-with-company, the disruption itself is Promethean in that the immortal nature of the ritual—the attempt at hiding from the effects of time by way of a strict and repetitive ordering of things—is undermined by this instance of deviation. As a result, Marcel finds himself incapable of continuing with his life. He cannot go to sleep. He, in effect, pays for his love of his mother with his evening of unrest.

L’Ogre is rapt with scenes of ritual. The father, who is symbolized by both a clock and the sun—two elements which measure time—reigns over this world of ritual to which Jean Calmet is constantly subjected. As mentioned in the previous chapter, *L’Ogre* begins with Jean Calmet seated in a restaurant, eating dinner by himself. While eating and reminiscing about his dead father, he remembers a scene from his childhood in which his family is eating dinner at the dinner table. In his memory, he cannot take pleasure in his meal because of the vulgar manner in which his father consumes his food. The scene, as previously recounted, reads as follows, “Assis

¹⁹ Proust, Marcel. *Du Côté de chez Swann*. from *A la recherche du temps perdu*. Paris: Quarto Gallimard, 1999. 15-507. (31)

à l'autre bout de la table, Jean Calmet écoutait avec répugnance les bruits de bouche de son père occupé à manger."²⁰ His father's mastication does not stand out because it is a rare occurrence at his family's dinner table, but rather because it strikes Jean Calmet as particularly disruptive of his existence; it reminds him of an ogre whose mission is the consumption of innocent children. The ogre, then, is a metaphor for Jean Calmet's father, a metaphor which is summoned forth by way of Jean Calmet's memory of this mythological creature. However, Jean Calmet's intellectual memory of the ogre is not the same as a memory of an event that occurred at a set time and place in his life. Once he learns of the ogre, it exists in his mind without a connection to a particular time and place. Like the symbol, intellectual memory is spatial rather than temporal. The ogre—a symbol for Jean Calmet's father—can be set beside his father and used to contribute to our knowledge and understanding of his character. The ritual is a convergence of Dionysian and Apollonian time in that it both measures life and arrests time; the association of Jean Calmet's father with an ogre sets him up as a character who is both a giver and taker of life. The narrator comments on Jean Calmet's controversial views of his father in the following passage:

La tristesse lui serrait la gorge et il avait envie de se jeter au cou du vieillard, de pleurer toutes les larmes de son corps sur sa poitrine ample et sonore. Car Jean Calmet aimait son père. Il l'aimait cette force massive et guetteuse, il détestait et il jalousait cet appétit, il aimait cette voix dominatrice en même temps qu'il en avait peur.²¹

In the same way that Jean Calmet's father is both a doctor and a father—people who give and support life—he is equally an ogre, a creature who consumes the same children he has protected.

²⁰ Chessex, Jacques. *L'Ogre*. Paris: Bernard Grasset, 1973. (16)

²¹ Chessex, Jacques. *L'Ogre*. Paris: Bernard Grasset, 1973. (17)

Jean Calmet's affection for and fear of his father reflect this split in his father's character. If he had not loved his father, perhaps Jean Calmet could have taken his father's death as a Promethean payment for his crimes; he might have lived the remainder of his own life with a certain degree of peace. However, the man who haunts him is also the one who gives him life. He cannot die because he encapsulates the double aspect of the ritual; he is both Dionysian and Apollonian time, timelessness and fateful measurement. In the end, he is canceled out; he is nothing. Whereas Jean Calmet's father can move freely both on the vertical and horizontal axis, can be for Jean Calmet both dead and alive, Jean Calmet cannot move at all. The viable difference between the two—Jean Calmet and his father—is that we are granted access into the mind of Jean Calmet but never into the mind of his father. His father is as much a myth to us as he is to Jean Calmet. We are subject to Jean Calmet's memories as he himself is subject to them.

In a second example of ritual in *L'Ogre*, the second chapter, entitled "L'esprit de Dionysos," opens with the ritual of Christmas. It begins as follows:

Il y eut Noël.

Il se terra.

Il s'encoconna dans la convention, les habitudes de sa famille, la tiédeur un peu louche de Lutry, l'affection inquiète de sa mère, la musique, les repas, les cloches.

Il y eut le sapin comme chaque année, depuis toujours. Il y eut ses soeurs, ses frères, les cris de ses neveux surexcités, la mélancolie des cadeaux, les yeux brillants de larmes dans la lumière des bougies. Il y eut la chaise vide du père. Il y eut la grande horloge dressée dans son cercueil derrière le fantôme.

Il y eut le 31 décembre.

Il se mit au lit.²²

Whereas, during the first ritual of the story—the ritual of dinner—Jean Calmet begins as a grown man to be tormented by a memory of his father eating. This ritual torments Jean Calmet because it contains everything he knows of the ritual of Christmas save the presence of his father. A chapter about Dionysus—about vertical time, ecstasy, and music—begins with lines portioned and controlled. With an Apollonian illusion, Jean Calmet tries to organize his ritual in order to steady his shaky bearings. Even the long, languid lines of descriptions are hemmed in by short and stumpy declarations of ritual. These lines function as reminders that, while it is time for Jean Calmet to partake in the ritual at hand, something drastic has changed and consequentially the ritual has a different meaning. The ritual of Christmas is especially disruptive to Jean Calmet because his father is not physically present. All that he has ever understood of the ritual of Christmas has included the corporeal presence of his cruel and powerful father. With his father's absence, ritual is overthrown as an illusion. In keeping with Kierkegaard's notion of the impossibility of repetition, tradition, too, is impossible. It suggests an equality it can only pretend to uphold. When one element goes missing, the Apollonian illusion loses its credibility and we are left as mortals, sitting around a slab of wood with nothing to say.

²² Chessex, Jacques. *L'Ogre*. Paris: Bernard Grasset, 1973. (87)

Chapter 3

The Language of Horizontal and Vertical Time

One does not have control of oneself in vertical time as one does in horizontal time. Assuming that a person is mentally sound, he can always choose horizontal time: he can go to work, pay his bills, go by the market, eat dinner, etc. One can never wholly choose vertical time, as there is something both mystical and animal in the abandon it procures. One cannot reason oneself out of logical thought any more than one can summon logic when one is drunk, or choose order amidst chaos. The best one can do is to put oneself in a position in which he can hope to be overtaken by the Dionysian; one can have the orgies, drink the wine, eat the food, and wait to be swept up the vertical axis while all the time being subject to the laws of time. However, if the aforementioned preparatory actions are preformed and the person fails to lose his thoughts, to be lifted in chaos, and cannot believe in the illusion of the linear, it must be admitted that he inhabits a third type of time that—as with the standstill produced in previous collision of the Dionysian and Apollonian—incapacitates all action in favor of a restlessness which nothing can cure. A person within this framework of time is in a hopeless, blighted position: he knows what he wants and has no means with which to attain it. He wants to be dead to horizontal time, but he cannot forget its hold on the world. He accepts that the present is the only real time, that neither the past nor the future exist in the moment, and yet, within this belief, he does not know how to succumb to the moment. He cannot breathe in the moment without the horror that he will

one day stop breathing completely. Whereas vertical time has “Une conception cyclique du temps, une affirmation joyeuse de ‘l’éternel retour’ voire de ‘l’éternel présent’,”²³ an escape from the knowledge of death, this third type of time confirms nothing and offers nothing save frustration and defeat. In this state, one rejects productivity, and yet cannot misbehave without remembering in each moment how he will pay for his actions. He feels the hangover while taking the drink; he has sex but never the orgasm; piercing every joyous feeling in the knowledge of its end and therefore of his own death.

In his essay “Two Aspects of Language and Two Types of Aphasic Disturbances,” Roman Jakobson sets up a polarity of language comparable to Maffesoli’s polarity of time. For Jakobson, the axis is divided between “...selection and substitution or . . . combination and contexture,”²⁴ the relation of similarity and the relation of contiguity, or, in literary terminology, metaphor and metonymy or synecdoche. Jakobson places these polar functions of language on a horizontal/vertical axis. However, Jakobson’s axes are governed by specific brain functions which also govern these two fundamental axes of language. In other words, his graph is based on scientific knowledge of the workings of the human brain. On this axis, which can be seen as a sentence, metaphor takes the vertical while metonymy and synecdoche take the horizontal. To grasp this, one must imagine a list of metaphors stacked over the original word in the sentence. In the sentence “The sun is round,” for example, over the word sun might be the following words: ball, red balloon, Frisbee. The words thus used metaphorically for *sun* are not taken from the same plane as the word itself (the plane of proximity, including such things as sky, cloud, and

²³ Krell, Jonathan. “L’Ogre Réécrit, L’Ogre Réhabilité.” *Esthétique, Littérature et Modernité*. Paris: L’Harmattan, 1998. 15-19. (18)

²⁴ Jakobson, Roman. “from Two Aspects of Language and Two Types of Aphasic Disturbances.” *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*. Ed. Vincent B. Leitch. New York, London: W.W. Norton and Comp., 2001. 1265-69. (1265)

bird), but are rather taken from different planes, infinitely extending the associations of the word. The sun must have some similarity to each of these objects, but, when one is chosen, we cannot assume that the sun is more like this object than like another to which it is also similar. It is, after all, neither the ball, nor the red balloon or the Frisbee. The specific metaphor says more about the speaker or narrator and about the situation within the work than about the object itself. Jakobson calls this “an instant of positional similarity.”²⁵

In contrast to positional similarity or substitutive quality of metaphor, metonymy and synecdoche create a hierarchy of objects and thus allow a digression “from the plot to the atmosphere and from the characters to the setting in space and time.”²⁶ For example, a woman who is given the synecdoche *legs* is objectified in a specific place and time and by a specific perspective. *Legs* cannot be replaced by *arms* or *neck*, and are therefore horizontally progressive. This synecdoche tells us that the woman is not only objectified, but also seen as sexually pleasing. We know that her legs are a particular attribute of her attractiveness. We know also that legs, within the historical context of the story, are viewed as culturally important to a woman’s appeal. Legs are not only a fetish of the individual making the woman into a synecdoche, but are a fetish of the culture as a whole. It can also be assumed that the legs are literally in view of the male; meaning, in other words, that women are not garbed only in things which conceal their legs, but rather put their legs in public view. Men are familiar with judging the appeal of legs; when a woman is thus referred to as legs, there is a general agreement of what is meant. The synecdoche is taken from the same plane as the object; nothing is added or

²⁵ Jakobson, Roman. “*from Two Aspects of Language and Two Types of Aphasic Disturbances.*” *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*. Ed. Vincent B. Leitch. New York, London: W.W. Norton and Comp., 2001. 1265-69. (1266)

²⁶ Jakobson, Roman. “*from Two Aspects of Language and Two Types of Aphasic Disturbances.*” *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*. Ed. Vincent B. Leitch. New York, London: W.W. Norton and Comp., 2001. 1265-69. (1267)

extended. Metonymy also takes from the same plane as the object in that it uses a symbol or ideal which is already commonly associated with the subject. Referring to the king as the crown, for example, does not paradigmatically extend our association to the king, but rather focuses on the regal, symbolic aspects of the king himself.

But can we go so far as to say that the metaphor pronounces vertical time in an orgiastic sense, whereas metonymy and synecdoche pronounce horizontal time in a utilitarian, future-focused sense? If this is in fact the case, do metaphor, metonymy, and synecdoche function to demonstrate the third axis of time, the axis previously derived from Maffesoli's division of time? In *L'Ogre*, Jean Calmet's father—the ogre to which the title refers—was, while living, an embodiment of horizontal time: a doctor who spent his life hard at work improving his life and the life of his family. However, the novel begins with his death. He therefore does not, in a literal sense, exist within the novel except in the memory of Jean Calmet. In accordance with Jakobson's axis, memory can function both as horizontal and as vertical time: horizontal in that it is not infinite, but is connected to actual event on a time-line; vertical in that a memory can exist in one's head as a moment outside of time, as something which floods the head and body and takes one into another world in which horizontal time cannot exist. Insofar as memory does not contribute to productivity, but is rather a practical waste of time, it has more tied to the vertical than to horizontal time. Jean Calmet's father is given the metaphor both of a clock and of the sun. In the following passage, Jean Calmet associates him with the giant clock in his childhood home:

Jean Calmet regardait l'horloge. Le cuivre du cadran brillait à la lumière du crépuscule. Le battement net et lent découpait le silence, et une fois de plus Jean Calmet admirait que son père se fût tenu des années devant cette machine dressée

comme un monument derrière lui: comme s'il avait voulu les avertir tous de sa domination irrévocable.²⁷

As the clock is made to measure time, so it is also suggested that Jean Calmet's father keeps time with the world. He *is* horizontal time. In another instance, Jean Calmet's father is compared, even while in the same room as the clock, to the sun:

Mais au-devant de l'ombre qui montait du sol et des coins éloignés de la grande pièce, il y avait cette masse éclairée, concentrée, cet autre soleil infailible et détestable qui rougissait, qui brillait, qui s'illuminait de tout son pouvoir.²⁸

Jean Calmet's father is both a sun, which rivals the natural sun, and a clock, which is illuminated by his rival, the sun. His father embodies neither all the characteristics of the sun nor all the characteristics of the clock. It is neither one nor the other. He is neither literally large as the sun, nor stationary as the clock. Both the sun and the clock measure time and could be used to support vertical time in their cyclical natures and horizontal time in their measurement of days so as to procure utility. However, once the metaphors are established, each time the reader hears mention within the text of the sun or anything related to the sun—light, heat, fire, etc.—or the clock and anything related to the clock—ticking, numbers, etc.—Jean Calmet's father is summoned forth, as it cannot be completely clear in what ways he is and is not the sun, nor in what ways he is or is not the clock. In this way, he mystically enters the story. The sun, for example, returns in the following passage: “Soudain il exulta intérieurement. Le père était mort et on l'avait brûlé au Crématoire. Mort, le docteur. Un petit tas de cendres!”²⁹ Jean Calmet says this to himself as a mantra, so as to convince himself of his father's permanent departure,

²⁷ Chessex, Jacques. *L'Ogre*. Paris: Bernard Grasset, 1973. (31)

²⁸ Chessex, Jacques. *L'Ogre*. Paris: Bernard Grasset, 1973. (16)

²⁹ Chessex, Jacques. *L'Ogre*. Paris: Bernard Grasset, 1973. (41)

though he is affected by his father as if the man continues to live. This raises the question: how can his father die at the flames of which he himself is composed? The sun cannot die from fire, though fire both gives life and it is deadly to others. This is the same problem over which Jean Calmet is tortured: outside of time, outside of death, his father returns to him. He knows his father to be dead. He needs and wants him to be dead, and yet, somehow, against the laws of nature, he lives. His father returns metaphorically in vertical time, and yet this vertical time is lacking the orgiastic, thoughtless, emotive aspect of Dionysian frenzy. It is mysterious, but it terrorizes Jean Calmet with its mystery. The father, the embodiment of horizontal time, haunts Jean Calmet in vertical time, and the result, as when one gets too close to the sun, is deadly.

In another example in which metaphor takes on vertical time, Jean Calmet, when thinking about his father burning in the crematorium, considers “la tombe comme un lit quotidien.”³⁰ In the same way that his father cannot die, Jean Calmet gives his tomb the metaphor of a bed. Thus, each time a bed appears in the story, each time Jean Calmet sleeps with Thérèse, his father is mysteriously present. This is further supported by the fact that Jean Calmet’s father had an affair with Liliane, Jean Calmet’s first love. When Thérèse falls in love with Marc, a student of Jean Calmet’s, Jean Calmet gains the same position as his father. He is now the older man, the one with money and power. Just as the sun has the double ability to give life and to take it away, Jean Calmet wants both to win the love of Thérèse—to regain the young love his father took from him—and to allow Thérèse to be with Marc, thus undoing the wrong his father did to him. He wants Thérèse, unlike Liliane, to choose to be with the beautiful, innocent, boy-lover who is her equal. Each bed mentioned in the story uses vertical time in the form of the metaphor in order to undermine the vertical time typically attained in the bedroom. The result is that Jean

³⁰ Chessex, Jacques. *L’Ogre*. Paris: Bernard Grasset, 1973. (18)

Calmet is trapped rather than freed by the third type of time in which he has set the scene for a vertical-time experience, but he cannot inter into it; he cannot lose his thoughts; he cannot bury the memory of his father. When Thérèse takes Jean Calmet to her bed, the scene is already oppressive for him. He cannot lose himself to the vertical, Dionysian pleasures meant to take place there, but is rather tormented by his father and his father's various cruelties imposed upon him.

The synecdoche used for Jean Calmet's father is *la loi*, the law. He is a doctor, and therefore has power over life and death. He is also a father, the head of the household, the money-maker. In working out his theory of the Oedipus Complex, Freud speaks of the law of the father which wants to be overrun by the son. This synecdoche tells us both that Jean Calmet sees the law embodied in his father and that he wants to override it. Jean Calmet says of Liliane and himself, "Elle avait dix-sept ans. Lui, dix-neuf."³¹ These two quotations parallel each other. In the first quotation, Jean Calmet speaks of himself in the third person, as if he is a character in a story who is subjected to a tyrannical father. He refers to his father as *la loi* to explain how such an old man could take such a young girl. When the law is mentioned, Jean Calmet is referring directly and explicitly to his father as a whole, whereas the aforementioned metaphors of his father refer to him only in part, resurfacing with mysterious and illusive meanings. We know, because Jean Calmet has both fright and love for his father, that this synecdoche is similarly multifaceted. With biblical association, it gives us an accurate picture of the power Jean Calmet attributes to his father, while also allowing us to understand that the law holds a great power in Jean Calmet's culture, a power equal in his mind to the power held by his father in regards to Liliane. However, there is no mystery in the synecdoche, nothing which

³¹ Chessex, Jacques. *L'Ogre*. Paris: Bernard Grasset, 1973. (63)

could connect it to vertical time, nothing orgiastic, nothing outside of time and actions. It simply tells us about Jean Calmet's grandiose opinion of his father, about his father's role in the world, about people's views of him. His father took what he wanted because he had the power to do so. Beyond that, there is little to be said. In an example of metonymy, Liliane is often referred to by her "grands yeux bruns."³² When Jean Calmet walks in on his father and Liliane, he says her name and is met with "ses yeux."³³ With this metonymy, we see Liliane's innocence, her youth. We see that Jean Calmet loves her because he feels as though he can see directly into her soul. The similarity between the two given examples lies in the fact that the mention of a policeman would not necessarily connect us to Jean Calmet's father, whereas the mention of anyone's eyes brings us back to Liliane. Her eyes exist in the plane of her already-present-features; they are contained in her physical being. It is thus the case that synecdoche and metonymy, in the two given examples, do in fact correspond to Maffesoli's concept of horizontal time. They add something to our knowledge of the characters, the story, the time period, and the culture in which the story takes place. They do not connect us in peculiar ways to other parts of the story, nor do they present an aspect of mystery. Whereas Liliane's eyes can demonstrate Jean Calmet's love for her, and even show him as being lost in her eyes, blinded to all other things, in a vertical state of time, the synecdoche tells us that this is the case, it does not structurally prove it to us.

Due to his father's mysterious presence in the bedroom, Jean Calmet is not free of his father even in the most intimate, most waxing orgasmic moments. Thus, he is kept from ever partaking in vertical time. He says of himself:

"Je suis enfermé en moi-même, séparé des autres, privé, coupable à cause de Ta

Loi que je subis comme un enfant humilié. Est-ce que la barrière tombera? Est-

³² Chessex, Jacques. *L'Ogre*. Paris: Bernard Grasset, 1973. (59)

³³ Chessex, Jacques. *L'Ogre*. Paris: Bernard Grasset, 1973. (61)

ce que la douceur me sera donnée, me sera rendue, avant la chute définitive dans l'obscur?"³⁴

Jean Calmet is addressing both himself and his deceased father. He asks his father if the barrier of the law, the synecdoche of his father which ties Jean Calmet to horizontal time, will ever fall. His father, while at the same time having the synecdoche of the law, is given the metaphor of a barrier immuring Jean Calmet, keeping him from vertical time. This metaphor is particularly poignant when death, in the following sentence, is given the metaphor of *the fall into the obscure*. Death is, for Jean Calmet, the only way in which he can surely be freed of his father and allowed into the rapture of vertical time, the time of falling, the time in which life itself no longer exists.

In addition, when the principal of Jean Calmet's school discovers that Jean Calmet has been sleeping with a prostitute, Jean Calmet does not care enough about the accusation to alter his life in the slightest. He is not concerned with his future, his career, his finances, and therefore does not participate fully in horizontal time. By examining his inability to exist in either vertical or horizontal time in *L'Ogre*, we can see the existence of a torturous third type of time. A cat says to him in an alley:

Tu n'as rien compris, Jean Calmet. Tu est à moitié vivant. Tu te consume. Tu es plus cendré que ton père. Et ton sang? Ta chair encore jeune? Ton cerveau plein de bonne folie? Tu veux rire, Jean Calmet. C'est l'esprit de Dionysos ou rien. Pan ou la mort.³⁵

Jean Calmet seeks the abandon of vertical time, but he cannot escape into it. He consumes as if in horizontal time, and yet he cares nothing for his future, his career. Isn't that his father's

³⁴ Chessex, Jacques. *L'Ogre*. Paris: Bernard Grasset, 1973. (162)

³⁵ Chessex, Jacques. *L'Ogre*. Paris: Bernard Grasset, 1973. (114)

terrain? The clock, the sun. Even in this scene, in which he speaks with a cat in what could be a Dionysian frenzy, a drunken exploration of his inner psyche, even the cat is telling him that he, Jean Calmet, knows that if he cannot reach vertical time, life is worthless to him. His father is horizontal time; Jean Calmet cannot participate in time which is already inhabited by his father. But his father, in appearing also in the most visceral of acts, in his bedroom and in the bedroom of his mistress, at the dinner table when he's trying to soak up the pleasures of a good meal, also ruins vertical time for him. He can go through the motions of having sex, of drinking wine, of eating, but he can never forget the mysterious, metaphorical presence of his father, his father's disruptive presence in his first love experience with Liliane.

Jean Calmet remembers when he was a boy being disgusted with his father's eating habits. By the end of the book, Jean Calmet has an epiphany that his father is in fact an ogre:

La gaieté de l'Ogre! Car Jean Calmet venait de faire une découverte effrayante:
l'Ogre ressemblait à son père, une nouvelle image de son père resurgie du
Crématoire pour l'avertir encore et le persécuter?³⁶

His father, metaphorically associated with the sun and the clock, with all horizontal time, in this passage takes on for Jean Calmet all the pleasures of vertical time. But his father cannot both eat his children in Dionysian ecstasy and, in the style of Prometheus, labor to keep his children alive, to preserve their futures. The two aspects undermine each other. Jean Calmet's father would have to labor for his children in order to take pleasure in consuming them. He would have to live in horizontal time so as to prepare his circumstances for the possibility of vertical time. Jean Calmet remembers his father eating a meal; he is repulsed by the memory. He can hear the savagery of his father's consumption. His father is to him a creature who, beyond the grave,

³⁶ Chessex, Jacques. *L'Ogre*. Paris: Bernard Grasset, 1973. (167)

consumes children and takes orgasmic pleasure in this enterprise. While working for his family, he consumes for himself. Jean Calmet's father both masters horizontal time and is taken away by vertical time. The son can neither take interest in accomplishing the first nor forget his father enough to experience the second.

Jean Calmet ends his tormented, third type of time by cutting his veins with a razor. This renunciation of life in favor of death raises the following question: is Jean Calmet's death a suicide or a murder? Does his brutal, domineering father torment him from the grave and finally consume him like a proper ogre? What we gather from the death scene is that death is not the vertical falling Jean Calmet imagined it to be. It is not an escape, but a sad and gruesome renunciation of life. After Jean Calmet is dead, the narrator tells us, "à la Cité, au même moment, le bac commençait. En hâte on avait remplacé Jean Calmet."³⁷ The world continues in a horizontal fashion. Jean Calmet's function in horizontal time—his function as a teacher, a giver of tests, etc., is quickly replaced. The teenagers he has taught ready themselves to take a test so as to assure their successful futures. The narrator tells us that Thérèse is in her bedroom, and then, as if describing various scenes through a camera lens, pans to Jean Calmet's mother. The book ends with the following passage: "Maintenant elle était assise dans son fauteuil, immobile, elle regardait dans la lumière de la fenêtre."³⁸ Jean Calmet's mother eats and dresses herself. She then sits in a chair doing nothing at all, without moving. Jean Calmet's father is metaphorically summoned with the reference to the light in the window. Although Jean Calmet is dead, his father still haunts the earth. His father, in a sense, outlives him; he is horizontal and vertical time. Because of this, Jean Calmet does not want to be his father and yet cannot forget

³⁷ Chessex, Jacques. *L'Ogre*. Paris: Bernard Grasset, 1973. (207)

³⁸ Chessex, Jacques. *L'Ogre*. Paris: Bernard Grasset, 1973. (208)

him; he can participate in neither type of time. One living in this third type of time cannot persist, as it is neither productive nor comforting. When trapped here, all one can do is give up.

Though less heavy with metaphors and metonymies than *L'Ogre*, “The Garden on the Forking Paths” still has something to offer in terms of a linguistic analysis. In the third page of the story, Tsun confesses in his letter about the extent to which Albert moved him during his encounter. He tells us, “I know of a man from England—a modest man—a man who for me is no less great than Goethe. I talked with him for scarcely an hour, but during that hour he was Goethe.”³⁹ In keeping with Jakobson’s axis, this metaphor is presumably on the vertical axis, denoting a Dionysian time. The verity of this becomes clear when we examine the function of this metaphor. We know certain things about Goethe, but none of these things can be attributed specifically to Stephen Albert. For example, we cannot assume that Albert is a writer or a German, but we are led to suspect that Albert, for our narrator, inhabits something of the mystery of the famous writer, something of the mystique of genius and of poetry. This metaphor does not progress the linearity of the story; it does not tell us new information about the plot. This metaphor serves to increase the Dionysian aspect of the relationship between the two men. Like a secret love of which we are made privy, this scene all of a sudden is revealed to us as a sacred event in which one man, for whatever reason, becomes for another man something greater than what he is.

The most obvious synecdoche of the story appears only a line later, when the narrator reveals the reason why he killed this man who had become Goethe to him:

³⁹ Borges, Jorge Luis. “The Garden of the Forking Paths.” From *Labyrinths: Selected Stories and Other Writings*. New York: Directions Publishing Corporation, 1962. (21)

I did it because I sensed that the Chief somehow feared people of my race—for the innumerable ancestors who merge within me. I wanted to prove to him that a yellow man could save his armies.⁴⁰

By a *yellow man*, we understand that Tsun means specifically a Chinese man. However, this particular phrasing—taking the description of his skin as a definition of him as a person—progresses the plot. From this description, we are led to understand that the society of which Tsun is a part is biased against Chinese men to the point of classifying them by their skin color. Using this belittling synecdoche to describe himself in an account of a murder for which Tsun feels contrition grants allowance to the description. He murdered a man who was like Goethe to him to save himself from being only a *yellow man*. In his recollection of the incident, we get the impression that Tsun no longer advocates his reason for murdering Albert. In supporting an entire people for which he has neither kinship nor preference, he has failed his attempt at strengthening the fidelity of the *yellow man*.

The linguistic juxtaposition of the vertical and horizontal results in the same paralysis that the collision of the Dionysian and the Apollonian enacts with memory and ritual. This is to say that horizontal time, when viewed in terms of a metonymy or synecdoche—which pretends to encapsulate when it is in fact only a part or an idea—easily takes over the illusion of the Apollonian, the illusion that each action serves a purpose and each thing has a meaning. Just as a thing cannot be both a metaphor and metonymy—something other than it is as well as only a part of itself—the collision of these two elements produces a standstill.

⁴⁰ Borges, Jorge Luis. “The Garden of the Forking Paths.” From *Labyrinths: Selected Stories and Other Writings*. New York: Directions Publishing Corporation, 1962. (21)

Chapter 4

Spatialization of Time as Promethean

In his book *Spatial Form in Modern Literature*, Joseph Frank explores the phenomenon of *pure time* in Marcel Proust's literary works. In *pure time*, the past and present are grasped simultaneously by the reader. For this to be the case, the present cannot be more present than the past, but must carry equal temporal weight. In this way, both the past and present take on a Promethean aspect: they are tied to a present existence during which anything is possible and everything must be suffered. The time of the story is neither Apollonian in its linearity nor Dionysian in its verticality, but is rather Promethean in that it is experienced in the present tense, absent from the illusion of the past and the future. In Proust's most lauded work, *A la recherche du temps perdu*, the transportation of the subject into his childhood is a peculiar combination of all three types of time: Dionysian, Apollonian, and Promethean. It is Dionysian in that it overtakes the passive subject, actually transporting him into the past, Apollonian in that the past has already happened, and therefore exists as a whole, and Promethean in that the subject has no choice but to live out his linear existence, day by day, paying for each action as he goes. The subject, Marcel, is equally the grown man of the present and the little boy of the past; in proximity he is closer to neither. In his *Confessions*, Saint Augustine argues for a similar present-ness of all time. In the following passage, he supports what Frank calls *spatialization of time*, seeing time as a cubby holes where different shoes are kept, all worn in different orders, but all equally available:

We cannot properly say that the future or the past exists, or that there are three times, past, present, and future. Perhaps we can say that there are three tenses, but that they are the present of the past, the present of the present, and the present of the future.⁴¹

Insofar as time can be spatialized and therefore lived always in the present, time is Promethean. The difficulty of a spatialization of literary time is that the past must necessarily be returned to from the standpoint of the present. Although we can grant the transportation of Proust's character Marcel into the past which, for him, becomes the present, and we can allow also that Marcel is actually living his past as a boy for the first time—rather than recollecting the past through the fuzzy vision of the present—it must also be admitted that he is transported *from* the present *into* the past, rather than from a neutral standpoint. This fact disallows the absolute equality of the two times; however, this disallowance is only relevant from the perspective of the reader. The past, at least from the reader's perspective, is seen in terms of what he knows of the present. For example, the reality of the character's existence in the present as a grown man determines that one read the account of his childhood with a certain Apollonian privilege unknown to the boy himself: we know at least certain facts about the boy as a grown man. At a very minimum, we can be assured that nothing in Marcel's childhood poses a legitimate threat to his life. In this way, the transportation retains something of the Apollonian illusion of memory. To the extent in which Marcel's childhood is experienced in the present tense rather than as a recollection, it can be said to inhabit Promethean time, which is akin to admitting that Marcel lives his childhood from day to day, suffering with all of the verity of the present tense. Marcel's childhood—once he is actually transported back to it—progresses in a linear fashion returning

⁴¹ Saint Augustine. *Confessions*. Trans. Henry Garry Wills. New York: Penguin Books, 2002. (271)

him eventually to the present. The Dionysian moment is the transportation itself—demanding a certain passivity of the character who does not seek his past but is rather swept back to it—while the Promethean is the measured life lived while experiencing his own childhood. This measured life, of course—as when the young Marcel is overwhelmed with obsessive love for Swann’s daughter—is dotted with Dionysian moments that can never persist for very long. The dialogue that exists between the Dionysian and the Promethean is made possible by the absence of illusion in Marcel’s peculiar form of recollection, a form accessible only to fictional subjects. The past present offers something to the present, as the present—Marcel as he has become—offers something to his past present childhood. It is Marcel’s real and genuinely difficult Promethean existence in the present that allows for dialogue with the Dionysian aspects of the book, which, in fact, saves the book from the paralysis necessitated by the intersection of the Dionysian and Apollonian. Because Marcel pays for his Dionysian moments of ecstasy with long nights of longing, the Dionysian, by way of the Promethean, becomes, rather than simply an illusion, a real moment of intense emotion. As Prometheus loves mankind more because he is willing to pay for his aid to us, so Marcel loves his mother more because he suffers for her presence. The Dionysian moments, when responding to the Promethean, function as reprieves from the heartache of daily existence.

When Saint Augustine asks himself what exists if the past no longer does, he responds with the following: “A representation of it does—that is what I see in the present, stored in my memory, whenever I remember or recount my boyhood.”⁴² We must keep two things in mind: first, memory of characters in literature has a greater freedom than it does to people in the living world, as it is not bound by reality; and secondly, in literature, everything is representation. So

⁴² Saint Augustine. *Confessions*. Trans. Henry Garry Wills. New York: Penguin Books, 2002. (270)

long as we are still in the process of reading the story, the literary present remains unconcluded and in this way is a representation of the actual present. However, in the fact that the narrator gives us only pieces of things—sensations which stand out to him, colors and tastes which change something, move something forward, leave an impression on him—the literary present is a representation of actual memory. The literary past—which may also be referred to as literary memory—is a representation of a representation of actual memory. It is impressions held in the mind of characters who are themselves impressions taken as though from someone's memory. The author must give enough pieces for the reader to understand the characters, to be capable of filling in the holes with collections from his own memory. Proust allows literary memory to function as a representation of actual memory rather than a representation of the literary present. In *A la recherche du temps perdu*, the literary past is—as Augustine classifies all past time—the *past present* rather than an invisible past separate from the memory necessary to retrieve it. We know it is the past, but for the main character, it is not a memory. Marcel is actually reliving the past for the first time, something impossible in the actual world. If, as Kierkegaard suggests, recollection is impossible, then literary recollection has, in Proust's work, surpassed the limits of the actual mind. One explanation is that Marcel's impossible act of memory demonstrates the relevance of this character's childhood to the rest of his life, the force and present-ness it contains even when it is not in the process of being recollected. Within him is his entire story, as present and relevant as when it first happened. It is possible also that Proust is commenting on the human condition; although recollection in this sense is impossible, true recollection must be shown in order to give a just picture of the many pasts contained in a human, moving him forward without his consent. The result of Marcel's transportation—of losing the illusion of Apollonian time—is that all moments are lived in the present and therefore nothing is tucked

away in the past, even the sensations which one would like to leave behind. Marcel, in this sense, is always restlessly waiting for his mother to come to his bedroom, always feverishly longing for Swann's daughter, always examining the hawthorns from the childhood summers and simultaneously missing their smells. The intersection of the Dionysian and the Promethean results in a dialogue through which the Dionysian can be understood simultaneously as an illusion and as a wonderful reality. The actions and emotions of the particular characters in the present tense can be expected to multiply.

In another form of the spatialization of time, Joseph Frank notes a trend which he attributes specifically to modernist writers wherein, rather than presenting past time in the form of a memory, they juxtapose the scenes occurring at different places in the present or a scene occurring in the present to a scene which occurred in the past so that the reader views them both at the same time. "All these writers," he argues, "ideally intend the reader to apprehend their works spatially, in a moment of time, rather than as a sequence."⁴³ The narrator goes back and forth between two or more scenes. By doing this, the author allows the present to play out in various scenarios, to extend in various directions at the same time. Time is extended beyond its natural length. The present—which constantly becomes the past, memory rather than reality—rests temporarily suspended. The reader is given a particular, holistic view of the story. Everything in the present appears suddenly in the readers' vision, so that each scene is not viewed separately, but both (or more) are deemed as inescapably bound to the other. There are two resulting effects on the reader: the Dionysian and Promethean. In the Dionysian, the reader experiences the two or more parts as one, allowing the scene to come at him like a wave over which he has no control. In the Promethean, he mentally divides the parts into separate

⁴³ Frank, Joseph. *The Idea of Spatial Form*. New Brunswick, London: Rutgers University Press, 1991. (10)

situations, allowing him to comprehend the individual scenes and in this way experience the linearity and present-ness of the story.

In Virginia Woolf's novel *Mrs. Dalloway*—a novel in which the story is made up of both the internal dialogue of the characters as well as the plot—as Mrs. Dalloway walks through the park, the narrator moves back and forth between the thoughts and observations of himself, Mrs. Dalloway, and other characters in the park. For example, after staying with Mrs. Dalloway's thoughts and plans for some time, an airplane flies overhead and writes an advertisement in the sky. The narrator shows different people reading the letter to the same advertisement, and then moves into the story of Lucrezia and Septimus in the following way:

Lucrezia Warren Smith, sitting by her husband's side on a seat in Regent's Park in the Broad Walk, looked up. "Look, look, Septimus!" She cried. For Dr. Holmes had told her to make her husband (who has nothing whatever seriously the matter with him but was a little out of sorts) take an interest in thing outside herself. So, thought Septimus, looking up, they are signaling to me.⁴⁴

The narrator thus juxtaposes many scenes in the park, placing them for the reader in dialogue with each other. Because of this, we do not see Clarissa's story simply as its own entity, occurring during the time it takes for her to walk to the flower shop and back, but as her own story as well as a part of other people's individual stories. The scene as a whole, with all of the thoughts and the expansion of time, is Dionysian. The individual scenes, when viewed on their own, as each character's experience as someone embedded in the world in which he lives, is Promethean. The result, rather than a restlessness or a standstill, is what feels like a very natural dialogue between the two.

⁴⁴ Woolf, Virginia. *Mrs. Dalloway*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, Inc., 1925. (31)

The author may also juxtapose a scene that takes place in the present with a scene that has already occurred. If the past scene contributes thematically or otherwise to the present scene, then, as seen in Proust, an equal value is given both to the scenes which causes the present scene, and the scene which is at least in part a reaction to the previous scene. By interchanging both scenes—either the present to the present or the present to the past—the reader does not see the story with an Apollonian view—in a linear, measured timeline with a conclusive ending—but rather with both the labor and payment characteristic of the Promethean and the overwhelming, timeless nature of the Dionysian. Time, in this sense, expands and contracts at different points. It has no common measure. There is no *here* and *now*, but only the occurrence of various scenes and the effect produced by the juxtaposition.

Mrs. Dalloway begins with Mrs. Dalloway going to buy flowers for a party she's hosting that evening. After running into her old acquaintance Hugh Whitbread, she says, in a third-person dialogue with herself about a scene which occurred thirty years before:

She could remember scene after scene at Bourton—Peter furious; Hugh not, of course, his match in any way, but still not a positive imbecile as Peter made out; not a mere barber's block . . . He was really unselfish, and as for saying, as Peter did, that he has no heart, no brain, nothing but the manners of an English gentleman, that was only dead Peter as his worst; and he could be intolerable; he could be impossible; but adorable to walk with on a morning like this.⁴⁵

Thirty years after the specific interchange between her and Peter, Mrs. Dalloway still participates in dialogue with a character who is still actively arguing in her mind. After so many years, Mrs. Dalloway is still defending herself to a man whom she still loves but whom she did not take as a

⁴⁵ Woolf, Virginia. *Mrs. Dalloway*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, Inc., 1925. (8)

husband. The fifty-year-old Mrs. Dalloway argues with the twenty-year-old Clarissa who suspects her Peter is correct about everyone while having the stubborn desire to assert her youthful independence. Mrs. Dalloway is trying to assert that, after all these years, she was right. Her memory of this scene asserts itself not with the Apollonian completeness of a memory, but as something that is still in the process of playing out. Mrs. Dalloway's dialogue—the fact that the dialogue has persisted for so long, after so much time—proves that she remains unconvinced, that her relationship with Peter is what Bakhtin, in his book *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, terms *unfinalizable*. Bakhtin notes that an *unfinalized* character “is never coincident with himself.”⁴⁶ In other words, a character is not equal to his attributes; there is always something in him that escapes definition and that cannot be determined by his appearance or placement within the work of literature. There is something in Mrs. Dalloway's relationship with Peter which escapes definition, which is not exactly as one expects it is. In order for Mrs. Dalloway to take the dialogue into account as viable, Hugh must be a type, not a type, or some combination of both: we must, like Mrs. Dalloway, remain in the present-ness of both dialogues and therefore remain unsure of the conclusion. While in legitimate dialogue with her old self as well as with Peter, Mrs. Dalloway does not dialogue with Hugh. Mrs. Dalloway and Hugh were childhood friends. Mrs. Dalloway must seem as finalizable to Hugh as Hugh seems to us; she does not do or say anything in their interaction that would suggest an open-endedness or an attempt at productive interaction. Mrs. Dalloway is unfinalizable to us simply because we are privy to her thoughts. From Hugh and Mrs. Dalloway's short interaction, we can see that there are at least aspects of each of them that are or have been finalized by the society they keep, the social laws of male and female interaction, and the required courtesy of old acquaintances. The

⁴⁶ Bakhtin, Mikhail. *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*. Trans. Carl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981. (48)

finalizability of their interaction is Apollonian in nature: like a sculpture already in the mind of the artist, Hugh and Mrs. Dalloway have become together exactly what their society has created them to be. They are comforted by their interaction in the same way one is comforted by finding his sock exactly where he left it or the way one is comforted by a sweet and Apollonian memory, or by assurances of one's future success. However, because we are given the unfinalizability of Mrs. Dalloway's own internal dialogue, this scene does not blight the potential for possibility, but rather swells the unfinalizability between Peter and Mrs. Dalloway as well as between Mrs. Dalloway and her younger self, Clarissa. We see that in the cloistered, high-society London in which the novel takes place, real dialogue is hard to come by. And it is Peter's dialogic relationship with Mrs. Dalloway that has kept him in her mind after all this time. She is saved by the finalizability, the Apollonian aspect, of her world by her relationship with Peter as he was in his youth as well as with her present and past-present self. The wave of dialogue that comes at us as though we have no choice and it has no boundaries is Dionysian in form. However, the movement between the scene of the present and the scene of the past changes time in this instance so that now the past lives in us, as with Mrs. Dalloway, as intensely as the present. In this, we experience the story in Promethean time. Although this present-ness of past time serves (because the past is not gone) to escape the effects of time as does the Dionysian and Apollonian, it also serves, because the questions and dialogues of the past are unfinished, to uproot the completeness of Apollonian time.

In addition to escaping the Apollonian temporality of the story with the juxtaposition of time, there are also moments of Dionysian ecstasy in which a character is lifted without choice into vertical time. Such is the case when Peter and Mrs. Dalloway meet again after so many years:

Now the door opened, and in came—for a single second she could not remember what he was called! So surprised was she to see him, so glad, so shy, so utterly taken aback to have Peter Walsh come to her unexpectedly in the morning! . . . “And how are you?” said Peter Walsh, positively trembling; taking both her hands; kissing both her hands.⁴⁷

The strictness of the drawing room lends an Apollonian comfort which is both met and undermined by this Dionysian moment of timelessness. In this timelessness, this fluttering ecstasy of our two aging characters, we get a view of a real dialogic interaction. They temporarily forget the way they should act with each other, and it rescues them from the dry and pointless interaction which Mrs. Dalloway has previously had with Hugh Whitbread. It does not matter, in this scene, that Mrs. Dalloway looks older since her sickness or that she once refused Peter’s marriage proposal. The only thing that matters in this instance is the instance itself, the nameless Peter kissing her hands. The fact that this interaction offers the illusion of timelessness is met by the dialogic nature of the exchange. And when the scene returns to the awkward and Apollonian exchange from which one in such society typically draws comfort, when the Dionysian makes both of them too uneasy at how bare they have been, what remains is the dialogic exchange of two characters who are paralyzed in that they don’t know how to act or what to say.

By keeping time always in the present—whether past-present, future-present, or present—Proust and Woolf save their characters from the Apollonian illusion that each thing, each life, is complete. Rather than this wholeness of plot, Mrs. Dalloway and Marcel must live their lives as Promethean laborers, always paying for what they love. And while both

⁴⁷ Woolf, Virginia. *Mrs. Dalloway*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, Inc., 1925. (60)

societies—that of Mrs. Dalloway and that of Marcel—are filled with Apollonian rituals and societal functions made to give one the illusion of immortality and of comfort in an otherwise unstable existence, the authors free their characters from retreat in these falsities by way of their Promethean relationships to time.

Chapter 5

Polyphony as the Unfinalized Conclusion

The form of a work of literature can be Apollonian or Promethean depending on the extent to which it gives the illusion of completeness. The content of a book can be classified as Dionysian in that the characters themselves escape definitions of time and plot and exist in a mysterious field in which one can never be completely confident of what they will do or how they will respond to the plot. In his book *The Dialogic Imagination*, Mikhail Bakhtin uses the novels of Fyodor Dostoevsky to explain what he terms the *polyphonic* novel. *Polyphony* is defined as the equal presence of many voices within a work of literature. For example, the division between Mrs. Dalloway, the narrator, and Mrs. Dalloway's younger self, Clarissa, establishes *Mrs. Dalloway* as a polyphonic work. The author must exist in a dialogic relationship with his characters wherein both he and they, in presenting their own thoughts, are allowed to be affected by the presentation of the others' view. There is then, as with the division of form and content, a two-fold nature to the polyphonic novel: the characters as free beings situated alongside the author, and the author's calculated plan for the novel as a whole. Bakhtin formulates this division as follows:

In Dostoevsky's novels we do in fact observe a unique conflict between the internal, unfinalized nature of the heroes and the dialogue on the one hand, and

the external (in most cases compositional and thematic) completedness of every individual novel.⁴⁸

In this case, the unfinalizable aspects of the characters, the illusion that they ultimately elude understanding and exist in the realm of mystery, is Dionysian; the Apollonian is the plot structure, the illusion of form and completeness, of finalizability. The meeting place of Nietzsche's two elements, in this case, is the entirety of the polyphonic novel.

The whole of the novel is constructed as a "great dialogue." The "great dialogue" is illuminated and intensified by the dialogue of the heroes which takes place within it, within the composition of the novel, and ultimately the dialogue goes to the very core, into every word of the novel, makes it double-voiced, into every gesture, every mimical movement of the heroes face, making the nod irregular and erratic.⁴⁹

The "great dialogue," when put this way, is one of conflict. There can be no final truce. The two sides must work against each other and reach no real conclusion. Bakhtin argues that the monologic ending of a novel (an Apollonian ending in which the story is wrapped up, the loose ends are tied up, etc.) is undermined by the unfinalizability—the Dionysian aspects—of the characters. The standstills and suicides noted in the *L'Ogre* and "The Garden of Forking Paths" allow for the unfinalizability of the fiction; the halting, which, as I said earlier, is Promethean in its reunion with the reality of Promethean time, is for Bakhtin a possible goal of the polyphonic novel.

⁴⁸ Bakhtin, Mikhail. *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*. Trans. Carl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981. (37)

⁴⁹ Bakhtin, Mikhail. *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*. Trans. Carl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981. (27)

A microcosm for the polyphonic novel can be found in the first scene of Dostoevsky's *The Idiot*. It begins, "A train of the Petersburg-Warsaw line was approaching Petersburg at full steam."⁵⁰ Both Prince Lyov Nikolayevich Myshkin and Parfyon Rogozhin are riding in the third class compartment of this train, sitting opposite each other. The train, as the book, begins in one definite location and ends in another. The characters are assigned their seats, clothes, names, abilities, and respective histories. While they do not have the ability to extricate themselves from the train any more than they can be unborn by their mothers, they have within the given parameters a certain freedom of dialogue. For example, after speaking at length with Myshkin, Rogozhin says to him, "Prince, I don't know why I've come to love you. Maybe because I met you at such a moment, though I met him, too . . . and don't love him."⁵¹ There is an ambiguity and mystery to Rogozhin's love for the Prince—as well as his confession of this love to the Prince—that cannot be explained simply by the dialogue which leads up to his confession. It is not a matter of circumstance, as he has met Lebedev in the same situation and yet has no love for him. The conflict between the unfinalizability of the characters and the physical act of the train ride resides in this: the train reaches its destination and, though the passengers gather their things and exit onto the quay, something which was not formerly in the world has been brought into existence by way of a dialogic act, of the interchange between the Dionysian and Apollonian.

Like mirrors of each other, the two men sit face to face on the train, as if it could be no other way. We get the impression that the plot is scrupulously planned out, that the narrator is aware of this plan even as the characters are not, and that the only real freedom the characters have is that of dialogue.

⁵⁰ Dostoevsky, Fyodor. *The Idiot*. Trans. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky. New York: Vintage Book, 2003. (5)

⁵¹ Dostoevsky, Fyodor. *The Idiot*. Trans. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky. New York: Vintage Book, 2003. (14)

The train also serves as a metaphor for Dostoevsky's use of time as spatial rather than temporal. The train progresses rapidly, though "it was so damp and foggy that dawn could barely break; ten paces to the right or left of the line it was hard to make out anything at all through the carriage windows."⁵² Though the train traverses miles of physical space, the sun, which measures time, cannot be seen. Space is passed over while time is on hold. When the passengers exit the train in Petersburg, it is as if they have conquered time and thus become immortal. Bakhtin notes Dostoevsky's interest in spatial time:

The persistent urge to see all things as being coexistent and to perceive and depict all things side by side and simultaneously, as if in space rather than time, leads him to dramatize in space even the inner contradictions and stages of development of a single person, causing the characters to converse with their doubles, with the devil, with their alter egos, with caricatures of themselves.⁵³

This spatialization of time, the present-ness of all things, corresponds with the argument given by Frank and which I previously examined with the use of *A la recherche du temps perdu* and *Mrs. Dalloway*. By deviating from time as we experienced it in reality, the author actually introduces a use of time that is more real and therefore Promethean.

The narrator of *The Idiot* describes Myshkin and Rogozhin at first as being very similar, as though twins, and then, by giving their specific characteristics, proves that they in fact look nothing alike. Even the fact that they are "both unfashionably dressed"⁵⁴ plays out in strikingly different ways in each of them. It is as if only the narrator, from his privileged standpoint, know

⁵² Dostoevsky, Fyodor. *The Idiot*. Trans. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky. New York: Vintage Book, 2003. (6)

⁵³ Bakhtin, Mikail. *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*. Trans. R.W. Rotsel. USA: Ardis, 1973. (23)

⁵⁴ Dostoevsky, Fyodor. *The Idiot*. Trans. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky. New York: Vintage Book, 2003. (5)

that the two men are doubles. He presents the descriptions of the men in such a way that we, too, first see them as similar and know that, even if they are in fact nothing alike, the suggestion of their relationship is a necessary clue to the Apollonian unfolding of the plot. Following the description of their similarities, the narrator says, “If they had known what was so remarkable about the other, they would certainly have marveled at the chance that had so strangely seated them facing each other . . .”⁵⁵ Only Dostoevsky knows what is so remarkable about the other. We are given the impression that the narrator is marveling at the juxtaposition which has been set in place, as though he, along with the reader, must sit back and wait for the characters to come upon the answer to the questions which, in order to retain the author’s separation from the characters, cannot be posed to them. Bakhtin theorizes about Dostoevsky’s position both as a dialogic participant in the novel and as an author with knowledge of the plot:

Dostoevsky never retains for himself an essential superiority of information, but only that indispensable minimum of pragmatic, purely informational omniscience which is necessary for the development of the plot.⁵⁶

In order for his novel to function as a polyphonic work, Dostoevsky can only know the most basic information about his characters. He can plan the situations in which to place them, but he cannot be completely sure of the outcome. In this way, the author of a polyphonic work must retain a certain passivity necessary to the Dionysian and opposed to the Apollonian. In Richard Pevear’s introduction to *The Idiot*, he claims that, after he wrote the first part of the novel:

Dostoevsky was uncertain about what would follow, and he continued in the uncertainty . . . only as he worked on the third and last part did he recognize the

⁵⁵ Dostoevsky, Fyodor. *The Idiot*. Trans. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky. New York: Vintage Book, 2003. (5)

⁵⁶ Bakhtin, Mikail. *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*. Trans. R.W. Rotsel. USA: Ardis, 1973. (5)

inevitability of the final catastrophe. And yet he could write to Sofya Ivanova in November 1868: “ This third part and its conclusion are the most important things in my novel, i.e., the novel was almost written and conceived for the novel’s denouement.”⁵⁷

Even in Dostoevsky’s writing there is a double aspect: he writes the novel up until the ending, placing himself in the same position as the characters—without the full knowledge of the plot—and yet the ending comes upon him as an inevitability, as though Dionysus has made him drunk and he cannot restrain himself from singing in public. What remains is neither Dionysian nor Apollonian, but rather Promethean in that it eludes the illusion of timelessness and complete order. Unlike the restlessness resulting from the collision of Dionysian and Apollonian in memory and ritual—events which grab at the past as though it can be caught—the collision of the Dionysian and Apollonian by way of form and content can have hopeful results. The content, when it consists of dialogue (verbal and otherwise), can serve to undermine the illusion of an overly strict and secure Apollonian form. Apollonian form serves to give the Dionysian content (an organic polyphonic content) a structure in which to act out its individuality. Ritual—the family dinner, for example—has the ability to give the family a framework from which they, similarly, can act out their individuality, but only if the seriousness of the event is undermined. If ritual, as memory, is not undermined, but is believed, then it functions as an illusion the only result of which is restlessness and disappointment, as dinner in itself means nothing and refers only to an idea.

L’Ogre and “The Garden of the Forking Paths” end their Dionysian and Apollonian duality with Promethean death and regret. *Du Côté de Chez Swann* ends with Charles Swann

⁵⁷ Dostoevsky, Fyodor. *The Idiot*. Trans. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky. New York: Vintage Book, 2003. (xii)

lamenting that he spent so much of his love on a woman who wasn't even his type.⁵⁸ Rather than completing Swann's story, we see him shaking his head and falling in love with someone new. *Mrs. Dalloway* ends its Dionysian and Promethean duality with Peter looking for Mrs. Dalloway and finally spotting her across the room. Rather than the standstill resulting from the collision of the Dionysian and Apollonian, a dialogue remains between the Dionysian and the Promethean; this dialogue remains unfinished insofar as our characters are still alive. The polyphonic aspect of this novel is preserved at its completion; the dialogue is left open open. At the end of *The Idiot*, Rogozhin murders Nastasya Filippovna, a woman loved by both him and Myshkin. Myshkin again goes crazy and Rogozhin is sentenced to a work camp. The story is not left open-ended, but is finalized. Each aspect is concluded. The polyphonic and therefore Promethean nature of the novel, rather than undermining the finalized ending, is itself undermined. Each aspect of the characters can be seen to contribute to the finalized ending. When the story ends, so does the dialogue. Worse even than the death and regret at the end of *L'Ogre* and "The Garden of the Forking Paths," we are left without a Promethean moment of payment from this collision of the Dionysian and Apollonian. Rather than payment, Nastasya's death at the end of *The Idiot* appears instead to be predestination. The unfinalizability of the characters is lost to the finalizability of the form. The form of a novel must retain a certain Promethean aspect in order for the dialogue to remain unconcluded, unfinalized. Without this aspect, the novel can never be a true representation of the actual world.

⁵⁸ Proust, Marcel. *Du Côté de chez Swann*. from *A la recherche du temps perdu*. Paris: Quarto Gallimard, 1999. 15-507. (507)

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