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In Memory of Narcissus: Aspects of the Late-Modern Subject in the Narcissus Theme 1890–1930

Licentiatavhandling i litteraturvetenskap

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Abbreviations

The following works will be referred to through page numbers within brackets:

AG André Gide, *Le Traité du Narcisse*, in the version published by Librairie de L'Art Indépendent in 1892, as it appears in Réjean Robidoux, *Le Traité du Narcisse (Théorie du symbole) d'André Gide*, Ottawa: Éditions de l'Université d'Ottawa, 1978, p. 101–124. References are to page numbers in Gide's text.

AGE André Gide, "The Tractate of Narcissus (Theory of the Symbol)", in Andrew Mangravite (ed. and trans.), *Masks: An Anthology of French Symbolist & Decadent Writing based upon The Book of Masks by Remy de Gourmont*, London: Atlas, 1994, p. 45–50.

HH Hermann Hesse, *Sämtliche Werke: Bd. I–XX*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2001–2005. References state volume and page numbers.

HHE Hermann Hesse, *Narcissus and Goldmund*, London: Owen, 1993, trans. Leila Vennewitz.

SF Sigmund Freud, *Gesammelte Werke: Chronologisch Geordnet. Bd. I–XVIII*, London: Imago, 1940–1987. References state volume and page numbers.

SFE Sigmund Freud, *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works: Vol. I–XXIV*, London: Hogarth, 1953–1974, trans. James Strachey. References state volume and page numbers.

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1. Introduction

The aim of the present study is to analyze adaptations of the Narcissus theme in Western European culture between 1890 and 1930 in texts by a number of authors, reaching from Oscar Wilde and Paul Valéry, over Sigmund Freud and Rainer Maria Rilke to Hermann Hesse and Joachim Gasquet. This is a period which sees a continued elaboration of the equation of Narcissus and artist, which digs deeper into the psychological and existential condition of Narcissus, and which witnesses the groundbreaking transformation of the Narcissus figure into the meta-psychological notion of narcissism. Furthermore, and this will be the main contention of this study, one important way in which the Narcissus theme is put to use during this period is as a figuration of an increasingly problematic understanding of the modern subject. Two series of questions, coupled with two general theses, will guide the investigation.

The first series of questions concerns *how* mythic material is incorporated into alien discourse. What elements of the story are emphasized in its modern reactivations? Which historical periods and individual texts in the Narcissus tradition do the modern adaptations draw on? How do different versions of the story clash with each other? What other stories, ideas, notions and settings is the myth confronted with? How do narrative, pictorial and conceptual renderings of the theme relate to each other? This line of questioning rests on the conviction that in any culture, thinking and writing does not begin from scratch. When we wish to express something new, we nevertheless return to old sources to reactivate meanings and reformulate problems in the novel context. Significant cultural material is recycled in a process where meanings shift, disappear and resurface and signifying structures break down, merge and reappear. The impetus for this side of the investigation is gained from the last decades' research into the phenomenon of intertexuality, which has highlighted the insight that texts are made from texts, that they produce meaning in their relation to other texts. The primary concern for this part of the investigation is descriptive: it aims at elucidating how structures and elements of the individual texts relate to other structures and elements in the intra- as well as the intertextual context. It will try to lay bare the substructures of the manifest texts and clarify their interrelations as well as the relations to the context of the Narcissus tradition.

If the first range of questions confronts the Narcissus theme with a *how*, the second concerns its *what*. What meaning is attributed to the theme? What complex of ideas comes into play in its reactivation? What philosophical, aesthetic, moral, existential and psychological questions are raised through the evocation of Narcissus and in what way does

the theme aid in answering them? In short, what does Narcissus mean for the authors of the turn of the century? This side of the investigation is interpretive in its practice and hermeneutical in its perspective. It aims at elucidating the theme's relation to its field of reference, both at the level of the individual text and at level of the corpus of texts constituted by the intertextual reference to the Narcissus theme. It will be argued that the main concerns for innovative renderings of the theme during this period are the issues of subjectivity and selfhood. This does not mean that traditional motifs for the Narcissus tradition – such as beauty, arrogance, pride, erotic abstinence, confusion of identities or ontological strata, metamorphosis, homosexual love, just punishment, mortality, self-love etc. – have become obsolete. But what is specifically brought to the fore and emphasized by this period's Narcissus-treatments are the renewed modern concerns of subjectivity: What does it mean to be a self? What am I, as a subject, over and against the object? How am I separated from the world and the Other? Whence did I emerge and whither will I go after this existence? What is the ontological foundation for my existence? The Narcissus theme is utilized to ask these questions in a novel frame. At the turn of the century, the possibility of a de-centering of the subject, the questionability of transcendent perspectives and the relativity of epistemology encourage a rephrasing of the questions related to the first person-perspective. A rephrasing for which Narcissus, "infelix quod non alter et alter eras", offers a suitable paradigm.[1] In this rephrasing, the Romantic notion of Narcissus as a symbol of the modern subject is revived. To some extent Romantic ideas are taken up again, but the view of the subject is also made more problematic and less harmonious by the adding perspectives of individuality, identity-formation and the questionability of transcendence. Romanticism could very well have been included in this project, but for the sake of focus and concentration, it has appeared justified to me to begin my inquiries at the year 1890 rather than 1790.

The two lines of inquiry, into the semiotics and the semantics of modern Narcissus, are of course intimately intertwined. Semiotic analysis and semantic interpretation will necessarily proceed hand in hand, and any discussion of an individual text will contain both elements. The investigation will be loosely based on the interrelated theories of cultural semiotics and intertextuality, primarily as they have been developed by Juri Lotman and Renate Lachmann, respectively. To be able to cope with a phenomenon which transgresses the limits of individual "languages" (i.e. semiotic structures), I have found it useful to adopt

[1] Ovid, *Fasti*, London: William Heinemann / Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1931, trans. James George Frazer, 5:226V, p. 226: "unhappy thou in that thou hadst not a double of thyself".

notions of the Tartu-Moscow School, such as the semiosphere and culture as a secondary modeling system, as auxiliary hypotheses. The cultural semiotics of scholars like Lotman regards culture as a self-descriptive dynamic system which correlates the individual languages of a culture with each other. Thereby it provides a different path out of the static stalemate of structuralism into "post-structuralism" than that chosen by the adherents of deconstruction, one which preserves the systemic and super-intentional qualities of signification, while also allowing for both dynamism and a sphere of *hors-langue*. The study will thus examine a series of micro-"explosions", to use Lotman's term, which restructure the Narcissus theme and semiotic systems which come into contact with it.

Whereas cultural semioticians like Lotman study the dynamics of the semiosphere on a larger scale (albeit often by means of minute analysis of individual texts), my investigation will regard a central, yet local phenomenon. I have therefore chosen to combine the theoretical resources of cultural semiotics with those, compatible ones, of intertextuality. I will primarily base my investigations on the conception of intertextuality developed by Renate Lachmann, partly building upon the assumptions of cultural semiotics. Lachmann conjoins the notion of intertextuality with that of memory, regarding it as the memory of a cultural system. By relying on the theoretical framework of cultural semiotics and its conceptual metaphor of a "semiotic space", Lachmann manages to find a middle-way between the subjectless productivity of the post-structuralist intertextuality of Julia Kristeva and Roland Barthes and the notions of intertextuality of hermeneutics and structuralists like Manfred Pfister and Gérard Genette (which are more applicable to textual analysis, but which remain dependent on authorial intention). For Lachmann, any text inscribes itself into an intertextual space, which it modifies through its inscription. The Narcissus theme will in this sense be regarded as a *locus*, dynamic but unified, in intertextual space.

In this context, and before concluding this introductory declaration of intent, I think it is motivated to make some preliminary remarks on the definition of the object of this inquiry, not least since research on "Narcissus" can differ widely when it comes to the actual object of the investigations.[2] We often speak about the *myth* of Narcissus. To be sure, there is a myth of Narcissus.[3] The figure of Narcissus has mythic origins, probably in Eretria on Euboea, possibly as far back as the second Millennium BC. This dissertation is not primarily on the *myth* of Narcissus. I reserve the term "myth" for its key sense of a story, orally

[2] See further below, "Previous Research".
[3] See further below, "The Narcissus Tradition".

transmitted within a religious and social context in archaic society – and, in the discussion with other authors, for the use they make of it. Nor is this dissertation primarily on *narcissism*. I will not seek to elucidate a psychological or meta-psychological phenomenon or its literary manifestations. In a cultural context, however, both the myth of Narcissus and the concept of narcissism belong to what I will call the Narcissus tradition. As far back as our historians and archaeologists can penetrate, there are not only several mythic versions, but also frescoes, vase paintings, monuments, epigrams and probably a tribe and a cult centered around Narcissus. Narcissus himself eludes us, but in his memory, so to speak, a tradition has arisen, which produces meaning gravitating towards the figure of Narcissus. This tradition is the object of my inquiries.[4] Narcissus will be regarded as having inscribed a *locus* for himself in Western cultural memory. The edifice of this *locus* has continuously been built upon and restructured by the texts belonging to this tradition. Seen from a different angle, the *theme* of Narcissus is the term I will use to denote those text-immanent characteristics which, within the dynamics of history, unite the texts of the Narcissus tradition.

The textual analyses will eventually be divided into four chapters, according to the different aspects of the Narcissus theme and the problem of subjectivity that are displayed. A first chapter – not included in this text – will analyze texts which focus on the error motif – that of Narcissus *not* recognizing himself – and which problematizes the self-reflection of the subject. Chapter 2 includes texts which, with regard to the Narcissus theme, problematizes the medium of the mirror and which, with regard to the problem of subjectivity, focuses on the conflict between subjectivity and individualism. Chapter 3 deals with the psychoanalytic handling of the theme. It shows an attempt to take semiotic control of the theme through rational explanation and questions the foundational status of the subject. Chapter 4 displays attempts at a reconstruction of the theme in the wake of narcissism. The texts analyzed here make a syncretistic use of the theme and explore the difficulties of the subject's efforts to become its own *destinateur*.

This introductory chapter is divided into four parts. The first part presents the context of the Narcissus tradition. The second part consists of a brief survey of research on the Narcissus theme around the turn of the century 1900. The third part accounts for the theoretical premises of the investigation. The fourth part, finally, gives a short presentation of the problem of subjectivity as it is understood in this study.

[4] With the further delimitations to be discussed below, "The Narcissus Theme 1890–1930".

The Context

What is to be studied here is a segment of the Narcissus tradition. For the reader's orientation, I will therefore begin by recapitulating this tradition and give a short general overview of renderings of the theme in the period under scrutiny. It will hopefully provide the reader with some orientation points, availing him or her in the appreciation of the analyses of the particular texts.

The Narcissus Tradition

To give the reader an idea of the tradition to which the texts to be examined in this study belong, I will here give a brief account of the history of the Narcissus theme. Its purpose is merely to present the width and the general outline of this tradition and thereby show the background against which my texts are set off. To the extent that the texts to be analyzed activate different intertexts within this tradition, those will be elaborated upon later. Except as regards the earliest origins of the myth, this account will be limited to written treatments of the theme.[5]

The earliest written renderings of the Narcissus theme (those by Konon and Ovid) date from around the beginning of the Christian era. They, as well as most ancient versions, seem to be based on the Boeotian version of the myth, where Narcissus is assumed to be an autochthone Boeotian hero, the cult of whom was located to the mountain Helicon in the vicinity of the village Thespis, not far from Thebes. Recent research – notably by Denis Knoepfler – has shown, however, that the Boeotian version, which probably dates from Hellenistic times, was preceded by an Euboean version which may have existed as early as a millennium B.C.[6] Of the myth of the Euboean Narcissus little can be known with certainty,

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[5] As a comprehensive overview of the history of the Narcissus theme, Louise Vinge's dissertation *The Narcissus Theme in Western European Literature up to the Early 19th Century* (Lund: Gleerups, 1967) still remains the uncontested standard reference. Since its publication a number of smaller studies on the theme have appeared, most of which do not have the global ambitions of Vinge's study; they normally focus on individual texts or a limited period. Another account of the entire history of the theme is given by Ezio Pelitzer, albeit in a less systematic and less complete fashion than Vinge ("Le Mythe de Narcisse", in Maurizio Bettini and Ezio Pelitzer, *Le Mythe de Narcisse*, Paris: Belin, 2010, trans. Jean Bouffartigue, p. 41–224). My account is therefore mainly based on Vinge, with complementary sources on certain periods and texts.

[6] Denis Knoepfler, *La Patrie de Narcisse*, Paris: Odile Jacob, 2010, p. 61ff, 155; Negin Daneshvar-Malergne, *Narcisse et le mal du siècle*, Paris: Editions Dervy, 2009, p. 54; Pelitzer, p. 85f.

but Knoepfler proceeds to some well-informed conjectures. Narcissus seems to have been a young ephebe, son of the huntsman Amarynthos and associated with the goddess Artemis, whose command of chastity he breaks.[7] It is not unlikely that his love for himself was added in the later Boeotian version.[8] It is also quite probable that his death was originally accidentally caused by someone else.[9] Furthermore, Knoepfler finds striking parallels between the Euboean Narcissus and Hyakinthos. They are both related to short-lived spring flowers (closely associated in the Homeric hymn to Demeter, where the narcissus flower is mentioned for the first time), gifted with exceptional beauty and young victims of the love they inspire.[10] The parallels lead Knoepfler to assume that Narcissus in pre-hellenic times was worshipped as a god of spring vegetation, associated with the annual rebirth of the world.[11] The relevance of the narcissus flower and its cultural signification in Greece for understanding the mythic origins of Narcissus has been emphasized by Pierre Hadot. It was in Antiquity considered a cold and humid flower, associated with chthonic and vegetal divinities, especially Demeter, Persephone and Dionysus. Furthermore, it was used as a funeral flower, and its name was supposed (probably incorrectly) to be etymologically related to *narkē*, drowsiness.[12]

The Thespian version of the myth is probably the one which the Greek traveler Pausanias from the second century A. D. refers in no more than two sentences:[13]

> On top of the crest of Helikon is the small river Lamos; there is also a place called Reed-bed which is on Thespian territory. *Narkissos's spring* is there; they say Narkissos looked into this water and not realizing he was seeing his own reflection fell in love with himself, and died of love beside the spring.[14]

This seems to be the core of the written Narcissus tradition. One of its first versions is found in a Greek contemporary of Ovid, namely Konon. According to him, the beautiful Narcissus had a haughty attitude towards Eros and dismissed those who loved him. To one of his more persistent lovers, Ameinias, he sent a sword. Ameinias begged Eros to avenge him and

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[7] Knoepfler, p. 127–158.
[8] Knoepfler, p. 42.
[9] Knoepfler, p. 192–208.
[10] *De homeriska hymnerna*, Stockholm: Natur och kultur, 2004, trans. Ingvar Björkeson, 2:426–428, p. 55; Knoepfler, p. 167.
[11] Knoepfler, p. 184f.
[12] Pierre Hadot, „Le Mythe de Narcisse et son intérpretation par Plotin », *Nouvelle revue de psychanalyse*, 13, 1976, p. 81–108, p. 82ff.
[13] Knoepfler, p. 36f ; Bernd Manuwald, "Narcissus bei Konon und Ovid", *Hermes*, 103:2, 1975, p. 349–372, p. 351.
[14] Pausanias, *Guide to Greece: Vol. I*, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1971, trans. Peter Levi, p. 376.

committed suicide at Narcissus' door. When Narcissus saw his own image in a source he fell in love with himself. Convinced that he suffered because he had despised Ameinias' love, he killed himself, and narcissus flowers grew on the soil where his blood had been shed.[15] As Bernd Manuwald has emphasized, the main motif of Konon's narration is that of guilt and punishment; Narcissus breaks Eros' commands and suffers justly, in a manner parallel to that of Ameinias.[16] Gregor Vogt-Spira adds that seen against the background of Greek customs, what Narcissus refuses in rejecting Ameinias is his own entry into adulthood, since the process of socialization of the young man often included homosexual initiation.[17]

By far the most influential version of the Narcissus story is, however, the one found in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.[18] It is here inserted into the Theban cycle, and framed by the story about the seer Tiresias.[19] Tiresias, who had been a woman for seven years and thus known both sides of love, settled a dispute between Juno and Jove on whether man or woman has most pleasure in love by stating that the female pleasure is greater. Juno, upset with his answer, struck him with blindness whilst Jove in return gave him the gift of knowing the future. The Narcissus story is motivated as the first test of his seer-gift. Tiresias is asked whether the new-born Narcissus, son of the nymph Liriope and the river-god Cephisus, will live to reach a well-ripened age. To this Tiresias responds: "si se non noverit" – an inversion of the Delphic inscription "Know thyself!" (*gnothi sauton*).[20] Narcissus grows up to be a youth in his sixteenth year and is loved by boys and girls alike, but he is too proud to be touched by their love. Here Ovid inserts the story about Echo (an association probably created by Ovid). As a punishment for concealing the adultery of Jupiter with her incessant chattering, she had been condemned by Juno to only be able to repeat the words of others. Echo also falls in love with Narcissus and in an ingenious play of words, where they both say the same words but mean different things, a misunderstanding is created between them. Echo runs to embrace Narcissus, but is dismissed. In her unanswered love she withers away, her bones turn to stone and only her voice remains. Another lover, a male this time, is upset by

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[15] Vinge, p. 19f.
[16] Manuwald, p. 370ff.
[17] Gregor Vogt–Spira, "Der Blick und die Stimme: Ovids Narziß- und Echomythos im Kontext römischer Anthropologie", in Almut-Barbara Renger (ed.), *Narcissus: Ein Mythos von der Antike bis zum Cyberspace*, Stuttgart/Weimar: J.B. Metzler, 2002, p. 27–40, p. 29.
[18] Ovid, *Metamorphoses: Books I–VIII*, Cambridge/London: Harvard University Press, 1977, trans. Frank Justus Miller, rev. G. P. Goold, 3:339–510, p. 148–161.
[19] Knoepfler argues that Narcissus' presence at this point may indeed be a deliberate substitution for Oedipus, the trace of whom not least the presence of Tiresias bears witness to (Knoepfler, p. 44). The association of Narcissus and Tiresias is probably Ovid's invention. See also Ingo Gildenhard and Andrew Zissos, "Ovid's Narcissus (*Met*. 3:339–510): Echoes of Oedipus", *American Journal of Philology*, 121:1, 2000, p. 129–147.
[20] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 3:348, p. 149: "If he ne'er know himself."

Narcissus' arrogance and prays: "sic amet ipse licet, sic non potiatur amato!".[21] His prayer is answered, not by Eros this time – as was the case in Konon, and probably in the mythic version – but by Nemesis. Now follows the mirror scene. Narcissus comes to a desolate source to quench his thirst. In the source he sees his own image and, without recognizing himself, he falls in love with what he sees. The torment of this vain love is elaborated upon for about 50 verses, before he finally recognizes (by realizing that he can only hear his own voice), that what he sees is himself: "iste ego sum: sensi, nec me mea fallit imago".[22] This recognition, however, does not cure Narcissus of his passion, but only increases the pain, since it also brings the realization that he will never reach the one he loves. So Narcissus dies from the torments of his impossible love and when the nymphs prepare a funeral pile, they cannot find his body, but only a white and yellow flower.

As many commentators have observed, the emphasis in Ovid's version is displaced from the motifs of defiance of Eros and just punishment, to those related to the phenomenon of the mirror (doubling, the gaze, visual vs. acoustic reflection etc.), which suits the poet's taste for the paradoxical. Hermann Fränkel argues that the main motif is the interplay between sameness and otherness and Manuwald finds that the motif of crime and punishment has been exchanged for that of a passion stronger than reason.[23] The fate of Narcissus is in this version motivated not only by the curse, but also by the prophecy, related to the Delphic inversion – "si se non noverit". Vogt-Spira argues that the transference from the Greek to a Roman context brings with it a process of abstraction, where the motif of knowledge is emphasized at the expense of the motif of love.[24] He also argues that Ovid's "Entpragmatisierung des Mythos und seiner Transposition in einen anderen kulturellen Kontext", with its subsequent focus on the inner logic of the structure of doublings and mirrorings, is the very reason for its cultural impact.[25] A quite different interpretation,

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[21] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 3:405, p. 153: "So may he himself love and not gain the thing he loves!"
[22] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 3:463, p. 157: "Oh, I am he! I have felt it, I know now my own image."
[23] Hermann Fränkel, *Ovid: A Poet between Two Worlds*, Berkely/Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1945, p. 82ff; Manuwald, p. 370ff.
[24] Vogt-Spira, p. 30ff.
[25] Vogt-Spira, p. 39. A large portion indeed of the writings on Narcissus in general consist of, or are based on, elaborations on the paradoxicalities inherent in Ovid's story. To mention only one typical example, John T. Hamilton argues that Echo can be equated with the poet and Narcissus with tradition, and from there goes on to elaborate on the meta-poetical implications of the story ("Ovids Echographie", trans. Dania Hückman, in Eckart Goebel and Elisabeth Bronfen (eds.), *Narziss und Eros: Bild oder Text?*, Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2009, p. 18–40). This line of research, which emphasizes the meta-poetical qualities of the text, seems to go back to John Brenkman, who in Ovid's account finds "a process of writing that squanders the security of a stable meaning, not a dialogue between voices that can be tied to a consciousness" ("Narcissus in the Text", *The Georgia Review*, 30, 1976, p. 293–327, p. 327).

however, is given by Ursula Orlowsky, who focuses on the genealogy and ontological status of Narcissus. As the son of a river-god and a nymph, his nature is vacillating between that of a god and a human. The imperative to know one-self, however, is only valid for humans (who are also mortal), and therefore becomes a dividing line between his divine and his human natures. When he knows himself he therefore ceases to be the god-child he grew up as, and becomes mortal.[26]

Another important ancient version is the one Pausanias prefers to the standard version, which he rejects because he finds it "absolutely stupid" that a boy old enough to fall in love would not know a human being from a reflection:

> but there is another story about him less well known (though one does hear it), that Narkissos had a twin sister; they were exactly the same to look at with just the same hair-style and the same clothes, and they even used to go hunting together. Narkissos was in love with his sister, and when she died he used to visit the spring; he knew what he saw was his own reflection, but even so he found some relief in telling himself it was his sister's image. I think the earth grew the flower of the narcissus before his time, at least if we should believe the verses of Pamphos. This Thespian was born many years before Narkissos; he speaks of Demeter's Maiden daughter playing and gathering flowers, and being seduced not with a violet but a narcissus, and carried off.[27]

This rationalizing version – typical of the Euhemeristic trend to interpret the myths as exaggerated stories about mortal humans – thus posits an incestuous desire as the plain explanation of the boy before the mirror. It seems, though, that this version also had a tradition, and it has certainly exercised a considerable influence in the history of the theme.[28]

A small, but historically important, reference to Narcissus also occurs in Plotin's treatise on beauty (c. 253). Plotin evokes Narcissus to illustrate the madness of not understanding the nature of reflection. In his neo-Platonic metaphysics, the hierarchy between ontological levels is regulated by reflections. The intellectual soul projects a reflection onto the animal soul, which in turn projects a reflection onto the vegetal soul. Purification of being is achieved through striving upwards in this hierarchy, towards the original light. Narcissus error is in not understanding that he himself is the origin of his reflection and in being

[26] Ursula Orlowsky, „Essay zur Arbeit am Mythos", in Ursula Orlowsky and Rebekka Orlowsky, *Narziß und Narzißmus im Spiegel von Literatur, Bildender Kunst und Psychoanalyse: Vom Mythos zur leeren Selbstinszenierung*, München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1992, p. 29–65, p. 45–57.
[27] Pausanias, p. 376f.
[28] Knoepfler, p. 36ff.

fascinated by it (the correct attitude towards reflections is complete indifference). Because of this, he falls *into* the water and perishes.[29]

Except for these influential renderings of the theme, there exist a number of less important ancient references to Narcissus in epigrams, poetic works, descriptions of art, allegories and mythographies.[30]

During the Middle Ages, the fate of the Narcissus tradition is intimately connected with the view of Ovid and what has been called an *ætas Ovidiana*, an Ovidian era, from the late 11th century up to the early 14th century, also brought a renewed interest in the Narcissus figure.[31] The reception of Ovid met with the complexities in the relation between the Christian world view and the pagan heritage that were common to most of the medieval reception of the classics: the contradiction between, on the one hand, the fascination of Greek and Roman culture, and, on the other hand, the need to subordinate this heritage to Christian dogma. This meant that the Narcissus figure often became the reason for a warning to the reader and was vested with more negative traits than in Ovid's version.[32] In a generalizing manner, it can be said that two main lines develop in the medieval Narcissus tradition: on the one hand the clerical interpretations of Ovid, where the story is regarded as an *exemplum* or an allegory; on the other hand literary renderings in a profane context.

In the interpretations, the motifs of the mirror and of recognition are often de-emphasized or even left out. Narcissus is generally associated with pride and with the *vanitas*-motif. The story is taken to negatively show either the consequences of arrogance or of love of earthly, perishable, things. Narcissus is assumed to be deprived of a life after death. Echo is seen either as a personification of good reputation (*bona fama*) or as an example of overly talkative people who always want to have the last word in any conversation. The moralizing interpretations reach their peak in *Ovide moralisé*, a French translation of and commentary on the entire *Metamorphoses*, and the Latin equivalent *Ovidius moralizatus* by Petrus Berchorius, both from the early 14th century.[33]

The profane renderings are generally focused on the power and workings of love. One of the earliest versions, *Lai de Narcisus*, by an anonymous French author from the end of the 12th century, sets the story in a contemporary court environment. Echo is here

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[29] Hadot, p. 98–108; Vinge, p. 36ff.
[30] Cf. Vinge, p. 23–40.
[31] Vinge, p. 55ff; Christine Walde, « Narcissus im Mittelalter: Nach Ovid – vor Freud », in Renger (ed.), *Narcissus*, p. 41–61, p. 41.
[32] Walde, p. 59.
[33] Vinge, p. 72ff, 91–100, 114f; Walde, p. 44–50.

exchanged for the princess Dané (Daphne), who does not possess any of the typical attributes of Echo. Her requited love leads her to invoke Amor and Venus (not Nemesis, as in Ovid) to punish Narcissus with the same unhappy love she feels. In this case, the problem for Narcissus is that he does not know at all what love is. He goes through a learning-process in front of his image (which he thinks is a woman, whereby the homosexual element is erased), where he first realizes what Dané must have felt, and then, that it is himself he sees and that his love is impossible. The story ends tragically with both protagonists dying.[34]

One of the most influential renderings of the theme from the Middle Ages is the one found in Guillaume de Lorris' *Roman de la Rose* (c. 1230). What is emphasized here is the power of Amor. The narrator of the narrative arrives at a well under a pine tree, where he finds a stone with an inscription, telling Narcissus' story and saying that this is where he died. In this story, Echo dies invoking Amor to avenge her unrequited love and Narcissus is punished by first falling in love with his image in the well, and finally dying. The story is framed by warnings about the lures of love and the just punishment for those who despise the love of others. What is curious is that the final warning is expressly addressed to women: "You ladies who show contempt for your friends, learn this example! For if you let them die, God will know how to pay you the wages you deserve."[35]

Further versions of and allusions to the Narcissus theme in the profane tradition are found in, among others, Bernard de Ventadour, Heinrich von Morungen, Benoit de Sainte-Maure, Robert de Blois, Boccaccio and Dante. They generally follow the pattern in the *Roman de la Rose*, where the story is used as a warning example for those who rebel against Amor. In Petrarch, Chaucer and other poets from the 14th century a new *topos* also appears: the rejected lover comparing him- or herself to Echo, whereas the beloved – man or woman – is compared to Narcissus in his supreme self-sufficient beauty.[36] Kenneth J. Knoespel has also found that the Middle Ages generalizes the love psychology of the Narcissus theme by extending it to encompass normal psychological development: "Narcissus is not simply a negative exemplum warning against pride and self-love but a narrative inviting the resolution of deception through a new vision."[37]

An important widening of the sphere of importance of the Narcissus figure is brought about by the Florentine Renaissance philosopher Marsilio Ficino. His main

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[34] Vinge, p. 58–66 ; Walde, p. 51ff.
[35] Quoted from Vinge, p. 80. Vinge, p. 78–87; Walde, p. 54ff.
[36] Vinge, p. 66–72, 87ff, 102–115.
[37] Kenneth J. Knoespel, *Narcissus and the Invention of Personal History*, New York/London: Garland, 1985, p. 104.

contribution is to reintroduce the neo-Platonic interpretation of the myth. It is framed by a metaphysics which regards love and beauty as keys to the universe. Beauty may lead up as well as down the ladder of ontological hierarchy constituted by God-angel-soul-body. Narcissus' error consists in having been deceived by bodily beauty, his soul thereby losing its form and being trapped in the mortal dissatisfaction of bodily existence. The story is compared to that of Socrates, whom Diotima led from the body upwards to God. Ficino also inaugurates the Renaissance trend to regard myths as revealing spiritual truths, which have thus already been revealed but which need an allegorical explanation.[38]

The invention of the printing press promoted the spread of Ovid's original as well as translations, imitations and commentaries such as *Ovide moralisé*. To a large extent these commentaries and imitations reiterate the moralizing attitude from the Middle Ages, warning about certain types of behavior in relation to love. There is, however, also a new emphasis placed on the opposition self-knowledge vs. lack of self-knowledge. The Renaissance poets of the 16th century also generally follow medieval tradition in their renderings of the theme, albeit with an elaboration of certain motifs, a de-emphasis of the crime-punishment schema and a transposition into a humanistic framework.[39]

The 17th century has been referred to as a new *ætas Ovidiana*, and many new translations and commentaries – which generally follow the moralizing and metaphysical patterns from the Middle Ages and the Renaissance – of the *Metamorphoses* appear. But there is also a trend towards a freer relation to Ovid and complete travesties of the *Metamorphoses* are published in France. In poetry, the story is less often set in a contemporary environment and more often in an indefinite past or a pastoral setting. The tendency to make Echo the main character is developed and the beauty of Narcissus is emphasized, often in relation to the *donna che si specchia*-motif, for example in Marino. The comparison of Narcissus to a woman instead of a man – found already in the Middle Ages – is broadly used, for example in Milton's *Paradise Lost*, where Eve is described in a pattern borrowed from Ovid, and in much Spanish poetry.[40] Another of the theme's lyrical faces is the development of the *vanitas*-motif. Gérard Genette has called the Narcissus theme a "complexe de culture" of the Baroque, where he finds conjoined the ambiguous motifs of "la Fuite" and "le Reflet". In his analysis of Honoré d'Urfé's *L'Astrée* (1607–1625) he finds the elusive image of tranistory existence: "De

[38] Vinge, p. 123ff.
[39] Vinge, p. 128–178.
[40] Cf. Vinge, p. 224ff. Brandee Strickland, "El mito de Narciso en la poesía española de los Siglos de Oro: la reescritura del mito y la búsqueda de la voz femenina", *Espéculo*, 40, 2008, www.ucm.es/info/especulo/numero40/narciso.html, accessed 2012-01-24.

la formule: *je me vois dans une eau qui s'écoule*, il passe insensiblement à: *je suis une eau qui s'écoule*. Thème substantiel qui [...] traverse le siècle comme une emblème de la sensibilité baroque. »[41]

Two dramatic treatments of the theme in Spanish deserve a special mention. The first is Calderón's *Eco y Narciso* from 1661. In this version it is the beautiful shepherdess Echo, only ten years old, who is surrounded by suitors but rejects their love. Narcissus, on the other hand lives in the wilderness together with his mother Liriope, who has heard the prophecy – by the magician Tiresias – that the end of her son will be brought by a voice and a beauty and therefore tries to protect him. When they meet with Echo and her company, Echo falls in love with Narcissus, who, after learning about the prophecy, becomes afraid and rejects her. Echo then calls for revenge and her suitors discuss whether they should kill Narcissus. Liriope, who worries about her son, brews a potion which makes Echo mute (and thus plays the part of Juno). Narcissus, at the same time, stops at a well to drink and falls in love with the well-nymph he sees in the water. Echo finds him, but before she has time to explain the reflection to him, the poison deprives her of her speech. It is instead Liriope who convinces Narcissus that he loves his own image. In the end Echo is transformed into air and Narcissus into a flower. In this play, Calderón not only accomplishes significant innovations and restructurings of the theme, but also gives it a psychological depth and complexity it had not had before, not least by introducing the over-protective mother as a central character. It is therefore no coincidence that psychoanalytically oriented critics, as well as psychoanalysts themselves, have considered it to be one of the most important texts in the Narcissus tradition.[42]

Substantially influenced by Calderón, Juana Inés de la Cruz in the mid-1680s wrote an *auto sacramental* named *El Divino Narciso*, intended for performance at the Corpus Christi festival in Madrid. In this play, which is framed as a reconciliation between the native American and Catholic religions, Human Nature decides to get rid of her sins, so that she can once again be recognized by Christ, the Divine Narcissus. The part of Echo is played by the fallen angel – helped by Pride and Self-love – who stages a temptation scene, but is driven away by Narcissus. Human Nature, looking for Narcissus, is helped by Mercy who shows her the Well of Life, where she is placed so that Narcissus can see her face. Narcissus comes to the well where he falls in love with the face he sees, and finally realizes that it is his own

[41] Gérard Genette, *Figures I*, Paris: Seuil, 1966, p. 27. Vinge, p. 179–251.
[42] Vinge, p. 237–244. It is noted by for example Otto Rank, see further chapter 3.

reflection. Stretching out his arms towards the well, he dies. He comes back, however, saying that he will ascend to heaven and leave the sacraments of penance and altar for the defense of Human Nature. Juana Inés thus gives a different metaphysical version of the theme than the neo-Platonic one. It is not man who is Narcissus, risking to be led astray by corporeal beauty, but Christ, whose imperfect reflection is man. Furthermore, she produces a syncretism, where not only Old Testament elements are used in the story of the Passion, but also native American and European pagan beliefs are regarded as real insights into the mystery of salvation.[43]

In the 18th century interest in Ovid generally decreases, which in handbooks gives an increased space to the Greek versions of the story, especially Pausanias'. The high esteem of myths as bearers of spiritual truths or psychological insights faded in favor of rational attempts, often euhemeristic ones, to explain their origin. In literary treatments, Ovid remains the main reference, but his text loses authority. The reflection episode is for example frequently freed from the narrative framework of Ovid's text. Women are no longer compared to Narcissus because of their beauty and the story is no longer used as a warning *exemplum* against rejecting a lover.[44]

Two pre-Romantic authors are important for noting a shift in the evaluation of the theme, Rousseau and Young. Rousseau's comedy *Narcisse, ou L'Amant de lui-même*, written in the 1730s, but published and provided with an important preface in 1753, focuses on self-love and self-knowledge. Valère, who is about to be married to Angélique, is given a portrait of himself in the guise of a woman by his sister Lucinde, in an attempt to cure his vanity. Valère, however, does not recognize himself, but instead falls in love with the image, abandons his plans to marry Angélique and goes in search of the woman represented in the picture. Lucinde, on the other hand, is in love with Cléonte but is to be married off to Léandre, whom she has never met. In the end it turns out that Cléonte and Léandre are the same person, and Valère finally chooses Angélique before the woman in the picture before it is revealed to him that the picture represents himself. What the play and its preface actualize is the relation between self-love and self-knowledge. Rousseau makes the distinction between *amour-propre*, which is a vice, and *amour de soi*, which is a necessary prerequisite for the virtue of self-knowledge.[45] Young uses Narcissus in a different way, but for similar purposes.

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[43] Vinge, p. 244ff.
[44] Vinge, p. 252–314.
[45] Bettina Rommel argues that Valère personifies Rousseau's critique of civilization and Enlightenment, by opposing the Lucinde and Valère as two different ways of cognizing, one which understands images, and one

He opposes the vicious Cain, restlessly wandering, to the virtuous Narcissus, at peace in his love for and knowledge of himself. Young's radical innovations consist in using Narcissus as an unequivocally positive figure of good self-love and in letting him be absorbed not in an illusion, but in a recognized image.[46]

In Germany the theme is increasingly associated with self-knowledge and, subsequently, with the self-reflection of the subject. This is the case in both Hamann and Herder, but with different axiological stances. Vinge writes: "When in his critique of culture Herder uses the Narcissus myth it has a moralizing function of a traditional kind, but what he criticizes in this way is a new phenomenon – subjectivism."[47]

In the Romantic movement, the direct connection between the Narcissus theme and Ovid's text is almost completely obliterated. The narrative framework is weakened and the attention is on the reflection episode. The motif of self-reflection is also combined with the idea of the poet as Narcissus. The notion of the image of Narcissus as a work of art goes back to Antiquity and there had earlier been rapprochements between the Narcissus theme and the Pygmalion theme, but in the *Frühromantik* Narcissus is in a new way used as a symbol of the poet's conscious self-reflection in his work.[48] This is seen in A.W. Schlegel's poems "An die Rhapsodin" (1788) and "Narcissus" (1800). The idea is further developed in Friedrich Schlegel's *Lucinde* (1799), where the Narcissus theme plays an important role throughout the novel. Narcissus' self-absorbed state is here seen as an ideal one. The complete focus on the real self is regarded as a perfect state, where man is as similar as possible both to a plant and to God.[49] The Swedish Romantic poet P. D. A. Atterbom, continues the same line in his poem "Narcissen" (1811), but with a more pessimistic evaluation of the narcissic state, and with a stronger connection to Ovid's story.[50]

The turn of the century 1800 also saw, especially in Germany, a renewed interest in mythology and a discussion of its significance. One of the more influential writers,

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which does not ("Narziß als Androgyn: Die Modellierung des jungen Mannes in Rousseaus Komödie *Narcisse* (1752/53)", in Renger (ed.), *Narcissus*, p. 63–78).

[46] Vinge, p. 277–288.

[47] Vinge, p. 299.

[48] The iconic motif, where the reflection the pool is seen as a painting, occurs already in Philostratus' descriptions of paintings of Narcissus (Vinge, p. 29ff) and in Jean de Meun's extension of *Le Roman de la Rose*, Pygmalion compares himself to Narcissus (Vinge, p. 86f).

[49] Stefan Matuschek, "'Was du hier siehest, edler Geist, bist du selbst': Narziß-Mythos und ästhetische Theorie bei Friedrich Schlegel und Herbert Marcuse", in Renger (ed.), *Narcissus*, p. 79–97. This is also the meaning that Coleridge gives to the word "narcissism" in its first recorded use (Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Collected Letters: Vol. V. 1820-1825*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971, ed. Earl Leslie Griggs, no. 1287, to Derwent Coleridge, 1822-01-15).

[50] Vinge, p. 303–314.

Friedrich Creuzer included the myth of Narcissus in his *Symbolik und Mythologie der alten Völker, besonders der Griechen* (1st edition 1810–12). Creuzer argued that the wisdom of primitive ages could be discovered through comparative studies. In his interpretation of the Narcissus myth he refers to Konon and Pausanias, but apparently regards Ovid's version as inauthentic. His explication of it comes very close to the neo-Platonic versions, and he sees Narcissus' death as a fall to earthly existence and the flower as a symbol of this fall. Creuzer's interpretation seems to have been a strong influence on the Swedish Romantic Erik Johan Stagnelius, who integrated it into his idiosyncratically designed gnostic world view. Not only in the poem "Narcissus" and the ballet *Narcissus*, both from the 1810s, did he make use of the theme, but throughout his poetic production.[51]

Towards the mid-19th century there seems to be a general decline in interest for the Narcissus theme, possibly related to the break-through of realism. The name Narcissus, however sometimes appears in plays and novels as a relatively weak reference to the theme, to indicate either a character trait or a function of a character in the intrigue. So for example, in an *opéra-comique* from 1850s, where Narcisse is a barber in love with a hatmaker, the name refers to the character's vanity and the confusion of identites in a manner similar to Rousseau's play.[52] In a novel from 1880s, Narcisse is a self-righteous man who refuses to sacrifice himself for his love.[53] The most influential text which makes an explicit allusion to the theme is probably Albert Emil Brachvogel's tragedy *Narziß* (1856/57).[54] In this drama the system reference to the Narcissus theme is interwoven with references to Diderot's *Le Neveu de Rameau* and the real circumstances surrounding the death of Madame de Pompadour in 1764. In the intrigues of power around the French court at the imminent death of the powerful mistress of Louis XV, the musician Narziß Rameau, Rameau's nephew, appears from the street and comes to play a decisive role. He retains many features from Diderot's dialogue, but his function in the intrigue is taken from the Narcissus theme, he works as a mirror. In the play, Diderot calls him the "Papagei der Pariser Gesellschaft" (thus also being associated with acoustic reflection) and Narziß himself declares: "Ich bin so eine Art Universalnarr, in dem alle übrigen aufgehen. Wer mich sieht, sieht sich im Spiegel […]!"[55] Through Narziß, the entire society, is associated with the kind of self-love denounced by Rousseau (who seems to be the only person Narziß admires). Narziß exclaims: "Alle, wie ihr dasitzt, die ganze noble

[51] Vinge, p. 315–322, 324ff.
[52] Charles Nuitter and Beaumont, *Rose et Narcisse: Opéra-comique en un acte*, Paris: Beck, 1854.
[53] Louis Létang, *Monsieur Narcisse*, Paris: C. Lévy, 1884.
[54] Albert Emil Brachvogel, *Narziß*, Leipzig: Reclam, 1909.
[55] Brachvogel, p. 27f.

Gesellschaft von Paris, heißt Narziß, Narziß der Selbstliebhaber, der Eigensüchtige, der Ichmensch, Narziß Rameau!“[56]

In the 19th century, however, at least the French, and to some extent the German, form of the name had become an not uncommon anthroponym, and there are examples of novel characters without any reference whatsoever to the theme, such as for example in George Sand’s novel *Narcisse* (1859).[57]

The Narcissus Theme 1890–1930

In order to go into some detail of textual analysis, it has been necessary to make a selection of Narcissus texts that will be discussed in depth in this dissertation. There is of course always a certain amount of arbitrariness in such a selection, but to enable the reader to assess this selection, I think it is fair, and hopefully enlightening, both to say something about the criteria for my selection and to give a brief overview of what has been excluded.

My decision to focus on the problem of subjectivity in relation to the Narcissus theme has been based on, on the one hand, the fact that it seems like one of the fields where the Narcissus theme is the most productive of new perspectives in this period, and, on the other hand, the fact that it seems like the common denominator for many of the most influential and original Narcissus texts of the period.

The grounds for my chapter division chapters will be given below, but from a historical perspective, the picture can be summarized as follows: It seems fair to say that there is a significant increase in the interest for the Narcissus theme around the turn of the 20th century. The main impulses for this renewed interest come largely from two independent sources: on the one hand Oscar Wilde, on the other André Gide and Paul Valéry. Around 1890 they all published texts with strong references to the Narcissus theme – Gide and Valéry in close contact with each other, Wilde independently of them.[58] Art plays an important role in all of these texts, as does questions of identity, individuality, subjectivity and selfhood.

Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891) opens the perspective of a specific modernity of the Narcissus figure and explores the relations of mirroring with regard to a

[56] Brachvogel, p. 33.
[57] George Sand, *Narcisse*, Paris: Michel-Lévy frères, 1866.
[58] Gide and Wilde later came to play quite important roles in each other’s lives, but their significant texts were written without knowledge of the other.

social persona as well as to the unconscious. The insecure social identity of modern Narcissus will in this study be followed up in texts by Paul Adam, Leopold von Andrian and Hugo von Hofmannsthal. The question of splitting and doubling of identity will be the focus of analyses of texts by Robert Scheffer, Alfred Walter Heymel and Jean Bernard.

Gide and Valéry both set their Narcissus texts within the frames of symbolist poetics, and to a large degree their concerns regard metaphysical and aesthetic questions. Much more than in Wilde's case, they gave rise to a minor tradition of Narcissus texts. From this tradition, poems by Henri de Régnier, Camille Mauclair, Jean Royère and Rainer Maria Rilke have been picked out for analysis, as well as an interesting text by Saint-Georges de Bouhélier which uses the Narcissus theme as a means to polemicize against modern poetry.

The next significant event was the coining of the term "narcissism", which got its full impact in the mid-1910s, when Freud introduced it into his metapsychology. In this study, I will, however, not focus exclusively on Freud's texts, but also on the surrounding works which paved the way for Narcissus' introduction into psychology.

The two final novels to be discussed – by Hermann Hesse and Joachim Gasquet – both, but in different ways, relate the Narcissus theme to modern scientific psychology, as well as more traditional sources.

My criteria for choosing these texts have been originality, representativity, artistic value and the strength of the system reference to the Narcissus theme. The first two may seem to be mutually contradictive. However, *original* should here be taken as relative to the history of the Narcissus theme, whereas *representative* should be taken as relative to the specific period. In this way, most emphasis has been put on texts which inaugurate a new trend in the treatment of the theme, less on those which continue it, and many texts which repeat well-known patterns are left out. *Artistic value* is here not to be understood in an absolute sense, but rather in the sense which Lotman attributes to it from a structural semiotic point of view. Lotman defines good poetry as that poetry which bears poetic information by containing elements which are simultaneously expected and unexpected in using the secondary coding proper to the poetic message. By surprising the reader, all the while activating cultural memory, a good poem is highly informative for its cultural system.[59] The strength of the intertextual reference, finally, should only be taken as a minimal necessary criterion. It simply points to the fact that I have only considered texts which explicitly refer to

[59] Cf. Yury Lotman, *Analysis of the Poetic Text*, Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1976, trans. D. Barton Johnson, p. 127ff. See also further below "Text and Code".

the Narcissus theme, or where this intertextual reference has a certain strength. If "Narcissus" were to be taken in a very general way – say, for example, if it were sufficient for there to be a mirror or self-love for something to be called a "Narcissus text" – there would be an infinite number of texts which would qualify for this selection. This criterion simply assures that the texts under scrutiny in one way or another have a common point of reference in the Narcissus tradition.[60]

I would, however, also like to present an overview of what has been excluded from the selection, in order for the reader to get a fuller picture of the uses of the theme in the period. While not claiming to be exhaustive, this overview nonetheless captures the broad scale of uses of the theme.[61]

The waning of the Ovidian hegemony in treatments of the theme, which had been an important trend since the 18th century, is even more obvious in our period. There are, however, renderings that still follow it closely. Winifred Catling publishes a poem which is hardly more than a distilled re-telling of Ovid's reflection episode.[62] Alfred Poizat, in a one-act drama, makes full use of Ovid's intrigue, while changing its narrative outline.[63] The main motif here is the phenomenon of reflection. Écho starts echoing because of her unrequited love for Narcisse. Narcisse, on the other hand, rejects her love because of what he has seen in the mirror. It is with an uncommon stubbornness that he refuses to realize that he sees himself in the mirror, and instead believes that he is in love with a goddess who reigns over a crystalline country, to which he aspires to gain access.

At least in the Anglo-Saxon world, Pausanias' version also seems to have gained some force. John William Aizlewood, in a long poem, combines most of the significant elements from Ovid and Pausanias.[64] Here Narcissus and Narcissa are the beautiful and mutually loving twin-children of Cephisus and Liriope. However, Narcissa dies and Narcissus mourns her by contemplating the mirror image which resembles her, and only lets Echo come near him, since her repetition of his words gives the impression of Narcissa speaking. Other lovers are scorned and they call down Nemesis' revenge on Narcissus. Narcissus' regret eventually turns into self-love, for which Echo is only used as a tool. She realizes this and leaves him. After fighting with his conscience, Narcissus finally turns to loving others, but

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[60] For a discussion of strength of intertextual reference pertinent to this criterion, cf. Ulrich Broich and Manfred Pfister, *Intertextualität: Formen, Funktionen, anglistische Fallstudien*, Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1985 p. 25–30.
[61] Among the limitations to this overview is inevitably the linguistic competence of the author.
[62] Winifred Catling, *Narcissus and Other Poems*, Amersham: Morland, 1913, p. 7–10.
[63] Alfred Poizat, *Écho et Narcisse: Comédie en un acte*, Paris: Plon, 1919.
[64] John William Aizlewood, *Echo and Narcissus*, p. vii–53, London: Kegan Paul & Co., 1893.

finds no mate, and, torn by unanswered love, he is transformed into the flower. Margeret MacEwen tells the story in a very similar manner, beginning with Pausanias' version and continuing with Ovid's, although with emphasis on the shortness of the human life.[65] Narcissus has wasted his youth not appreciating the value of love. Louis How, who uses a wealth of classical motifs in an unorthodox order, also includes a twin sister of Narcissus.[66]

In the freer adaptations of the theme, renderings which stage a conflict between reality and ideals through the figure of Narcissus are not uncommon, often in connection with the dichotomy human-divine. One case where the fullness of the divine sphere of antiquity is activated is a poem by Grace Denio Litchfield.[67] Here Narcissus loves not what he is, but what he strives to be, he wants to realize the ideal, and dies "[f]or love of that which he had failed to be – / A soul all unfulfilled and incomplete".[68] In a poem by Paul Feuillâtre, a conflict is likewise played out between terrestrial existence and the ideals of the young man.[69] In a somewhat decadent attitude, Narcisse loathes the vulgarity of the world around him and detaches himself from it in solitude, but is saved by Echo who convinces him to love. Another poem with a very active divine world is George Hanley's, where the relation between Echo and Narcissus is compared to that between Aphrodite and Adonis.[70] Through the opposition between a human and a divine character, it becomes a meditation on the conditions of mortal existence in face of eternity.

Not unrelated to these poems of the conflict between the real and the ideal are those which stress the motif of beauty in the Narcissus theme. The latter, however, are generally more positive about the possibility to allow reality to be infused with ideal beauty. Among these we find for example two songs by Florence Hoare and W. Keith Elliott.[71] In a poem by Hugo von Stumm, Narciss, struck by the impossible love for himself, considers the thought of taking his life, but resists because he cannot bear the thought of separating himself from the immense beauty of nature.[72] In Klabund's version, Narkissos, who sees a beautiful man in the water, imagines that there must be sunken cities of beauty at the bottom of the

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[65] Margeret MacEwen, *Narcissus: A Poem*, London/Toronto: Dent & Sons, 1914.
[66] Louis How, *Narcissus and Two Other Poems*, New York: Harbor Press, 1928.
[67] Grace Denio Litchfield, *Narcissus and Other Poems*, New York/London: Putnam's Sons, 1908, p. 5–32.
[68] Litchfield, p. 32.
[69] Paul Feuillâtre, *Écho & Narcisse: Daphné*, Paris: La Belle édition, 1909, p. [9–43].
[70] George Hanley, *Narcissus and Other Poems*, Singapore: Methodist Publishing House, 1912, p. 3–42.
[71] Mare van den Heuvel (music) and Florence Hoare (words), *The Legend of Narcissus: Cantata For Ladies' Voices*, London: Weekes & Co., 1898; W. Keith Elliott, *Narcissus-Eyes*, New York: Witmark & Sons, 1912.
[72] Hugo von Stumm, *Narciss: Bescheidene Gedichte eines jungen Träumers*, München: Jaffe, 1907, p. 13–15.

lakes (or seas) which are only visible in midday-light.[73] He therefore urges the man of the depths to rise up to the surface, so that the world may tremble at the sight of his beauty.

In Stumm's celebration of beauty, flowers are the most important element. In Germany, we also find a couple of poems where the Narcissus flower and its traditional connotations – related to its appearance in the Homeric hymn – are in focus. Richard Dehmel has a poem where the narcissi effect the association between passionate love and the melancholy foreboding of death.[74] In the poem "Narzissen" by Rudolf Presber, the narcissi are also a sign of death, which leads the subject to terminate his love affair with a married woman, so that she can live a happy bourgeois life as a mother.[75] Another text which makes use of both traditional conceptions of the flower and its actual qualities is Arthur Neustadt's fairy-tale "*Prinzeß Narziß: Ein Märchen*".[76] In this story the narrator goes picking narcissi in the vicinity of Montreux, but is captured by dwarves for stealing the flowers. It turns out that the dwarves are in the service of king Narziß, who rules a kingdom responsible for manufacturing narcissi. The narrator will be put to forced labour in their factory for as many months as the number of flowers which he has stolen – 549. All the inhabitants of Narziß' kingdom have, it seems, been convicted of the same crime. In the end, the narrator wakes up after having slept in a room with heavily smelling narcissi. The narcotic effect of the narcissus is thus used in combination with its association with the descent to Hades.[77]

Some texts, in a manner not unrelated to what will be discussed in chapter two, conceive of Narcissus as a specific modern type. One such text is *The Book-Bills of Narcissus*, by Richard le Gallienne.[78] A playful narrator here tells the story of Narcissus, to whom he has once lent money. Narcissus is a poetically minded young man who, uninterested in the possession of earthly goods, in a self-absorbed manner goes about his conquests in amorous, social and intellectual matters. Although frequently involved with women, he does not know love, but only passion. Just as he can only grasp the selfish side of the erotic, his erudite acquisitions are always subordinated to his own theories. As the portrait of Narcissus proceeds, it becomes clear that this Narcissus is not so much an individual as a modern type.

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[73] Klabund (Alfred Henschke), *Das heisse Herz: Balladen. Mythen. Gedichte*, Berlin: Erich Reiss, 1922, p. 63–64.
[74] Richard Dehmel, *Gesammelte Werke: Bd. III. Weib und Welt*, Berlin: Fischer, 1907, p. 12.
[75] Rudolf Presber, *Spuren im Sande: Neue Gedichte*, Stuttgart/Berlin: Cotta, 1918, p. 19–20.
[76] Arthur Neustadt, *Prinzess Narziss und andere kleine Geschichtchen*, Zürich: Art. Institut Orell Füssli, 1922, 7–26.
[77] Another case of a children's story related to the theme, just before our period, is the anonymous *Prince Narcissus and the Elfin King*, London: W. Swan Sonnenschein & Co, 1883, where the poetically inclined prince Narcissus disobeys his father king Tyrannus by befriending the peaceful king Thistledown of the forest.
[78] Richard le Gallienne, *The Book-Bills of Narcissus*, Derby: Frank Murray, 1892.

At the other end of the period we find another markedly modern Narcissus, this time in the form of a beauty queen. In the novel *Fräulein Narziss*, Kurt Sonnenfeld satirizes the superficiality of modern society, while also treating the reader to an adventurous trip around the world.[79] Anna Littmann, a beautiful and vain girl from humble circumstances working at a department store in Vienna, enters a beauty-contest and ends up becoming Miss Universe. In the middle of all of her adventures, before travelling to New York for the final, she is returns to Vienna for a short sojourn. To make some money she accepts to play the main part in a pantomime called "Fräulein Narziss", written by the epigone-poet Robitschek through plagiarism from Nikolaus Lenau. The poet argues that Fräulein Narziss is "eine moderne Problemfigur", in that she "nur für seine Schönheit lebt und auf Mutterschaft verzichtet, um schön zu bleiben".[80] The play, which is placed in the center of the novel, is attributed a structuring function for the entire novel, a function emphasized by Robitschek's return at the end of the novel, where he has written a continuation of the play. Anna's story ends on a pessimistic note – supported by strong references to Schopenhauer – in a way corresponding to Robitschek's text.[81]

These satirizing uses of Narcissus as a figure of modern society are paralleled by a continued great interest, in the German-speaking world, for Brachvogel's likewise satirical play. In the mid-1920s no less than three different modernizations – which do not change much in the essential content – of the drama are published in German.[82]

There are also quite a few instances where the reference to Narcissus is used to indicate the character or function of a person in a drama or novel. In a novel by Xavier de Montépin, Narcisse Mistral is a self-righteous ignorant who arrives in Paris for traditional 19th century conquests.[83] In a novel by John Bede, built on theological conflict, Narcissus is a beautiful deaf mute girl secretly in love with Dr. Blasius who pushes the local church in a catholic direction.[84] In a farce by Paul Meylan, the reference indicates confusion of

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[79] Kurt Sonnenfeld, *Fräulein Narziss: Der Roman einer Schönheitskönigin*, Wien: Saturn, 1930.
[80] Sonnenfeld, p. 271.
[81] Another association between the Narcissus theme and the beauty industry is found in the title of Gerald Heard's speculative history of fashion *Narcissus: An Anatomy of Clothes*, London/New York: Kegan Paul, 1924, where fashion is seen as a continuation of man's development towards ever increasing self-consciousness. The reference to the theme is weak, however, and seems largely dependent on the fact that is included in a series of books with titles like *Dedalus or Science and the Future* och *Tantalus or the Future of Man*.
[82] Erwin Hahn, *Narziß: Trauerspiel von Brachvogel neugearbeitet in vier Akten*, Rudolfstadt: Boltze, 1922; Moritz Lederer, *Narziß und die Pompadour: Theaterstück in fünf Akten = sechs Bildern (nach Diderot-Brachvogel)*, Berlin: Oesterheld & Co., 1925; Gustav Davis, *Narziß: Drama in fünf Aufzügen. Nach A. E. Brachvogel frei gestaltet*, Vienna: Eirich, 1926.
[83] Xavier de Montépin, *Les Conquêtes de Narcisse Mistral*, Paris: H. Geffroy, 1894.
[84] John Bede, *Narcissus or an Anglican Altar Sacrifice*, London: Elliot Stock, 1899.

identities.[85] In a novel by Gertrude Violet MacFadden, the story of Echo and Narcissus serves as a contrasting background to the love story between the vagabond Narcissus and Jackeydawra, the daughter of the family where Narcissus one day appears.[86] In a story by E. Michon, the reference is used to indicate the erotic ignorance of a youth who is only interested in stamps, but subsequently taught the pleasures of love by his maid.[87] In a novel by Arthur Stone, a young boy is called Narcissus, a nickname which is explained by the older Lady Brickleton, who is attracted to him: "Boy you were born with the Girdle of Narcissus – you don't understand? No? The expression means that while you have the power of exciting love, you are at the same time very slow to feel love."[88] In all of these cases, the reference to Narcissus is used to indicate one complication or another within the frames of an erotic intrigue.

These novels and plays often celebrate the healing power of love. This is also the central motif of a poem by Gustaf Fröding.[89] Narkissos is here caught in solitary and solipsistic agony, marked by a profound ambivalence towards himself. He seems to exist in a world closed in on itself, but is taken out of his misery by a young woman who comes to love him. In a different way, Albert Giraud's play *Pierrot Narcisse* (1887) portrays a Narcissus disconnected from the world.[90] Pierrot suffers from some sort of poetic lunacy and says that he is drunk on winter. He realizes that he has to choose between dreaming and living, and by breaking a mirror in the end, he decides to live.

Other texts are more focused on the question of personal identity and the quest for a lost past. In a poem by Vilhelm Ekelund, the poet uses the theme to examine his present situation through his own child-eyes.[91] In the short-novel *Le Baiser de Narcisse* by Jacques d'Adelswärd-Fersen, set in hellenistic times, Milès is taken away from his childhood city of Byblos and ends up in the service of Scopas in Athens.[92] Gifted with an extraordinary beauty and an enigmatic personality he is highly desirable to all who meet him. Confronted with the cynicism of the world he is dominated by his nostalgic longing for his fatherland. Towards the

[85] Paul Meylan, *Narcisse: Farce en deux actes*, Paris: Molière, 1906.
[86] Gertrude Violet MacFadden, *Narcissus in the Way. A Romance of two Temperaments*, London: John Lane, 1922.
[87] E. Michon, *Le Fifils a sa mère: Le Triomphe de Narcisse*, Paris: Collection Vaudeville, 1925.
[88] Arthur Stone, *The Girdle of Narcissus*, London: Stockwell, 1926, p. 96.
[89] Gustaf Fröding, *Nytt och gammalt*, Stockholm: Bonniers, 1897, p. 46–48.
[90] Albert Giraud, *Pierrot lunaire: Les Dernières fêtes. Pierrot Narcisse*, Paris: L'Harmattan, 2004, p. 105–168.
[91] Vilhelm Ekelund, *Samlade skrifter: Vol. II*, Stockholm: Bonniers, 2004, p. 88–90.
[92] Jacques d'Adelswärd-Fersen, *Une jeunesse: Le Baiser de Narcisse*, Paris: A Messein, 1907, p. 121–225.

end he meets his double – an exact copy of himself – and they fall in love. The double disappears, though, and Milès, absorbed by his own image in the water, drowns.

A quite singular case, finally, is Madeleine Merens-Melmer's poetry collection *A la fontaine de Narcisse*, which opens with a poem where the complaining Psyche juxtaposes herself to Narcissus, and continues with a number of poems called "miroirs", where the poet reflects herself in a number of female lovers, such as Ophelia, Sappho and Phaedra.[93] The Narcissus theme is here broken up and dispersed in the text in a way similar to the novels by Hesse and Gasquet which will be discussed later.

Previous Research

A survey of research for a project like the present has little chance to be exhaustive, due to the nature of its delimitations. The fields of research which it connects to – first, on the individual authors included in the study, second, on the Narcissus theme, third, on the question of modern subjectivity – are in themselves vast and, taken together, ungraspable. However, my take on the question of subjectivity and an overview of the history of the Narcissus theme have already been briefly presented in this chapter, and relevant parts of the research on the individual authors examined in this study will be presented in the chapter on the respective author. In this overview, I will therefore limit myself to considering research which has some general bearing on the Narcissus theme as such in the specified period.

In the 1930s a couple of minor German studies on the Narcissus figure appear, seemingly prompted by the recent breakthrough of the psychoanalytic concept of narcissism.[94] The first of these is an article by Heinz Mitlacher, which is remarkable in its non-differentiation between the psychoanalytic concept of narcissism and the theme of Narcissus, both of which he subsumes under the term "der Narzißbegriff".[95] Mitlacher plays with the thought of positing Narcissus as the mythic opposite of the Faust figure, as personifications of the dichotomies static vs. dynamic, ectropy vs. entropy and France vs.

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[93] Madeleine Merens-Melmer, *A la fontaine de Narcisse*, Paris : Librairie de France, 1929.

[94] Havelock Ellis, "The Conception of Narcissism", in *Studies in the Psychology of Sex: Vol. VII*, Philadelphia: F. A. Davis Company, 1928, p. 347–375, can also be included among these, but will instead be treated as part of the object of the study in the chapter on psychoanalysis.

[95] Heinz Mitlacher, "Die Entwicklung des Narzißbegriffs", *Germanisch-romanische Monatsschrift*, 21, 1933, p. 373–383. Wieseler's study of ancient versions of the theme and Freud's introduction of narcissism are for example considered to be on equal footing.

Germany, but finds the neat distinction to be not altogether true, if, however, with much to speak for it. It is clear, though, that the Narcissus figure as such is thought to be charged with a depth of meaning, which finds its highest expression in Valéry's mature poem "Fragments du Narcisse" (1926). Aspects of this deep-meaning are unfolded in its figurations as representative of weak aestheticism, of severe discipline of the mind, as "Sammelsymbol" for psychiatric terminology, and in its presumed association with magic.

A somewhat longer study by Ludwig Pfandl also speaks of the general "Narzißbegriff".[96] His position as regards the relation between the psychoanalytic concept and theme is an unambiguous confirmation of the implicit assumption in early psychoanalysis: narcissism is the truth about Narcissus.[97] Pfandl is disturbed by the many contradictory interpretations of the myth and argues that this conflict can be resolved with reference to Freud's work on narcissism: "Der Narzißmus als seelische Erkrankung ist eine Art der Neurose; der Narzißmus als Mythos aber ist die älteste und vielleicht schönste Darstellung dieser Neurose in der Form einer die psychischen Vorgänge erzählerisch und symbolisch veranschaulichenden Sage."[98] In other words, now that the phenomenon of narcissism has been given a rational explanation, the myth has been exhausted and lost its explanatory value. Pfandl furthermore argues that only the original, pure, form of the myth expresses the Narcissus concept. Secondary elaborations to some extent express secondary features of the psychiatric condition, and poetic versions of it are only of any significant value to the extent that the author himself has any first-hand knowledge of narcissistic disorders (such he considers the versions by Juana Inés de la Cruz and Valéry, whereas much of the history of theme falls in the category of imitations of Ovid, to whom Pfandl does not acknowledge any substantial understanding of the Narcissus concept).

In his book on water, Gaston Bachelard includes a section on Narcissus.[99] Bachelard's primary interest is not historical, but in his peculiar investigation of the "material imagination", where he seeks "les conditions objectives du narcissisme", he makes use not only of the psychoanalytic conception of narcissism, but also of Narcissus texts by Valéry, Joachim Gasquet and others, and his analysis has come to exercise some influence on the French reception of the Narcissus theme. He blames psychoanalysis for being too narrow in its understanding of narcissism, not appreciating the importance of the mirror being made of

[96] Ludwig Pfandl, "Der Narzißbegriff: Versuch einer neuen Deutung", *Imago*, 21:3, 1935, p. 280–310.
[97] Cf. below, "From Narcissus to Narcissism".
[98] Pfandl, p. 281.
[99] Gaston Bachelard, *L'Eau et les rêves: Essai sur l'imagination de la matière*, Paris: José Corti, 1947, p. 29–45.

water, which provides "l'occasion d'une *imagination ouverte*".[100] In the fluidity of the water mirror he finds not only a "narcissisme idéalisant" but also a "narcissisme cosmique", for which the densest expression is found in Gasquet: "Le monde est un immense Narcisse en train de se penser".[101] In this cosmic narcissism, where all beings "se *narcisent*", the world is seen under the aspect of pancalism (the æsthethic doctrine that everything should be considered with regards to its beauty).[102]

A number of smaller studies have focused on the use of the Narcissus theme in texts related to Symbolism, the first of which by one of the great historians of the movement, Guy Michaud.[103] Michaud stresses the importance of the theme of the mirror in symbolism, not only as an image, but a generator or catalyzer of images. He argues that its central position in Symbolist imagination is due to the fact that it is seen as the key to the correspondences between exterior reality and the human soul, or between microcosm and macrocosm. If the Symbolists (of which Michaud enumerates Mallarmé, Gide, Valéry and Royère) "s'identifient à Narcisse, c'est moins par une introversion complaisante que pour tenter de saisir et fixer, au-delà des formes fugitives, leur propre essence".[104]

Roland Derche has published a study on the Narcissus theme which covers texts by Ovid, Calderón, Rousseau, Gide, Valéry and Gasquet.[105] Mainly concerned with summarizing and assessing poetical qualities, and with a presentation flawed by factual errors, Derche contributes little, however, to the research on the Narcissus theme in the period. All the more interesting is Maja Goth's comparative analysis of the Narcissus poems by Rilke and Valéry.[106] She argues that "Narcissus is the myth of modern man" and emphasizes the similarities between the French and German poets in their concerns with their own selves. Goth finds that through the Narcissus theme, they express the condition of man – as opposed to other beings – as the creature who can never be unified with himself. The self, the reflexive aspect of the ego, is always set in constant metamorphosis (an analysis inspired by Bachelard) and man is condemned to incomplete individualized loneliness.

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[100] Bachelard, p. 33.
[101] Joachim Gasquet, *Narcisse*, Paris: Librairie de France, 1931, p. 31.
[102] Bachelard, p. 37.
[103] Guy Michaud, "Le thème du miroir dans le symbolisme français", *Cahiers de l'Association internationale des études francaises*, 11, 1959, 199–216.
[104] Michaud, "Le thème du miroir", p. 206.
[105] Roland Derche, *Quatre mythes poétiques*, Paris: Société d'édition d'enseignement supérieur, 1962, p. 71–108.
[106] Maja Goth, "The Myth of Narcissus in the Works of Rilke and Valéry", *Wisconsin Studies in Contemporary Literature*, 7:1, 1966, p. 12–20.

Helga Esselborn-Krumbiegel tidies the discussion about Symbolist Narcissus by focusing on actual references to the myth.[107] She notices that it has become a commonplace that Narcissus is the central myth of Symbolism, but finds that, when it comes to works "die den Narziß-Mythos gestalten", this view is supported by a "'Kanon' von höchstens fünf Texten".[108] In her own analysis of Narcissus texts by Valéry, Régnier, Royère, Rilke and Gide, she finds that the reference to the history of the theme is weakened and that its imagery is concentrated in a symbol. "Übereinstimmend reduzieren alle hier betrachteten Gestaltungen des Narziß-Themas den Mythos auf *eine* Szene, in der sich Atmosphäre und Bedeutung des mythischen Geschehens verdichten: die Selbstbetrachtung des sich spiegelnden Narziß."[109]

In a study on Narcissus and Ophelia around 1900, Hanspeter Zürcher has investigated a complex of interrelated motifs in three poets (George, Rilke and von Hofmannsthal) and three painters (Klimt, Hodler and Monet).[110] Zürcher's focus, however, is on the motif of calm water; this is what is primarily understood in the concrete sense of a motif. Narcissus and Ophelia, as two opposing mythic figures, appear rather as polarizing principles which aid the interpretation. Zürcher, it is true, looks for similarities between, scenes depicted in the texts he analyzes and Ovid's account of Narcissus, but these connections are generally weak and add little to his presentation.[111] His interest is much more on the "Narzisstische" and the "Opheliahafte". These designate two different ways for the ego to relate to the world. Narcissus insists on his individuality, rejects the world and creates a universe for himself; Ophelia connects the ego to the world in such a way that all individuality perishes and the ego is dissolved.

Most larger studies "on Narcissus", are actually not investigations of the Narcissus theme, in that they take Narcissus not as the object of research, but as a tool of investigation. One such study is Gray Kochhar-Lindgren's *Narcissus Transformed*.[112] In this

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[107] Helga Esselborn-Krumbiegel, "Das Narziß-Thema in der symbolistischen Lyrik", *Arcadia*, 15, 1980, p. 278–294.

[108] Esselborn-Krumbiegel, p. 279.

[109] Esselborn-Krumbiegel, p. 294. This could also be the place to discuss Christian Angelet's comparative analysis of the Narcissus texts by Gide and Gasquet ("Le *Narcisse* de Joachim Gasquet et les premiers écrits de Gide", in Christian Berg, Walter Geerts, Paul Pelchmans and Bruno Tritsmans (eds.), *Retour du mythe: Vingt études pour Maurice Delacroix*, Amsterdam/Atalanta, Rodopi, 1996, p. 133–141), but since it mainly concerns Gasquet's novel, it will be treated in the chapter dedicated to it.

[110] Hanspeter Zürcher, *Stilles Wasser: Narziss und Ophelia in der Dichtung und Malerei um 1900*, Bonn: Bouvier, 1975.

[111] Cf. e. g. Zürcher, p. 5.

[112] Gray Kochhar-Lindgren, *Narcissus Transformed: The Textual Subject in Psychoanalysis and Literature*, University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993. This study belongs rather in the same category as the innumerous investigations of *narcissism* and its relation to literature, like, only to mention few, Lawrence

investigation, heavily influenced by Jacques Derrida, Kochhar-Lindgren attempts to describe and find a way out of "the entextualization of the human subject".[113] In this enterprise, Kochhar-Lindgren writes, "the myth of Narcissus will shape our understanding of literature, psychoanalysis, and the philosophies of reflection".[114] This myth is, with reference to Eric Gould, taken to be that which tries to close the gap of *la différance*. In the play between semiosis and mythicity, the logic of narcissism (also equated with idealism) develops as that in which the modern subject is entangled as in a confusing hall of mirrors. The logic of narcissism is explored in the writings on narcissism and the mirror stage by Freud and Lacan, as well as in novels by Virginia Woolf, Michel Tournier and John Fowles. Kochhar-Lindgren's study can be taken as a counter-example to what I wish to accomplish in the present dissertation. My aim will be to study uses of the Narcissus theme from a historical distance, while avoiding the circularity of using Narcissus or narcissism as operational tools of analysis.

In a study based on the theories of Judith Butler, Steven Bruhm ends up in a position mid-way between mine and Kochhar-Lindgren's.[115] Bruhm makes a queer reading of Narcissus, focusing on the questions of narcissism and homosexuality. In Bruhm's view, Narcissus has been locked into dichotomizing pattern by a tradition whose primary proponent is Freud. In Bruhm's analysis, Narcissus turns out to be a Protean figure, who transgresses boundaries and undermines every stable dichotomy. From within a psychoanalytic discourse, he undertakes a reading against the grain of the Western tradition in order to rethink the concepts of narcissism and male homosexuality through a renewed perspective on Narcissus. The question is: what is Narcissus in Bruhm's account? Bruhm answers:

> Narcissus is the centralizing, unifying trope whose presence only bespeaks his absence, whose self-identification can only engender the slippages of desire, and whose mystifications within the masculine order cannot belie the spectral traces, the vestiges of the penis as an organ of pleasure.[116]

Thornton, *Unbodied Hope: Narcissism and the Modern Novel*, London/Toronto: Bucknell University Press, 1984; Lynne Layton and Barbara Ann Schapiro (eds.), *Narcissism and the Text: Studies in Literature and the Psychology of* Self, New York/London: New York University Press, 1986; Jeffrey Berman, *Narcissism and the Novel*, New York/London: New York University Press, 1990; Marshall W. Alcorn Jr., *Narcissism and the Literary Libido: Rhetoric, Text, and Subjectivity*, New York/London: New York University Press, 1994

[113] Kochhar-Lindgren, p. 1.

[114] Kochhar-Lindgren, p. 3.

[115] Steven Bruhm, *Reflecting Narcissus: A Queer Aesthetic*, Minneapolis/London: University of Minnesota Press, 2001.

[116] Bruhm, p. 18.

Narcissus as such a "trope", is in any case a cultural entity of a more abstract order than the Narcissus I wish to examine in this study. His choice of texts, which admittedly is "governed more by personal idiosyncrasy than anything else", covers the historical period between Romanticism and the present and to a large extent includes texts which explicitly refers to the Narcissus theme (among those covered in this study, for example such by Wilde, Gide, Freud and Hesse), but also many where the connection to the theme is dependent on the mediation of the analyst.

Walter Erhart traces the modern Narcissus back to the turn of the century 1800 (Hamann, Goethe, the Schlegels), where, he argues, Narcissus becomes "das Modell einer Selbstbildung durch Kunst und Kultur" and "eine Art Urszene in der Entstehung moderner Individualität".[117] During the 19th century, he continues, Narcissus regains the status he had in the moralizing renderings from the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, that of a deviation. What he deviates from in the *fin de siècle*, is the straight path of history, science and development. In analyses of Gide's *Traité du Narcisse*, as well as of narratives by Leopold Andrian and Hugo von Hofmannsthal alluding to the Narcissus story, Erhart shows that Narcissus around 1900 becomes a critical figure, which identifies with the mother and with spatiality and resists the paternal and the temporal, and thereby the progress of modern society. This deviating, decadent, Narcissus, which is diagnosed as pervert by sexology, is so to speak neutralized by Freud, whose primary narcissism is a necessary step on the way to normality and which only resists it if it has not already been defeated by the paternal Oedipus.

Ida Merello also focuses on the Narcissus of the *fin de siècle*.[118] In the line of Bachelard and Genette, she conceives of the Narcissus theme as a *complexe de culture* which works as an archetypal knot for decadence. She argues, however, that it is in the form of an anti-Narcissus, that he exerts his power on the imagination of the decadents, a complex which is composed of "l'*Altérité du moi* et le *Dédoublement de la personnalité*".[119] Through analyses of works by Marcel Schwob, Guy de Maupassant and Adam Villiers de l'Isle-Adam, which connect to the complex, she argues that anti-Narcissus expresses the poetics of symbolism, the return of the unconscious and the esoteric relation between our world and that of the ideas. However, behind all these expressions she finds the solipsistic male inability to

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[117] Walter Erhart, "'Wundervolle Augenblicke' – Narziß um 1900", in Renger (ed.), *Narcissus*, p. 99–115, p. 100, 103.
[118] Ida Merello, « De Narcisse à la sirène : Variations sur des thèmes mythiques dans l'imaginaire fin de siècle », in Sergio Cicada and Marisa Verna (eds.), *Simbolismo e naturalismo fra lingua e testo : Atti del Convegno Università Cattolica di Milano 25–26–27 settembre 2003*, Milano : V & P, 2010, p. 217–232.
[119] Merello, « De Narcisse à la sirène », p. 219.

grasp the otherness of the world – "le subjectivisme de la vision et l'impossibilité d'une définition univoque du monde réel".[120]

Negin Daneshvar-Malvergne's study *Narcisse et le mal du siècle*, finally, is somewhat ambiguous as to whether Narcissus should be regarded as that which is studied or as an analytic tool.[121] It is in most respects a traditional *geistesgeschichtliche* study which aims at the core of the decadence of the turn of the century 1900. Her understanding of the Narcissus figure is both phrased as a myth in the strong sense, i.e. as a deeply meaningful narrative which reveals certain aspects of man's relation to the sacred, and – which may seem somewhat paradoxical – as that narcissism which is explained by psychoanalysis. Her approach to the myth corresponds to this potentially contradictory understanding of the Narcissus figure. On the one hand, she argues that it manifests itself (an approach which corresponds to the strong sense of the myth), on the other she argues for the appropriateness of interpreting decadence in terms of the myth of Narcissus (an approach which better accords with the psychoanalytic view of myths as *actually* representing psychic rather than divine reality).[122] Through her application of the Narcissus myth to *fin de siècle* decadence, she argues that it is composed of three successive phases: the phase of rejection, which is characterized by the ego's withdrawal into itself; the phase of reaction, where the ego cuts the relation with the outside world; and the phase of unity, where the narcissistic wound has been healed and the ego returns to a sound relationship with the world. In a final chapter, Daneshvar-Malvergne explores the figure of Salomé as a feminine inversion of Narcissus.

Theoretical Considerations

The primary theoretical basis of my investigations will be the semiotics of culture of the Moscow-Tartu school. The semiotics of culture emerged within the Soviet branch of semiotics, which had developed from Prague structuralism. In 1971 Juri Lotman and Boris Uspensky published an article where they argued that the individual sign systems (or languages) studied by structuralism cannot function in isolation.[123] Every language is

[120] Merello, « De Narcisse à la sirène », p. 231.
[121] Negin Daneshvar-Malvergne, *Narcisse et le mal du siècle*, Paris: Dervy, 2009.
[122] Daneshvar-Malvergne, p. 7, 108–115.
[123] Yu. M. Lotman and B. A. Uspensky, "On the Semiotic Study of Culture", *New Literary History*, 9:2, 1978, p. 211–232, trans. George Mihaychuk.

dependent upon its cultural context for the production of meaning. Thus, apart from the semiotic study of individual sign systems, culture as the information processing mechanism of any given human community can also be the subject of semiotic inquiry. A culture structurally organizes the world, determines its borders against non-culture and regulates the interrelations between its individual sign systems. Lotman later introduced the concept *semiosphere* – a parallel to Vladimir Vernadsky's biosphere – to denote the totality of interrelated sign systems.[124]

A core aspect of the cultural system or the semiosphere is that it functions as the "*nonhereditary memory of the community*".[125] This aspect was developed in the 1980s by German scholars. In Heidelberg, Aleida and Jan Assmann developed the concept of *cultural memory*, regarded as those mechanisms of information transmission which form the basis for the continuity and unity of a society.[126] They thereby opened a field of research into forms of cultural memory. In Konstanz in 1990, Renate Lachmann integrated the idea of a cultural memory with the theoretical developments in the field of intertextuality.[127] By arguing that intertextuality can be regarded as the memory of a cultural system, Lachmann connected Lotman's general framework with the Western research into the phenomenon of intertextuality, with which it has much in common. Simultaneously with these developments, Lotman spent the last years up until his death in 1993 on reworking his ideas to focus more on the dynamics of the semiosphere, thereby paralleling the developments made by Lachmann's introduction of post-structuralist ideas on intertextuality in the semiotics of culture.[128]

In this section, I will begin by sketching the basics of Lotman's semiotics, thereafter go on to discuss the idea of culture as a semiotic mechanism and the concept of semiosphere, and finally focus on culture as memory and connect it with the phenomenon of intertextuality.

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[124] Juri Lotman, "On the Semiosphere", *Sign Systems Studies*, 33:1, 2005, p. 205–229, trans. Wilma Clark.
[125] Lotman and Uspensky, "On the Semiotic Study of Culture", p. 213.
[126] Cf. Jan Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis: Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen*, München: C.H. Beck, 2007, p. 22.
[127] Renate Lachmann, *Gedächtnis und Literatur: Intertextualität in der Russischen Moderne*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1990.
[128] Cf. Yuri M. Lotman, *Universe of the Mind: A Semiotic Study of Culture*, London/New York: Tauris, 2001, trans. Ann Shukman and *Culture and Explosion.* Berlin/New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 2009, trans. Wilma Clark.

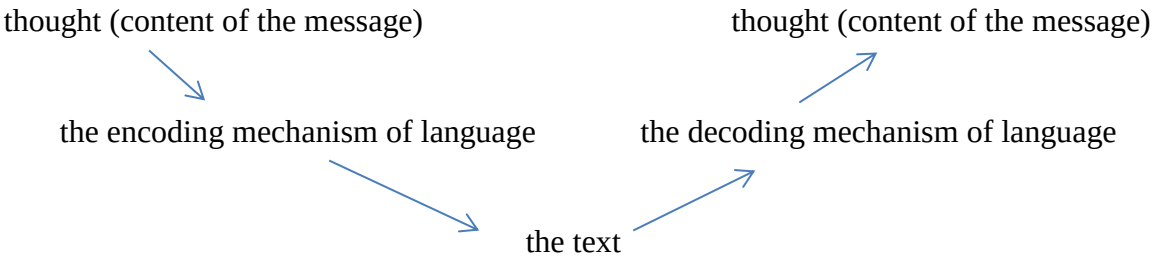
Text and Code

Lotman's semiotics builds upon the basic assumptions and distinctions common to all structuralist poetics in the tradition springing from the structural linguistics of Ferdinand de Saussure, such as the distinctions between iconic and conventional signs, between signifier and signified, between *langue* and *parole*, between paradigm and syntagm etc. The point of reference and comparison for Lotman's semiotics is primarily the Prague school of structuralism, represented by Roman Jakobson. Lotman's opening move in relation to Jakobson is to question his model of communication, and thereby, to reconsider the status of language and code.[129] A simplified version comprises the following:[130]

addresser → text → addressee

Language

A message is transmitted from adresser to the addressee through a text, encoded in language. Lotman's alternative model consists in inserting an intermediate step in the model, which highlights the instability of language:[131]



Lotman distinguishes the encoding of language from the decoding, but functionally retains the standard model. For communication purposes, the model works well if the message content in the beginning is identical to the message content at the end. However, as Lotman writes: "It is obvious, therefore that a total guarantee of adequacy between the transmitted and received message there has to be an artificial (simplified) language and artificially simplified communicators: these will have a strictly limited memory capacity and all cultural baggage

[129] Cf. Lotman, *Universe of the Mind*, p. 11ff, 20ff, *Culture and Explosion*, p. 4ff, Edna Andrews, "Lotman's communication act and semiosis", *Semiotica*, 126:1–4, 1999, p. 1–15.
[130] This is the version used in Lotman, *Culture and Explosion*, p. 4.
[131] Taken from Lotman, *Universe of the Mind*, p. 11.

will be removed from the semiotic personality."[132] This is of course never the case in natural communication. The point is that the code of the encoding is not identical to the code of the decoding. Language is more than code:

> If one takes into account cultural traditions (the semiotic memory of culture) and the inevitable factor of the individual way with which this tradition is revealed to a particular member of a collective, then it will be obvious that the coincidence of codes between transmitter and transmittee is in reality possible only to a very relative extent.[133]

In reality, Lotman argues, only artificial languages can be completely monolingual. In natural language a certain amount of translation between codes is always involved. In fact, the standard communication model only captures one of the functions of the text – communication. Lotman argues that there are two more central functions: creativity and memory. It is precisely creativity that is the gain when the communicative function fails because of non-correspondence between codes. When a text is translated into another language, a different message is created – how different depends on how closely related the languages are. Texts, therefore, not only transmit but also generate meaning. These two functions of the text, transmission and creation of meaning, lead Lotman to speak of two different channels of communication, one where a message is transmitted from addresser to addressee, one where a message is transmitted from one code to another.

The standard model of communication describes the case where a message is transmitted from one person to another and in what Lotman calls the I-s/he direction. The other case is autocommunication, the I-I direction. This takes place "in all cases when the rank of the message is raised. […] These include cases when a person addresses him/herself, for instance in diary jottings which are made not in order to remember certain things but to elucidate the writer's inner state."[134] In the I-I system, as opposed to the I-s/he system, the bearer of the message remains the same, but the message is reformulated. "This is the result of introducing a supplementary, second code; the original message is recoded into elements of its structure and thereby acquires features of a *new* message."[135] In the I-I system the text will provide both code and message. Therefore, it functions partly as a language, i.e. as a modeling system which organizes the world. However, I-I and I-s/he communication should not be seen

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[132] Lotman, *Universe of the Mind*, p. 13.
[133] Lotman, *Universe of the Mind*, p. 13. Lotman later states that "[l]anguage – is a code plus its history", *Culture and Explosion*, p. 4.
[134] Lotman, *Universe of the Mind*, p. 21.
[135] Lotman, *Universe of the Mind*, p. 22.

as mutually exclusive. They are rather to be taken as idealizations, which both play a part in normal communication. Describing the channels in terms of subject and object of communication highlights the fact that one is concerned with the the transmission of information whereas the other is concerned with the qualitative change of information through supplementary coding. The I-I system is particularly relevant for poetry, and a typical example of a supplementary code is versification. Versification adds syntagmatic connections to a message and thereby alters and complicates its semantic connections. This does not, however, mean, that poetry should be regarded as exlusively using the I-I channel.

> Art is born not from the 'I-s/he' system or the 'I-I' system. It uses both systems and oscillates in the field of structural tension between them. The aesthetic effect arises when the code is taken for the message and the message for the code, i.e. when a text is switched from one system of communication to another while the audience keeps awareness of both.[136]

The I-I system of communication will of course be central to the investigations in this study. First, because their main focus will be on literature, which, as stated, derives its basic principle from it.[137] Second, early psychoanalysis, which is my other object of scrutiny, certainly uses the I-I channel as it begins to formulate its theories. Its language is not yet ready and much of its intellectual progress depends on adding supplementary modeling systems to those existing. Third, the rewriting of the Narcissus theme in the Western tradition must largely be regarded from the view point of I-I communication. It rarely serves the function of transmitting the information about a beautiful young man's death thousands of years ago, but is used as a way of reorganizing experience and self-understanding.

Culture and the Semiosphere

In traditional semiotics, the starting point has always been the individual text. This, Lotman argues, is a sensible heuristic move, but ontologically, it must be recognized that the phenomenon of culture always precedes any individual use of signs.[138] Culture, from the point

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[136] Lotman, *Universe of the Mind*, p. 32.
[137] In Lotman's earlier writings poetry is defined on the one hand by being a model or taking on traits of a secondary modeling system, i.e. a language, and, on the other hand by being multi-systemic (Lotman, *Analysis of the Poetic Text*, p. 39, 83, 123). These characteristics are so to speak subsumed under the formulation of the channel of autocommunication.
[138] Lotman, "On the Semiosphere", p. 205f.

of view of semiotics, is a community's mechanism for processing, storing and communicating information. It is only within it that semiosis is possible. To emphasize this aspect of culture, Lotman in 1984 coined the term "semiosphere" to designate a "semiotic continuum, which is filled with multi-variant semiotic models situated at a range of hierarchical levels."[139] Later, he defines it as "the semiotic space necessary for the existence and functioning of languages, not the sum total of different languages; in a sense the semiosphere has a prior existence and is in constant interaction with languages."[140] In the context of semiotics, Lotman seems to use the terms "semiosphere", "semiotic space" and "culture" interchangeably.

The semiosphere has one general function: "The fundamental 'task' of culture […] is in structurally organizing the world around man."[141] This is also the "task" of every language, and culture should indeed be regarded as a language. However, any culture needs at least two languages, and the semiosphere is to be seen as a "secondary modeling system" or a "system of systems", which organizes the languages within it.[142] The reason why *one* language is not enough is that every language models reality in a certain way, but it remains a model. To be able to represent a reality that lies outside of itself, heterogeneity between complementary languages is required.

> The idea of an optimal model, consisting of a single perfect universal language, is replaced by the image of a structure equipped with a minimum of two or, rather, by an open number of diverse languages, each of which is reciprocally dependent on the other, due to the incapacity of each to express the world independently. These languages superimpose themselves on each other in such a way as to reflect one and the same thing in diverse ways, so that they appear to be situated on a "single plane" and form its internal borders. Their mutual untranslatability (or limited translatability) represents a source of adjustment of the extra-lingual object to its reflection in the world of languages.[143]

In this way, culture as a whole enables man to represent the world, and the world is perceived as such only insofar as it immersed in the semiosphere.

One of the central features of the semiosphere is that it sets itself off against its outside; culture exists only in opposition to non-culture. Whether non-culture be the phenomenal world or other cultures, it belongs to that which is not semiotically structured in

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[139] Lotman, "On the Semiosphere", p. 206.
[140] Lotman, *Universe of the Mind*, p. 123.
[141] Lotman and Uspensky, "On the Semiotic Mechanism of Culture", p. 213.
[142] Lotman, *Analysis of the Poetic Text*, p. 19f, Lotman and Uspensky, "On the Semiotic Machanism of Culture", p. 212f, Ju.M. Lotman, B.A. Uspenskij, V.V. Ivanov, V.N. Toporov and A.M. Pjatogorskij, *Theses on the Semiotic Study of Culture*, Lisse: The Peter de Ridder Press, 1975, p. 21f.
[143] Lotman, *Culture and Explosion*, p. 2.

the view of that semiosphere. Any culture also constructs its specific opposition to non-culture. This opposition can be represented as true religion vs. profanity, enlightenment vs. ignorance, cosmos vs. chaos, ectropy vs. entropy etc.[144] Two of its general forms seem to be "organized-unorganized" and "correct-incorrect".[145] The relation of the semiosphere to its outside depends to a large extent on how this opposition is represented. Whereas a culture focusing on the opposition "correct-incorrect" tends to construct non-culture as a unified, isomorphically constructed, anticulture, a culture focusing on the opposition "organized-unorganized", tends to regard itself as an active principle which tries to expand its borders at the expense of entropy.[146] "Each historically given type of culture has its own type of nonculture peculiar to it alone."[147] From the point of view of a given culture, it is independent of its outside and immanently intelligible. However, from the view point of a scientific meta-perspective, culture and its other are mutually conditioned. From this perspective, culture, as it expands its borders and transforms entropy into information, also continually creates its specific chaos. Thus, it "is characteristic that the twentieth century, having exhausted the reserves of the spatial expansion of culture (all geographical space has become 'cultural'; the 'forefield' has disappeared), has addressed itself to the problem of the subconscious, constructing a new type of space opposed to culture."[148] In this way we can regard individual subjectivity as a space which is being semioticized in the period under scrutiny in this study, partly through the figure of Narcissus.

One of the most important positions in the semiosphere is its outward borders. This is the zone of contact between culture and non-culture. The border should be thought of as a membrane which mediates between the semiotic and the extra-semiotic:

> the semiotic border is represented by the sum of bilingual translatable "filters", passing through which the text is translated into another language (or languages), situated *outside* the given semiosphere. "The isolated nature" of the semiosphere subsists in the fact that it cannot be contiguous to extra-semiotic texts or non-texts. In order that these may be realised, they must be translated into one of the languages of its internal space, in other words, the facts must be semioticized. In this way, the border points of the semiosphere may be likened to sensory receptors, which transfer external stimuli into

[144] Lotman and Uspensky, "On the Semiotic Mechanism of Culture", p. 219, Lotman et al., *Theses on the Semiotic Study of Cultures*, p. 3f.
[145] Lotman and Uspensky, "On the Semiotic Mechanism of Culture", p. 219. Lotman and Uspensky initially connect this antithesis with that between cultures oriented towards content and cultures oriented towards expression. The latter antithesis, however, does not reappear in the later writings.
[146] Lotman and Uspensky, "On the Semiotic Mechanism of Culture", p. 220f.
[147] Lotman et al., *Theses on the Semiotic Study of Cultures*, p. 4.
[148] Lotman et al., *Theses on the Semiotic Study of Culture*, p. 5.

> the language of our nervous system, or a unit of translation, which adapts the external actor to a given semiotic sphere.[149]

The border is also, and in virtue of being a border, a zone of increased semiotic activity. The amount of translation underway at the border accelerates semiotic processes.[150] It is in such a region of the semiosphere that the phenomena examined in this study appear.

There are however also borders within the semiosphere. "These sectional boundaries which run through the semiosphere create a multi-level system."[151] These borders participate in creating the inner structure of the semiosphere. The core opposition of this structure is that between center and periphery. At the center, the semiosphere is highly organized, at the periphery, it is to a large degree irregular.[152] The center holds the dominant semiotic systems and is also the place where culture arrives at the level of regulative self-description.[153] It promotes the unity of the system and works as a conservative force in the dynamics of the semiosphere. At the periphery, contacts with the outside and distance from the conservative forces that uphold the hierarchical organization between languages accelerate semiotic processes and break up the organization. The forces from center and periphery, those of unity and diversity, hierarchy and anarchy, together determine the dynamics of the semiosphere. Changes within the semiosphere can either take the form of a gradual process (predictable) or explosions (unpredictable), depending on the organization of the system and on interference from external systems.[154]

The same phenomena also appear, on a smaller scale, within the semiosphere itself. Local centers are formed, which determine the boundaries of their sub-cultures or sub-semiospheres, which in turn are exposed to the same dynamics as the general semiosphere.

The dynamics of the semiosphere enables it to deal with its relations to its outside. It constitutes the development and "thinking" of a culture in the form of dialogue: "We have already mentioned that the elementary act of thinking is translation. Now we can go further and say that the elementary mechanism of translation is dialogue."[155] Dialogue is characterized by three features. First, it requires a dialogic situation which precedes the actual

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[149] Lotman, "On the Semiosphere", p. 208f.
[150] Lotman, "On the Semiosphere", p. 212.
[151] Lotman, *Universe of the Mind*, p. 138.
[152] Lotman, "On the Semiosphere", p. 214.
[153] Cf. Lotman, *Universe of the Mind*, p. 128ff.
[154] Cf. Lotman, *Culture and Explosion*, p. 7ff, 114–141.
[155] Lotman, *Universe of the Mind*, p. 143.

dialogue.[156] Second, it requires a certain semiotic asymmetry. For a text to be able to pass from one language to another there needs to be a similarity, but also a specific difference which allows for the work of translation.[157] Third, there must be an exchange, a shift between receiving and transmitting texts. When a system receives texts, it transforms its internal structures, according to the dynamics of center and periphery, to be able to incorporate the alien texts and make them its own. These changes in the system then allow it to transmit new texts to other systems.[158] This process of dialogue is continually at work both between and within cultures. This phenomenon will in my investigation be highlighted in the relation between literature and psychoanalysis, through the figure of Narcissus.

Cultural Memory and Intertextuality

Culture can also be seen as memory, as it is the preservation and organization of information of a given community. In regarding culture as memory, two aspects of it deserve to be emphasized.

First, cultural memory is external memory. It does not, like individual memory, rely on a neurological basis, and its function is to surpass individual death.[159] This means that it exceeds the limits of what Jan Assmann has called "communicative memory", i.e. that part of the collective memory which is formed and upheld by the internal memory of its members, and which therefore has a limited life-span.[160] By making use of an external material basis, culture has the ability to outlive the individuals that constitute it. For culture to be able to preserve information, however, it needs both a signifying structure and signs. These signifying structures – or languages – are what Jan Assmann explores and refers to as *Erinnerungsfiguren*.[161] For memory to work, it needs both a codifying mechanism and material vehicles to serve as texts.[162] This, for Lotman and Uspensky, poses the problem of

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[156] Lotman, *Universe of the Mind*, p. 143, Lotman, "On the Semiosphere", p. 218.
[157] Lotman, "On the Semiosphere", p. 216.
[158] Lotman, *Universe of the Mind*, p. 143ff.
[159] Lotman and Uspensky, "On the Semiotic Mechanism of Culture", p. 213, Jan Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis*, p. 35.
[160] Cf. Jan Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis*, p. 48–56, "Communicative and Cultural Memory", in Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning (eds.), *Cultural Memory Studies: An Interdisciplinary Handbook*, Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2008, p. 109–118.
[161] Jan Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis*, p. 37ff.
[162] *Nota bene* that in this context, "text" is not confined to verbal texts, but also include monuments, buildings, rituals etc.

longevity of texts and longevity of codes: "In certain cases these two aspects may not be directly related to one another. Thus, for example, superstitions can be seen as elements of a text of an old culture whose code is lost, as a case where the text outlives the code."[163]

Second, cultural memory – like any memory – has a limited capacity. It needs to manage its limited capacity in order to keep relevant information and secure its continuity. According to Lotman, it has three ways of regulating its content: first, "a quantitative increase in the amount of knowledge"; second, "a continuous reorganization of the coding system which, while remaining itself in its own consciousness and conceiving itself to be continuous, tirelessly reforms separate codes, thus ensuring an increase in the value of the memory by creating 'nonactual,' yet potentially actualizable, reserves"; third, "forgetting".[164] Important to note, thus, is that cultural memory, on the one hand, continually reorganizes its semiotic forms and, on the other hand, by the same process, exposes its texts to desemiotization and resemiotization as well as creates a reserve, or an archive, of actualizable texts in its efforts to manage its limited capacity.[165] The Heidelberg circle around Jan and Aleida Assmann have dedicated much research into elucidating the types and transformations of cultural memory. However, as much of their focus has been on the social and political dynamics of the community and the macroscopic view of entire cultures, I will turn instead to a researcher whose attention in this field has been on textual detail, Renate Lachmann.

Lachmann begins examining the question of cultural memory in 1990 by fusing it with the theoretical framework of intertextuality. She thereby makes a connection between two theoretical trends which had been developing as parallels in the East and in the West over two decades. In fact, even though Lotman does not mention the term "intertextuality", much of his late work bears a considerable resemblance to semiotic research on intertextuality in the west.

Intertextuality is based on the insight that no text exists in a vacuum, that texts are created from texts. It states that the meaning of the text is in part determined by its relation to other texts, as these relations impose multiple codings on the elements of the text. Thereby, it challenges the sovereignty of the work. It switches the master metaphor of literary history from flux, as in the study of influences and sources, to texture, with its focus on structure and spatially conceived relations.

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[163] Lotman and Uspensky, "On the Semiotic Mechanism of Culture", p. 215.
[164] Lotman and Uspensky, "On the Semiotic Mechanism of Culture", p. 215f.
[165] On the dialectics between canon and archive, cf. e. g. Aleida Assmann, "Canon and Archive", in Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning (eds.), *Cultural Memory Studies: An Interdisciplinary Handbook*, Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2008, p. 97–108.

The notion of intertextuality was developed by Julia Kristeva in the late 1960s as a generalization of Michail Bakhtin's dialogism. It appeared as an integral part of the post-structuralist revision of the concept of text, carried out by Kristeva, Roland Barthes, Jacques Derrida and others. [166] In this context, intertextuality connoted a radical break with traditional views on meaning, authorship, subjectivity etc. In the view of the post-structuralists, intertextuality denotes the borderless productivity of a textual space. As part of the critique of logocentrism, intertextuality de-centers the subject of enunciation, which is no longer seen as the author of a text, but as an epiphenomenon of the production of meaning. The text can no longer be read as closed in upon itself, but weaves itself into the general text.

As interest in intertextuality rose in the 1970s, the terminological confusion and the manifold of competing conceptions of intertextuality grew exponentially. From the mid-70s there occurred a division between scholars focusing on what Laurent Jenny called implicit and explicit intertextuality.[167] The former, which could also be called general intertextuality, refers to intertextuality as a general feature of texts. Its theorizing developed within deconstruction, reader-oriented criticism and socio-culturally oriented criticism, and continued to pose a challenge to traditional criticism. The latter, which Marko Juvan terms "citationality", refers to observable relations between individual texts. Here, intertextuality is regarded as a strategy of literary art and phenomena like imitation, parody, citation, montage, plagiarism etc. are examined. Theoreticians focusing on citationality developed more applicable methods of analysis and a systematization of the phenomena of intertextuality – notably in works like those by Michael Riffaterre and Gérard Genette.[168] As this view of intertextuality developed, mainly in the fields of semiology and literary hermeneutics, the possibilites to analyze and classify intertextuality grew, but it also meant that the theory lost some of the radical impetus it had towards main stream criticism within the context of post-structuralism.

The problem for a theory of citationality is that it largely makes the intertextual relation dependent upon the intention of the author and therefore loses sight of one of the core insights of intertextuality: that there are aspects of the text's meaning production which evade

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[166] Cf. Julia Kristeva, *Σημειωτική: Recherches pour une sémanalyse*, Paris: Seuil, 1969, p. 113; Susanne Holthuis, *Intertextualität: Aspekte einer rezeptionsorientierten Konzeption*, Tübingen: Staufenburg, 1993, p. 14f; Marko Juvan, *History and Poetics of Intertextuality*, West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2008, p. 76ff; Mary Orr, *Intertextuality: Debates and Contexts*, Malden: Polity, 2003, p. 27ff; Graham Allen, *Intertextuality*, London/New York: Routledge, 2000, p. 30ff.

[167] Laurent Jenny, "La stratégie de la forme", *Poétique*, 7:27, 1976, p. 257–281. Cf. Juvan, p. 104f.

[168] Michael Riffaterre, *La Production du texte*, Paris: Seuil, 1979; Gérard Genette, *Palimpsestes: La Littérature au second degré*, Paris: Seuil, 1982.

the control of the author. Theories of general intertextuality, on the other hand, have often proved too unspecific in their emphasis on the infinite semiosis of textuality to be applicable to textual analysis.[169] Lachmann's insertion of intertextuality in the framework of cultural semiotics, however, provides definite limitations to general intertextuality and, therefore, allows her to analyze specific intertextual relations while also accounting for the effects of text's immersion in a semiotic space.

Lachmann's account of cultural memory follows the general outline of cultural semiotics and of the Heidelberg circle, but takes its starting point in classical mnemotechnics. She begins by establishing an opposition, as well as an analogy, between the "innere Schreiben des Gedächtnisses", which "ist zeichenlos", and mnemotechnics, which makes use of external signs.[170] In the internal memory, signless "images" are inscribed to preserve something which might otherwise be lost. In mnemonics, external, or reified, images are produced, which stand for the primal "images" of the mind. Classical mnemotechnics operates with places, images and sequences:

> Die fundamentale Operation der Findung von Orten, *loci*, an denen Bilder für zu Erinnerndes, *imagines*, niedergelegt werden, die Verfahren der Transposition der Erinnerungsgegenstandes in seinen Bildvertreter, die Sequenzbildung im Raum, *collocatio*, deren erneutes imaginiertes Abschreiten das zu Erinnernde abrufbar macht, sind durch spezielle Regeln präzisiert.[171]

> The fundamental of finding places (*loci*) where images for things to be remembered (*imagines*) are recorded is prescribed by specific rules, as are the procedures for transposing the object to be remembered into its visual substitute – the formation of sequences in space (*collocatio*) whose repeated imaginative traversal makes it possible to retrieve that which is to be remembered.[172]

In every case, mnemonics is defined as *imaginatio*, i.e. "als eine Verbindung von Ordnungserfahrung und Bilderfindung".[173] There are different styles and procedures of *memoria*, but the general operation of inventing signs which are ordered in systematic manner remains the same.

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[169] Cf. Holthuis, p. 15ff.
[170] Lachmann, *Gedächtnis und Literatur*, p. 14. Renate Lachmann, *Memory and Literature: Intertextuality in Russian Modernism*, Minneapolis/London: University of Minnesota Press, 1997, trans. Roy Sellars and Anthony Wall. *Memory and Literature*, p. 2: "inner writing of memory" / "is signless".
[171] Lachmann, Gedächtnis und Literatur, p. 19.
[172] Lachmann, Memory and Literature, p. 5.
[173] Lachmann, Gedächtnis und Literatur, p. 21. Lachmann, Memory and Literature, p. 5: "as a combination of the experience of order and the invention of images".

Lachmann writes that different cultures and different historical periods have favored different mnemonic paradigms.[174] These paradigms serve both to store knowledge and to organize it in structuring schemata.[175] She mentions four such paradigms.[176] The first is the mnemotechnical paradigm of classical rhetoric, which creates an architecture of memory. The second is the diegetic paradigm, which records by narration. The third is the diagrammatic paradigm, which operates through abstraction and orders memory by systematic relations. The fourth paradigm which Lachmann cites is literature.

The reason for placing literature among the paradigms of mnemonics is the intimate relation between mnemonic and literary imagination. In both memory and literature, imagination is used to produce images for something that is absent. Lachmann writes:

> verhält es sich nicht eher so, daß literarische Ikonographie immer auf die des Gedächtnisses rekurriert, daß der Bilderspender der Literatur der nämliche wie der des Gedächtnisses ist, oder noch anders: daß sich die Bildtätigkeit des Gedächtnisses die poetische Einbildung einverleibt?
>
> Daß die Poesie an dem Bildwissen der Mnemonik ebenso teilhat, wie diese das (verlorengegangene) Originalvermächtnis poetischer Weltaneignung assimiliert hat, führt zur These, daß mit der Mnemotechnik elementare Leistungen imaginativen Erinnerns pragmatisiert worden sind, wie sie allen Akten des Schreibens als Gedächtnishandlungen zugrunde liegen.[177]
>
> is it not the case that literary iconography always appeals to mnemic iconography, that the image bank of literature is the same as the image bank of memory, or, put another way, that the image-producing activity of memory incorporates the poetic imagination itself?
>
> If we accept the notion that poetry participates in the mnemonic knowledge of imagery in the same way that mnemonics has assimilated the (lost) original legacy of the poetic perception of the world, then we may surmise that, through mnemotechnics, elementary achievements of imaginative remembering have been pragmatized – inasmuch as these achievements, as acts of memory, serve as the basis of all acts of writing.[178]

It is thus the same kind of activity which produces the images of literature and memory. The difference seems to be that the mnemonic image stands for something real, whereas the literary image may often not have a real referent. However, as Lachmann argues, the image always brings with it the possibility of a deceptive image:

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[174] Renate Lachmann, "Kultursemiotischer Prospekt", in Anselm Haverkamp and Renate Lachmann (eds.), *Memoria: Vergessen und Erinnern*, München: Wilhelm Fink, 1993, p. xvii–xxvii and "Cultural Memory and the Role of Literature", *European Review*, 12:2, 2004, p 165–178.
[175] Lachmann, *Gedächtnis und Literatur*, p. 45.
[176] This enumeration must however, especially in the light of the work of Jan and Aleida Assmann, be regarded as a strong generalization.
[177] Lachmann, *Gedächtnis und Literatur*, p. 34.
[178] Lachmann, *Memory and Literature*, p. 14.

> Jedem Zeichen, jedem Bild (als Zeichenkomplex) ist das Gegenzeichen, das Simulakrum, als "falsches" und "trügerisches" eingeschrieben. Indem das Simulakrum das gleiche als Nichtgleiches, das ähnliche als Nichtähnliches zu erkennen aufgibt, entzieht es dem Zeichen die es stabilisierende semantische Legitimation.[179]
>
> Every sign, every image as a complex of signs, is inscribed in relation to an antithetical sign, a simulacrum, a "false" or "deceptive" sign. By presenting the identical as potentially nonidentical, the similar as potentially dissimilar, the simulacrum deprives the sign of the legitimation that stabilizes it.[180]

As a sign, every sign of memory carries the twofold indication of both being similar to and different from that which it represents. It always effects a doubling of reality, a doubling which is effected by arbitrary imagination and therefore carries with it the possibility of simulacrum. The sign remains a sign, whether or not it actually refers to an existing entity. For memory, this means that we always run the risk of fraudulent images, for literature, this is the possibility of fiction.

Now, memory is not a simple question of storing images of a lost world. Memory is a dynamic process of remembering and forgetting, with a limited capacity for information processing. In this process signs are desemiotized and resemiotized, i.e. they lose and regain their signifying capacity.[181] In the economy of signs, signs and complexes of signs are used and reused in ever new contexts. In this way cultural memory reactivates and transforms mnemonic signs, multiplying meaning by double encoding or annihilating it by negative semantics.

As for the text, its memory is its intertextuality. Intertextuality is the process by which culture continually rewrites itself:

> Der Raum zwischen den Texten, ist er nicht der eigentliche Gedächtnisraum? Verändert nicht auch jeder Text den Gedächtnisraum, indem er die Architektur, in die er sich einschreibt, verändert? […] Der Gedächtnisraum ist auf dieselbe Weise in den Text eingeschrieben, wie sich dieser in den Gedächtnisraum einschreibt.[182]
>
> Is not the space between texts, in fact, the authentic space of memory? Does not every text also alter that memory space, by altering the architecture in which it inscribes

[179] Lachmann, *Gedächtnis und Literatur*, p. 27
[180] Lachmann, *Memory and Literature*, p. 10.
[181] Renate Lachmann, "Die Unlöschbarkeit der Zeichen: Das semiotische Unglück des Mnemonisten", in Anselm Haverkamp and Renate Lachmann (eds.), *Gedächtniskunst: Raum –Bild –Schrift*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1991, p. 111–141, p. 112ff.
[182] Lachmann, *Gedächtnis und Literatur*, p. 35.

> itself? […] The space of memory is inscribed in a text in the same way that a text inscribes itself in a memory space.[183]

Through intertextuality, the text both works as a repository for cultural memory and inscribes itself into a memory space, analogous to the architecture of memory of classical mnemotechnics, constituted by intertextual references.

When it comes to specifying intertextual relations, Lachmann argues that there are four parameters to be considered: 1) the manifest text; 2) the referent text; 3) signals of reference; and 4) intertextuality (the textual quality that results from the relationship between the manifest and the referent text).[184] The signals of reference are schematically of two different kinds: contiguity or similarity. The former occurs when the manifest text takes up a constitutive element from the referent text. The latter occurs when structures are pointed out in the referent text, which are equivalent to structures in the manifest text. These signals of reference indicate two different types of intertextual relations. Contiguity indicates a relation of contamination, in which

> der ursprüngliche Referenzrahmen eines Elements, sein Stellenwert in einer Texttotalität wird aufgegeben und ein Kontakt zu jeweils anderen fremdtextlichen Elementen hergestellt. Es entstehen auf diese Weise heterogene Reihen oder Schichten; einem Vorgang der Zerstreuung folgt der einer Zusammensetzung zu einem neuen Textkomplex.[185]

> an element loses both its original framework and its status in a previously existing textual whole and thereby establishes contact with other relevant elements in other texts. In this way there arises heterogeneous semantic series or strata within the text; a process of scattering is followed by one of recomposition in a new textual environment.[186]

Similarity, on the other hand, indicates a relation of anagram, where elements of the referent text are distributed in the manifest text in such a way that it is possible to recognize its coherent structure by reassembling scattered pieces:

> der Referenztext ist als Anatext präsent. Die anagrammatische Signalisierung schafft eine Rätselstruktur, die durch ein kombinatorisches, rück- und vorverweisendes Lesen dekodiert wird. Das kontaminatorische Signal verlangt eine Lektüre, die kompensatorisch die jeweiligen ursprünglichen textuellen Ordnungen wiederherstellt

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[183] Lachmann, *Memory and Literature*, p. 15.
[184] Lachmann, *Gedächtnis und Literatur*, p. 60ff and Renate Lachmann, ”Ebenen der intertextualitätsbegriffs”, in Karlheinz Stierle and Rainer Warning (eds.), *Das Gespräch*, München: Wilhelm Fink, 1984, p. 133-138.
[185] Lachmannn, *Gedächtnis und Literatur*, p. 61.
[186] Lachmann, *Memory and Literature*, p. 32f.

> und die identifizierten Elementen in ihre Rahmen zurückverweist, ohne dabei die Sinnkomplexion abzubauen, die in der (ludistischen) Heterogenisierung der Elemente erzeugt werden konnte.[187]
>
> The other text is thus present in the form of an anatext. This process of anagrammatic indexing reminds us of a puzzle, a problematic structure that can only be solved through backward- and forward-looking combinatory decoding, by the to-and-fro movement of reading. When contamination is signaled, a compensatory reading is required, one that reconstitutes the original contexts without, however, dismantling the ramifying growth of meaning that had arisen in the playful mixing together of such heterogeneous elements.[188]

Anagram and contamination – which are also described as the moments of syncretism and dialogue respectively – serve either to synthesize or to differentiate semantic series. Syncretism collapses hierarchies and liberates semantic potential; dialogue condensates meaning and makes an element of the text resonate of different voices. The types of relations, however, are not mutually exclusive, but should be seen as ideal types, which interact with each other in any intertextual relation.

Intertextuality thus effects a ramifying growth of meaning through the relations between texts. However, this expansion of meaning also implies the possibility of hypertrophy and semantic evacuation. To counter this, there is an opposite force, which strives to close the individual text and re-establish the semantic integrity of the work. Any text, Lachmann argues, is inscribed in the dialectic movement of decomposition and recomposition.[189] As intertextuality decomposes the structure of the text and thereby disperses and multiplies meaning, the moment of recomposition integrates the structure of the text and condensates meaning. The relative strengths of these moments in the individual text determine the semiotic openness of the text. The conflict between a hermeneutic conception of intertextuality, which insists upon the semantic integrity of the work, and a post-structuralist conception of intertextuality, which asserts the decentering of the work in the limitless semiosis of the general text – as outlined by for example Karlheinz Stierle – thus becomes a conflict which is settled by markers in the individual text.[190] Lachmann notes the difference

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[187] Lachmannn, *Gedächtnis und Literatur*, p. 61f. The term "Anatext" should here be taken as relative to the anagrammatic relation. Terminologically, it is to be regarded as equivalent to Kristeva's *paragramme* (cf. Kristeva, *Σημειωτική*, p. 174–207) and Genette's *hypotexte* (Genette, *Palimpsestes*, p. 13ff).
[188] Lachmann, *Memory and Literature*, p. 33.
[189] Lachmann, *Gedächtnis und Literatur*, p. 509ff.
[190] Karlheinz Stierle, "Werk und Intertextualität", in Wolf Schmid and Wolf-Dieter Stempel (eds.), *Dialog der Texte*, Wien: Wiener Slawistischer Almanach, 1983, p. 7–26.

> zwischen den avantgardistischen Synkretismen, in denen das Heterogene in der Kontiguität und Friktion der Formen Sinnkomplexion erzeugt, und der postmodernen Versammlung von elementen verschiedener Kodes, die gerade in der Glättung der Zerstreutheit den „Formverlust“ – den die *mise en abîme* nicht etwa aufhält, sondern beschleunigt – nicht verschleiern kann.[191]
>
> between the avant-garde forms of syncretism, in which heterogeneity produces complexity of meaning in the contiguity and friction of forms, and the post-modern gathering of elements from various codes, which, precisely in its assembling of what had been scattered, cannot cover up the 'loss of form' that the mise-en-abîme does not prevent but accelerates.[192]

Situating the Object

Finally in this section on the theoretical vantage points of this study, we must discuss how to situate the object to be investigated within the theoretical framework; what do we mean by "Narcissus" in this study?

In Lotman's system, Narcissus should be regarded as a *symbol*. Lotman somewhat hesitatingly introduces the concept of symbol after observing the notorious polyvalence of this word. In his discussion of the concept, Lotman does not give an all-encompassing definition of "symbol", but instead proceeds to describe its "*structural position*", since he argues that "even if we do not know what a symbol is, every system knows what 'its symbol' is and needs one for the working of its semiotic structure".[193] In this description, he gives it the following characteristics: First, it has a specific form of "sign-ness" in that its content "serves as the expression level for another content, one which is as a rule more highly valued in that culture".[194] This is a classical conception of the symbol as a composite sign, to which Lotman adds that it contains both conventional and iconic elements; there relation between signifier and signified is to some extent arbitrary and to some extent dependent on resemblance, and in this way becomes "a mediator between different spheres of semiosis".[195] Second, symbols have the ability to "store up extremely long and important texts in condensed form".[196] They have preserved the mnemonic function of archaic symbols and thereby work as operators of a transgression through the synchronic layers of a culture, "they

[191] Lachmann, *Gedächtnis und Literatur*, p. 515.
[192] Lachmann, *Memory and Literature*, p. 333.
[193] Lotman, *Universe of the Mind*, p. 102f.
[194] Lotman, *Universe of the Mind*, p. 103.
[195] Lotman, *Universe of the Mind*, p. 111.
[196] Lotman, *Universe of the Mind*, p. 103.

can transfer texts, plot outlines and other semiotic formations from one level of a culture's memory to another".[197] In this way, they serve as stable invariants in the evolution of culture, and preserve some semantic and structural integrity independent of the syntagmatic chain where they may or may not appear. However, the other side of their ability to transgress diachronic and synchronic boundaries is that they reconnect with the surrounding texts in ever new ways: "a symbol actively correlates with its cultural context, transforms it and is transformed by it. Its invariancy is realized in variants."[198] As border-transgressing vehicles for cultural memory, symbols preserve a certain constancy through change. This quality is related to the third characteristic, that the expression of the symbol never entirely covers the content: "What is important is that the semantic potentials of the symbol are always greater than any realization of them: the links which, with the help of its expression, a symbol establishes with a particular semiotic context never exhaust all its semantic valency."[199] This trait Lotman develops as he puts symbol in a complementary relation with reminiscence. The symbol exists before and independently of any individual text. The reminiscence is an organic part of the new text. As complementary aspects of the same phenomenon, symbol and reminiscence move in different directions between text and memory:

> This is why what seems like a symbol in the process of creation (as suggestive memory mechanism) is perceived by the reader as a reminiscence, since the processes of creating and of perceiving move in opposite directions: to the creative process the final text is a summation, to the perceiving process it is a point of departure.[200]

In Lotman's terms, we will thus in our investigations encounter the *symbol* of Narcissus in the form of textual *reminiscences*.

In the field of intertextuality, most theories have focused on the relation between one manifest text (pheno-text) and one referent text (pre-text). In this study we will direct our interests towards the relations between a complex of texts, namely those that deal with the Narcissus theme. When it comes to conceptualizations of the relations between groups of texts, this has often been understood as the relation between a pheno-text and a text-type.[201] It would be difficult to argue, however, that Narcissus-texts constitute a type of text, regardless of how this type is construed. Manfred Pfister and Ulrich Broich have, however, paid some

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[197] Lotman, *Universe of the Mind*, p. 104.
[198] Lotman, *Universe of the Mind*, p. 104.
[199] Lotman, *Universe of the Mind*, p. 104.
[200] Lotman, *Universe of the Mind*, p. 105f.
[201] Cf. e.g. Holthuis, *Intertextualität*, p. 51ff and Genette, *Palimpsestes*, p. 11.

attention the kind of intertextuality we are dealing with here. They differentiate between *Einzeltextreferenz*, the reference to individual texts, and *Systemreferenz*, the reference to a system of texts.[202] Pfister writes:

> Der Prätext, der dabei ins Spiel kommt, ist nicht mehr ein individueller Prätext, sondern wird von Textkollektiva gebildet oder genauer von den hinter ihnen stehenden und sie strukturierenden textbildenden Systemen. Da diese sich aber in Texten manifestieren und nur über Texte greifbar sind, erscheinen auch bei diesen abstrakteren Relationen die Begriffe „Intertextualität" und „Prätext" angebracht, ohne daß man sie dabei überstrapaziert.[203]

We could thus speak of the Narcissus theme as a system which structures the relations between the individual texts. Pfister enumerates four types of such systems (from weaker to stronger reference – a point which Pfister emphasizes in his polemics with post-structuralist conceptions of intertextuality): the general system of the language (*la langue*); specific types of discourse; genres (*architextualité* in Genette's terminology); myths and archetypes. To perceive of the last kind, pertinent to this investigation, as a system reference is motivated,

> weil (1) Mythos mehr ist als eine Sammlung einzelner Erzählmotive, nämlich deren Verknüpfung zu einem System, und weil (2) ein mythologischer Text kaum je auf einem einzelnen Text zurückgreift, in dem dieser Mythos schon gestaltet war, sondern auf eine ganze Serie von Varianten.[204]

This system, to which texts of the Narcissus tradition refer, thus, in an intertextual framework, describes the relations between the text in such a way that it can be regarded as equivalent to the "invariancy of the variants" of Lotman's symbol. Lachmann, who hypostasizes the intertextual relations in the "mnemonic space of intertextuality", instead speaks of an intertextual *locus*. This is the way Lachmann conceives of Petersburg as cerebralized intertextual space in modern Russian literature. More accurate as a comparison is perhaps her analysis of the *Doppelgänger* in Nikolai Gogol, Fyodor Dostoevsky, Andrei Bely and Vladimir Nabokov, which shows how the figure of the *Doppelgänger* is transposed onto different semantic and semiotic levels.[205]

Lotman's symbol, Pfister's system reference and Lachmann's *locus* thus gives us three different, but, as I believe, internally compatible definitions of the object under

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[202] Ulrich Broich and Manfred Pfister, *Intertextualität: Formen, Funktionen, anglistische Fallstudien*, Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1985 p. 48–58.
[203] Broich and Pfister, p. 53.
[204] Broich and Pfister, p. 56.
[205] Lachmann, *Gedächtnis und Literatur*, p. 463–488.

scrutiny in this study. I take them to describe three different aspects of that which I am investigating. I think, however, that it is also worthwhile to linger for a moment on how I relate to a couple of alternative conceptions of "Narcissus", taken from theoretical traditions which I do not base my investigations on, but with which I nonetheless find it rewarding to entertain a dialogue.

The first is the research tradition known as thematology. If I use the term "Narcissus theme" to denote the ensemble of Lotman's symbol, Pfister's system reference and Lachmann's intertextual locus, it is not only because it is a handier term or because it can be used to cover all those three aspects, but also because – even though I find the theoretical resources presented in this section more useful than those of traditional thematology – I do not wish to make a clean slate with the research tradition of for example Vinge and Esselborn-Krumbiegel. Thematology, the modern history of which goes back to Raymond Trousson's and Elisabeth Frenzel's initiatives in the field in the 1960s, defines theme as a unit of content and uses functional or formal analysis as its chief tools.[206] These are both its strengths and its weaknesses. In focusing on a unit of content – or *Stoff*, as opposed to the other two main areas of traditional literary criticism, *Gehalt* and *Form* – thematology offers opportunities for comparative analysis of very different texts; the theme provides a semantic point of contact for texts of different kinds, literary or non-literary.[207] However, thereby it also presupposes a traditional and somewhat old-fashioned view of the literary work of art and restricts its analysis to one of its aspects, its semantic content. For our purposes, this is not sufficient, since it will be seen that relevant aspects of the Narcissus figurations of our period often transgress the boundaries between content and form, and regard the semiotics of the text just as much as its semantics. Through this isolation of the semantic level, thematology can also arrive at a relatively high level of clarity and rigor of systematic analysis. This clarity, though, comes at the price of *a priori* limiting the outer framework of the variations of the theme. The Narcissuses of my texts will be found to be too protean to be able to fit in such a framework of analysis. Nonetheless, thematology is in no way alien to intertextual analysis, and possibilities of fusing the two have been suggested.[208] I think rather that elements of

[206] For an overview of its modern research tradition, cf. e.g. Elisabeth Frenzel, "Neuansätze in einem alten Forschungszweig: Zwei Jahrzehnte Stoff-, Motiv- und Themenforschung", *Anglia*, 111, 1993, p. 97–117.
[207] Cf. Elisabeth Frenzel, *Stoff- und Motivgeschichte*, Berlin: Erich Schmidt, 1974, p. 7ff and Menachem Brinker, "Theme and Interpretation", in Werner Sollors (ed.), *The Return of Thematic Criticism*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993, p. 21–37.
[208] For example by Frenzel („Neuansätze", p. 100f) and Holger Klein ("Themes and Thematology", *New Comparison*, 6, 1988, p. 1–17, p. 5f).

thematological analysis could be incorporated as parts of the analyses I wish to do in this study. This is also why I have chosen to keep the traditional term "the Narcissus theme".

Also in the intellectual vicinity of my investigation, one will find what with a generic term could be called myth-criticism, i.e. literary criticism based on certain conceptions of the specificity of myth and its relation to literature. There exists a wide range of such conceptions and they are too diverse to be treated as *one* research tradition. I would, however, like to mention one, very influential in German humanities, which I think may be useful as a point of reference not least for our treatment of psychoanalysis's handling of the Narcissus theme, that of Hans Blumenberg. As a historian of philosophy, Blumenberg, in his work *Arbeit am Mythos* (1979), focuses on the relation between myth, dogma and philosophy. It is to be seen as a continuation of his earlier work on metaphor, where he argues for the existence of absolute metaphors, i.e. metaphors which it is not possible to translate into literal language, where the imaginative qualities of figurative speech are not reducible to the logicity of conceptual discourse.[209] He also thinks that the opaque language of metaphor and the transparent language of conceptual discourse historically interact with each other. The metaphor expresses a pre-logical understanding of the world, which conceptual thought makes use of. Myths have a similar relation to conceptual thought. According to Blumenberg, man begins to tell stories to ward off what is called the "absolutism of reality", i.e. the terror one feels faced with an incomprehensible surrounding.[210] Naming and telling stories are the means man possesses to make the unfamiliar familiar and make the world, if not comprehensible (*begreiflich*) so at least tangible (*greifbar*). This is the work *of* myth. In the oral tradition stories are then told and retold, and are thereby exposed to a "Darwinism of words", where only the strongest stories survive and are retold. Strongest here means the stories with the greatest "significance" (*Bedeutsamkeit*), i.e. the greatest general relevance for human existence.[211] The stories that survive the selection process of oral retelling are the ones we call myths. They are thus endowed with a nucleus of great signification. As they make it into written culture, the work *on* myth begins. This work consists in eliciting the meaning that is condensed in the myth, and is done through dogmatism, philosophy and literature. By explaining, interpreting and transforming the myth, reception tries to regain for rational thought the meaning captured in the mythic form. The limit concept of this work is to bring

[209] Cf. Hans Blumenberg, *Paradigmen zu einer Metaphorologie*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1998.
[210] Hans Blumenberg, *Arbeit am Mythos*, Frankfurt am Main: Shuhrkamp, 1984, p. 9ff.
[211] Hans Blumenberg, *Arbeit am Mythos*, p. 67ff.

myth to an end, i.e. to exhaust the significance of the myth, which, although often tried, never succeeds.[212]

I am somewhat skeptical towards the idea that myths are supposed to "contain" an abundance of meaning, which written culture merely extracts from them and I do not feel entitled to subscribe to any propositions on the general origin of myths. It should be noted, though, that what Blumenberg refers to as "myth" is largely in accordance with what I denote by "theme". Myth, in his sense, encompasses the wealth of its written adaptations.[213] The idea that the work on myth is a transhistorical process which interacts with other domains of thought seems to accord well with Lotman's account of the symbol. Moreover, I think that the notion of bringing myth to an end, the effort to exhaust the necessity and relevance of myth, might be hypothesis which it is worthwhile to consider in our discussion on psychoanalysis.

The Problem of Subjectivity

In her reading of Plotin in *Histoires d'amour*, Julia Kristeva interprets Narcissus as a figuration of the upsurge of a speculative interiority in Western thought. She admits that the myth of Narcissus may not be compared to that of Christ or of Dionysus as regards cultural importance, but insists that it possesses a general significance. "Narcisse nous séduit et s'impose comme moteur du subjectivisme occidental […] un cas limite, certes, mais un cas général."[214] In the same vein, the texts that I will examine as figurations of the late-modern subject may not be those that have contributed the most to the history of modern subjectivity. Nonetheless, they offer themselves as litmus papers for reading the state of that history. The history of modern subjectivity is, during this period, reflected in the Narcissus theme. This is the case simply due to inherent qualities of the theme. The modern subject is founded in self-reflection; and few cultural themes in the Western tradition are more strongly associated with self-reflection than the myth of Narcissus. The traditional story of Narcissus lends itself to an emblematic figuration of the modern subject. It is used as such in poems by Romantics like the Schlegels, E. J. Stagnelius and P. D. A. Atterbom, an can be conceived as ideal

[212] Hans Blumenberg, *Arbeit am Mythos*, p. 295ff.
[213] Cf. e.g. Blumenberg, *Arbeit am Mythos*, p. 300ff. On the compatibility between Blumenberg's notion of myth and Broich and Pfister's of *Systemreferenz*, cf. Broich and Pfister, p. 57.
[214] Julia Kristeva, *Histoires d'amour*, Paris: Denoël, 1983, p. 146.

representation of modern subjectivity.[215] It is against such a construction that the Narcissus figurations of our period are set off. In refiguring the Narcissus theme, they are, *eo ipse*, presenting the modern subject turned problematic. In deviating from the traditional story, they figure deviations from the traditional view of the subject.

Famously born in Descartes' heated room in Ulm in November 1619, the subject was declared dead in the 1970s by the post-structuralists.[216] Assuring a unitary foundation for knowledge and legitimacy in reflexive consciousness, the subject is intimately connected with the historical paradigms of modernity and humanism. In postmodern and post-humanist times, this foundation is destabilized and relativized and the subject is found to be non-identical with itself (Derrida), a product of practices of power (Foucault, Lyotard) or desire (Deleuze, Guattari) or an effect of meaning (Barthes). This neat sketch of the history of subjectivity, which supposes a line of subject-constitution from Descartes to Husserl and one of subject-destruction from Nietzsche to Kittler, contains a grain of truth, but hardly the whole story. The subject was vividly defended *outre-rhin*, most notably perhaps by Manfred Frank and attempts to reestablish the subject have been made by Charles Taylor and Paul Ricœur.[217] Furthermore, it can be suggested, as Wolfgang Hübener has, that the subject which has been constructed as the centerpiece of modernity, was completely dead already with Hegel.[218]

The linear history of subjectivity, found for example in most dictionaries of philosophy, can be contrasted with the view of the subject presented by some of its historiographers.[219] The latter generally admit that the story of the rise and fall of the subject is not completely off key, but insist that it be seen as more multi-dimensional and be acknowledged that the destruction of the subject is to some extent co-originary with its constitution.

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[215] Cf. e.g. Katarina Båth, "Den romantiska ironins cirklar", in Leif Dahlberg and Jakob Nilsson (eds.), *Codex and Code: Aesthetics, Language and Politics in an Age of Digital Media*, Linköping: Linköping University Press, 2010, www.ep.liu.se/ecp/042/, accessed 2012-01-18, p. 259–270.

[216] René Descartes, *Valda skrifter*, Stockholm: Natur och kultur, 1998, trans. Konrad Marc-Wogau, p. 34; C. E. J. Caldicott, "Disguises of the Narrating Voice in *Discours de la méthode*", in Paul Gifford and Johnnie Gratton (eds.), *Subject Matters: Subject and Self in French Literature from Descartes to the Present*, Amsterdam/Atlanta: Rodopi, 2000, p. 28–42, p. 28.

[217] Manfred Frank, „Subjekt, Person, Individuum", in Manfred Frank and Anselm Haverkamp (eds.), *Individualität*, München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1998, p. 3–20, *What is Neostructuralism?*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989, trans. Sabine Wilke and Richard Gray, p. 188–387, *Selbstbewußtsein und Selbsterkenntnis: Essays zur analytischen Philosophie der Subjektivität*, Stuttgart: Reclam, 1991; Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989; Paul Ricœur, *Soi-même comme un autre*, Paris: Seuil, 1990.

[218] Wolfgang Hübener, "Der dreifache Tod des modernen Subjekts", in Manfred Frank, Gérard Raulet and Willem van Reijen (eds.), *Die Frage nach dem Subjekt*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1988, p. 101–127.

[219] Cf. e.g. *Les Notions Philosophiques*, Paris: PUF, 1990 ; *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, Basel: Schwabe, 1995; *Ästhetische Grundbegriffe*, Stuttgart/Weimar: Verlag J.B. Metzler, 2003.

Alain Renaut argues that inscribed within the history of modern subjectivity is another history, which runs counter to it, namely that of individualism.[220] Whereas the subject is the central category of humanism – which cherishes freedom in the form of *autonomy*, i.e. to be governed by rules founded in man's own reason and will – the central category of individualism is the individual – the freedom of which is thought of as *independence*, i.e. a freedom without rules. Individualism presupposes humanism but, at the same time, destroys it from within by shattering the holistic perspective which makes the subject a communal category. He thus sees what he calls a "dérive individualiste" or a "moment monadologique", which operates within the history of subjectivity in a line from Leibniz to Nietzsche.

Peter Bürger thinks that the history of subjectivity has been too one-sidedly focused on Descartes in positing its origin.[221] He argues that we should instead see the trio Montaigne-Descartes-Pascal as the inaugurating constellation of modern subjectivity. They each show us a different aspect of the same subject. Montaigne gives us the particular I in its process of experiencing itself. Descartes gives us a general reasoning I, abstracted from its body, which has certain knowledge of that which is outside itself. Pascal shows us an I in existential crisis, which, when it contemplates itself, finds only the horrible *ennui* of its own emptiness. As he goes through the history of subjectivity, he finds not so much a history as elaborations on these three initial positions, which, he argues, still determine our condition as modern subjects.

Peter V. Zima reads the history of subjectivity in the sign of an opposition between the subject as foundational (*zugrundeliegendes*) and as subjected/disintegrating (*unterworfenes*/*zerfallendes*).[222] The subject as foundational is associated with modernity, whereas the subject as subjugated/disintegrating is associated with post-modernity. However, just as in Renault's and Bürger's accounts, the clear-cut diachronicity of epochs falls apart and it turns out that both aspects of the subject are present throughout, although the self-understanding of the different eras emphasize one or the other. Zima credits the period under scrutiny in the present study with the merit of having acknowledged the problematic tension between the two aspects of the subject: "Es ist ein Verdienst des Modernismus als

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[220] Alain Renaut, *L'Ère de l'individu : Contribution á une histoire de la subjectivité*, Paris: Gallimard, 1989.
[221] Peter Bürger, *Das Verschwinden des Subjekts* / Christa Bürger, *Das Denken des Lebens*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2001.
[222] Peter V. Zima, *Theorie des Subjekts: Subjektivität und Identität zwischen Moderne und Postmoderne*, Tübingen/Basel: A. Francke Verlag, 2000.

spätmoderner Selbstkritik der Moderne, diese Dialektik zwischen Zugrundeliegendem und Unterworfenem in ihrer voller Tragweite erkannt zu haben."[223]

The perspectives found in these three books will contribute to distinguishing the nuances of the question subjectivity in the works to be examined. I find them valuable for an open-ended discussion about what my texts say about the question of subjectivity. Or to phrase it as Bürger, the texts will be "daraufhin befragt, was sie über das moderne Subjekt wissen".[224]

Before I go on to outline how the question of subjectivity is to be dealt with in the different chapters of this dissertation, a comment must be made about what in the context of this study stands out due to its absence. There is a relative lack of female writers, both in my selection and in the overview I have presented of the theme in the period between 1890 and 1930. Parallel to this numerical inequality on the side of the authors, there seems to be a gender difference inscribed in the content of the theme – that relating to the opposition between Narcissus and Echo. Naomi Segal writes that "it is not surprising perhaps that myths are often wrenched out of their contexts – but it is particularly disturbing how often Narcissus is wrested out of his essential connexion to Echo".[225] How essential the connection between Narcissus and Echo is considered to be of course depends on the importance we in the history of the theme ascribe to Ovid, who introduced it.[226] In my period it is clear that Echo generally plays a minor part, but she is in no way absent. Furthermore, there are quite a few instances where Pausanias' competing version, which includes Narcissus' twin sister, is actualized. In these cases there is no essential connection between Narcissus and Echo to be broken.

Nonetheless, the Narcissus theme seems to have a stronger appeal for the male imagination. There may also be a valid point in Segal's contention, that the male self-identification is beset with a suppression of femininity which comes back to haunt it. In any case, this male dominance also means that we are looking at a male conception of subjectivity. Whether it makes any difference for the subject to be conceived as male or female (i.e. whether gender difference is assumed to set in at level that is higher or lower than that of the subject), is a question I prefer to leave open. It is a fact, however, that all texts analyzed in this study are written by men. Furthermore, it is a fact that modern subjectivity has produced the most part of its self-understanding in writings by male philosophers. In their

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[223] Zima, p. 91.
[224] Bürger, p. 28.
[225] Naomi Segal, "Narcissus and Echo: Feminine Haunting Masculine", in Lieve Spaas(ed.), *Echoes of Narcissus*, New York: Berghahn, 2000, p. 137–150.
[226] Cf. e.g. Walde, p. 43: „doch prinzipiell ist das Echo kein kanonischer Bestandteil der Geschichte geworden".

parallel works *Das Verschwinden des Subjekts* and *Das Denken des Lebens*, Peter and Christa Bürger have highlighted and examined this fact.[227] Christa Bürger has contributed to the writing of the history of modern subjectivity by paying attention to female responses and corrections to a male conception of subjectivity, mostly in the form of letters. The picture of female subjectivity that surfaces in C. Bürger's work, and that is inset between the male contributions in P. Bürger's account, is one where the ego constitutes itself *in relation to another subject*. This stands in stark contrast to the generally monological conception of the subject in male writings, one which in this respect corresponds well to the texts examined here.

It is not my ambition to give a full account of modern subjectivity as such, nor am I in a position to say anything essential about female subjectivity as opposed to male subjectivity. But it is important to have some idea about what is excluded in the present study – as a consequence of its delimitation to the Narcissus theme around the turn of the century. On the one hand, female perspectives are, relatively speaking, lacking in this study. On the other hand, dialogical conceptions of subjectivity are also, relatively speaking, lacking in this study. A critique of the subject-tradition with regards to its conception of the subject as solitary and monological began to gather momentum from the 1920s onwards in the works of dialogical thinkers such as Martin Buber, Mikhail Bakhtin and Emmanuel Levinas. They argued that the *I* cannot be conceived of as isolated from its relation to a *you*.

This can also be seen as a continuation of the secularization of the thinking about subjectivity. As God was progressively extracted from the account of subjectivity, the subject lost its transcendent foundation, and thereby its relation to that which is external to itself. It tended to become a pure immanence, which, for a subject, is a contradiction in terms. It would only re-cognize *itself* in the world. In Renaut's terms, it was a completion of the monadological moment which undermined subjectivity as such.[228] Trying to bring the Other into some sort of relation with the sameness of the subject, thus became a way of reinserting some necessary kind of transcendence into the conception of subjectivity, and thereby, of saving the idea of the subject. The attempts – abounding throughout the 20th century – to, in Habermas' words, find a way out of the philosophy of the subject, have often been focused on finding a way to conceive of the dialogical relation as primary to, or co-originary with,

[227] Peter Bürger, *Das Verschwinden des Subjekts* / Christa Bürger, *Das Denken des Lebens*.
[228] Cf. Renaut, p. 227–257.

subjectivity. When we go to the Narcissus theme around 1900, however, these perspectives are scarce.

My approach to the question of subjectivity in this study will, in accordance with the historiographies cited above, be to regard it as a historically situated problem without clear-cut diachronic divisions. In line with Zima's assessment of late modernity, the texts to be examined will be shown to present a problematic subjectivity, torn between its classical foundational conception and different aspects which tend to undermine this conception. The problems of subjectivity will, for heuristic reasons, be presented in opposition to what can be conceived as a classical conception of the subject, albeit this conception may not be attributable to any one particular author. These problems will, at the same time, be shown as corresponding with certain types of refigurations of the Narcissus theme, and will therefore also form the basis of the division between the chapters in this study.

There are many different modern uses of the word subject, depending on the field in which the subject appears. However, they all trace their origin to the alteration in its meaning in the 17th century.[229] In pre-modern times, the subject was that about which something is predicated. With Descartes (although he does not use the word), the concept – and with it, the worldview which is implied by it – underwent an epistemological turn.[230] The subject became not that which has qualities, but that which has certain knowledge. However, the subject keeps its foundational qualities: it is the ground for knowledge about the world. This shift in foundation marks the shift to modernity: man is discovered as subject, and, thereby as foundation: foundation of his acts, of history, of truth, of law etc.[231] The whole of human enterprise is founded in man, or more precisely, in his self-awareness. Jürgen Habermas writes that Hegel was the first to discover subjectivity as the principle of modernity and explains its general structure:

> In der Moderne verwandeln sich also religiöse Leben, Staat und Gesellschaft, sowie Wissenschaft, Moral und Kunst in ebensoviele Verkörperungen des Prinzips der Subjektivität. Deren Struktur wird *als solche* erfaßt in der Philosophie, nämlich als abstrakte Subjektivität in Descartes „Cogito ergo sum", in der Gestalt des absoluten Selbstbewußtseins bei Kant. Es handelt sich um die Struktur des erkennenden Subjekts, das sich auf sich als Objekt zurückbeugt, um sich wie in einem Spiegelbild – eben „spekulativ" – zu ergreifen.[232]

[229] This does thus not apply to those English senses which are based on its pre-modern meaning, as in "the subject of a speech", or to its grammatical meaning.
[230] Cf. e.g. *Enzyklopädie Philosophie und Wissenschaft*, Stuttgart/Weimar: Verlag J.B. Metzler, 1980–1996, „Subjekt".
[231] Cf. e.g. Renaut, p. 27f.
[232] Jürgen Habermas, *Der philosophische Diskurs der Moderne*, Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp, 1988, p. 29.

Hegel discovers, but does not initiate this principle, which has been in operation since the beginning of modernity in the 16th century. The modern elevation of man to the measure of everything finds its philosophical formulation in the act of reflection as an act of foundation, as well as in its positing of knowledge and reason at the top of the hierarchy among human faculties. It is with this principle of subjectivity that the myth of Narcissus has a certain affinity. In Ovid's version we find, it can be argued, the same association between knowledge, reflection and humanity (mortality). The challenge which structures Ovid's account is Tiresias' prophetical "si se non noverit". This is negatively fulfilled, whereby Narcissus dies and settles the ambiguity pointed out by Orlowsky, whether Narcissus is man or god.[233] Of course, the Narcissus story as illustration of the principle of subjectivity is far from perfect, not least since Narcissus dies rather than, for example, founds an empire. This a good reason for it not to have been used as such by the principle's proponents. However, it makes it all the more suiting for those who focus on the gaps and problems in this principle.

The first group of texts (not included in this study) that I will examine stresses the part of the theme which Vinge has termed the error motif – that Narcissus does *not* recognize himself in the mirror. They thereby turn their attention to the reflection at the heart of subjectivity. The relation between the one who sees (ego) and the one who is seen (self) is thematized. In a line of great philosophers of the subject, such as Descartes, Kant and Husserl, this self-awareness takes the form of an immediate self-knowledge of the conscious subject. However, the immediate self-reflection in the clarity of consciousness has never been the full picture of subjectivity. As Bürger observes, the Cartesian subject obtains its control over nature only at the price of a severe self-discipline, which excludes precisely those aspects of it which are brought out by Montaigne, i.e. the incessant instability of the corporeal-mental unity that makes self-knowledge an interminable process of self-experience. In German Idealism, the self-reflection of the subject becomes a process which ends in self-recognition. In the texts I will examine there is an emphasized lack of correspondence between the one who sees and the one who is seen, between ego and self. The conscious observer does not recognize himself in the mirror, but finds instead an often uncanny distortion of his ego. The mirror displays an image which belongs to a level either "above" or "below" that of consciousness: that of a social *persona* or of unconscious mental states. Thereby they also put

[233] Cf. Orlowsky, p. 48.

in motion a dynamics of surface and depth, in which the individual attempts to maintain its identity.

The second group of texts (chapter 2, to be extended) – mainly, but not exclusively, associated with French Symbolism – stresses the mediality of the mirror. That through which the image is seen gains a "thickness" by being thematized as such. No longer is the mirror any neutral reflecting surface, but the central part of the theme and that which determines the seer and the seen in their mutual relation. By doing so, these texts explore the tension between subjectivity and the finitude of individual existence. As many authors have pointed out, a subject is not necessarily an individual.[234] There may in fact be a strong tension between the two, as in Renaut's account, strong enough to challenge the hegemony of the subject.[235] This tension between individuality and subjectivity is largely ignored by the Cartesian *cogito* which on the basis of observations made by the individual founds the legitimacy of man, without acknowledging any discrepancy between the two categories. The conflict between the individual and general subjectivity is increasingly noticed during the 19th century, above all by Nietzsche, but also by author like Max Stirner and, closer to the authors to be discussed, Maurice Barrès. The texts studied in this chapter examine the fate of the mortal individual and, often against the background of Romanticism and German Idealism, ask how this fragile and lonely being connects to or is set apart from general subjectivity.

The third group of texts (chapter 3, to be extended) – those of early psychoanalysis – try, in Blumenberg's words, to bring myth to an end. They attempt to exhaust the significance of the Narcissus theme by bringing it under the control of rational explanation. The theme in itself is emptied of explanatory value and substituted for by the concept of narcissism. This destruction of the theme by means of rational explanation corresponds to an overthrowing of the reign of the subject. The subject is deprived of its foundational status and is instead itself explained as a product of the play between instinctual forces in what Ricœur has called a "reduction *de* la conscience" or an "*epochè* retournée".[236] The foundational unity of the *res cogitans* – that of mind, consciousness, ego and reason – is broken up and shown to be the contingent product of forces at work on a infra- as well as a superindividual level, ultimately reducible to the great mythic forces of *Eros*, *Thanatos* and

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[234] Frank, „Subjekt, Person, Individuum"; Zima, *Theorie des Subjekts*, p. 4–24.
[235] Renaut, *L'Ère de l'individu*.
[236] Paul Ricœur, *De l'interprétation: Essai sur Freud*, Paris: Seuil, 1965, p. 126. Paul Ricœur, *Freud and Philosophy. An Essay on Interpretation*, New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 1970, trans. Denis Savage, p. 122: "reduction *of* consciousness", "epochē in reverse".

Ananke. It is in this sense that Freud is the heir of Nietzsche and the predecessor not only of Lacan, but also of Adorno, Foucault and Deleuze.

The fourth group of texts (chapter 4, to be extended), written after the psychoanalytic attack on the theme, recollect the scattered pieces of the Narcissus tradition. Influenced by the psychoanalytic concept of narcissism, they also reconnect to the Narcissus theme. The Narcissus story is here not readily recognizable in its traditional outline. Instead, pieces of it are spread out in the texts, interspersed on different levels of its structure. The way that these texts thematize subjectivity brings up one of its features that has not yet been mentioned. Zima, in his account of subjectivity, makes use of the possibility to extrapolate Greimas' actant-model onto other domains than its original narratological context. He states that the subject is constituted in relation to a sender (*Auftraggeber*, Greimas' *destinateur*).[237] This sender, which in its narratological context provides the hero with a narrative program, can also be found in general subjectivity: "Ein politischer Führer, eine Partei oder Gewerkschaft, die Wissenschaft oder die Kunst können zu solchen Auftraggebern werden und in ihrer Eigenschaft als *destinateurs* das *destin*, das Schicksal des Einzelnen entscheidend beeinflussen."[238] In Ovid's Narcissus story, such a sender is obviously present in the shape of Tiresias, who presents the hero with the destiny to not know himself – or die. The sender is also present in the history of subjectivity. Zima writes about Descartes that "der Begründer des modernen Rationalismus den dem *cogito* zugrundeliegenden Subjekt-Aktanten als *Beauftragten* eines göttlichen *Auftraggebers* (*destinateur*, Greimas) auffaßt".[239] About Hegel he writes: „Synonym oder fast-synonym mit Gott, wird Hegels Weltgeist zum neuen Auftraggeber der kollektiven und individuellen Subjekte, die in der weltgeschichtlichen Erzählung in seinem Namen agieren."[240] The texts that I will study in this chapter struggle with this question of sender or *destinateur*. They display an attempt at self-empowerment, where the subject strives to become its own sender. They tell of heroes who not only struggle to succeed in a quest presented to them, but also to define that very quest, and thereby become their own masters. Intertwined with this aspect is also that of a reunification of the self under the aegis of individualism. These depart from a sense of a split self and project dreams of a healing of the self which evades the perspective of being subjected to super-individual forces – be it those of society or of institutionlized religion.

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[237] The French original, *destinateur*, is a neologism which substitutes *expéditeur* in analogy with *destinataire* (receiver), to emphasize its relevance for the *destin* (destiny) of the subject.
[238] Zima, p. 11.
[239] Zima, p. 95.
[240] Zima, p. 108.

2. André Gide, *Le Traité du Narcisse*

The story about Narcissus has often been regarded as the emblematic myth of Symbolism, but it was not until 1891 that Paul Valéry and André Gide published the first Symbolist treatments of it.[241] In these texts, the quality of the medium of reflection, the water, receives a heightened attention; it becomes an element of significant structural importance. Through it, the texts explore the relation between individual subjectivity and some conception of general subjectivity. They thematize what Renaut has called a "dérive individualiste" in the history of subjectivity.

Gide and Valéry had become acquainted through their common friend Pierre Louÿs and first met when Gide spent some time in Montpellier around Christmas 1890. It is well-known that during these first weeks of what ended up being a life-long friendship, Gide and Valéry went for walks in the Jardin des Plantes in Montpellier, where they discovered what is said to be the grave of Edward Young's daughter, named Eliza, but called Narcissa.[242] The inscription on the grave, "NARCISSAE PLACANDIS MANIBUS", served as the motto for Valéry's poem "Narcisse parle".[243] *Le Traité du Narcisse (Théorie de symbole)* was the first text that Gide published in his own name. His first book, *Les Cahiers d'André Walter* (1891), had received considerable praise from leading Symbolists such as Mallarmé and Maurice Maeterlinck.[244] In early 1891 Louÿs and Maurice Barrès had introduced him not only to Valéry, but also to the literary coteries around José-Maria de Heredia and Mallarmé, the

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[241] Cf. e.g. Michaud, *Message poétique du symbolisme*, p. 389; Göran Printz-Påhlson, *Solen i spegeln: Essäer om lyrisk modernism*, Stockholm: Bonniers, 1996, p. 11–40 and Esselborn-Krumbiegel, "Das Narziß-Thema in der symbolistischen Lyrik", p. 279. Valéry's poem was published in *La Conque* in March 1891 and Gide's *Le Traité du Narcisse (Théorie du symbole)* was printed in a "tirage provisoire" of twelve copies at the beginning of December 1891 – distributed to, among others, Valéry, Louÿs, Henri de Régnier and Stéphane Mallarmé – and published in January 1892 (André Gide, *Romans: Récits et soties. Oeuvres lyriques*, Paris: Gallimard, 1958, p. 1460 and Robidoux, *Le Traité du Narcisse*, p. 13, 33f). It seems likely that Gide's text was written between June and November 1891 (Robidoux, *Le Traité du Narcisse*, p. 31f). There is a mention of "*Traité du Narcisse*" in the diary already on 8 May 1890, before Gide had met Valéry, but, as Réjean Robidoux argues, the idea of what was to become the text of *Le Traité* must then have been very vague and it is furthermore possible that it was not sharply distinguished from the text he was working on at that time, *Les Cahiers d'André Walter* (André Gide, *Journal I: 1887-1925*, Paris: Gallimard, 1996, p. 119; Robidoux, *Le Traité du Narcisse*, p. 14ff). Jean Delay (*La Jeunesse d'André Gide: T. II*, p. 115f) and Daniel Moutote (*Le Journal de Gide et les problèmes du moi (1889–1925)*, Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1968, p. 10) argue that they were, from the outset, conceived as two different but intimitley related texts.

[242] Cf. e.g. Patrick Pollard, "Le Contenu du 'Narcisse'", in *Les débuts littéraires: d'André Walter à L'Immoraliste*, Paris: Gallimard, 1969, p. 152–164, p. 154, Robidoux, *Le Traité du Narcisse*, p. 21, Henri Mondor, *Les Premiers temps d'une amitié: André Gide et Paul Valéry*, Monaco: Éditions du Rocher, 1947, p. 113f and Jean Delay, *La Jeunesse d'André Gide: T. II. D'André Walter à André Gide. 1890–1895*, Paris: Gallimard, 1957, p. 116.

[243] Paul Valéry, *Œuvres*, Paris: Gallimard, 1961, p. 82f: « to appease the manes of Narcissa ».

[244] Delay, *La Jeunesse d'André Gide: T. II*, p. 41f, 48.

latter of whom he embraced enthusiastically.[245] Mallarmé became his "maître" and Maeterlinck invited him for a sojourn in Brussels in the summer of 1891.

The writing of *Le Traité* occurs at a stage in Gide's literary and intellectual development where the central tenor of *Les Cahiers* – notably Schopenhauer's philosophy and the pietistic Christianity of Gide's youth – is retained, while being fertilized by his discovery of Symbolism. He considered himself a Symbolist already when he first came in contact with the "school" and there was no hesitation in his ambitions. In a letter to Valéry on 26 January 1891, he writes:

> Donc, je suis symboliste et sachez-le. Ils disent Moréas chef de l'école. Oh! non – mais Mallarmé certes – parnassien peut-être pour la forme, mais symboliste dans l'âme.
>
> Donc, Mallarmé pour la poésie, Maeterlinck pour le drame – et quoique auprès d'eux deux, je me sente bien un peu gringalet, j'ajoute Moi pour le roman.[246]

Le Traité, with the subtitle *Théorie du symbole*, has often, with good reason, been read as a Symbolist manifesto, where the young author, aspiring to become the great novelist of the Mallarméan school, lays out his poetological foundation.

Given the biographical background of the text, along with it being dedicated to Valéry, one would expect an intimate relation between Valery's poem and Gide's treatise.[247] In the treatment of the theme, however, the differences are more striking than the similarities: Gide focuses on Narcissus leaning over the water, Valéry lets Narcissus drown in the source; Gide discards the nymphs, Valéry equates them with the source; Gide has an almost mute Narcissus, Valéry's poem is Narcissus' monologue; Gide abstracts from most of the traditional scene, Valéry emphasizes the setting of the action; Gide uses Narcissus principally as a means of posing metaphysical questions, Valéry focuses intently on Narcissus' psychological state etc. In a way, it seems as though Gide and Valéry developed the theme in diametrically opposed directions.

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[245] Jean-Michel Wittmann, *Symboliste et déserteur: Les Œuvres "fin de siècle" d'André Gide*, Paris: Honoré Champion, 1997, p. 12.
[246] André Gide and Paul Valéry, *Correspondance 1890–1942*, Paris: Gallimard, 1955, p. 46.
[247] This expectation gains even more support by the fact that Gide in the letters addresses Valéry as "Narcisse", just as Valéry speaks of himself by that name. Gide to Valéry, May 1891, and Valéry to Gide, 3 March 1892, *Correspondance 1890–1942*, p. 81, 150.

Judging from the letters, Gide did not at all approve of Valéry's treatment of the theme, and he is rather severe in his criticism of it.[248] Gide above all considers Valéry's poem to be too fragmentary and without the unity demanded by the "dream" of Narcissus: "il vous faut prendre le courage de le refaire […] vous le feriez en de longues heures toutes hantées et solitaires en l'enchantement du seul rêve: il faudrait cela pour l'unité réfléchie de Narcisse en son rêve".[249] The opinion that Valéry's poem does not attain the proper expression of Gide's and Valéry's common dream recurs in the letters: "Narcisse n'est pas aussi beau que le désirait votre rêve (et le mien)", and is reflected in the original dedication in Gide's text: "À mon ami PAUL AMBROISE VALERY avec qui j'ai fait un tel rêve" (AG 7).[250] It seems thus that the common point of departure for Gide and Valéry was not so much the explicit rendering of the story as a more vaguely defined "dream" that should be expressed through the figure of Narcissus. What Gide may be referring to when he speaks of a "dream" is possibly the influence exerted on Gide by Valéry, characterized by Robidoux as the Symbolist ideas of a metaphysical art able to expose the universe as a harmonically united whole and the idea of the poet who is able, through divinatory sight, to see his own *esprit* in every natural object.[251]

As stated above, Gide refers to "l'unité réfléchie de Narcisse en son rêve". This unity is one of the major obstacles to any interpretation of the text. It is a very dense and tightly woven text, for which every paraphrase must necessarily risk destroying the integral unity as it tries to explicate any of the parts of the text. When the text was finished, Gide wrote to Valéry:

> Mon *Narcisse* est fini. Je ne sais qu'en penser. Il est pourléché et je n'y saurais rien changer que tout – mais je crois que c'est étriqué.
>
> Cela te plaira-t-il?
>
> Toujours l'effort pour l'écrire n'est-il pas perdu, car il m'a débrouillé toute mon esthétique, ma morale et ma philosophie. Et l'on ne m'empêchera pas de croire qu'il *faut* que tout *auteur* ait une philosophie, une morale, une esthétique *particulières*. On ne crée rien sans cela. L'œuvre n'est qu'une manifestation de cela.[252]

I will attempt to extract some of this philosophy, aesthetics and ethics, while at the same time presenting an interpretation of the text as a literary work. I agree with Christian Angelet when

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[248] Gide to Valéry, 1 March 1891, *Correspondance 1890–1942*, p. 56f.
[249] Gide to Valéry, 1 March 1891, *Correspondance 1890–1942*, p. 57.
[250] Gide to Valéry, 29 March 1891, *Correspondance 1890–1942*, p. 75.
[251] Robidoux, *Le Traité du Narcisse*, p. 26f.
[252] Gide to Valéry, 3 November 1891, *Correspondance 1890–1942*, p. 134.

he with regard to myth in the text states that, "[e]xpliquer, c'était ici dénaturer."[253] One of the main problems for the explication is that Gide aims at an expression which, as Angelet writes, "ne peut en aucun cas se décomposer en un *signifiant* et un *signifié*."[254] He strives towards a "pure" expression, where there is no difference between meaning and being. To show this it will however be necessary to somewhat denature the text, while trying to do as little violence as possible to it. Contrary to Angelet, I think that one should linger upon the differences in modes of signification – the different codes and the way they interrelate with each other – which are present in Gide's text despite their internal strife to unity.

I will argue that three different codes are interwoven in this text, codes which, with reference to the self-description of the text, will be termed theory, myth and symbol. However, since the text tends toward a universal unification, centering on the iconic symbol of the *narcissus poeticus*, all of the aspects examined will be seen to converge. Nonetheless, the task of analysis is to analyze, and by examining the ways in which the different codes relate to each other through the reflexive medium of the water, I hope to achieve some understanding of how *Le Traité* represents the problem of subjectivity and how it makes use of the Narcissus theme.

The Hierarchy of Codes

The Narcissus theme is derived from a myth, and the most essential quality of a myth is that it is narrative. The narrative has also been the traditional way to represent the theme. In Gide's text there is, however, a strong tendency towards denarrativisation. It has been noted by Vinge that the Romantic treatments of the theme, by focusing on the reflection episode, deemphasize the narrative, and Esselborn-Krumbiegel finds that the Symbolists tend to dissolve the narrative into impressions and images.[255] In Gide's text, this denarrativisation is, as I see it, at work within the text itself. It is above all the temporal dimension – the most basic characteristic of any narrative – that is threatened, and the detemporalization is effected by two different means of signification: the symbol and the concept. The narrative structure of the myth about Narcisse is challenged, on the one hand by the symbolic image of the

[253] Christian Angelet, *Symbolisme et invention formelle dans les premiers écrits d'André Gide:* Le Traité du Narcisse*,* Le Voyage d'Urien*,* Paludes, Gent: Romanica Gandensia, 1982, p. 32.
[254] Angelet, *Symbolisme et invention formelle*, p. 33.
[255] Vinge, p. 313 and Esselborn-Krumbiegel, p. 294.

narcissus flower bending over the water, and on the other hand by the theoretical interpretation of the myth in a conceptual discourse about metaphysics, poetics and ethics.

I will argue that three different codes structure the text. They are continually competing for hermeneutical priority. Even more often, however, they give up hermeneutical priority to each other, and are thereby ordered hierarchically. All three types of discourse are present already in the title: *Le Traité du Narcisse (Théorie du symbole)*. We have three different ways of representing truth: theory, myth and symbol. The first works with concepts, the second with stories and the third with images.

In the title, the preference given to theory is unambiguous: it is a *treatise* on the myth and a *theory* of the symbol. The reader is led to expect a theoretical explanation of the myth and the symbol. However, as soon as we enter the text, theoretical discourse gives way to myth: "Les livres ne sont peut-être pas une chose bien nécessaire; quelques mythes d'abord suffisaient." (AG 7)[256] Erudite explanation gives preference to myth. This is the same move that we find in the last paragraph of the text: "Ce traité n'est peut-être pas quelque chose de bien nécessaire. Quelques mythes d'abord suffisaient." (AG 26)[257] In this way, the text is framed as a theory, but downplays the validity of theory. The opening paragraph continues with a narrative statement, which emphasizes mythic discourse: "Le peuple s'étonnait à l'apparence des fables et sans comprendre il adorait" (AG 7).[258] Before the end of this sentence, however, we are already turning towards symbolic signification; it continues: "les prêtres attentifs, penchés sur la profondeur des images, pénétraient lentement l'intime sens du hiéroglyphe" (AG 7).[259] The "fables" have already turned into "images". Moreover, the hieroglyph(s) that they are interpreting should in this context not be seen as the linguistic expression of a story, but rather, as Liselotte Dieckmann has argued, following a tradition from the Renaissance and German Romanticism, as "mere unlinguistic symbols of ideas", "a correspondence between idea and form".[260] In the final paragraph, a similar displacement from myth to symbol occurs when the myths that the priests want to explain are transformed into "les plus secrets trésors du temple", "qu'on profane en les montrant" (AG 26), i.e. are given a spatial rather than temporal form of existence.[261]

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[256] AGE 45: "Perhaps books are not all that necessary; originally a few myths sufficed".
[257] AGE 49: "Perhaps this treatise is not all that necessary. At first a few myths sufficed."
[258] AGE 45: "The people, amazed at the appearance of these fables, and uncomprehending, worshipped them".
[259] AGE 45: "the attentive priests pondered the depths of these images, and slowly fathomed the inner meaning of the hieroglyph".
[260] Liselotte Dieckmann, "The Metaphor of Hieroglyphics in German Romanticism", *Comparative Literature*, 7:4, 1955, p. 306–312, p. 311, 312.
[261] AGE 50: "the temple's most secret treasures"; "in displaying them profanes".

In this way, theory, myth and symbol are all present in the first and final paragraphs of the text. They remain so throughout the text, but hermeneutical priority shifts. As we have seen, theoretical discourse appears to constitute the frame of the text. However, as soon as we enter the text, precedence is given over to myth, which is explicitly said to be the only thing necessary. Here follows Gide's version of the Narcissus myth. Theoretical discourse is certainly still present, but it is controlled by myth. Conceptual thought is now placed on the allegorical level of the narrative: The canal at which Narcisse arrives is the river of time and it is explicitly explained how the allegory is to be understood. Thus, theoretical discourse coexists with mythic narrative, but the former is contained by the latter. The myth has the upper hand over theory: the latter can only explain what the story gives as explanandum. This is most obviously seen with regard to time: narrative time is prior to conceptual time (the story of Narcisse begins before he arrives at the river of time). The latter is exposed and manipulated within the former.

However, within the mythic narrative there is another tendency: one toward symbolization. The narrative tends to thicken and become absorbed by the iconic symbol of Narcisse leaning over the water, thereby countering the temporal nature of narrative in favor of spatial form in the sense of Joseph Frank's classical essay.[262] Throughout the text, there is a recurrent emphasis on Narcisse in his traditional posture. In the introduction there is an italicized summary of the traditional story. The summary includes most of the traditional motifs and seems intended to evoke an unspecific version of the well-known fable. Interesting to note, however, is that this summary inaugurates the denarrativizing tendency, by including only verbs in the *imparfait*, none in the *passé simple*. It is not possible to distinguish any diachronic relations between any two events. The most basic requirement for a narrative – temporal succession – is missing. The only elements that may contradict this tendency are the two causal relations – "*c'est pourquoi*" (AG 7), "*parce qu'il*" (AG 8).[263] But in this context, the causality relates different traits of Narcisse's character rather than different events. The narrative has been transformed into a description of scene and character. The only temporal adverb stresses the continuity of Narcisse in his emblematic posture: "*tranquille et penché, tout le jour il contemplait son image…*" (AG 8).[264] As Gide develops his version of the story, the leaning Narcisse becomes the normal condition, toward which the narrative strives to

[262] Cf. Joseph Frank, *The Idea of Spatial Form*, New Brunswick/London: Rutgers University Press, 1991.
[263] AGE 45: "*that is why*"; "*because*".
[264] AGE 45: "*peacefully reclining, all day long he contemplated his image…*".

return. As he arrives at the river of time, he takes "la traditionelle posture" (AG 10) and when the story concludes, "il reprend sa calme attitude" (AG 25). [265]

In this way, Narcisse leaning over the water becomes something of a *telos* for the narrative. But the image also absorbs the narrative by containing it within itself. When, in the end, Narcisse leans over the appearance of the world (the river of time), he "sent vaguement en lui, résorbées, les générations humaines qui passent" (AG 25).[266] These human generations have already passed in the numbered sections, which makes it clear that Narcisse, through the view of his own image, perceives the whole central story. The great narrative of humanity is in this sense contained within his image.[267]

Other evidence of the detemporalization of the narrative is the paratextual markers. The title of the treatise is *Le Traité* du *Narcisse* and not *Le Traité* de *Narcisse* – thus evoking the flower, *le narcisse*, rather than the name, *Narcisse* – and the original cover (made by Louÿs) has the text "TRAITÉ DV", posed above a picture of a narcissus flower. In this way, a strong metaphorical relation is established between the character Narcisse leaning over the water and the solitary narcissus flower in the same posture.[268] Narcisse as a flower is of course static in a more fundamental way than Narcisse as a man.[269]

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[265] AGE 45: "his traditional posture". AGE 49: "he recovers his calm serenity".

[266] AGE 49: "vaguely feels the transient generations of humanity re-absorbed into him".

[267] This is an indication that the whole central part should be read as a *mise en abyme*, an issue which will be further developed below.

[268] As Robidoux observes, the image of the flower, even more than the story, seems to have held a particular place in Gide's imagination (Robidoux, *Le Traité du Narcisse*, p. 19f). Gide seems to have had a great admiration for the narcissi of his childhood Uzès, where he saw the solitary flowers shining like stars.

[269] In the 1899 edition of the text, Gide added the motto "nuper in me littore vidi" (AG 7), a quote from Virgil's second eclogue (Virgil, *Eclogues: Georgics. Aeneid I-VI*, Cambridge/London: Harvard University Press, 1999, trans. H. Rushton Fairclough, *Eclogues* 2:25: "on the shore the other day I looked at myself"). Virgil's text does not deal with the Narcissus theme, but the narcissus flower appears in it, which thereby strengthens the association to the flower.

Virgil's eclogues seem to have exerciced some influence on Gide at the time of writing *Le Traité*. Patrick Pollard cites a 1892 letter from Gide to Madeleine Rondeaux, where he speaks about the influence of Virgil's *Eclogues* on his treatise (Pollard, "Le Contenu du 'Narcisse'", p. 159), and *Le Subjectif*, where Gide listed his readings between 1889 and 1893, has three mentions of the *Eclogues* during the summer of 1891, when *Le Traité* was conceived (Jacques Cotnam, "Le *Subjectif*, ou les lectures d'André Walter (1889–1893)", in *Les débuts littéraires: d'*André Walter *à* L'Immoraliste, Paris: Gallimard, 1969, p. 15–113, p. 106).

It is difficult, however, to see any direct relation between the overall theme or the action of Virgil's poem and Gide's text. The second eclogue is about the shepherd Corydon's unanswered love for Alexis and it consists almost exclusively of the former's lonely song to the latter. Pollard likens Corydon's unanswered feelings for Alexis to Adam's desire for his other half (Pollard, "Le Contenu du 'Narcisse'", p. 160). This seems not quite fitting, since Adam's carnal desire plays such a minor part in the treatise and the only common denominator between the two desires is that they do not lead to happiness. I consider it more reasonable to delimit the influence of Virgil on *Le Traité* to certain poetic images and moods. For instance, Corydon's argumentation for the advantages of his simple and lonely rural existence over the supposed luxuries and worldliness of urban life seems to parallel Gide's insistence on importance of solitude for artistic creation.

What is set in relief by the phrase chosen for the motto is not the flower, though, but the other element of the symbolic image, water. It refers to the moment when the protagonist Corydon has been able to see his own image when "cum placidum ventis staret mare", i.e. in an extraordinarily serene state of a body of water that is often seen as an immense source of dynamic power.[270] This is parallel to the symbolic manipulations of water in *Le Traité*. The flowing water is in the theoretical-allegorical interpretation seen as the abstract concept of time. In symbolic discourse, we turn the other direction: towards its tactile concreteness. If time is the flux of water, it is possible to stop time, just as it is possible to stop the water. It is this possibility that is examined in the three numbered sections. If time/flux were to stop, the image in the water – the symbol – would become the pure and unfalsified image of the idea. In section II the possibility of making time stop by means of religion is examined. That this is possible stems from the fact that "comme le temps ne fuit que par la fuite des choses, chaque chose s'accroche et se crispe pour alentir un peu cette course et pouvoir apparaître mieux" (AG 18f).[271] If everything were to stop, then, in pious contemplation of the kerygma, so would time. However, this attempt fails, because it has not been able to control mythic narrative: "parce qu'un joueur de dés n'avait pas arrêté son vain geste, parce qu'un soldat voulait gagner un tunique, parce que quelqu'un ne regardait pas" (AG 20).[272]

The other possibility to stop time depends on the intrinsic qualities of water. It is explained in section II:

The phrase where the narcissus flower appears in the poem, "narcissum et florem jungit" (Virgil, *Eclogues* 2:48: "blends narcissus and sweet-scented fennel flower") , was meant to serve as the motto for a poem called "Narcisse secret", from which Gide quoted a fragment in a letter to Valéry on 21 March 1892 (Gide to Valéry, *Correspondance 1890–1942*, p. 154):

> Le mystère
> De la grotte qui s'ouvre au flanc du roc sonore
> Velu de folles herbes d'or, où l'incurie
> De la nymphe laissait vers l'onde qu'il colore
> Le sang tiède couler de sa vulve mûrie.

The poem was never published, though, and it is difficult to establish any clear relation between it and *Le Traité*, apart from the unmistakably Symbolist tone of the poem and its close association between music and essential being.

[270] Virgil, *Eclogues* 2:26: "by grace of the winds, the sea was at peace and still".

[271] AGE 48: "Since time flies only through the flight of things, each thing clings fast and tenses itself in order to slow this course a little and so be able the better to appear."

[272] AGE 48 : "because one of those casting lots has not checked his vain gesture, because a soldier wished to win a tunic, because someone did not watch".

> Le Paradis [i.e. the timeless state] est sous l'apparence. Chaque chose détient, virtuelle, l'intime harmonie de son être, comme chaque sel, en lui, l'archetype de son cristal; – et vienne un temps de nuit tacite, où les eaux plus denses descendent: dans les abîmes imperturbées fleuriront les trémies sécrètes… (AG 18)[273]
>
> It [i.e. Paradise/the timeless state] remains beneath appearances. Everything is in potential possession of the intimate harmony of its being, as each salt, in itself, possesses the archetype of its crystal – and a time of tacit night comes when the densest waters descend: in the imperturbed gulfs secret crystal-clusters will flower… (AGE 47f)

In this passage, we learn that when water thickens, the salts that it contains are transformed into crystals, which are at the same time likened to flowers. The crystal – which is at the same time a flower – is thus the image for time having stopped. This is what the poet manages to create:

> Car l'oeuvre d'art est un cristal – Paradis partiel ou l'idée refleurit en sa pureté supérieure; où, comme dans l'Eden disparu, l'ordre normal et nécessaire a disposé toutes les formes dans une réciproque et symétrique dépendance, où l'orgeuil du mot ne supplante pas la Pensée, – où les phrases rhythmiques et sûres, symboles encore, mais symboles purs, où les paroles, se font transparentes et révélatrices. (AG 22f)
>
> Because the work of art is a crystal – partial paradise in which the Idea flourishes anew in its superior purity; in which, as in vanished Eden, the natural and necessary order has arranged all forms within a reciprocal and symmetrical dependence, in which the pride of the word does not supplant the thought – in which the sure and rhythmic phrases, still symbols, but pure symbols, in which words make themselves transparent and revealing. (AGE 49)

It is obvious that this is valid for the text we are reading. What Narcisse sees in the water is at the same time himself, a flower and the crystal that is the work of art, situated outside of time, and therefore outside of mythic narrative. Myth, then, has given way to symbol. The text seems to depict, on the highest level, the symbolic image of the narcissus bending over its own image in the water.

We find, thus, that the codes of the text are hierarchically ordered, proceeding from theory, over myth, to symbol. This organization, which determines the relations between ordering and ordered, is simultaneously one which determines the opposite poles of center and periphery and pure and impure signification. Theory, subordinated to both myth and symbol, is what meets the reader in paratexts, introduction and conclusion; myth is what is

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[273] "Trémie" is a "[m]acle de cristallisation du sel marin en forme de pyramide creuse" (*Le Nouveau Petit Robert*, Paris: Dictionnaire Le Robert, 2004).

found inside the treatise; and symbol, finally, is the distillate of the myth. Theory is also the most impure form of signification, that which only amplifies the myths, which in turn is the temporal approximation of symbol, which is a completely transparent expression. The transitions and relations between these codes are mediated by the medium of reflection, the water. In the myth it has its natural fluid form; in theory it is abstracted into an allegory; in symbol it is frozen in a crystal.

In distinguishing three different interwoven layers of the text, I am making further distinctions than previous research, which has generally emphasized Gide's rapprochement between myth and (symbolist) literature.[274] Angelet also stresses the difference that nonetheless exists between literature and myth in Gide's account.[275] As shown in the above, however, I think that the text's character of treatise should also be appreciated in its own right.[276] These layers must now be analyzed separately, showing us different aspects of the problematics of subjectivity and individuality, before a synthetic interpretation of the text can be accomplished. The analysis of myth will give us the religious aspects of the text and present the basic scheme of the problematics of subject-object-division; the analysis of theory will give us a Schopenhauerian perspective, which emphasizes the problem of individuality within that of subjectivity; the analysis of symbol will present us with the perspective of an aesthetic redemption of the problems of subjectivity and individuality.

Mythic Narcisse

When it comes to the notion of myth, with regard to *Le Traité*, I agree with certain remarks made by Angelet, Pamela A. Genova and Valérie Michelet Jacquod. Genova rightly emphasizes the very original and personal use Gide makes of antique myths and that it is his own problem of subjectivity that is very much at stake in his borrowings from antique

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[274] Cf. e.g. Valérie Michelet Jacquod, *Le Roman symboliste: Un art de l'extrême conscience. Edouard Dujardin, André Gide, Remy de Gourmont, Marcel Schwob,* Genève: Librairie Droz, 2008, p. 408ff; Kevin Newmark, *Beyond Symbolism: Textual History and the Future of Reading*, Ithaca/London: Cornell University Press, 1991, p. 156ff.

[275] That the text is both theory and myth, is however also argued by Newmark (Newmark, *Beyond Symbolism*, p. 156).

[276] This stance gains further support by the insistance on the doubled theoretical note, about which Gide in preliminary sketches writes: "J'écris ce traité pour supporter deux notes, – et les faire comme nécessaires." For a discussion about the importance of the note, cf. Réjean Robidoux, "Problèmes historiques posés par la note esthético-morale du *Traité du Narcisse*", *Revue des Lettres modernes*, 547–553, 1979, p. 39–51.

mythology.[277] Angelet and Michelet Jacquod, on the other hand, note certain views on myth, which it seems reasonable to ascribe to Gide. It concerns myth as something co-originary with language, an impersonal creation going back to, and expressing, a time before there was a sharp divide between man and world.[278] These views are associated with myth and language scholars of the 19th century like Max Müller and Ernest Renan.[279] In effect, Renan's ideas about the non-separation between intellect and nature – and a corresponding non-separation between man and world – in man's original mode of signification, expressed in *De l'Origine du langage* (1848), comes very close to the ideals depicted by *Le Traité*:

> Le parallélisme du monde physique et du monde intellectuel fut le trait distinctif des premiers âges de l'humanité. Là est la raison de ces symboles, transportant dans le domaine des choses religieuses le procédé qui avait servit au développement du langage; là est la raison de cette écriture idéologique donnant un corps à la pensée et appliquant à la représentation écrite des idées le même principe qui présida à leur représentation par les sons. En effet, le système de nomenclature que nous avons décrit est-il autre chose qu'un symbolisme, un hiéroglyphisme continuel, et tous ces faits ne se groupent-ils pas pour témoigner de l'étroite union qui, à l'origine, existait entre l'âme et la nature?[280]

This indeed looks like the linguistic-mythic aspect of the paradisiacal state that Gide depicts. Another quote gives an even more striking semblance with the original condition in *Le Traité*: "Il semble que l'homme primitif ne vécût point avec lui-même, mais répandu sur le monde, dont il se distinguait à peine. […] Ainsi *aliéné de lui-même*, il devient, comme dit Leibniz, le miroir concentrique où se peint cette nature dont il fait partie."[281]

These indications give us valuable insight into *why* Gide was using myth. However, I will not use myth as an analytical concept in the same way as either Genova or Angelet and Michelet Jacquod. Genova begins her study with a broad overview of myth theorists from the 20th century, but when it comes to determining the function of myth in literature, she fixes it as intertextuality, in the specific meaning that Julia Kristeva and Roland Barthes ascribe to this term: "Si on considère de plus près le fonctionnement des rapports

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[277] Pamela A. Genova, *André Gide dans le labyrinthe de la mythotextualité*, West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 1995, p. 17–34.
[278] Christian Angelet, "Le paysage romantique et le mythe de l'homme primitif", *Cahiers de l'Association internationale des études francaises*, 29:1, 1977, p. 99–113, p. 106ff, Angelet, *Symbolisme et invention formelle*, p. 17ff and Valérie Michelet Jacquod, *Le Roman symboliste: Un art de l'extrême conscience. Edouard Dujardin, André Gide, Remy de Gourmont, Marcel Schwob,* Genève: Librairie Droz, 2008, p. 408ff.
[279] It should be noted that according to *Le Subjectif*, Gide did not read the relevant writings by these authors until 1892, but it is also not improbable that some of their ideas could have had an indirect influence on him. Cf. Cotnam, "Le *Subjectif*", p. 86, 88.
[280] Ernest Renan, *Œuvres complètes: Vol. VIII*, Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1958, p. 67f.
[281] Renan, *Œuvres complètes: Vol. VIII*, p. 63.

entre le mythe et l'écrivain, on constate que cette relation offre un modèle exemplaire du processus de l'intertextualité."[282] With this text-centered perspective she sets out to locate Gide's texts in the web of "mythotextuality". The view of myth as a relation between texts in the free play of the semiosis seems to bring a bias, however, which does not accord with what is explicitly said in *Le Traité*, nor gives reasonable importance to different intertextual relations.

As mentioned, *Le Traité* opens with an italicized section, which summarizes the traditional story of Narcissus. Genova's conclusion regarding the résumé in italics is as follows: "By unambiguously including Ovid's authorial voice, presenting it in a distinctly isolated space of its own, Gide ironically displays both his connection to and his differentiation from the antique referent."[283] I agree with Genova that the inclusion of a version that Gide himself does not follow is significant indeed. However, I cannot see that it is Ovid's "authorial voice" that is included in the italicized section. It is rather a short summary of the *content* of his story. The potential *irony* of the reference must also be understood according the text's own framing of the traditional version. The text begins with the statement: "Les livres ne sont peut-être pas une chose bien nécessaire; quelques mythes d'abord suffisaient." (AG 7)[284] And the italicized summary ends: "– Vous savez l'histoire. Pourtant nous la dirons encore." (AG 8)[285] These remarks indicate that what Gide is referring to is not so much Ovid's version specifically, but rather an orally transmitted story dating back to the earliest history of man and given one (of potentially many) formulation by Ovid. Furthermore, Ovid's version is certainly a bookish one, and motifs specifically associated with it – such as the Echo episode, the genealogy of Narcissus, the invocation of Nemesis etc. – are not included in Gide's text, either affirmatively, or negatively. It is therefore my opinion that Genova overestimates the importance of Ovid when she uses the relation to his text as the point of departure for her analysis.[286]

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[282] Genova, *André Gide dans le labyrinthe de la mythotextualité*, p. 12.
[283] Pamela A. Genova, "A Crossroads of Modernity: André Gide's 'Le Traité du Narcisse'" *South Central Review*, 11:3, 1994, p. 1–24, p. 1.
[284] AGE 45: "Perhaps books are not all that necessary; originally a few myths sufficed".
[285] AGE 45: "You know the story. But we tell it still."
[286] There is in fact little evidence of any influence at all from Ovid on Gide's *Traité*. There is no mention of Ovid in *Le Subjectif* (cf. Cotnam, "Le *Subjectif*"), and by comparison, it could be added that Valéry apparently read Ovid "pour la première, et sans doute ultime, fois" *after* publishing his "Narcisse parle", and writes about his version that "[j]e n'ai trouvé d'autre similitude que le titre dans son *Narcisse*" (Valéry to Gide, *Correspondance 1890–1942*, p. 79). Of course, Valéry speaks only for himself, but it gives an indication of the interest Ovid might have had for the two friends.

The views on myth, expressed by *Le Traité*, also do not seem to accord with the framework of post-structuralist semiotics. There is no instability in the relation between the myth and its meaning. The reason for retelling the story is not so much an endless movement in the signifying process, but rather the difficulty of grasping the hidden, essential meaning. What Gide is intending is a primary and univocal meaning. If we need to rewrite the story, it is not because of the unstable arbitrariness in the relation between signifier and signified, but because we need to attain a more profound contemplation of "l'intime sens du hiéroglyphe" (AG 7).[287]

Angelet and Michelet Jacquod focus on what myth meant for Gide. They find that it is seen as an impersonal, authorless, expression of universal truths, stemming from the earliest origins of man, which in its mode of existence has some kind of unifying power that allows us to transcend the borders between man and world or reader and work. Myth, seen in this way, appears to be both the origin of and the ideal for literature. I agree with Angelet and Michelet Jacquod in this analysis. I am nonetheless of the opinion that we, in the analysis of the text, need to distinguish between myth and literature. To be sure, the ideal for literature, is myth, but this does not mean that literature is myth. Instead, the attributes ascribed to myth are the ones that literature should strive to acquire, but this might not be possible to achieve through mythic means. Given that myth is found by the first humans as something given, it is not possible to create a myth. What Gide is trying to do is rather to create a work of art, which will share fundamental characteristics with myth. This is why I choose to operate with a less extensive concept of myth in the analysis of the text, while returning to the question of the mythic ideal in the discussion of the text as Symbolist literature. In the analysis of myth *as code* I will retain only more basic characteristics. In the preface of *Le Traité*, we read: "quelques mythes d'abord suffisaient. Une religion y tenait tout entière. Le peuple s'étonnait à l'apparence des fables et sans comprendre il adorait" (AG 7).[288] We find that myth here has the original Greek meaning of fable or narrative, that it is associated with religion and that it conveys hidden and awe-inspiring meaning.

After the preface, the new version of the myth begins with a radical reduction: it takes away everything but the "seul Narcisse donc, qu'un Narcisse rêveur et s'isolant sur des grisailles" (AG 9).[289] Not even the scenery is portrayed and we have only the character, whose

[287] AGE 45: "the inner meaning of the hieoglyph".
[288] AGE 45: "originally a few myths sufficed; a religion contained them all complete. The people, amazed at the appearance of these fables, and uncomprehending, worshipped them".
[289] AGE 45: "Narcissus alone, dreaming and holding himself aloof in the greyness".

only quality is that he is a dreamer. He seems to exist in a vacuum where neither time nor space are discernible. The story then begins by Narcisse wanting to know the form of his soul (or his face, which in the context should perhaps be seen as the bodily double of his soul). This wish sets the story in motion and provides it with spatial and temporal relations: the event that Narcisse "veut connaître enfin quelle forme a son âme" (AG 9)[290] triggers the series of events that the story is composed of and gives some definition to its space – he "se lève et part à la recherche des contours souhaités" (AG 9).[291]

In the allegory of the narrative, however, there is still no time or space (a false allegory indeed, since it is explained in the text). On this level, they only come into existence when Narcisse sits down by the "fleuve du temps" (AG 10).[292] The primacy of the story of Narcisse over the allegory of the river of time is emphasized by the latter being very materially framed in the former. It is described as a "ennuyeux, un léthargique canal" (AG 10)[293] and sharply marked off and likened to a two-way mirror: "un cadre brut où s'enchâsse l'eau, comme une glace sans tain" (AG 10).[294] The fact that Narcisse's desires come prior to the allegory is also emphasized in the curious variation of the illusion motif: Narcisse thought that the river was a road and "comme il s'ennuyait" (AG 10), he went closer to see things pass.[295]

When Narcisse arrives at the river of time, he sits down and "[l]es mains sur le cadre, maintenant, il se penche, dans la traditionelle posture" (AG 10).[296] He is now fixated in the emblematic position, and remains so until section III. The attention is now shifted from Narcisse's actions and desires to his perceptions and thoughts. In the water he sees the appearances in their manifold and their transitoriness. He does not yet see himself, but only the reflection of the surrounding objects. The traditional illusion motif is here transformed into two other kinds of confusion. First, he does not know "si son âme guide le flot, ou si c'est le flot qui la guide" (AG 11).[297] Second, he does not understand why the forms reappear in many instances. The second kind of confusion is resolved as he realizes that the forms are imperfect and "s'efforce vers quelque chose, vers une forme première perdue" (AG 11).[298]

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[290] AGE 45: "wants at last to know the exact form his soul possesses".
[291] AGE 45: "rises and goes in search of the wished-for contours".
[292] AGE 45: "river of time".
[293] AGE 45: "dreary, lethargic canal".
[294] AGE 45: "a rough frame in which the water is set, like a sheet of plate glass".
[295] AGE 45: "as he is bored".
[296] AGE 45: "Now, his hands upon the frame, he leans over, in his traditional pose."
[297] AGE 46: "whether his soul guides the stream or the stream itself is the guide".
[298] AGE 46: "strive for and seek an original, now-lost form".

This leads Narcisse to imagine paradise, the realm of the original and lost forms, which in the text effects the transition to the next diegetic level, the story of Adam in paradise.

Now follow the three numbered sections. They mix narrative and theoretical discourse, but seen as narratives they touch upon, respectively, Adam (I), mankind (II), the poet and Narcisse (III).[299] What we see, thus, in the central triptych, is the all-encompassing cosmological history of humanity, from Adam in paradise, to humanity's struggle for salvation, and finally to the realization of eschatology in the poet. Moreover, we see that in this narrative of fall and salvation what is at stake is the question of time: the state of grace is associated with timelessness and the state of sin with temporality. In the beginning, Adam is the spectator of the perfect harmony of the timeless paradise. When he commits the original sin, i.e. breaks a branch from Yggdrasil to confirm his own power, time begins (as with Narcisse, a temporal action is prior to time itself). This gives rise to the damned race that Adam will father. In the second section, it is explained that : "Le Paradis est toujours à refaire; mais il n'est point en quelque lointaine Thulé, Le Paradis est sous l'apparence." (AG 18)[300] Salvation is then equated with stopping time. All religious ceremonies are interpreted as a way of stopping the flux of time. However, it never succeeds, since there is always someone who continues to commit the same sin as once Adam – "se préférer": "L'individu qui songe à soi tandis que la Passion s'ordonne, et, comparse orgueilleux, ne se subordonne pas." (AG 20)[301] In the third section, then, the eschatology is realized through the figure of the poet. The rapprochement of religion and poetry in this drama appears already in section I, where it is said that humanity will give birth to poets and prophets, "qui se souviendront d'un Eden et recueilleront pieusement les feuillets déchirés, du Livre immémorial" (AG 16).[302] In section III, the poet, "comme Moïse sur le Sina" (AG 23), succeeds in stopping time, by creating a work of art, that "n'est pas dans le temps" (AG 23).[303] In fact, the realization of eschatology through the creation of the work of art, leads to questioning the beginning of the story: "on se demande si le Paradis, hors du temps lui-même, n'était peut-être jamais que là, – c'est-à-dire

[299] Robidoux sees Christ as the central character of the middle section (Robidoux, *Le Traité du Narcisse*, p. 44.) Christ, however, appears as object rather than subject in the narrative – he is that towards which the attention of the mass is directed. The subject of the story is humanity as a whole.
[300] AGE 47: "Paradise has always to be restored; it is not int some far-off Thule. It remains beneath appearances."
[301] AGE 48: "the individual dreams to himself while the Passion ordains itself, and he, proud supernumerary, fails to subordinate himself".
[302] "who will remember an Eden, and who will piously gather up the leaves torn from the immemorial Book".
[303] AGE 49: "like Moses upon Sinai"; "is not within time".

qu'idéalement…" (AG 23).[304] Just before we return to Narcisse, the whole story of the fall and salvation of man is so to speak put within brackets. The temporal dimension required for the narrative of the cosmological drama, is itself the subject of the narrative. Beginning and ending in a state of timelessness, it seems impossible, then, to recount it as a narrative, and the final remark seems to suggest that the preceding story is but an imperfect approximation of the truth about time and the religious destiny of man. We see then, how the text makes an effort to detemporalize and denarrativize a narrative about time.

The text now returns to Narcisse and continues his story in a more traditional way. Narcisse sees a face in the water and commits the traditional error of desiring the image. The illusion quickly disappears and Narcisse "comprend que c'est lui, – qu'il est seul" (AG 24).[305] Since he realizes that the kiss is impossible, he reassumes his traditional posture and contemplates the image with calm gravity.

A central question for the interpretation is how to relate the story about Narcisse to the inserted narrative. The text gives us certain indications. The adverb "cependant" – with its senses both of opposition and simultaneity – indicates that the story about Narcisse takes place at the same time as the history of the world, i.e. it is not possible to situate it within world history – it is in some sense exterior to it. Narcisse's conclusion about what to do with the desired image – "il ne faut pas désirer une image; un geste pour la posséder, la déchire" (AG 25)[306] – shows that he has learned the lesson of Adam, who argued that "c'est un esclavage enfin, si l'on n'ose pas risquer un seul geste, sans perturber toute l'harmonie" (AG 14f).[307] We understand, then, that Narcisse is acquainted with the story told in sections I-III. Other indications tell us how he is acquainted with it. The last sentence tells us that he is a symbol, through which he can see the history of mankind. When Narcisse, as an opening to the story about Adam, "rêve au paradis" (AG 11),[308] he is already the poet: "lui, qui sait qu'il crée, devine à travers chaque chose – et une seule lui suffit, symbole, pour révéler son archétype" (AG 22).[309] Thus, the whole story is contained within the symbol of Narcisse, which Narcisse himself contemplates as he looks into the mirror of the world.

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[304] AGE 49: "one asks oneself if Paradise, itself outside of time, was perhaps never more than this – that is to say, only ideally".
[305] AGE 49: "understands tht it is he – he alone".
[306] "one must not desire an image; a gesture to possess it, will tear it".
[307] AGE 47: "finally it is slavery, if one dares not risk a movement without disturbing the whole harmony".
[308] AGE 46: "dreams of paradise".
[309] AGE 49: "himself knowing that he creates, guesses through each thing – and one thing is enough, being a symbol, to reveal its archetype".

What we are confronted with here is an example of Gide's famous *mise en abyme*. He uses the expression for the first time in the diary on 9 September 1893. I quote from this passage:

> J'ai voulu indiquer dans cette *Tentative amoureuse*, l'influence du livre sur celui qui l'écrit, et pendant cette écriture même. Car en sortant de nous, il nous change, il modifie la marche de notre vie […]
>
> Nulle action sur une chose sans rétroaction de cette chose sur le sujet agissant. C'est une réciprocité que j'ai voulu indiquer; non plus dans les rapports avec les autres, mais avec soi-même. Le sujet agissant, c'est soi; la chose rétroagissante, c'est un sujet qu'on imagine. C'est donc une méthode d'action sur soi-même, indirecte, que j'ai donnée là; et c'est aussi tout simplement un conte.
>
> […] J'aime assez qu'en un œuvre d'art, on retrouve ainsi transposé, à l'échelle des personnages, le sujet même de cette oeuvre. Rien n'éclaire mieux et n'établit plus sûrement toutes les proportions de l'ensemble. Ainsi, dans tels tableaux de Memling ou de Quentin Metzys, un petit miroir convexe et sombre reflète, à son tour, l'intérieur de la pièce où se joue la scène peinte. […] Aucun de ces exemples n'est absolument juste. Ce qui le serait beaucoup plus, ce qui dirait mieux ce que j'ai voulu dans mes *Cahiers*, dans mon *Narcisse* et dans *La Tentative*, c'est la comparaison avec ce procédé du blason qui consiste, dans le premier, à en mettre un second "en abyme".[310]

Gide seems to be using the term in two different, but coinciding senses. First, the *mise en abyme* is a retroaction of the imagined subject on the imagining subject. Second, it is the subject of the work transposed onto the level of the characters of that work. In this way, the cosmological story is one imagined by Narcisse, but also one that affects him, in that he learns from it. But it is also a reflection of himself, showing the drama that is played out within himself. It is thus an iconization of the narrative, in the sense suggested in the previous analysis of the relation between codes: the image of Narcisse becomes a symbol of humanity as a whole, or rather, of the idea of man.

This actualizes the relation to an English man of letters which deeply influenced Gide at the time of writing *Le Traité*, Thomas Carlyle.[311] In his lectures *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History* (1840), which Gide read with great admiration in 1891, Carlyle explains, similar to the theory of symbolism in *Le Traité*, that every sensory object is the representative of the divine: "To us also, through every star, through every blade of grass,

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[310] Gide, *Journal I*, p. 170f.

[311] Cf. Patrick Pollard, "Autour de Thomas Carlyle et d'André Gide", in Robert Kopp and Peter Schnyder (eds.), *Gide et la tentation de la modernité: Actes du colloque international de Mulhouse (25–27 octobre 2001)*, Paris: Gallimard, 2002, 155-180 and Germaine Brée, "Rencontre avec Carlyle", *Revue d'histoire littéraire de la France*, 2, 1970, p. 286–295.

is not a God made visible, if we will open our minds and eyes?"[312] This is the basis for all religion, and the highest manifestation of divinity is found in man himself: "But know, if all things whatsoever that we look upon are emblems to us of the Highest God, I add that more than any of them is man such an emblem."[313] This is how the image of Narcisse works in *Le Traité*: he symbolizes a divine truth.

The reference to Carlyle also explains some of the elements of the story, not least the syncretistic approach. The logarithmic tree Yggdrasil indeed seems like a Norse and Pythagorean anomaly in the Judeo-Christian Eden. For Carlyle this is no problem, since he argues that all religious manifestations are symbols of the divine, which are a substituted for each other in a process of idolization and iconoclasm of religious symbols. Gide probably did not know Yggdrasil from the *Eddas*, but from Carlyle, and the notion of music – and, by implication, mathematics – as a pure expression of being did probably not derive directly from Pythagoras, but rather from Carlyle and Schopenhauer.[314]

Furthermore, Carlyle provides a perspective on religious symbolization which seems to accord with *Le Traité*. In the beginning all men were open to the deep religious meaning of everything in nature; they could see the divine in the appearances and worshipped it, but over time science has hidden it from us:

> What in such a time as ours it requires a Prophet or a Poet to teach us, namely, the stripping-off of those poor undevout wrappages, nomenclatures and scientific hearsays, – this, the ancient earnest soul, as yet unencumbered with these things, did for itself. The world, which is now divine only to the gifted, was then divine to whosoever would turn his eye upon it.[315]

The hero, who for Carlyle is the one who can reveal the divine, appears in many shapes, but the poet and the prophet are two of the most recurrent in Carlyle's lectures, and the ones that most clearly appear as the perceivers of the world's divine essence. He equates them under the name of *Vates*, and argues that "[f]undamentally indeed, they are still the same".[316] These are also the ones who seem to have caught Gide's imagination, as he affords a similar equation of "des prophètes, – et des poètes […] qui se souviendront d'un Eden et recueilleront

[312] Thomas Carlyle, *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History*, Milton Keynes: Lightning Source, 2010, p. 14. Cf. Cotnam, "Le *Subjectif*", p. 63f and Gide, *Journal I*, p. 129.
[313] Carlyle, *On Heroes*, p. 14.
[314] Carlyle, *On Heroes*, p. 22, 72f, 86f.
[315] Carlyle, *On Heroes*, p. 13.
[316] Carlyle, *On Heroes*, p. 69.

pieusement les feuillets déchirés, du Livre immémorial où se lisaient les vérités qu'il faut connaître" (AG 16).[317]

Let us now try to describe the religious content of the myth presented in *Le Traité*. Gide presents us with two religiously determined states: the ideal, paradisiacal state and the state after the fall. We have already seen that they are distinguished by there being time after the fall and eternity before the fall. To complete the dichotomy we find that before the fall there is no difference between *to be* and *to appear* – "chaque chose était ce qu'elle paraissait" (AG 13) – or between *to be* and *ought to be* – "tout était parfaitement ainsi que tout devait être" (AG 12) – whereas after the fall the appearances are only imperfect representatives of being and there is always a difference between what is and what should be.[318] Furthermore, before the fall, there is unity and harmony, whereas the state after the fall is determined by multiplicity and differentiation.

However, as regards man, the central line of demarcation is that after the fall, man is *determined by his subjectivity* – and as part of that, but on this level not yet stressed, *his individuality*. Adam in paradise is "[u]nique, encore insexué" and "[h]ypostase d'Elohim" (AG 14), i.e. neither sexually, nor religiously does he stand in relation to an object.[319] Strictly, he is also not a cognizing subject in relation to the world around him, since "pour lui, par lui, les formes apparaissent" (AG 14).[320] The prepositions "pour" and "par" would be contradictory after the fall, but are here an adequate expression, since "il ne se distingue plus de ces choses" (AG 14) – there is no division between him and the world.[321] He is also not an acting subject, "il n'a pas de rôle" (AG 14).[322] The same goes for Narcisse: "Je me confonds, dans ce paysage sans lignes, qui ne contrarie pas ses plans." (AG 9)[323]

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[317] AGE 47: "prophets […] and poets, here will piously gather up the leaves torn from the immemorial Book in which one may read the truth that must be known".
[318] AGE 46: "everything was as it appeared"; "everything was perfectly as it ought to be".
[319] AGE 46: "Still unsexed, unique"; "Hypostasis of Elohim".
[320] AGE 46: "for him, through him, forms appeared".
[321] AGE 47: "he no longer distinguishes himself from these things".
[322] AGE 46: "he has no role".

[323] AGE 45: "I merge into this landscape whithout paths, that does not contrast its planes." The analysis of this dichotomy will be extended in the view of post-Kantian philosophy in the next section. For now, let us also note that Gide at this time seems to have seen the step into subjectivity as an instance of a general regression from the essential or ideal into the contingent or particular. In the *Feuillets* from 1891, he writes:

> Toute loi, de générale tend à devenir particulière. De commune, elle devient exquise. Chaque fait s'individualise. Tendance à l'apparante anarchie. Ainsi la loi générale de gravitation se divise en lois toujours plus particulière.
>
> Ainsi, la race tend à la production de l'individu. […] Tout tend à l'idiosyncrasie.
>
> (Gide, *Journal I*, p. 124)

If the state after the fall is determined by the subjectivity and individuality, the transition, i.e. the original sin, is accordingly effected by the want to confirm one's own subjectivity. Adam argues that, "[c]ertes il est puissant, puisqu'il crée et que tout se suspend après son regard, – mais connaît-il cette puissance, même, tant qu'elle reste inaffirmée?" (AG 14).[324] What brings him to commit the sin is the feeling that "c'est insupportable, – ne pas savoir jusqu'où l'on va!" (AG 14).[325] In the same way, what brings Narcisse to the state of subjectivity, is that "il s'inquiète [and] veut connaître enfin quelle forme a son âme" (AG 9).[326] This is, however, paradoxical indeed. How can there be a will to confirm one's own subjectivity, if there is yet no subject? This shows the necessity of constructing the text on different levels. On the allegorical level, Narcisse is only constituted as a subject in relation to the world when he sits down by the river. Only then is there time, difference between appearance and being and differentiation between individuals – i. e. the basic conditions associated with worldly existence. The advantage of myth is that it is able to represent what is outside of our conceptual framework. Narcisse appears as a subject even before he constituted as one. By these means, Gide shows that a will to individualization precedes man's determination as both subject and individual. The original sin is what constitutes man as individual subject. This is the sin that man continues to commit when he "prefers himself"; the sin that stands in the way of his salvation.

Gide also offers a soteriological perspective, a transition between the two states in the opposite direction. This transition does also, and for the same reasons as the fall, by necessity appear paradoxical. It is not possible to conceive of a transition into a state which is not determined by our basic conceptual framework in terms of that very framework. Salvation here means the transition into a state where there is no time, no multiplicity, no difference between being and appearance and no subject-object dichotomy. To be able to express this, the text uses another transition between discursive levels: it moves from myth to symbol. As said before, time being figured as flowing water, it is possible to halt it in a crystallization, which is at the same time a transformation into flower – "dans les abîmes imperturbés fleuriront les trémies secrètes…" (AG 18).[327] The iconic symbol of Narcisse leaning over the water is at the same time the *telos* and the epitome of the mythic narrative; the latter's temporality is consumed by the former's immobility. In this image we also find a unification

[324] AGE 46: "Certainly, he is powerful, since he creates and the whole world hangs on his glance – but what does he know of his power, in so far as it remains unaffirmed?"
[325] "it is unbearable, not knowing where one ends".
[326] AGE 45: "He is uneasy [and] wants at last to know the exact form his soul possesses".
[327] AGE 48: "in the imperturbed gulfs secret crystal-clusters will flower…".

of all multiplicity. Narcisse sees in his image "les générations humaines qui passent" (AG 25).[328] This is an inversion of Gide's general rule, "la race tend à la production de l'individu".[329] In the vision of salvation we also find all of humanity united in Narcisse's attitude of contemplating the mystery of the world through the figure of one man – "toute la Création contemple le Christ enfin qui se fige en la Croix suprême" (AG 20)[330] – just as we find the priests in the beginning in Narcisse's posture, "penchés sur la profondeur des images" (AG 7).[331]

The difference between being and appearance is revoked in this image. Being is for the young Gide essential, ideal, being; a pure symbol is one which is transparent in relation to its idea. Narcisse is, in this sense, a pure symbol for the idea of man, as he sees all of humanity in the image of himself. There is no longer any distinction between the Narcisse before the mirror and Narcisse in the mirror. The image has become so transparent that the "stagnant miroir, dira […] en la pureté pareille de l'image, – pareille enfin jusqu'à se confondre avec elles – les lignes de ces formes fatales, – jusqu'à les devenir, enfin." (AG 17)[332] The fact that there is no longer any difference between being and appearance (a difference effected by the flow of the water) also implicates that there is no longer any difference between perceiving subject and perceived object (since the flow of the water has ceased).

What the mythic code in the text affords is thus the perspective of the origin and the destiny of man. Set between the extremes of cosmogony and eschatology, man is determined as subject and individual. The myth gives the text the possibility to narratively represent the transitions between the ideal and the real states. As we go on to discuss the text as theory and as symbol, this perspective will be fleshed out in its philosophical and its aesthetic aspects.

The Theoretical-Allegorical Code

The theoretical level of signification in the text is developed primarily as an allegorical interpretation of the myth. This allegory is in some senses explicitly clarified, especially with

[328] AGE 49: "the transient generations of humanity".
[329] Gide, *Journal I*, p. 124.
[330] AGE 48: "all of creation finally contemplates the Christ who congeals upon the supreme cross".
[331] "inclined over the profundity of the images".
[332] AGE 47: "stagnant mirror, show[s], with the same purity of image, the lienaments of these fatal forms – so confusingly alike – or even become them, at last".

regard to the river of time: "Où Narcisse regarde, c'est le présent. Du plus lointain futur, les choses, virtuelles encore, se pressent vers l'être; Narcisse les voit, puis elles passent; elles s'écoulent dans le passé" (AG 11).[333] This allegory is based on a well-known pattern in the history of the Narcissus theme, found in the neo-Platonic tradition. It is not possible to pinpoint any specific text, and in many central aspects Gide departs from the tradition, but a few of the constitutive traits are nonetheless preserved. The central feature that Gide shares with the neo-Platonists is the interpretation of the reflection in the water as a version of Plato's allegory of the cave. Already Plotin used the reflection in a water mirror as a simile for the relation between *Logos* and matter. Where Plotin uses the story mainly as an illustrative simile however, the authorial voice in *Le Traité* seems to endow it with a more intimate relation to the truth. The prefatory remarks about the nature of myth in the treatise more closely resemble Marcilio Ficino's explanation – which in its interpretation of the reflection motif closely follows the antique neo-Platonists – about which Vinge writes: "The story itself has been understood as a myth with a hidden metaphysical meaning. It is not in order to compare one illusion to another that Ficino mentions it, but to show that in a figurative way the truth has already revealed itself through the myth."[334]

In this way, Gide takes up a traditional interpretation of the story, but he does not follow the neo-Platonists when it comes to the plot of the story or the weighting of the motifs. Most neo-Platonic renderings of it end with Narcissus drowning, and the significance of the story is fundamentally negative.[335] In Gide, we are left with Narcissus in his traditional "calme attitude" (AG 25), meaning that he has achieved the poetic ideal.[336] In accordance with this, the neo-Platonists exclusively emphasize the illusion motif, whereas in Gide, the illusion is followed by recognition.

Gide's allegory has a certain very strong and specific, philosophical reference. It is hardly necessary to argue that Schopenhauer's had a strong influence on the young Gide, as this has already been made abundantly clear by many scholars.[337] In the case of *Le Traité*, Angelet has provided the basis for a Schopenhauerian interpretation and by use of quotes shown that Gide sometimes even uses wordings very similar to those found in *Die Welt als*

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[333] AGE 46: "Where Narcissus watches: it is the present. From the more distant future, things, still potential, hurry toward being; Narcissus sees them, then they pass; they flow into the past."
[334] Vinge, p. 126.
[335] For example in Plotin and Creuzer (cf. Vinge, p. 37f, p. 317f).
[336] AGE 49 : « calm serenity ».
[337] Cf. Renée Lang, *André Gide et la pensée allemande*, Paris: Egloff, 1949, p. 65ff, Angelet, *Symbolisme et invention formelle*, p. 13f, André Gide, *Si le grain ne meurt*, Paris: Gallimard, 1939, p 242.

Wille und Vorstellung.[338] Angelet points out that, as in Schopenhauer, the appearances in *Le Traité* are symbols of a higher reality – the ideas, which in turn are objectivations of the thing in itself, which "est d'essence musicale".[339] Like Schopenhauer, *Le Traité* also allows for a certain kind of perception, achieved through aesthetic contemplation, in which what is cognized is no longer the object as appearance, but as eternal form: the idea. This is what Narcisse accomplishes as Gide's version of the myth closes.

Thus far, I agree with Angelet in his analysis of the Schopenhauerian connection. However, I do not agree with his subsequent interpretations. Angelet writes: "Mais cet accès au monde idéal n'est possible que si le spectateur est lui même consubstantiel aux idées. Entre Narcisse et la création, il y a convenance essentielle."[340] It is certainly true that there is co-substantiality between the knowing subject and the ideas, in the sense that they are both objectivations of the thing in itself, i.e. will. This is however not the reason why genius – and not ordinary perception, which would otherwise be just as liable to perceive the ideas – is able to access the ideas. The reason why this particular act of knowing is possible is instead that genius is able to suspend the principle of sufficient reason by discarding all willing and becoming a pure knowing subject.[341] Angelet then concludes his account of Schopenhauer's influence on *Le Traité* by arguing that the ideal world is nothing but the constructions of the consciousness which knows it:

> Au monde idéal qui fonde les apparences, l'auteur du *Narcisse*, toujours fidèle à l'idéalisme de Schopenhauer, ne confère pas une existence transcendante, antérieure aux phénomènes et qui subsisterait à leur disparition. Une expérience personelle nous induit à poser l'existence des Idées; mes les Idées, comme tout ce qui nous entoure, ne sont, selon la formule de Schopenhauer, qu'un *rêve de notre cerveau*.
> […] L'idéalisme de Schopenhauer, qui conclut à l'inexistence de toute réalité qui transcende le sujet connaissant, ne rejoint-il pas ici l'esprit du mythe gidien? [342]

In my opinion, this is a misreading of both Schopenhauer and Gide, which exaggerates their solipsistic and relativizing tendency. There is certainly something which transcends the subject: namely the object (Schopenhauer does not in a Fichtean way try to unite subject and

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[338] Angelet, *Symbolisme et invention formelle*, p. 26ff.
[339] Angelet, *Symbolisme et invention formelle*, p. 27. To be sure, the *essence* of the *Ding an sich* is not music but will. Music is the art that immediately, and not by way of the ideas, imitate the will: "Musik ist […] *Abbild des Willens selbst*" (Arthur Schopenhauer, *Sämtliche Werke: Bd. I. Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung I*, Stuttgart/Frankfurt am Main: Cotta/Insel, 1960, §52, p. 359. "music is […] a *copy of the will itself*" (Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation: Vol. I*, New York: Dover, 1969, trans. E. F. J. Payne, §52, p. 257.
[340] Angelet, *Symbolisme et invention formelle*, p. 28.
[341] Cf. Schopenhauer, *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung I*, §36.
[342] Angelet, *Symbolisme et invention formelle*, p. 29f.

object in the subject). If the world is representation, it is also, more fundamentally, will. Furthermore, in arguing that "[u]ne expérience personelle nous induit à poser l'existence des Idées", Angelet does not seem to make the proper distinction between the individual and the pure subject. It is not the case that the ideas are but the production of one given, singular, consciousness. It is rather so that the ideas are pure objectivations of the will. In perceiving the ideas, one sees through Maya's veil, i.e. one sees the world to a lesser degree determined by the principle of sufficient reason, including the *principium individuationis*. The de-individualization of the object is paralleled by a de-individualization of the subject. Therefore, it is difficult to say that an "expérience personelle" leads us to positing the ideas, since the attribute "personelle" refers exactly to what one is liberated from in the perception of the ideas.[343]

After these preliminary remarks, I would like to expound the allegory as follows. Narcisse is obviously man as subject. In the surface of the water he perceives the appearances. The fact that the water flows indicates that the representation is determined by the principle of sufficient reason – time, space and causality. This is to be understood as *principium individuationis*, which individualizes and differentiates the appearances.[344] These individualized appearances are the sensible forms of the ideas, which in *Le Traité* are the objects reflected in the water: "un ciel peut-être, l'Arbre, la Fleur, quelque chose de stable enfin, et qui dure, mais dont le reflet, tombant sur l'eau, se brise et que la mobilité des flots diversifie." (AG 17) The image in the water is thus the world as representation. The content of this representation is ultimately the thing in itself, which for Schopenhauer is will. The transition from the world as representation to the world as will, is effected by the *mise en abyme*. When we turn to Adam in paradise, we turn to the world as will. When Narcisse, i.e. the knowing subject, apprehends the story in the numbered sections, he has already, as shown by the anachronisms analyzed earlier, achieved the state of pure aesthetic contemplation, which means that he has a pure intuition of the world. This is expressed in the text by the mythic totalizing and all-encompassing perspective, which grasps even time itself within it. Schopenhauer writes that for the pure subject of knowing the idea appears as the adequate objectivity of the will.

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[343] Cf. e.g. Schopenhauer, *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung I*, §32–34, p. 252–260 and François Félix, *Schopenhauer ou les passions du sujet*, Lausanne: L'Age d'Homme, 2007, p. 205–218.
[344] Cf. Schopenhauer, *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung I*, §23, p. 173ff.

> Diese [the Idea] schließt Objekt und Subjekt auf gleiche Weise in sich, da solche ihre einzige Form sind; in ihr halten sich aber beide ganz das Gleichgewicht: und wie das Objekt auch hier nichts als die Vorstellung des Subjekts ist, so ist auch das Subjekt, indem es im angeschauten Gegenstand ganz aufgeht, dieser Gegenstand selbst geworden, indem das ganze Bewußtsein nichts mehr ist als dessen deutlichstes Bild.[345]
>
> In itself, the Idea includes object and subject in like manner, for these are its sole form. In it, however, both are of entirely equal weight; and as the object also is here nothing but the representation of the subject, so the subject, by passing entirely into the perceived object, has also become the object itself, since the entire consciousness is nothing more than its most distinct image.[346]

The same is expressed in Gide's text as follows:

> Quand donc cette eau cessera-t-elle sa fuite? et reposée enfin, stagnant miroir, dira-t-elle, en la pureté pareille de l'image, – pareille enfin, jusqu'à se confondre avec elles – les lignes de ces formes fatales, – jusqu'à les devenir, enfin. (AG 17)
>
> When will this water cease its flight? and finally resigned, stagnant mirror, show me, with the same purity of image, the lineaments of these fatal forms – so confusingly alike – or even become them, at last. (AGE 47)

The sentence, with its enigmatic syntax, evokes the non-distinction between image and and object: the image in the water (the representation) becomes that which it represents. Schopenhauer continues:

> Dieses Bewußtsein eben, indem man sämtliche Ideen oder Stufen der Objektität des Willens der Reihe nach durch dasselbe durchgehend sich denkt, macht eigentlich die ganze *Welt als Vorstellung* aus. Die einzelnen Dinge aller Zeiten und Räume sind nichts als die durch den Satz vom Grund (die Form der Erkenntnis der Individuen als solcher)vervielfältigten und dadurch in ihrer reinen Objektität getrübten Ideen.[347]
>
> This consciousness really constitutes the whole *world as representation*, since we picture to ourselves the whole of the Ideas, or grades of the will's objectivity, passing through it successively. The particular things of all particular times and spaces are nothing but the Ideas multiplied through the principle of sufficient reason (the form of knowledge of the individuals as such), and thus obscured in their pure objectivity.[348]

It is in this way that Narcisse in the end perceives the human generations within himself. Since the image is perfectly clear, the knowing subject (Narcisse), in Schopenhauer's words, becomes the object, and since this consciousness pictures to itself "the whole of the Ideas, or

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[345] Schopenhauer, *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung I*, §34, p. 258f.
[346] Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation: Vol. I*, §34, p. 179f.
[347] Schopenhauer, *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung I*, §34, p. 259.
[348] Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation: Vol. I*, §34, p. 180.

grades of the will's objectivity, passing through it successively", Narcisse absorbs the entire mythic story ("les générations humaines qui passent", AG 25).

In fact, the whole metaphysical scheme of the mythic story, which Narcisse contemplates, is given by Schopenhauer himself:

> Nicht, dem Satz vom Grunde gemäß, die Individuen, sondern die Idee des Menschen in ihrer Einheit betrachtend, symbolisiert die christliche Glaubenslehre die *Natur*, die *Bejahung des Willens zum Leben, im Adam*, dessen auf uns vererbte Sünde, d. h. unsere Einheit mit ihm in der Idee, welche in der Zeit durch das Band der Zeugung sich darstellt, uns alle des Leidens und des ewigen Todes teilhaft macht: dagegen symbolisiert sie die *Gnade*, die *Verneinung des Willens*, die *Erlösung* im menschgewordenen Gotte, der, als frei von aller Sündhaftigkeit, d. h. von allem Lebenswillen, auch nicht wie wir aus der entscheidensten Bejahung des Willens hervorgegangen sein kann, noch wie wir einen Leib haben kann, der durch und durch nur konkreter Wille, Erscheinung des Willens ist; sondern, von der reinen Jungfrau geboren, auch nur einen Scheinleib hat.[349]
>
> Considering not the individuals according to the principle of sufficient reason, but the Idea of man in its unity, the Christian teaching symbolizes *nature*, the *affirmation of the will-to-live, in Adam*. His sin bequeathed to us, in other words, our unity with him in the Idea, which manifests itself in time through the bond of generation, causes us all to partake of suffering and eternal death. On the other hand, the Christian teaching symbolizes *grace*, the *denial of the will*, *salvation*, in the God become man. As he is free from all sinfulness, in other words, from all willing of life, he cannot, like us, have resulted from the most decided affirmation of the will; nor can he, like us, have a body that is through and through only concrete will, phenomenon of the will, but, born of a pure virgin, he has only a phantom body.[350]

Adam in *Le Traité* commits precisely the sin of the affirmation of the will-to-live and, thereby affirms the *principium indviduationis*. He is therefore particularized and sexualized and gives rise to the human race. As explained above, there are two possible means of salvation: poetry and religion, corresponding the routes suggested in third and fourth books in *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*: aesthetic contemplation and ascetism. Narcisse, "[g]rave et religieux" (AG 25), should probably be seen as synthesizing these.[351] He reverses the fault committed by Adam when he falls in love with his own image but desists from the kiss. His intuition informs him that his individualization is illusory, wherefore no kiss is possible: "Mais Narcisse se dit que le baiser est impossible, – il ne faut pas désirer une image; un geste pour la posséder, la déchire." (AG 25)[352] In this sentence, will is abolished. Narcisse has achieved the

[349] Schopenhauer, *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung I*, §70, p. 549f.
[350] Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation: Vol. I*, §70, p. 405.
[351] AGE 49: "Religious and grave".
[352] AGE 49: "But Narcissus tells himself that to kiss it is impossible, he does not need to desire an image; a gesture to possess it, will tear it."

state which can be referred to as "Erleuchtung, Vereinigung mit Gott usw.".[353] In this state, where not only individuality, but also, subjectivity, is revoked – there is no difference between Narcisse before the mirror and Narcisse in the mirror:

> […] aufgehoben die Mannigfaltigkeit stufenweise folgender Formen, aufgehoben mit dem Willen seine ganze Erscheinung, endlich auch die allgemeinen Formen dieser, Zeit und Raum, und auch die letzte Grundform derselben, Subjekt und Objekt. Kein Wille: keine Vorstellung, keine Welt.[354]
>
> […] the multifarious forms succeeding one another in gradation; the whole phenomenon of the will; finally, the universal form of this phenomenon, time and space, and also the last fundamental form of these, subject and object, all these are abolished with the will. No will: no representation, no world.[355]

The Schopenhauerian interpretation also sheds further light on the theoretical note in the text. This note presents an ought to (*devoir*) and a sin (*péché*): "Toute phénomène est le Symbole d'une Vérité. Son seul devoir est qu'il la manifeste. Son seul péché: qu'il se préfère." (AG 27).[356] This formula is universal and valid for both ethics and aesthetics: "Les règles de la morale et de l'esthétique sont les mêmes: toute œuvre qui ne manifeste pas est inutile et par cela même, mauvaise. Tout homme qui ne manifeste pas est inutile et mauvais." (AG 27)[357] To prefer oneself is obviously to affirm the *principium individuationis*. To manifest, in this context, means to manifest the idea that one stands for, and therefore resist individualization. This can be an ethical rule, because manifestation for man would then mean, to manifest oneself as the idea of man and, by implication, deny particular existence of the individual man:

> Eine Moral, aber, *die* motiviert, kan dies nur durch Einwirkung auf die Eigenliebe. Was nun aber aus dieser entspringt, hat keinen moralischen Wert. Hieraus folgt, daß durch Moral und abstrakte Erkenntnis überhaupt keine echte Tugend bewirkt werden kann; sondern diese aus der intuitiven Erkenntnis entspringen muß, welche im fremden Individuo dasselbe Wesen erkennt wie im eigenen.[358]
>
> But a morality that *does* motivate can do so only by acting on self-love. Now what springs from this has no moral worth. From this it follows that no genuine virtue can be

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[353] Schopenhauer, *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung I*, §71, p. 557. Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation: Vol. I*, §71, p. 410: "illumination, union with God, and so on".
[354] Schopenhauer, *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung I*, §71, p. 557.
[355] Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation: Vol. I*, §71, p. 411.
[356] AGE 295: "Every phenomenon is the Symbol of a Truth. Its only duty is that it manifests it. Its only sin: that it prefer itself."
[357] AGE 295: "The rules of morality and aesthetica are the same: every work that does not manifest is useless and, for that very reason, bad. Every man tht does not manifest is useless and bad."
[358] Schopenhauer, *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung I*, §66, p. 501.

> brought about by morality and abstract knowledge in general, but that such virtue must spring from the intuitive knowledge that recognizes in another's individuality the same inner nature as in one's own.[359]

By realizing that one has no real particular existence, but takes part in the idea of man, one is led to the virtue of compassion, which, for Schopenhauer, is the basis of all ethics. Aesthetically, the same rule applies, since what symbolist art should represent are not contingent facts, but universal ideas. In this, art is superior to empirical science as form of knowledge, as is expounded in section III:

> […] le Savant les recherche, par une induction lente et peureuse, à travers d'innombrables exemples; car il s'arrête à l'apparence, et, désireux de certitude, il se défend de déviner.
>
> Le poète, lui, qui sait qu'il crée, devine à travers chaque chose – et une seule lui suffit, symbole, pour révéler son archétype (AG 21f)

> [...] the Scientist searches out these primary forms by means of a slow and timorous induction, through numerous examples ; for he halts before the appearances and desirous of certitude, he refrains from intution.
>
> The Poet, himself knowing that he creates, guesses through each thing – and one thing is enough, being a symbol, to reveal its archetype (AGE 48f)

This critique of science is a reiteration of Schopenhauer's critique of systematic knowledge under the guidance of the principle of sufficient reason: "weil sie das innerste Wesen der Welt nie trifft, nie über die Vorstellung hinaus kann, vielmehr im Grunde nichts weiter als das Verhältnis einer Vorstellung zur andern kennen lehrt".[360]

The Symbol: Narcissus poeticus

Having examined the text as mythic narrative and as theoretical treatise, I will now analyze it as a work of art. From this perspective, Gide's relation to Mallarmé inevitably comes to the fore. Much has been written about Gide's attitude to Mallarméan Symbolism, and it is beyond doubt that, as time passed, Gide, under the influence of his acquaintance with Oscar Wilde, his trips to North Africa and his readings of Friedrich Nietzsche, distanced himself from the

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[359] Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation: Vol. I*, §66, p. 367f.

[360] Schopenhauer, *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung I*, §7, p. 63f. Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation: Vol. I*, §7, p. 28 : "It never aims at the inmost nature of the world; it can never get beyond the representation; on the contrary, it really tells us nothing more than the relation of one representation to another."

Symbolist movement, even though he retained some of its poetic lessons throughout his literary career.[361] Some critics have argued that Gide already in *Le Traité* deviates from Mallarmé and that it contains a parody or at least an implicit criticism of the doctrines of the *Maître*.[362] It may be true that Gide, by putting some weight on ethical issues, brings literature to bear on extra-textual reality to a higher degree than orthodox Symbolism.[363] I, however, find that in his poetics Gide remains thoroughly faithful to Mallarmé, as will be shown in the following.

In *Le Traité*, Gide gives this definition of the work of art:

> Car l'œuvre d'art est un cristal – Paradis partiel où l'Idée refleurit en sa pureté supérieure; où, comme dans l'Eden disparu, l'ordre normal et nécessaire a disposé toutes les formes dans une réciproque et symétrique dépendance, où l'orgeuil du mot ne supplante pas la Pensée, – où les phrases rythmiques et sûres, symboles encore, mais symboles purs, où les paroles, se font transparentes et révélatrices. (AG 22f)
>
> Because the work of art is a crystal – partial paradise in which the Idea flourishes anew in its superior purity; in which, as in vanished Eden, the natural and necessary order has arranged all forms within a reciprocal and symmetric dependence, in which the pride of word does not supplant the thought – in which the sure and rhythic phrases, still symbols, but pure symbols, in which words make themselves transparent and revealing." (AGE 49)

The work of art is thus a symbol, which, according to the note is a phenomenal representative of an idea. In contrast to other symbols, however – every phenomenon is, according to the same note, a symbol – the work of art is a pure, crystallized symbol, which is completely transparent in relation to its idea. In the text we find one object that corresponds to this description, namely the image of Narcisse. This is what follows from the analyses above, where I showed that what Narcisse sees in his image is the idea of himself. The notion of the image in the water as a work of art is reinforced by the fact that the banks of the river of time are likened to "un cadre brut où s'enchâsse l'eau, comme une glace sans tain" (AG 10), which triggers the association to a painting.[364]

The fact that the work of art as a pure symbol is not only well-ordered and transparent in relation to its idea, but also emphatically spatial and non-temporal is

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[361] Cf. Guy Michaud, *Message poétique du symbolisme: T. III*, p. 525f.
[362] Cf. e.g. Martin Kanes, "Gide's Early Attitude to the Symbol", *Symposium*, 13, 1959, p. 195–215 and Emily S. Apter, "Gide's *Traité du Narcisse*: A Theory of the Post-Symbolist Sign?", *Stanford French Review*, 9, 1985, 189–200.
[363] Cf. e.g. Newmark, *Beyond Symbolism*, p. 142–167.
[364] AGE 45: "a rough frame in which the water is set, like a sheet of plate glass".

emphasized by the two images used to describe it: the flower and the crystal. The crystal and the flower are repeatedly connected as coinciding images of the pure symbol (AG 12, 18, 22). The image of the crystal, as the sensory expression of the river of time being stopped, is a concrete visualization of the transformation of time into space. The same goes for the flower. The evocation of the flower, the *narcissus poeticus*, in the text has already been mentioned. When Narcisse is fixed in his attitude in front of the mirror, he becomes, in more than one sense, *narcissus poeticus* – Narcissus the poet and narcissus the flower. In this way Gide uses the transition between two opposing states as – between mobile man and immobile flower – which has often been implicit in the Narcissus tradition, but which was stressed by Edward Young.[365]

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[365] The relation to Edward Young might be worth mentioning in this context. Even though it is well-known that Gide's and Valéry's Narcissus texts originated in their walks in Montpellier, contemplating the inscription on the grave of Young's daughter, no scholar, to my knowledge, has examined the possibility of comparing Gide's Narcissus to Young's interpretation of the theme. There might be good reason for this. Young is not noted in the *Subjectif*, which, however, as Jacques Cotnam stresses, does not mean that Gide did not read him – he did not note everything he read – but only that we do not know whether he did (Cotnam, "Le *Subjectif*", p. 23). Young's connections to the theme are also only subtle allusions. Even so, it would be surprising if the two young aspiring poets had not been intrigued enough by the grave inscription to at least look into the work of Young. I think Young deserves to be mentioned in this context for a couple of reasons. Vinge cites two of them:

> What is radical in Young's way of applying the allusion to Narcissus is first of all the fact that he dare use the mythical figure to illustrate something positive – true, good self-love. This in its turn has brought about another novelty: in Young Narcissus is not absorbed in an illusion but in a recognized image (Vinge, p. 286)

These two characteristics are also valid for Gide's Narcissus. The allusion Vinge refers to appears in the eighth book of *The Complaint, or Night-Thoughts on Life, Death and Immortality*. Young is here discussing the opposites vice and virtue, and compares them to Cain and Narcissus:

> Man's greatest strength is shown in standing still,
> […]
> The true is fixt, and solid as a rock;
> Slipp'ry the false, and tossing, as the wave,
> This, a wild wanderer on earth, like Cain:
> That, like the fabled, self-enamour'd boy,
> Home-contemplation her supreme delight;
> She dreads an interruption from without,
> Smit with her own condition; and the more
> Intense she gazes, still it charms the more.
>
> (Edward Young, *The Complaint, or Night-Thoughts on Life, Death and Immortality: Vol. 2*, Glasgow, 1798, p. 90)

Narcissus is seen here not so much as the foolish lover or the arrogant self-admirer, but as the grave contemplator, avoiding worldly disturbances in his search of self-knowledge and insight into his own divine being. As Vinge remarks, the antithesis between Cain and Narcissus is understood as movable versus immovable (Vinge, p. 286). All this seems to agree with Gide's view of Narcissus, where, as we have seen, the focus is on the image of the solitary flower seeing through the timely appearances. The expounded antithesis

Now, if the image of Narcisse is a pure, well-ordered, transparent and non-temporal symbol, this must also be true of Narcisse in front of the mirror, who is himself the idea that the image represents and, according to *Le Traité* has even in some sense become. Furthermore, since Gide's text obviously claims to be a work of art, this should also be true of *Le Traité* as a whole – seen as a work of art. We are here deeply entangled in the logic of the *mise en abyme*: one finds, in the image that Narcisse sees in the water, "transposé, à l'échelle des personnages, le sujet même de cette œuvre", just like the reader or writer of the text recognizes the same transposition.[366] To understand how this is to be understood, Mallarmé's notes for the *Livre* will lend considerable support, a support I will use as mediated by Eric Benoit's account of the notes.[367]

According to Benoit, Mallarmé thinks that the reader and the work are ontologically dependent on each other. For this reason, it is necessary for the author to control the reading, so that the *mystère* will not be profaned. This is done in two ways: by preliminary directions for the reader and by a *mise en scène* of the reading in the text itself.[368] Both of these strategies are employed in *Le Traité*. The frame of the text contains directions for the reading as it says that books are not necessary and that, in the beginning, some myths were sufficient. This should not be seen as meaning that the *Livre* is not necessary; it is rather a warning against theoretical explanations (in the same way that Schopenhauer argues that reason is inferior to inuition, since its concepts, as opposed to the ideas, are secondary derivations from the phenomena). Instead, the prescribed way of reading is the one suggested

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between vice and virtue also seems to correspond with Gide's, at this point still firmly held, Pietistic convictions (cf. Catherine H. Savage, *André Gide: L'Évolution de sa pensée religieuse*, Paris: Nizet, 1962, p. 19–52) , as seen in the *Traité*. Young emphatically associates vice with pride and virtue with piety ("but of all vice, / Pride loudest calls", "piety is more, 'tis virtue's source"; Young, *The Complaint: Vol. 2*, p. 77, 83).

Furthermore, it is interesting to note that Young also in *Conjectures on Original Composition* makes discreet allusions to Narcissus as he argues for the necessity of self-knowledge in *both* ethics and aesthetics (cf. Vinge, p. 287f). This rapprochement of ethics and aesthetics is crucial also in the *Traité*, where, in the note, Gide writes: "Nous vivons pour manifester. Les règles de la morale et de l'esthétique sont les mêmes: toute oeuvre qui ne manifeste pas est inutile et par cela même, mauvaise. Tout homme qui ne manifeste pas est inutile et mauvais." (AG 27) We see, then, that Young and Gide use Narcissus for much the same kind of purposes. But it should also be stressed that whereas for Young his significance depends much on the good self-love, in Gide, it is, for ethical and aesthetical reasons, more important that he learns to see, to manifest, and *not* to prefer himself.

[366] Gide, *Journal I*, p. 170.

[367] Eric Benoit, *Mallarmé et le Mystère du "Livre"*, Paris: Honoré Champion Éditeur, 1998. Michelet Jacquod has shown the value of Mallarmé's *Livre* for understanding the artistic logic of *Le Traité* in focusing on his notion of *preuve*, based on Jacques Scherer's exegesis of the notes (Michelet Jacquod, *Le Roman symboliste*, p. 396–407, this notion of *preuve*, with its ontological signification, is possibly what is referred to when it is said about Eden that "prouver était inutile", 13). While not disagreeing with her conclusions, I choose here to approach the issue from a slightly different angle, which I think better clarifies the issue in this context.

[368] Benoit, *Mallarmé et le Mystère du "Livre"*, p. 75f.

at various places: attentive and solitary contemplation. Proper reading is also staged within the text, in the sense that Narcisse is contemplating what is essentially a work of art. Thus, to succeed in reading the text, we should follow the example of Narcisse. This example, after our analyses above, should be clear enough: Narcisse is first bewildered by the manifold appearances in the river of time. To achieve a proper understanding of them, he must see through their temporality and individuality and grasp the differentiated in its original unity by abstracting from the concrete appearances in time. By following this example, the reader will detemporalize the text (which, of course, is a fundamentally temporal medium) and create synchronic connections within it and see the unity of the priests before the images (AG 7), the people before Christ (AG 20) and Narcisse before his image (AG 25) or the unity of Narcisse in search of his contours (AG 9) and Adam in search of his bounds (AG 14) etc., until he sees the perfect unity of it all in the image of the *narcissus poeticus*.

In posing such an ideal for the reading, Gide joins Mallarmé as he writes: "Le Livre supprime le temps".[369] As Benoit explains, Mallarmé bestows on the *Livre* a plastic spatiality, which transcends its discursive linearity, and in which every element of the text is connected to every other element.[370] The proper reading of such a text is a continual rereading, in which

> le texte se développera et sera cerné dans l'espace de sa circularité ou plutôt de sa spiralisation puisque cette relecture permettra de nouveaux développements et la découverte de nouvelles relations, *tendant toujours vers la saturation inattingible de l'espace potentiellement relationnel qu'est le texte*, qu'il s'agisse d'un simple poème ou du Livre lui-même.[371]

In a way corresponding to this reading, the text will organize itself as a "système clos", where every trace of contingency – the sworn enemy of Mallarmé as well as of the young Gide – will be eliminated.[372]

Through the reading, a relation is established between reader and text which ideally would be the "absolute aesthetic relation":

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[369] Mallarmé, feuillet 55, quoted from Benoit, *Mallarmé et le Mystère du "Livre"*, p. 78.
[370] Benoit, *Mallarmé et le Mystère du "Livre"*, p. 79ff.
[371] Benoit, *Mallarmé et le Mystère du "Livre"*, p. 83.
[372] Benoit, *Mallarmé et le Mystère du "Livre"*, p. 84. The view on contingency can arguably be seen as the pivot in Gide's reversal in the mid-1890s. For what is the *acte gratuit* of *Le Promethée mal enchainée* (Gide, *Romans*, p. 305f) if not an affirmation of contingency? It has its perfect counterpart in Adam's just as gratuitous breaking of the branch of Yggdrasil. In both cases, the *acte gratuit* is the sign of humanity, but the assessment of it has shifted 180 degrees. Gide's memory of the earlier attitude is expressed in *Si le grain ne meurt*: "Mais ce qui nous dominait surtout c'était l'horreur du particulier, du bizarre, du morbide, de l'anormal. " (*Si le grain ne meurt*, p. 289).

> La lecture est donc une mise en communication parfaite et *transparente* de deux puretés, celle du texte et celle de l'esprit du lecteur, condition pour que pénétrer le livre ne soit pas violer le livre, et que les deux virginités fusionnent ('preuves nuptiales') tout en demeurant, l'une et l'autre, intactes.[373]

This is indeed the relation depicted by Narcisse in front of the perfect mirror, refraining from the kiss, since "un geste pour la posséder, la déchire" (AG 25).[374] The dynamics of this relation is understood in terms similar to those found in the Schopenhauerian interpretation above. The transparent relation between two purities is the ideal. Attaining this ideal is equivalent with redemption (ontologically understood: being redeemed is being absolute, and reader and work are the ontological foundations of one another). But what stands in the way of attaining this ideal is individual subjectivity: "ce qui fait obstacle à l''ingénuité' du lecteur, n'est autre que sa propre subjectivité, sa propre personnalité".[375] Mallarmé is faced with a problem analogous to that of Schopenhauer: pure intuition requires pure subjectivity. The solution to this problem is, for Mallarmé, the *Livre*, the book that would contain all possible meaning and thus, by way of the aesthetic relation, would be able to unite all humanity in its reading.

The reasoning behind this is that the Absolute is both in *la Foule* and in *l'Œuvre*, and thus divided.[376] The absolute aesthetic relation is the possibility to heal this division. But in order for that to happen, both sides must be united in complete virginity; *la Foule* must become *l'Esprit humain universel* and *l'Œuvre* must become *le Livre*. This process thus involves a transition from individual subjectivity to pure subjectivity, just like we saw above. The difference is that in Mallarmé, the relation between subject and object is understood in Hegelian rather than Schopenhauerian terms.[377] Benoit describes it as a mirror relation:

> Il y a donc ce que nous proposons d'appeler un rapport spéculaire: la Foule (l'Humanité) voit dans l'Œuvre ce qui est dans la Foule, c'est-à-dire l'Esprit: l'Humanité saisit au plus profond de l'Œuvre ce qui est au plus profond d'elle-même; autrement dit, l'Esprit (qui est dans la Foule) voit (se mire dans) l'Esprit (qui est dans l'Œuvre).[378]

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[373] Benoit, *Mallarmé et le Mystère du "Livre"*, p. 93.
[374] AGE 49: "a gesture to possess it, will tear it".
[375] Benoit, *Mallarmé et le Mystère du "Livre"*, p. 94.
[376] Just like in Mallarmé, *la Foule* is in *Le Traité* represented by woman, understood as the principle of human generation (16; Benoit, *Mallarmé et le mystère du "Livre"*, p. 105).
[377] Cf. Benoit, *Mallarmé et le mystère du "Livre"*, p. 122.
[378] Benoit, *Mallarmé et le mystère du "Livre"*, p. 113.

This, it seems, is one more description of what is depicted in the universal scene of the *narcissus poeticus* before the mirror. Now, the little treatise that Gide has written is of course not the *Livre* of Mallarmé. The *narcissus poeticus* could perhaps be seen more as what Mallarmé calls the "purs motifs rythmiques de l'être".[379] They are decribed in the following way by Benoit:

> Ces "motifs" […] sont donc à la fois intellectuels *et* affectifs, intelligibles *et* sensibles. En effet, les structures symboliques ou mythiques informent génératívement les structures de la pensée conceptuelle, et sont ainsi en relation directe avec l'intellection de l'Idée. C'est pourquoi les 'purs motifs rythmiques de l'être' répondent à l'un des caractères essentiels de la relation esthétique: l'*aïsthèsis* greque est en effet la faculté de *percevoir* par les sens, par la *sensation*, et par l'*intelligence*: mythes et symboles, lieux de convergence de la sensation et de l'Intellect, répondant à l'affectivité profonde de l'Esprit, ces deux dimensions structurant l'être humain auront réciproquement et complémentairement leur part.[380]

A "pur motif rythmique de l'être", also described as "structure anthropologique", with its double nature as an intelligible and sensible human universal, is probably the status that can be ascribed to the *narcissus poeticus* of *Le Traité*. It is a both symbolic and mythic structure, universally valid, which demands a theoretical as well as an artistic treatment.

Individual Subjectivity in *Le Traité*

As a conclusion of this analysis, and as a means to put it into its relevant context, I think it may be useful to compare Gide's Narcisse to Romantic Narcissus. In both cases, Narcissus' state in front of the mirror is taken as some sort ideal state of harmonic being. But there are also striking differences. Let us take as comparison an extract from Friedrich Schlegel's *Lucinde*:

> So schaut das Auge in dem Spiegel des Flusses nur den Widerschein des blauen Himmels, die grünen Ufer, die schwankenden Bäume und die eigne Gestalt des in sich selbst versunkenen Betrachters. Wenn ein Gemüt voll unbewußter Liebe da, wo es Gegenliebe hoffte, sich selbst findet, wird es von Erstaunen getroffen. Doch bald läßt sich der Mensch wieder durch den Zauber der Anschauung locken und täuschen, seinen Schatten zu lieben. Dann ist der Augenblick der Anmut gekommen, die Seele bildet

[379] Stéphane Mallarmé, *Œuvres complètes*, Paris: Gallimard, 1945, p. 345.
[380] Benoit, *Mallarmé et le mystère du "Livre"*, p. 107f.

> ihre Hülle noch einmal, und atmet den letzten Hauch der Vollendung durch die Gestalt. Der Geist verliert sich in seiner klaren Tiefe und findet sich wie Narcissus als Blume wieder.
>
> Liebe ist höher als Anmut und wie bald würde die Blüte der Schönheit fruchtlos welken ohne die ergänzende Bildung der Gegenliebe!
>
> Dieser Augenblick, der Kuß des Amor und der Psyche ist die Rose des Lebens. – Die begeisterte Diotima hat ihrem Sokrates nur die Hälfte der Liebe offenbart. Die Liebe ist nicht bloß das stille Verlangen nach dem Unendlichen; sie ist auch der heilige Genuß einer schönen Gegenwart. Sie ist nicht bloß eine Mischung, ein Übergang vom Sterblichen zum Unsterblichen, sondern sie ist eine völlige Einheit beider.[381]

Like Gide, Schlegel uses elements of the neo-Platonic version of the theme, and like him, he conceives of Narcissus' mirroring as a harmonious state of being, using his vegetale form, the flower. Let us turn, however, to the differences.

In Schlegel, the narcissic state is one of completion of the process of *Bildung* of the subject. It represents the stage where the subject has realized its *Gestalt*, and reached complete insight into itself. It is the termination of a future-oriented process.

In Gide, the narcissic state, through the use of myth, is a return to an original state. If a *Bildung*, or at least some process of self-knowledge and purification of the instance of the subject, is inscribed in the achievement of the narcissic state, this process is immediately consumed by a dissolution of subjectivity as such.

The dissolution of subjectivity – and absolute unification of being – is in Schlegel only accomplished in the union of mutual love.[382] In Schlegel, therefore, the narcissic state is transcended by that of *Gegenliebe*; in Gide, it is the end, as well as the starting, point. We can thus see, in Gide's text, the "moment monadologique", that Renaut describes. In Gide's text, the ascension to absolute being does not, like in Schlegel, proceed by way of mediation through a *you*.

These differences are related to the different views on how human existence is in fault with relation to absolute being. For Schlegel, as for absolute idealism in general, the basic predicament of human existence is the subject-object dichotomy. For Gide, the subject-object split is certainly a problem of considerable importance, but it is here seen as co-originary with the problem of individualisation. Individual subjectivity is here the opposite of absolute being in the sense of a symptom of idiosyncrasy and contingency, just as much as a lack of access to the numinous. Individual subjectivity is in the first place a result of the

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[381] Friedrich Schlegel, *Lucinde: Ein Roman*, Stuttgart: Henne, 1859, p. 110f

[382] Cf. e.g. Frederick C. Beiser, *German Idealism: The Struggle against Subjectivism 1781–1801*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002, p. 458ff.

general decadence and dissolution of being. It is therefore through ascetic denial, rather than embracement of the *coincidentia oppositorum* that absolute being can be reached.[383]

Furthermore, in line with the monadological road to redemption sketched in *Le Traité*, the text itself is offered to the reader less as an act of communication than as reflexive medium, through which the reader him-/herself can ascend the ladder of the hierarchy of being by way of pious contemplation and refusal to prefer him-/herself.

[383] It might be worth remarking in this context that *Le Traité* was written shortly after a marriage proposal from Gide to his cousin Madeleine Rondeaux was rejected, an incident which seems to have had a great emotional impact on Gide (cf. Delay, *La Jeunesse d'André Gide: T. II*, p. 15–34 and Germaine Brée, *Gide*, New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1963, p. 24ff). But this is not the place for biographical digressions.

3. Psychoanalysis 1898–1916

The discussion of narcissism, in its relation to the Narcissus theme and the problem of subjectivity, will be divided into two chapters. The first, which deals with the introduction and the development of the concept from the origins in sexology around 1900 up until its systematic conceptualisation in Freud's metapsychological papers of the mid-1910s, will describe a process of demythification, where the theoretical account gradually gains the upper hand over the theme.[384] In the second chapter, which focuses on the development between *Jenseits des Lustprinzips* (1920) and *Neue Folge der Vorlesungen* (1933), a process of remythification will be discerned, not in the sense of a return of Narcissus, but through a mythification of the position that narcissism has come to assume in the theory of instincts.[385] The neat distinction between two clearly demarcated periods will be seen to be somewhat blurred when it comes to exact dates, but I think that it is noneheless relevant to draw a dividing line in the late 1910s, in the process of the revision of the theory of insticts and formulation of the second topography. For the sake of clarity of presentation some indications of the tendency towards a remythification that are present already in the first period will be neglected in the first chapter and taken up in the second.

The literature on Freud is immense, and even if it were to be limited to the topics of narcissism or psychoanalysis and literature, a complete survey of research would hardly be either possible or necessary.[386] It is necessary, and relevant, however, to state my position in this field of research. In accordance with the ambitions of Freud and other early psychoanalysts, much research on psychoanalysis and literature has proceeded within the assumption that the theory of psychoanalysis can shed light on the phenomenon of literature. Over time this relation has developed to be not only one where the hermeneutical priority is given to psychoanalysis, but also to be one of dialogue between equal partners. Common to those perspectives, however, is often that the point of departure is the phenomena and mechanisms discovered by psychoanalysis. My investigation begins at a, so to speak, more superficial end. My point of departure is not narcissism, but the Narcissus theme. I enter the texts of psychoanalysis through the application of theories which are not shaped by psychoanalytic thought. My aim is to discern how narcissism relates to the Narcissus theme

[384] This is the present chapter.
[385] This chapter is not included in the licentiatavhandling.
[386] This obviously also limits the extent of originality that this part of the invstigation can lay claims to. I hope, however, that it will add a couple of pieces to the general picture of both the development of the Narcissus theme and psychoanalysis' relation to literature and myths.

and what it tells us about the modern complexities of subjectivity, without, however, entering into the question of its psychological or philosophical validity.

In applying a such perspective, I think that I am part in growing trend in Freud research in the humanities, one which applies external perspectives on Freudian thought and which is not primarily concerned with Freud's being right, wrong or somewhere in between, but which is concerned with Freud as a writer or with his position in our cultural history. Recent examples, which focus on Freud's relation to the legacy of Antiquity, are studies by Richard H. Armstrong and Rachel Bowlby. Armstrong bases his investigations on Jan Assmann's theories on cultural memory and discusses the relation between the archive of Antiquity and the archive of Freud.[387] Bowlby uses myth both in its proper and in the Barthesian sense, and investigates the relation between myths that determine the way we shape our identities today, in Freud's time and in Antiquity.[388] Interestingly enough none of them mentions Narcissus more than in passing.[389]

Quite a few studies have also been dedicated to Freud's own literary influences, one of the pioneers being Gunnar Brandell.[390] One interesting work along this line of study, which also takes a synthesizing grip on Freud's relation to literature, is Graham Frankland's *Freud's Literary Culture*.[391] Frankland insists on Freud's high esteem of literature (which, however, was challenged by his biological training) and shows both the impact of literature in the shaping of psychoanalytic theory and hermeneutics and Freud's own frustrated efforts in the fields of literary criticism and literary writing. Frankland emphasizes Freud's appreciation of the *Dichter* as precursors for his own theories. In the case of narcissism, Frankland underscores not so much the specific contents of the theme as the importance of introducing a mythic figure at the center of the theory of instincts, while stressing the central position of quotes and allusions from Schiller, Heine and Rumi in "Zur Einführung des Narzißmus".[392]

Other scholars treat Freud *as* a literary writer. An early example of this approach is Walter Schönau's investigation about literary aspects of Freud's prose.[393] A more recent study, which expressly argues that "Freud's texts are literary", is Perry Meisel's *The Literary*

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[387] Richard H. Armstrong, *A Compulsion for Antiquity: Freud and the Ancient World*, Ithaca/London: Cornell University Press, 2005.
[388] Rachel Bowlby, *Freudian Mythologies: Greek Tragedy and Modern Identities*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.
[389] Armstrong, p. 76f; Bowlby, p. 94f.
[390] Gunnar Brandell, *Vid seklets källor: Studier och essäer*, Stockholm: Bonniers, 1961, p. 37–137.
[391] Graham Frankland, *Freud's Literary Culture*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.
[392] Frankland, p. 41ff.
[393] Walter Schönau, *Sigmund Freuds Prosa: Literarische Elemente seines Stils*, Stuttgart: Metzler, 1968.

Freud.[394] The line of research that Meisel represents generally derive much of its impetus from French post-structuralism, relying not least on Lacan's and Derrida's readings of Freud. Meisel's focal point is the question of *representation*, which is a shared concern for literature and psychoanalysis and which, in Meisel's account, affords the mediation between them. In this way, Meisel produces a typical example of a psychoanalytic reading of psychoanalysis, which argues that the mechanisms described by Freud are also at work in his own texts.

These examples of Freud research are mentioned merely in order for me to state my position more clearly. While I wish to highlight the relations between psychoanalysis and literature, and certainly agree that Freud's writings have literary qualities which are noteworthy, I nonetheless insist on the difference between literature and psychoanalysis. Psychoanalysis as a whole is conceived as a medical science and is thereby subordinated to the general aim of undersstanding the human psyche and curing psychological diseases, a subordination which does not apply to literature. Furthermore, I do think that we are able to "think outside" of psychoanalysis and my contention is that in "psychoanalyzing" psychoanalysis, we do not pay tribute to the achievements of psychoanalysis, but rather run the risk of not taking it seriously by not distinguishing different levels of discourse. In the case of Meisel, I would for example object that we need to differentiate between the psychic *Repräsentanz* of which Freud speaks and the representation of literature, even though Freud readily uses metaphors of writing (among others) in describing the psychic apparatus. Ricœur notes an important distinction as regards representatives of instincts (ideas and affects):

> Certes, elle [une théorie de la *Repräsentanz*] ne saurait se réduire à une théorie de la *représentation*, puisque l'affect *présente* la pulsion et que la pulsion elle-même *présente* le corps « dans l'âme ». Mais l'assonance toute verbale – celle-là qui embarasse tant le traducteur – trahit une affinité profonde entre *Repräsentanz* et *représentation*.[395]
>
> The latter [a theory of *Repräsentanz*] cannot, of course, be reduced to a theory of "representation" in the sense of ideas [Vorstellungen?], since affects "represent" [sic!] instincts and instincts "represent" [sic!] the body "to the mind". But the mere verbal assonance – which so perplexes the translator – betrays a profound kinship between *Repräsentanz* and "representation" in the sense of ideas.[396]

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[394] Perry Meisel, *The Literary Freud*, New York/London: Routledge, 2007, p. xi. This book also contains a reception history of Freud as literature which is useful for this line of Freud research, but also very selective and highly anglocentric, (p. 1–38).
[395] Ricœur, *De l'interprétation*, p. 152.
[396] Ricœur, *Freud and Philosophy*, p. 150.

However, given these preliminaries about the *difference* between literature and psychoanalysis, my primary concern will be in finding the *connections* between them.

The present chapter will be subdivided into two parts. The first, historically oriented, will describe the development of the concept of narcissism, its gradual absorption into the center of psychoanalytic theory and its demythification of the theme. The second, more systematically conceived, discusses the metapsychological concept in its relation to the Narcissus tradition and the problem of subjectivity.

From Narcissus to Narcissism

Narcissus is not the only figure from Greek mythology that was revived by Freud's psychoanalysis. In the title of a study by Victoria Hamilton, Narcissus is named the brother of the other Greek hero who took a central position on the psychoanalytic stage, namely Oedipus.[397] In Freud's later development, Eros, Thanatos and Ananke increasingly competed with the two Boeotians for Freud's attention. The ways in which these gods and heroes were appropriated, however, differ widely. Oedipus was probably Freud's most personal and congenial adaption of an ancient myth. The formulation of the Oedipus complex was entirely his own idea, based both in clinical and personal experience. In it, furthermore, the *story* remains active and the support of those plays by Sophocles and Shakespeare where Freud finds it dramatized is never made redundant by psychoanalytic theory. The gods – Eros, Thanatos and Ananke – on the other hand, are to a much larger degree abstract principles. Like gods, they personify forces which are greater than man, whereas Oedipus and Narcissus express different aspects of the specific human fate. Of the gods, Eros in particular has specific philosophic precedents in a tradition from Plato.[398]

With Narcissus, the case is quite another. He can hardly be said to have been picked by Freud himself, and the reference to mythology is indirect for Freud. Freud instead inherited narcissism, already appropriated by psychological discourse, a notion which he was not even the first to introduce into psychoanalysis. It was however Freud who wrought the notion of narcissism into the shape of a psychoanalytic concept.

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[397] Victoria Hamilton, *Narcissus and Oedipus. The Children of Psychoanalysis*, London, 1982.
[398] Cf. e.g. John Farrell, "The Birth of the Psychoanalytic Hero. Freud's Platonic Leonardo", *Philosophy nd Literature*, 2007:2, p. 233–254.

As we turn to the question the relationship between Narcissus and narcissism, we must begin by stating a trivial yet fundamental disjunction: narcissism is not Narcissus. This of course true for simple grammatical reasons, but furthermore we must not take the short-cut of assuming an equivalence between Narcissus and the narcissist – especially since the term "narcissist" is rarely used by Freud himself. In order to achieve an appropriate understanding of the intertextual relation between Narcissus and narcissism, we need to begin by acknowledging the discrepancy between the two. Narcissus is a literary-mythological hero; narcissism (when it is fully developed) is a metapsychological concept. They are, however, intimately related, and describing the nature of this relationship is the task of the present chapter. From my perspective of cultural semiotics, I will argue that narcissism functions as a device to control the semiosis of the Narcissus theme. Whereas the Narcissus theme, ever since its mythic beginnings, provides an intertextual *locus* for a steadily ramifying growth of meaning, narcissism is designed to control this meaning, by ordering and explaining it.[399]

I will show that the evolution of the concept of narcissism can be understood in terms of a three-part dialogue between psychological observations (clinical and others), psychological theory and literature. The intersection between literature and psychological observation can be conceived as a border, in Lotman's sense, between two semiotic spheres, i.e. as a "sum of bilingual translatable 'filters', passing through which the text is translated into another language (or languages), situated *outside* the given semiosphere."[400] As psychiatry brings a certain domain of psychological phenomena into the vicinity of the Narcissus theme, border points are constituted, which, as Lotman states, "may be likened to sensory receptors, which transfer external stimuli into the language of our nervous system, or a unit of translation, which adapts the external actor to a given semiotic sphere."[401] This border zone is most clearly established in texts by Ellis and Rank.

One of the important functions of the border, according to Lotman, is that it is an "area of accelerated semiotic processes, which always flow more actively on the periphery

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[399] It might be worth stressing that narcissism has other functions as well. It is obviously introduced into psychoanalysis for discipline-immanent reasons; its primary value for Freud is that he judges it necessary to explain what he refers to as paraphrenia (i.e. the group paranoia-schizophrenia, cf. Jean Laplanche and J.-B. Pontalis, *Vocabulaire de la psychanalyse*, Paris: PUF, 1971, p. 301) and that it adds an important building-block in metapsychological theory. In the context of this study, however, narcissism is included by virtue of its connection to the Narcissus theme.

[400] Lotman, "On the Semiosphere", p. 208f. Again, it should be noted that the relation to clinical observations also constitute a border of psychoanalysis, one where extra-semiotic facts are introduced into the realm of semantics, cf. Lotman, "On the Semiosphere", p. 210. This time, however, that border is doubled by that with the Narcissus theme.

[401] Lotman, "On the Semiosphere", p. 209.

of cultural environments, seeking to affix them to the core structures, with a view to displace them."[402] A conflict thus emerges between center and periphery, where influences from the border threaten the hierarchical organization of the semiosphere, established at the center. Gradually, then, narcissism is formulated at the core of the sub-semiosphere known as psychoanalysis. As a regulating higher-order modeling system, the theory of instincts, where narcissism is subsequently introduced, controls the hierarchical organization of the languages of psychoanalysis. The accelerated semiotic activity at the border with the Narcissus theme, however, is reproduced through the semiotic sphere and forces a revision of the theory of instincts and other central modeling systems, culminating in the metapsychology of the mid-1910s.

One question that will also follow us through this chapter is to what extent narcissism can be regarded as a demythification of the theme. Does it make the Narcissus theme redundant? Does it exhaust its significance? And does it replace mythological generation of meaning by rational explanation.

Sexological Beginnings

The first time the word "narcissism" or any of its derivatives was used in any connection with what was to become the psychoanalytic concept was in two articles by the German psychiatrist Paul Näcke in 1899.[403] In the first he presented statistics of perversions in the asylum he superintended; in the second he presented an overview of research on psycho-sexual phenomena. It is clear, however, both from textual and biographical evidence, that Näcke used the term "Narcismus" as a translation of Havelock Ellis' expression "Narcissus-like tendency".[404] This expression had been used by Ellis in an article in 1898 to denote a rare

[402] Lotman, "On the Semiosphere",, p. 212.

[403] Paul Näcke, "Kritisches zum Kapitel der normalen und pathologischen Sexualität", *Archiv für Psychiatrie*, 13, 1899, p. 356–386, p. 375 and „Die sexuellen Perversitäten in der Irrenanstalt", *Psychiatrische en Neurologische Bladen*, 3, 1899, p. 122–149, p. 128f, 131, 146. Coleridge used the word in a letter in 1822, but in a different sense and context (quoted above). *Dictionnaire de la psychanalyse* claims that French psychologist Alfred Binet used it in 1887, "pour décrire une forme de fétichisme consistant à prendre sa personne comme objet sexuel", but gives no reference (Élisabeth Roudinesco and Michel Plon, *Dictionnaire de la psychanalyse*, Paris: Fayard, 1997, p. 707). At any rate, this does not seem to have been noted by Ellis or the psychoanalysts.

[404] Cf. Havelock Ellis' retrospective account of the origin of the concept (*Studies in the Psychology of Sex: Vol. VII*, Philadelphia: F. A. Davis, 1928, p. 355f.

and extreme form of auto-erotism.[405] This article was subsequently elaborated and included in the different editions of the first volume of Ellis' *Studies in the Psychology of Sex* from 1900 onwards, where the term "narcissism" is also used. It is thus uncontroversial to credit Ellis with having introduced narcissism into psychiatric discourse, even if the wording was a product of Näcke's German translation.

The origin of the concept of narcissism can thus be traced to the following two passages, from Ellis' and Näcke's respective articles:

> To complete this summary of the main phenomena of auto-erotism, I may briefly mention that tendency which is sometimes found, more especially perhaps in women, for the sexual emotions to be absorbed, and often entirely lost, in self-admiration. This Narcissus-like tendency, of which the normal germ in women is symbolized by the mirror, is found in minor degree in some feminine-minded men, but seems to be very rarely found in men apart from sexual attraction for other persons, to which attraction it is, of course, normally subservient.[406]

> Auf alle Fälle viel seltener als das Tagträumen ist der Narcismus, die Selbstverliebtheit. Hier ist die Grenze gegen blosse Eitelkeit zu ziehen und nur dort, wo das Betrachten des eigenen Ich's oder seiner Theile von deutlichen Zeichen des Orgasmus begleitet ist, kann mit Fug und Recht von Narcismus gesprochen werden. Das wäre dann der klassischste Fall von „auto-erotism" im Sinne von H. Ellis.[407]

The juxtaposition of these quotes (given the knowledge that Näcke's quote is taken from an account of Ellis' research on auto-erotism) confirms the semantic equivalence of "Narcismus" and "Narcissus-like tendency". The expression "Narcissus-like tendency" however says more, and explicitly states the simile at the origin of narcissism. It already gives us the three parties in the dialogue that shapes the concept: Narcissus, the narcissist and narcissism, taken from their respective fields of mythology, psychological observation and psychological theory. This shows the basic mechanism at work in Ellis' formulation of the concept: narcissism is the common characteristic of Narcissus and the narcissist. To give a full account of Ellis' view, however, we need to take into account his subsequent additions to this fragmentary introduction. I will therefore use the extended version of Ellis' article, included in the third edition of *Studies in the Psychology of Sex. Vol. I*, published in German in 1907 and in

[405] The article, entitled "Autoerotism, a Psychological Study", appeared in the review *Alienist and Neurologist* in April 1898. I have unfortunately not been able to access this article.
[406] Quoted from Havelock Ellis, *Studies in the Psychology of Sex: Vol. VII*, p. 355.
[407] Näcke, "Kritisches zum Kapitel der normalen und pathologischen Sexualität", p. 375.

English in 1910, complemented by his retrospective account, "The Conception of Narcissism", included in *Studies in the Psychology of Sex. Vol. VII* in 1928.[408]

Ellis' primary contribution to the development of the concept of narcissism is in creating an association between the Narcissus theme and certain psychological phenomena. Let us have a look at how this is done before we go on to discuss how his concept relates to the examples he gives.

When he, in the quote above, compares an observed psychological condition to the mythic figure of Narcissus, he brings two semiotic systems into contact with each other. The key to the approximation is a psychologically realistic interpretation. The realism in the interpretation of the myth can be compared to that in the mention of another mythological character in the same article:

> There can be no doubt, also, that, under the same conditions, the occurrence of the complete orgasm during sleep with, in men, seminal emissions, is altogether normal. Even Zeus himself, as Pausanias has recorded, was liable to such accidents: a statement which, at all events, shows that to the Greek mind there was nothing derogatory in such an occurrence.[409]

This already tells us something of how Ellis dealt with mythic and literary material. It serves as an additional source to the collection of facts of sexual phenomena otherwise provided by scientific observation. The Narcissus-simile is introduced at the end of a long exposition of the various phenomena of auto-erotism. The sources for these phenomena range from religious and literary texts to medical and anthropological observations. It is clear that the main objective for Ellis is to display the universality as well as the diversity of the phenomena of auto-erotism. To this end he strives to cover vast historical and geographical areas and therefore needs to take recourse to different sorts of sources.

In the couple of pages that introduce the "Narcissus-like tendency", there is first a paragraph which introduces the general notion, thereafter follow, in this order, exemplifications taken from the novels *Genio y Figura* (1897) by Juan Valera and *Tagebuch einer Verlorenen* (1905) by Margarete Böhme (the first of which explicitly mentions Narcissus, and the second of which vaguely alludes to him), the description of the case of a young woman who displays the tendency, and observations made by other medical

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[408] The German edtion, later referred to by Otto Rank: Havelock Ellis, *Gechlechtstrieb und Schamgefühl*, Würtzburg: Stuber, 1907. I will refer to Havelock Ellis, "Auto-erotism. A Study of the Spontaneous Manifestations of the Sexual Impulse", in *Studies in the Psychology of Sex: Vol. I*, Philadelphia: F.A. Davis, 1913, p. 161–283 and "The Conception of Narcissism", in *Studies in the Psychology of Sex: Vol. VII*, p. 347–375.
[409] Ellis, *Studies in the Psychology of Sex: Vol. I*, p. 187f.

researchers.[410] They thus show the same pattern of non-discrimination between literary and scientific observations. Furthermore, the ordering of the evidence – literary before medical – prompts us to a conclusion which is confirmed by the author's later retrospective account: the literary evidence is not only just as valid as medical observation, it also structures the interpretation of it. The Narcissus theme provides a framework for the ordering of psychological observations.

A particular importance is here attributed to Valera's novel. In 1928 Ellis claims to have come to the notion of narcissism through two sources: the Narcissus tradition and the case of the young woman. "It was, therefore, inevitable that when I became acquainted in real life with a woman [the case described in "Auto-erotism"] who possessed these characteristics [those attributed to Rafaela in Valera´s novel] in a high degree I should recall the image of Narcissus."[411] In the 1928 article, Ellis sets out to write the history of the concept. In doing this he moves from the beginnings of the myth to the psychoanalytic concept. He thus points out as his precursors, the mythic origins as conjectured by Wieseler, Ovid, Calderon, Milton, Rousseau and Valera. What is interesting to note about this rendering of the Narcissus tradition is the implicit assumption, albeit sometimes hesitatingly, that these authors describe the same phenomenon which Ellis denotes by narcissism. Instructive is the following quote about ancient Narcissus:

> How far the modern psychological conception implicit in this figure was vaguely apprehended remains obscure.
>
> It has, however, recently been suggested that there really was present in the Greek mind *the idea of Narcissus as embodying an attitude of mind which would now be termed auto-erotic*. In a fragment of a comedy by Kratinos there is an uncertain phrase which Meineke reads as "the olisbos of Narcissus." The olisbos, as we know, was primarily an instrument for the sexual gratification of women.[412]

Even though he needs to rely on an uncertain fragment to be able to make the connection to masturbation, Ellis insists in suggesting that Narcissus even in antiquity was a narcissist in his own sense.

In these examples, we see that the Narcissus theme serves as a unifying framework for ordering psycho-sexual phenomena, which, in turn are theorized by the concept of narcissism. What, then, does narcissism mean for Ellis? His explicit statements about its definition tend to limit themselves to the idea of being (in a sexual sense) in love

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[410] Ellis, *Studies in the Psychology of Sex: Vol. I*, p. 206ff.
[411] Ellis, *Studies in the Psychology of Sex: Vol. VII*, p. 354f.
[412] Ellis, *Studies in the Psychology of Sex: Vol. VII*, p. 347f, my emphasis.

with oneself, a condition which is considered to be a form of auto-erotism. Auto-erotism he defines as "the phenomena of spontaneous sexual emotion generated in the absence of an external stimulus proceeding, directly or indirectly, from another person."[413] In his discussion of these phenomena, Ellis focuses primarily on masturbation, erotic day-dreams and orgasm during sleep. He repeatedly states that auto-erotism is a normal part of human sexuality and that it also plays a part in religious ecstasy and artistic creation. As for narcissism, it is included in the category as an "extreme form" and as "curiosity".[414] He finds it to be "rare, except, perhaps, in insanity". In Näcke's inventory of the the 1531 inmates in his asylum, he finds one female and four male cases of narcissism. Even these cases are, however, only hesitatingly classified as narcissism; Näcke prefers to speak of "Pseudo-Narcismus": "Fälle von echtem Narcismus sind gewiss *sehr* selten und eine ganz eigene Verirrung."[415] The rarity of the narcissism is thus emphasized. On the other hand, it also seems to be regarded as the purest form of auto-erotism. Näcke explicitly speaks of "Narcismus" as "der klassischste Fall von 'auto-erotism'".[416] In this way, narcissism, although extreme, becomes somewhat emblematic for auto-erotism as a whole, and thereby paves the way for the subsequent expansion of the concept.

When we then compare the conceptual definition to the examples Ellis cites, it becomes clear how blunt it is compared to that which it is supposed to explain. Let us focus on the quote from Valera's novel. In "Auto-erotism", Ellis quotes the following speech by the heroine:

> I fall into a puerility which may be innocent or vicious, I cannot decide. I only know that it is a purely contemplative act, a disinterested admiration of beauty. It is not coarse sensuality, but æsthetic platonism. I imitate Narcissus; and I apply my lips to the cold surface of the mirror and kiss my image. It is the love of beauty, the expression of tenderness and affection for what God has made manifest, in an ingenuous kiss imprinted on the empty and corporeal reflection.[417]

The original is:

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[413] Ellis, *Studies in the Psychology of Sex. Vol: I*, p. 161.
[414] Ellis, *Studies in the Psychology of Sex. Vol: I*, p. 162, 206.
[415] Näcke, „Die sexuellen Perversitäten in der Irrenanstalt", p. 146. Interesting to note is the general tendency, both in sexology and later in psychoanalysis, to define narcissism as specifically feminine, despite the fact that most of the evidence of narcissism is found in men.
[416] Näcke, "Kritisches zum Kapitel der normalen und pathologischen Sexualität", p. 375.
[417] Ellis, *Studies in the Psychology of Sex. Vol. I*, p. 206.

> incurro en una puerilidad que no sé decidir si es inocente o viciosa. Sólo sé que es acto meramente contemplativo; que es desinteresada admiración de la belleza; No es grosería sensual, sino platonismo estético lo que hago. Imito a Narciso; y sobre el haz fría del espejo aplico los labios y beso mi imagen. Esto sí que es platonismo, me digo entonces. Esto es el amor de la hermosura por la hermosura: la expresión del cariño y del afecto hacia lo que Dios hizo manifestada en un beso candoroso que en el vano e incorpóreo reflejo se estampa.[418]

In Lachmann's terminology, the quote is a contamination. It introduces a heterogenic semantic series – taken from its textual origin – the integration of which into the new text is determined in the play of composition and decomposition at work in the manifest text. In this case, the notion of the Narcissus-like tendency is what brings cohesion and controls the semantic growth. It is, however, quite clear already from the manifest quote that the concept only scratches the surface of the meaning produced here. The name Narcissus activates a reference system (*Systemreferenz*) which multiplies the semantic content of the passage, invoking Romantic esthetics as well as neo-Platonic metaphysics. Those levels of meaning by far exceed the explanatory capacity of the "the tendency for the sexual emotion to be absorbed and often entirely lost in self-admiration".[419]

Even more is the impotence of the concept made clear when we turn to what is left out in the quote, but included in the 1928 article. In the latter, Ellis adds the following lines, which precede the quote above:

> But I do not think she flatters me when I get out of my bath and she dries me and looks at me with a thrill of pleasure and says: "Ah, my child, every day you grow more beautiful. Lucky the man who may look at you like this!" The fact is that I also look at myself with much complacency in large opposite mirrors and feel in full agreement with Petronila's opinion. I will confess all: when Petronila has left me alone,[420]

And in the original:

> pero no creo que me adula cuando salgo del baño y me enjuga y me mira con agradable pasmo, y suele decirme:
> —¡Ay, niña, niña!, cada día estás más hermosa. ¡Bienaventurado el que así te vea!
> Lo que es yo me miro también con complacencia en grandes y opuestos espejos y me siento en perfecta consonancia con el parecer de Petronila.
> Te lo confesaré todo: cuando Petronila me deja sola,[421]

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[418] Juan Valera, *Genio y figura*, Madrid: Fernando Fé, 1897, p. 181.
[419] Ellis, *Studies in the Psychology of Sex. Vol. I*, p. 206.
[420] Ellis, *Studies in the Psychology of Sex. Vol. VII*, p. 351.
[421] Valera, *Genio y figura*, p. 181

Significantly enough, Ellis, in the first version, left out the immediate context of the quote, and cut it to precisely block the presence of other people than Rafaela herself, thereby emphasizing the solipsistic aspect of her self-love. When set in its context a much more complicated structure seems to be involved. It could be argued that Rafaela in fact desires the admiration or envy of her maid, who in turn could be seen as something of a stand-in for the male gaze. These aspects, central as they are to the subsequent developments of the concept of narcissism, cannot be covered by Ellis' definition of auto-erotism as "the phenomena of spontaneous sexual emotion generated in the absence of an external stimulus proceeding, directly or indirectly, from another person."[422] Apart from being set in a language of stimuli and emotions which can hardly deal with the intricacies of the maid's speech and Rafaela's implicit reception of it, this definition directly contradicts the evidence provided by Valera's novel.

To summarize, Ellis' expression "Narcissus-like tendency" deserves to be taken quite literally. His concept is a weak one, which is highly dependent upon the Narcissus tradition. It brings the Narcissus theme, with its manifold configurations, into contact with the field of psycho-sexual empirical evidence, but it does not control the semiotic activity thereby generated. The intertexts activated by the reference to Narcissus produce a surplus of meaning which is not brought under control by psychological theory. But through Ellis' efforts a border zone has been created between literature and psychological observation, where bilateral translations are under way, psychologizing Narcissus and associating psycho-sexual phenomena with those of the Narcissus theme. Narcissism, at this point, denotes a rare perversion, but its connotations are amply spread in directions guided by the Narcissus tradition.

Introduction into Psychoanalysis

Before Freud formally introduced the concept of narcissism in "Zur Einführung des Narzißmus" (1914) (SF X, 138–170), he had used it in an increasingly extensive manner in a number of text. The first occasion – an additional footnote to the 1910 edition of *Drei Abhandlungen zur Sexualtheorie* (SF V, 44n1) – was followed by mentions in the study on

[422] Ellis, *Studies in the Psychology of Sex. Vol. I*, p. 161.

Leonardo da Vinci (1910) (SF VIII, 170), in the third part of the case study of judge Schreber (1911) (SF VIII, 295–316) and an in the third part of *Totem und Tabu* (1913) (SF IX, 93–121). His first oral use of the term, however, was reportedly at a meeting of the Psychoanalytic Association in Vienna on 10 November 1909.[423] It came here as a commentary to a lecture given by Isidor Sadger.

It was indeed Sadger who introduced narcissism into psychoanalytic discourse, in the article "Psychiatrisch-Neurologisches in psychoanalitischer Beleuchtung" in 1908.[424] In this article, which effects narcissism's transition from sexology to psychoanalysis, Sadger appears as an apologetic of psychoanalysis, and his main concern is to promote a general psychoanalytic thesis: "Wo immer man psychopathologische Probleme bis auf den tiefsten Grund durchprüft, stößt man stets wieder wie bei der Hysterie und Zwangsneurose auf Sexuelles, in specie auf infantile Sexualitäten."[425] Narcissism and *Doppelgängerei* are here taken as two examples which are intended to support this general thesis. Narcissism is here understood in the sexological sense, taken as a version of auto-erotism, where a person is sexually aroused by touching or seeing his or her own body – the primary example is a hysteric woman who enjoys kissing her own arms. As Sadger digs into this case, though, he arrives at an explanation which transgresses Ellis' language of stimuli and excitation. He finds that the woman had probably as a child been kissed by her mother – according to Sadger's self-assured analysis, on the genitals – and she now, in a transferred way, does to herself what her mother used to do to her. What is important to note is that Sadger introduces a logic of desire and identification – absent in Ellis' account – which can account for the person not only as an organism reacting to stimuli, but also as a subject relating to objects: "Als Grundlage des Narzismus finden wir also auch hier Bewunderung des Kindes durch seine Mutter und aus Liebe zu dieser Identifikation mit ihr wie in den Kinderspielen."[426]

How this logic of desire and identification is supposed to work is not completely clear (on the one hand, one seems to identify with the person one desires, on the other, one seems to identify with the person in possession of the love of the person one desires), nor are

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[423] Cf. Ernest Jones, *Sigmund Freud: Life and Work. Vol. II*, London: Hogarth, 1955, p. 304 and Andrea Huppke and Michael Schröter, "Annäherung an einen ungeliebten Psychoanalytiker: Zu Isidor Sagder und seinen Erinnerungen an Freud", in Isidor Sager, *Sigmund Freud: Persönliche Erinnerungen*, Tübingen: Diskord, 2006, p. 99–137, p. 127.

[424] Isidor Sadger, "Psychiatrisch-Neurologisches in psychoanalitischer Beleuchtung", *Zentralblatt für das Gesamtgebiet der Medizin und ihre Hilfswissenschaften*, 4:7–8, 1908, p. 45–47, 53–57. Curiosly, in his book about Freud, Sadger renounces all credit for the discovery (*Sigmund Freud: Persönliche Erinnerungen*, Tübingen: Diskord, 2006, p. 43).

[425] Sadger, "Psychiatrisch-Neurologisches in psychoanalitischer Beleuchtung", p. 57.

[426] Sadger, "Psychiatrisch-Neurologisches in psychoanalitischer Beleuchtung", p. 54.

the specifics of the developmental history in which this logic is supposed to play out. There is generally relatively little theorizing on Sadger's part in this article, but there is, on the other hand, an effort of association at work in this article. Quite a few of the phenomena which are later to be explained by narcissism are here simply mentioned side by side with it (narcissism is here taken more as something to be explained than as something which can explain other phenomena). Homosexuality is for example mentioned in the etiology of the narcissistic woman. More interstingly, though, narcissism "führt hinüber zur Doppelgängerei", without further comments.[427] In the discussion of the double, Sadger completely gives up his theorizing ambitions, and hands it over to his patient, an intelligent young male homosexual masochist, whose speech is reported word for word.[428] This young man discusses philosophers (Schopenhauer and Nietzsche), psychologists (Ribot and Freud) and writers (Raupach, Grillparzer, Maupassant, Goethe, Ibsen, Shelley, Dostoevsky, Homer, Euripides, Hoffmann, Andersen, Kleist, Wagner, and Aeschylus). The contention of his triade is not quite clear, but its main motivation seems to be to point to the connections between *Doppelgängerei*, masochism, homosexuality, megalomania, paranoia and narcissism. Narcissism is here still unequivocally understood as a relative to Narcissus: "Auch der Narzismus hängt mit der Doppelgängerei zusammen, die Sage vom Narziß, der sich in sein eigenes Bild verliebt."[429] What Sadger – or his patient – does is thus to connect a number of psychological phenomena with each other, through the use of mythic and literary elements. He widens the zone of contact between literary and psychological phenomena, but supports the associations with literary themes rather than psychological theory.

In the lecture of 1909, Sadger develops and systematizes his views on narcissism as he explores the phenomenon of (male) homosexuality.[430] In a case study of a Danish count suffering from multiple perversions, he inserts narcissism as a stage in the sexual development: "Der Narzismus ist nun nicht etwa ein vereinzeltes Phänomen, sondern eine notwendige Entwicklungsstufe beim Übergang vom Autoerotismus zur späteren

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[427] Sadger, "Psychiatrisch-Neurologisches in psychoanalitischer Beleuchtung", p. 55.

[428] As Huppke and Schröter observe, it is hardly probable that this speech, that most of all ressembles a lecture on literary history, did actually take place within the frames of a psychoanalytic treatment. It seems more likely that this is Sadger's way of writing case stories (Huppke and Schröter, p. 126).

[429] Sadger, "Psychiatrisch-Neurologisches in psychoanalitischer Beleuchtung", p. 56n1.

[430] Isidor Sadger, „Ein Fall von multipler Perversion mit hysterischen Absenzen", *Jahrbuch für psychoanalytische und psychopathologische Forschungen*, 1910:1, p. 59–133. Some preliminary sketches are made in „Zur Ätiologie der konträren Sexualempfindung", *Medizinische Klinik*, 5:2, 1909, p. 53–56, without, however, making use of the concept of narcissism.

Objektliebe.“[431] It is clear that Sadger begins to make a distinction between auto-erotism, but the nature of this distinction is not unambiguous. Ellis’ notion of auto-erotism had been appropriated by Freud in *Drei Abhandlungen* to denote an early stage of the child’s development where the sexual instincts are still without object and satisfy themselves through the child’s own body (SF V, 81ff). Sadger now – apparently at the recommendation of Freud – introduces the notion of secondary auto-erotism, which appears in early puberty and where the sexual instincts have achieved a genital organization, but are still directed at one’s own body.[432] This secondary auto-erotism seems to be identical with narcissism in Sadger’s account. It is somewhat unclear if this narcissism occurs in all individuals, or only those who develop homosexuality. In any case, Sadger establishes a narrative of sexual development which leads to homosexuality (which Sadger understands as “Inversion”) – as is so often is the case in early psychoanalysis, the story is told about a boy, but is supposed to be valid for both men and women. The child originally has two types of love-objects, itself and its mother. At the separation from the mother, the child is heavily disappointed, turns away from her and gives her up as love-object. In repressing his love for her, he instead identifies with her, and comes to love himself. As an adult he will then find love-objects who ressemble himself.[433]

What is important to note is that Sadger here adds a code to narcissism – that of the psychoanalytic narrative of sexual development. When compared to the earlier article, no new psychological phenomena are associated with narcissism, but it is theorized at a higher level. Narcissism is no longer a phenomenon that above all has to be explained, but one which can explain another phenomenon – homosexuality. The connection between the two has been made clearer and the logic of desire and identification has been somewhat straightened. In accordance with this increased ordering on the side of psychological theory, there is also no mention of Narcissus. The lecture represents a regulating of the semiotic systems of psychoanalysis following the accelerated semiotic processes at the border produced by the connections between Narcissus and the psychology of the narcissist.

Freud’s first use of the concept of narcissism in a new text, in *Eine Kindheitserinnerung des Leonardo da Vinci* (1910), is very limited in scope and mainly confirms and clarifies the mechanism described by Sadger. Freud tells a story designed to fit Leonardo’s sexual development, but told as a typical story for male homosexuals, emphasizing the deviations from “normal” development. It tells of a boy with a weak or

[431] Isidor Sadger, „Ein Fall von multipler Perversion mit hysterischen Absenzen“, p. 112.
[432] Isidor Sadger, „Ein Fall von multipler Perversion mit hysterischen Absenzen“, p. 104ff.
[433] Isidor Sadger, „Ein Fall von multipler Perversion mit hysterischen Absenzen“, p. 112ff.

absent father and a strong mother, the erotic attachment to whom is, therefore, especially strong. This love becomes untenable in further conscious development (in the case of Freud's Leonardo, when he was taken to his father's house) and is repressed. "Der Knabe verdrängt die Liebe zur Mutter, indem er sich selbst an deren Stelle setzt, sich mit der Mutter identifiziert und seine eigene Person zum Vorbild nimmt, in dessen Ähnlichkeit er seine neuen Liebesobjekte auswählt." (SF VIII, 170)[434] In Freud's account, this is unambiguously a regression into auto-erotism. This mechanism is what is now referred to as narcissism: „Wir sagen, er findet seine Liebesobjekte auf dem Wege des *Narzißmus*, da die griechische Sage einen Jüngling, *Narzissus* nennt, dem nichts so wohl gefiel wie das eigene Spiegelbild, und der in die schöne Blume dieses Namens verwandelt wurde." (SF VIII, 170)[435] Freud's first and only mention of Narcissus thus, as in Ellis, takes the form of a simile. However, it is a slim simile indeed. In Freud's very vague and general reference to the Narcissus story, the only significant element is self-love. The way of narcissism into psychoanalysis thus clearly goes through the conceptualizing work of sexology and not Freud's interpretation of the myth.

The year after, in "Psychoanalytische Bemerkungen über einen autobiographisch beschriebenen Fall von Paranoia (Dementia Paranoides)", narcissism is more firmly established in psychoanalytic theory. Its place in psychogenesis is now unquestionably an intermediary stage which all individuals pass through on the way from auto-erotism to object-love (SF VIII, 297) – and thus separated from auto-erotism.[436] Freud here discovers the extraordinary usefulness of the concept in explaining the etiology of pathological conditions which had hitherto remained unexplained by psychoanalysis. After having discovered homosexuality behind judge Schreber's paranoia, he finds narcissism behind homosexuality. The explanation is generalized and all forms of paranoia (Freud differentiates pathological jealousy, persecution mania, erotomania and megalomania) are found to be based in a fixation in narcissism (SF VIII, 309f). Together with dementia praecox – which Freud finds to be a regression into auto-erotism – they are grouped as paraphrenia (SF VIII, 313). In the process of these etiological discussions, Freud also begins elaborating on the topographic-economic aspects of narcissism. The fixation in narcissism effects a withdrawal of libido from the objects. This produces a destruction of the subjective

[434] SFE XI, 100: "The boy represses his love for his mother: he puts himself in her place, identifies himself with her, and takes his own person as a model in whose likeness he chooses the new objects of his love."
[435] SFE XI, 100: "He finds the object of his love along the path of *narcissism*, as we say; for Narcissus, according to the Greek legend, was a youth who preferred his own reflection to everything else and who was changed into the lovely flower of that name."
[436] To some extent, however, the distinction between narcissism and auto-erotism remains fluid and uncertain in Freud's thinking.

conception of the world: "Der Weltuntergang ist die Projektion dieser innerlichen Katastrophe; seine subjektive Welt ist untergegangen, seitdem er ihr seine Libido entzogen hat." (SF VIII, 307)[437] The paranoic delusions are symptoms of the ego's attempts to heal itself by again sending out the libido. Freud here also invents the notion of "Ichvergrößerung", which is a consequence of libido being withdrawn and invested in the ego. In this case study, Freud thus further elevates the theoretical rank of narcissism. As a developmental stage in its own right, and with its own structural-economic properties, narcissism is now crucial in explaining both homosexual love and the pathologies of paranoia.

In the third part of *Totem und Tabu* (1913) Freud further expands the applications of the concept of narcissism. Based on the writings of Spencer, Frazer, Tylor and others, Freud postulates a parallelism between the development of thought systems of humanity and the individual's development through different phases of organization of the libido, where narcissism is at the center of attention. He establishes equivalences between animism and narcissism, object-choice and religion and adaption to reality and science (SF, IX, 111). To make the scheme work he also needs an equivalent of auto-erotism, and therefore insists on including a pre-animistic thought system, called "animatism", even though hardly anything can be known about it: "Es ist wenig mehr aus der Erfahrung über den Präanimismus zu sagen, da man noch kein Volk angetroffen hat, welches der Geistesvorstellungen entbehrte." (SF IX, 112)[438] On the surface, this text is a contribution of psychoanalysis to anthropology. In reality, however, it appears just as much as an attempt to get anthropological confirmation of the revised scheme of sexual development of the individual by connecting the psychology of narcissism with already well-worked out theories on animism and witchcraft.[439] According to Freud, the belief in "Allmacht der Gedanken" – which is found to be the principle behind withcraft – is a product of the libidinous cathexis of the ego: "intellektueller Narzißmus, Allmacht der Gedanken" (SF IX, 110).[440]

[437] SFE XII, 70: "The end of the world is the projection of this internal catastrophe; his subjective world has come to an end since his withdrawal of his love from it."
[438] SFE XIII, 91: "Experience has little light to throw on pre-animism, since no race has yet been discovered which is without the concept of spirit."
[439] This point has been developed by for instance Patricia Cotti, „'Original Narcissism' or the Shadow of a Philosophy of History", *History of Psychiatry*, 15:1, 2004, p. 45–45, trans. Mirabelle Ordinaire.
[440] SFE XIII, 90: "intellectual narcissism and omnipotence of thoughts". "Cathexis" is Strachey's translation of Freud's term "Besetzung", which denotes the attachement of psychic energy to an object.

Rank's contribution

As Freud was working to elevate the theoretical potency of narcissism – restructuring the central modelling systems of psychoanalysis to make place for it – his friend and colleague Otto Rank was working in the opposite direction, exploring the connections between narcissism and Narcissus. His first results are presented in the article "Ein Beitrag zum Narzissismus" (1911).[441]

Rank's article takes the form of an interpretation of a dream of a young woman, who Rank argues has a "latente gleichgeschlechtliche Neigung".[442] His contention is that the dream can be understood by assuming that it expresses narcissistic dream-thoughts. As the interpretation progresses, Rank expounds the insights into narcissism thus far attained by psychoanalytic research. In this exposition of the theory of narcissism, every step is backed up by references to the Narcissus tradition. Rank clearly assumes the tradition to have prefigured every part of what is being conceptualized as narcissism. As opposed to Ellis, however, he does not limit himself to collecting examples of self-love, but also incorporates the various connected phenomena he finds in the theme into the concept and makes an effort to confirm his psychological findings by occurrences in the tradition. In a quite literal sense he uses the tradition as a store house of knowledge about the narcissistic phenomena.

The first step is to assert "die narzissistische Grundlage der homosexuellen Verliebtheit".[443] This is precisely what Rank finds in Ovid's story: in the water mirror Narcissus loves a boy (homosexual love) which is in reality himself (narcissistic love). The connection to homosexuality he finds to be confirmed by what he assumes to be the mythic version (Konon's version), where Ameinias kills himself because of his unanswered love for Narcissus.

At this point Rank also includes observations that are not motivated by the context and which are not covered by the present stage of his conceptualization, but which he apparently assumes to be important for the understanding of narcissism. He cites Narcissus-treatments by Pedro Calderón and Albert Emil Brachvogel without saying anything about them. He notes that the inclusion of the Echo-episode is probably Ovid's invention, but suggests that this inclusion is natural, as it is based on masturbation. According to Dion Chrysostomos, Pan was in love with Echo, who rejected him. His father Hermes then took

[441] Otto Rank, "Ein Beitrag zum Narzissismus", *Jahrbuch für psychoanalytische und psychopathologische Forschungen*, 3, 1911, p. 401–426.
[442] Rank, "Ein Beitrag zum Narzissismus", p. 402.
[443] Rank, "Ein Beitrag zum Narzissismus", p. 407.

pity on him and taught him the art of masturbation, which was thereby introduced into the world. Masturbation is for Rank, like narcissism, regarded as closely related to auto-erotism. He thus doubles the very evident connection between Narcissus and Echo – that of optic and acoustic reflection – with a more hidden and far-fetched one – that of auto-erotism. Furthermore, Rank mentions an episode told by Plutarch which does not include Narcissus, but where Eutelidas "sein eigenes Gesicht im Wasserspiegel so schön erschienen sein soll, daß er von einem bösen Blick desselben erkrankte und sein Wohlbefinden zugleich mit seiner Schönheit verlor".[444] Here, Rank prefigures his own subsequent elaborations on narcissism and the double.

In a second step, Rank goes from observing that the woman finds herself beautiful to affirming the narcissistic ground for admiring and creating depictions of oneself. He exemplifies with Rembrandt's self-portraits, but also argues for a more general "Beziehung der Porträtierungskunst zu einer gewissen Sublimierungsform der narzissistischen Verliebtheit".[445] In this context he mentions Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, where the painter Basil Hallward says that "every portrait that is painted with feeling is a portrait of the artist, not of the sitter".[446] From the observation that the woman in the dream likes to watch her own image, Rank, through the intermediary of literary and artistic references, arrives at the assumption that narcissism plays a part in all portraiture.

In a third step, Rank finds that especially the sight of one's own naked body is attractive to the narcissistically loving person. This is confirmed by Ellis' quote from Valera's *Genio y figura* and by a reference to Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* where a young man called Narziß "[s]ich auch ohne Hülle für schön halten dürfte."[447]

In a last step, Rank considers the origin – previously stated by Sadger and Freud – of narcissism in the repression of the love for the mother. Like a mother loves her baby as a younger version of herself, narcissistic love, following the identification of the mother, has a "Verjüngungstendenz". This tendency Rank finds confirmed in Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, where the protagonist's – likened to Narcissus – wish to always remain young and beautiful is granted, and thereafter turns into self-contempt as the picture, as a mirror of his soul, ages and deteriorates. Wilde is ascribed a thorough, but intuitive, knowledge of the phenomena of narcissism: "Aber nicht nur dieses Abwehrstadium des Narzissismus und der

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[444] Rank, "Ein Beitrag zum Narzissismus", p. 408.
[445] Rank, "Ein Beitrag zum Narzissismus", p. 408.
[446] Rank, "Ein Beitrag zum Narzissismus", p. 408; Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, London: Penguin, 2000, p. 9.
[447] Rank, "Ein Beitrag zum Narzissismus", p. 410.

narzissistischen Objektliebe (der Homosexualität) kennt der intuitive Dichter, sondern auch die auf der Grundlage des äußerlich zwar überwundenem, aber doch nicht völlig verdrängten Narzissismus entstehende Neurose.“[448] Rank also notes that Dorian is reported to have a “auffallende Ähnlichkeit” with his mother. From this he concludes that not only can the narcissist turn his love for himself into homosexual object-love, but he can also revive an old love for someone else’s body (in this case the mother) through his love for his own body. He considers this idea to be confirmed by Pausanias’ version of the Narcissus story, where Narcissus loves his dead sister through his own image in the water.

From an intertextual point of view, I think it is reasonable to argue that Rank’s text establishes an anagrammatic relation between the general text, or the system reference, of the Narcissus theme and the field of narcissistic phenomena. The Narcissus theme, which is constituted by a system of interrelated texts, contains a certain amount of signifying elements. These are now found to be dispersed in the textual sphere describing the field of psychological observations related to narcissism. They are thereby restructured and subjected to the signifying capacity of psychoanalytic discourse, i.e. their semantic potential is delimited to that which can be covered by the language of psychoanalysis. Rank thereby adds stability to the bridge between Narcissus and narcissism. The implication of the text is that significant elements in the Narcissus tradition are, in their psychological aspects, likely to be explained by the theory of narcissism. The border zone between the Narcissus theme and narcissistic phenomena is thereby widened. However, it also increases the irregularity in the system. The concept that Rank uses cannot be argued to explain the phenomena which he thereby introduces into the system of narcissistic psychology. From a cultural semiotic point of view, there is an increase in semiotic activity at the periphery, which is insufficiently structured by the modeling systems at the center of the semiosphere.

Metapsychological Formulation

We have seen that Freud in the Schreber case and in *Totem und Tabu* awarded narcissism a firm place in the narrative code of sexual development with its logic of fixations and regressions. Events at the border of the subsemiosphere – those of psychological observations related to the Narcissus theme – increased the irregularities in the system. Those irregularities

[448] Rank, ”Ein Beitrag zum Narzissismus”, p. 412.

were reproduced and absorbed by the higher order modelling system of sexual development, which was altered by the introduction of a narcissistic stage of development to be able to bring order to the irregularities. In "Zur Einführung des Narzißmus" (1914) – although this had begun to be developed already in *Totem and Tabu* – the changes are transmitted to the very core of psychoanalysis, to the theory of instincts.

The center of psychoanalysis in the mid-1910s is metapsychology. In "Das Unbewußte" (1913), Freud writes:

> Wir werden es nicht unbillig finden, die Betrachtungsweise, welche die Vollendung der psychoanalytischen Forschung ist, durch einen besonderen Namen auszuzeichenen. Ich schlage vor, daß es eine *metapsychologische* Darstellung genannt werden soll, wenn es uns gelingt, einen psychischen Vorgang nach seinem *dynamischen*, *topischen* und *ökonomischen* Beziehungen zu beschreiben. (SF X, 280f)
>
> It will not be unreasonable to give a specific name to this whole way of regarding our subject-matter, for it is the consummation of psycho-analytic research. I propose that when we have succeeded in describing a psychical process in its dynamic, topographical and economic aspects, we should speak of it as a *metapsychological* presentation. (SFE XIV, 181)

At this level narcissism is now introduced, and more specifically as a concept which participates in regulating the relations between the three points of view. The points of view are certainly three complementary modelling systems of the psyche, and can thus in Lotman's terminology be referred to as codes. The dynamic point of view describes psychic phenomena as a result of the pressure exerted by opposing and combining forces. The topographical point of view describes the psychic apparatus as pseudo-spatially differentiated between different systems. The economic point of view describes the psychic processes as the circulation of quantifiable energy.

In 1914, narcissism is introduced as a primarily economic concept with the well-known amoeba-simile:

> Wir bilden so die Vorstellung einer ursprünglichen Libidobesetzung des Ichs, von der später an die Objekte abgegeben wird, die aber, im Grunde genommen, verbleibt und sich zu den Objektbesetzungen verhält wie der Körper eines Protoplasmatierchens zu den von ihm ausgeschickten Pseudopodien. (SF X, 140f)
>
> Thus we form the idea of there being an original libidinal cathexis of the ego, from which some is later given off to objects, but which fundamentally persists and is related to the object-cathexes much as the body of an amoeba is related to the pseudopodia which it puts out. (SFE XIV, 75)

Its introduction implies a subdivision of the theory of instincts. The basic division of instincts (about which Freud at this time begins to express doubts) is that between ego-instincts (or instincts of self-preservation) and sexual instincts (the energetic aspect of which is referred to as libido). The sexual instincts are now attributed an increased plasticity and can be directed either at an object or at one's own ego, and can therefore appear as narcissistic libido (ego-libido) or object-libido.

"Zur Einfürung" performs three different tasks. First, it sums up the development of the theory of narcissism and systematically presents its explicatory power with regard to psychological conditions (these are now extended by sleep, organic disease and hypochondria) and homosexual object-choice. Second, it uses the notion of narcissism to defend Freud's dualistic theory of instincts against Carl Gustav Jung and Alfred Adler, who had at this time presented alternative, monistic, theories of instincts. Third, it elaborates on further and even more fundamental consequences of the introduction of narcissism. This latter aspect is what concerns us here. It leads to a reformulation of the dynamics of repression, which is now explained through a topographical addition originating in narcissism, the ideal-ego:

> Diesem Idealich gilt nun die Selbstliebe, welche in der Kindheit das wirkliche Ich genoß. Der Narzißmus ercheint auf dieses neue ideale Ich verschoben, welches sich wie das infantile im Besitz aller wertvollen Vollkommenheiten befindet. Der Mensch hat sich hier, wie jedesmal auf dem Gebiete der Libido, unfähig erwiesen, auf die einmal genossene Befriedigung zu verzichten. Er will die narzißtische Vollkommenheit seiner Kindheit nicht entbehren, und wenn er diese nicht festhalten konnte, durch die Mahnungen während seiner Entwicklungszeit gestört und in seinem Urteil geweckt, sucht er sie in der neuen Form des Ichideals wieder zu gewinnen. Was er als sein Ideal vor sich hin projiziert, ist der Ersatz für den verlorenen Narzißmus seiner Kindheit, in der er sein eigenes Ideal war. (SF X, 161)
>
> This ideal ego is now the target of the self-love which was enjoyed in childhood by the actual ego. The subject's narcissism makes its appearance displaced on to this new ideal ego, which, like the infantile ego, finds itself possessed of every perfection that is of value. As always where the libido is concerned, man has here again shownhimself incapable of giving up a satisfaction he had once enjoyed. He is not willing to forgo the narcissistic perfection of his childhood; and when, as he grows up, he is disturbed by the admonitions of others and by the awakening of his own critical judgement, so that he can no longer retain that perfection, he seeks to recover it in the new form of an ego ideal. What he projects before him as his ideal is the substitute for the lost narcissism of his childhood in which he was his own ideal. (SFE XIV, 94)

The satisfaction from the love of the ideal-ego is supervised by a certain agency, called conscience (in the second topography to be developed as super-ego), which is in charge of censoring unconscious representations.

Some of the metapsychological aspects of narcissism are elaborated in the papers of 1915–16. In "Triebe und Triebschicksale", where Freud explores the "destinies" of instincts, narcissism plays a prominent role. Among the different changes that the instinct is here supposed to be able to undergo, two fundamental types of turns are related to narcissism: the turn towards one's own ego and the turn from active to passive:

> Mit Rücksichtsnahme auf die konstruierte narzißtische Vorstufe des Sadismus nähern wir uns so der allgemeinere Einsicht, daß die Triebschicksale der Wendung gegen das eigene Ich und der Verkehrung von Aktivität in Passivität von der narzißtischen Organisation des Ichs abhängig sind und den Stempel dieser Phase tragen. (SF X, 224)[449]

> If we take into account our constructed preliminary narcissistic stage of sadism, we shall be approaching a more general realization – namely, that the instinctual vicissitudes which consist in the instinct's being turned round upon the subject's [sic!] own ego and undergoing reversal from activity to passivity are dependent on the narcissistic organization of the ego and bear the stamp of that phase. (SFE XIV, 132)

Here, Freud also begins to explore the signifiance of narcissism for the development of the ego. In the narcissistic phase, as the individual has no interest in the world around it, it strives to unite the two great psychic polarites ego-subject vs. object-environment and pleasure vs. unpleasure. To achieve this it introjects into itself everything that is perceived as a source of pleasure, and projects everything that is perceived as a source of unpleasure outside of itself. In this way it conceives a purified pleasure-ego, which is the first organization of the ego. Further developments on the question of the development of the ego are produced in "Trauer und Melancholie". Freud here argues that the loss of a love-object – especially one chosen according to the narcissistic object-choice – can, through a narcissistic regression, lead to identification with the object: "Die narzißtische Identifizierung mit dem Objekt wird dann zum Ersatz der Liebesbeziehung, was den Erfolg hat, daß die Liebesbeziehung trotz des Konflikts mit der geliebten Person nicht aufgegeben werden muß." (SF X, 436)[450]

From being understood as an extremely rare perversion in sexology, narcissism has thus, in the metapsychological papers, turned into a fundamental component in the central modelling systems of psychoanalysis. Primarily an economic concept, it also determines

[449] The opposition active – passive is furthermore equated with that between masculinity and femininity, which is explicitly said to have no other psychological signification that this, thus once again stressing the femininity of narcissism.

[450] SFE XIV, 249 : "The narcissistic identification with the object then becomes a substitute for the erotic cathexis, the result of which is that in spite of the conflict with the loved person the love-relation need not be given up."

central structures of the topographical and dynamic points of view. In topography it explains the formation of the ego, the ideal-ego and conscience, and thus begins the process which eventually leads up to the second topography of id, ego and super-ego. These formations in turn determine fundamental dynamic mechanisms such as repression. In a way not dissimilar to the water in Gide's *Traité*, then, narcissism can here be described as something of a mediator between the central codes of psychoanalysis.

Narcissism is now also semiotically completely independent of Narcissus. The reference to the theme is now redundant in establishing the meaning of narcissism – which, as we have seen, was not the case in Ellis, or even in Rank's "Ein Beitrag". In a certain sense, then, narcissism has been dissociated from Narcissus. Furthermore, narcissism is now something which can primarily be attributed to an instinct. It is no longer about psychological content, but about its metapsychological foundation. As for example Ricœur has stressed, there is in Freud's thinking a fundamental gap between the pseudo-physical realm of energetics and the psychic realm of hermeneutics.[451] On the one hand, Freudian analysis deals in quantitative explanation, on other, it deals in qualitative interpretation. The former is a heritage from his neurological education, the latter from his humanistic *Bildung*.[452] The instinct, which Freud describes as "ein Grenzbegriff zwischen Seelischem und Somatischem" (SF X, 214), appears as a mediator between the two.[453] The instinct itself, which is not psychologically knowable, is described in metaphorical terms borrowed from physics. It is, however, presented to the psyche by means of representatives of instincts – representations and affects (cf. SF X, 254f). Narcissism now completely belongs to the realm of energetics. The Narcissus theme, on the other hand, as it was discovered by psychoanalysis, appeared at the level of psychological content. This is indeed the general way in which literature, myths and other cultural artifacts are treated by Freud; they are something for interpretation, not for quantitative explanation. In this way, the metapsychological formulation of narcissism signifies not only a de-psychologizing of Narcissus, but also a de-mythologizing.

Can we then say, in Blumenberg's terms, that narcissism can be regarded as an attempt to bring the myth of Narcissus to an end? Blumenberg discusses some such attempts. The major example is German Idealism, which is taken as an attempt to bring myth as a whole to an end. He also, however, discusses the possibility of bringing *one* myth to an end.

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[451] Ricœur, *De l'interprétation*, p. 75ff.

[452] Cf e.g. Siegfried Bernfeld, "Freud's Earliest Theories and the School of Helmholtz", in Laurence Spurling (ed.), *Sigmund Freud: Critical Assessments. Vol. I. Freud and the origin of psychoanalysis*, London: Routledge, 1989, p. 229–248 and Frankland, *Freud's Literary Culture*, p. 1ff.

[453] SFE XIV, 122: "a concept on the frontier between the mental and the somatic".

The examples he mentions here are the Faust of Valéry and the Prometheus-treatments by Gide and Kafka. That a myth is brought to an end means that its significance has been exhausted, it should leave the impression that there is nothing more to say, that no more meaning is to be elicited from the myth (this aspect will be discussed in the next sub-section).[454] What characterizes an attempt to bring an individual myth to an end is that the elements and structures of the myth have been twisted so far that it is hardly recognizable anymore, and central features have been eclipsed or reversed. In Blumenberg's theory, the end of myth should also, as a limit-concept be an affirmation of the "absolutism of the subject", as opposed to the "absolutism of reality" which sets the work of myth in progress (these aspects will be discussed in the next section). Finally, since myth as a whole is never actually brought to an end, every successful attempt to bring a myth to an end should itself be a myth (this aspect will be discussed in the next chapter).

Confirmation of the Double

Finally, in this exposition of the conceptualization of the Narcissus theme, Rank's text „Der Doppelgänger", published shortly after „Zur Einführung des Narziβmus", should be mentioned. In this context, the point to be observed is that Rank once again reconnects narcissism with the Narcissus theme, not so as to make the concept dependent on the theme for its meaning, but in an effort to subordinate the theme to the concept and display the explanatory value of the latter.

Through an analysis of a film based on Hans Heinz Ewers' *Der Student von Prag*, Rank comes to the conclusion that the double-motif he finds in it "das interessante und bedeutsame Problem des Verhältnisses des Menschen zu seinem eigenen Ich ist, welches uns in seiner Störung als Schicksal des Individuums versinnbildlicht wird".[455] This leads him to undertake a comparative analysis of a great number of literary works which include the motif of the double. In this analysis – which, among others, includes works by Hoffmann, Jean Paul, Poe, Maupassant, Heine and Dostoevsky – he finds that in these cases, the double is an exact image of the hero – "aus dem Spiegel gestohlen" – that the double stands in the way of

[454] An unscientific indication that this is the case with Narcissus-narcissism is my personal experience that whenever I, in a social context, mention that I am working on a dissertation on Narcissus, I am almost without exception tipped off about some scholar who has said interesting things about narcissism or met by a comment on our narcissistic society. It seems like we are hardly able to think Narcissus outside of narcissism.
[455] Otto Rank, "Der Doppelgänger", *Imago*, 1914:2, p. 97–164, p. 100f.

the hero, that the hero's relation to women ends in disaster, often suicide, and that the motif is associated with paranoia.[456] As an explanation for these similarities, Rank suggests the "identische seelische Struktur dieser Dichter".[457] He indeed finds such an identity as he goes through biographies of the authors, but argues that this is not enough to explain particular features of the double motif.

He turns instead to ethnographic, folkloristic and mythological traditions. Through them he establishes the equivalence between mirror image, portrait, photography and shadow, the latter of which he finds holds a special place in the *Völkerpsychologie*. Through ethnographic evidence he argues that the shadow is a representative of the soul, and that it is associated with a curious synthesis of the erotic and the disastrous.[458] This then brings him to the Narcissus theme, in which he finds all of the former traits assembled. The main part of Rank's article is thus dedicated to connecting, through psychological evidence, the theme of the double with that of Narcissus (his prime example being Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*), while also including the belief in an immortal soul.

Then Rank turns to psychological explanation, where the concept of narcissism turns out to be the key to all of these phenomena; they all relate to a fixation in primary narcissism. He argues that the double is the product of a splitting of the ego, which in turn is related to a strong sense of guilt, which, he states, "miβt, wie Freud dargelegt hat, einerseits die Distanz zwischen dem Ichideal und der erreichten Wirklichkeit, anderseits wird es aus seiner mächtigen Todesfurcht gespeist und schafft heftige Selbstbestrafungstendenzen, die auch den Selbstmord mitbedingen."[459]

The basis of all of the phenomena related to the double appears to be different sorts of fragmentation of the ego, originating in narcissism. We have the hypostasis of an ideal-ego which Freud in "Zur Einführung des Narziβmus" argued to be a compensatory product created when primary narcissism is abandoned. We have the belief in an immortal soul, which according to Rank is narcissism's way of granting the wish to live for ever. And we have the "Abspaltung eines bösen, strafwürdigen Ich, welche die Vorbedingung jedes Selbstmordes zu sein scheint", exemplifying the mechanism of libidinal ego-constitution which Freud was later to develop in "Triebe und Triebschicksale".

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[456] Rank, "Der Doppelgänger", p. 123.
[457] Rank, "Der Doppelgänger", p. 123.
[458] Rank, "Der Doppelgänger", p. 149.
[459] Rank, "Der Doppelgänger", p. 156f.

Rank's paper on the double thus turns out to be, above all, a final subordination of the Narcissus theme under the concept of narcissism. It does appear like an attempt to show that whatever meaning is found in the Narcissus theme can be derived from narcissism. In this sense, narcissism appears to (in the view of the psychoanalysts) have exhausted the significance of Narcissus; there is nothing more to say and there are no more stories to be told – all can be reduced to narcissism.

Narcissism, Narcissus and Subjectivity in the Metapsychological Papers

In the previous section, I presented the historical development of the concept of narcissism and displayed the gap that surfaces between Narcissus and narcissism, where the latter, at least within psychoanalytic discourse, comes to semiotically dominate the former. Let us now try to, in a more systematic manner, reinsert narcissism within our context of the Narcissus-theme and its relevance for the question of the subject.

Undoubtedly, psychoanalysis as a whole has a great deal to tell us about the question of subjectivity. It generally conceives of the human subject as something which is constitued, and often tormented, by opposing forces within the self.[460] Relative to the modern tradition of subjectivity, its most marked contributition is that it dissolves the equation between self, ego, consciousness, psyche and reason, which since Descartes had been its foundational structure. This is not the place to undertake a complete discussion of subjectivity in psychoanalysis; I will limit myself to those aspects which are related to the introduction of narcissism in the mid-1910s. Through the introduction of narcissism, the concept of the ego (*das Ich*) begins to be problematized. It was not until "Das Ich und das Es" (1923) that Freud arrived at a coherent theory of the ego, but the development of this theory begins with the introduction of narcissism. In the early texts "das Ich" is often identical to the self and with consciousness.[461] I will now trace some of the developments on the question of subjectivity which are related to narcissism by means of a comparative discussion of narcissism and the Narcissus theme.

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[460] Cf. e.g. Irving Thalberg, "Freud's Anatomies of the Self", in Richard Wollheim (ed.), *Freud: A Collection of Critical Essays*, New York: Anchor, 1974, p. 147–171.

[461] Cf. e.g. Clifford Yorke, "Freud's 'On Narcissism': A Teaching Text", in Jospeh Sandler, Ethel Person and Peter Fonagy (eds.), *Freud's "On Narcissism: An Introduction"*, New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 1991, p. 35–53, p. 36.

"Narcissus" denotes a person of some kind; "narcissism" is a quality ascribed to an instinct. There is thus a disparity of the terms that prevents a comparative analysis in any strict sense. But given the many faces of "the Narcissus theme", I think it is at least possible to discuss the relationship between the two in a systematic comparison of contents and structures.

It is not uncommon to begin a study of narcissism with a short presentation of the myth of Narcissus. This is often done in passing, to give some background to the discussions.[462] Sometimes the discussion of the myth is more elaborate and gives some explicit indications for the discussions to come, as in a study by Jean-Claude Stoloff.[463] Often we also find literary scholars who use narcissism and Narcissus as an unbroken continuum in discussions about psychological issues.[464] Common to those is the implicit assumption that narcissism and the myth of Narcissus are about the same thing, and that Narcissus will be able to tell us something about the phenomenon of narcissism.

Somewhat rarer are thematized comparative analyses of narcissism and the Narcissus theme. Mark Edmundson makes such a reading as he juxtaposes Freud's "Zur Einfürung" and the passage from Milton's *Paradise Lost* which describes Eve in front of the pool while alluding the Narcissus theme. [465] In so doing, Edmundson tries to "allow Milton's text to read Freud" and "demonstrate the mythological or literary affinites of Freud's text".[466] However, even though Edmundson manages to find some structural similarities between the two texts, the choice of that particular Narcissus text as intertext to Freud's concept seems highly arbitrary and the conclusions are very specualtive. A more down to earth discussion is that of Glenn W. Most, who asks the question "War Narziß ein Narzißt?"[467] Most takes the historical distance between Freud and Ovid seriously, and interrogates the possibilites to bridge it. He finds that, even though Ovid's and Freud's texts play out in different contexts, they show remarkable parallels in their view of love, knowledge and subjectivity. In my view, however, Most relies too much on both the relation between Freud's concept and Ovid's text and the parallel with case of Oedipus. Our previous discussion has shown both that the

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[462] Cf. e.g. Rolf Reitan, *Freuds narcissisme*, Århus: Klim, 1988, p. 14ff.
[463] Jean-Claude Stoloff, *Interpréter le narcissisme*, Paris: Dunod, 2000, p. 5ff.
[464] Cf. e.g. Elke Siegel, "Relais für einen Selbstbezug: Narzissmus und Freundschaft", in Eckart Goebel and Elisabeth Bronfen (eds.), *Narziss und Eros: Bild oder Text?*, Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2009, p. 135–165.
[465] Mark Edmundson, "Freudian Mythmaking: The Case of Narcissus", *The Kenyon Review*, 2, 1988, p. 17–37 and Mark Edmundson, *Towards Reading Freud: Self-Creation in Milton, Wordsworth, Emerson, and Sigmund Freud*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990, p. 55–86.
[466] Edmundson, "Freudian Mythmaking », p. 27.
[467] Glenn W. Most, "Freuds Narziß: Reflexionen über einen Selbstbezug", in Renger (ed.), *Narcissus*, p. 117–131, p. 117.

formation of the psychoanalytic concept draws on the whole Narcissus tradition much more than on the individual contribution of Ovid and that the parallels between Oedipus and Narcissus in psychoanalysis are, at best, weak.

It seems futile to single out one text, supposed to represent the Narcissus tradition, for comparison with the concept of narcissism. To compare one particular Narcissus-text – even that of Ovid – would be arbitrary and could hardly tell us anything of general interest for the Narcissus tradition. A more general discussion may at least yield something.

Are there, then, any significant results to be obtained from such a comparison? One feature that could be noted is that narcissism is intrinsically linked to femininity. This amounts to some kind of reversal compared to the traditional versions of the theme, but, as we have seen, this change of sex has a long history. What is radical is that narcissism becomes *the* defining characteristic of the feminine in its psychological aspect.[468] The specific stress on the relation between narcissism and homosexuality could also be noted. Narcissus' love has certainly been a homosexual one before, but it has not been thematized as a significant element of the theme. Once again, narcissism is the sole defining element of homosexuality. In this way, gender and sexuality are more closely linked to the constitution of the subject, which had formerly, in its theoretical acceptance (albeit this may not be the case for its implicit connotations – but we are here investigating what texts say about subjectivity, not what they hide), been gender- and sexuality-neutral. However, it is worth stressing that gender and sexuality do not primarily define subjectivity; it is the other way around: that which defines subjectivity also defines gender and sexuality.

One element that is central in most treatments of the theme, but that is pushed into a secondary position in narcissism, is the epistemic question. The confusion of reality and illusion is, as we have seen, often the central motif of the theme, or – when subordinated to self-love – an important factor in further developments. At the core of narcissism, knowledge is not an issue. It is only as an effect of narcissism, in the "omnipotence of thoughts" and in the hallucinations of paranoia, that epistemological concerns appear. In narcissism, love is the primary concern.

Another interesting feature to note is that primary narcissism is a completely harmonic state. This is a rather recent development, charateristic of Romantic treatments of

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[468] This is made particularly clear in "Triebe und Triebschicksale" – given the idea that narcissism produces the turn from active to passive – where Freud writes: "Der Gegensatz Aktiv–Passiv verschmilzt späterhin mit dem von Männlich–Weiblich, der, ehe dies geschehen ist, keine psychologische Bedeutung hat." (SF X, 227)

the theme and going back to Edward Young. In those cases, however, it is a goal to be achieved; in narcissism, it is an original state. This brings us closer to Gide's Narcissus, where the narcissic state is also a harmonic initial condition. The comparison can be developed. As we remember, Narcisse's state in front of the mirror is one of self-absorbed timelessness. Freud, in a note to "Zur Einführung" writes: "Nur als Vermutung füge ich an, daß die Ausbildung und Erstarkung dieser beobachtenden Instanz [the one related to the ego-ideal] auch die späte Entstehung des (subjektiven) Gedächtnisses und des für unbewußte Vorgänge nicht geltenden Zeitmoments in sich fassen könnte." (SF X, 164n1)[469] The stage of primary narcissism thus also appears to be one of (at least subjective) timelessness. In this way they share some notion of the narcissic state as a paradisiacal one. In both cases, it is also from this original position that the development of the ego proceeds, under the aegis of this very position. We see, thus, at least some similiarities between Symbolist Narcissus and the narcissism of psychoanalysis.

In Gide, though, the narcissic state is one of perfect reflection. Of course, ever since Narcissus arrived in Thespis, reflection has perhaps been the most important motif of the theme. This brings us to an interesting question for narcissism: *is there any reflection in narcissism?* This may sound like a baroque question, but the answer is far from obvious. Whatever reflexivity is taken to mean, it must at least include either some sense of turning back upon oneself or some form of correspondence between two entities. Is this the case in primary narcissism? In the amoeba simile quoted above, Freud evokes the image of a reservoir of energy, which can be distributed to the objects. The energy that goes out in the object cathexes can then of course be taken back into the ego, but this seems more like a "withdrawal" than a "reflection". In any case, this happens only after the individual has left the stage of primary narcissism. This simile is also in line with "Das Unbewußte", where Freud speaks of the "primitiver objektloser Zustand von Narzißmus" (SF X, 295).[470] However, does not "die Vorstellung einer ursprünglischen Libidobesetzung des Ichs" (SF X, 141) imply some sense of reflexivity?[471] That the ego is also an object seems to be implied in „Triebe und Triebschicksale", where Freud speaks of „das narzißtische Objekt" (SF X, 224). "I (subject) love myself (object)" must surely comprise some element of reflexivity. Yes, but is this really the meaning of the original libido cathexis of the ego? Who is it that loves the

[469] SFE XIV, 96n1: "I should like to add to this, merely by way of suggestion, that the developing and strengthening of this observing agency might contain within it the subsequent genesis of (subjective) memory and the time-factor, the latter of which has no application to unconscious processes."
[470] SFE XIV, 197: "primitive object-less condition of narcissism".
[471][471] SFE XIV, 75: "the idea of […] an original libidinal cathexis of the ego".

ego? In "Zur Einführung", Freud writes: "Es ist eine Notwendige Annahme, daß eine dem Ich vergleichbare Einheit nicht von Anfang an im Individuum vorhanden ist; das Ich muß entwickelt werden." (SF X, 142)[472] This development goes through the stage of primary narcissism. The ego indeed seems to be created by the libido that is directed at it. This libido is of autoerotic origin, but can it be said to emmanate from the ego? We are given the alternatives of either assuming that the libido directed at the ego comes from a source external to it – in which case there is no reflection – or assuming that the ego creates itself in some sort of autochthone hyper-reflexivity, where nothing exists prior to reflection.

The latter alternative reminds us of the inaugurating move of the philosophy of the subject where the subject constitutes itself through a reflexive act. The "I love myself" becomes a kind of erotic *cogito* where the ego constitutes itself by its love for itself. However, we must remind ourselves that narcissism is an economic concept. It appears at the level of metapsychology and not at the level of psychological content. The idea "I love myself" is non-sensical for a theory which can only deal with an economy of energy.

The alternatives stated above, namely between the ego being constituted by being the object of an instinct and being constituted by its love for itself, in fact reproduces the epistemological gap in psychoanalysis that was noted above – that between energetics and hermeneutics. Being the object of an instinct is expressible in the pseudo-physical language of metapsychology; being in love with oneself is expressible in a language which deals with meaning. The possibility to close this gap will be discussed in the next chapter. For now, let us simply accept the discrepancy. What this reduction from psychology to metapsychology amounts to is, as Ricœur has argued, "une *epochè* retournée, puisque ce qui est initialement le mieux connu, le conscient, est suspendu et devient le moins connu".[473] To speak with Kant, consciousness is treated as a perception, and metapsychology describes the conditions of this perception.

If we remain within metapsychology and regard narcissism as a libido cathexis of the ego, we find that the ego is constituted as the aim of an instinct. As Ricœur states: "Cette introduction [du narcissisme] équivaut à radicaliser la notion même de pulsion,

[472] SFE XIV, 76f: "we are bound to suppose that a unity comparable to the ego cannot exist in the individual from the start; the ego has to be developed".
[473] Ricœur, *De* l'interprétation, p. 122. Ricœur, *Freud and Philosophy*, p. 118: "an *epochē* in reverse, since what is intially best known, the conscious, is suspended and becomes the least known".

puisqu'il faut concevoir celle-ci plus primitivement que toute relation sujet-objet".[474] In "Triebe und Triebschicksale", where Freud develops the metapsychological aspects of instincts, they are presented as highly plastic fundamental forces, which are not dependent on the subject and object they relate. The object is argued to be "das variabelste am Triebe, nicht ursprünglich mit ihm verknüpft, sondern ihm nur infolge seiner Eignung zur Ermöglichung der Befriedigung zugeordnet" (SF X, 215).[475] The object is thus a function of the aim of an instinct. The aim of the sexual instincts – which are really the only ones Freud is concerned with here – is "die Erreichung der Organlust" (SF X, 218), in other words, the constancy principle, or the avoidance of energetic tensions. This means that the ego itself – in its topographical sense – since it is conceived as an object of a sexual instinct, is a function of the constancy principle.

But let us return to the question if there is any reflexivity in narcissism. The answer is yes, in a certain sense. As Freud explores the vicisissitudes of instincts and identification with lost objects in metapsychological papers, a generalized sense of narcissism can be discerned. This general sense seems to be that of a passive aim of an instinct. Narcissism effects a return to the passive aims of "wanting to be seen" or "wanting to be loved". It thus, in a certain sense, reverses the relation between subject and object. To be sure, Freud warns against confusion between active/passive and subject/object:

> Der Gegensatz von Aktiv – Passiv ist nicht mit dem von Ich-Subjekt – Außen-Objekt zu verwechseln. Das Ich verhält sich passiv gegen die Außenwelt, insoweit es Reize von ihr empfängt, aktiv, wenn es auf dieselben reagiert. […] Das Ich-Subjekt sei passiv gegen die äußeren Reize, aktiv durch seine eigenen Triebe. (SF X, 227)
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> The antithesis active – passive must not be confused with the antithesis ego-subject – external world-object. The relation of the ego to the external world is passive in so far as it receives stimuli from it and active when it reacts to these. […] the ego-subject is passive in respect of external stimuli but active through its own instincts. (SFE XIV, 134)

This means that the subject can be both passive and active in relation to the object, but in relation to a given content of instinct, e.g. loving, seeing or hurting, the relation between subject and object is reversed as the aim of the instinct is turned from active to passive. Freud writes for example:

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[474] Ricœur, *De l'interprétation*, p. 131. Ricœur, *Freud and Philosophy*, p. 127 : "The introduction of narcissism deepens our notion of instinct; it forces us to conceive of instincts as more radical than any subject-object relation."

[475] SFE XIV, 122: «most variable about an instinct and […] not originally connected with it, but becomes assigned to it only in consequence of being particularly fitted to make saatisfaction possible".

> Dann müssen wir von der Vorstufe des Schautriebes, auf der die Schaulust den eigenen Körper zum Objekt hat, sagen, sie gehöre dem Narzißmus an, sei eine narzißtische Bildung. Aus ihr entwickelt sich der Aktive Schautrieb, indem er den Narzißmus verläßt, der passive Schautrieb halte aber das narzißtische Objekt fest. Ebenso bedeute die Umwandlung des Sadismus in Masochismus eine Rückkehr zum narzißtischen Objekt, während in beiden Fällen das narzißtische Subjekt durch Identifizierung mit einem anderen fremden Ich vertauscht wird. (SF X, 224)

> It follows that the preliminary stage of the scopophilic instinct, in which the subject's own body is the object of the scopophilia, must be classed under narcissism, and that we must describe it as a narcissistic formation. The active scipophilic instinct develops from this, by leaving narcissism behind. The passive scopophilic instinct, on the contrary, holds fast to the narcissistic object. Similiarly, the transformation of sadism into masochism implies a return to the narcissistic object. An in both cases the narcissistic *subject* is, through identification, replaced by another, extraneous ego. (SFE XIV, 132)

In narcissism, then, the subject takes itself as an object and simultaneously identifies with the object. This is what is developed in the investigation of narcissistic identification in "Trauer und Melancholie" and what is tentatively suggested already in the essay on Leonardo da Vinci, as it was stated that the boy, in repressing his love for his mother also identifies with her.

The mechanism of reversal of the positions of subject and object is also what determines the subsequent development of the psychological subject. In this way, for example, the formation of the ego-ideal is a process where a part of the subject is treated as an object. The ego-ideal becomes the object of the narcissistic love and undergoes the same sexual overestimation as love-objects (SF X, 161). In connection to the ego-ideal, the conscience is developed, which acts as a subject, an agency, and objectifies the ego: "Die Kranken klagen dann darüber, daß man alle ihre Gedanken kennt, ihre Handlungen beobachtet und beaufsichtigt; sie werden dem Walten dieser Instanz durch Stimmen informiert, welche charakteristischerweise in der dritten Person zu ihnen sprechen. („Jetzt denkt sie wieder daran; jetzt geht er fort.")" (SF X, 163). This process is generalized in „Trauer und Melancholie":

> Die Objektbesetzung erwies sich als wenig resistent, sie wurde aufgehoben, aber die freie Libido nicht auf ein anderes Objekt verschoben, sondern ins Ich zurückgezogen. Dort fand sie aber nicht eine beliebige Verwendung, sondern diente dazu, eine *Identifizierung* des Ichs mit dem aufgegebenen Objekt herzustellen. Der Schatten des Objekts fiel so auf das Ich, welches nun von einer besonderen Instanz wie ein Objekt, wie das verlassene Objekt, beurteilt werden konnte. Auf diese Weise hatte sich der Objektverlust in einen Ichverlust verwandelt, der Konflikt zwischen dem Ich und der

> geliebten Person in einen Zwiespalt zwischen Ichkritik und dem durch Identifizierung veränderten Ich. (SF X, 435)
>
> The object-cathexis proved to have little power of resistance and was brought to an end. But the free libido was not displaced on to another object; it was withdrawn into the ego. There, however, it was not employed in any unspecified way, but served to establish an *identification* of the ego with the abandoned object. Thus the shadow of the object fell upon the ego, and the latter could henceforth be judged by a special agency, as though it were an object, the forsaken object. In this way an object-loss was transformed into an ego-loss and the conflict between the ego and the loved person into a cleavage between the vritical activity of the ego and the ego as altered by identification. (SFE XIV, 249)

Reflection in the sense of a reversal of the positions of subject and object thus seems to be what continually shapes the ego, just as it gave rise to it in the first place. Furthermore, this mechanism of reflection is what creates an inner differentiation of the ego. Whereas the primary inner psychic conflicts in Freud's early writings were those between ego-instincts and sexual instincts, the ego itself has now become a place of tension and conflict. The ego, which was previously closely associated with consciousness and concerned with regulating the relation of the individual to reality, is now somewhat loosened from consciousness, internally differentiated and constituted as a function of the instincts. As Nicholas Duruz writes: "D'après Freud, le 'moi' est donc le lieu d'une profonde tension: il est à la fois objet libidinal, ayant le statut d'une *représentation* de la pulsion, soumise par là au destin de la determination substitutive inconsciente qui connaissent les représentations, *et* instance de *liaison psychique*, source d'unité pour l'individu pulsionnel."[476]

Returning to our discussion with Blumenberg, can we now say that narcissism brings the myth of Narcissus to an end in the sense of reversing or eradicating its central elements and structures? This is hardly the case. Narcissism consists much more in a concentration on two central themes: self-love and reflexivity. Furthermore it specifies the sense of reflexivity as a reversal of subject and object in relation to a specific instinct. It remains the case, however, that it poses as something which encompasses or distills all meaning contained in the Narcissus theme. Furthermore, in the transition from Narcissus to narcissism, we have shifted from the realm of meaning, accessible to interpretation, to the realm of energetics, accessible to pseudo-physical explanation. Thereby, narcissism becomes a structure which conditions the production of meaning rather than, as the Narcissus theme, a meaningful structure. That is, narcissism is not something for hermeneutical interpretation; it

[476] Nicholas Duruz, *Narcisse en quête de soi: Études des concepts de narcissisme, de moi et de soi en psychanalyse et en psychologie*, Brussels: Pierre Mardaga, 1985, p. 46.

is an explanatory device which describes relations of meaning, whereas the Narcissus theme is meaningful in itself. Narcissism is not readily accessible for our psyche or consciousness; it can only be deduced from the workings of the psyche. In this sense, we can still speak of a demythification of the theme.

As regards Blumenberg's other criterium for bringing myth to an end, that it should entail the "abolutism of the subject", the present case is ambiguous. On the one hand, the ego is constituted as a function of the aim of an instinct, and thus subordinated to the instincts, which are ultimately supposed to be derived from biology. In this way, as opposed to the dominance of man over nature, which is one of the central corollaries of the philosophy of the subject, the situation is reversed: nature dominates man. On the other hand, the ego still acts as that which unifies the psychic being and regulates its relations to reality, and which is ultimately constituted through an act of reflection.

4. Hermann Hesse, *Narziß und Goldmund*

We turn now to a post-narcissism treatment of the Narcissus theme, that of Hermann Hesse's novel *Narziß und Goldmund* (1930). Here, I will try to show that elements of the Narcissus theme are dispersed throughout the novel, but that by taking Freudian psychoanalysis into account, it will be possible to reintegrate the fragments into what will ultimately be seen as the Narcissus theme treated as a perspectival dualism. The intertextual relations between the novel and the Narcissus theme will be seen to take different forms and appear at different levels. Traditional motifs of the theme are scattered in the novel, effecting semantic contamination. The Narcissus theme is, however, overshadowed by the theory of narcissism and the psychoanalytic concept will be seen to have an anagrammatic function in structuring the semiotics of the novel. By means of this narcissistic application of the Narcissus theme, the novel presents the process of a healing unification and self-empowerment of the individual subject.

The task to analyze the Narcissus theme in *Narziß und Goldmund* is met by an immediate difficulty, which will also guide this investigation: how do we find the theme in the novel? There is a reference to the Greek myth in the title, but there is no obvious adaption of it in the text.

Set in some unspecified period of the Middle Ages,[477] most of the novel tells the story of Goldmund. Goldmund arrives at the monastery Mariabronn at the age of fifteen. He is brought by his father, whose wish it is that the son become a monk. Goldmund soon becomes friends with the slightly older Narziß who is still a novice but, because of his extraordinary intelligence, already works as a teacher's assistant. Narziß and Goldmund are each other's opposite in all ways, but something attracts them to each other. Goldmund begins to feel "confused" as he is confronted with his own sexuality and the fact that it conflicts with his goal to become a monk. Narziß realizes his friend's difficulty and guides him to the insight that he has another calling in life than becoming a monk, namely one determined by the mother who Goldmund had forgotten. Goldmund then leaves the monastery under the influence of his first sexual encounter. This leads him into a new vagabond existence, where he enjoys sensual love together with ever new women and is led to kill a man who tries to rob

[477] It has been shown that the anachronisms in the novel are irreconcilable; cf. Egon Schwarz, "*Narziß und Goldmund*", in *Hermann Hesse: Romane*, Stuttgart: Reclam, 1994, p. 113–131, p. 118, Theodore Ziolkowski, *The Novels of Hermann Hesse: A Study in Theme and Structure*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965, p. 233, Ralf R. Nicolai, *Hesses "Narziß und Goldmund": Kommentar und Deutung*, Würzburg: Königshausen und Neumann, 1997, p. 120.

him. One day he steps into a church and sees a Madonna that impresses him deeply. He finds out that the artist, Meister Niklaus, lives in a nearby city and goes to apply for an apprenticeship with the master. For two years he lives a sedentary life improving his artistic skills and finishing a statue of John (Johannes) the evangelist, modeled after his friend Narziß. When realizing that even the life of an artist risks becoming one of the property owning bourgeois, he again leaves to live a life on the roads. More adventures follow, among others, the horrible event of the plague. When he again returns to the city, he catches sight of the governor's beloved Agnes and falls in love. While secretly visiting her in the castle, he is caught and sentenced to death. A visiting priest is allowed to take his last confession and Goldmund plans to kill him and escape. However, it turns out that the priest is Narziß, now abbot of Mariabronn under the name of Johannes. Narziß takes Goldmund back to the monastery, where he begins to work as an artist. After finishing a great work depicting the world and the divine word, Goldmund again leaves the monastery to search for Agnes. He is dismissed by her, suffers an accident, and returns to the monastery to die.

The two main protagonists clearly stand as a major opposition around which the novel revolves, most often interpreted as some kind of great dualism along the lines of *Geist* vs. *Natur*. Further scholarly interpretations of the opposition include *vita contemplativa* and *vita activa*, sedentary life and vagabond existence, church and world, father and mother, concept and image, introversion and extraversion, Apolline and Dionysiac, realism and nominalism (in the problem of universals), romanesque and gothic art, stone and wood etc. This exceedingly symmetrical composition has given rise to both praise of wonderful harmony and accusations of kitsch. *Narziß und Goldmund* became the real bestseller among Hesse's works, but it was also made one of the primary targets for Karlheinz Deschner's attack on epigone and tasteless art, where he argues that "[s]olche Menschen existieren nicht, es sind Konstruktionen".[478] Walter Erhart has written that the novel "ist […] ein schwieriger Roman geblieben, weil er sich gegen Ehrenrettungen und Aufwertungen scheinbar erfolgreich wehrt".[479] However, there is something in the novel that undermines this strict dualism, and thereby might allow one to identify something more in the novel than this all-too-obvious great dualism – the relationship between Narziß and Goldmund. Some aspect of the one is present in the other, which complicates the dualism. It will be one of my concerns to shed

[478] Karlheinz Deschner, *Kitsch, Konvention und Kunst: Eine literarische Streitschrift*, München: List, 1957, p. 118: "such people do not exist, they are constructions".
[479] Walter Erhart, "Narzissmus und Goldmund", in Cornelia Blasberg (ed.), *Hermann Hesse 1877 – 1962 – 2002*, Tübingen: Attempto, 2003, p. 103–119, p. 106: "has stayed a difficult novel, because it appears to successfully defend itself against attempts to save its honour or reevaluate it".

some light on this question (without thereby making any judgment on the aesthetic value of the novel). This will only come as a consequence, however, of the answer to my inquiry into the Narcissus theme in the novel.

The Narcissus theme

Why does the title of Hesse's novel feature the name *Narziß*? This question can be, and has been, posed in two ways. The first way of phrasing this question is "why is the novel called *Narziß und Goldmund* and not *Goldmund oder das Lob der Sünde* or *Goldmunds Weg zur Mutter*, which were two of Hesse's earlier titles for the novel?"[480] This relates to the fact that the title suggests a balanced polarity between the two main protagonists that does not seem to correspond to the structure of the novel, where Narziß tends to become a background figure in the story of Goldmund's life. In particular the ending, where the dying, mother-related, Goldmund says to the father-related Narziß, "wie willst du denn einmal sterben, Narziß, wenn du doch keine Mutter hast?" (HH IV, 531) has been viewed as confirming the structural imbalance between the two poles. [481] Egon Schwarz claims that here "zerstört Hesse vollends das mühsam angestrebte Gleichgewicht" ("Hesse destroys the balance so laboriously strived for") and Theodore Ziolkowski "consider[s] this to be a major structural flaw".[482] This is often interpreted as a failure on Hesse's part – either artistically, in not being able to maintain an assumedly intended balance – or in his life, in not being able to integrate the two sides of his personality. Of course, the assessment of this structural imbalance depends on the general interpretation of the novel, and I will return to it later.

The other way of phrasing the question is "how does *Narziß und Goldmund* relate to the myth of Narcissus or its reception history?" This is what interests me in this context, and in an attempt to somewhat estimate the span of possible answers, I will start by giving an overview of the explanations that have been given. The obvious *locus* to start looking for a connection to the Narcissus story is of course the character of Narziß. It seems clear that most commentators feel that Narziß is quite a "natural" name for this protagonist, since they do not dwell upon the question. This feeling of self-evidence in the name Narziß

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[480] Lewis W. Tusken, "Thematic Unity in Hermann Hesse's *Narziss und Goldmund*: The Tree Symbol as Interpretive Key", *Modern Fiction Studies*, 29:2, 1983, p. 245–251, p. 247.
[481] HHE 253: "how are you going to die one day, Narcissus, since you have no mother?".
[482] Schwarz, p. 129; Ziolkowski, p. 251.

probably reflects a view that is made explicit, but also rendered problematic, in some of the less elaborated interpretations of the name. An example is Hans Levander, who recognizes the introspectiveness of the Narcissus figure: "Narziss skall i varje fall betyda den inåtvände, 'självbespeglande' tänkaren – även om nu hans tänkande är bestämt inriktat ej på det egna jaget utan på en yttersta, för honom och hans tid 'objektiv' verklighet: Gud."[483] This interpretation is unsatisfactory, not only because it is questionable whether Narziß actually is a typical medieval thinker, but also because it suggests an interpretation of Narcissus that only partly applies to Narziß.

Mark Boulby is the first to give a more specific interpretation of the name: "As for Narziss, the very name of course suggests introversion; his poise, his remarkable self-containment, his deliberate stunting of his own self-expression, his search for realization within, all these are classical features of the type as described by Jung."[484] Seeing Narziß and Goldmund as representatives of Carl Gustav Jung's introvert and extravert types has since become commonplace in the reception of the novel. This is not an unreasonable interpretation, but it does not, in fact, make a *direct* connection to the Narcissus figure, since Jung neither connects his concept with the myth, nor does he acknowledge Freud's theory of narcissism. To arrive at the connection between the name Narziß and the concept of introversion, we must either interpret the Narcissus figure as an introverted personality, or consider Jung's theory of introversion as a response to, and elaboration of, Freud's theory of narcissism.

The first to recognize the novel's connection to the Narcissus story beyond the character Narziß is Russell Neuswanger. He finds that one of the central structuring principles in *Narziß und Goldmund* is an onomastic mirroring, where Narziß and Goldmund are the bearers of each other's names. Goldmund is a German translation of Chrysostomos, and it is explicitly mentioned twice in the novel that church father John Chrysostom is Goldmund's patron saint (HH IV, 296, 318).[485] As Neuswanger points out, John Chrysostom, a leader of the church, was known for his eloquence and his asceticism; a description which applies very well to Narziß, but not to Goldmund. On the other hand, Goldmund has a "penchant for staring into water" (HH IV, 398f, 420f, 460, 468), and is "beautiful and irresistible to

[483] Hans Levander, *Hermann Hesse: en outsiders väg*, Stockholm: Forum, 1983, p. 201; Ziolkowski also explicitly interprets Narziß's name as meaning "introspective spirit", p. 231.
[484] Mark Boulby, "Narziss and Goldmund", in Harold Bloom (ed.), *Hermann Hesse*, Philadelphia: Chelsea House, 2003, p. 79–109, p. 86.
[485] HHE 31, 52.

women", characteristics commonly ascribed to Narcissus.[486] Neuswanger then goes on to show how the mirror-principle structures the relation between Narziß and Goldmund on various levels. Narziß is said to be the thinker, interested in concepts and differentiations; Goldmund is the artist, interested in images and wholes. But in the story it turns out that their most important achievements are based on their possession of each other's qualities; Narziß sees holistic images and Goldmund develops his discriminatory faculty. They also mirror each other in that their respective formative processes progress by the shaping of the other (Narziß ends his novitiate by sending Goldmund out into worldly existence, Goldmund ends his apprenticeship by making his sculpture of Narziß) and in a reciprocity of affectionate acts toward the other. In this way Neuswanger presents two new possibilities for connecting the novel to the Narcissus story, first, in seeing Goldmund as Narcissus, and second, in perceiving the relationship between Narziß and Goldmund as one of reflection, whilst in passing connecting this to Pausanias's version of the story where Narcissus loves his lost twin through his reflection.[487]

With a different interpretive approach, Hans Dieter Zimmermann also connects the relationship between the characters with the Narcissus figure. Departing from Freud's "Das Unheimliche", he makes the connection between narcissism and the *Doppelgänger*, to explain Hesse's literary practice of projecting his own "verschiedene Ich-Strebungen" ("different ego-ambitions") onto pairs of characters in his novels as a way to represent his own "Identitätsfindung".[488] Zimmermann's hypothesis is that Hesse's often acknowledged popularity among young people is based on the author's failure to come to terms with his own secondary narcissism: "Gerade weil Hesse so eindeutig die subjektive Selbstbezogenheit betont, kann er seinen Lesern ein Gegengewicht bieten in einer Welt, in der das Subjekt unterdrückt wird" ("Precisely because Hesse so unequivocally stresses the subjective relation to one-self can he offer his readers a counterbalance in a world where the subject is oppressed").[489] This is however a different kind of reading where Freudian narcissism is not seen as an intertext to *Narziß und Goldmund*, but is instead used as an explanatory tool in the description of the relation between Hesse and his readers.

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[486] HHE 128f, 149, 186, 192. Russell Neuswanger, "Names as Glass Beads in Hesse's 'Narziß und Goldmund'", *Monatshefte*, 67:1, 1975, p. 48–58, p. 49.
[487] Neuswanger, p. 49.
[488] Hans Dieter Zimmermann, "Hermann Hesses Doppelgänger", in *Hermann Hesse*, München: Ed. Text + Kritik, 1977, p. 33–42, p. 34f.
[489] Zimmermann, p. 42.

Ralf R. Nicolai, who has offered the most thorough close-reading of *Narziß und Goldmund* yet, develops many of the observations described above. He relates the name Narziß to Freud's primary narcissism, and uses this to explain Narziß' feelings for Goldmund.[490] His view seems to be that Narziß loves Goldmund according to the narcissistic object choice, since he saw "Goldmunds Natur, die er trotz des Gegensatzes innigst verstand; denn sie war die verlorene Hälfte seiner eigenen" (HH IV, 293).[491] By mentioning the onomastic mirroring, Nicolai continues to affirm the *inner* relationship between the outwardly opposed Narziß and Goldmund. Like Zimmermann, but with an anchoring in the text, he compares this relationship with Freud's view of the *Doppelgänger* and concludes that Goldmund resembles a *Doppelgänger* in that he represents Narziß's unrealized possibilities, but that he cannot simply be equated with the Freudian logic, since "die Handlungen Goldmunds für Narziß weder anstößig noch 'unheimlich' sind".[492] The Freudian conception of narcissism is here introduced in an overall view of Narziß and Goldmund as personifying Jung's introvert and extravert types respectively.

Steven Bruhm exclusively relates the Narcissus theme in *Narziß und Goldmund* to Freud's theory of narcissism. However, he does not use the latter as a tool for a peaceful understanding of the former. Instead, he reads the novel as Hesse's refutation of the Freudian theory of sublimation and uses it to support a deconstructive reading of "Zur Einführung des Narzißmus". On the one hand, Bruhm attacks the supposed commonplace that Narziß' religious devotion is a neurotic sublimation of his homosexual desire for Goldmund, by affirming that Narziß "*sublimates*, but does so knowingly, non-neurotically, 'gracefully,' to use Hesse's word."[493] On the other hand, the novel is used to confirm Bruhm's challenge to Freud's assumption of, first, the primacy of heterosexuality over homosexuality and, second, the conception of homosexuality as narcissistic and heterosexuality as anaclitic: "In Goldmund, Hesse brings to completion the phenomenon I traced in Freud: Narziss is the homoerotic phallus that complements the mother; he is, if not the origin, then at least the co-genesis of both erotism and creativity in the novel."[494]

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[490] Nicolai, p. 36.
[491] HHE 29: "Goldmund's nature, which, despite their polarities, he intimately understood, since it was the other, lost half of his own".
[492] Nicolai, p. 41: "Goldmund's acts are neither offensive nor 'uncanny' to Narziß".
[493] Bruhm, p. 100.
[494] Bruhm, p. 101. „Anaclitic" is Strachey's translation of „Anlehnung" and the opposite of „narcissistic" as regards object-choice. It indicates that the sexual instincts are led by the instincts of self-preservation in their search for love-objects.

Walter Erhart, like Zimmermann, is intrigued by the question of why Hesse's novel has such irresistible appeal to young people, whereas the mature re-reading of it in most cases turns out to be a great disappointment, and finds the answer in its relation to the Narcissus theme. He explicitly expounds three distinct phases in its reception history: the story as it stands in Ovid, a general account of its meaning in the fin-de-siècle and Freud's conception of narcissism. He finds that none of them make a perfect match to the character Narziß, at least not more than with Goldmund. He argues, however, that the cultural impact of Ovid's story is related to the question of identity: "die eigenartige Umkehrung des delphischen 'Erkenne dich selbst!' – das hier in Verbindung mit einer tragischen Schuld und Verkennung zum Tode führt." ("the peculiar reversal of the Delphian 'Know thyself!' – that here leads to death, in connection with a tragic guilt and mistake")[495] At the time around which Hesse writes his novel, Erhart recognizes a conflict between the decadent and the psychoanalytic interpretation of Narcissus, which makes Narcissus a contradictory figure. What Hesse does is to divide this story about identity into two opposed characters' search for their own selves. In this way, the young reader can recognize his or her different sides on the way to *Selbstfindung* and *Selbstverwirklichung*. In short, *Narziß und Goldmund* relates to the reception history of Narcissus primarily in that it is a story about the search for identity.

Another interpretation that focuses on the relation between author and reader is Yvonne Wolf's, which I will return to later.

Julia Moritz has performed an analysis of the theme which provides a good basis for my investigation, since it identifies the different elements of the theme that can be recognized in the novel.[496] She connects the theme directly back to Ovid's story about Narcissus and Echo, and finds that the references are spread out in the novel and distributed over different characters. Narziß speaks excellent Greek. He is beautiful and loved by many, but he is also arrogant and does not return the love he receives. In the opening chapters of the novel it is often emphasized that Narziß has "ein Gefühl für die Art und Bestimmung der Menschen" (HH IV, 275), a visionary power that allows him to foretell the destiny of both Abt Daniel and Goldmund.[497] This is the ability that, in Ovid, is ascribed to Teiresias and is used on Narcissus. The emblematic mirror scene never occurs with Narziß, but with

[495] Erhart, p. 108.
[496] Julia Moritz, „Narkissos und Chrysostomos, oder 'dahin, wo es weniger weh tut': Metamorphosen des Mythos in Hermann Hesses Roman ‚Narziß und Goldmund'", in Bogdan Mirčev (ed.), *Mythos und Krise in der deutschsprachigen Literatur des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts*, Dresden: Thelem, 2004, p. 217–236.
[497] HHE 10: "a feeling for the nature and destiny of people".

Goldmund, both in water (HH IV, 398f, 468) and in a conventional mirror (HH IV, 523).[498] Furthermore, Moritz notes that the relationship between Narziß and Goldmund to some extent resembles that of Narcissus to his mirror-image.

This provides a map of the Ovidian elements of the theme in the novel. I will now try to trace the meaning of these elements by, on the one hand, trying to reintegrate the dispersed fractions of the theme, and on the other hand, connecting them to the reception history of the myth to analyze what they signify in Hesse's novel. A reasonable starting point for this analysis would seem to be psychoanalysis. Its strong impact on literature clearly affected Hesse, who for example wrote in "Künstler und Psychoanalyse" that a close and fertile relationship existed between art and psychoanalysis (HH XIV, 351). The relevance of psychoanalysis for *Narziß und Goldmund* is made clear by the evidently psychoanalytic technique Narziß uses to bring Goldmund's childhood into remembrance.

Psychoanalysis

A first question which must be asked in this context is whether we should describe the characters in Freudian or Jungian terms. An abundant number of readings have relied on Jung in their interpretations of the novel, and a relatively small number have referred to Freud. In the Jungian approaches the reference to Narcissus is generally seen as indicating that Narziß is introverted (and Goldmund extraverted). As mentioned above, Jung does not relate his concept of introversion to Narcissus, and as we remind ourselves that Freud introduced the concept of narcissism in an attempt to counter Jung's libido theory – and explicitly uses the term "narcissism" as something clearly demarcated from Jung's term "introversion" (SF X, 139) – this question gains some importance.

It is widely acknowledged that Hesse held psychoanalysis in high esteem, although his enthusiasm in the late 1910s had been somewhat moderated by 1930, when he writes in a letter to Hermann von Müller that the medieval demonology and exorcism had achieved a "feinerer Nuancierung" of the psychological diseases than even modern psychoanalysis.[499] But there are different opinions about whether Hesse was more influenced by Jung or Freud. Hesse often talks more positively about Freud, but he went through

[498] HHE 128f, 192, 246.
[499] Cf. HH XIV, p. 351–356; Hermann Hesse, *Gesammelte Briefe: Bd. II. 1922–1935*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1979, p. 249.

psychoanalytical treatment 1916–17 with Jung's student Joseph Bernard Lang, in 1921 with Jung himself and later with Lang again in 1926.[500] René Breugelmans, who has conducted an investigation of Hesse's relationship to psychoanalysis between 1916 and 1926, argues that "[i]n spite of his experiential contact with Jungian analysis, psychoanalysis for Hesse was and remained associated in the first place with Freud".[501] However, Breugelmans also gives an account of how Hesse publicly attacks Jung in 1934 for criticizing Freud's concept of sublimation, and how the subsequent correspondence between Jung and Hesse shows that the latter does not quite understand the difference between Jung's and Freud's concepts.[502] Many analyses of Hesse's works have also convincingly shown the affinity between Jung and Hesse. In conclusion, we should probably expect Hesse to be more positive towards Freudian theory on a conscious level, but also to not always make a sharp distinction between the two.

This, however, does not yet solve our problem of whether to connect Narziß to Freudian narcissism or Jungian introversion – since it is possible that Hesse referred to the Freudian concept without being aware that it is not equivalent with the Jungian – but it allows the possibility for both. So let us turn to the text.

There are certainly many things that speak in favor of seeing Narziß and Goldmund as representing the introverted and extraverted types respectively. The essential distinction in Jung's typology is whether a person emphasizes the subjective or the objective factor in the subject-object dichotomy. A person who is oriented toward the objects and the objective is an extravert. This seems to fit Goldmund with his outgoing personality, his desire to explore the world and his openness to impressions. A person who lets the subjective determinants become dominant is an introvert. This, in turn, seems to fit Narziß with his reserved attitude, his focus on "das Innere" and his solitary existence in the monastery. Moreover, the ways Jung's types are conceived would also provide convincing psychological explanations for Narziß and Goldmund. Jung sees the types as primarily being determined by an innate disposition rather than influences during early childhood.[503] Although no explicit distinctions are made between inheritance and environment in the novel, the insistent affirmations of Narziß and Goldmund *fundamentally* being of different kinds at least seem to point in this direction. The relationship between conscious and unconscious in Jung's types

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[500] René Breugelmans, "Hermann Hesse and Depth Psychology", *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature*, 8, 1981, p. 9–47, p. 22ff, 36.
[501] Breugelmans, p. 45f.
[502] Breugelmans, p. 44f.
[503] Carl Gustav Jung, *Gesammelte Werke: Bd. VI. Psychologische Typen*, Zürich/Stutttgart: Rascher, 1960, p. 359, §625.

would also work well to explain some of the dynamics in the novel. Generally speaking, a consciously introvert person has an extravert unconscious which works as a complement and vice versa. Pathological conditions occur when the discrepancy between conscious and unconscious becomes too great, i.e. when the unconscious disposition is not allowed to play its complementary part. This could explain Goldmund's nervous collapse as being caused by the repression of his unconscious introversion. This could also explain the intimate bond and understanding between the two friends in spite of their differences, as one manifests qualities which the other carries in his unconscious.

Nevertheless, Narziß and Goldmund can in many respects not be identified as representatives of the introvert and extravert types. Narziß should of course be referred to as the introvert thinking type, of which it is said:

> Das Denken des introverierten Typus ist positiv und synthetisch in Hinsicht der Entwicklung von Ideen, die sich in steigendem Maße der ewigen Gültigkeit der Urbilder annähern. Lockert sich aber ihr Zusammenhang mit dem objektiven Erfahrung, so werden sie mythologisch und für momentane Zeitlage unwahr.[504]

Narziß' thinking is quite the opposite, far from mythological and decisively analytical, as Goldmund observes: "dann will mir scheinen, der Unterschied [between Narziß and Goldmund] bestehe in nichts anderem als eben in deinem merkwürdigem Versessenheit auf das Finden von Unterschieden!" (HH IV, 302).[505] The risk in introverted thinking is that of becoming mystical, which is precisely the risk that Narziß foresaw if Goldmund had stayed in the Monastery: "Wärest du […] ein Denker geworden, so hättest du Unheil anrichten können. Du wärest nämlich ein Mystiker geworden." (HH IV, 502)[506] It is also said that the introvert is a bad teacher: "Er hat als persönlicher Lehrer geringen Einfluß, da ihm die Mentalität seiner Schüler unbekannt ist."[507] This is hardly characteristic of Narziß as Goldmund's mentor. For Jung, emphasizing the subjective factor means, in its positive sense, emphasizing the collective unconscious with its archetypes. This is indeed what Goldmund does in his search for the "Urbilder". The extravert is supposed to adapt to objective circumstances in a Epimethean way, and for example choose an occupation "der an dieser Stelle und zu dieser

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[504] Jung, p. 420, §708.
[505] HHE 38: „I get the impression that the difference [between Narziß and Goldmund] consists of nothing more than your strange obsession with finding differences!"
[506] HHE 225f: "If, instead […] you had become a thinker, you might have caused great harm, for you would have become a mystic."
[507] Jung, p. 419, §706.

Zeit aussichtsreiche Möglichkeiten bietet".[508] This is hardly the case with Goldmund, who chooses to become an artist out of an inner calling, and who many times risks his life to win "forbidden" women.

It would seem, then, that there is perhaps an excess of introversion in Narziß and of extraversion in Goldmund, but the duality of the characters is in no way structured according to this polarity. This refutation of an introversion-extraversion duality in the novel does not affect the credibility of other Jungian interpretations of the novel, as for example Günter Baumann's, where the focus is on Goldmund and his process of individuation.[509]

So let us then instead turn to Freud, with the main objective of investigating to what extent the Narcissus reference in *Narziß und Goldmund* can be understood within a Freudian framework. In one aspect the antithesis between Narziß and Goldmund seems to correspond very well to a Freudian ditto, namely object choice. In "Zur Einführung des Narzißmus" Freud declares that „der Mensch habe zwei urspüngliche Sexualobjekte: sich selbst und das pflegende Weib" (SF X, 154). According to these he chooses the object for his libido either by the narcissistic or the anaclitic type. Freud continues:

> Man liebt:
> 1) Nach dem narzißtischen Typus:
> a) was man selbst ist (sich selbst),
> b) was man selbst war,
> c) was man selbst sein möchte,
> d) die Person, die ein Teil des eigenen Selbst war.
> 2) Nach dem Anlehnungstypus:
> a) die nährende Frau,
> b) den schützenden Mann
> und die in Reihen von ihnen ausgehenden Ersatzpersonen. (SF X, 156f)

Both possibilities are open to all humans, but one is normally predominant. The narcissistic type is especially common among people "deren Libidoentwicklung eine Störung erfahren hat, wie bei Perversen und Homosexuellen" (SF X, 154). It is obvious that in Narziß, the narcissistic type of object choice is predominant. His only love is for Goldmund: "Dich habe ich lieben können, dich allein unter den Menschen." (HH IV, 527)[510] Goldmund, on the other hand, spends his life in search of his lost mother, in what Bruhm calls "obsessive

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[508] Jung, p. 363, §631
[509] Günter Baumann, *Hermann Hesses Erzählungen im Lichte der Psychologie C. G. Jungs*, Rheinfelden: Schäuble, 1989, p. 248–285.
[510] HHE 249: "It is you alone I have been able to love, you alone in all the world."

heterosexuality".[511] It is in fact when Narziß explicitly states this fundamental difference – "deine Träume sind von Mädchen, meine von Knaben" (HH IV, 306) – that Goldmund suffers his nervous breakdown and awakens to the insight of his forgotten childhood.[512]

The question is now how far a Freudian interpretation of the novel can go. This is dependent on *how* it is interpreted. One central question here is whether the novel should be seen as realistic on the level of character, i.e. if the characters in the novel should be considered psychologically complete human beings. Many commentators have emphasized that Narziß and Goldmund, to a much larger degree than in Hesse's previous works, are independent and psychologically trustworthy characters.[513] But there are also those who argue that Narziß and Goldmund should be seen as two sides of a single personality.[514] Hesse's own interpretation of the novel also seems to lean in this direction. In a letter to Christoph Schrempf, he writes:

> Goldmund ist erst mit Narziß (oder doch mit seiner Beziehung zu N[arziß]) zusammen ein Ganzes. Ebenso bin ich, der Künstler Hesse, der Ergänzung bedürftig durch einen Hesse, der den Geist, das Denken, die Zucht, sogar die Moral verehrt, der pietistisch erzogen ist und der die Unschuld seines Tuns, auch seiner Kunst, immer wieder aus moralischen Verwicklungen heraus neu finden muß.[515]
>
> Goldmund is only together with Narziß (or with his relationship to N[arziß]) a whole. In the same way am I, the artist Hesse, in need of the completion of a Hesse who honors the spirit, the thought, the discipline, even the moral, who has been raised as a pietistic and who over and over again must find a way out of the moral complications for his doings and his art.

In the oeuvre of Hesse, this would also go well with the common view that, with some modification, the antithesis between Narziß and Goldmund corresponds to that between for example Demian and Sinclair or Govinda and Siddharta, an antithesis which is *internalized* in *Der Steppenwolf*. Moreover, interpretations like Yvonne Wolf's of Narziß as Goldmund's

[511] Bruhm, p. 101.
[512] "Your dreams are of girls, mine of boys".
[513] For example Joseph Mileck, "*Narziss und Goldmund*: Life's double Melody", in Harold Bloom (ed.), *Hermann Hesse*, Broomall 2003 [1967], p. 123–139, p. 129 and Hans Jürg Lüthi, *Hermann Hesse: Natur und Geist*, Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1970, p. 93.
[514] For example Eduard Korrodi and Wilhelm Kunze. Cf. Adrian Hsia (ed.), *Hermann Hesse im Spiegel der zeitgenössischen Kritik*, Bern: Francke, 1975, p. 322, 324.
[515] Hesse, *Gesammelte Briefe. Bd. II*, p. 275.

auctor and Adrian Hsia's of the two protagonists as yin and yang, certainly reduce the characters' independence within the ontology of the fiction.[516]

But let us start by trying to interpret Narziß and Goldmund as complete characters. This is certainly possible in the case of Goldmund. He is a relatively complex character, whose life and development the reader is allowed to follow from the age of fifteen until his death. Psychoanalytically, his case is clear – and some of the evident signs have been analyzed by Eugen Drewermann.[517] Under threat of castration from the father, Goldmund has repressed his desire for his mother and tries to fulfill his father's wish that he become a monk. After undergoing psychoanalytic treatment with Narziß, his childhood trauma is remembered and he turns into a healthy heterosexual. He seems, however, to remain unrelieved to some extent, since he keeps searching for his mother until the end, and as if by a compulsion of repetition, he keeps coming back to the Urszene: he seduces a woman who belongs to another man. This is always done at the risk of his own life (castration), but in repeating the scene, Goldmund always triumphs and thereby reassures himself against his unconscious fear. This is the case with Lise, the peasant's wife and Agnes. With the sisters Lydia and Julie, even the incestuous element of the forbidden love is present. The two murders that Goldmund commits are also motivated by the fight over a woman. In one case Goldmund murders the man that tries to rape Lene (HH IV, 446), in the other, Viktor is killed because he tries to take Goldmund's ducat.[518] Goldmund does not know the monetary value of the coin, but it is significant for him in two ways: "Es war das einzige Geschenk Lydias" ("It was the only gift from Lydia") and he "hatte [Viktor] ihretwegen [der Goldmünze] in der Not umgebracht" (HH IV, 386f).[519] The value of the coin depends on the success in the Oedipal situation – the conquest of the woman and the killing of the male opponent.

In fact, Goldmund's whole life seems to be determined by an Oedipal logic, indicating, then, that Narziß' therapy was not completely successful after all. In this interpretation Goldmund's sublimation of his sexual instincts into creating art would be explained by the lack of satisfaction he feels in spite of his sexual conquests. However, why

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[516] Yvonne Wolf, "Risikoleben und Textsicherheit in Hermann Hesses *Narziß und Goldmund*", in Andreas Solbach (ed.), *Hermann Hesse und die literarische Moderne: Kulturwissenschaftliche Facetten einer literarischen Konstante im 20. Jahrhundert*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2004, p. 285–304; Adrian Hsia, *Hermann Hesse und China: Darstellung, Materialien und Interpretation*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1974, p. 258–262.
[517] Eugen Drewermann, "Gedanken über Hermann Hesses 'Narziß und Goldmund': Eine Annäherung aus psychoanalytischer Sicht", in *Das individuelle gegen das normierte verteidigen. Zwei Aufsätze zu Hermann Hesse*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1995, p. 51–81, p. 59–66.
[518] HHE 172.
[519] HHE 116: "It was the only gift from Lydia"; "for its [the coin's] sake he had killed [Viktor]".

Goldmund would not be satisfied – what would be lacking in Narziß' therapy – that remains an enigma for the Freudian interpretation, and perhaps points to one of the divergences between Freud and Hesse.

When it comes to Narziß, it is much more difficult to get a complete psychologically realistic picture of him. Even though Narziß enters the stage before Goldmund and remains after his friend dies, he is absent in large parts of the novel and the reader is only allowed to enter his psyche when he thinks about Goldmund. In the same way that Goldmund goes through an initiatory process, as has been shown by Baumann and Panagiota Theodorou, Narziß seems to undergo what in Jungian terms would be called an individuation process as he develops from novice to abbot and changes his name from Narziß to Johannes.[520] But the reader is not invited to take part in this. In Freudian terms, we basically know the following: he chooses his libido objects according to the narcissistic type. He falls in love with Goldmund, but sublimates his love into the serving of the *Geist*: "Allzusehr liebte er vielmehr den blonden Jüngling, und für ihn war dies ein Gefahr […] Ihm war Lieben nur in einer einzigen, der höchsten Form erlaubt." (HH IV, 293)[521] He is successful in his clerical career, but when Goldmund returns, sensual love once again breaks through and Narziß starts questioning whether his life's struggle has been in vain. Goldmund's last words to Narziß are: "Aber wie willst du denn einmal sterben, Narziß, wenn du doch keine Mutter hast? Ohne Mutter kann man nicht lieben. Ohne Mutter kann man nicht sterben." (HH IV, 531)[522] These words "brannten in seinem Herzen wie Feuer" (HH IV, 531).[523] What does this mean? Does Narziß not have a mother? Or does it mean that Narziß, like Goldmund before, has forgotten his mother and is now about to embark on the same journey as his friend? Since we do not know where Narziß comes from, nor where he goes after we leave him at Goldmund's deathbed, nor why he loves according to the narcissistic type, these questions are difficult to answer. Also, since, other than an alleged arrogant attitude, there is no real evidence of Narziß suffering from some kind of pathological narcissism, such as *paranoia* or *dementia praecox*, it is difficult to diagnose him. In short, the account of Narziß offers us a relatively limited psychological view. Narziß seems in some way enclosed by his monastery walls, just as Freud complains about the difficulty penetrate

[520] Panagiota Theodorou, *Übergangsriten in Hermann Hesses Erzählen: Eine Studie zu* Siddharta *sowie* Narziß und Goldmund, München: Iudicium, 2008.
[521] HHE 28: "Rather did he love the youth too well, and for him this was a danger […] To him, love was permitted only in a single, the most sublime, form."
[522] HHE 253: "But how are you going to die one day, Narcissus, since you have no mother? Without a mother one cannot love. Without a mother one cannot die."
[523] HHE 253: "burned like fire in his heart".

into the neuroses of narcissism: "Bei den narzißtischen Neurosen ist der Widerstand unüberwindbar; wir dürfen höchstens einen neugierigen Blick über die Höhe der Mauer werfen, um zu erspähen, was jenseits derselben vor sich geht." (SF XI, 438).[524] But the curious part is that he reveals precisely his narcissistic love, and nothing else.

In sum, although it is possible to make a plausible interpretation of Narziß and Goldmund as realistic characters, it remains unsatisfactory, because it does not explain the relationship between Narziß and Goldmund.

So let us try, then, to abandon character realism and try other ways of accounting for the relation between Narziß and Goldmund. I can envisage three different ways of doing this within a Freudian framework. The first is to deny character realism to *both* Narziß and Goldmund; the second is to maintain character realism in *Narziß* while denying Goldmund such; the third is to, inversely, preserve character realism in *Goldmund*, while denying Narziß such.

The Protagonists as Instinctual Opposition

If – in accordance with the view that Hesse often exteriorizes different aspects of a personality in a couple of protagonists – we regard Narziß and Goldmund as aspects of one individual, this individual could be represented by the monastery, which, as Nicolai has shown, fuses attributes of Narziß and Goldmund, such as wood and stone (together with the chestnut tree), and Gothic and Romanesque architecture.[525] In this allegorical reading, the protagonists can then be regarded as some sort of instinctual or energetic opposition. An obvious choice would be to take them as representing the two different kinds of libido, the narcissistic libido and the object libido, that Freud acknowledges from 1914. However the theory of instincts in Freud's work is set in constant revision from the early 1910s until the early 1920s. The early opposition between sexual instincts and instincts of self-preservation (also called ego-instincts), is gradually overshadowed, first by the opposition between object-libido and narcissistic libido (also called ego-libido), and, second, by the opposition between life

[524] SFE XVI: "In the narcissistic neuroses the resistance is unconquerable; at the most, we are able to cast an inquisitive glance over the top of the wall and spy out what is going on on the other side of it."
[525] Nicolai, p. 13ff.

instincts and death instincts.[526] The relation between these pairs of opposites is not always quite clear, but to some extent they tend to replace each other.[527] In the one individual-interpretation of *Narziß und Goldmund*, Goldmund can be seen to represent the series sexual instincts, object-libido and life instincts; whereas Narziß can be seen to represent the series ego-instincts, narcissistic libido and death instincts.

In this reading, Goldmund's being brought to the monastery by his father would then represent the development of the sexual instincts in the Oedipus complex. The partial instincts had already been integrated in the primary narcissism (Narziß is already there), and strong ego-instincts lead the way out of the castration complex in adolescence (Narziß' anaytic treatment of Goldmund). The sexual instincts are then freed to pursue their primary objective and Goldmund goes out into the world in search of his mother. Narziß then only appears on the stage again when Goldmund, in his love for Agnes, is sentenced to death. In this situation, the sexual instincts have led the individual to risk its own existence – and as a parallel, the monastery has come into conflict with the world, which is why Narziß is in the city (HH IV, 490f) – and, since "unter normalen Verhältnissen Ichlibido ungehindert in Objektlibido umgesetzt und diese wieder ins Ich aufgenommen werden kann" (SF XI, 431), libido is transferred from the objects to the ego and Goldmund is safely brought back to the monastery.[528] With age, the sexual instincts are exhausted and Goldmund, after his last adventure, becomes sick and dies.

This interpretation gives us the opportunity to see how far it would be possible to follow Freud in his development of the theory of instincts. From *Jenseits des Lustprinzips* (1920) this enters a more speculative phase. Here, Freud makes an attempt to equate ego instincts with death instincts and the sexual instincts with the life instincts. The first represents what Freud saw as the natural tendency in all life to return to its pre-organic state and the second represents its tendency to create something that will outlast the individual existence. The most paradoxical part in this new theory of instincts is that the ego-instincts, that strive to preserve the life of the individual, now become death instincts. Freud says: "Es erübrigt daß der Organismus nur auf seine Weise sterben will; auch diese Lebenswächter sind ursprünglich

[526] The argument of this section presupposes the conclusions of my second chapter on psychoanalysis, which has not yet been written.
[527] Cf. e.g. Laplanche and Pontalis, *Vocabulaire de la psychanalyse*, p. 383.
[528] SFE XVI: "in normal circumstances ego-libido can be transformed unhindered into object-libido and […] this can once more be taken back into the ego".

Trabanten des Todes gewesen." (SF XIII, 41)[529] The death instincts, the most primitive ones, stem from a pre-organic level of development and obey what Freud calls the "*Nirwanaprinzip*" (SF XIII, 60), i.e. a striving toward annihilation of life.

It seems, in fact, that also this version of the theory of instincts is quite applicable to our allegorical interpretation of the novel. As Nicolai has made abundantly clear, there is a strong association between Narziß and inorganic matter (primarily stone) on the one hand, and Goldmund and life (wood, animals, plants) on the other. Narziß, enclosed in his monastery, assures himself to "die only in his own fashion"; Goldmund is always in search of sexual union. Moreover, Freud argues that it is the effort of the life instincts to "das Organische zu immer größeren Einheiten zusammenzufassen", whereas the death instincts strive to dissolve the organism.[530] In its sublimated form, this corresponds to the difference between Narziß' analytical thinking and Goldmund's synthetical imagination. In Goldmund's theory of art, the most essential trait also seems to be that the work of art is something that "überdauert" the individual existence of man. A strange passage in the novel which would be clarified by this interpretation is the one where Goldmund tells Narziß about his plans to escape from his execution and Narziß asks: "Du wolltest also nicht sterben? Du wolltest dich dagegen wehren?" (HH IV, 488) It would seem natural that Goldmund would rather live than die, but Narziß appears to be surprised.

This interpretation would imply that neither Narziß nor Goldmund reach their goal in the end: Narziß does not die and Goldmund dies without having fulfilled his "liebster und geheimnisvollster Traum […], eine Figur der Mutter zu machen" (HH IV, 530).[531] However, the fact that the protagonists' respective goals are not achieved is also emphasized in the ending: Goldmund concludes that "statt daß meine Hände sie formen und gestalten, ist sie es, die mich formt und gestaltet […] sie hat mich zum Sterben verführt" (HH IV, 531) and that Narziß is striving to die seems implied by Goldmund question, "wie willst denn du einmal sterben, Narziß[…]?" (HH IV, 531).[532]

In conclusion, the allegorical interpretation does not seem unreasonable. It accounts for most significant episodes in the story and corresponds to its general structure. It affords a Freudian version of the dualism, which, like most others, interprets it in terms of

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[529] SFE XVIII, 39: "What we are left with is the fact that the organism wishes to die only in its own fashion. Thus these guardians of life, too, were originally the myrmidons of death."
[530] SFE XVIII, p. 43: "combine organic substances into ever larger unities".
[531] HHE 252: "fondest and most secret dream to carve a mother-figure".
[532] HHE 252: "Instead of my hands forming and shaping her, it is she who is forming and shaping me". HHE 253: "But how are you going to die one day, Narcissus".

substance (nature and *Geist*, wood and stone etc.). At least two things speak against such an interpretation, though. First, the characters appear to be a bit too complex to be no more than principles. This is especially the case with Goldmund, who not only loves in the direction of the mother, but also, throughout the novel, loves Narziß: "ich habe dich immer liebgehabt, Narziß" (HH IV, 527).[533] Second, this interpretation only gives an "outer" sense of identification between Narziß and Goldmund. If they are the two kinds of instincts in man, they presuppose a larger unity of which they are parts. Their immanent identity is limited to them both being libido (in the mid-1910s interpretation), which can be transferred from one to the other. But this hardly seems to account for the impression of a strong intrinsic connection between them, given by e.g. the onomastic mirroring or the mutual shaping of each other.

Narziß

The second way to break up character realism is to maintain some kind of realism in Narziß, but denying it to Goldmund, i.e. granting Narziß some kind of psychological completeness, but reducing it in Goldmund. Yvonne Wolf has made an interpretation along these lines. She departs from the common view that Hesse is an author of the "Problematisierung des eigenen Ich" and the fact that he has regretted the one-sided focus on Goldmund in the reception of *Narziß und Goldmund*.[534] She also notes that in the essay "Vom Bücherlesen", Hesse has shown his preference towards a free, ludic kind of reader, that *uses* the text for his own thinking and imagination in what Wolf sees as "ein spezifisch modernes Verständnis von Textrezeption, das an poststrukturalistische Theorien erinnert" ("a specific modern understanding of text-reception, which reminds one of poststructuralist theories").[535] In this spirit, she interprets the relationship between Narziß and Goldmund as an allegory for that between the author and his work. In what should probably be seen as a pun, rather than an interpretation, she reads Narziß as "*narcissus poeticus*", the botanical name of the flower.[536] However, this could be taken seriously as following a line from A.W. Schlegel which uses the reflection motif in the Narcissus theme as an image for the poet's relation to his work.[537]

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[533] HHE 249: "I have always felt love for you, Narcissus".
[534] Wolf, pp. 285, 289.
[535] Wolf, p. 286.
[536] Wolf, p. 294.
[537] Cf. Vinge, p. 304.

Wolf begins with a psychoanalytic understanding of Narziß, where she argues that he is not simply the ideal self-assured, rational and impeccable servant of the *Geist*, but a "Mischung aus Hochmut und Weltfurcht" ("mix between arrogance and world-anxiety").[538] On several occasions, it is shown how he represses his wishes, and Wolf interprets his devotion to the monastery as an anxiety towards the risk involved in worldly life. Instead he sends Goldmund out into the world as his "imaginierter Lebenslauf" ("imaginary life") and in this way becomes the author of the text that consists of Goldmund. "Goldmund ist somit ein Medium, auf dem sich das Leben einschreibt, ein Tor, durch das die Welt durch die Klostermauern hindurchtritt" ("Goldmund is in this way a medium, on which life is inscribed, a gate, through which the world steps through the monastery walls"), which allows Narziß in this imaginary way to fulfill his own repressed wishes.[539] In this way Goldmund is the "Risikoleben" ("risk-life") that is repressed by Narziß' "Textsicherheit" ("text-security"). However, the text develops its own life in connection to other texts, and just as Goldmund's fate, when affected by his contact with Agnes, slips through Narziß' fingers, the text evades the author's intention.

Wolf's interpretation is very suggestive, but there is no need to take the detour over a poststructuralist text conception to arrive at this kind of relationship between Narziß and Goldmund. The basic ideas in Wolf's account can be transposed into an interpretation that remains within the borders of the work and that finds an explanation related to narcissism within traditional psychoanalysis: Goldmund can simply be seen as Narziß' *Doppelgänger*. Nicolai argues that the protagonists are not *Doppelgänger* because "die Handlungen Goldmunds für Narziß weder anstößig noch 'unheimlich' sind".[540] I will return to this question, but here intially remark that being "uncanny" is not constitutive for the *Doppelgänger*, even if this is often the case. In J. W. Goethe's *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, we find another *Doppelgänger*, who like Goldmund is associated with gold, who is quite the opposite:

> Ich sah nämlich, nicht mit den Augen des Leibes, sondern des Geistes, mich mir selbst, denselben Weg, zu Pferde wieder entgegen kommen, und zwar in einem Kleide, wie ich es nie getragen: es war hechtgrau mit etwas Gold. Sobald ich mich aus diesem Traum aufschüttelte, war die Gestalt ganz hinweg. […] Es mag sich übrigens mit diesen

[538] Wolf, p. 291.
[539] Wolf, p. 298.
[540] Nicolai, p. 41.

> Dingen wie es will verhalten, das wunderliche Trugbild gab mir in jenen Augenblicken des Scheidens einige Beruhigung.[541]
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> I saw, not with the eyes of the body, but with those of the mind, my own figure coming toward me, on horseback, and on the same road, attired in a dress which I had never worn, — it was pike-gray, with somewhat of gold. As soon as I shook myself out of this dream, the figure had entirely disappeared. […] However, it may be with matters of this kind generally, this strange illusion in some measure calmed me at the moment of parting.

In particular their names indicate Goldmund as being Narziß' *Doppelgänger*. As we have seen, Goldmund is named after the church leader John Chrysostom (Johannes Chrysostomus), known for his eloquence, ascetism and misogyny, which seems to be a perfect description of Narziß. Chrysostom's first name, Johannes, also becomes Narziß' name as an abbot. Furthermore, as Goldmund looks in the mirror after his last return to the monastery, his image "erinnerte ihn […] an den heiligen Jakob […] unter seinem Pilgerhut" (HH IV, 523).[542] This is obviously the disciple Jacob, younger brother of John the evangelist, whom Narziß is named after, and as Otto Rank observes, the double is "oft mit dem Bruder identifiziert".[543]

We will also see that the mechanisms of the *Doppelgänger* in *Narziß und Goldmund* correspond rather well to Freud's and Rank's writings on the subject. According to Rank, the *Doppelgänger* originates in primary narcissism, but tends to reappear together with symptoms of secondary narcissism, e.g. paranoia and megalomania. It indicates a regression to primary narcissism from a stage of "sublimierte Homosexualität".[544] In primary narcissism, the *Doppelgänger* is originally a defense against the ultimate threat to the self, death: "wenn also die Todesvorstellung durch eine Verdoppelung des Ich, die sich im Schatten oder Spiegelbild verkörpert, dementiert wird".[545] But when primary narcissism is overcome, the *Doppelgänger* changes its meaning: "mit der Überwindung dieser Phase ändert sich das Vorzeichen des Doppelgängers, aus einer Versicherung des Fortlebens wird er zum unheimlichen Vorboten des Todes" (SF XII, 247). Freud says, however, that the *Doppelgänger* can be charged with diverse repressed content:

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[541] Johann Wolfgang Goethe, *Werke. Bd. IX*, Hamburg: Wegner, 1948, p. 501. This passage is also noted by Rank (Rank, „Der Doppelgänger", p. 127f).
[542] HHE 246: "reminded him […] of St James […] beneath his pilgrim's hat".
[543] Rank, "Der Doppelgänger", p. 155. Otto Rank, "Narcissism and the double", in Emanuel Berman (ed.), *Essential Papers on Literature and Psychoanalysis*, New York/London 1993 [1914], pp. 122–138, transl. Harry Tucker Jr., p. 125: "often identified with the brother".
[544] Rank, "Der Doppelgänger", p. 154. Rank, "Narcissism and the double", p. 125: "sublimated homosexuality".
[545] Rank, "Der Doppelgänger", p. 162. Rank, "Narcissism and the double", p. 130: "The idea of death, therefore, is denied by a duplication of the self incorporated in the shadow or in the reflection image."

> Aber nicht nur dieser der Ich-Kritik anstößige Inhalt kann dem Doppelgänger einverleibt werden, sondern ebenso alle unterbliebenen Möglichkeiten der Geschicksgestaltung, an denen die Phantasie noch festhalten will, und alle Ich-strebungen, die sich infolge äußerer Ungunst nicht durchsetzen konnten, sowie alle die unterdrückten Willensentscheidungen, die die Illusion des freien Willens ergeben haben. (SF XII, 248)

The often ambivalent attitude toward the *Doppelgänger* is a result of narcissism and the defense against it. Rank argues that "Furcht und Haß dem doppelgängerischen Ich gegenüber mit der narzißistischen Liebe zu demselben und deren Abwehr in engem Zusammenhang steht".[546] Rank finds that there are two forms of the defense against narcissism:

> In Furcht und Abscheu vor dem eigenen Spiegelbild, wie es Dorians fiktiver Romanheld [sic!] und die meisten Gestalten Jean Pauös zeigen oder, wie in der Mehrzahl der Fälle, im Verlust des Schattens-, respektive Spiegelbildes, der aber, wie die folgerungen zeigen, gar kein Verlust ist, sondern im Gegenteil eine Verstärkung, Verselbstständigung, ein Übermächtigwerden, das eben wieder nur das überstarke Interesse am eigenen Ich erweist.[547]
>
> in fear and revulsion before one's own image, as seen in Dorian and most of the characters of Jean Paul; or, as in the majority of cases, in the loss of the shadow-image or mirror image. This loss, however, is no loss at all, as the persecutions show. On the contrary, it is a strengthening, a becoming independent and superiorly strong, which in its turn only shows the exceedingly strong interest in one's own self.[548]

Let us look, then, at the case of Narziß. As Wolf observes, it is obvious that Narziß represses his wishes, and we have already seen how he resists the physical expression of his love for Goldmund.[549] But there are indications of this repressed homosexuality even before Goldmund appears. In the beginning, there are in the monastery two "Einzelne und Besondere", Narziß and Abt Daniel, and they seem to have a special relationship: "Jeder der beiden fühlte sich dem anderen mehr verwandt und mehr zu ihm hingezogen […] dennoch konnte keiner beim anderen warm werden." (HH IV, 273)[550] It is in this situation it is shown that Narziß represses his wishes: "ich weiß über meine Wünsche nicht so sehr genau Bescheid" (HH IV, 274).[551] The discussion between Narziß and Abt Daniel revolves around people's destinies, into which Narziß has such miraculous insight. After this, Goldmund is

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[546] Rank, "Der Doppelgänger", p. 153. Rank, "Narcissism and the Double", p. 124: "fear and hate with respect to the double-self are closely connected with the narcissistic love for it and with the resistance of this love".
[547] Rank, "Der Doppelgänger", p.. 153f.
[548] Rank, "Narcissism and the Double", p. 124.
[549] This process should indeed be regarded as one which comprises both repression and sublimation, which, as Freud argues, are two distinct vicissitudes of instincts.
[550] HHE 9: "Each felt more akin to the other, more attracted to him […] Yet […] neither could warm the other."
[551] HHE 10: "I am really not so sure about my wishes".

introduced into the narrative. Narziß sees in him "seinen Gegenpol und seine Ergänzung" (HH IV, 284) and „die andere, verlorene Hälfte seiner eigenen [nature]" (HH IV, 293).[552] In this way, Narziß, from his stage of sublimated homosexuality, projects the repressed possibilities of his own life onto Goldmund. There is a conflict in Narziß between secondary narcissism, in the form of megalomania, and the defense against it: "Es mag wohl sein, daß ich hochmutig bin, gnädiger Vater. Ich bitte Euch, mich dafür zu strafen." (HH IV, 274)[553] This, Rank would say, is the "Schuldbewußtsein [das] mißt […] einerseits die Distanz zwischen dem Ichideal und der erreichten Wirklichkeit, anderseits wird es aus einer mächtigen Todesfurcht gespeist und schafft heftige Selbststrafungstendenzen".[554]

The early stage of the friendship between Narziß and Goldmund evokes the same kind of feelings in the surrounding as Narcissus' love for himself in Ovid's story: "Niemand sah seine [Goldmund's] Freundschaft mit Narziß gerne. Die Hämischen brachten sie als naturwidrig in Verruf, namentlich jene, welche selbst in einem der beiden Jünglinge verliebt gewesen waren." (HH IV, 297)

But the creation of Goldmund as a *Doppelgänger* only truly begins when Narziß increases his efforts to separate himself from Goldmund: "der Dämon mußte gefunden, mußte beschworen und sichtbar gemacht werden, dann war er zu besiegen" (HH IV, 297).[555] Narziß declares: „unsere Freundschaft hat überhaupt kein anderes Ziel und keinen anderen Sinn, als dir zu zeigen, wie vollkommen ungleich du mir bist!" (HH IV, 296).[556] Here we return to the question of the uncanniness of the *Doppelgänger*. As Rank stated, the defense against narcissism can either take the shape of fear of the mirror-image, or the loss of it. What Narziß does is to exorcise it out of the monastery, by showing Goldmund that he does not belong there, and thereby ridding himself of the worries. What finally brings the separation about is that in one conversation "gelang es Narziß, ihm einen *Bild* von den Unterschieden ihrer Naturen zu geben" (HH IV, 305, my emphasis).[557] As a confirmation of the separation, Goldmund is found unconscious in the "Kreuzgang […] wo er ja eigentlich nichts zu suchen hat" (HH IV, 308).[558] The cloister is from now on Narziß' exclusive territory. When the

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[552] HHE 19: "his opposite and complement". HHE 29: "the other, lost half of his own [nature]".
[553] HHE 9f: "It may well be that I am proud, gracious Father. I ask you to punish me for that."
[554] Rank, "Der Doppelgänger", p. 156f. Rank, "Narcissism and the Double", p. 126: „awareness of guilt [that] measures on the one hand the distance between ego-ideal and the attained reality [and] is nourished by a powerful fear of death and creates strong tendencies toward self-punishment".
[555] HHE 32: "the demon must be found, conjured up and made visible. Then it could be conquered [defeated]".
[556] HHE 31: "Our friendship has no other goal than to show you how completely different you are from me!"
[557] HHE 40: "Narcissus was able to give him a *picture* of the difference in their natures" (my emphasis).
[558] HHE 43: "cloister, where he had really nothing to do".

creation of the image is accomplished, Narziß' *Doppelgänger* goes out into the world, thereby strengthening himself and promoting his clerical career (he progresses from novice to monk) and, at the same time, increasing the independence of his image. Just as Rank notices that projecting certain parts of oneself onto another ego is usually associated with some diabolical pact, the curious change in Goldmund awakes Abt Daniel's suspicion that Narziß is not a good Christian: "Weiß Gott, ob er nicht hinter der Maske des Gehorsams Schlimmes verbarg, vielleicht ein Heide war?" (HH IV, 312)[559]

This means that Goldmund's leaving the monastery is, in Narziß, an act of repression. But, as Freud argues, it is not the repressed that is uncanny, but the return of the repressed into that which represses. And the reunion of the two friends certainly bears the traits of the uncanny. By coincidence, as it seems, Narziß happens to be at the count's court when Goldmund is arrested and sentenced to death. This is a "coincidence", as Freud would say, "welches das sonst Harmlose unheimlich macht und uns die Idee des Verhängnisvollen, Unentrinnbaren aufdrängt, wo wir sonst nur von 'Zufall' gesprochen hätten", and is explained by the repetition compulsion. Now, when the repressed returns, the *Doppelgänger* becomes "das unheimliche Vorbote des Todes". Goldmund in fact plans to kill the priest who comes to hear his last confession.

When Goldmund finally dies, however, there is an interesting deviation from the *Doppelgänger* theme. The image dies, and his last words about Narziß' inability to die, "brannten in seinem Herzen wie Feuer." (HH IV, 531) How are we to interpret this? A comparison with Rank's prime example of the *Doppelgänger* motif, Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, is elucidating. As with Narziß, here we have an image that ages, whereas the person associated with Narcissus remains virtually unchanged. Narziß appears, even as a youth, as a grown-up and works as a teacher even before having completed his novice, and he has not aged to the same degree as Goldmund. But Dorian kills his image (and thereby himself), whereas Narziß' image dies by itself. Rank interprets the killing of the *Doppelgänger* as "ein Selbstmord […] in der schmerzlosen Form der Tötung eines anderen Ichs: eine unbewußte Illusion von abspaltung eines bösen strafwürdigen Ich".[560] The different endings are reflected in the developments of the respective narratives. In *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, there is an increasing hatred toward the *Doppelgänger* and an augmenting

[559] HHE 46: "God knew whether, behind his mask of obedience, he was not hiding something evil, was not a heathen perhaps." Rank, p. 126.
[560] Rank, "Der Doppelgänger, p. 159. Rank, "Narcissism and the Double", p. 128: "a suicidal act […] in the painless form of slaying a different ego: an unconscious illusion of the splitting-off of a bad, culpable ego".

pathological condition – i.e. the suicidal impulses grow stronger. For Narziß, the return of the *Doppelgänger* brings with it a reevaluation of the expulsed part: "Er [Goldmund] war ihm ebenbürtig; nichts hatte Narziß ihm gegeben, das er nicht vielfach wiederbekommen hätte." (HH IV, 521)[561] The final sign that Narziß manages to reintegrate and embrace his repressed side appears just before Goldmund's death: "er berührte Goldmunds Haar und Stirn mit seinen Lippen" (HH IV, 526).[562] This is exactly what he could not allow himself to do before. Goldmund's death, then, seems to mean quite the opposite of that of Dorian's picture. Narziß no longer has a need for his *Doppelgänger*, since he manages to incorporate the Goldmund-side into himself. This is why Goldmund's words burn like fire: he now needs to go in search of his mother and face his anxiety towards death, i.e. expose himself to the parts of him that are repressed from the narrative as a whole.

Goldmund

We cannot finalize our analysis with this interpretation, however. It would be too one-sided a focus on Narziß. After all, most of the novel revolves around Goldmund's life. Hesse, in his letters, usually refers to the book as simply "Der Goldmund", and even when he, in the letter to Schrempf, insists that Narziß should not be neglected, he spends almost the entire letter discussing Goldmund, whereas only a few lines are dedicated to Narziß.[563] Let us try, then, to reverse our approach, i.e. grant character realism to Goldmund and reduce it in relation to Narziß. How are we then to read the Narcissus theme into the novel?

An opening is offered by Hesse himself in the letter to Schrempf. He writes: "Goldmund ist erst mit Narziß (oder doch mit *seiner Beziehung zu N*[arziß]) zusammen ein Ganzes."[564] As noted previously, Goldmund loves not only the mother, but also Narziß. And this latter is a narcissistic love. In this letter, Hesse emphasizes that Goldmund and himself are "das Gegenteil von vorbildlichen Menschen" ("the opposite of exemplary people"), and when he speaks about his own Narziß-side, he says that he "den Geist, das Denken, *die Zucht*, sogar *die Moral* verehrt".[565] Narziß is seen then, not least as a moral instance in the personality.

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[561] HHE 243: "Goldmund was his equal; there was nothing Narcissus had given him that he had not received many times over in return."
[562] HHE 248: "he touched Goldmund's hair and forehead with his lips".
[563] Hesse, *Gesammelte Briefe. Bd. II*, p. 275ff.
[564] Hesse, *Gesammelte Briefe. Bd. II*, p. 275, my emphasis.
[565] Hesse, *Gesammelte Briefe. Bd. II*, p. 275, my emphasis.

From a Freudian point of view, this would make it reasonable to interpret Narziß as Goldmund's ego-ideal. In "Zur Einführung des Narzißmus", Freud nuances his earlier view that it is the ego that accomplishes the repression while connecting it to narcissism. He now argues that an ideal ego has been created out of the child's primary narcissism: "Was er [man] als sein Ideal vor sich hinprojiziert, ist der Ersatz für den verlorenen Narzißmus seiner Kindheit, in der er sein eigenes Ideal war." (SF X, 160) The love of oneself, just like the love of another person, idealizes the object. In the case of narcissistic love, this results in the ego ideal, which later, in the structural model, will be known as the super-ego. This instance in the psyche is precisely that which accounts for the moral aspects of the human being:

> Es wäre nicht zu verwundern, wenn wir eine besondere psychische Instanz auffinden sollten, welche die Aufgabe erfüllt, über die Sicherung des narzißtischen Befriedigung aus dem Ichideal zu wachen, und in dieser Absicht das aktuelle Ich unausgesetzt beobachtet und am Ideal mißt […] wir können sie nur als solche agnoszieren und dürfen uns sagen, daß das, was wir *Gewissen* heißen, diese Charakteristik erfüllt. (SF X, 162)

Narziß corresponds very well to the description of the narcissistically constituted ego-ideal in relation to Goldmund. When Goldmund comes to the monastery, Narziß takes his father's role as the representative of the father world. He personifies everything that Goldmund strives to become. When he feels that he has committed a great sin by going to the village and kissing the young girl, this is because this would be prohibited for Narziß. The emotional breakdown in front of Narziß after returning is a measurement of the distance between the aspired ideal and the actual state of the ego, with its characteristic feelings of shame:

> Statt diesen Überlegenen mit den edelsten Waffen zu gewinnen, mit Griechisch, mit Philosophie, mit geistigem Heldentum und würdiger Stoa, war er schwach und jämmerlich vor ihm zusammengebrochen! Nie würde er sich das verzeihen, nie würde er ihm ohne Scham ins Auge sehen können. (HH IV, 290)
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> Instead of winning this superior being with the noblest of weapons, with Greek or philosophy, with spiritual heroism and dignified stoicism, he had collapsed in front of him, weakly and shamefully! Never would he forgive himself for that; never would he be able to look Narcissus in the eye without shame. (HHE 25)

When Goldmund returns to the monastery, it is clear that Narziß still constitutes the scale of measurement for his achievements. Narziß says: "Ich will sehen was aus dir geworden ist; du wirst mir zeigen, in Worten, im Leben, in deinen Werken." (HH IV, 497)[566] That this is not

[566] HHE 220: "I want to see what you have become. You will show me, in words, in life, in your works."

only Narziß' attitude is shown by Goldmund's thoughts as Narziß for the first time inspects a piece of his work: "Wenn mein Werk nicht gut genug ist, oder wenn er es nicht verstehen kann, dann hat alle meine Arbeit hier ihren Wert verloren." (HH IV, 511)[567] Implicit in Hesse's declaration that Narziß is the moral aspect of his character is also the suggestion that Goldmund's life is an immoral one. The fact that Narziß functions as his conscience is made clear by the fact that, after slaying Victor, Goldmund furiously and as if in a hallucination, starts apologizing for his actions in front of Narziß (HH IV, 384f).[568]

In this reading, it is logical that Narziß remains a static character, since he is an ideal. Goldmund's last question, regarding whether Narziß will ever be able to die when he has no mother, becomes a rhetorical one: ideals belong to the realm of the father and are not part of the cycle of death and rebirth, symbolized by the mother. Ideals are eternal in a static way. This reading emphasizes that the novel belongs to the genre of *Bildungsroman*.[569] According to Gerhart Mayer, one of the basic characteristics of the genre is its focus on the main character, to whom "sind die übrigen Figuren funktional zugeordnet, weshalb diese nur in relativ beschränktem Umfang ein Eigensein gewinnen."[570] Even Narziß is here only a function in Goldmund's *Bildungsweg*. Contrary to the common standard of the genre, however, the *Bildung* is only completed by Goldmund's death, perhaps in accordance with the doctrine implicit in Tiresias' "si se non noverit": know thyself – and die. This deviation from genre rules, however, fits well with Gregory Castle's account of the modernist *Bildungsroman*. Castle argues that the form of the *Bildungsroman* is recycled in modernism, but with a constant and deliberate failure to meet its standards. In this way, he argues, the modernists developed an immanent critique of the ideal of *Bildung* as it had been institutionalized in the 19th century:

> It is my contention that in the modernist Bildungsroman, the normative modes of socialization and social mobility, which had become increasingly institutionalized throughout the nineteenth century, serve as a starting point for an immanent critique of the socially pragmatic Bildung, of upward mobility, socialization, "getting on". The chief difficulty faceing the modernists was to articulate alternatives in a genre whose narrative conventions were extremely conservative, in some cases little altered from the

[567] HHE 233: "If my work isn't good enough, or if he can't understand it, all my labours here will have been valueless."
[568] HHE 114.
[569] Cf. Walter Hinck, *Romanchronik des 20. Jahrhunderts: Eine bewegte Zeit im Spiegel der Literatur*, Köln: DuMont, 2006, p. 66–73.
[570] Gerhart Mayer, *Der deutsche Bildungsroman: Von der Aufklärung bis zur Gegenwart*, Stuttgart: Metzler, 1992, p. 20: "the other characters are subordinated, and, therefore, only allowed proper being to a limited extent".

> time of Goethe. In an important sense, generic failure was structurally necessary, for it was the ground and registration of the immanent critique of classical Bildung.[571]

A *Bildung* that is completed only at death – often in connection with some idea of a cycle of death and rebirth – can be recognized from other novels by Hesse, in for example *Siddharta*. It thus evokes the idea of self-formation as a life-long process, which is emphatically not to be seen as a subordination to social norms and bourgeois society.

In this perspective we must also say something about art, since it is of such central concern to Goldmund (and often emphasized by Hesse himself, like in the letter to Schrempf).[572] Here, too, the novel, at least to some degree seems to agree with the Freudian theory of narcissism. It is certainly the case that Goldmund's art is a sublimation of his sexual instincts: when he loves he does not create art, when he creates art he does not love. This is very much in line with the Freud's reasoning, as for example in his treatment of Leonardo da Vinci (cf. SF VIII, 172ff). Furthermore, the impulse and ability to sublimate seem to be bestowed upon him by Narziß. It is when Goldmund for the first time since he left the monastery enters a church – the realm of Narziß – that he discovers his wish to become an artist (HH IV, 392). When he is asked to make a drawing, he draws Narziß, and when he works on his sculpture of the friend, it is "Narziß, der sich seiner [Goldmund's] Künstlerhände bediente, um aus der Vergänglichkeit und Veränderlichkeit des Lebens herauszutreten und das reine Bild seines Wesens darzustellen." (HH IV, 406)[573] This follows Freud's theory that it is the ego-ideal that provides the impulse to sublimation (SF X, 162). At this stage, however, we come to a point, where Hesse does not follow Freudian theory any longer, for here we encounter two notions where Hesse, at least by the time of writing *Narziß und Goldmund*, explicitly disagrees with Freud: sublimation and art.

In a letter to Theodor Schnittkin from 1928, Hesse expresses his high estimation of psychoanalysis, but also defines the field which it has not been able to penetrate: art. He writes that among the dozen psychoanalysts he has known, not one "fähig wäre, das Positive und Wertvolle an mir, oder sagen wir etwa an einem Dichter wie Rilke, zu sehen" („would be able to see the positive and valuable in me, or a poet like Rilke"), and argues that „die gesamte, riesige Literatur der Psychoanalytiker über Dichter keine einzige wirklich bedeutsame Leistung gebracht." ("all of the abundant psychoanalytic literature on poets has

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[571] Gregory Castle, *Reading the Modernist Bildungsroman*, Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2006, p. 71.
[572] Hesse, *Gesammelte Briefe: Bd. II*, p. 275.
[573] HHE 136: "Narcissus, availing himself of the sculptor's hands in order to shed the impermanence and mutability of life and to present the pure image of his innermost being."

not brought a single significant achievement.")[574] Their differing views seem to boil down to different evaluations of sublimation. In Freudian theory, sublimation is the transference of the libido onto a "higher" goal, because its normal course is blocked for some reason. From Hesse's perspective, this would only be the negative side of sublimation. Hesse would agree that art is the product of sublimation, but rather than a mere deviation from normality, Hesse argues that there is "in der ganzen Geschichte der Menschheit … ja überhaupt nichts andres, was wichtig wäre, als … der Vorgang der Sublimierung." ("in all history of humanity there is nothing else that is important, except for the process of sublimation")[575] As the letter to Schrempf shows, Hesse's positive evaluation of sublimation comes closer to the Romantics' view of the sublime as a possibility to grasp the essence of life.[576] In short, where psychoanalysis stops short of giving sublimation an inner significance, this is exactly what Hesse demands – and this is afforded in Goldmund's theory of art.

Without much discussion, it can be stated that the creation of art in *Narziß und Goldmund* is made possible by the unification of Goldmund's experiences of life – of love and death – and Narziß' formal discipline. This has, by Nicolai and others, been accounted for by the opposition between Narziß and Goldmund interpreted as the opposition between the Apolline and Dionysiac along the lines of Nietzsche in *Die Geburt der Tragödie*. This is certainly a plausible interpretation that I will not dwell on further, since it has already been sufficiently expounded by others. It integrates the Tiresias-part of the Narcissus theme in the whole of the novel. In the beginning of the novel, much focus is on Narziß' ability to foresee fate. This indeed associates him with Tiresias, whose clairvoyance is the motif for telling the story about Narcissus in Ovid.[577] As Nietzsche states, "Apollo, als der Gott aller bildnerischen Kräfte, ist zugleich der wahrsagende Gott".[578] Narziß-Apollo is both the one who can tell the future and bring form to the matter of Goldmund's art.

However, I do not think that the Apollo-Dionysus opposition covers all of the central aspects of the theory of art presented in *Narziß und Goldmund*. Hesse is sometimes abundantly – and even disturbingly, as Deschner would argue – explicit in offering the reader an interpretation of the themes he presents. Art is one of these themes. There are, roughly speaking, four significant ideas about art presented by Goldmund. First, art is a unity of the

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[574] Hesse, *Gesammelte Briefe: Bd. II*, p. 195f.
[575] Quoted from Breugelmans, p. 44.
[576] Hesse, *Gesammelte Briefe: Bd. II*, p. 276f.
[577] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 3:338–342, p. 148.
[578] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Werke: Bd. I*, Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1972, p. 23. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, London 1993, trans. Shaun Whiteside, p. 16: "Apollo, the deity of all plastic forces, is also the soothsaying god".

will to form and the intuition of matter. Second, the motivation for art consists of the will to create something that outlives individual existence. Third, real art is not essentially a representation of an empirical object but of the *Urbilder*. Fourth, living experience is used to create art; when this experience is exhausted, no more art can be created. Only the first, and to some extent the second, of these is covered by the Apolline-Dionysiac-interpretation. However, when we turn to the question of art in the context of the narrative, we find that it is intimately related to another of the dispersed Narcissus-motives: Goldmund by the water.

When Goldmund sets out on his artist-career, immediately after creating his first sketch for Meister Niklaus, he goes to look into a well with falling water. He sees himself in the liquid and recognizes himself as changing:

> dieser Goldmund, der ihn aus dem Wasser anblickte, [was] längst nicht meht der Goldmund des Klosters oder der Goldmund Lydias […] Er dachte, daß er und jeder Mensch dahinrinne und sich immerzu verwandle und endlich auflöse, während sein vom Künstler geschaffenes Bild immer unwandelbar das gleiche bleibe. (HH IV, 398f)

> this Goldmund looking at him from the water had long since ceased to be the Goldmund of the monastery or Lydia's Goldmund […] He thought how he and every human being was carried along through constant change to final dissolution, whereas the image as created by the artist remained for ever fixed and immutable. (HHE 129)

In the attitude of Narcissus, Goldmund experiences, not the self-sufficient love of himself, but his fragile and evanescent identity and the perishable existence of everything worldly. Water as a strong symbol for change is recurrent, not only in *Narziß und Goldmund* where every major change in Goldmund's life is marked by contact with water, but in the *oeuvre* as a whole, most notably in *Siddharta*. In the history of the Narcissus theme, however, it is more common for the water to be calm and stabilizing. Precedents for Hesse's version can be found for example in what Gérard Genette traces as the "complexe de Narcisse" in Baroque poetry, where Narcissus is taken by the fear of losing his identity and where "le miroir liquide n'offre à qui s'y recueille que l'image fuyante d'une existence transitoire".[579]

In the Baroque Narcissus, the motif is still not connected with the question of art, though. An adaptation that takes this into account is, closer in time, the contemporary French author who Hesse appreciated the most, André Gide.[580] In the neo-Platonic allegory of *Le Traité*, one of the central features is the notion that a work of art should represent eternal ideas. The poet "dévine à travers chaque chose – et une seule lui suffit, symbole, pour révéler

[579] Genette, *Figures I*, p. 27.
[580] Cf. Hesse, *Gesammelte Briefe: Bd. II*, p. 249, 378.

son archétype“ (AG 22). This conception of art in many aspects resembles that of Goldmund, which is also expressed in water. From the initial will to save something of the appearances from death, Goldmund transcends to the vision of the archetypes. From the vision of his own mother (HH IV, 313), he progresses to the vision of "das Gesicht der Urmutter" (HH IV, 418).[581] Immediately after this epiphany, he goes to sit by the river, in which he now recognizes the depth-dimension. He sees the golden secrets that can only be hinted at beneath the surface. "So wie dies kleine Wassergeheimnis, schien ihm, waren alle echten Geheimnisse, alle wirklichen, echten Bilder der Seele“ (HH IV, 421).[582] When he later talks to Narziß about these secret soul-images, his friend confirms their Platonic status by comparing them to philosophical ideas (HH IV, 495).[583]

The water in which Goldmund finds the flux of appearances as well as their secret archetypes is also the living experience needed to create art. When it runs dry, no more art can be made: "Das ist der Brunnen, aus dem ich geschöpft habe. Der Brunnen wird bald leer sein, es wird mir dürr im Herzen.“ (HH IV, 516f)[584] This further confirms the deviation from Freud in the understanding of art. The sublimation that Goldmund accomplishes in his creation is not an outlet for stored energy. It is not even to be seen in libidinal terms, but rather, as Genette says of the Baroque Narcissus, "[s]a fascination est d'ordre intellectuel, non érotique".[585] There is a cognitive process at work in Goldmund's sublimation, an understanding in which the Narziß-side of his personality is used to obtain a perspective toward the material experiences of Goldmund's life. This artistic-intellectual view point grants meaning and direction to the ever recurring events of Goldmund's sensual monotony.

We have arrived, then, at an interpretation of Goldmund as a realistic character. Narziß now constitutes one side of Goldmund's psyche. In one part it was possible to follow Freud by viewing Narziß as Goldmund's ego ideal. When we turn to the question of art and aesthetic experience, however, Hesse deviates from Freudian psychology. Narziß continues, though, to serve as the idealizing force in Goldmund, either by shaping the figure of himself through Goldmund's hands, or by being materialized in Goldmund's water/mirror-experience. In this shift, we also turn from a libidinal to an aesthetic-intellectual understanding of Narcissus.

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[581] HHE 47. HHE 147: "the face of the primal mother".
[582] HHE 149: "All true secrets, all true images of the soul, it seemed to him, were like these [this] watery secrets [secret]".
[583] HHE 219.
[584] HHE 239: "That is the well from which I have drawn. Soon the well will be empty, my heart is drying up."
[585] Genette, *Figures I*, p. 28: "his fascination is of intellectual kind, not erotic".

Narcissistic Composition and the Healing of the Subject

In this reading of Hesse's *Narziß und Goldmund* I have shown the possibility of two radically opposed interpretations; one where Narziß is seen as a realistic character and Goldmund as an expression of his narcissistic repression, and one where Goldmund is seen as a realistic character and Narziß as an expression of his narcissistic or Narcissus-related side. We can conclude that the novel is coded in two different ways: on the one hand, as the *Bildungsroman* of Goldmund, and on the other, as the story of the double of Narziß. I do not consider them to be mutually exclusive, but rather complementary possibilities for reading the novel. Together they account for and integrate the Narcissus theme in *Narziß und Goldmund*. They constitute a perspectival dualism inscribed in the text. This is to be understood as opposed to a substantial dualism that we found in our explication of Narziß and Goldmund as the ego instincts and the sexual instincts. But this substantial dualism is also the paradigm of the general line of readings of the novel that first of all sees an opposition between *Natur* and *Geist*, extraversion and introversion, artist and scientist, *vita activa* and *vita contemplativa*, mother-world and father-world a.s.o. The perspectival dualism does not invalidate the substantial dualisms, but it takes the reading to higher level. It is only on this level that the *relationship* between Narziß and Goldmund can be explained.

The perspectival dualism obeys a logic of reflection. More specifically, it accords with a narcissistic logic of reflection. As we saw in the discussion of psychoanalysis, narcissism contains reflection in the sense of a reversal of subject and object. This is indeed the type of reflection we find in the relation between the two codes in *Narziß und Goldmund*. In Goldmund's story, Narziß is objectified as that which guides his quest and which he through his development manages to incorporate into himself. In Narziß' story, Goldmund is objectified as that which he exorcizes out of himself, but which he finally manages to reincorporate. We thus find the Narcissus theme on three different levels of the text. At a superficial level of explicit reference we find it in the name of Narziß and in motifs reproduced in Goldmund's story. At a deeper level, we find it in the narcissistic mechanisms that allow us to interpret Narziß and Goldmund psychologically. At the third level, we find it as a compositional principle which determines the relation between the codes of the narrative. The reference to the theme is thus preserved, but its traditional structure is scattered and

replaced by that of narcissism. We also see, then, that narcissism, as in psychoanalysis, at the deepest level is applied as a scheme for the production of meaning.

In both stories we also find projections of a dream of wholeness of self; they display processes of reintegration which heal some initial split or rift within oneself. In Narziß, there is a process towards a reintegration of the repressed, in Goldmund, one of reconciliation between ego and ego-ideal. This process of self-healing is also one of individualization. The process of becoming whole is not, as in Gide's *Traité*, one of resisting individuality, but one which realizes individuality. The difference between Narziß and Goldmund – and thereby their respective individualities – is not annulled by the process of self-healing, but reaffirmed. This can be conceptualized in the idea of becoming one's own *destinateur*. Goldmund, in the context of his *Bildungsroman*, is explicitly sent out on his quest by Narziß. But his development is to a large extent that of reintegrating this sender into himself. Narziß appears as the *destinateur* of a part of himself, his double, which he projects out of himself. And his development is largely that of achieving identification with the subject that he has sent out.

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