GRAAT On-Line Occasional Papers – February 2010

The (Pseudo)-Confessional Mode in Postmodern Fiction
The Diary of a Rapist and *Mother Night*

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"I confess to a ghastly lack in myself"
Mother Night

The question that the present paper addresses revolves around the aesthetic and critical implications generated by the radical recasting in postmodern fiction of the confessional mode in literary narrativity. The self-questioning tendency of first-person narrative fiction (of all literature, according to DeMan), and the inescapable self-irony inherent even in confessional autobiography (as we learn from Rousseau's canonical *Les Confessions*), are at the basis of my argument that the (pseudo)-confessional mode in postmodern fictional narrativity is a further development in an already paradoxical literary form that has quite often challenged the frontiers, not only between fiction and autobiography, but also between the moralizing and the rebellious or sceptical tendencies of the novel genre.

This paper aims at exploring the implications of the subversive quality that the confessional mode acquires in some of the postmodern narratives as they revisit the forms of life-writing (mainly the diary form and written confession) within the ironic mode. Through the discussion of Evan S. Connell's *The Diary of a Rapist* and Kurt Vonnegut's *Mother Night*, I mean to demonstrate that what I have called the "*pseudo*-confessional" mode is anchored in a postmodern aesthetics of surface that consecrates a deliberate problematization of literary meaning and of the ethical

ground of self-narration. Within the Postmodern aesthetics of surface, as will be explained in this work, the motifs of secrecy and self-revelation that inform confessional narration are recast in accordance to the sceptical, self-questioning, and self-ironic tendency of the postmodern poetics. The significance of the "hidden" or the unobservable in the novels discussed here (secret guilt in Connell's and intentionality in Vonnegut's) allows for an illustration of the critical and self-critical orientation that the thematization of literary meaning assumes in postmodern fiction. The (pseudo)-confessional mode in *The Diary of a Rapist* and *Mother Night* enacts and deconstructs the conventionally assumed link between meaning and the "concealed", between significance and what is implicit or even "unpresentable" (in Lyotard's terms) in the narrative. The self-conscious exploration of the nature of meaning in both novels generates, beyond the re-thinking of the motif of secrecy, a questioning of the limits of literary representation itself.

Problematics of the Confessional Mode in Narrative Fiction

The confessional mode in fiction and autobiography has been associated with paradoxes and forms of self-irony that remained a vital force in confessional narration. Thus, ever since Rousseau's justification of *Les Confessions* by his need to hide and write[1] and the evolving thematics of self-revelation as a response to the need to flee society and misunderstanding, confessional narrativity (in various forms of fictional self-writing) came to be conceived of as a "hiding"; a form of asserted absence.[2] The evolution of the confessional mode in the narratives of the Romantic period was marked by a more accentuated problematization of the claims of self-presence and self-revelation than in Rousseau's inaugural work. In her study of the Romantic confessional narratives, Susan M. Levin insisted on the tendency of such narratives to assume the fragmentariness of the sense of self created in confession, and the impossibility of any definitive articulation of selfhood.[3]

The spirit of self-questioning within which the confessional mode developed in Romantic writings, would amount to a form of Romantic irony that fully explores and consecrates the blurred boundaries between self-revelation and self-invention; signifying intentionality and the impossibility of reducing meaning to intention;

attempting "to reveal the innermost being of a person and a questioning of the very possibility of any definitive statement about the self".[4] With postmodern fiction, as this paper argues, the confessional mode of self-narration assumes even a more radical form of Romantic irony which allows it to entangle its critical interrogation on the nature of meaning in an aesthetics of a "radical uncertainty".[5] Self-revelation as the main thematic axis of confessional narrative offers the postmodern novel a conventional literary background against which to articulate its parodic games and ironic recasting of both meaning and subjectivity. The contradictions and instability already informing the backgrounded literary tradition may account for the excessively ambiguous, often disorienting (or paradoxical) qualities that the ironic form of confessional narrativity assumes in postmodern fiction.

The polemical nature that the concept of literary confession encompasses may be reflected in the disagreement among critics, as to the archetypal text of that literary form. Thus, while some critics point to St Augustin's *Confessions* as the precursor text in the Western tradition of confessional writing, others, like Philip Lopate, and more recently David Terry[6], insist that as a literary form, confessional writing is to be traced back to the French essayist Montaigne in whose essays the confessional mode acquires the sense of "eavesdropping on the mind in solitude".[7] Even within the scope of literary writing itself, the protean quality of the confessional mode is often displayed through the contingency of its implications that depend largely on the peculiar narrative form that contains it such as the diary or autobiography.[8] In their survey of Western narrativity, Scholes and Kellogg have condensed the confessional form in its movement from the allegorical mode (introduced by Saint Augustin's *Confessions*) to the anti-allegorical mode of postmodern, form-oriented narrative, with the Modernist phase in between, encompassing the allegorical without the traditional moralizing dimension.[9] Scholes's and Kellogg's reading of confessional narrativity has the merit foregrounding the challenging instability that informs the ethics of literary confession.[10]

The confessional mode, as promoted in the Romantic age and by some of the early novelists like Samuel Richardson, could be associated with what Thomas Pavel

describes as "l'enchantement de l'interiorité"[11]; the handling of the inward realm of the individual as the site of a moral ideal (besides its embodiment of a meaningful private experience). The ethical issue was at the center of Fielding's critical parody of Richardson's *Pamela* in his novel *Shamela*. Part of Fielding's attack on what he saw as a lack of plausibility in the characterization of Pamela, as Pavel[12] put it, is the incompatibility between her celebrated virtue and her need to keep a diary (the confessional mode and the diary form being assimilated to the avowal of guilt). Fielding's conservative view actually points to an ethical vision the persistence and significance of which are clearly implied by the role that such ethics of literary confession seemed to play in binding the conventions of plausibility and verisimilitude. This peculiarly intense complicity between the poetics of a literary form and its ethics remained unquestioned by Richardson and the Romantics even when they reversed the ethical orientation of literary confession. Indeed, while Richardson, like Rousseau, subverted the traditional link between confessional narrativity and the unveiling of guilt or moral degradation[13], they did not upset or question the traditional complicity between the poetics of the confessional narrative and its ethics. The idealization of inwardness in eighteenth-century fiction enacted a reversal of the ethical implication of the confessional mode, but not a questioning of the ethical ground as such; the confessional mode of first person narratives tended to unveil a moral integrity, an inner nobility not accessible to any exterior observer. But, the moral idealism consecrated through the celebration of interiority does not necessarily entail self-knowledge; quite often, it is rather mingled with self-ignorance or even self-illusion[14], which maintains in confessional narrative the ironic tension between self-revelation and the impossibility of mastering the process or its outcome.

What distinguishes the confessional mode as re-invented in some postmodern novels is its deliberate problematization of the traditional relationship between the poetics of confessional narrative and the ethical orientation of its thematics. While this may count as an aspect of the continuous rethinking and refiguring, in postmodern literature, of the relation between poetics and aesthetics on the one hand and ethics of the other, the ironic re-visiting of the confessional mode of first-person narrative is particularly significant in unveiling the slippery nature of literary ethics.

Much of postmodern fiction is concerned with a questioning of such ethics. From the perspective of the "Postmodern ethics" promoted by Andrew Gibson in his attempt to reinvigorate a Levinatian ethical reading of modern and postmodern novels[15], the poetics of (pseudo)-confessional narrative is grounded in a repudiation of the knowledge (and self-knowledge) claims. That is, within the frame of "Postmodern ethics", the (pseudo)-confessional novel targets an undermining of the "arbitrary dogmatism of the self"[16] as the latter insists on relating to the Other within the terms of cognition.[17] The foregrounding of the "*pseudo*" nature of the confessional in many postmodern fictional narratives does not only lay bare the artifice of verisimilitude and the fictionality of the self-revelation (or self-knowledge) process. It also contributes to the instability of the relationship between the aesthetics and ethics of the postmodern literary discourse by systematically defeating the claims of self-knowledge and knowledge of the Other.

The notion of "logic of narrativity" promoted by Philip Sturgess[18] as a mediating category that bridges the logic of discourse and that of story, may at once support and undermine our experience of confessional narrativity in fiction. It may bestow the quality of sincerity on the narrative discourse (and so direct our reception of the story narrated). When the logic of narrativity relies on the game of self-betrayal, however, it foregrounds the failure of discourse to match meaning with intentionality (in particular with an unreliable narrator revealing more than, or the opposite of, what he intends), and consequently, it fosters a tension between the logic of discourse and that of story. In confessional narrative, such tension corresponds to the gap or distance between the narrating self and the experiencing self (what Dorrit Cohn calls "dissonant or distanced self-narration"[19]), while in the ironic, pervasive version of confessional narrativity that tension becomes a double negation. It is not the gap imposed by retrospection (as we will see with Connell's novel) since the confessing character does not necessarily carry on his discourse from a superior (or more insightful) moral stance, and it is not the gap that implies any progress in the quest for self-knowledge. When Sturgess describes the "logic of narrativity" in postmodern fiction as enhancing one axis (logic of discourse or of story) through an ironic pointing to the supremacy of the other[20], he oversimplifies a deliberate

indeterminacy of the frontier between story and discourse maintained by the self-critical orientation of Postmodern narrative. Indeed, when the logic of narrativity operates through a misleading promotion of the logic of discourse, in particular with first-person narration, what is produced is not a foregrounding of story (verisimilitude) as Sturgess argued, but, rather, an ironic deconstruction of verisimilitude.[21]

The gap between story and discourse, which is typical of first–person narratives is much more forcefully pronounced in the confessional narrative where the present subjectivity of the 'confessant' is presented as a "stable unit of ontological individualism".[22] From a similar perspective, Paul McCormick deduces (in his revisiting of Dorrit Cohn's notion of "dissonant narration") that dissonant narrators frame their experiencing and narrating selves as discontinuous, not only in a temporal sense but also intellectually and/or morally.[23] In the parodic revisiting of the confessional mode and of the diary form, that discontinuity is not, however, induced by any implicit assertion of an intellectual or moral superiority in the narrating self. The discontinuity is generated by the tendency of the postmodern, parodic narrative to foreground the elusive nature of the sense of self and of the pursued or claimed self-knowledge. The narrative discourse in the (pseudo)-confessional narrative contributes to an aesthetics of the postmodern novel where the discontinuity highlights the sliding of meaning that informs the writing process, rather than the movement or a progress from the hidden to the revealed, or from an unstable to a stable self. The playful dimension of the sliding of meaning does not merely point to the materiality of the textual space, but it also suggests the possibility of a postmodern ethics (in the pseudo-confessional novel) from the perspective of which the "othered" self (the experiencing "I" of the story) is approached not as an object of knowledge but as a signal of the dissolution or at least the uncertainty of the subject-object relation (the relation between the narrating and the experiencing selves). That uncertainty, challenging as it is to the reader's attempt at reaching a stable sense of the narrating self, is further consolidated in the experimental postmodern novels that associate the process of self-narration to that of self-writing.

The present paper will discuss two such instances where the mingling of self - narration with self-writing frames the critical revisiting of the confessional mode: namely the diary novel (Connell's *The Diary of a Rapist*) and the first-person novel that takes the form of written confessions (Vonnegut's *Mother Night*). The diary novel has often been described as the "ancestor to the autonomous monologue" or the stream-of-consciousness novel, in that "the two forms share the fiction of privacy".[24] Consequently, both novelistic forms deny or problematize the traditional connivance between narrator and reader, since their content is conveyed through an "eavesdropping-like" rhetoric (to repeat Bakhtin's image in describing the whole thematics of private life in the novel).[25] The diary novel, like the stream-of-consciousness novel, signals a radical shift towards expressivity (the expression of interiority eclipses the communicative project of the narrative act).[26] Like the stream-of-consciousness novel also, the fictional diary narrative foregrounds the incompleteness of personality, besides its challenge to the convention of plot.[27] The immediacy and "intimist" quality of the self-revelation process in the diary narrative do not guarantee any stability or completeness of meaning. Its quality as sporadic writing excludes any totalizing effect in the diary narrative.[28] And yet, in the conventional diary novel or in the stream-of-consciousness novel, the incompleteness of identity and the openness of meaning do not generate any real challenge to the thematics and rhetoric of depth; they rather perpetuate, even in a nuanced form, the assumption that deciphering the rhetoric of self-revelation allows the reader to catch a glimpse at a private human experience; the hidden meaning is to be deduced from the psychic and mental processes exposed in the narrative, from the play of "free associations", etc. However, the Modernist experimentation with the stream-of-consciousness method and with other forms of first-person narrative like the diary novel had the merit of maintaining in the foreground of the fictional text the inevitable instability of meaning in addition to a sharp problematization of the ethics of self-narration.[29]

The critical questioning of the Modernist assumptions about psychic depth (as the object of literary representation) and of the related conception of subjectivity (as hermetic, autonomous, meaning-generating entity) informs to a large extent the

narrativity of postmodern fiction. At the basis of the experimental revival in postmodern fiction of the traditional forms of narrative lies a critical dismissal of the Modernist pursuit of psychic depth, a self-conscious thematization of the contradictions of narrative fiction, and the need to animate the process of story-telling with a sceptical attitude towards the assumed representational force of the literary discourse. Therefore, the revival of the various forms of literary narrativity associated with the confessional mode -the epistolary narrative, the diary, and the *Bildungsroman*- is not a mere resurrection of a traditionally claimed authenticity in story-telling that would reduce intrusive authorial presence, as first-person narratives have conventionally implied. It is rather part of a substantially ironic and self-ironic attitude that allows postmodern fiction to explore the possibilities for literary narrativity to signify within an inevitable deferral and indeterminacy of meaning, and within the persistence of what Gerald Prince calls the "disnarrated" elements.[30] Therefore, the subversive orientation assumed by the confessional mode of first-person, postmodern narratives offers a critical frame that bridges the recasting of the poetics of fiction and the forceful investment of the problematical nature of meaning. The ironic, self-undermining forms of confessional narrativity articulated in many postmodern novels join the claim of self-revelation (in its subversive, self-defeating tendency) to a deconstruction of the notion of depth or the hidden.

It is in this sense that the phrase "pseudo-confessional" is used in the present paper. The subversive, self-ironic essence of self-revelation in the postmodern narratives discussed here frames and orients a critical questioning of the notion of depth as implied in both literary narrativity (as in the Modernist claim of psychic depth) and in the discourse of literary criticism. The metafictional critique of the play of the notion of depth (and the hidden as a variation on it) undertaken in American postmodern fiction includes a scrutiny of the interaction of meaning with intentionality; meaning with the spectacular, and meaning with aesthetic pattern. Thus, the postmodern critical revision itself does not pretend to go beyond the dichotomy of the hidden and the apparent (the enigmatic and the graspable); it

rather invests that dichotomy to explore the free-floating play of literary signification that challenges the notions of authorship and readership alike.

It is mainly within the postmodern aesthetics of surface that the myth of depth is challenged through a critical re-articulation of ironic versions of the confessional mode. The self-conscious foregrounding of surface in the prominence assigned to the spatial category, and to the interchangeability of masks (rather than the opposition between mask and truth) allows the American postmodern novel to join literary self-reflexivity to a systematic questioning of subjectivity concepts.

The Diary of a Rapist & Mother Night: parodic subversion of the confessional mode

In Evan S. Connell's novel[31], as in Kurt Vonnegut Jr.'s[32] the parodic investment of confessional narrativity relies on an ironic repetition of the leitmotif of secrecy. The secret, legal and moral, transgression in Connell's narrative of the diary-writer, like the secrecy of espionage in Vonnegut's novel, inscribe and subvert the confessional mode of the first-person narratives by maintaining an ironic distortion of the conventional process of self-revelation. The presentation in both novels of narrators whose confessions are articulated in the activity of writing illustrates the tendency of metafictional narrativity to associate its critical exploration of meaning and subjectivity to an ironic examination of the rhetoric of self-revelation.

In Evan S. Connell's *The Diary of a Rapist*, Earl Summerfield's daily transcription of the monotonous course of his life immediately assumes the tone of pathetic self-justification mingled with a repeated attempt to reveal his murderous impulse within the frame of self-excuse. Such a frame is provided by the sustained attention that Earl pays to the overwhelming presence of crime (at the level of individuals and of the state) in his ritualistic reading of newspapers, and by his attempt to highlight a pathetic self-image as the victim of his wife's cruel indifference. Earl's diary assumes a more promising orientation (in terms of meaningfulness) when it begins to revolve around an endeavour to trace back the beginning of his moral ruin through an effort to understand (or re-interpret) the past of his married life. The moment of writing (the present of the narrative) becomes an attempt to locate in the past an account for

the future transgressions that Earl gets gradually obsessed with; namely the murder of Bianca and/or the rape of Mara St John.

The patterning of Earl's self-revelation within a perverse use of causality (Mara is responsible for the rape because of her "provocative" attitude during the parade [47]) and an arbitrary movement between opposite views, not only reduces the process to pathetic self-excuse; it also binds the confessional mode to narrative unreliability. Earl's unreliability as a narrator plays a framing role in undermining the claim of a cognitive relation between the self and the other, and between the writing and the written self. The consequent self-undermining (self-defeating) tendency of the narrative as it promotes a parodic version of confessional narrativity, accentuates the Romantic irony already inherent in more conventional forms of confessional story-telling. Connell's narrative opens up the possibility of creating a structure of meaning that would depend on the tension between self-justification and self-betrayal (as a more conventional narrative would do). However, the orchestration of self-betrayal itself, as Earl assumes more and more openly his murderous obsession, foregrounds the movement of the narrative towards self-negation; towards an assumed absence of meaning. Such movement is illustrated, for instance, by Earl's repeated destruction in later fragments of assessments made in earlier ones (his judgement of Bianca, of his colleagues in the bureau), or also his easy shifts between opposite but equally absurd and self-negating views. In addition, Earl's complaint about the moralizing nature of his confessional writing and his imagination of his own possible murder as a punishment for his failure to go beyond this moralizing impulse (138) generates a logic of narrativity whereby the logic of discourse and that of story are played off against each other in a way that threatens to cancel the narrative itself. The irony of Earl's situation is that of the narrative form itself: the confessional tone of the diary struggles to dissociate itself from the traditional moral ground, and Earl's complaint stands as an ironic reminder of the "pseudo" quality of his confession and of the impossibility for such a parodic version of the narrative form to defeat its inherent ethical content. The narrative's revelation of the limits of its own critique becomes the genuine confession.

In his analysis of the "enigmaticity" of literature, Jean Bessière[33] insists that even when a literary text highlights the absence of meaning, the enigmatic produced in literary writing is neither solved nor dissolved. From this perspective, the game of self-deconstruction in Earl's diary suggests that the meaningfulness of the narrative emanates from *the tension itself* created in its simultaneous movement towards the construction and the dismantling of signification.

The game of pursuing meaningfulness is what Earl Summerfield himself is engaged in through his obsessive concern with interpreting and commenting upon the stories reported in the newspapers, or deciphering the clues that may suggest the forthcoming events related to his own life. The emerging doubleness or self-mirroring of the narrative manifests itself in an ironic duplication of the reader's activity: Earl's continuous attempt to decipher some hidden meaning, ranging from the secret pattern of the world (139), to the signs of his coming promotion at work (140), to the clues about the possible discovery of his crime (151, 155). Since it imposes the frame of metafictional self-irony on the reading process, such duplication lays bare the overlapping, but not the identity, of meaning and information; the hidden (secret) and the simply unknown. As Earl undertakes a close scrutiny of every item that presents itself to him, he comes to incarnate an ironic image of the detective, in particular after the rape. When he closely examines the landscape of his own crime to find out if some evidence against him could have been gathered, or as he examines Bianca's clothes in an attempt to trace back the beginning of his moral degradation, Earl's behaviour implies an ironic undermining of the motif of secrecy or the hidden (in particular in detective fiction), together with a subversion of the ethical implication of confessional narrative. It is not the wish to admit his secret guilt that seems to motivate the diary writing. Similarly, when Earl plays the role of the detective, the significance of secrecy is displaced and the moral paradigm confused (the criminal and the "detective" become identical).

Actually, in Connell's novel, the progress of Earl's diary is neither a movement towards a final revelation (the expected revelation of Earl's guilt), nor to a degree of self-knowledge. The confessional mode of Earl's self-writing generates a gradual subversion of the notion of secrecy itself, and a consequent upsetting of the

conventional thematics of depth. The ironic perversion of the notion of depth is implemented through the progressive foregrounding of the spatial nature of the hidden. The diary narrative is informed by the movement from the mental landscape of Earl's dreams and thoughts to a preoccupation with the place where he would hide the diary itself from Bianca. Thus, the game of displacement, through out Connell's narrative, ends up presenting the text of the diary itself as incarnating the only sense of secrecy that is relevant to Earl's conscience; the highlighted materiality of the diary (a reminder of the spatiality of the narrative) destroys, in consequence, the traditional notion of depth. The ironic, subversive displacement generates an association between the notion of secrecy and the materiality of the diary narrative as surface.

Meaning, thus, is no longer the concealed secret of the narrative that the reader deciphers or creates; it becomes a free-floating entity, sliding over the surface of the narrative that is produced by the act of self-writing. The tension maintained in Connell's novel between the conventional form of secrecy related to the thematics of depth (Earl's secret guilt and his perverse obsession) and the secrecy of the writing act itself unveils the disruptive quality that the confessional mode of literary narrativity assumes in postmodern *meta*fiction. Such a disruption is the term that relates the (pseudo)-confessional mode of Connell's narrative to the conventional poetics of fiction but also to the ethical dimension inherent in narrativity, since it reinforces the aesthetics of surface typical of postmodern literature. In his pertinent discussion of the aesthetics of surface inaugurated in the literature of "Late Modernism" and consecrated in postmodernism, Alan Wilde[34] emphasizes the main features of such aesthetics, namely the repudiation of depth psychology and the foregrounding of language, which promotes the reflexivity of the fictional narrative at the expense of conventional referentiality and rounded characterization. In opposition to the ambiguous and often unintentional advocation of meaningful surface in Late Modernist fiction[35], the postmodernist aesthetics of surface does not necessarily rest on an interest in the outer, phenomenal world. It rather entails a deliberate questioning of the very limits of literary representation; a questioning enacted in a constant problematization of the conventional novelistic thematics and

of the concept of self. The very assumption of a self is questioned; not only through its association with an "inner void" (the association in the Modernist novel does not necessarily undermine the concept of self)[36] but mainly through the conflation of the "inner" with an aesthetics of surface.

In *The Diary of a Rapist*, the play with, and against, the traditional assumption about depth and its conventional association with the concept of truth and with the complexity in character portrayal, is grounded in the very unveiling of Earl's mental world. The aesthetics of surface in the narrative does not depend only on the "flattening" of character, but on the enactment of such flattening in the narrator's very hesitation between the self-revelation process of the confessional mode and the perverse tone of pathetic self-excuse; the hesitation between an obsession with secret guilt and the gradual inscription of meaningful secrecy in the spatiality of the diary narrative (Earl's obsession becomes an obsession with hiding the text of the diary). Surface is not a mere "given" evidence but an aesthetic construct that informs the poetics of postmodern experimental novels like *The Diary of a Rapist*, and sustains its self-questioning, self-deflating orientation. In many postmodern narratives, such an orientation takes the extreme form of confronting the possibility of self-negation or self-destruction when the aesthetics of surface generates an inescapable movement towards silence. In Connell's novel, the final shift towards silence in the last empty entries of the diary narrative is the ultimate subversion of the confessional mode and its motif of secrecy. The chronological entries open up a space of emptiness through which the diary reaches the extreme form of self-reflexivity in self-annihilation. The inner (psychic) void acquires its significance exclusively (and paradoxically) in the spatial void of the narrative text.

Actually, the predominance of such a metafictional orientation in the postmodern novel highlights its constant thematization of the problematical essence of meaning. The process of "laying bare" the artifice of literary composition does not merely displace the enigmatic or the "hidden" in fictional narrative (from the traditional life-like content to the question of literary form); it polemicizes the related processes of encoding and decoding meaning by foregrounding the overlapping, and the blurred boundary between author position and reader position. Among the

critics of literary self-reflexivity, Lucien Dällenbach has pointed to the tendency of the "*mise-en-abyme*" to obscure what it intends to unveil and to confuse what it tries to clarify.[37] Earl's role as "writer" and "reader" enacts such confusion: his failure to control meaning in his writing and in his interpretation maintains an ironic questioning of both authorial intention and the reading act; a questioning of their ability to contain meaning. It is the thematization of both authorial intention and the decoding process of interpretation that sustains the mystifying, obscuring play of self-reflexivity in much of postmodern metafiction.

Similarly, in *Mother Night,* Kurt Vonnegut brings the issue of intentionality to a questioning of the nature of meaning in self-writing; a questioning that repeatedly points to the defiant tension between concealment and revelation, between intention and interpretation, and that constantly challenges the possibility of reaching a sense of the truth in *Mother Night*. The orchestration of such tension is doubly encompassed in the fictional world: the motif of espionage informs the story of Howard Campbell (an American playwright established in Germany and recruited as spy by the Americans during World War II, and his work under his cover identity as a Nazi propagandist), while Campbell's self-narration takes the form of written confessions he undertakes in his prison in Jerusalem (as he waits for a trial by an Israeli court).

The two forms of literary narrativity to which Vonnegut's novel appeals, confessional and captivity narratives, are gradually subverted through the parodic mode. The form of captivity narrative confers upon Howard Campbell's confession the frame of the judiciary procedure (his written confessions are supposed to be a response to an official order from the system that documents war criminals), but the ironic undermining of this frame reinforces the problematization of the confessional narrative. Indeed, Campbell's captivity arbitrarily turns into a complicity and collaboration with the legal system that has launched the trial (he refers to himself as "friend of the court [106]"). In addition, the machinery of espionage and its orchestration of a web of secrecy that entraps Howard Campbell stands as a backgrounded source of ironic subversion to the narrative's investment of a playful sliding and deferral of meaningfulness and its consecration of the game of mirroring and duplication. The narrative explores the question of meaning by joining to its

consistent thematization of writing the problematical notion of intentionality. Campbell's writings, divided into the texts produced as responses to outer orders, and those emanating from a private need, foreground the issue of intentionality as the enigmatic part of textuality and of interpretation alike: intentionality as creative of spaces of meaningfulness without being capable of controlling meaning nor containing its plurality.

Campbell's patterning of his confessional narration suggests the importance of the coincidence between his recruitment as an American counter-spy and the development (in his mind) of his fourth play, "*A Nation of Two*". The play is intended by Campbell to explain how mutual love between Helga and himself creates in them a sense of nationalistic belonging capable of substituting the conventional "nation". The presentation of Campbell's new profession as a spy in terms of story and acting, does not only inscribe a proximity between the fictional plot and the machinery of espionage; it also creates an ironic continuity between the story "that was beginning to write itself in [his] mind "(23) and the narrative in which Campbell transcribes his past life as a spy. Such continuity escapes the intentionality of both the "writer" and the spy machinery; it points rather to an outer, authorial intentionality that manipulates the coincidence. In addition, that ironic continuity between the text Campbell had in mind and the actual confessional narrative he is writing in the present takes the form of a subversive transformation: "the Nation of Two" materializes in the narration of the schizophrenic doubleness that espionage imposed on the "writer" (Campbell's repeated reference to schizophrenia betrays an unintended reminder of the "original" but absent "Nation of Two"). Such a distortion does not simply destroy Campbell's intention; it rather incorporates it to the free play of a free-floating intentionality that makes it possible for the mental construct (the play "Nation of Two") and the "story" imposed on Campbell by the machinery of espionage to come to the same closure, with Campbell reduced in both to a "stateless person" (31). The coincidence, as it offers a glimpse at authorial intention outside the fictional world, actually fictionalizes such intention in a way that reinforces the "enigmaticity" of meaning in the confessional narrative.

Indeed, beyond the thematization of the clashes, disfiguration and betrayal, that the intentionality of the novelist-surrogate undergoes, the outer, authorial intention points to its own "haunting" presence. But, in Vonnegut's novel authorial intention is not glimpsed at as the location of the text's depth, nor is it associated with the possibility of an ultimately revealed meaning. It is mainly through the betrayed, disfigured, mutilated intentionality of Campbell -the writer-surrogate that *Mother Night* inscribes its own meaning as the multiple, unstable product of the unsolved tension between the unveiled and the concealed, between the visible progress of the linear narrative and the fictionalized intentionality supposedly standing behind. Actually, the ironic terms within which intentionality is handled, suggest that the narrative can incorporate it only as *absence*, not as secret; the story-telling can only point to the process of its destruction and loss, not its initial presence as origin.

Therefore the ultimate target of the narrative's ironic deconstruction is Campbell's belief that what causes his victimization is the impossibility to bring his intentionality to the surface, and to allow it to contain and control his writings. The intentionality of the artist-surrogate is hinted at through the traces that mark its betrayal and its loss as in the instance when, without knowing it, he reveals Helga's death in the coded messages that he transmits (as a propagandist) to the Allies (119). Campbell himself summarizes his story as a continuous perversion of his intention: "The part in me that wanted to tell the truth got turned into an expert liar! The lover in me got turned into a pornographer! The artist in me got turned into ugliness" (133). Authorial intentionality is glimpsed within an equally ironic frame as it is detected in the orchestrated game of concealment and revelation and in the careful patterning throughout the narrative of a continuous sliding of signification. Such intrinsic links, consolidated throughout *Mother Night*, between authorial intentionality and the sliding of meaning keep under erasure the notion of depth and the traditional complicity between meaning and intention. Intention is not the hidden, secret location of meaning; it is rather deferred signified, detected only in the signs of its absence. In Vonnegut's novel, intentionality is thus thematized in terms that sustain Derrida's description of the notion as a literary *function* or experience; not the (hidden) essence of the text, and so as the evasive component of the writing

and reading acts.[38] In *Mother Night*, the repeated reference to intentionality within the terms of betrayal and perversion bears upon Campbell's confession since it develops as a recognition of gaps and void, rather than a revelation of the concealed ("I confess to a ghastly lack in myself"[137]).

Because in *Mother Night* the motif of intentionality sustains the continuous sliding of meaning (rather than signifying its secrecy), the novel's thematics are anchored in an aesthetics of surface through which the instability and plurality of signification undermine the notion of depth. This is induced by the game of narrative self-mirroring: the repeated emergence of doubles to Campbell's own self-narration in the letters and the newspaper articles that provide opposite versions of Campbell's story, and in the portrayal of such characters as Jones and Kraft. Moreover, throughout *Mother Night*, the gap between the intention of the writer-surrogate and the actual interpretation to which his creations are submitted recasts the sense of the enigmatic within the aesthetics of surface, that is, within a radical instability of meaning (not any claimed secrecy or depth). When Campbell re-discovers the caricature of the cigar-smoking Jew he drew in 1941, he notices the gap between the aim of self-derision that the drawing was meant to express and its racist interpretation by the Nazi audience that turned it into a target of shooting (99, 100). Similarly, one of Campbell's satirical poems is turned, when performed in Jones's group, into a "famous prayer" (50), in the same way his private memoirs ("*Memoirs of a Monogamous Casanova*") which were meant to express his love for Helga are turned into a pornographic show when interpreted by the Russian theatre. When Campbell comes to trace those gaps back to the functioning of the espionage machinery (in that they are linked to the "self" or mask his spy work imposed on him), the confessional mode of his self-revelation becomes a struggle to liberate the story-telling process from that machinery and its infernal game of simulation. But the irony of Campbell's self-writing is that confessional narration is imposed on him by another machinery; it is the judiciary system functioning in connection with that of historiographic documentation (the Haifa Institute for documenting war criminals to whom his written confessions are destined). Campbell's confessional narrative keeps nonetheless exceeding its legal, institutionalized frame in order to fall into a

metafictional pondering on the authority of intention and interpretation in establishing the meaning (and/or significance) of a work of art. The transgressive impulse that informs the narrator's crossing of the boundary between the legal and the literary frames[39] produces the nucleus of the novel's ironic investment of the confessional mode: the assimilation of the confessional act to the rule of transgression. It is not merely the transgression of the boundary between the concealed and the revealed, but it is the violation of the borderline between distinct "domains" of experience (the literary and the judicial), which inscribes the challenging sliding of meaning in the very frame to which the reader would appeal in his/her interpretation of Vonnegut's novel. This aspect of the play of transgression attests, in fact, to the tension between the aesthetic and the ethical (as larger such frames) on which the poetics of the postmodern parodic novel sometimes relies.

As the thematized authorial intentionality is associated in *Mother Night* with the impossibility to fix meaning (rather than its conventional association with the authority of meaning-generation), the notion of the death of the author is consequently put into question. The fictionalizing of the authorial self and the suggestion of authorial intentionality within the terms that come close to Lyotard's notion of the "unpresentable in presentation" ascribe to the "dead" author a polemicizing intrusion rather than an unproblematical absence. The secretive or the hidden is turned into the unpresentable, which means that the conventional orchestration of secrecy and self-revelation in fiction is undermined by the critical pondering on the limits of literary representation itself.

The Carnivalesque re-invented: staging as displacement

Besides its problematization of authorial intentionality, the (pseudo)-confessional mode in many postmodern novels relies, in its self-defeating games of concealment and revelation, on a recasting of the carnivalesque spirit of the novel genre. Julia Kristeva[40] has defined the carnivalesque structure as essentially dialogical (composed of nonexclusive oppositions); a spectacle without stage in which language escapes linearity (that is the law), parodies and relativizes itself. Kristeva's description built on Bakhtin's own attempt to trace the comic origins of the

novel back to the popular carnival[41], sheds light on the paradox of revelation (or staging) through masking that seems to be inherent in the novel genre. What is significant in the American postmodern novel is that the play of ironic revelation through the negation of depth and the enactment of a continuous sliding of meaning, induces a reinforcement and a re-invention of the carnivalesque dimension of the genre. This is especially relevant in the narratives that encompass the motif of the spectacle which is implemented, as McHale[42] has pointed out, in the dramatization of the act of reading, the act of writing, or even in the scenes that take the shape of a dramatic performance, or foreground the trope of the circus. When the metafictional self-reflexivity of the Postmodern narrative is joined to an ironic recasting of the carnivalesque dimension of the novel, the tension between literary self-exposure and the game of masking inscribes the deferral of meaning within the terms of instability and multiplicity, rather than those of secrecy and depth.

In *The Diary of a Rapist*, Earl's interest in collecting pictures of murderers as part of his "ritualistic" reading of crime stories in the newspapers (119, 120), introduces the dimension of the spectacle when -as the narrative moves on- those newspaper pictures join the mental ones of Earl's imagined rape of two schoolgirls (93). As the boundary between the outer, fixed traces of the "spectacle" of murder (the newspaper pictures of victims and murderers) and 'inner', mental scenes of possible murders (his imagined murder of Bianca 93, 130) collapses, the macabre quality of the carnivalesque upsets the plot convention. The plot exceeds its traditional 'content' (action and happenings) to become a fusion of the "actual" and the imagined (or "disnarrated"), while the ability of Earl's imagination to turn into spectacle such macabre scenes as the execution of a convict or rape dismantles the ethical force of the confession.

Indeed, what is challenged by the carnivalesque in the American postmodern novel through the upsetting of the official linguistic code is not only social or political law, as Kristeva[43] argues, but also the long-established literary conventions, especially those related to narrative fiction. The carnivalesque acquires a metafictional orientation, which does not necessarily minimize its satirical impulse; postmodern fiction has been described as "the heir of Menippean satire and its most

recent historical avatar".[44] With the parodic novel, the carnivalesque quality (originally associated with popular festive forms) becomes a trope for the functioning of heteroglossia and polyphony in novelistic narrative and its processes of transgressing social, political and literary norms.[45] In many postmodern narratives, the reinforcement of the carnivalesque dimension by the motif of the spectacle, tends to destabilize the very metaphoric scope of the notion by reviving its original association with festive performance. The deliberate confusion of the limit between the literal and the metaphoric significance of the carnivalesque sustains the aesthetics of surface through the narrative's undermining of depth and the re-invention of secrecy as a multiplicity and openness of meaning.

In *The Diary of a Rapist*, the re-invented carnivalesque takes the forms of spectacles that Earl, witnesses or imagines: his imagination of the process of executing a criminal in the gas chamber, his private game of travestying, his attendance at the parade. The main function of those spectacles is the paradoxical offering of glimpses at meaningfulness beyond the void in Earl's life, and the orchestration of the deferral of meaning through the motif of the mask (acting as if) which inheres in the carnivalesque quality of those 'spectacles'. Part of the parodic, subversive tendency of the confessional mode in Earl's diary is materialized in the fact that the playfulness of the mask erodes the conventional notion of depth through the game of displacement: the imagined "spectacle" of execution is a perverse satisfaction of Earl's murderous impulse; the created spectacle of travestying is an absurd solution to his suffering from Bianca's tyranny (he becomes Bianca). The playfulness of the spectacle and its paradoxical revelation through masking generate a mirroring of the pseudo-confessional narrative itself with its implementation of "interchangeability" between revelation and masking. The on-going process of displacement takes the form of Earl's shifting sense of meaningful secrecy (whether he is going to have a promotion, whether his marriage would be saved, whether he would commit a crime, if his crime would be discovered and his identity revealed). When his writing itself and the text of the diary begin to incarnate such secrecy (Earl hides from Bianca in order to write and hides the text of the diary) and so secrecy

becomes an artefact orchestrated by the writing character, Connell's narrative reinforces its game of substituting depth by displacement.

Earl's acquaintance with the future victim of his rape (Mara St John) that takes place in the context of the parade on Washington's birthday, is not only a turning point in the character's moral being; it also brings together the play of masking in its both dimensions: the literal (the parade) and the figurative (Earl's perverse comment on Mara's dancing as immoral). When Earl re-interprets later the same scene as an invitation of Mara's own victimization ("the slim invitation"[137]), the perversity that informs the narrative point of view grounds the mask of pathetic self-excuse in the game of displacement. The quality of Earl's interpretation as a masking (since it comes when his obsession with rape gets intense) doubles the carnivalesque quality of the parade scene by displacing the meaningful masking that the reader would decipher. It is significant that within the same section, Earl records his experience of private travestying. It is an experience through which Earl allows his distorted judgement induced by his own moral perversity to have an apparent, physical parallel. The irony of Earl's attempt to establish a harmonious continuity between the inner and the apparent sides of his perverse self lies in the fact that such harmony is still relegated to the private realm (no one sees Earl playing the travesty). In addition, the confessional mode of Earl's diary subverts the authority of the conventional ethical dimension of confessional self-narration since the perverse harmony that Earl tries to create between his moral and physical sides does not imply any avowal of guilt. Here one may notice that the perversion of the moral orientation of the confessional narrative through the functioning of a postmodern aesthetics of surface is further consolidated in *The Diary of a Rapist* by the parodic echoing of Sartre's *La Nausée* (1938). The hesitation of the Sartrian diarist between an identification with a victim of rape and a confusion of his own identity with that of the rapist[46] provides to Earl's diary a backgrounded model of the transgressive game[47] through which the perversion of the ethical orientation of the confessional mode reinforces the narrative's (that is Sartre's) parodic reshaping of the diary novel. The ironic echo of Sartre's novel in *The Dairy of a Rapist* amplifies that transgressive game by highlighting the carnivalesque quality of its metafictional import.

In *Mother Night*, the theme of theatricality, repeatedly hinted at in the description of Campbell's double identity as a Nazi propagandist and counter-spy, besides his initial profession as playwright, frames the critical functioning of the carnivalesque through out the narrative. Howard Campbell is first approached by the American agent who recruited him as counter-spy through the trope of theatrical performance (25, 27). As Campbell himself explains it, the machinery of espionage is attracted to his "ability to create a show"(27); he is aware that the elements of playfulness and masking (acting "as if") induce an overlapping between such machinery and the theatre. Also, Campbell first conceived of spying in terms of a successful hiding of his honest self, before he discovered that the machinery of espionage made impossible "the honest me I hid so deep inside"(27); it is this easy and terrifying sliding from secrecy to absence (non-existence) that Campbell ultimately became aware of. The trope of hide-and-seek game that Campbell uses to describe his condition after the war is ironically echoed in the thematized rupture between authorial intention and the receiver's interpretation. The playfulness of masking that enacts the carnivalesque dimension of the novel is not only reinvented in those two thematic axes, but it is also implemented in the narrative strategy of Campbell's confession, since Campbell does not exploit the retrospective nature of his narration to unveil the discrepancy between appearance and reality, but reproduces the same misleading course of such events as the reappearance of Helga, the coincidence that made him acquainted with Kraft, etc.

Actually, the basis of an implicit but powerful overlapping between the espionage machinery and the theme of literary writing in *Mother Night* is related to their common tendency to present the "hidden" as an artefact that can be invented and erased. Besides, both realms encompass the prospect of absence; not secrecy. However, when artistic creativity is informed by the impulse of resisting absence or disappearance, the spying machinery operates in an unproblematical orchestration of both terms. Therefore, Howard Campbell and his double, Kraft, the Russian spy, strive to leave in their respective arts (writing and painting) the traces that would resist the artifice of post-war politics (34). The thematized affinity and contrast between literary composition and the "plotting" in espionage foregrounds a new,

aestheticist orientation of the carnivalesque dimension, since what Vonnegut's novel ultimately emphasizes is its metafictional pondering on the poetics of the novel genre. Such a metafictional orientation accounts for the fact that the "staging" and "masking" mechanisms of the carnivalesque structure assume, in Campbell's confessional narrative, the shape of a sustained pointing to the "enigmaticity" generated by the gaps between the aesthetic and the ethical; between discourse and intention. Campbell's own trope of the purgatory (used to refer to his condition when he is neither free nor imprisoned) may apply to the whole narrative as meaningfulness is neither fixed nor absent.

Conclusion

The re-thinking of depth and secrecy in (pseudo)-confessional postmodern narratives within a critical examination of the nature of literary meaning allows for a renewed questioning of the desired forms of interaction between aesthetics and ethics, and between the playfulness of the artifice of fiction and its "serious" thematic concerns. The "pseudo" quality of the confessional mode in Connell's and Vonnegut's novels may lead us to deduce that the sceptical, self-critical spirit of postmodern fiction allows for meaningfulness only within the *subversive* re-creation of the aesthetic form and ethical ground of confessional narrativity. The reliance of the postmodern poetics on such subversion may account for the fact that its "suspensive" irony maintains under erasure the conventional notions of depth and secrecy.

Notes

[1] Jean Jacques Rousseau, *The Confessions*, translated by J. M. Cohen (London and New York: Penguin Classics, 1953), Book Three, p.116. Though the English translation of Rousseau's "Le parti que j'ai pris d'écrire et de me cacher…" ("Les Confessions", *Oeuvres Complètes* 1, Paris: Pléiade, 1959, livre III p.116) does not emphasize the idea of hiding ("The role I have chosen of writing and remaining in the background"), I based my reading on the idea of "hiding" in the original, in particular as explained by John Starobinsky in *Jean-Jacques Rousseau. La transparence et l'obstacle* (Paris: Gallimard, 1971), pp. 152-3.

[2] See Jean Starobinsky, 152, 153.

[3] Susan M. Levin, *The Romantic Art of Confession. De Quincey, Musset, Sand, Lamb, Hogg, Frémy, Soulié, Janin*. Her main argument revolves around the peculiar features of the Romantic prose

works entitled confessions, in opposition to other, autobiographical narratives of the same period and produced by the same writers.

[4] *Ibid*., p.11.

[5]Alan Wilde, *Horizons of Assent. Modernism, Postmodernism and the ironic Imagination* (Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1981), p.44, and 131-132. What is radical about the postmodern uncertainty about meaning (p.131), according to Wilde, is its tendency to shatter the modernist desire to restore in artistic order or in the assumed depth of the self a "lost wholeness". Wilde perceives in "absolute" or "suspensive irony" the expression of this attitude: "confronted with the world's randomness […] it [postmodernism] enacts that attitude of suspensiveness which […] implies a fundamental uncertainty about the meanings and relations of things in the world…" (132).

[6] David P. Terry, "Once Blind, Now Seeing: Problematics of Confessional Performance." *Text and Performance Quarterly* 26, n°3 (July 2006), p.213.

[7] Philip Lopate, "Introduction", in *The Art of the Personal Essay. An Anthology from the Classical Era to the Present* (New York: Anchor Books, 1995), p. xxiv. Cited by David P. Terry, "Once Blind…" *Ibid*., p.213.

[8] See Jean-Pièrre Carron, *Écriture et Identité. Pour une poétique de l'autobiographie* (Bruxelles: Ousia Editions, 2002), pp. 29-30 ; and Susan M. Levin, *The Romantic Art of Confession*, ibid., p.6 and 24.

[9] *The Nature of Narrative* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966, 2006), p. 79, p. 153, p.107 respectively.

[10] What Scholes and Kellogg deduce is the hesitation of the confessional form between the psychological, mimetic portrayal and the sociological, illustrative dimension (84-85, 91-107). The ethical instability is a significant outcome of such hesitation that the present paper aims at exploring from the angle of its impact on the aesthetics of the pseudo -confessional narrative in Postmodern fiction.

[11]Thomas Pavel, *La pensée du roman* (Paris: Gallimard, 2003), pp. 139- 206.

[12] Pavel, *ibid*., p. 146.

[13] Cf. Pavel, *ibid*., pp. 150-155.

[14] See Pavel, *ibid*., pp.146-7.

[15] Gibson's exploration of the Levinasian theory of ethics in *Postmodernity, Ethics and the Novel* (Florence, KY: Routledge, 1999) is based on an insightful critique of traditional ethical criticism for "it ignored all the various problematizations of narrative and narrative form-problematizations that have precisely been postmodernist, that could not have emerged without the modern novel..."(11). Hence, Gibson's description of postmodernity as the "condition in which we arrive at […]a more and more developed awareness of moralities as myriad, groundless, incommensurable and interminable" (14) has an immediate bearing on his approach to narrative ethics. Arguing that the formal distinctions between modes of narrative are far from being "merely formalist" (26), he insists that "in a context of an ethics for which ethical and epistemological questions are inseparable, distinctions between modes of narration are also the crucial ethical distinctions." (26)

[16] Gibson, *ibid*., p.16.

[17] The non-cognitive nature of the ethical relation is central to the Levinasian ethics, see Gibson, pp. 25-50 and Emmanuel Levinas, *Entre nous: on thinking of-the-other*, trans. B. Smith and B. Harshav (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998).

[18] *Narrativity. Theory and Practice* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), pp. 81- 89.

[19] *Transparent Minds. Narrative Modes for Presenting Consciousness in Fiction* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1978), p.151.

[20] Sturgess, *Narrativity*, *ibid*., p.89.

[21] Maurice Blanchot, in his comment on the process and implication of verisimilitude, described this novelistic convention as the basis of an enigmaticity inherent in the novel genre: the mechanisms of verisimilitude generate an impression of "*mirroring*" out of what the novelistic discourse actually *creates* ("L'énigme du roman" 215). Part of the critique of verisimilitude in the postmodern novel relies on its self-conscious and ironical foregrounding of the interchangeability of the two terms.

[22]"Once Blind Now Seeing", ibid., p.210.

[23] Paul McCormick, "Claims of Stable Identity and (Un)reliability in Dissonant Narration", *Poetics Today* 30, n°2 (Summer 2009), p.319.

[24] Dorrit Cohn, *Transparent Minds*, ibid., p. 208.

[25] Mikhail M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, translated by C. Emerson and M. Holquist (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1981), p.123, 124. While Bakhtin mentions eavesdropping among the narrative methods (besides the criminal trial and eye-witness) that channel the revelation of private life by giving it a plausible basis, I am using the same word in its metaphorical meaning in relation to the same issue as it assumes a different but equally polemical shape in the modernist stream-of-consciousness novel. In a variation on the image of eavesdropping, Milan Kundera describes the stream-of-consciousness method as a process similar to placing a microphone inside the character's head.

[26] Cf. Belinda Cannone, *Narration de la vie intérieure* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2001), p.22 and 58.

[27] Cf. Paul Ricoeur, *Temps et récit II* (Paris : Seuil, 1984), p. 22.

[28] Cf. Jean- Pièrre Carron, *Écriture et identité*, *ibid*., p.31.

[29] Of course the considerable differences between the Modernist novels in the intensity or scope of their metafictional critique is not to be ignored or minimized. The generalized statement I am making above would be quite relevant to such diary novels as Sartre's *nausea*, but probably not to Saul Bellow's *Dangling Man*.

[30] Gerald Prince advocated the category of the "disnarrated" to describe the forms of disjuncture between literary representation and the world represented: the disnarrated "covers all the events that do not happen though they could have and are nonetheless referred to (in a negative or hypothetical mode) by the narrative text." "The Disnarrated", in *Narrative as Theme: Studies in French Fiction* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992), p. 30.

[31] Evan S. Connell, *The Diary of a Rapist* (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1966). Subsequent references to this edition will be noted parenthetically in the text.

[32] Kurt Vonnegut Jr., *Mother Night* (1966) (St. Albans: Priad/Panther Books, 1979). Further references to this edition will be noted parenthetically in the text.

[33] *Énigmaticité de la littérature* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1993), pp.14- 15.

[34] *Horizon of Assent*, ibid., pp.108-110.

[35] Cf. Alan Wilde, *Horizons of Assent*, ibid., p.108, 109, 121: in the Late Modernist literature of the thirties, the attention to surface is part of an interest in the reliability of perception, of the visible.

[36] Cf. Alan Wilde, *Horizons of Assent*, *ibid*., p. 101.

[37] *Le récit spéculaire* (Paris: Seuil, 1977), p.33.

[38] «The Stange Institution Called Literature. An Interview with Jacques Derrida», in *Acts of Literature*, Derek Attridge, ed. (London & New York: Routledge, 1992), pp. 44-5: "Literarity is not a natural essence… it is the correlative of an intentional relation to the text […] There is therefore a literary functioning and a literary intentionality, an experience rather than an essence of literature."

[39] A crossing that is dramatized in Campbell's vacillation between the perspective of the convicted war criminal or the spy and that of the playwright who looks back at his spy experience through the lens of literary rhetoric.
[40] "Word, Dialogue, and Novel", in *Desire in Language,* translated by Thomas Gora, A. Jardine, and L. S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), pp.78-79.
[41] Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, p. 79.
[42] Brian McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction* (London and New York: Routledge, 1987), p.174.
[43] "Word, Dialogue, and Novel", *ibid*., p.65, p.80.
[44] McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, *ibid*., p.172.
[45] See Stuart Hall's "For Allon White: Metaphors of Transformation", pp.6-7.
[46] See Jean-Paul Sartre, *La Nausée* (Paris : Gallimard, 1938), 144-147.
[47] Here the transgression of the boundary between self and other, which fits into a postmodern ethics of affective responsiveness to the other, is in fact problematized by the confusion of the ethical plane on which victim is usually distinguished from aggressor. Connell's novel brings the polemical nature of the whole ethical issue to the surface.

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