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## Rape, Crypt and Fantasm: Kleist's *Marquise of O....*

THOMAS DUTOIT

**T**he term "trauma" denotes a physical and/or psychical "wound." As wound, a trauma implies that a violent event has punctured the body and/or mind. Indeed, through its Indo-European etymology, the word "trauma" has connotations of "piercing." Yet, as Freud discovered through his studies of neuroses and dreams, what constitutes the traumatic event is less the violent nature of the puncture and more the fact that the psychic apparatus was not ready to understand the nature of the "piercing." The violence that "hits" the subject is beyond his/her understanding, and the poignancy of the trauma consists in the way that the perforation is internalized. In their psychoanalytic research, Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok have developed the notion of the "crypt" as the name for the place of this violence that hits a subject without being understood and admitted by him/her. In their writings, the "crypt" is the correlative of "incorporation"—as opposed to "introjection"—and the basis for a new theory of fantasy and fantasms.

Kleist's novella, the *Marquise of O....* (1808), explicitly deals with a traumatic event and its "cryptic" implications. In this story about a woman who finds herself pregnant without knowing how or by whom, the action begins when a war breaks out in Northern Italy, and the castle of the Marquise's father is surrounded by enemy forces and eventually overwhelmed and invaded by Russian troops. The bombs, fire and troops drive the women and children deeper into the castle interior, until the Marquise, alone with enemy marksmen, is molested. Most often, impregnation is assumed to occur immediately after this scene when one Russian officer—the Count, Graf F...—violently



disperses the assaulting soldiers, and escorts her to a still safe "wing of the palace." At precisely this place in the story, the Marquise is said to have "sunk down fully consciousness." In the next sentence, a dash punctuates the text: "Here — he took [*Hier — traf er*], since soon thereupon her horrified women appeared, measures for calling a doctor" (11). Although idiomatically the German for "to take measures" is present (*Anstalten treffen*), syntactically that meaning is deferred by the opening of the sentence. The infinitive *treffen* originally means "to strike," in the sense of hitting or meeting one's target in battle. "*Hier — traf er*" implies that it is within the dash that Graf F... sexually "struck" or "met" the Marquise: "here — he took." By means of the punctuating dash, Kleist represents—by not "representing"—the poignancy of a traumatic rape.

Yet while the implication is that the Marquise received Graf F... sexually, other men are also implicated in her impregnation, and as we will see, the Marquise's impregnation has an ambiguous status in the text: when and where conception occurred is never clear. Throughout the remaining action of the novella—which consists in family rejections and re-acceptances of the pregnant Marquise, in verifications of her pregnancy by both a doctor and midwife, in Graf F... 's "courting" her, in the Marquise's placing a want-ad in order to discover the father, to find "a father no matter what the cost" (92) and in Graf F... 's marrying her not once but twice—the event of the impregnation of the Marquise is unexplained, inexplicable, almost unbelievable by the characters within the story. Dashes recur throughout the text, repeating the "original" dash of "Here — he took," and a proliferation of dashes correlates stylistically with the problems of trauma, paternity and fantasy.

The first characteristic of the Marquise's traumatic impregnation—its inexplicability or incredibility—links both the event and the novella to the genre of the fantastic. According to Tzvetan Todorov, the fantastic consists in the reaction of hesitation and disbelief to something that, based on the fact that there is a reaction, must really have happened, but which can neither be believed nor disbelieved (31). The second characteristic of the Marquise's trauma links the issue of impregnation to fortification. As Deborah Esch observes, "impregnation" could be thought of as stemming etymologically from the late Latin *impraegnare*, "to carry before birth," and also as connoting

"impregnable," from the Old French *im* (not) and *prenable* (takable) (144).

The central event in the *Marquise of O....* therefore links pregnancy to preservation, fortification and the construction of a crypt. Through the issue of impregnation, the *Marquise of O....* establishes a relationship between the fantastic and the secret crypt. In order to analyze the status and the implications of the trauma of impregnation in Kleist's novella, I will focus on the following issues: 1) how the traumatic event, the fantastic and the symptomatic fantasies are related; 2) the constitution of the cryptic space within the story and its characteristics; 3) the function of the punctuating dash as the trace, on the stylistic level, of the constitution of the cryptic space. In approaching Kleist's story in this way, I hope to further the suggestion by John H. Smith that Kleist's text partakes in the construction of what later came to be identified under the generic term "fantastic" (213), just as I wish to add a specific example to Petra Perry's general observation that "the *fantastic* situation is fundamental for Kleist's work" (91). The *Marquise of O....* is especially concerned with the chiasmi between the improbable and the true, with the fact that "truth may not always be on the side of veracity" (*Amphitryon* 1: 694; see also *Michael Kohlhaas* 2: 96; "Improbable Veracities" 2: 278).

**H**esitation to believe what one reads or sees is central to the *Marquise of O....* When the Marquise's father reads in the newspaper that the man who claims to have made his daughter pregnant wants to meet her, "the Colonel read the paper three times, as if he did not trust his own eyes" (74). His wife remarks that it is specifically his eyes that make the father hesitate to believe: "such a Thomas!...such a doubting Thomas" (85). Just as the biblical Thomas needed to finger the hole in Jesus's side, so the father resorts to touch: "busy with his fingers over the mouth of his daughter" (91).

Belief is also suspended by the undecided question of whether Graf F... really died or not, just as for the Marquise herself the fact of her pregnancy is associated with a suspension of certainty. In addition, a number of stock figures of fantasy make their appearance: ghosts, spirits, etc. As I wish to argue, however, the fantastic in the text is not merely a suspension of



belief relative to an enigmatic event (the absent impregnation), as Smith and Perry have it. Nor is the fantastic limited to being a mere convention found in that genre called the "novella," as Dorrit Cohn contends (140). My thesis is that the fantastic is rather an effect of the place of a secret crypt in the text.

Pointing in this direction, Günther Blöcker has observed that "[t]he grammatically quite unmotivated dash after the 'Here' comprises, *cryptically*, the whole story" (240). Cohn calls this dash "the generating matrix of the entire plot," indeed a "pregnant graphic sign" (129). Curtis C. Bentzel reiterates the cryptic status of the text, noting "the *cryptic* quality of the Count's vision" of the swan (300). What neither he nor Linda Dietrick mention, however, is that the "cryptic quality" of the way Graf F... confuses the image of the Marquise with that of a swan stems from a textual cryptogram: *Schwan* (swan) is part of the secret, unpronounced word in the text, namely *Schwan-ger* (pregnant). Fantasy is linguistically cryptic.

While the term "fantastic" is used by Todorov to characterize a 19th-century genre, he also observes that the themes of fantasy "have become, literally, the very themes of the psychological investigations of the last fifty years" (162). Significantly, this situation is suggested by Freud himself at the beginning of his analysis of the case of the "Wolf Man": "Many details...seemed to me myself to be so extraordinary and unbelievable that I feel some *hesitation* in asking others to believe them" (17: 12). Freud's hesitation thus reflects the same suspension of belief that Todorov sees as the defining feature of the fantastic.

That the Wolf Man was the case on which Abraham and Torok based their notion of the crypt indicates, in turn, an intersection between the crypt and the fantastic. The Wolf Man had been witness to and participant in a traumatic seduction scene. Abraham and Torok, and Jacques Derrida, posit that this pre-verbal traumatic scene would have been "en-crypted" with all its libidinal forces. A crypt is first of all a closed, sealed place, fortified in such a way as to preserve remains and memories. Furthermore, to this idea of closure, the concept of the crypt also adds the notion of an inclusion which is by definition inaccessible and secret. According to Derrida, the crypt defines the topos which allows an event to "take place secretly, or take a secret place, in order to keep itself *safe* somewhere in a self"

(*Fors* 68). The crypt is a figure for how something can be interiorized yet inaccessible.

In Kleist's novella, the Marquise has been impregnated, yet the impregnation itself remains a secret to her. The impregnation constructs a space within her and within Kleist's novella, a space whose properties are those of the crypt, indeed a secret crypt. She herself compares her womb to a sepulchre: "graves will be fructified, and out of the womb of the cadavers a birth will develop!" (48). The fact that she situates the fructifiable womb in the grave of the dead gives us occasion to recall that Derrida calls the *Cryptonomie* "pregnant": "pregnant, one might say, with an elaboration both in process and to come" (*Fors* 77). Also, of course, for the Marquise, the "origin" of the child in her womb is "full of the secret" (62). The narrator describes the Marquise as having a "form full of the secret" (66). In addition, the Marquise insists that her family assist as witnesses at the scheduled meeting with the person who will appear as the father, "in that she did not want to have to share any species of the *secret* with this person" (92-93). A *topos* such as the crypt for the secret results from the traumatic scene of the "taking of the fortress" (9), a scene that itself encloses the "seduction" scene between Graf F... and the Marquise. Moreover, this *topos* results from the loss and death of Graf F... that comes right after this scene.

Even though the word "crypt" does not appear explicitly in the *Marquise of O...*, closed, guarded and locked spaces abound. The family lives in a fort, a castle or *Schloß* which in German is homonymous with the word "lock"; the Marquise herself is said to live in "cloistered seclusion," and she is herself an inaccessible space insofar as her father prohibits her from taking a man after the death of her first husband. The Marquise's impregnation—i.e., the constitution and inclusion, inside her body, of a closed space—can thus be seen as emblematic of the constitution of a space of closure.

It is indeed by and through secrecy that the cryptic space created by the Marquise's impregnation is constituted. It remains a point of contention whether the identity of the father is ever established. Curtis C. Bentzel has remarked that criticism has neatly separated between one camp which sees Graf F... as the father and another camp which feels that the identity of the father is left ambiguous (296). As Bentzel and Heinz Politzer



note, one ironic possibility is Leopardo the Hunter, for on the day upon which the "real" father is supposed to meet with the Marquise, it is Leopardo who enters at the appointed hour. Prior to this entrance, her mother had lied to her daughter, telling her that Leopardo had avowed that he was the father, that he had a "secret" that she might try "to unlock from him" (82). The Marquise believes the story, responding that indeed once she was sleeping on a divan and she awoke to see Leopardo walking away. Since the mother thereupon confesses her lie, Leopardo's would-be secret turns out to have been the mother's fake secret. The secret of the mother, of the mother's strategy, is that she in fact had no secret. The Marquise's impregnation thus remains an untold secret, both because Leopardo's secret is never told (indeed, it does not exist but in fiction) and because the text never identifies who was the cause of insemination (as Dietrick discerns, 318). The topos defined by the impregnation takes place secretly; it occupies a place whose secret will be kept. The "real" father, as well as the origin of patriarchal order, is never revealed but instead is the product of a series of texts, of documents.

Moreover, the secrecy that surrounds the Marquise's impregnation, i.e., the secrecy that characterizes the cryptic space, is reinforced by the absence of witnesses. The narrative makes sure that no one will bear testimony to the scene: during the bombing of the castle, the Marquise's mother and women servants are separated from the Marquise and her children; the Marquise is then separated from her children; the soldiers who assault—if not rape, it not being clear how far they go—the Marquise are executed thereafter without trial. Besides Graf F... who appears during that assault, the only witness is the victim, the Marquise. At the same time, she is ruled out as witness since, under their most shameful mishandling, she nearly collapses: "she just wanted to" (or "was just about to," the German modal verb is *wollte*) "sink to the ground." At stake here is how the text limits her status as witness: the Marquise's "scream for help," her being "speechless from all these rows," that she subsequently "sank down completely unconscious" (11), and the narrator's euphemistic expression about "most shameful mishandling," mark the limits of what can be presented, experienced and said. The secrecy of the cryptic space is reinforced by the lack of witnesses. The real impact of the

violence cannot be presented or told. It can only be detected in its effect, i.e., the constitution of the cryptic space.

The cryptic space of the Marquise's pregnancy is not only the closed space of a secret but it is also a space built through violence. As Erika Swales has argued, sealed and guarded spaces such as the castle, the secluded residence of the Marquise, and the widowed, forbidden to re-marry Marquise are repeatedly trespassed and violated (144). The bombarded family castle is invaded. The invading troops are bent on violating the Marquise. Dragged to the back courtyard, she screams for help "in vain." The Marquise as "booty" (*Raub*) and the soldiers "lusting after" (*lüstern*) her, obviously suggest rape—the violation and impregnation of the Marquise as closed, impregnable space. The Marquise's impregnation is thus the result of violence, even if none of the soldiers is the father. As Derrida notes, the crypt is not only a "secret place" but it is moreover an effect of violence, of a traumatic scene: "we have to know that the crypt itself is *built* by violence. In one or several blows" (*Fors* 68).

Other scenes of trespassing—violation of the Marquise's space—repeat the original scenes of violence. The Marquise's cloister-like retreat is repeatedly transgressed. Although her retreat is guarded by a porter who is supposed to keep everyone away since "Frau Marquise would speak to no human being" (65), Graf F... nevertheless manages to sneak in. Likewise, when her mother, Frau von G..., comes to her door, the porter tells her that no one may enter. Yet she also bypasses him.

In fact, many of Kleist's texts foreground forced entries into various enclosures. The most famous instance occurs in "On the Marionette Theatre": "Paradise is *locked and bolted* [*verriegelt*] and the *Cherub* is *behind* [*hinter*] us. We must make the trip around the world, to see if it is perhaps somewhere again *open* [*offen*] from *behind*" (2: 342). These images of the locked door and of the Cherub also appear, word for word, in the *Marquise of O...* (94, 74). The rear entrance also recurs. While having her pregnant womb embraced by Graf F..., who has just sneaked into her garden, the Marquise asks: "from where was it possible—?" (66). Lexically, her question refers to his entrance into her garden: how did he get in when she had instructed her doorman to let no one pass the door? Deictically, it refers to the gesture of his arm around her "dear body": how is this pregnant womb possible, given the lack of inseminating agent?



Just as Herr C. in "On the Marionette Theater" posited an entrance to paradise from behind, so Graf F... answers the Marquise's question by positing an open rear entrance: "through a *back door* [*hintere Pforte*] which I found *open*" (67). Moreover, just as the Marquise's question can be understood in two ways (penetration of the garden, penetration of herself), Graf F... 's answer is also a *double entendre*. For this image of rear penetration is also an image of insemination. Indeed, the Marquise's pregnancy is described as a "trick" played on her from behind: "even still she resisted entering into whatever relation with the person who had deceived her [*hintergangen hatte*]" (62). Although the common sense of *hintergehen* is "to deceive," "to trick," the literal sense involving an entrance from behind (*hinter-gehen*) echoes the "back door" of Graf F... 's answer. In Kleist's oeuvre, what is locked, such as the castle, the fort, the garden, or the Marquise herself, is trespassed and accessed by a back door.

As Derrida's exposition of Abraham and Torok's concept of the crypt shows, the crypt, built on the violence of a trauma, is furthermore the result of the loss of a libidinally invested object. There are, for the subject, two ways of dealing with such loss. Introjection, "normal" mourning, is "to love the dead as a living part of me, dead *save in me*" (Fors 71). The dead one is accepted as dead, except in the mourner, where he/she continues to live on, in and by memory. According to Sandor Ferenczi, "all object-love" is "an enlargement of the Self" (qtd. in Fors 70). For Abraham and Torok, introjection is opposed to incorporation, the latter occurring at the failure of the former: "When the process of introjection is thwarted, contradiction sets in"; incorporation "intervenes at the limits of introjection itself, when introjection, for any reason, fails" (qtd. in Fors 71). If introjection is the "normal" way of processing the loss of an object or person, incorporation is a failed mourning and leads to the creation, within the self, of a secret crypt.

Indeed, in the process of incorporation, the real loss of the object is denied, but the desire for the object is maintained. The Self takes in the loss while at the same time denying the object's absence. Hence, in incorporation, that which is taken in (the fact of loss) is also excluded, maintained to be impossible. In such a manner, according to Derrida, a crypt is built: "cryptic incorporation always marks an effect of impossible or refused

mourning" (Fors 78). As "vault of desire," "what the crypt commemorates, as the incorporated object's 'monument' or 'tomb', is not the object itself, but its exclusion, the exclusion of a specific desire from the introjection process" (Fors 72). By this double gesture, there is both penetration and expulsion. The consequence is that what penetrates is sequestered to an even more interior space. Such would be the effect of a crypt: an inaccessible inside which itself is inside (and therefore outside) the inside. The paradox—that something has been both included and excluded, lost and not lost—results in a number of contradictions. The dead will live.

In the *Marquise of O...*, the constitution of the crypt involves a process of loss. Upon her recovery from her faint in the scene where Graf F... saves her from the sharpshooters (substituting one rape for another, if not adding one to others), the Marquise had no other wish than "to be allowed to stand up in order to testify to her thankfulness to him who saved her" (13-14). This testimony is never completed, for Graf F... leaves her father's castle and his departure thus means that the Marquise loses him before she can thank him. Furthermore, news is then brought of Graf F... 's death, and thus the Marquise loses him a second time. Upon hearing of his death, she is "inconsolable" (18), mourns and, quickly thereafter, forgets him. To analyze the Marquise's loss of Graf F... in terms of the processes of introjection and incorporation sheds light on the constitution of the cryptic space of impregnation: the crypt is not constituted merely by the violence of the trauma (the rape) but also through the violence of a loss that has not been successfully mourned but is instead incorporated. Kleist's text inscribes two kinds of trauma through which the crypt is built: a) the assault(s), rape(s) or "seduction" scene(s); b) the death of Graf F... who had saved the Marquise's life.

When the Marquise hears of Graf F... 's death, she is inconsolable because his death means she had definitively missed the occasion "to throw herself at his feet" (18). Because he dies, the "thanks" of which she wished to give him "testimony" (13) becomes impossible to deliver and remains unsaid. She is beset with an unpayable debt, in the same sense of the term which her father expresses: "how much he... was indebted [*schuldig*] to the



Russians in general and in particular to the young Graf F..." (15). *Schuld* has here the sense of "debt." Yet, when the Marquise blames herself for not having sought him out and thanked him, her debt becomes her guilt (the other sense of the German term *Schuld*). His death renders her "inconsolable" and she cannot forget him for many moons. Instead of a successful mourning through introjection, however, what seems to have happened is incorporation. She in fact "was able to forget him" (18); the memory of her failure to attest to her indebtedness seems magically absolved in her forgetting of him after his death.

Further textual precisions about the operations of her memory point toward a failure to mourn (to remember) and the constitution of the crypt through incorporation. When she hears that among the last words to pass Graf F...'s lips was her name—"Julietta! This bullet avenges you!"—she pities "the unfortunate one, her *name*-sister, of whom he had still thought in death" (18). She seeks vainly to find out where this woman who bears her name is located. The status of her memory is therefore peculiar: she remembers *his name* and *her debt*. In fact, it is she who first mentions his appellation: "she already knew that he was...Graf F..., Commanding Lieutenant" (13-14). Despite the fact that she can remember *his name*, her memory nonetheless fails to identify herself behind *her name*. She can neither remember her own name nor recall the presumed rape which led Graf F..., in his dying words, specifically to call her by name. She is thus able to remember Graf F...'s name while also able to forget him. Furthermore, she is unable to identify herself in her own name and to remember the situation to which his dying words refer. It is at this level of her non-identification with her name that she can consistently maintain her "innocence"—*Unschuld*, literally "non-guilt" or "non-debt" (57, 60). Just as Freud notes that the prefix "un" of the "uncanny" is the "mark of repression" (12: 259), her "non-guilt" records and represses her debt.

Incorporated in the crypt, the event of her impregnation is immemorial. Yet her memory oddly retains the place of that event. Martin Ziegler notes that Kleist's oeuvre employs a number of devices such as ellipses to create "*l'indétermination des lieux*" (12). The working of the Marquise's memory performs this indeterminacy of place. Her memory of his name retains his place in the military—"Lieu-tenant"—yet does not permit her to know whence her pregnancy came. The cryptic operation of

her memory consists in the fact that the word crypt, as Derrida puts it "will not have taken place [*lieu*] as such. Its proper place [*lieu*] is the other's.... A crypt puts into question: places [*les lieux*]" (Fors 65, 67). In lieu of the memory of the place is the memory of the "lieutenant."

The *Marquise of O....* has thus constructed the event of impregnation as a cryptic space built through violence and incorporation, the space of a sealed and inaccessible secret. Just as at the level of the plot the event of impregnation is constructed as a secret space, inaccessible to memory, so at the level of the narrative the *Marquise of O....* fails to narrate this event and leaves it implicit in the dash sign of "Here — he took." The impregnation is never described in the text; it is neither remembered by the Marquise nor narrated in the novella. It is neither inscribed in her memory nor written in the text. Although never narrated, however, the encrypted impregnation seems to be "present," on the textual level, in the form of a punctuating dash: the impregnation is incised in the text *via* the dash, a punctuation sign which, following Karl Kraus, can be seen as the horizontal tracing (*Strich*) that "strikes" thought, as the German word for "dash," *Gedanken-strich*, indicates (430).

Examples of dashes can be found on many pages of Kleist's text: in the absence of the inseminating agent there is thus a dissemination of traces. Just as Politzer has noted that the reader cannot trust in any consistent use of colons in Kleist's text, there is no single function of the dash. Sometimes the dashes occupy the place of what is to be suppressed. At other times they serve the purpose of punctuation in the grammatical sense. Sometimes they serve no function other than purely to puncture the text.

In general, punctuation is in opposition to the rest of a text. Unlike letters, punctuation does not build figures. It marks pauses and establishes rhythm. Yet it is not simply an empty space. If a text is comparable to a knitted textile, punctuation is something like the holes made by the needle: what is knitted is not generally studied for the holes but instead for its figural pattern. Yet the punctures constitute the knitted textile. The appropriateness of this analogy for Kleist's novella can be seen from Axel Laurs's linking the Marquise's knitting to the motif



of weaving in Kleist's "Foundling," where the daughter of a fabric merchant busies herself during mourning with weaving. In terms of psychology, Laurs sees the Marquise's knitting as her "way of keeping the emotional world at bay" (183). Beyond that, "knitting" conducts the fundamental textual thread, a triple-twilled thread of witnessing, fructifying and suppressing.

Although in their English translations Greenberg and Luke & Reeves supply the term "knitting" for the German *Strickzeug* (61), they elide the crucial word "equipment" (*Zeug*). *Strickzeug* is "knitting equipment." By implication, Laurs's view of the "knitting equipment" echoes Heidegger's notion of equipment such as "writing equipment" or "sewing equipment" as instruments for "defraying concerns" (68). Just as Kleist's German for "knitting equipment" is *Strickzeug*, Heidegger's German for writing and sewing equipment is *Schreibzeug* and *Nähzeug*. Moreover, common to both Kleist and Heidegger is not only the term *Zeug* for "equipment" but also the theme of witnessing.

In his analysis of "witnessing" (*Bezeugung*) and "testimony" (*Zeugnis*), however, Heidegger never links them back to his earlier notion of "equipment" (*Zeug*). In contrast, at the textual level of Kleist's *Marquise of O....*, the knitting equipment operates by joining an early motif of failed "witnessing"—*bezeugen*, *Zeuge* (13, 14, 49, 57)—to a subsequent motif of "conviction": *über-zeugen*, *Über-zeugung* (67, 79, 83). Moreover, and significantly at the textual level of the stem *zeug*, the knitting equipment occurs in the same sentence as does the idea for discovering the father (62). The "knitting equipment" is therefore the tool with which a reading of the story as a cryptogamy, i.e., as a cryptic fructification, could be woven, for three reasons. First, the stem *zeug* from *Strickzeug* also evokes *zeugen*, which in German does mean "to inseminate," "to fructify" (*Duden* 829). Second, we already saw that it is the cryptic space of tomb as womb which can be "fructified"—*befruchtet* (46). Third, *Strickzeug* could also be translated as "tool for catching" the father, as implied by the German *Strick*. Parallel to how the Marquise lets slip her knitting equipment at the thought of placing the newspaper want-ad for the father, the dash in "Here — he took" is the textual pen slipping. The tool for knitting also points to how the initial dash problematizes holes, punctures and punctuation in the text and in memory.

As holes in the representation, the relation of punctuation signs to the text echoes what Roland Barthes has described as the relation between the *punctum* and the *studium*. In "The Deaths of Roland Barthes" Derrida explores this relation further. The *punctum* is that which punctures the *studium*, "for *punctum* is also: sting, speck, cut, little hole" (265). The Latin *punctum* designates a puncture in representation. To Derrida, it is "a point of singularity which punctures the surface of the reproduction—and even the production—of analogies, likenesses and code" (264). Furthermore, to Barthes, the puncture in and of forms is also an interruption in time: "*l'emphase déchirante du noème ('ça-a-été')*, *sa représentation pure*" (148). Like Barthes's *punctum*, Kleist's dashes are the sign that something happened, was there. As a pure representation, insofar as they are without form or content, such dashes are the mark that something happened.

The dash of "Here — he took" is the master stroke in the text. This dash is a trace, or tracing, that both alludes to and occludes the act of insemination. The presence of the dash thus reinforces the notion that the unnarrated event took place. At the same time, however, the dash does not represent anything. As a form of *puncturing punctuation*, the trace of the dash records a presence yet does not represent: it suggests that something happened, that an event or an encounter took place but it does not narrate it. The dash is thus also the sign of an impossibility to recuperate and narrate an event, the sign of the presence of an immemorial, un-narratable secret. At the narrative level, the dash is thus the trace of the constitution of the cryptic space.

This non-narrated and non-remembered event nonetheless produces repetitive symptoms. Once "encrypted," the traumatic scene repeats itself in the form of deferred effects. If the *Marquise of O....* revolves around an event (impregnation) which never appears in the text and that cannot be remembered, it is nevertheless made present in the temporality of its deferred effects, that is, through the repetition and return of affects without memory. Such deferred effects concern not only the different symptoms experienced by the Marquise but also the status of Graf F... in the text after his death. Although Graf F... is described as "mortally shot through the breast" and as "deceased" (17), he nevertheless reappears. The German for deceased is *verblichen*, from *verbleichen*, which means "ashen-pale."



Instead of following Joachim Pfeiffer's view that the description suggests "the supposed death of the Count" (236), I will argue that when the Count comes back, "pale [*bleich*] in the face" (22), it is as a ghost, as a *revenant*—"risen up from the dead," as Politzer puts it (117).

Graf F... 's apparition as ghost, moreover, is unique among the other fantastical figures. Whereas it is only the Marquise who sees angels, devils and spirits, her parents as well as the Marquise see Graf F... as ghost (*Geist*). In fact it is they who call him such for the first time (23). My point is that we need to analyze such phenomena as deferred effects of the process of incorporation that has "encrypted" the impregnation. Such a reading will allow for a re-elaboration of what fantasy, the fantastic and the fantasmatic, might be in this text. For "incorporation is of the order of the fantasm," according to Derrida; incorporation is "fantasmatic, immediate, instantaneous, magic, sometimes hallucinatory" (*Fors* 73, 71).

Although not in memory, the event of the impregnation remains unforgettable, since its effects persist. When things seem to come back to normal and when the "old order of things" seems to have returned, the Marquise is suddenly afflicted by "repeated indispositions" (19). The symptoms that she identifies as those of pregnancy are troubling because she has no memory of their cause, i.e., the impregnation. The symptoms are the signs that the "event" of which she has no memory nevertheless persists in its effects. When she discusses this situation with her mother, her father interrupts them and "because the Marquise in a few days recovered, the whole situation was forgotten" (20). The German syntax directly juxtaposes "recovered" and "forgotten" (*wiederholte, vergessen*); by contiguity the syntax links "repeating" (*wiederholen*) and "forgetting." The term *wieder erholen* (to recover) is by no means to be confused with *wiederholen* (to repeat). Nonetheless, repeating and forgetting are linked because *wieder erholte* (recovered) is a punlike metathesis for *wiederholte* (repeated). In fact, the *wieder erholte* placed immediately before *vergessen* (forgotten) echoes precisely the *wiederholte Unpäßlichkeiten* or "repeated indispositions" that are the very subject of their interrupted conversation. Although the impregnation cannot be remembered, its effects take the form of a morning sickness which manifests itself as repetition and of the kind that links repetition and forgetting.

Furthermore, while the source is originally clearly identified as pregnancy, the symptom then continues to come back in a form that is much less clear. It is an internal, dark feeling (53) which repeats the repeated indispositions associated with the pregnancy. The Marquise repeatedly experiences "nausea, dizziness, fainting spells" (19). The symptoms return, not as memories but as insanity and madness, associated by the mother with betrayal and deception. As she tells the Marquise: "If your memory is so certain about the *past*, then what kind of an insanity of fear seizes you? Can not then an *inward feeling*, which indeed makes itself felt only darkly, betray?" (52). What to the mother seems to be pure delusion—because without apparent cause—"does not deceive" her daughter. She insists that the feeling truly exists, in its horror and destructiveness (53). It manifests itself as "trembling limbs," "burning face," "flowing tears" and "convulsive movements." Even Graf F..., when he comes back after his death, observes that "she is queasy [*unpäßlich*]" (21). Although in colloquial German the word simply means a nausea caused by indigestion (or by morning sickness), *unpäßlich* literally means "not passable," "unpassable." Just as she had searched for the woman bearing the same name whom Graf F... had called at his death, so does the Marquise search her "memory" in vain to find in her past the cause of her symptoms. The symptoms testify that the "something" that has not been digested cannot be remembered.

Indispositions, trembling limbs, tears, convulsions and nausea are thus traces of the real: the Marquise is pregnant, and does give birth. At the same time, these physical reactions are traces of the subject's oblivion of a secret insemination, traces of a secret indigestible, the gestation of an irreducible. Such traces are deferred signs of the persistence of a trauma that, as we have seen, has been incorporated but not "digested" and is therefore not remembered.

Besides seeing the feelings as symptoms, there is another set of textual events that can also be considered as deferred and symptomatic effects of the persistence of cryptic insemination: fantasies, visions, ghosts and spirits. The link between the symptoms and fantasies is established when the Marquise and her mother first discuss the initial symptom, the fact that she has felt a sensation akin to that which she had when pregnant with her second daughter; now they both imagine the infant to be fantastic



and fabulous. The mother calls this infant "Phantasus" (which Luke and Reeves translate as "the god of Fantasy" 74; Ziegler notes, "*peut-être 'fantasme'*" 33n2). The Marquise's response is to say that "Morpheus... would be his father" (20). Although her pregnancy is real and she does give birth to a child, the Marquise's first inclination is to associate the unborn infant with—and indeed to give it—the proper name for fantasy.

Besides the fantasy of bearing an infant named Phantasus, fathered by the god of fantasy Morpheus, the Marquise is also haunted by the return of Graf F.... Despite the fact that there has been an eye witness to his fatal wound, that his dying words have been reported, and that the news of his death is "certain," Graf F... comes back. He even confirms these reports of his death, to the others' "horror" (20) and "amazement." At the same time that he confirms his mortal wound, however, he denies that he is (any longer) dead, even giving assurance that he is alive: "The Count, to the allegations of the parents that he was indeed dead, had assured them that he lived" (21). Graf F... 's return is, then, fantastic: is he dead and/or alive? is his return real or is it a fantasy? Nothing in the text indicates that he was not dead. The text does not deny that he died: he comes back in the narrative as pale as a ghost from the grave but also: "like a young god, a bit pallid in the face" (22). The mother explicitly states: "in fact, we will believe that you are a ghost until you will have disclosed how you arose out of the grave in which you were laid in P..." (23). All that the Marquise wants to know from him is "how *he* arose into life" (21, Kleist's italics).

Graf F... 's ghostly appearance has an oddly parental origin, for his coming back from the grave links him with fantastic insemination in Kleist's allegory about Phantasus, Morpheus, widows, and mysterious conception. In Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Phantasos is the brother of Morpheus, both dream-gods and sons of Sleep. Following Iris's instructions, Sleep selects Morpheus to appear to the widow Alcyone as the ghost of her husband "Ceyx": he is to take the "face and form of Ceyx," but with the "pallor a dead man has" (279). It is, however, not in the form of the Marquise's dead husband that Graf F... returns, but instead as a cryptogram of Ovid's Ceyx. In a sort of reverse antonomasia (where instead of a common noun giving a proper name, a proper name gives a mode of action), the unperceived "sex" in

"Here — he took" homophonically allegorizes into the figure of Ceyx. Also, Ceyx's wife, Alcyone, who was transformed into the halcyon bird, is the figure of mysterious, innocent conception. As Gary Shapiro has shown, in Greek and Latin thought halcyon days are the time of pregnancy, and why the halcyon bird should both nest and hatch its eggs at sea remains an utter enigma. Nietzsche named himself the Halcyon in order to explain how *he* was pregnant, a pregnancy brought out of death.

Not only is the Marquise haunted by Graf F... 's ghost but she is also inhabited by "spirits" who calm "themselves a bit" (99) when she receives the marriage contract signed by Graf F.... These spirits are responsible for turning the Marquise into a snake-haired goddess of vengeance, when Graf F... returns to assume fatherhood: "a fury looked not more horribly" (97). When her mother tries to visit the Marquise in her cloister-like retreat, she is told that "the Marquise speaks with no one on earth" (78). That she does not speak with any person of this world suggests that she might speak with otherworldly persons, that is, with what falls under the category of "ghosts" or "spirits."

These textual phenomena, phantoms or fantasies, are not mere generic elements but are determined by the nature of incorporation. As the secret advent of the event, incorporation is the very origin of fantasy, the fantasm, and the phantom. Moreover, the event that has not been inscribed by the subject can recur only in the form of repetitions; it cannot recur as a *remembrance*. The Marquise's ghosts and her fantasies join in the logic of her repetitive symptoms. They constitute the ghost-effect of the encrypted impregnation.

Ghosts and fantasies, along with symptoms of illness, recur as the deferred trace of the encrypted event. Obeying that same logic, the trace of the process of encrypting—the dash—comes back throughout the text. Its recurrence produces the effect of a haunting presence. As punctuation, the dashes are most purely representative of the irrecuperable event advent in the *Marquise of O....* The dash, moreover, comes back most insistently when Graf F... is "present," whether as topic of discussion or in "person" (as ghost). Its repetitions testify to the return of the "first" dash, which is also the first encounter between the Marquise and Graf F.... The recurrent dashes thereby function analogously to the modes of Graf F... 's return as ghost or *revenant*, and as one who "returns" (*wiederkehrt*) before his



"appointed time" (*Zeitpunkt*) (61). As puncture and punctuation, the frequent return of the dash in Kleist's text is a kind of ghost, a *revenant* that operates as a reminder of the dash of "Here — he took." The ghost-effect of the recurring dashes-as-punctuation also links them to "poignancy" or *punctum*: "Ghosts: the concept of the other in the same, the *punctum* in the *studium*, the dead other alive in me" (Derrida, "Deaths" 267).

Kleist's text tells how an event disorders the mind and leaves it unable to grasp and narrate it. His story suggests that there is an irrecoverable gap between the fact *that* something happened and the description of *what* happened. Trauma is seen to consist in the gap between the incision of an event and language's attempt to recuperate the event's advent. On the one hand, the mind fails to represent what it has suffered; on the other, the mind insists on repeating what irretrievably took place. Encrypted in the psychoanalytic sense, this "event" manifests itself through effects: repetitive symptoms, fantasies and ghost-effects. Ghosts, spirits and fantasies are the diegetic effects of cryptic incorporation (but not the contents of the crypt). Punctuating and puncturing dashes that return with ghostly insistence are its textual effects. Kleist's tale of an encrypted pregnancy, paralleled by a dead body in the apparition of Graf F..., correlates with cryptonymy, or the psychoanalytic reading of the incorporation of a foreign body in the Self, an incorporation paralleled by a *ghost effect*, "a corpse buried in the other" (*Fors* 91).

## NOTE

- 1/ Translations are mine and are based on the recent Berlin edition by Roland Reuss and Peter Staengle. What motivates my practice is that the Berlin edition most respects Kleist's punctuation, whereas the English translations by Martin Greenberg and by David Luke and Nigel Reeves often eliminate many of the punctuation signs (dashes especially). In his analysis of the function of graphic signs in Kleist's writing, Dirk Grathoff stresses that readers must pay attention to "hebraic script, asterisks, dashes and whatever else Kleist confronts us with" (208). Similarly, Anselm Haverkamp and Barbara Vinken observe that the first printing of the *Marquise von O....* "is characterized by an uncommon attention to the graphic" (1). In quotations all italics are mine, unless indicated otherwise. Aside from ellipses in titles and proper names, all ellipses in quotations are also mine. Translations from secondary sources have occasionally been modified for the sake of precision.

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