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The Postmodern Treatment of Myth in the Writings of Michel Tournier

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Michel Tournier defines his supreme mission of a writer to be the creation of a
mythology which allows for interaction with his readers, who seem to be losing their
critical faculties in our contemporary, postmodern world dominated by consumption. Our
contemporary society has changed due to the end of the modern era with its reigning
ideologies. Collapsing after the atrocities of the Second World War, Modernity and the
artistic and literary reactions referred to as modernism, have likewise been transformed.
Myth continues to represent the collectivity of human existence, yet, in the short stories
and the novels of Michel Tournier, myth represents the collapse of over-reaching
ideologies inherent to the Modern era. The grand narratives of Modernity such as
Christianity and Man's reason have been deconstructed in the postmodern era. The
mythology of Michel Tournier expresses these trends towards the dissolution of
modernity and creates individual, mini narratives which emphasize the particularity of
individual existence.

Tournier takes established mythical models rooted in Christianity, fables and
legends of Western Civilization and re-contextualizes them. Through a semiotic
reworking of core binary pairs of a myth, Tournier creates a third order level of
representation which modifies the mythical model. The works of *le Roi des Aulnes, Gilles
et Jeanne,* and *Vendredi* are illustrious of this third order level of signification.
According to Ferdinand de Saussure, Roland Barthes and Claude Lévi-Strauss, the
structural make-up of myth transforms established meanings according to the dominant

cultural code. Barthes' semiological study of myth reveals the levels of representation through which myth creates meaning. Myth builds upon the denotative first-order level of language and through a connotative process, creates a second-order level. This connotative process does not end on this second-order, for in the writings of Tournier, this semiological process is continued to a third-order which re-contextualizes the myth again. Tournier adapts myth to the unique traits of the postmodern era including deconstruction and playfulness by allowing the reader to provide the context of the story. As such we, the reader, take the place as author of our own individual mythology.

This dissertation by Melissa Barchi Panek fulfills the dissertation requirement for the doctoral degree in Philosophy approved by Dr. Jean-Michel Heimonet, as Director, and by Dr. Peter Shoemaker, and Dr. Nadia Harris as Readers.

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Dr. Nadia Harris, Reader

For my father, all the TP's in my life and Madeleine.

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Preface

This dissertation is the product of a lifelong reflection on the power of literature to not only represent, but to affect the reality that surrounds us. I would like to thank Dr. Jean-Michel Heimonet whose keen intellect and profound understanding of literature and philosophy compelled me to finish this study. I would also like to extend gratitude to Dr. Nadia Harris who inspired my creativity and encouraged me to continue writing.

INTRODUCTION

To say that Michel Tournier is a writer for whom myth plays an integral role has been duly noted by many of the foremost critics of Tournier including Arlette Bouloumié, David Platten, David Gascoigne and William Cloonan. Arlette Bouloumié emphasizes the revelatory characteristic of myth, that is to say myth's capacity to voice the societal trends in which it functions, as she states: "L'oeuvre de Michel Tournier tire son originalité et sa profondeur de l'actualisation de grands mythes oubliés. La fonction du mythe, cette "histoire fondamentale", (VP, 188), écrit-il, est d'éclairer les secrètes et confuses aspirations de l'homme."[1] Her extensive collection of works offers a profound study of myth in the works of Tournier. Yet this perspective needs to be widened in order to accommodate and account for the radical social changes that have transformed our society into one which not only follows modernity, but breaks from it, leading us into the postmodern. In the works of Michel Tournier, myth is re-structured and adapted to our postmodern world. The study that follows will examine the influence exerted by post modernity on the mythical components of his novels and short stories.

In the most general sense, to speak of the postmodern evokes the contemporary era overrun with technological advancements and simulation. Our contemporary society is dominated by consumption. The tremendous influence exerted on life by television and the internet collectively contributes to a critical dormancy of the individual. That is to say, in the postmodern era, man's critical faculties are repressed, favored for a more complacent attitude of consuming rather than producing. Here enters Tournier who uses

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[1] Arlette Bouloumié. *Michel Tournier: Le Roman Mythologique* (Paris: J. Corti, 1988), 5.

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myth as a medium to not only represent this existence, but to stimulate our psyche through the literary process.

Indeed, Tournier realizes the highest aspirations of the literary process: the representation of a reality. As such, through the examination of the mythical restructuring performed by Tournier, one may understand his works to constitute a discourse. That is to say that his works create a unique depiction of reality. After all, myth and discourse are indissociable as confirmed by Barthes who states: "Puisque le mythe est une parole, tout peut être mythe, qui est justiciable d'un discours."[2] It is through this perspective which emphasizes the narrative traits of this discourse, that we may ascertain the differences between the postmodern and the modern. Accordingly, we may then confer upon a text the characterization of modern or postmodern.

The distinction between the modern and the postmodern is highly contested amongst many social and literary critics today. It is possible to emphasize the postmodern traits of Tournier's transformation of myth due to his tendency to deconstruct and then semantically reconstruct the key components of the mythical model. Indeed, Tournier's consistent unraveling and pursuant reconstruction of myth may be qualified as postmodern due to the fact that he achieves a playful undermining of established modern ideological predecessors.

As a result of these mythological alterations, we, the reader, emerge from the literary process profoundly altered. We no longer view reality or society in the same way. Tournier's works inspire and call to us to be creatively engaged with ourselves and

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[2] Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* (Paris: Editions de Seuil, 1957),181.

with the changing world around us. Instead of consuming the image of the individual as represented through the various technological mediums of our era, we instead turn inward and then project our own uniquely individual conception of reality.

Therefore, throughout the course of this study I will emphasize the postmodern characteristics of Tournier's treatment of myth, the playful and deconstructionist propensities of his texts. I do not intend to blankly brand his narrative structural re-workings as postmodern, implying that Tournier's works correspond to a distinct set of criteria which allow for them to be labeled as postmodern. Such a formulaic classification would imply that there exists a certain technique inherent to the postmodern. Such an approach would ironically be a modern all-encompassing and utilitarian trait, which is fiercely resisted by the postmodern. Rather, through the close textual studies of his radical mythological transformations, I attempt to reveal the attributes of his works which reflect the enormous societal transformations which mark the passage from the modern to the postmodern.

If we accept the postmodern as beginning at the moment when the ultimate meta-narrative of man's reason collapses as exemplified by the atrocities of the Second World War, then we may emphasize the elements of Tournier's works which express the deconstruction of the modernist ideals. Robinson Crusoe's failure to master the island in his *Vendredi ou les limbes du Pacifique*, Veronica's inability to offer an image of man's salvation in the short story *les Suaires de Véronique*, Abel Tiffauge's complicity in the atrocities of the Second World War in the novel *le Roi des Aulnes*, cumulatively attest to the failure of the totalizing, linear meta-narratives rooted in the Enlightenment. As such,

we may aptly speak of the postmodern traits of Tournier's reworking of myth.

His works attest to the postmodern discourse which espouses the impossibility of creating such a universal meta-narrative. Rather, his narratives emphasize the relativity, the individuality of existence and of the capacity of discourse to stimulate the critique of itself through the use of mini-narratives which are inextricably linked to the individual experiences of collective life.

Myth's capacity to represent the historical roots of a society fulfills several functions, the most important of which is its ability to enlighten our understanding of our own contemporary reality. The universal nature of myth grounded in its profoundly archetypal characteristics, allows for its appeal to the psychic makeup of man. Above all, we must understand myth to be a discourse, a system which functions according to very specific traits as elaborated by Claude Lévi-Strauss and Roland Barthes. This structural understanding of myth, indeed its semiological makeup, is the starting point of this study which emphasizes that there exist very specific correlations between the structural makeup of his texts and the reality they convey: the postmodern.

The deconstruction, playfulness and semiotic unraveling characteristic of the postmodern which attest to the demise of all-encompassing modern ideologies, take place on a newly supplemented level of signification by Tournier. Tournier takes established mythical models rooted in Christianity, fables and legends of Western Civilization and re-contextualizes them. This restructuring takes places on a highly semiological level, that is to say that Tournier plays with established meanings of myth. He contributes new meanings which radically alter the universal truth of the myth and in fact allow for a

more individualized interpretation. As such, his works demarcate the passage into the postmodern which emphasizes mini-narratives, the discourse of the individual rather than the universal truths of the modern era.

The first chapter of this study, "Into the Shadows: the Third Order of Myth," explores in depth not only the dangers of this level of representation as proclaimed by Plato, but the specificity of the narratives. Through the close examination of Tournier's inversion of several core binary pairs, or opposing relationships, such as good/evil which are at the heart of any myth, we will ascertain the distinct semantic traits which attest to and account for the transformation of established myth.   We will follow Tournier's structural re-workings from the denotative or first order level, to the second order connotative level and then onwards into the third order level plagued by so many mimetic problems as feared by Plato. It is in this third order that Tournier plays with and deconstructs established mythical meanings through a process of transgression and simulation. The works of *le Roi des Aulnes*, *Tupik*, *Gilles et Jean* will be examined in such a way as to peel back the narrative layers and reveal the realization of Tournier's supreme mission which is to create new mythologies authored by the readers of his works.

The second chapter, "The Transgressive Self of the Shadows," constitutes a case study of one particularly powerful myth: Robinson Crusoe. This chapter emphasizes the transgressive nature, that is to say the novel's capacity to break the boundaries imposed by the modern version of Robinson Crusoe, and to emphasize its highly postmodern nature. Tournier's ability to re-contextualize the eternal myth of Robinson Crusoe in such

a way as to eliminate its capacity to refer to a concrete historical referent is suggestive of

the postmodern as well. Whereas Defoe's Robinson Crusoe espouses the enlightened

ideals of modernity, Tournier's deconstructed Crusoe attests to the failure of reason

indicative of the postmodern. This textualization of the myth of Crusoe, its inability to

refer to a concrete historical referent, results from playfulness on behalf of Tournier with

regards to the narrative elements of the novel. The perverted sexuality, the

heterogeneous nature of Robinson Crusoe are accentuated in such a way as to give voice

to the inner dynamism of each individual of which the sacred, as understood by Bataille,

speaks.

   This notion of the sacred, key to Tournier's transgression of established

boundaries will be studied within and outside of the margins of established Christianity in

Chapter 3 entitled: "The Demise of the Sacred." Above all, this chapter explores

Tournier's faith as represented, intentionally and unintentionally, in several of his works

including *Gaspard, Melchior et Balthazaar* and *les Suaires de Véronique*. Nietzsche's

proclamation that "God is dead" announces postmodern tendencies towards the

dissolution of the ideological narrative of Christianity and this deconstruction will be

explored in great detail in hopes to reveal the transformation of religion in the

postmodern era. George Bataille's theories of the sacred prove to be essential for it is

Bataille who expresses the essence of man's need for God, which is ironically suppressed

and stifled by Orthodox Christianity. The narratives of Christological discourses are

radically perverted, that is to say redefined outside the established norms, in Tournier's

works and offer a new vision of religion that is creationist in that it affirms the

individual's capacity to create.

Through a dialectical process in the spirit of the hermeneutic and phenomenological theories of Gadamar and Schleiermacher, the imagination of the reader is engaged which proves to be a remedy to the dangers of the postmodern era. Tournier's emphasis on the immanence, the daily experience of our life, rather than the transcendence falsely promised by modern ideologies, is postmodern in that it attests to an individualization of the meta-narrative of Christianity. The very act of scripting our own discourse in the face of these altered, third order level mythical models, constitutes the quest for the sacred and the rebirth of the individual's critical and imaginative faculties which is above all, Tournier's greatest use and accomplishment of myth.

The final chapter, "The Power of Symbolism: The Salvation of the Self" emphasizes the highly symbolic makeup of Tournier's narrative reworkings which account for his text's ability to stimulate the reader's psychic processes. In particular, the novel *le Roi des Aulnes'* unique symbolic structure exemplifies a postmodern text in that it re-contextualizes and creates a multiplicity of meanings. Structured around the symbol of the Star of David, the novel speaks of the precarious position of the Jew as Other and represents the deciding moment in history in the passing from the modern to the postmodern: the Holocaust. The Holocaust, as attested by Jean-Francois Lyotard, represents the moment in time in which man's reason fails and in fact turns into a machine of irrationality and murder. Voicing this horrific historicity, the journey of Abel Tiffauges is one in which we participate in a highly symbolic and thus imaginative way. Passing along through Nazi Germany, riding with this *porteur d'enfants* on his horse

Blue Beard in his murderous rapture of young boys, we, the stagnant readers, actively

engage in a literary process which ultimately reveals our common complicity.

Through its universality, its incarnation of the elements of the cosmos, the Star of

David represents on a macrocosmic as well as a microcosmic level and as such is

representative of the dark forces which dwell in each one of us. Voicing this

heterogeneity of man, our ability and penchant to transgress established sexual, religious

and moral norms, are realized through the symbolic reworking of myth by Tournier. Yet

Tiffauge's journey does not end in his demise, nor does this study end with the demise of

the individual of the postmodern. Rather, it offers an optimistic, yet cautious, vision of

the individual in today's technologically hyper-advanced society. The simulation, the

massification at work around us represent a great danger to our critical faculties yet

Tournier's works attest to the power of the literary process which engenders an active

participation on the part of the reader. As transformative, inciting, stimulating and

transgressive, Tournier's use of myth gains an even greater relevance and force in our

postmodern society.

Chapter One: Into the Shadows: The Third Order of Myth

> "for, to write well, a good poet, so they say, must know his subject; otherwise he could not write about it. We must ask whether these people have not been deluded by meeting with artists who can represent appearances, and in contemplating the poets' work have failed to see that it is at the third remove from reality, nothing more than semblances, easy to produce with no knowledge of the truth. Or is there something in what they say? Have the good poets a real mastery of the matters on which the public thinks they discourse so well?"[1] Plato

Myth and Man

In his *Le Vent Paraclet*, Michel Tournier defines the "mission suprême d'un romancier"[2] as creating in his writings a mythology that allows for interaction with his readers, who seem to be losing their critical faculties in our contemporary, postmodern world. Tournier views mythology as the means through which he can re-awaken the dormant individual and ultimately allow his readers to participate in the creation of their own myth: "Il devrait y avoir une mythologie, une autre mythologie, féconde et profonde, qui me permette à la fois de trouver le contact du public parce qu'elle l'enrichirait en le faisant rire, trembler et pleurer, en changeant sa façon de sentir, de voir et de penser, au lieu de l'exploiter en lui vendant de la lessive et du shampooing."[3] Tournier's literary aspirations rely on myth as a medium through which social consciousness can be aroused.

Due to the unique composition of myth which is grounded in the collective existence of man, Tournier's re-writings of myth voice the profound changes that have

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[1] Plato, *The Republic of Plato*, trans. Francis MacDonald Cornford (London: Oxford University Press, 1945), 327.
[2] Michel Tournier, *Le Vent Paraclet* (Paris: Gallimard, 1977), 83.
[3] Ibid, 178.

transpired in our contemporary settings. The structural makeup of myth is described by

Ferdinand de Saussure, Roland Barthes and Claude Lévi-Strauss, for whom myth has a

unique capacity to transform established meanings according to the dominant cultural

code. As such, Barthes' semiological study of myth reveals levels of representation

through which myth creates meaning. To summarize his ideas, myth acts on already

established signs, or first order denotative systems. The connotative mythical level takes

this denotative signifier and uses it as the initial signified of a second order level of

representation that widens the plane of expression according to the particularities of the

culture within which it functions.   Yet myth does not solely exist on this second order

level. Through supplementing a new context, Tournier attributes to this structure a third

order level of representation. Just as the second order level re-contextualizes the first-

order level, this third order level continues the signifying process into a second

connotative order. Through this signifiying process, myth emerges profoundly altered

and its mimetic capacity, that is to say its ability to represent the societal movements at

its core, is transformed as well. There results a problematic of representation which may

best be addressed through the lens of Plato's theories of the third order contained in

Chapter XXXV of Part V of Book X entitled: "How representation in art is related to

truth" where he warns against the dangers of imitation at three times removed from the

original form. I clearly do not intend to classify Plato as a writer of the postmodern,

rather to extract from his philosophies the highly relevant discussion of the writer's

ability to convey a reality which is a core tension of the postmodern era.

In the chapter that follows, the notion of myth will be explored in depth in its

many facets: myth as a societal and psychological phenomenon, myth as a discourse

similar to language which functions as a meta-language through self-analysis and myth as

a semiotic signifying series of three levels as developed by Lévi-Strauss, Roland Barthes

and Plato. Finally, the distinctive trait of this third order level, which is the importance of

the context provided by the reader, will be developed and continued in the second

chapter. Indeed, this supplemental level of representation is not only provided by

Tournier, but by the psyche of the reader within which the modified myth takes root and

is transformed on an individual basis. As a result, we may speak of a decentering which

challenges the modern concept of author and allows for a postmodern interpretation of

the myth through the creation of individual mythical discourses created by the readers of

the narratives of Tournier.

Tournier in his writing grapples with this link between man and myth. His

narratives verbalize this dialectic, this exchange between the reader and the text, by

introducing previously established mythical characters in new, contemporary contexts

such as Abel Tiffauges, the Ogre in the Second World War. The relevance of Tournier's

fictions lies in his ability to render universal myths historical and pertinent to a

contemporary audience through creating a singular narrative containing mythical

qualities which is the story of an individual rather than a collectivity. Living in a

postmodern milieu, we, the readers, can identify with the specificity of the narrative

which has been tuned to the dynamics of our society.

The Universal Nature of Myth

The universality of myth has long been recognized. Lévi-Strauss argues that:

"Certains prétendent que chaque société exprime, dans ses mythes, des sentiments fondamentaux tels que l'amour, la haine ou la vengeance, qui sont communs à l'humanité tout entière."[4] Thus, according to Strauss, myth is a fictitious narrative composed of archetypes. The concept of the archetype is developed on by Carl Jung who defines them as "preexistent instinctual models or patterns of behavior."[5] Myth, according to Strauss, reconciles the irreconcilable, explains the inexplicable and offers to humanity validation of its existence and comfort in its plight. The function of myth in this sense is very similar to that of a dream, be it an unconscious dream or a conscious dream for its very makeup grapples with the unknown and in turn offers an explanation. Both are symbolic messages which need to be deciphered in order to understand their meaning.

The mentioning of the unconscious brings us right to the question at hand, for is it the unconscious of an individual or the unconscious of all people that is represented in myth? Many theories have been developed, notably by Carl Jung, Lévi-Strauss, Freud and Nietzsche, which emphasize the inextricable link between the unconscious of the individual and the existence of a larger more "collective unconscious" which is shared by all individuals. Carl Jung argues for the existence of a collective unconscious shared by all people which has its roots in the primitive psyche of man which has been suppressed through years of evolution. Myth, according to Jung, is a "mass dream of the people."[6] For it is his theory that Man in his primitive state was ruled by basic instincts belonging to the unconscious. Through evolution and the creation of a modern civilization, man's

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[4] Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Anthropologie Structurale* (Paris: Pocket, 1985), 207.
[5] Carl Jung, *Collected Works of Carl Jung*, Vol. 4 (Princeton: Princeton University Press,1970), 302.
[6] Carl Jung, *Psychology of the Unconscious: A Study of the Transformations and Symbolisms of the Libido* (New York: Yard and Company, 1916), 29.

psyche was molded by the new social constructs which led to the suppression of these more primitive instincts or archetypes. As a result, this psychic, pre-historic material became the makeup of the unconscious, and resurfaces during dreams. Through dream, man can revisit the past. Nietzsche was more than aware of this as he states:

> In our sleep and in our dreams, we pass through the whole of earlier humanity…The dream carries us back into earlier states of human culture, and affords us a means of understanding it better… To a certain extent the dream is a restorative for the brain, which during the day is called upon to meet the severe demands for trained thought, made by the conditions of a higher civilization. [7]

The parallel between myth and dream relates the makeup of myth and the psychology of man to each other. Dream and myth function as a cathartic medium that allows man to grapple with the unknown or the inexpressible by creating a symbolic narrative whose meaning lies masked.

Myth as Fable

This perspective places myth in the realm of the fable, or a fictitious narrative which narrates a series of events providing cause and explanation for the inexplicable. Many of the images found in fables and common folklore belong to the realm of dream or the unconscious, for they are symbols which need to be deciphered as well. Dreams result from the persistent voice of the unconscious, from the fragment of his psyche which is rooted in man's genesis. Jung in his *Complete Works* develops the theories relating this function of dream to myth. He credits Abraham and his work *Dreams and Myths* as insisting on the dream component of myth as he states: "the myth is a

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[7] Carl Jung, *Psychology of the Unconscious: a Study of the Transformations and Symbolisms of the Libido*, 28.

sustained, still remaining fragment from the infantile soul-life of the people, and the dream of the myth is the myth of the individual."[8] This citation perfectly summarizes this dialectic between the simultaneously collective and individual nature of myth.

For Abraham, the key to understanding this rapport is through fable and the fantastic for according to his theory, myth is a fable for an adult. Myth is a meta-narrative which offers to the adult an all-encompassing story with the symbolic makeup of the unconscious. Just as the child embraces folklore as truth, adult man embraces myth as truth. One only need refer to the phenomenon of religion, to the meta-narrative of Jesus Christ who offers mankind salvation from evil, the adult form of a child's folk story. As confirmed by Carl Jung:

> One might raise the objection that the mythological inclinations of children are implanted by education. The objection is futile. Has humanity at all ever broken loose from the myths? …Thus one can indeed withhold from a child the substance of earlier myths but not take from him the need for mythology.[9]

Those familiar with Tournier's writings will quickly observe that Tournier is not only a prolific writer of adult fiction but of children's fairytales as well. Tournier himself realizes the intrinsic link between the adult need for myth and children's need for fairytale. His publications for children include many of the same characteristics of his adult works for they too are reworkings of established myth and folklore: *Pierrot ou les Secrets de la Nuit*, *Vendredi ou la vie sauvage,* are versions of narratives that Tournier has re-written for adults namely: *Vendredi ou les limbes du Pacifique* and the several

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[8] Jung, *Psychology of the Unconscious: a Study of the Transformations and Symbolisms of the Libido,* 29.
[9] Ibid.,30.

short stories in *Le Coq de Bruyère*.

Myth: the Voice of the Collective Unconscious

Having drawn a parallel between the unconscious of man and the myths in which

he believes, I now turn to the notion of the collective unconscious which proves to be the

link between myth and man. What better product of the collective voice than that of

literature? Tournier's genius lies in his ability to use literature to express the mythic

components shared by his readers and the members of society. According to Tournier,

man is innately mythological in nature as he states in *Le Vent Paraclet*;

> L'homme ne s'arrache à l'animalité que grâce à la mythologie. L'homme
> n'est qu'un animal mythologique. L'homme ne devient homme,
> n'acquiert un sexe, un cœur et une imagination que grâce aux
> bruissements d'histoires, au kaleidoscope d'images qui entourent le petit
> enfant dès le berceau et l'accompagnent jusqu'au tombeau.[10]

Thus Tournier attributes to myth a diachronic aspect in that the myth he creates or re-

creates, relates directly to his contemporary readers.

A story which offers an explanation to the inexplicable, myth "fournit des

modèles pour la conduite humaine"[11] according to Mircea Eliade. Ironically, the

meaning of the term "myth" is currently in direct opposition to the meaning held so dear

by primitive people. In today's world the word myth implies something that is not true, a

story that albeit entertaining has no validity or historical certitude. Yet to those who

structure their lives around myth, these stories offer the opportunity of re-birth and

express the voices of the Gods and super-beings that create their very existence. Myth,

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[10] Tournier, *Vent*, 179.
[11] Mircea Eliade, *Aspects du mythe* (Paris: Gallimard, 1963),12.

recounted orally, allows man to communicate with these powerful Gods who forged their

very body and soul from the nature that surrounds us. It is an infallible and absolute

Truth worshiped by the members of society.

This communicative aspect of myth is primordial, for myth: "raconte une histoire

sacrée, il relate un événement qui a eu lieu dans le temps primordial, le temps fabuleux

des "commencements"[12]. Myth allows mortal man to communicate with the Gods who

created his very existence. In recounting the myth, man is transported to the genesis of

his world and in doing so he alters the present by allowing the sacred to again influence

his present environment. Therefore, the validity of myth was indisputable for it is

"considéré comme une histoire sacrée, et donc une "histoire vraie", parce qu'il se réfère

toujours à des réalités"[13].

The representation of the reality expressed by myth is achieved through a distinct

structural makeup unique to myth. The section that follows will unravel these layers of

representation and unveil the mechanisms through which they alter the established

mythical meanings as seen in several of Tournier's works including *Tupik*, *Gilles et Jean*,

and *le Roi des Aulnes*. The semiotic approach to the signifying systems of myth as

developed by Roland Barthes and Claude Lévi-Strauss will be essential to the

understanding of the supplemental level of signification by Tournier. The problematic of

representation that results from this transformation of myth, that is to say the capacity of

myth to represent a collectivity, will be grounded in Plato's Republic. Plato's warning of

the dangers of this third order level plagued by questions of mimetic truth, highlight the

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[12] Eliade, *Aspects du Mythe*, 16.
[13] Ibid., 17

plight of these mythical meta-narratives in the postmodern era in which their established meanings are deconstructed. In this light, Jacques Derrida's theories of deconstruction will enlighten our study. Through the various theories on third-order representation we can better understand the signifying systems which transform myth into its ultimately postmodern form whose lack of an established meaning allows the reader to play the privileged role of author himself. The reference to the lack of an author emphasizes the enormous influence the cultural code plays in this connotative process which no longer restricts the established meanings of modern mythical discourse.

The Third-Order of Representation: Plato

Let us begin this discussion of third-order representation at the dawn of Western philosophy with the great Plato who already demonstrates a profound understanding of the mimetic problematic inherent to all forms of artistic representation, including painting, poetry and literature. It is from Plato's extensive dialectical discussion of the levels of representation and of the problems each contain, that we may attempt to understand the effect Tournier's semantic re-structuring exerts upon myth. Myth as a form of representation expressed in this case in literature, is evident by its capacity to convey a reality. Above all, as we have seen, myth voices a story which is believed to be true. However, the historical evolution which has brought us into the postmodern era, has exerted an enormous influence on not only the structural make-up of myth, but on the contents and on the believers of myth as well. In order to fully grasp and understand the unique nature of representation of this third order of myth, it is Plato who many centuries ago, offers a profoundly astout synopsis of the dangers of representation in artistic

mediums, of which myth as a literary form, is included.

Using the example of a bed, Plato argues for the existence of three distinct levels of existence. The first and purest form is that of "a single essential nature or Form for every set of things."[14] This idealistic world is abstract and non-physical in nature. The second level consists of material forms of the true Form. In following the example of the bed, Plato states "the craftsman, when he makes the beds or tables we use or whatever it may be, has before his mind the Form of one or other of these pieces of furniture. The Form itself is, of course, not the work of any craftsman."[15]

This second level is the realm of physical presence in which objects exist attempting to give an "appearance" of the true Form: "My notion is that a painter is a craftsman of that kind. You may say that the things he produces are not real; but there is a sense in which he too does produce a bed."[16] The second level gives way to a third level in which the artist attempts to represent the second level of physical reality. As Plato explains:

> Now shall we make use of this example to throw light on our question as to the true nature of this artist who represents things? We have here three sorts of bed: one which exists in the nature of things and which, I imagine, we could only describe as a product of divine workmanship; another made by a carpenter; and a third by the painter. So the three kinds of bed belong respectively to the domains of these three: painter, carpenter, and god.[17]

The Platonic dialogue emphasizes that this third level is "at the third remove from

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[14] Plato, *Republic*, 327.
[15] Ibid., 325.
[16] Ibid., 326.
[17] Ibid., 327.

the essential nature of the thing."[18] He expands this third level of artistic representation

to include tragic poets as well as painters for: "the tragic poet, too, is an artist who

represents things; so this will apply to him; he and all other artists are, as it were, third in

succession from the throne of truth."[19] Above all, according to Plato this third order is

too far removed from its original form to attain a realistic representation, and as such he

condemns it.

To better understand his placement of artists in this third level, one must

remember the historical events of the time which influenced Plato's dialectic. When

Plato refers to artists and in particular poets, he is referring to the tragic poets and Homer

who authored poems in which morality, human conduct, religion and human nature are

discussed. Plato condemns this genre of poetry to the third order removed from reality,

due to the inability of the author to truly "know his subject." Plato argues that tragic

poets are incapable of representing truth or knowledge and that their artistic

representation is "at third remove from reality, nothing more than semblances, easy to

produce with no knowledge of the truth."[20]

At the heart of the Platonic dialogue in these matters is the end to which artistic

representation lead. His challenging of tragic poetry is in the innate problematic of

representing things which the poet cannot possibly truly understand as he states: "If

Homer had really possessed the knowledge qualifying him to educate people and make

them better men, instead of merely giving us a poetical representation of such matters,

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[18] Plato, *Republic*, 327.
[19] Ibid., 327.
[20] Ibid.,327.

would he not have attracted a host of disciples to love and revere him."[21] The derogatory

tone so subtly evoked by Plato in this quote clearly illustrates his disdain for artistic

representations and illustrates why he banishes poetry from his Ideal state.

Plato emphasizes the weakness of artistic expression for its lack of knowledge of

its subject matter. Be it a painter of a bridle who is ignorant of how to make it in the way

of a craftsmen or the horseman who understands their use, the poet or painter is ignorant

of that which he represents and therefore only represents appearances and not the true

Form of the object. For Plato, the poet is a painter who uses words to represent and in so

doing merely represents the semblance of the object. Plato blatantly condemns artistic

representation for its lack of truth and knowledge and for: "reproducing only what

pleases the taste or wins the approval of the ignorant multitude."[22]

Above all, Tournier's re-writing of myth constitutes an artistic representation that

is at three times removed from the original model, similar to the level of the poet who

uses words to convey a reality. As such, the third order level he supplements, with the

help of the reader, is plagued by questions of viability and of truth. His ability to

represent the Form is put in question by Plato's theories and as such announces a

problematic of representation which is a central theme to the postmodern era. Justly so,

for the postmodern era is above all plagued by questions of the artist's ability to faithfully

represent a reality. Tournier's medium of choice, myth, therefore is a form of artistic

representation as well and we may aptly discern these different levels of representation.

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[21] Plato, *Republic*,327.
[22] Ibid., 328.

The Three Levels and Myth

We can distinguish in myth each of these three levels in the following way. The first level which is the world of intellectual and perfect forms constitutes the world of language defined by Ferdinand de Saussure as: "a system of signs that expresses ideas, and is therefore comparable to a system of writing"[23]. This is the first level denotative order as described by Roland Barthes in which the relationship between the signifier and the signified is arbitrary, meaning there is no direct relation between the signifier and the signified.[24] Barthes defines a denotative statement as: "a first-order statement: a statement that concerns the literal (first-order) meaning of the words that make up that statement."[25]

The second level as described by Plato, in which we reach the world through our senses, is the level of myth precisely because myth deforms language. This level copies and deforms the ideal world referred to as the first order level of language. This is the level in which the true Form of the first level is crafted into the form of a myth. In the case of myth, myth takes the first level object, that of a story of a man or of woman, or of some act done in ordinary life, and attributes to it a mythical quality. As stated by Barthes in his *Mythologies,* myth constitutes a "vol du langage" in that it uses language to attribute new meaning to the very elements of language. Myth, such as the myth of the Minotaur, attributes to the animal of the Minotaur the signifier of sexual strength and prowess. Or in the case of St. Veronica, attributes to the acts of a woman named

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[23] Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, 4.

[24] It may be helpful to review the definitions offered by Saussure of the signifier and the signified. The signifier refers to a meaningful form. The term signified designates the concept which that form evokes.

[25] Roland Barthes, *S/Z* (Paris: Editions de Seuil, 1957), 50.

Veronica the powerful role of the Savior of Man in that she reveals the sacred image of

the face of Christ through her kind act of wiping his face on her veil. In each of these

myths, the simple denotative level of language is rendered more complex through the

addition of a supplemental connotative signified or context. That is to say that myth

takes the act of an ordinary person as a model from which is erected a new context which

attributes to this act a superhuman or mythical quality. This signifying operation is

continued in the writings of Tournier for he promulgates this mythical slippage as

Jacques Derrida refers to it, to a third-order level of representation, in which an additional

signifier is added.

Roland Barthes in his *Mythologies* summarizes the semiotic process through

which myth reaches a third level. As he states:

> A vrai dire, la meilleure arme contre le mythe, c'est peut-être le mythifier
> à son tour, c'est de produire un mythe artificiel…Puisque le mythe vole du
> langage, pourquoi ne pas voler le mythe?   Il suffira pour cela d'en faire
> lui-même le point de départ d'une troisième chaîne sémiologique, de poser
> sa signification comme premier terme d'un second mythe.[26]

Myth is Language

This brings us to the issue at hand: that of unraveling the layers of myth in the

writings of Tournier and of ascertaining the chronological relevance to its contemporary

milieu which is the postmodern world. It is the premise of this study that myth in the

writings of Michel Tournier functions as a language, that is to say a system of signs and

mythemes which recombine the pre-existing mythological components into a new system

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[26] Barthes, *Mythologies*, 209.

which alters the meaning of the myth. As Lévi-Strauss confirms: "myth is language: to be known, myth has to be told; it is a part of human speech. In order to preserve its specificity we must be able to show that it is both the same thing as language, and also something different from it."[27]

Let us begin by showing how myth and language are similar. Considering that both are systems made up of units, be they phonemes or mythemes, what is important is the fact that they are networks of signifying units:

> Myth, like the rest of language, is made up of constituent units. These constituent units presuppose the constituent units present in language when analyzed on other levels- namely phonemes, morphemes and sememes….they belong to a higher and more complex order. For this reason we shall call them *gross constituent units*."[28]

If we want to penetrate this network, one must break down the individual units and identify original meaning, as Lévi-Strauss states: "myth tells the past, the present and the future." Thus myth is paradoxically dependant on its chronological milieu and universal, for one myth can be understood by people from other societies and other times. Myth's ability to represent the passage of time may be understood through Saussure's distinction between synchrony and diachrony. Saussure postulates that language is a system of signs which must be studied as a complete system at any given point in time. The most important part of language is how the components function relative to one another. A synchronic relationship is one where two similar things exist at the same time and form a system. Diachrony is the change in the meaning of words over time through the collective body. Saussure clarifies the meaning of synchrony and diachrony in the

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[27] Lévi-Strauss, *Anthropologie Structurale*, 209
[28] Ibid., 210

following way:

> Synchronic linguistics will be concerned with the logical and
> psychological relations that bind together coexisting terms and form a
> system in the collective mind of speakers.
>
> Diachronic linguistics, on the contrary, will study relations that bind
> together successive terms not perceived by the collective mind but
> substituted for each other without forming a system.[29]

Given that myth is a sign system similar to language, Saussure's theories of diachrony and synchrony are tools which allow us to follow the movement of meaning through time. This new meaning given by the myth echoes the societal characteristics which welded its new form. In the case of Michel Tournier's writings, the postmodern world, with its proliferation of mini-narratives, proves to be the driving force behind the transformation of the myth. It is my intention to examine on a structural level the mythical components of the stories and novels of Tournier in the spirit of Lévi-Strauss. In his "Structural Analysis of Myth", Lévi-Strauss emphasizes the importance of including in ones analysis all the versions of the myth to find common traits and oppositions, as he states: "The true constituent units of a myth are not the isolated relations but *bundles of such relations.*"[30]

This theoretical groundwork provided by Barthes, Plato and Lévi-Strauss will now be applied to a textual reading of several stories of Tournier, including *Tupik, Gilles et Jean* and *le Roi des Aulnes.* It is only through the application of such a semiological approach that we may truly identify the tri-dimensional signifying structure at work in the

[29] Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Lingusitics*, 99-100.
[30] Lévi-Strauss, *Anthropologie Structurale*, 219.

signifying process through which Tournier alters myth.

The Third Order of Abel Tiffauges in *le Roi des Aulnes*

After having defined and developed the concept of third order representation as a connotative signifying system, let us turn to the study of the *parole* of Abel Tiffauges to reveal how it functions precisely on this third level. Abel Tiffauges himself is the product of the inversion of several binary pairs and mythical characters which allow Tournier to recombine mythical meanings and to alter their signification. Through the use of inverting established meanings in a positive or negative way, *inversion bénigne* and *inversion maligne*, Tournier connects these meanings in new ways which create a new connotative discourse, that of Abel Tiffauges, the *porteur d'enfants* of the Jungmannen in WWII. Returning to the mythical models from which he fashioned Tilffauges, a structural study of the mythical reworking will reveal the different levels of this mythical transformation.

Tournier himself speaks of his mythological models St. Christopher and Der Erlkönig in his article *Comment j'ai construit le Roi des Aulnes*:

> Néanmoins, il y a un autre modèle mythologique que j'ai placé au début, et qui est Saint-Christophe. Le Roi des Aulnes serait le modèle noir, et Saint-Christophe le modèle blanc, le bon. Saint-Christophe était un géant qui vivait aupres d'un fleuve tumultueux... Il prenait sur ses épaules les voyageurs et les faisait passer. Et un jour il a fait passer ainsi l'enfant Jésus. Quel rapport y a-t-il me direz-vous entre le Roi des Aulnes et Saint Christophe? En ceci qu'ils sont tous les deux les porteurs d'enfants.[31]

It is through the optic of Roland Barthes' distinction between denotation and connotation, based on the definition of Louis Hjemslev, that we can discern and unravel

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[31] Tournier, "Comment", 88.

the particularities of these orders of representation to see how Tournier recombines the mythical models of which he speaks.

The first order level constitutes the denotative level. At this level, the plane of expression consists of words used to describe the acts of Christopher in carrying the young boy across the river on his shoulders. In order to infer symbolic meaning from this statement, we must move to the second-order connotative level which is precisely the level of myth. As Barthes states in his *Elements of Semiology*: "the first system (ERC) becomes the plane of expression, or signifier, of the second system… the first system is then the plane of denotation and the second system (wider than the first) the plane of connotation. We shall therefore say that a connoted system is a system whose plane of expression is itself constituted by a signifying system." [32]

Semiology is particularly useful to Barthes in his studies of how myth produces meaning. Barthes reminds us in "Myth Today" that the concept of the sign is crucial in this work and that it is involved in a three-part relationship between the signifier (the word or image) and the signified (the cultural concept) which together create the sign. Myth acts on already established signs, or first order denotative systems. The connotative mythical level takes this global sign, or the combination of the denotative signifier and signified, and uses it is as the initial signifier of a second order level of representation which widens the plane of expression according to the cultural code of the time. As Barthes confirms: "myth is a peculiar system, in that it is constructed from a semiological chain which existed before it: it is a second-order semiological system.

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[32] Barthes, *Elements of Semiology*, 28.

That which is a sign (namely the associative total of a concept and an image) in the first system, becomes a mere signifier in the second."[33]

In the case of the construction of the character of Abel Tiffauges, let us begin at the denotative first-order level to define its attributes. The signifier would be the image or the word "Christopher" carrying the young boy on his shoulders. The signified would be: the kind of act of Christopher who carrying the young boy across the river. Together they create the sign: Christopher the strong man who bravely rescues a young boy by carrying him on his shoulders to safety. Thus, at the denotative level, the meaning is restricted and the plane of expression is limited to the literal meaning of the words. This denotative sign, or global sign as Barthes refers to it, becomes the signifier of a second-order connotative level which contributes a culturally influenced universal meaning. In the case of myth, this process is particularly consistent and effective for it is on this second order level that myth functions.

Continuing our example of the acts of Christopher, myth takes the sign and provides the supplemental signified of a brave man who courageously and selflessly carries the weight of the savior of our world, as a young boy, Jesus Christ, across a river. This connotative signified combines with the denotative sign (signifier), to create Saint Christopher: the Savior of Man, for he was the original porteur of the child Jesus-Christ.

Mythology takes the denotative order and turns it into a second order meaning or what Barthes calls signification. Signification refers to the second-order sign of St. Christopher whose meaning was established by culturally transforming a pre-existing

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[33] Barthes, *Mythologies*, 114

meaning established in the first-order level. Myth is a meta-language: a second-order

language which, acting on the existing meaning of the acts of Christopher, generates new

meaning. This meta-language of the connotative level speaks about the first-order level

and concerns itself precisely with this global sign as Barthes states:

> In myth there are two semiological systems, one of which is staggered in
> relation to the other: a linguistic system, the language (or the modes of
> representation which are assimilated to it) which I shall call the language-
> object, because it is the language which myth gets hold of in order to build
> its own system: and myth itself, which I shall call metalanguage, because
> it is a second language, in which one speaks about the first.[34]

Having established the first-order denotative level which creates the global sign

from which is established the connotative second-order level of the myth of St.

Christopher, we now turn to the writings of Tournier which use this global sign as the

initial signifier of yet another level of representation: the third order.

This "troisième chaîne sémiologique" as Barthes names it, continues the

signifying process into a second connotative order which continues the promulgation of

meaning in myth. We now enter into the literary domain of *le Roi des Aulnes* created

through techniques such as *inversion bénigne* and *maligne* by Michel Tournier. Through

recombining the pre-existing elements of the mythical models of St. Christopher and the

poem Der Erlkönig, Tournier takes the established connotative sign of the second-order

and transforms it into the signifier of a third order level of signification. He supplies a

new signified, one that perverts and alters the established global sign and connotative

sign of myth. The connotative sign of St. Christopher, savior of man and original *porteur*

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[34] Barthes, *Mythologies*, 115.

d'enfants, becomes the starting point of this third order. Tournier ascribes a new signified, that of a *porteur d'enfants,* who instead of carrying the young boy to safety, carries him to his death. This signifier and signified of the second connotative level create a new sign: that of Abel Tiffauges the monstrous ogre who derives pleasure from "la phorie" he experiences from lifting young boys and carrying them to their own destruction in Nazi Germany's Jungmannen.

Let us not forget the tremendously dense network of intertextualization at work in the character of Abel Tiffauges who functions explicitly on this third level. Here in the shadows of the second order, St. Christopher and Der Erlkönig combine malignantly to widen the plane of expression of the myth to include more sinister propensities.

Tournier, in so doing, alters the sign of the second system and thus profoundly alters the mythical meaning. This third level speaks of the second level, just as the second-order is a meta-language of the first-order. The third level builds on, and in the case of Abel Tiffauges, contorts the established meaning of his mythical predecessors. Instead of the Savior of the young boy, Tiffauges is the doom of young boys. He derives pleasure, due to the influence of the mythical character Gilles de Rais, from the suffering and death of the young boys. This transformation takes place semiologically in the very structure of the myth in the narratives of Tournier.

Through the creation of this third order Tournier creates an individualized discourse which stands in opposition to the universal sign of the second order.   The story of Abel Tiffauges is temporal and individualistic and placed in a particular time: that of WWII. Due to a syntagmatic combination of terms through his technique of malignant

and benign inversions along the horizontal axis of the narrative, Tournier creates a mini-narrative. As overtly individualized, this mini-narrative ressembles a *parole*. This *parole* stands in contrast to its second-order connotative precedent which is the myth of St. Christopher that universally signifies the salvation of man. Remembering Saussure's distinction between *parole* and *langue*, *langue* is the whole system of language that precedes and makes speech possible. Grammar, spelling, syntax and punctuation are all elements of langue. *Parole* consists of the individual utterances which constitute the use of the *langue* or language.

For the purposes of my study, a *parole* closely ressembles a mini-narrative or an individual utterance, that does not attempt to impose a universal truth on the collectivity. As non-utilitarian and non-representative of a collectivity, the *parole* of Tiffauges is postmodern. Tiffauge's mythical predecessor St. Christopher, the *langue* of the connotative, 2nd order level, is modern. It does impose on the collectivity a universal truth through its signification in Christianity, a modern ideology.

What then are the ramifications of such a "parole" whose sinister super being Abel Tiffauges, unravels and perverts the long held mythical belief in St. Christopher and the good he represents to the world? Why do I evoke "into the shadows" when describing the evolution from denotative first-order to connotative second and ultimately third-order representation? To answer these questions we go to the heart of Tournier's "mission suprême d'un romancier" for he challenges each one of us to acknowledge our own complicity in such historical atrocities through the propensity for evil possessed by each individual. As Josette Wisman states in her article: *Une lecture hermeneutique du*

Roi des Aulnes: "*le Roi des Aulnes* essaie d'expliquer, pour un public averti et sous le couvert d'un personnage fictif, comment beaucoup ont vu et vécu la deuxième guerre mondiale."[35]

Tournier's third order connotative process succeeds in engendering a new mythology, one which is paradoxically individualistic in nature. It is due to his literary genius and his narrative structuring consisting of inverting long-established binary pairs that he enables the third order level to signify.

Abel Tiffauges the Sinister Supreme Being

In the case of Abel Tiffauges, Tournier's third order of myth alters one of myths founding traits: voicing the Gods and Supreme Beings that formed our world. In Tournier's texts the identities and characteristics of these Supreme Beings are profoundly perverted, as are many other aspects of myth. Using one of his literary techniques known as *inversion maligne*, Tournier inverts the positive connotation attached to these Primordial Gods and instead creates a Supreme Being whose monstrous qualities offer to man no salvation, no *sacré*, rather a re-creation of hell on earth, known as the Second World War.

No critics to date have succeeded in penetrating the dense mythological network of Tournier's writings. Many critics recognize that Tournier uses *inversion maligne* to re-work the myth, such as Martin Roberts in his work entitled *Michel Tournier: Bricolage and Cultural Mythology* in which he recognizes that "Inversion is more than just a theme in Tournier's fiction….it is also a central mechanism in the thematic and narrative

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[35] Josette Wisman, "Une lecture hermeneutique du Roi des Aulnes," *Romanic Review* 80 (1989): 597.

structure of the novels themselves."[36]   Yet none fully recognize how true to the very

form of myth his writings are. In particular, certain traits of Tournier's mythology

perfectly echo the myths of primitive societies. The trait that is of concern to us at this

point is the notion of the God or Supreme Being who created our world in the Primordial

time. In the context of *Le Roi des Aulnes* the main character Abel Tiffauges proves to be

the Supreme Being who is responsible for our world, a proclamation which has profound

historical implications to be explored in this section.

Mircea Eliade in his *Aspects du Mythe* explores in depth the role of the original,

divine creator who forged our world in his vision. This capacity of myth offered to

primitive man a justification for his existence:

> un "primitif" pourrait se dire: je suis tel que je suis aujourd'hui parce
> qu'une série d'événements ont eu lieu avant moi. Seulement, il doit
> immédiatement ajouter: des événements qui se sont passés dans les temps
> mythiques, qui, par conséquent, constituent une histoire sacrée, parce que
> les personnes du drame ne sont pas des humains, mais des Etres
> Surnaturels"[37]

This prevalence placed on the author of our genesis proves to be essential to the

relevance of Tournier's writings to the world in which it is practiced, that is, ours. Myth

explains to man how his world came into being and ultimately who he is as Eliade

describes in his *Aspects du Mythe*:

> En effet, les mythes relatent non seulement l'origine du Monde, des
> animaux, des plantes et de l'homme, mais aussi tous les événements
> primordiaux à la suite desquels l'homme est devenu ce qu'il est
> aujourd'hui, c'est à dire un être mortel, sexué, organisé en société, obligé
> de travailler pour vivre, et travailler selon certains règles. Si le Monde

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[36] Martin Roberts, *Michel Tournier: Bricolage and Cultural Mythology* (Saratoga: ANMA Libri, 1994), 85.
[37] Eliade, *Aspects du Mythe*, 25.

existe, si l'homme existe, c'est parce que les Etres Surnaturels ont déployé une activité créatrice aux "commencements.[38]

The actions of the Supreme Beings that created Man's world are told and repeated orally through myth, an act which allows man to revisit this Primordial time and to exist again in a new chronological milieu: the contemporary world. Thus, key to understanding myth is the understanding of its present and of its past, of analyzing the stories of myth and the histories that lie within. Using this approach, the role of Abel Tiffauges becomes increasingly clear and powerfully underestimated in modern literary criticism.

Vladimir Turmonov in his article: *John and Abel in Michel Tournier's le Roi des Aulnes* recognizes Abel Tiffauges as a messenger as well, but in his opinion that of an apocalyptic vision:

> We find a similar situation in Le Roi des Aulnes where Tiffauges does not claim to access the signs on his own. As Gascoigne points out, "[John of Patmos] is giving an account of the genesis of his own writing, just as Tiffauges did at the start of his Ecrits sinistres, and in so doing both authors claim supernatural authority[39]

John J. Collins offers further insight into the role of Tiffauges as author or creator: "the apocalypse is a genre of revelatory literature with a narrative framework, in which a revelation is mediated by an otherworldly being to a human recipient, disclosing transcendent reality which is both temporal, insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation, and spatial, insofar as it involves another, supernatural world"[40] This

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[38] Eliade, *Aspects du Mythe*, 23.
[39] Vladimir Turmanov, "John and Abel in Michel Tournier's le Roi des Aulnes," *The Romanic Review* 90, no. 3 (1999): 417.
[40] John J Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to the Jewish Matrix of Christianity* (New

otherworldly being Collins speaks of is Tiffauges who communicates his mythical vision in his *Ecrits Sinistres*.

Thus Vladimir and Collins share the view of Tiffauges as an author or a messenger of a divine message, yet they do not emphasize the importance played by myth. For his part, Vladmir emphasizes the apocalyptic nature of *Le Roi des Aulnes* which is recounted by Tiffauges. For my part, I view Tiffauges as the author of an apocalyptic story to be true, for the etymology of the word apocalypse means "revelation" or to reveal. Yet I emphasize that Tiffauges is the messenger of a mythical reality, that is to say expressive of the narratives at the heart of our collective existence which, in this case, represent the worst of man. It is in his *Ecrits Sinistres*, in the very first page of the novel *Le Roi des Aulnes*, that Tiffauges proclaims his role as creator of our world:

> Or moi, j'étais là déjà, il y a mille ans, il y a cent mille ans. Quand la terre n'était encore qu'une boule de feu tournoyant dans un ciel d'hélium, l'âme qui la faisait flamber, qui la faisait tourner, c'était la mienne."[41]

That Tiffauges references himself as the God creator of our existence against the astronomical backdrop of the universe reinforces the role of Tiffauges as the hero of the novel. The myth of the hero is one with a rich history and has been developed over a long period of time. Yet, despite the diverse theories and interpretations of the myth of the birth of the hero, the common ground lies in the fact that the hero emanates from an astral source as Stucken and Winckler observe.[42] The theories surrounding the birth of

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York: Crossroad, 1984), 4.

[41] Michel Tournier, *le Roi des Aulnes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1993), 13.

[42] For a more in-depth study of the myth of the hero, please refer to Otto Rank's book: *The Myth of the*

the hero all reinforce the notion that the hero is indelibly linked to his cosmic surroundings, giving to him superhuman status as someone who does not belong to this world but comes from the forces of the universe. Tiffauges explicitly states that he is born from the original matter of our universe, helium and fire. This hero status attributed to Tiffauges echoes and complements his godlike status.

In light of the studies of Carl Jung who claims the God figure symbolizes the collective unconscious of a society, it is irrefutable that Tiffauges is a personality who represents society as a whole and thus the identity of Tiffauges is of great interest to the understanding of the culture as a whole. If the Supreme Being truly molds reality in his vision, then once we understand him, we gain insight into understanding the society which worships him. It is unmistakable that *Le Roi des Aulnes* offers a vision of the world in which the worst of humanity is in control, in which genocide and war are the dominant forces. From where does this animosity emanate? As we shall now see in the psycho-mythical make-up of Tiffauges, it is the worst of humanity which exerts the greatest influence.

Establishing himself as the cosmic creator of our existence, Tiffauges claims a mythological identity composed of numerous myths taken by Tournier and re-worked, malignantly inverted into the complicated identity of the *porteur d'enfants*. The character of Tiffauges proves a rich resource in our quest of understanding the mythical aspects of *Le Roi des Aulnes*. Who exactly is this sinister Supreme Being who authored contemporary existence?

Birth of the Hero.

The Paradoxal Personal Myth

Before exploring the mythical heritage of Abel Tiffauges, it is useful at this point to recognize the complexities of discussing the "myth" of one particular character for myth typically represents that which is universal. Charles Mauron in his article "Des Métaphores obsédantes au mythe personnel" explores this paradoxical trait of myth, its seemingly universal nature combined with a singular vision told through a series of unique mythological components. Claude Lévi-Strauss explores this contradictory nature of myth in that he explains how myths around the world are quite similar to one another. From this phenomenon, we may ascertain myth's universal nature which is voiced through individualized discourses. There may exist similarities between the myths, yet there are details which differentiate one version from another. It is precisely the influence of individuals, of those who recount the myth, that distinguish one version from the next. Lévi-Strauss asks: "Pourtant, ces mythes, en apparence arbitraires, se reproduisent avec les mêmes caractères, et souvent les mêmes détails, dans diverses régions du monde. D'où le problème: si le contenu du mythe est entièrement contingent, comment comprendre que, d'un bout à l'autre de la terre, les mythes se ressemblent tellement?" [43] Mauron offers further insight into this complex duality inherent to myth by evoking the use of a psycho critical approach which delves into the unconscious of the author of myth. Of course, this approach takes myth as an artistic form, for myth in its most primitive form is oral and a message from the Gods.

For the purposes of this study, myth will be viewed in both of these perspectives,

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[43] Lévi-Strauss, *Anthropologie Structurale*, 237.

but the psycho critical approach favored by Mauron is particularly useful in deciphering the mythology of Michel Tournier. Mauron's approach identifies the mythological units, the "mythemes", which repeat themselves in Tournier's works and lend to his writings their unique characteristic. Tournier favors certain mythical traits and themes which repeat in his works. For example, the notion of the Ogre constitutes a mytheme which is transformed in several of his works, be it in the character of Abel Tiffauges in *Le Roi des Aulnes*, or in the short story *La fugue du Petit Poucet* of his collection of short stories: *le Coq de Bruyère*.

In order to penetrate this mythological network, both Mauron and Lévi-Strauss agree that a scientific approach is needed. For Mauron, this scientific approach is a psycho critique which reveals the unconscious of the author. It is not the words themselves that interests Mauron, rather: "les liens entre les mots, leurs groupements, les structures verbales."[44] This approach evokes the technique used by Lévi-Strauss to decipher mythemes in which he writes repeating mythological units on an index card. However, the approach favored by Mauron is more satisfying in that it attributes these groupings of words to the psychological makeup of the author and more specifically:

> Cependant, les réseaux d'associations que j'étudiai d'abord sous le nom de métaphores obsédantes …témoignent d'une pensée encore, mais plus primitive, prélogique, reliant les images selon leur charge émotionnelle. Cette pensée primitive a toutes les chances d'être largement inconsciente.[45]

Mauron's use of the term "primitive" evokes one of the profound distinguishing

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[44] Mauron, 30
[45] Ibid., 30

characteristics of myth, the fact that myth has its origins in primitive societies who to this day practice and live according to myth. Mauron links this primitive characteristic to the unconscious of the writer whereas primitive societies attribute the origins of myth not to the writer but rather to the Supreme Being or God who enacts the myth. Mauron's emphasis on the psychology of the author reveals the repeating themes that makeup Tournier's own unique mythology.

Lévi-Strauss advocates a similar method in the analysis of myth as he states in his Anthropologie II: "Un mythe ne doit jamais être interprété à un seul niveau. Il n'existe pas d'explication privilégiée, car tout mythe consiste dans une mise en rapport de plusieurs niveaux d'explication... Un mythe ne doit jamais interprété seul, mais dans son rapport avec d'autres mythes, qui pris ensemble, constituent un groupe de transformation"[46]

Mauron's psycho-critique postulates a relationship between the mythological unit and the unconscious makeup of the writer. It is important to note the similarity between the primitive form of myth and this perspective offered by Mauron. In primitive times the myth was seen as a message from an exterior persona, someone who does not inhabit their world or time. According to Mauron, these mythological units are likewise the expression of an exterior source, albeit a different one: that of the unconscious. As Mauron states: "Source extérieure en un sens: car pour le moi conscient, qui donne à l'oeuvre littéraire sa forme verbale, l'inconscient franchement nocturne est "un autre".[47]

These diverging theories find commonplace in the theory of the collective

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[46] Lévi-Strauss, *Anthropologie structurale II*, 83.
[47] Mauron, 31.

unconscious as developed by Carl Jung. For these two external sources, God and the

unconscious, are joined as one according to Jung who states: "the god image is the

symbol of the unconscious"[48] Therefore, the unconscious of the author is rooted in the

collective unconscious and through his rewriting of myth, creates his own unique "mythe

personnel". Above all, myth is the voice of a collective unconscious speaking through

the singular unconscious of the writer of the myth. Thus, in order to penetrate the

mythological network of Tournier, one must also consider the dynamic of the collective

unconscious of the society that surrounds him. This must take place on a synchronic as

well as a diachronic basis given the paradoxical nature of myth as simultaneously

contingent and universal. Therefore, a thorough study of the mythology of Tournier must

consider the different contexts in which the myths are told.

The Monster in Tiffauges is the Collective Unconscious

Carl Jung in his works extensively develops the notion of the collective

unconscious, to which I have referred on numerous occasions. At this point I wish to

explore in greater depth the relationship between the collective unconscious and the

godlikeness that Tiffauges experiences in his *Ecrits Sinistres*. There are powerful

parallels between the narrative structure of his *Ecrits Sinistres* and the emergence of the

new, evil Tiffauges who can only express himself with his left hand. Jung explores the

psychological process that ultimately leads to the splitting of the consciousness which

results two opposing psyches of an individual, one good and one evil.

According to Jung, this process is rooted in the collective unconscious which

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[48] Jung, *Psychology of the Unconscious: A Study of the Transformations and Symbolisms of the Libido,* 26.

functions as the groundwork upon which evolves the consciousness of the individual: "the collective psyche is the original basis for the individual psyche."[49] An individual, through the process of assimilating into the society which surrounds him, strives to develop his own unique individual psyche. In so doing, he gradually represses the collective psyche, which according to Jung: "contains good and evil in undifferentiated form."[50] Tiffauges, through his attempts to function in society, tries to stifle the impulses stemming from the collective unconscious that in him stir up profoundly evil and destructive urges such as pedophilia.

His attempts to assimilate into society are in vain and an oppositional pairing of good and evil manifests in his psyche, with the evil dominating. This explains Tiffauges' new "identity" which expresses itself strictly through the use of his left hand which traditionally symbolizes evil. Having seriously injured the ligaments in his right hand during an accident in his garage, Tiffauges expresses relief at his new-found ability to express his darker side: "C'est alors que j'ai eu soudain la révélation que je savais écrire de la main gauche! Oui, sans exercice préalable, sans hésitation ni lenteur, ma main gauche trace fermement des caractères achevés, d'un graphisme étrange, étranger, un peu grimaçant.."[51] The powerful symbolism of this new form will be further developed in chapter four, but the issue at hand relates to the psychological make-up of our sinister Supreme Being. Suffice to say that Tiffauges' god complex is dominated by an affinity for evil.

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[49] Jung, *Psychology of the Unconscious: A Study of the Transformations and Symbolisms of the Libido,* 29
[50] Eliade, *Aspects du Mythe*, 38
[51] Tournier, *le Roi des Aulnes*, 16

The Genesis of a Monster

The god-likeness expressed by Tiffauges in his *E.S.* results from his monstrosity which inhibits him from assimilating into society. The very fact that he admits his own monstrosity is a testament to the fact that Tiffauges feels psychologically marginalized; he does not feel integrated into the civilized personality.

> Pour n'être pas un monstre, il faut être semblable à ses semblables, être conforme à l'espèce, ou encore être à l'image de ses parents. Ou alors avoir une progéniture qui fait de vous dès lors le premier chaînon d'une espèce nouvelle. Car les monstres ne se reproduisent pas..Et là je retrouve mon éternité, car elle me tient lieu à la fois de parents et de progéniture. Vieux comme le monde, immortel comme lui, je ne puis avoir qu'un père et une mère putatifs, et des enfants d'adoption.[52]

The psychological make-up of Tiffauges is highly influenced by the primitive collective unconscious that Tiffauges proves unable to repress. Clearly, the far recesses of his unconscious are dominated by evil rather than good. Therefore, his psyche is mythical in the sense that it is dominated by the archetypes of monster and godlikeness that characterize the collective unconscious as understood by Jung. This proves to be a powerful force in Tiffauges.

Tiffauges recounts in his *Ecrits Sinistres* the marginalized and alienated feelings that dominated his childhood, the process through which well adjusted children emerge having developed their own individual identity. At the boarding school St. Christopher, Tiffauges describes a turning point in which:

> Mais si mon Malheur n'était plus celui, éperdu, du déracinement et de la divagation dans l'inconnu, il n'en était que plus profond sous sa forme

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[52] Tournier, *le Roi des Aulnes*, 14

> calme, réfléchie et comme définitive. A ce moment-là, je me souviens, j'avais fait le recensement de mes misères et je n'attendais de lueur d'espoir de nul horizon."[53]

It is as if Tiffauges accepts the negativity of his personal unconscious and embraces it. Tiffauges withdraws into himself and chooses to create "une culture en marge, un panthéon personnel où voisinaient Alcibiade et Ponce Pilate, Caligula et Hadrien, Frédéric-Guillaume Ier et Barras, Talleyrand et Raspoutine."[54] These are historical examples of oppositional personalities who judged one another and ultimately tried to balance good and evil. Tiffauges refers to these historical personalities as "quelqu'un des miens".

Tiffauges' *Ecrits Sinistres* constitute a written description of his psychological suffering as a youth who was "chétif et laid"[55] with a "corps gauche et osseux". He describes his humiliation and actual physical beatings during recess where he was "par terre, et il était rare que je pusse me relever avant le retour dans les classes."[56] The *Ecrits Sinistres* provide us with the details of his psychological development, of a boy on the margins of society, an outcast who encounters nothing but rejection and torment. As a result, he turns inward and thus nourishes the more primitive forces in him and in all man: those of the collective unconscious.

The Mythical History of Tiffauges

The character of Abel Tiffauges undeniably pervades the novel le *Roi des Aulnes* in term of its thematic structure and its narrative progression. It is precisely from the

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[53] Tournier, *le Roi des Aulnes*, 24.
[54] Ibid., 24.
[55] Ibid., 25.
[56] Ibid., 25

mythical heritage of this character that Tournier finds inspiration himself and crafts the
narrative elements of the novel. How does Tournier succeed in rendering the universal
attributes of the mythical models from which Tournier drew his inspiration, such as Abel
from the Bible, Saint Christopher and Barbe Bleue, individual? That is to say, how does
the mythical transformation that casts the character of Abel Tiffauges constitute a *parole*,
an individual discourse, rather than a universal *langue* told by its mentors? Lévi-Strauss
readily acknowledges this paradoxical temporal compatibility of myth: "Ce système est
en effet a deux dimensions: à la fois diachronique et synchronique, et réunissent ainsi les
propriétés caractéristiques de la "langue" et celles de la "parole."[57]

Through several narrative and structural operatives Tournier inverts and creates
meanings which profoundly alter the mythical models. These techniques create a
relationship of contiguity between Tiffauges and the world that surrounds him and thus
are metonymic in nature.[58] Tiffauges is inextricably linked to every aspect of his
surrounding environment, be it the hair of the Jungmannen or the "phorie" he experiences
when lifting a child, there exists a syntagmatic connection between Tiffauges and his
narrative reality.

Ferdinand de Saussure in his *Course in General Linguistics* clarifies the nature of
a "syntagmatic relationship" by describing the words within a sentence as being a
syntagmatic cluster and more importantly: "In the syntagm a term acquires its value only

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[57] Lévi-Strauss, *Anthropologie Structurale*, 242.
[58] Metonymical elements allow for the replacement in time of one signifying element by another. Metonymy exploits relationships of contiguity between a thing and its attribute, its environments and its adjuncts. Metonymic literature relies on its context, refers to the environment in which the narrative takes place. The elements are combined in a sequence, which constitutes a parole and is diachronic.

because it stands in opposition to everything that precedes or follows it, or to both."[59] It

is the notion of opposition that forms the groundwork of Tournier's narrative and

mythical re-structuring, for his version of Tiffauges stands in sharp contrast, in

opposition, to its mythical predecessors. Saussure confirms the essential role of

opposition in a sign system and how each term derives its value in the following way: "a

state of the set of chessmen corresponds closely to a state of a language. The respective

value of the pieces depends on their position on the chessboard just as each linguistic

term derives its value from its opposition to all the other terms."[60]

Tournier succeeds in implementing narrative techniques which ultimately collapse

already established binary pairs and the oppositional relationships through the

recombination of syntagmatic associations in his texts.   According to Saussure, the

recombining of existing terms typical of syntagmatic relations is realized at the level of

individual discourse or "parole" which stand in contrast to paradigmatic relations which

involves operations of selection and combination inherent to a language as a collective

tool, or "langue."

Tournier uses the techniques of *inversion bénigne* and *inversion maligne* as well

as "bricolage", to rework established mythical models and ultimately undermine their

meaning by creating new, altered mythical characters who together densely intertwine to

create a literary parole in which connotation rather than denotation is the ruling factor.

These processes of inversion recombine existing elements into a sequence-the narrative

of Tiffauges-which constitutes an individual "parole".

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[59] Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, 123.
[60]Ibid.*,* 88.

The section that follows will examine these binary pairs and how these narrative techniques function in the construct of Abel Tiffauges and succeed in creating a newly formed mythical character whose distinctly different makeup constitutes a new form of myth, which due to the metonymic nature of Tiffauges' symbolic reality is individual and postmodern in nature.[61]

Inversion: Metonymical Continuation

Allow me to begin this character study by defining and examining these techniques and binary pairs which are recombined on a diachronic axis by Tournier. Tournier sheds much light on these narrative operatives in his own works and frequently through the voices of his own characters. Using the voice of Abel Tiffauges in *Le Roi des Aulnes*, *l'inversion bénigne* is defined in the following manner:

> L'inversion bénigne. Elle consiste à rétablir le sens des valeurs que l'inversion maligne a précédemment retourné. Satan, maître du monde, aidé par ses cohortes de gouvernants, magistrats, prélates, généraux et policiers présentent un miroir à la face de Dieu. Et par son opération, le droit devient gauche, la gauche devient droit, le bien est appelé mal et le mal est appelé bien.[62]

In an interview contained in the article: "Treize clès pour un ogre", Tournier defines inversion in the following manner:

> L'inversion est un renversement des valeurs qui peut s'observer dans les domaines les plus variés: passage du noir au blanc (et réciproquement) dans le triage photographique: de la gauche à la droite dans un miroir ou dans le langage héraldique; du porteur au porté; du chasseur au chassé etc. L'inversion maligne manifeste la présence et l'efficacité du mal. Elle est dérision et cruauté. Un pape prêchant la haine, un tueur vénéré comme un

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[61] The postmodern nature of the mythical character of Tiffauges will be explored in depth in chapter three. Suffice it at this point to understand the postmodern myth as being an individual mini-narrative rather than being a universal and all-encompassing meta-narrative.

[62] Tournier, *le Roi des Aulnes*, 123.

saint, une mère infanticide…illustrations de l'inversion maligne.[63]

The reference to God and Satan, left and right, already suggests a narrative coherency and symbolic symmetry that harmonizes in the character of Abel Tiffauges. At the core of this character lie several versions of the eternal opposition of good/evil such as: left/right, light/dark, sighted/ blind, raised/lowered. It is in the character of Tiffauges that the delineating boundaries established by mythical history collapse and give way to new altered meanings. When Tournier inverts malignantly the opposition good/evil, Satan takes on God-like attributes and God takes on diabolical attributes.

Taking the dichotomy of good/evil as a starting point, we turn to Genesis to find the narrative seeds of Abel Tiffauges. As many critics have pointed out, notably Martin Roberts in his work *Michel Tournier Bricolage and Cultural Mythology*, and D.G. Bevan in his work *Michel Tournier*, the character of Abel Tiffauges is a fusion of several myths and legends. The Biblical legend of Abel, brother of Cain, is transformed in a new context. Abel, as recounted in the Bible, is the son of Adam and Eve and is murdered by his brother Cain. Abel is a shepherd and Cain is a farmer. Abel is a nomad and Cain is sedentary. They both make an offering to the Lord from the fruits of their labor, however, the Lord rejects Cain's offering and accepts Abel's. Out of jealousy, Cain murders his brother. Jesus calls Abel righteous in the New Testament.

Tournier takes this defining model and through a malignant inversion, reverses several of the attributes of the brothers and creates Abel, the shepherd of German youth. Tiffauges recounts the historical feud and the domination of the sedentary over the

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[63] Tournier, "Treize clès pour un ogre," *Le Figaro littéraire*, 30 novembre, 1970, 21.

nomadic claiming a sympathetic view of the latter, for Tiffauges views his destiny to be

nomadic to be sure and malignant in nature:

> Et moi, caché parmi les assis, faux sédentaire, faux bien-pensant, je ne bouge pas certes, mais j'entretiens et je répare cet instrument par excellence de la migration, l'automobile. Et je prends patience parce que je sais qu'un jour viendra où le ciel, lassé des crimes des sédentaires, fera pleuvoir le feu sur leurs têtes. Ils seront alors, comme Caïn, jetés pêle-mêle sur les routes, fuyant éperdument leurs villes maudites et la terre qui se refuse à les nourrir. Et moi, Abel, seul souriant et comblé, je déploierai les grandes ailes que je tenais cachées sous ma défroque de garagiste, et frappant du pied leurs crânes enténébrés, je m'envolerai dans les étoiles.[64]

This destiny envisioned by Abel can only be realized amidst the atrocities

committed by Nazi Germany for this is Tiffauges' "Hyperborée"[65]: his magical land of

freedom where he realizes his true self as he states:

> Cela s'ajoutant à la simplification qu'impose forcément à tout ce que je dis ma connaissance imparfaite de l'allemand fait de moi un homme beaucoup plus fruste, direct et brutal que le Tiffauges francophone. Métamorphose infiniment appréciable…pour moi du moins.[66]

Far from the magical utopia celebrated by the Greeks, Tiffauges' Hyperborean

offers him the potential for limitless cruelty and inhumanity. Thus, this malignantly

transposed Abel who, through the inversion of his brother's crimes, will himself carry out

the murderous rapture committed by Cain. Both of these attributes, that of Tiffauges'

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[64] Tournier, *le Roi des Aulnes*, 58.

[65] The notion of Hyperborean, also the title of the third chapter of the novel, is one of rich mythological meaning which enlightens the symbolic journey of Tiffagues. According to the *Dictionary of Symbols* by Chevalier and Gheerbrant: "Greek mythology often mentions the Land of the Hyperboreans: but where was it? … Undoubtedly it was somewhere in the north, beyond the land in which the Boreas blew… 'it would seem as if the Greeks came to regard the Land of the Hyperboreans in much the same way as they regarded Ethiopia or Atlantis, for example, as a sort of distant Paradise, home of he Blessed… The land was the gilded land of dreams, of ideal childhood and of ever Golden Age. Hyperboreans became a sort of supermen-or space aliens as they would be called today-living in a kind of Utopia in wisdom and happiness and a vague aura of magic.", 535.

[66] Tournier, *le Roi des Aulnes*, 424

paradoxical freedom in his Nazi Hyperborean and the inversion of the meaning of his

name, are metonymic attributes in that they constitute detailed elements of Tiffauge's

reality. These are solid examples of metonymies that construct the context in which

Tiffauges functions and prove to be essential adjuncts to the narrative.

Tiffauges enters Germany, his land of personal freedom, through being falsely

accused and judged guilty of molesting a small girl, Martine. When France mobilizes

against the Germans, Tiffauges is one of the first prisoners to be sent to war and sets off

towards his destiny which will be realized in a Nazi camp as Tiffauges foretells: "Les

trompettes de Jericho vont bientôt faire tomber les murs de ma prison."[67]

This historical context of Germany during World War II proves a fertile ground

for the self realization of Tiffauges. It is Germany that transforms into the *porteur

d'enfants* and in fact provides the cultural codes, or connotative elements, for Tiffauges'

transformation. It is helpful to remember Roland Barthes' definition of cultural code

which he defines in S/Z: "the numerous codes of knowledge or wisdom to which the text

continually refers…they "afford the discourse a basis in scientific or moral authority." [68]

Therefore it is worth examining the cultural differences to which Tiffauges

himself alludes between France and Germany for it is precisely these differences that

nourish Tiffauges' malignant transformation:

> Moi, si intolérant, si vite enflammé d'indignation quand j'étais en France,
> toujours maudissant et fulminant, je m'interroge parfois sur ma patience et
> ma docilité depuis que je foule le sol allemand. C'est que je me trouve ici
> constamment confronté à une réalité signifiante presque toujours claire et
> distincte…La France me heurtait sans cesse par des manifestations

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[67] Tournier, *le Roi des Aulnes,* 201
[68] Roland Barthes, *S/Z*, 18.

blasphématoires élémentaires qui surgissaient dans un désert inexpressif.[69]

Tiffauges' reference to a "réalité signifiante presque toujours claire et distincte" confirms the innately linked relationship between Tiffauges and the environment in which the narrative of his journey takes place: Nazi Germany. Tiffauges enjoys a metonymic relationship with Nazi Germany for it stimulates every aspect of his life and nourishes his transformation to the *Roi des Aulnes*.

Tiffauges' steady journey: "toujours en direction du nord-est" leads him to his utopia, his own Hyperborean. Upon entering the work camp: "Tiffauges se trouva renforcé dans le sentiment de liberté et de disponibilité qui l'avait saisi en descendant du train."[70] Paradoxically, Tiffauges finds the organization and order around which the Nazi camp functions to be liberating. Step by step Tiffauges progresses along the path of his destiny to become *le Roi des Aulnes* thanks to the nature of the Third Reich. William Cloonan in his article "Michel Tournier's *Le Roi des Aulnes*" notes that: "his enthusiasm for this work marks the beginnings of a personal degradation that will lead him in time to create his miniature version of the Third Reich."[71]

Tiffauges' sympathetic attitude towards the Nazi Regime is derived from the fact that the Third Reich revitalizes the power of past mythologies. Nazism in turn creates its own order to govern reality not predicated upon outdated and irrelevant laws. Rather, the symbolism which so influences the Nazis, allows for the rapture of young boys through their recruitment into the Jungmannen. Mark Facknitz comments on Tiffauges' symbolic

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[69] Tournier, *le Roi des Aulnes*, 405.
[70] Ibid., 255.
[71] William Cloonan, *Michel Tournier's Le Roi des Aulnes* (New York: Greenwood, 1987), 24.

sympathy for Nazi Germany:

> The low region of eastern Prussia where, under the Hyperborean sky, Abel Tiffauges expects to make sense of the signs that have swarmed about him as he followed the straight line of his destiny on a course east by northeast from Paris. Of course, Tiffauges does not discover a natural order, rather the order he presupposed is revealed as a construction of his own desire, deleterious and deceitful, one that implicates him in the Holocaust.[72]

Upon entering Nazi Germany, Tiffauges' metamorphosis is unleashed and the barriers between good/evil, captor/captured, guilty/innocent disappear, for it is as prisoner that Tiffauges experiences the most freedom.

Another opposition at the core of the character of Abel Tiffauges is that of sighted/blind. Tiffauges, suffering from a severe myopia, has very poor vision which will prove to be a key element of his new monstrous identity. As in other aspects of his personal evolution, it is in Nazi Germany that Tiffauges' self-discovery leads towards his destiny of *Roi des Aulnes*. It is a German Nazi named Blattchen who enlightens Tiffauges on the meaning of his last name "Tiffauges", according to whom Tiffauges "n'est qu'une altération de Tiefauge, et caché par conséquent une origine teutonne lointain. …Tiefauge, c'est l'oeil profond, l'eoil enfoncé dans l'orbite. Et quand on vous voit, Herr von Tiefauge, on comprend si bien ce nom qu'on se demande s'il ne s'agirait pas d'un sobriquet!"[73]

Thus, one connotation of Tiffauges implies a visionary in that he sees far beyond the limitations imposed by society, yet this positive attribute is neutralized by a more

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[72] Mark Facknitz, "Fascism, Phoria, and the Symbolic destiny of Abel Tiffagues," *The Journal of Narrative Technique* 22 (Spring 1992): 107.

[73] Tournier, *le Roi des Aulnes*, 406

sinister meaning for Tiffauges wisely recognizes that in German Triefauge means: "l'oeil malade, larmoyant, chassieux exactement!"[74] Tournier inverts these two models, that of Tiefauge and that of Triefauge in the character of Tiffauges who ironically represents a blind visionary whose destiny lies in a dangerous inversion compromising both of these meanings. The result of the connection of these two opposing elements into one harmonized element is the creation of the *parole* of Tiffauges, or the individual ogre whose blindness paradoxically suggests the presence of a visionary.

The Mythical History of Tiffauges: Gilles de Rais

Apart from these meanings of Tiffauges, the symbolic nomenclature chosen by Tournier gives to the mythical Supreme Being of Tiffauges a heritage rooted in the historical personality of Gilles de Rais, the murderous pedophile whose atrocities committed in his castle Tiffauges are the substance of the legend of *Barbe-Bleue* or Blue Beard. It is not happenstance that the name of the chateau in which Gilles de Rais commits his murderous and pedophilic atrocities is named Tiffauges as well. As noted by Martin Roberts: "The central protagonist of *Le Roi des Aulnes*, it will be recalled, was associated with Gilles de Rais both by his own name (Tiffauges being the name of one of Gilles's castles) and that of his horse, Barbe Bleue."[75]

Tournier intentionally crafts Abel Tiffauges in the light of Gilles de Rais for this proves to be the defining metonymic element, for Tiffauges himself wanders the German countryside in search of youth to be taken to become Jungmannen, or the Nazi youth. This historical referent gives to the mythical character of Tiffauges the sinister propensity

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[74] Tournier, *le Roi des Aulnes*, 407.
[75] Roberts, 126.

for metaphorical pedophilia, for Tiffauges, as *porteur d'enfants*, does not derive pleasure from the actual molestation of children as does Gilles de Rais, rather from the act of carrying a child on his shoulder.

The history of Gilles de Rais enlightens the murky character of Tiffauges, for as Lévi-Strauss states, to understand a myth, you must explore all versions of that myth. The myth of Abel Tiffauges is a malignant version of certain traits of Gilles de Rais. It was in 1431 after the horrific execution of his love Jeanne d'Arc that Gilles de Rais was transformed into Barbe Bleue: "Il va devenir chenille dans son cocon. Puis la métamorphose maligne accomplie, il en sortira, et c'est un ange infernal qui déploiera ses ailes."[76]

Just as Tiffauges derives pleasure from the suffering of his troupe of garcons who make up the Jungmannen, so did Gilles de Rais derive pleasure from the pain of young boys. Upon viewing a fresco painted to commemorate the atrocities as told by the Evangile of Matthew which recounts the massacre of young boys in Bethlehem, Gilles experiences such a strong emotion that he is urged to confession saying: "J'ai pitié de ces petits qu'on égorge. Je pleure sur leurs tendres corps pantelants. Et en même temps, je ressens un tel plaisir! C'est si émouvant, un enfant qui souffre! C'est si beau un petit corps ensanglanté, soulevé par les soupirs et les râles de l'agonie."[77] This expression of pleasure derived from suffering gives insight into the evolution of the monstrosity, shall we say ogrish, personality of Gilles de Rais.

Tournier, faithful to his tradition of Intertextuality, provides an in depth

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[76] Tournier, *Gilles et Jeanne* (Paris: Gallimard, 1980),45
[77] Ibid., 54

presentation of the character of Gilles de Rais in the story entitled: *Gilles et Jean*. It is

useful at this point to examine the opposing binary pairs and oppositions which allow

Tournier to create yet another complementary individual diachronic discourse of a

mythical being in this short story.

Gilles et Jeanne

Many of the binary pairs at the core of Abel Tiffauges and of the novel *le Roi des*

Aulnes and in particular that of male/female, prove to be at the core of another of

Tournier's stories: that of the love affair between the historical Jeanne d'Arc and the

monstrous Gilles de Rais after whom the legend of *Barbe-Bleue* was based. From the

very beginning of the narrative, Jeanne d'Arc is described in an androgynous manner thus

grappling with established gender roles. The Dauphin describes this "fille-garçon"[78] as

"un jeune garcon qui veut se faire passer pour une pucelle". It is Jeanne who reveals his

destiny as King of France and he advises Jeanne to visit two matrons to help develop her

femininity. For the first time in her life this virgin is "déculotté". Tournier describes her

femininity in highly sexual terms:

> Pauvre Jeanne! C'était la première fois qu'elle se ferait déculotter. Ce ne
> serait pas la dernière. En attendant, les deux matrones se rengorgent,
> énomes et caparaconnées. Leurs lourdes mains couvertes de bagues se
> caressent l'une l'autre avant de palper le ventre de vierge et les cuisses de
> cavalier du petit page.[79]

Jeanne incarnates this opposition of male/female and continues the dialogue into a

new historical context that Tournier quickly reworks. It is the character of Gilles de Rais

that recognizes the perfect harmony of masculinity and femininity in Jeanne: "un jeune

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[78] Tournier, *Gilles et Jeanne,* 11.
[79] Ibid., 13.

garçon, un compagnon d'armes et de jeu, et en même temps une femme, et de surcroit une sainte nimbée de lumière"[80] and remarks himself at the rarity of such a balanced combination of such incompatible traits. The feminine represents that which is luminous, "innocence enfantine" and ultimately "une lumière qui n'est pas de cette terre, l'enivrante et dangereuse fusion de la sainteté et de la guerre."[81]

Another binary pair around which the narrative structures itself is that of good and evil and proves to complement the opposition between male and female. As represented by Jeanne, that which is feminine is good, in fact saintly. Jeanne sees in the nature that surrounds her, the luminous and healing effects of a saintly femininity. This femininity embellished by goodness finds its complement in the evil and masculine character of Gilles de Rais. Just as Jeanne d'Arc hears saintly voices, Gilles de Rais is courted by the Devil as Gilles describes: "Et pourtant le Diable et sa cour existent. Je les sens parfois qui me frôlent et murmurent à mes oreilles des choses obscures que je ne comprends pas et que je tremble de comprendre un jour."[82]

 This binary pair manifests itself throughout this historical recreation achieved by Tournier. Consistently throughout the text, that which is good is feminine and that which is evil is masculine. This simplistic breakdown allows us to better perceive the larger impact on the history of France for this binary pair influences the destiny of King Charles who during his crowning on July 17, 1429 has Gilles on his left and Jeanne on his right.

The symbolism of the left and of the right consistently reinforces the binary

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[80] Tournier, *Gilles et Jeanne*, 15.
[81] Ibid., 15.
[82] Ibid, 23.

opposition of good and evil. The left symbolizes evil and the right symbolizes goodness. Thus, when Gilles takes his place to the left of the king, it is a malignant presence of evil complemented and balanced by the presence to the right of the King of Jeanne who herself represents that which is good and saintly. This opposition of good and evil continues to be tested during the narrative and Gilles himself sees the fragility of the distinction between the two: "Le bien et le mal sont toujours proches l'un de l'autre. De toutes les créatures, Lucifer était la plus semblable à Dieu."[83]

This binary thematic dominates the semiological structure of *Gilles and Jeanne.* The arrival of a particularly sinister character, that of François Prélat, complements and ultimately negates the role of salvation played by Father Eustache Blanchet to whom Gilles confesses his ardent sexually driven pleasure in the face of the suffering of youth, in particular young boys, and asks him : "Mon père, cette pitié-là est-elle de Dieu ou du Diable?"[84]

This committed confessor, Father Eustache Blanchet, who witnesses first-hand the deranged metamorphoses of Gilles in the face of the burning of Jeanne, embarks upon a journey to find enlightenment for the darkening Gilles. It is in Florence where he encounters his binary pair, his evil complement, Prélat. Prélat's discourses prove to be an extension of the diabolical philosophy of Gilles and confirm the ambiguity between the dominant binary pair of good and evil. Prélat, like Gilles, believes in the union of the two opposing elements that of God and Satan. Burning with the flames of the enlightenment unveiling in Florence in the early 1400's, Prelat's function in the text is to balance out the

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[83] Tournier, *Gilles et Jeanne*, 31.
[84] Ibid., 33.

Godly influences exercised by Jeanne and to affirm the presence of a humanistic

renaissance which emphasizes science, alchemy and above all the sense of reason of man

which has more in common with Lucifer than with Jesus Christ. Thus the penchants of

this *diabolique* that consumes Gilles lean towards the darkness.

> Lumière du ciel et flammes de l'enfer sont plus proches qu'on ne pense.
> N'oubliez pas que Lucifer- le Porte-Lumière-était originellement le plus
> beau des anges. On en fait le Prince des ténèbres, le Mal absolu. C'est
> une erreur! L'homme, pétri de fange et animé par le souffle de Dieu, a
> besoin d'un intercesseur entre Dieu et lui. Comment voulez-vous qu'il
> entre directement en rapport avec Dieu?[85]

Metaphors of another binary pair, that of lightness and darkness, enhance the

narrative structure of the text and embellish the thematic of good and evil. The constant

allusions to shadows and luminescence promulgate the central place of the opposition

good and evil. Jeanne is described as having risen in a "lumière radieuse" when she is

burned alive and "franchi le rideau ardent qui la séparait des champs celestes."   Prélat

advises Gilles that to follow his beloved Jeanne he too must descend to Hell through fire

in order to be reborn and to rise again to be by her side. How must he accomplish this

devilish descent? Through satisfying his carnal hunger for the flesh of children: "Il faut

que leur chair vous ouvre les portes incandescentes de l'Enfer!"[86]

Tournier's narrative practices of *inversion bénigne* and *inversion maligne* are not

only at work in the narrative structure of the text, but are in fact advocated by the

characters as in the case of Prélat's visionary transformation of Gilles de Rais and the

following passage from the text is worth noting at length:

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[85] Tournier, *Gilles et Jeanne,* 90.
[86] Ibid., 110.

> Le Florentin (Prélat) semblait fonder ses expériences sur l'ambiguité fondamentale du feu, lequel est vie et mort, pureté et passion, sainteté et damnation. Il professait que le pélerin du ciel-ainsi se nomme l'alchimiste en quête-n'atteint l'un de ces pôles que pour se trouver aussitôt rejeté vers l'autre pôle par un phénomène d'inversion, comme l'excès de froid provoque une brûlure, ou comme le paroxysme de l'amour se confond avec la haine. Et cette inversion pouvait être bénigne ou maligne. Le pêcheur, plongé dans les abîmes de l'Enfer, pouvait en rejaillir revêtu d'innocence pourvu qu'il n'ait pas perdu la foi.[87]

Thus according to the proclamations of the enlightened Prélat, Gilles must undergo a malignant inversion through the sacrifice of children in order to obtain salvation next to Jean.

These similarities, embellishments and developments between the characters of Gilles de Rais and that of Abel Tiffauges in *Le Roi des Aulnes* represent examples of a core mytheme in Tournier's works, that of the Ogre. As noted by Martin Roberts in his *Michel Tournier Bricolage and Cultural Mythology*: "Just as in *Le Roi des Aulnes* Tiffauges was modeled on the historical Gilles de Rais, so in *Gilles et Jean* Tournier's Gilles, paradoxically, is modeled on Tiffauges: like Tiffauges, he is depicted as an Ogre, and shares with him a number of the ogrish characteristics identified by Tournier in *Le Vent Paraclet*."[88] Gilles himself, not merely ogre, monstrously so, obtains his salvation through the murder of young children. Tournier in his tendency towards Intertextuality complements Abel Tiffauges and perhaps enlightens his unsuspecting readers to the genesis of this Ogre on *Le Roi des Aulnes* for Gilles de Rais himself is a "porteur d'enfants" who roams the countryside mounted upon his horse in search of prey. Gilles, as Abel Tiffauges, mounts his horse to search the countryside for young boys: "Le

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[87] Tournier, *Gilles et Jeanne,* 110.
[88] Roberts, 127.

cavalier ouvre son manteau. Un enfant est agrippé à lui. Il tombe à terre, cherche à se

relever gauchement."[89]

In continuing the spirit of narrative Intertextuality so ardently practiced by

Tournier, Gilles is even reported to have taken the "petit Poucet", this "petit dernier, si

chétif qu'on l'appelle Poucet"[90] and his brothers when they have the great misfortune of

finding the "silhouette noire et massive d'une forteresse"[91] that of château Tiffauges

where they seek refuge and whose door "se referme sur eux." Any reader of Tournier

quickly recognizes the narrative harmony of Tournier's texts. According to Martin

Roberts:

"this Perrault reference is an unusually complex example of bricolage…. Tournier's

rewriting of Perrault presented as the historical origin on which the fairy-tale is

based…Tournier's version accordingly replaces the fantasy of Perrault's tale with a grim

realism, and has no happy ending: Poucet and his brothers enter Gilles's castle never to

return."[92]

One link between Gilles de Rais and Tiffauges is their shared experience of "la

phorie" which is derived from the Greek pherein: to carry. Tournier defines this

phenomenon in the following manner in his article: *Comment j'ai construit le Roi des*

Aulnes:

> C'est son affaire à lui, la phorie; personne d'autre que lui ne sait ce que
> c'est. La phorie vous la retrouvez dans Saint-Christophe, Christo Phorus,
> le porteur d'enfants, celui qui accomplit la phorie du Christ. Qu'est-ce

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[89] Tournier, *Gilles et Jeanne*, 57.
[90] Ibid., 58.
[91] Ibid., 59.
[92] Roberts, 127.

que c'est donc la phorie? Si vous réunissez toute l'imagerie de ce roman, et si vous cherchez à dégager ce qu'il peut y avoir de commun pour tous les hommes, je voudrais qu'on comprenne que la phorie, un concept qui peut paraître fou, est aussi dans le coeur de chacun de nous. La phorie, c'est l'ambiguité de l'amour.[93]

This quotation from Tournier brings to the forefront another opposing binary pair at the very heart of the construction of Tiffauges, that between Saint Christopher and the famous *Roi des Aulnes* (Der Erlkönig) from the famous poem by Goethe. This dichotomy not only incarnates the opposing forces of good/evil, but another opposition essential to Tiffauges' destiny that of up/down or carried/carrier (*porté/porteur*). Tiffauges' character is the sum of several malignant inversions on behalf of Tournier. Tournier takes these two models and inverts their meaning in order to give new meaning to the established mythical meaning. Saint Christopher and Der Erlkönig (*le Roi des Aulnes*) are both examples of *la phorie,* or the pleasure felt by someone who is carrying a small child: be it St. Christopher who helps Jesus Christ across a river or Der Erlkönig whose deadly embrace suffocates the helpless child he carries. Tournier discusses the opposition between these two characters in the following way:

> Quelle difference y a-t-il entre Saint-Christophe et le Roi des Aulnes? Saint-Christophe porte un enfant, le Roi des Aulnes emporte un enfant. Saint-Christophe est la bête de somme humble, l'âne qui porte le Saveur; le Roi des Aulnes est la bête de proie qui vole. L'un sert, l'autre serre (au sens d'écraser), asservit. Et c'est toute la phorie, ce sont les deux pôles entre lesquels Tiffauges pendant tout le roman oscille, car il y a en lui du bon et du mauvais. Il y a le tendre porteur d'enfants, et le féroce emporteur d'enfants, voleur d'enfants. [94]

This quote summarizes perfectly the duality inherent to the construct of Tiffauges

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[93] Tournier, "Comment", 87.
[94] Tournier, *Gilles et Jeanne*, 87

and as in the previous of examples of inversion, Tournier recombines the existing traits of St. Christopher and of Der Erlkönig and places them temporally in the time of Nazi Germany. Through the use of inversion Tournier continues a connection between the mythical models that formulate Tiffauges. There is a connection between St. Christopher and Der Erlkönig which function syntagmatically. There is continuity between his ogrish and pedophilic urges that are balanced out by these two mythical models.

Tiffauges himself discusses his nomenclature and is forced to recite the story of Saint-Christopher by heart during his stay at his preparatory school notably named: Saint-Christopher. Tiffauges' recitation notes the duality of good/evil which greatly influences the actions of Saint-Christopher who at the beginning of his quest for the most powerful person on earth turns to the devil. Yet St. Christopher hears of a far more powerful man, Jesus Christ and seeks him. Arriving at a river with too strong a current to pass, St Christopher encounters a young boy who is unable to cross the river and asks for his help. St. Christopher agrees and puts the young boy on his shoulder whose weight nearly crushes him. Upon arrival on the other side, the young boy reveals his identity as the all-mighty Christ, savior of man, and lavishes the saint with gifts of fresh fruit.

Of noteworthy importance in this recount is the thematic model of the man who lifts the young boy on his shoulder and leads him to safety for this is the primordial example of "la phorie" which is metonymic in nature. Tournier inverts this model, for upon lifting a child on his horse, Tiffauges leads them to the Nazi camp where they join the Jungmannen. Salvation to man no more, this *porteur d'enfants* entraps and leads youth to their doom.

This thematic oppositions resulting from this mythical bricolage of St. Christopher and Der Erlkönig, namely carrier/carried, up/down, good/evil, continue to dominate the novel and culminate in the final moments of Tiffauges' life when he quite literally becomes *le Roi des Aulnes*, the true *porteur d'enfants* when he carries the young Jewish boy Ephraim across a muddy field yet he crumbles under the weight and is unable to save the savior.

Tiffauges is the author of a world ravaged by genocide, which silently gave to Adolf Hitler the power to pursue his vision of racial cleansing. It is exactly this universality of evil that Tournier chooses to emphasize: "Alors évidemment, dès le début, j'ai souligné les côtés monstrueux du personnage, mais ces côtés sont petitement monstrueux, je veux dire qu'il serait facile, à chacun de nous, d'en trouver l'équivalent en lui-même ou chez les autres."[95]

The closing of this statement powerfully evokes the duality inherent to a mytheme such as the monster which is at once universal and individual in nature. The narrative of Tiffauges in *le Roi des Aulnes* emphasizes the individual element of Tiffauges' monstrosity through the use of metonymic elements such as *inversion bénigne* and *maligne* which transform Nazi Germany into a fertile environment for the personal myth or the *parole* of Abel Tiffauges placed in the Second World War.

Through the creation of this third order constructed around the malignant inversion of the core binary pairs and mythemes of the mythological models, Tournier creates a mini-narrative which stands in opposition to the universal, connotative sign of

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[95] Tournier, "Comment", 81

the second order.   The story of Abel Tiffauges is placed in time, that of WWII. Due to a combination of terms through his technique of malignant and benign inversions, Tournier creates a mini-narrative that emphasizes the individuality of the myth. This *parole* stands in contrast to its second-order connotative precedent which is the myth of St. Christopher who universally signifies the salvation of man.

Tournier's third order connotative process succeeds in engendering a new mythology, one which is paradoxically individualistic in nature. It is due to his literary genius and his narrative structuring consisting of inverting long-established binary pairs that he enables the third order level to signify. This technique is not specific to Abel Tiffauges and this mythical re-structuring is rampant in his works and worth exploring at length. Indeed, the short story *Tupik* provides another example of Tournier's rewriting of an established myth on a third order level of representation.

Tupik: Structural Study

A young boy nicknamed Tupik by his father to describe the boy's prickly hair, grapples with the influence of maternal and paternal sexual models in the short story *Tupik*. His penchant for the more feminine is expressed in the long descriptions of the sensual appeal of his mother. They blatantly reveal a boy whose sexual preference is more inclined towards the feminine than the masculine, as reinforced by his preference to urinate in a seated manner like a girl. The metaphorical images which dominate Tupik's daily outings reinforce gender confusion and ultimately the fracturing of the body into distinct parts which can be recombined to create a unisexual being. Historically, the Minotaur's body symbolizes sexual virility and strength. Tupik's gender confusion

manifests itself in several ways: fetishism for symbols of his mother such as her gloves with which he embraces himself, urinating his bed uncontrollably, and an excessive curiosity for the rituals and aura of a woman.

Eventually this curiosity leads Tupik into the ladies restroom on an outing one day, in which he finds an enchanting, wonderfully smelling world of cleanliness which stands in sharp contrast to the repulsively unkempt men's restroom in which these men have the audacity to urinate standing. Tupik's revulsion for masculinity and his propensity for the feminine have its roots in his paternal and maternal relationships respectively.

For Tupik, the father role is dominated by punishment and authority. The adjectives employed by Tournier to describe Tupik's father create an image of a man whose embrace repulses Tupik: "ses joues râpeuses…sa peau grise, son odeur de tabac...son complet couleur de poussière, il n'y avait rien qui flatte et caresse dans cet homme, et ses manifestations de tendresse ressemblaient à des punitions."[96] His father imposes the undesirable nickname Tupik on the poor boy in attempt to demean and embarrass him precisely for his body parts.

Several binary oppositions dominate the short story and structure it accordingly. Tournier adds mythological and symbolic elements to these binary pairs that create the universe of Tupik. The most dominant opposition of the text is male/female from which emanate other oppositions such as father/son, mother/son, woman/man, girl/boy and ultimately gender confusion/ gender distinction. As stated by Lévi-Strauss in his

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[96] Michel Tournier, "Tupik", in *Le Coq de Bruyère* (Paris: Gallimard, 1978), 69.

Structure des Mythes, myth creates meaning through these oppositions and as we shall see in the story of Tupik, the opposition of male/female has profound literary ramifications which emanate from the symbolic makeup, both metaphoric and metonymic, of the narrative.

As in other texts by Tournier, the narrative structure consists of three distinct levels which allow Tournier to modify the mythical elements at work. The most obvious mythological example is that of the Minotaur, the mythical monster whose body is that of a strong man but whose head is that of a Bull. This image is coupled with Thesée, adding to the gender confusion of Tupik. Thesée is in fact a young boy whose feminine attire and girlish name complement the viral masculinity endowed in the Minotaur. Collectively the Minotaur and Thesée symbolize this dialectic between male and female. The references to this sexual dialectic are present throughout the text, each reinforcing the stereotypes and ideals attributed to each sex by Tupik.

From the very beginning of the story, the paternal role is described in a sensual manner in that the description of the father consists of his smell and of his touch. Tupik, fearful of his father, seeks refuge in the welcoming arms of his mother who: "l'avait enveloppé de son parfum."[97] A long passage follows describing the softness of his mother including her creamy skin and her reassuring voice who assures Tupik that baby porcupines' needles are not prickly until later when they grow up and become man.

The gender descriptions rely on intimate details which recreate very private moments to which, in the case of the father, Tupik is privy. Through lengthy descriptions

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[97] Tournier, "Tupik", 69.

of the most minute details of Tupik's fathers' toiletry, the manner with which he holds

the razo-"tenu bizarrement entre le pouce et l'index"[98], or the "grimaces ridicules"[99]-

Tournier recreates the movement and the sensory atmosphere surrounding these private

rituals. This ritualistic aspect is complementary to the mythical quality of this text for as

Mircea Eliade confirms in his *Initiation, rites, sociétés secrètes*, the first category or type

of initiation is the ritual through which an adolescent passes to adulthood: "La première

comprend les rituels collectifs par lesquels s'effectue le passage de l'enfance, ou de

l'adolescence, à l'âge de l'adulte."[100] Through participating in this ritualistic grooming

of his father, Tupik, in a way, himself, crosses the bridge to manhood. In the end, Tupik

is repulsed by his father's grooming and flees before his father has a chance to embrace

him, questioning how his father could be finished having left hairs on his chest. Tupik

thus expresses disgust with that which is masculine and an enchantment with that which

is feminine which in this story, lies temptingly out of reach.

In sharp contrast, the toiletry of his mother proves to be an enchanting ritual to

which Tupik is refused access. These private moments of his mother in which she

embellishes her femininity are denied to Tupik. In fact Tupik: "n'avait en revanche

jamais vu sa mère à sa table de toilette."[101]   All he witnesses is the "déesse" she has

become when she has finished. The nouns and adjectives of the description of his

mother's toiletry emphasize the beauty of that which is feminine: "fraîche, rose,

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[98] Tournier, "Tupik", 70.
[99] Ibid., 70.
[100] Eliade, *Initiation, rites, sociétés secrètes*, 24.
[101] Tournier, "Tupik", 70.

déesse". [102] Tupik, excessively taunted by this mysterious femininity, pleads for his

mother to comfort him in her absence with a token, a fetish: her evening gloves:

"souples et tièdes comme des peaux vivantes fraîchement arrachées." [103] Tupik, so

endeared "l'avait enveloppé son corps de ces mains vides, les mains de maman, et il

s'était endormi sous leur caresse." [104] The gloves in this instant represent metonymically

that which Tupik longs for: his mother's presence. They provide a connection between

Tupik and his mother. It remains to be seen at the end of the text how concretely Tupik

reenacts these "living skins freshly torn off."

The symbol of the glove functions in a diachronic manner, assuring his mother's

presence at a particular moment in time. They enjoy a temporal existence in that they

assuage the grief of Tupik at a particular moment in time. The syntagmatic relationships

between the metonymy of the gloves and of the mother they represent constitute

connotative elements which connect Tupik with his mother. These elements of the story

are signifying elements which function together in the narrative. Tournier manipulates

these signifiers and signifieds in order to create the *parole* of Tupik, the individual mini

narrative of a little boy, a young boy who is part male, Minotaur with a sex, and part

female, part Thésée enrobed in girlish attire.

This statue of the Minotaur and of the young boy perfectly represents the dialectic

at work in the story. The dominant thematic symbolism of the story consistently revolves

around the metaphor of the Minotaur. This opposition of male/female and the confusion,

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[102] Tournier, "Tupik", 70.
[103] Ibid., 71.
[104] Ibid., 71.

with which Tupik approaches it, manifests itself in every aspect of the narrative description. Every day at the park, this "lieu initiatique" where Tupik enjoyed passing his time "à demi désoeuvré d'exploration et de découverte"[105], Tupik's attention was drawn above all to the restrooms: "le chalet". The division between the sexes and their respective toilets is clearly noted in the text. The left, which symbolizes the sinister as we have seen with Abel Tiffauges' *Ecrits Sinistres* performed by his left hand, is the domain of the man with: "ses urinoirs malodorants, parcimonieusement irrigués, et derrière des portes qui fermaient mal"[106] stand in stark contrast to the ladies which: "fleuraient le desinfectant au lilas" and with "des serviettes fraîches et neigeuses."[107]

Most importantly for Tupik is the stall itself which has defined limits symbolized by a door which closed firmly, unlike the stalls which "fermaient mal"[108] in the men's room. With their "papier hygiénique soyeux, insonore et imprégné d'essence de violette"[109], these closed spaces offer safety and beauty, all that which his mother represents to Tupik. In this feminine space Tupik safely explores his own femininity, his preference to sit when urinating and his own feminine desires.

This tempting world of sexual duality is guarded by Mamouse who Tournier cleverly symbolizes by Cerbere, the guardian of the Underworld. Mamouse symbolizes a barrier to sexual exploration and ultimately sexual freedom which is not confined to this particular moment in the narrative. Rather, this barrier constitutes the *langue* of the text,

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[105] Tournier, "Tupik", 72.
[106] Ibid., 75.
[107] Ibid., 75.
[108] Ibid., 75.
[109] Ibid., 75.

it is the opposition which creates this binary male/female pair and exercises an influence a temporally.

The impenetrability of this guarded sanctuary becomes jeopardized when Tupik witnesses a young boy Dominique leaving the ladies room. Curious about how Dominique could have attained this "énorme privilège"[110], Tupik quickly interrogates the young boy. Dominique commands Tupik to meet him at the center of the labyrinth in order to reveal to him the secret, as such mirroring the labrynth in which the Minotaur was imprisoned. This dizzying space symbolizes metaphorically the gender confusion experienced by Tupik. Man, woman, or both? The notion of the labyrinth instills in Tupik a horror similar to the overwhelming distress he feels in the presence of his father. This labyrinth: "Lui avait toujours inspiré de l'horreur. C'était un massif obscur et humide dans lequel on pouvait se glisser par une fente étroite. Ensuite on se perdait."[111] "On se perdait" proves to be the defining emotion for Tupik, for his quest lies in understanding his own sexuality, in transgressing the boundaries established by societal norms.

Having arrived "plus mort que vif"[112] at the center of the labyrinth, Tupik discovers the "gros garcon" Dominique sitting with a serious demeanor. Then, slowly, he reveals his stomach "blanc et lisse" which ended in "une fente laiteuse, un sourire vertical où jouait la trace d'un pâle duvet."[113] Thus, Dominique's masculine exterior in fact hides

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[110] Tournier, "Tupik"., 80.
[111] Ibid., 81.
[112] Ibid., 81.
[113] Ibid., 82.

the feminine sexuality, this "sourire vertical"[114] so desired by Tupik. This sexual

revelation only adds to Tupik's confusion for gender seems to be different from sex.

Standing in contrast to the sex of the man this "viande brune de l'homme"[115] that Tupik

witnessed in the men's room, here standing before him is the non-imposing sex of a

woman.

Tupik leaves this revealing endeavor more confused than before and decides to

return to the "cabine", the place from which the gender confusion which reached its

climax in the labyrinth originates. Having just recently witnessed the sexual revelation of

Dominique, Tupik quickly finds himself in the midst of a similar crisis. However, this

time, true to the construction of the text centered around opposing binary oppositions,

Tupik witnesses the overwhelmingly imposing gender of man which stands in sharp

contrast to the non-imposing feminine sex. Tupik: "n'en crût pas ses yeux. La quantité

de chair bistre et molle qu'il renfonçait péniblement dans sa braguette était formidable.

Qu'allait-il faire de tout cette viande hideuse et inutile?"[116]

The adjectives employed by Tupik describe a boy's vision of manhood and are

notably negative. To Tupik, that which is masculine represents that which is vile, useless

and imposing. Combined with the paternal influence from which Tupik flees, it becomes

increasingly clear that Tupik develops a growing animosity towards, and disgust with,

that which is masculine. In contrast, that which is feminine represents happiness, beauty

and acceptance.

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[114] Tournier, "Tupik", 82.
[115] Ibid., 83.
[116] Ibid.,

These opposing sexual forces harmonize in the statue of the Minotaur and the young Thesée. All of the gender confusion noted throughout the story finds a fitting symbol in one lone act of Thesée, that of Thesée cutting off the phallus of the masculine Minotaur. Symbolically, the feminine triumphs over the masculine by removing that which incarnates masculine strength. This revelation proves to be of paramount psychological importance, for Tupik no longer wets his bed, and more importantly he focuses on an act that will liberate him from his gender confusion and the vile masculinity which encumbers him: that of removing his own phallus. Standing before the guardian of the sexual Hell from which Tupik emerges, he: "tira de sa poche un rasoir, un de ces anciens rasoirs à manche de nacre que l'on appelle parfois des coupe-chou. Il l'ouvrit de sa main libre déboutonna sa braguette. …Le sang jaillit. Tupik tendait maintenant à Mamouse par-dessus la table un peu de chair recroquevillée."[117]

This self-castration exercised by Tupik perfectly demonstrates a ritualistic act of initiation which allows the pubescent boy to enter into manhood or in Tupik's case, permanent gender confusion as noted by M. Eliade: "Dans de très nombreux cas, les rites de puberté impliquent, d'une façon ou de l'autre, la révélation de la sexualité."[118] He comments on initiation in the following way: "l'initiation de puberté débute par un acte de rupture: l'enfant ou l'adolescent est séparé de la mère, et cette séparation se fait parfois d'une manière assez brutale."[119] Tupik redefines the brutality to which Eliade refers by castrating himself. Nonetheless, it is infallible that Tupik participates in an

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[117] Tournier, "Tupik", 84.
[118] Eliade, *Initiation, rites, sociétés secrètes*, 27.
[119] Ibid., 27.

initiation to his adult form, be it hermaphroditic (combinination of male and female), asexual (no gender parts at all), transgendered (artificially constructing a sex), or a blend of all of these.

The world which oppresses Tupik by its sexual complexities quickly fades away and Tupik falls before Mamouse, thus having resolved his own sexual identity by changing to the feminine. In one fell swipe of the razor, Tupik transgresses the sexual boundaries established by society and nature.

Let us review for a moment the semiotic structure of the story. As well noted by Lévi-Strauss in his *Anthropologie Structurale*, myth is formed of "unités constitutives"[120] which compose language yet due to the structural complexity of myth which builds upon language, these "unités" are termed "grosses unités constitutives."[121] In the case of Tupik, the gross constitutive units can be determined by breaking down the plot into the shortest possible sentences in order to "traduire la succession des événements."[122] In the case such a synopsis would be as follows.

Tupik is repulsed by his father.	Tupik wets his bed.	Dominique reveals her feminine sex.
Tupik is enamored of his Mother.		
.	Tupik urinates sitting down.	
		Tupik sees the enormous penis of a Man in the bathroom.
	Tupik stops urinating his bed.	

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[120] Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Anthropologie Structurale*, 241.
[121] Ibid., 241.
[122] Ibid., 241.

Tupik identifies with the
statue of the Minotaur and Thesée.

         Tupik cuts off his penis.

  In the method practiced by Levi-Strauss on the Oedipus legend, each unit is

placed in the above manner which allows for a simultaneously diachronic and synchronic

reading of the units. To read from left to right allows for a diachronic reading of the

story which is true to the progression of the actions in the text. However, if one reads

each individual column from top to bottom, one interprets the actions atemporally,

avoiding the cause and effect inherent to a chronological reading. These mythemes

constitute meaning in the way they associate to each other. For example, Tupik stops

urinating his bed once he has reconciled his gender confusion through witnessing the

sexes of both male and female, and by acknowledging his repulsion of the male sex and

his attraction to the female sex.   These "paquets de relations" as Lévi-Strauss refers to

them, constitute the mythical system at work in Tupik.

  Once having established and defined the mythemes and the binary pairs at the

core of the semiotic structure of this text, I would now like to elaborate on the different

levels of systems at work given that *Tupik* is a mythical text in which Tournier has

reworked and attributed new signifiers to already established mythical meanings. The

text has several examples of myths, or second order signifying systems which have

already built upon the first order denotative level of language. The statue of the Minotaur

is a perfect example, for the beast became mythical once a connotation of masculinity,

strength and sexuality was attributed to the animal through a mythical story, that of the

Minotaur and Thésée. Tournier takes this second level system and attributes a new

signifier that of a symbol of gender confusion and violence towards that which is

masculine through the use of malignant inversion. Thésée castrates the Minotaur as

punishment for its masculinity and the Minotaur thus symbolizes all that is negative

about masculinity. Thésée symbolizes the beauty and strength of the feminine hidden and

complex in its nature.

The metaphorical and metonymical makeup of *Tupik* constitutes the third-order

system created by Tournier. Through the reworking of the already established mythical

meanings, he renders the myth more complex. He, in the spirit of Barthes, uses myth to

rework myth just as myth uses language to rework it. The representation of Cerbere by

Mamouse and the re-contextualizing of the Minotaur and of Thésée are the new signifiers

added by Tournier. The chart above captures the simultaneously historical and a

historical nature of the text due to the very makeup of the metaphors and metonymies.

The metonymy of the mother glove establishes a relationship of contiguity between the

glove and the loving mother which it represents to Tupik. The glove metonymically

connects Tupik to his mother thus this, and other stories of Tournier, are metonymic in

nature in that they rely on an environment, a context in which the narrative takes place.

The elements combine in a sequence and thus constitute a *parole,* a mini-narrative of

Tupik, the young boy who wishes to be a girl and takes profoundly permanent actions to

alter his own gender.

Tournier builds upon this 2nd order, connotative level to a third level which alters

the signifieds and supplies new meaning to the metaphorical and the metonymic make-up

of the text. The manner in which Tournier accomplishes this reworking is distinctly

malignant for he renders the symbols more negative in nature. That this third order

constitutes an individual narrative through its reliance on metonymy and its unraveling of

the universalistic tendencies of the first-order myth, relates it to the postmodern era.

Tupik's gender confusion and self-castration proves to be a playful undermining of

established gender roles as defined by the modern era and by the mythical models of the

Minotaur and of Thesée. Therefore, Tournier's reworking of the myth of the Minotaur

challenges its established meaning. Through the use of myth, by restructuring the

mythemes and binary pairs which signify the meaning of the myth, Tournier effectively

deconstructs myth. The concluding pages will enhance this structural perspective by

explaining the collapse of these systems through the theories of Derrida and Charles

Sanders Pierce and announce the postmodern aspects of Tournier's mythical reworking

which will be explored in great depth in chapter 2.

Tournier's Mythomorphic Narratives

Tournier's re-working and re-structuring on a third-order level of representation

creates a mythological system which engenders an addition of new signifieds attributed to

previously established systems. His particular narratives, as we have seen throughout this

study, function on a third-order level of representation for it is Michel Tournier who

contributes the supplemental signifieds to dramatically alter the meaning of the myth.

Yet this process does not end fatally on the pages of his works, rather through the use of

mythology he draws us, the readers, into this semiotic process for the narrative continues

in us and we take our turn in attributing a new culturally coded signified which gives rise

to a new myth or mini-narrative.

Charles Sanders Pierce's semiotic theory developed in the eight volumes of his *Collected Papers* argues for the existence of two interlocking triads the first of which consists of the "sign", the "interpretant", and the "object." The process of signification involves all three:

> A sign is something which stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity. It addresses somebody, that is, creates in the mind of that person an equivalent sign, or perhaps more developed sign. That sign which it creates I call the interpretant of the first sign. The sign stands for something, its object. It stands for that object, not in all respects, but in reference to a sort of idea…[123]

This notion of interpretant proves essential in understanding this progression from one signifying system to the next, for, due to the unique semiotic characteristics of the structure of myth, this signification is continued by the reader of the text. The interpretant as developed by Pierce is identical to the signified as elaborated on by Saussure and in particular the quality of endless commutability of the two. Pierce summarizes this trait of the interpretant in the following way: "The interpretant is nothing but another representation to which the torch of truth is handed along; and as representation, it has its interpretant again. Lo, another infinite series."[124]

Myth, understood to be a structural system, presumes the existence of a center or an origin, all at once universal and contemporary. Once this center is proven dislocated and constantly transferring to another system outside the system through the operation of the interpretant, it proves impossible to concretely identify a fixed episteme of a myth.

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[123] Charles Sander Pierce, *The Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Pierce Vol II*, ed. Charles Hartshone and Paul Weiss (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1931), 135.
[124] Charles Sanders Pierce, *Collected Papers*, 171.

Since language is the tool of the critic, this becomes even more complicated since

language and myth are similar systems of signification susceptible to the complications of

representing that which they themselves use as a tool as noted by Plato. As a result, in

order to establish a structural discourse of myth, perhaps it is better to abandon a

scientific approach and embrace a discourse of myth itself, as Derrida states: "le discours

mytho-logique doit être lui-même mytho-morphe. Il doit avoir la forme de ce dont il

parle."[125] Derrida credits Lévi-Strauss in *le Cru et le Cuit* as having already reached this

conclusion:

> Il n'existe pas de terme véritable à l'analyse mythique, pas d'unité secrète
> qu'on puisse saisir au bout du travail de décomposition. Les thèmes se
> dédoublent à l'infini….l'unité du mythe n'est que tendancielle et
> projective, elle ne reflète jamais un état ou un moment du mythe.
> Phénomène imaginaire impliqué par l'effort d'interprétation, son rôle est
> de donner une forme synthétique au mythe. Ainsi ce livre sur les mythes
> est-il, à sa façon, un mythe.[126]

Tournier in his writings exercises this approach for he too recognizes the

complications of analyzing a mythical discourse. Instead of attempting to decipher the

myth in a scientific manner, he uses myth as a structural narrative to understand and to

continue the process of mythical decent ring by allowing the reader to participate in the

construction of his own mythical discourse.

Lévi-Strauss concretely confirms my postulation of the third-order of myth in

Tournier's writings by stating that a text which deals with and uses myth to analyze myth

is in fact a third order since: "les mythes reposent eux-mêmes sur des codes de second

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[125] Jacques Derrida, "La Structure, le Signe et le Jeu" in *L'écriture et la différence* (Paris: Editions de Seuil, 1967), 420
[126] Ibid., 420.

ordre (les codes du premier ordre étant ceux en quoi consiste le langage), ce livre offrirait

alors l'ébauche d'un code de troisème ordre, destiné à assurer la traductibilité réciproque

de plusieurs mythes."[127]

As a mythical level which contemplates and analyzes its second order model,

Tournier's reworking of myth assumes this mythoi-poetic function as described by

Derrida in his "La structure, le signe et le jeu".   As a result of his malignant and benign

inversions, his *bricolage mythique* constitutes a mythopoem in that his narratives

contemplate and enlarge the realm of possible interpretation of myths, allowing for a

highly connotative, individualized interpretation. The examples of Tiffauges and of

Tupik constitute third-order myths in that they contemplate the mytho-logies of a

connotative, second- order nature.

The mythemes as established earlier in this chapter are those present in the

second- order system upon which Tournier builds a third, mytho-morphic system. The

innate problematic inherent to the scientific approach hailed by structuralists such as

Lévi-Strauss and in part the analysis contained in this chapter, suffers a similar fate as

that of language using language to critique itself: a constant decent ring which

destabilizes and ultimately dangerously undermines the ascertations made. Pierce's

theory of interpretants which engender infinitely new interpretants seems to have already

dealt with this problematic. Perhaps even Plato, in warning against the dangers of third

order representations, is aware of the problematic yet unable to escape it. However,

Tournier in his third order writings offer the most relevant and possible critical

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[127] Derrida, "La Structure, le signe et le Jeu", 421.

exploratory discourse on myth for he uses myth to understand myth. Be it as is stated by Lévi-Strauss and Derrida that there is no center, no origin and in fact no author of myth since the center and origin is constantly shifting, Tournier's faithfulness to the overall structural makeup of myth engenders this process. Tournier allows for new readers to inhabit, albeit briefly, their own mytho-morphic dialogue which proves to be a trait of the postmodern era which will now be explored in greater depth in chapter two.

Chapter Two: The Transgressive Self of the Shadows

> *"Me voici donc seul sur la terre, n'ayant plus de frère, de
> prochain, d'ami, de société que moi-même."* Jean-Jacques
> Rousseau [1]

> *"'Je' est un autre."* Rimbaud[2]

It is in the novel *Vendredi ou les limbes du Pacifique* that Michel Tournier once

again breathes new life into an established myth, that of Robinson Crusoe for whom

"Jamais un mythe n'a été plus vivant que celui-là."[3] Through his mythical reworking,

Tournier adapts Robinson to the postmodern milieu and in so doing allows him to

transgress many of the modern boundaries previously restricting him. In the place of the

totalizing meta-narrative of the modern Crusoe whose legitimacy was secured by its

legacy of Western empowerment, emerges a postmodern Robinson. Tournier's Robinson

exemplifies a mini-narrative rejecting such a historical heritage of dominance and

ultimately ventures into the realm of his primitive slave Vendredi.

Thrust from his *Virginie*, Crusoe's isolation on the island he named la Désolation,

exemplifies the postmodern narrative. As such, it deconstructs its modern era literary

predecessor and allows Crusoe the realization of a heterogeneous, individual freedom

amidst chaos and disorder. Above all, Tournier's reworking of the myth of Robinson

Crusoe constitutes a mythical reworking of the established myth of alienation which

dominates our postmodern consumer based society. In his postmodern treatment of the

myth of Robinson, Tournier systematically unravels several modern dialectical

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[1] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Les Rêveries du Promeneur Solitaire* (Paris: Flammarion, 1997), 55.
[2] Arthur Rimbaud, "Lettre du Voyant" in *Oeuvres Complètes* (Paris: Edition de la Pléiade, 1946), 247.
[3] Michel Tournier, "Entretien Michel Tournier," *Lire* (1996): 36.

oppositions such as master and slave, order and chaos, good and evil, the homogenous

and the heterogeneous. As a result, Robinson no longer refers to a modern reality or

referent, rather he and his opposing complement Vendredi exemplify a postmodern

simulation of the modern referent. Therefore, a textualization of the modern myth of

Robinson Crusoe occurs. In his place stands a starkly ahistorical Robinson Crusoe who

is isolated and cast away from his historical referent: the modern era and its belief in

rationalistic ideals of western empowerment.

The chapter that follows will examine the transgression of modern boundaries and

the isolation felt as a result by the subject of the narrative structure: the myth of Robinson

Crusoe. Just as the postmodern consumer individual feels cast away and isolated from

human interaction and reality, so too is Robinson cast away from the legitimizing

discourse of his mythological modern predecessor. Tournier's use of myth as the central

mechanism to his writings continues to adapt to its contemporary milieu for as Jean

Baudrillard remarks, the defining moment for the postmodern era is mythical in nature:

"Consumption is a myth. That is to say, it is a statement of contemporary society about

itself, the way our society speaks itself."[4] This reference to myth as second level

discourse reinforces the reflexive nature of myth as emphasized by Roger Caillois in his

le Mythe et l'homme: "C'est en effet dans le mythe que l'on saisit le mieux, *à vif*, la

collusion des postulations les plus secrètes, les plus virulentes du psychisme individuel et

des pressions les plus impératives et les plus troublantes de l'existence sociale."[5]

As seen in the previous chapter, Tournier's dialectical restructuring of myth does

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[4] Jean Baudrillard, *The Consumer Society: Myths and Structures* (London: Sage Publications, 1998), 193.
[5] Roger Caillois, *Le mythe et l'homme* (Paris: Editions de Gallimard, 1938), 13.

not take place merely on a second level but a third level which simulates and incorporates the established myth into a new system of signification. Using the theories of simulation and simulacra developed by Jean Baudrillard, I will demonstrate how this process of simulation takes us to the third order and thrusts us into the shadows of representation amidst which rises before us a profoundly altered Robinson Crusoe. Through an analysis of the complex intertextuality between the original text, the hypotext, of Defoe and the ensuing reworked version, the hypertext of *Vendredi,* I will demonstrate the postmodern aspects of the thematic and aesthetic deconstruction performed by Tournier of the established second order myth. I will then discuss how this transformation passes into the third order plagued by so many questions of mimetic viability and ultimately challenges the very aesthetic of representation.

In exploring the transformation and appropriation of the raw materials of the myth of Crusoe, I will demonstrate the profound discontinuity and rupture of modern ideals which give rise to a postmodern Robinson. It is through the eruption of Vendredi and the discursive force he exerts on Robinson's island that the postmodern trait of deconstruction arises. Through representing the other, that which is unknown and unable to be incorporated into a system, Vendredi represents the heterogeneous and the sacred as envisioned by Georges Bataille. His systematic destabilization of the modern, orderly, Robinson, succeeds in leading Robinson himself outside the boundaries of the rules he constructed. Gilles Deleuze in his essay "Michel Tournier et le monde sans autrui" seems to already announce the inherently postmodern attributes of Robinson's existence *sans autrui* by recognizing the dehumanizing and disorienting consciousness which results

from this transgression: "Tout a perdu son sens, tout devient simulacra et vestige, même l'objet du travail, même l'être aimé, même le monde en lui-même et le moi dans le monde."[6] I will demonstrate this fracturing of the self, which manifests itself not only in the creation of the log-book but also the temporal confusion Robinson experiences in his new found ahistorical, non-referential status. I above all wish to emphasize the structural reworkings which create the textualization of the myth of Crusoe, turning the modern era "work" of Daniel Defoe, so rich in meaning, into a postmodern "text" whose ability to create meaning or expression will be explored in the end of this chapter.

The postmodern free-play which results from the abolition of a historical referent puts a hermeneutic interpretation of the novel at great risk. As a matter of fact, what stands in its place is a new text centered around the core notion of differentiation and inversion. Baudrillard identifies the inherently postmodern character of such a play of signification due to the lack of a referent in his *the Mirror of Production*: "the signified and referent are now abolished to the sole profit of the play of signifiers, of a generalized formulation in which the code no longer refers back to any subjective or objective "reality" but to its own logic."[7] In this perspective, Tournier's dense mythological restructuring fuels itself by attributing new signification to established meanings. As such, Robinson himself exemplifies this game of signification in that he explores new spaces of representation in his solitary adventures on the island. I hope to reveal the new found freedom of our postmodern Robinson which is due to the liberating force of his

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[6] Gilles Deleuze, "Michel Tournier et le monde sans autrui," in *Vendredi ou les limbes du Pacifique* (Paris: Gallimard, 1972), 275.

[7] Jean Baudrillard, *the Mirror of Production* (St. Louis: Telos, 1981), 127.

slave Vendredi. In fact, Tournier's Robinsons exemplifies a mini-narrative which, after having cannibalized and effaced its modern predecessor, allows us to explore our own unique personal space in this new postmodern world. In this sense, Tournier's work constitutes what Jameson describes as a "radically new form…in which we may again begin to grasp our positioning as individual and collective subjects and regain a capacity to act and struggle which is at present neutralized by our spatial as well as our social confusion."[8]

The Postmodern Crusoe

Postmodern literature, albeit widely defined, consistently deconstructs previously held modern beliefs and the meta-narratives which stabilized and legitimized society. One such belief was that of the power of man's reason and his ability to dominate inferior societies as a result. Robinson's solitary isolation on an island far removed from the auspices of modernity exemplifies the futility of man's reason in the overwhelmingly uncontrollable force of nature, including human nature. Robinson's futile attempts at order and control fail, and ultimately lead him to produce his own individual narrative, one in which the uncontrollable forces of nature reign. Tournier's *Vendredi* presents us with Robinson Crusoe the individual, who no longer exemplifies the modern meta-narrative of the universal triumph of man's reason over the uncontainable island. Rather, Tournier's Crusoe is the revealing account of a single man, who, experiencing the failure of reason, comes to opt for a liberty which transgresses the many boundaries imposed by modern rationalism. As such, this narrative proves to be postmodern in nature.

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[8] Frederic Jameson, *Postmodernism: or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991), 54.

Postmodernity as a literary and artistic reaction to modernity inhabits many mediums and forms. For the purpose of this study, its literary tendencies are of the greatest concern. Postmodern literature tends to emphasize parody, "bricolage", irony, playfulness and reflexivity. This corpus of literature is commonly situational and contingent as opposed to modern narratives which are widely perceived as universal. Postmodern narratives make no claim to truth or universality or stability, rather they recognize and embrace the freedom which results from the collapse of controlling modern narratives. As Frederic Jameson in his work Postmodernism confirms: "As the word itself suggests, this break is most often related to notions of the waning of extinction of the hundred-year-old modern movement (or its ideological or aesthetic repudiation)."[9]   Tendencies toward fragmentation and discontinuity dominate the structure and the thematic identity of these works. However, as stated by Tournier, postmodern literature does not seek to reform the structure of the text as did for instance the "nouveaux romanciers". As he claims: "Mon propos n'est pas d'innover dans la forme, mais de faire passer au contraire dans une forme aussi traditionnelle, préservée et rassurante que possible une matière ne possédant aucune de ces qualités."[10]

The familiar form referred to by Tournier is mythical in nature, as in so many of his other works. Extracting from modernity mythical characters and subsequently conforming them to the emerging trends of the postmodern era is accomplished by Tournier's transformation of the myth on a profoundly structural level. Having demonstrated in Chapter1 the addition of a third signifying level to the already

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[9] Jameson, *Postmodernism,*1.
[10]Tournier, *le Vent Paraclet*,195.

established myths of St. Christopher and Tupik, it will be helpful at this point to explore

this dynamic relationship between myth and the postmodern era.

The adaptation of myth to the postmodern proves to be the unique contribution of

Tournier for the modern era relied heavily on all encompassing mythological narratives

in order to legitimize man's actions. As Jean-François Lyotard states in his *Postmodern*

Condition: "le postmoderne se caractérise par une incredulité à l'égard des meta-récits"[11].

In fact, according to Lyotard, these all encompassing ideologies are losing their

"puissance unificatrice et légitimante."[12] Modern narratives were proven overoptimistic

and indeed erroneous in the face of the collapse of the great belief in Man's reason after

the horrifying acts of the Second World War and its aftermath. As many critics confirm,

such as Fred Dallmayr in his essay *Modernity in the Crossfire: Comments on the*

Postmodern Turn: "modernity is under siege today."[13] His definition of modernity is

particularly helpful in this study of Robinson Crusoe for whom modernist ideals are the

ruling factors:

> by 'modernity' or 'modern culture,' I mean a culture or way of life that is
> the product of the Western Enlightenment and that has undergone the
> Weberian process of "rationalization" in every domain , including
> intellectual secularization, disenchantment from nature, political
> reorganization in the direction of rational-administrative efficiency and
> economic industrialization." [14]

As we shall soon see, Tournier's novel *Vendredi* exemplifies each and every one

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[11] Jean-Francois Lyotard, *La Condition Postmoderne: Rapport sur le Savoir* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1979), 63.

[12] Ibid., 63.

[13] John Paul Jones III,ed., Wolfgand Natter, ed., Theodore R. Schatzki, ed., *Postmodern Contentions: Epochs, Politics, Space* (New York: The Guilford Press, 1993), 17.

[14] Ibid., 17.

of the above mentioned traits of modernity. Yet it is not through the expression of these

modernist ideals that Tournier's Crusoe will achieve the realization of individual

freedom, rather through the deconstruction of each trend, an approach which is inherently

postmodern in nature.

Postmodern theory enlarges the realm of possibility beyond such modern

narratives and offers, as Jameson points out: "promise to get rid of whatever you found

confining, unsatisfying or boring about the modern, modernism, or modernity."[15] That

which is postmodern about Tournier's treatment of myth is his ability to undermine myth

using myth itself. As Ian Gregson explains in his work entitled "Postmodern Literature":

> The dominant attitude in postmodernism is disbelief. The dominant
> strategy of both postmodernist philosophy and postmodernist aesthetics is
> deconstruction, which is disbelief put into practice. Deconstruction is an
> anti-system, or a system that subverts a system; it is a mechanism that
> exposes mechanisms. Deconstruction unscrews belief systems and
> uncovers their whirring cogs.[16]

This emphasis on myth's capacity to critique and undermine is shared by

Baudrillard in the following commentary of late-capitalistic society: "Like every great

myth worth its salt, the myth of 'Consumption' has its discourse and its anti-discourse. In

other words, the elated discourse on affluence is everywhere shadowed by a morose,

moralizing, 'critical' counter-discourse on the ravages of consumer society and the tragic

end to which it inevitably dooms society as a whole."[17] This counter discourse voices

itself through the mythical reworking by Tournier of Robinson Crusoe.

Through the construction and subsequent de-construction of an additional

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[15] Jameson, *Postmodernism*, 14.
[16] Ian Gregson, *Postmodern Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press), 1.
[17] Baudrillard, *The Consumer Society,* 195.

signifying system, and of the many oppositions at the core of a myth, Tournier succeeds

in effectively destroying myth's aesthetic of expression which dominated the modern.

Tournier's use of myth as the central mechanism to unravel previously established myths

proves to be a powerfully postmodern approach. The following section will review the

structural reworking of the raw materials of the myth of Robinson Crusoe for which the

tridimensional signifying series functions in the following way.

The Three Orders of Robinson Crusoe

The first or denotative order of the myth of Robinson Crusoe consists of the

stranding of a single man on an isolated and unknown island. The signifier, or the

material component, is Robinson Crusoe the man on the island. The signified, or

conceptual material which combines with the signifier, is the notion of isolation and its

effect on the human condition. As Tournier himself questions in his *Vent Paraclet*,

perhaps the denotative model was the intentional stranding of Alexandre Selcraig, or

Selkirk as he was called, on a Pacific island in 1703. Selkirk had to choose between

solitude on the island or to be treated as a mutineer on the Cinq Ports whose fate would

soon turn ill in the hands of Spanish pirates.

Daniel Defoe takes this denotative model and contributes a new connotative

context which engenders a new signifying system. He creates a hypertexuality[18] in his

novel *Robinson Crusoe* which derives its meaning from a previous text describing the

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[18] Genette. It would be helpful to review Genette's definition of hypertextuality: "Any (transtextual) relationship linking a text B (the hypertext) to a preexisting text A (the hypotext) from which it derives in a manner other than that of commentary. Includes texts derived from earlier texts through a direct transformation (e.g. The Odyssey/Ulysses) or by imitation, an indirect transformation (e.g. The Odyssey/ The Aeneid.)" Genette, *Palimpsestes la literature au second degré* (Paris: Editions de Seuil, 1978),11.

fate of Selkirk. The new signifier which replaces the sign or combination of the 1st order

signifier and signified, is Robinson Crusoe the isolated man whose humanity is greatly

affected by his solitude. The connotative signified attributed to this model is the power

of reason. Thanks to the modern ideals of reason, Crusoe manages to master not only the

island but himself as well and is ultimately rescued, escaping such a cruel solitude. The

global sign of this second order mythical model hails Crusoe as a model of modernism

who regains his position of authority through the domination of nature and of lower class

levels represented by the slave, Friday.

Here enters Michel Tournier who takes this ever powerful universal myth and

attributes yet another level of connotation which profoundly alters and undermines the

modern myth. As David Platten points out in his work *Michel Tournier and the*

Metaphor of Fiction: "As we shall see, in relation to Defoe's Robinson Crusoe the

narrative of Vendredi orchestrates a play of similarities and differences which is so dense

and complex as to render incidental even Tournier's rehabilitation of Selkirk."[19] Platten

points out that differentiation, rather than similarity, distinguishes Tournier's text from

Defoe's.

Tournier, for his part, creates an intertextuality, as defined by Genette as : "The

transtextual relationship that consists of an eidetic (form/content/image generating)

copresence between two or several texts, most often through the actual presence of one

text within another, e.g. explicit borrowing by quotation, the literal but undeclared

borrowing which constitutes plagiarism and even the less explicit and less literal form

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[19] David Platten, *Michel Tournier and the Metaphor of Fiction* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1999). 42.

that is allusion."[20]   Through indirect allusion, Tournier's *Vendredi* enjoys a transtextual

relationship to the hypotext of Defoe. The signifier of the third order, or the global sign

of the 2nd order, remains Robinson Crusoe, yet he is now a man whose reason fails to

grant him authority and control. The newly attributed signified suggests the ramifications

of such a collapse of order. This signified combines with the signifier to create a

distinctly postmodern Crusoe whose power relations are inverted as are countless

hierarchical divides which characterize the modern.

The dangers of such a third order representation have been discussed in the first

chapter yet the specificity of the demise of the Crusoe of the second connotative level is

uniquely postmodern. As Julian Pefanis reminds us in his work *Heterology and the*

Postmodern: Bataille, Baudrillard and Lyotard: "We are cautioned by Plato against the

seduction of the 'third order representations" of the poet and the painter of scenes. It is a

moral injunction for the third order is the order of shams, of reflections and shadows."[21]

In order to better grasp the mutation of this character into a postmodern type, it

would be helpful to revisit the narrative and theoretical evolution which leads us from

such a structuralist interpretation of the construction of his character to a postmodern one

in which Crusoe finds himself isolated not only on his island *la Désolation* but from the

very structure hailed by modernity itself. As reinforced by Baudrillard, the study of myth

necessarily includes a structuralist heritage providing useful tools for its analysis, as

noted by George Ritzer in his introduction: "The world of consumption is treated like a

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[20] Genette, *Palimpsestes la littérature au second degree*, 11.
[21] Julian Pefanis, *Heterology and Postmodern: Bataille, Baudrillard and Lyotard* (Durham: Duke
University Press, 1988), 59.

mode of discourse, a language (and even, following Lévi-Strauss, like a kinship system). As a language, consumption is a way in which we converse and communicate with one another. Once we think of consumption as a language, we are free to deploy the whole panoply of tools derived from structural linguistics including sign, signifier, signified and code." [22] The following section will explore the progression from structuralism to the postmodern which illustrates a more theoretical, poststructuralist discourse which critiques the hermeneutics of high modernism.

Decentered Structure: From Structuralism to Poststructuralism

This shift in representation exemplifies the shift between structuralism as established by Ferdinand de Saussure to Poststructuralist theories developed by Jacques Derrida and Jacques Lacan. According to these poststructuralist theorists the fault of Saussure's structuralist construct is that the subject outside the structure who wishes to describe and define the structure is himself hopelessly a part of it. Thus, there is no hope for objective analysis or understanding of the structure. Jameson describes: "My own sense is that the influence of structuralism is rather to be attributed to the possibility of making homologies ("texts" of kinship) than to the operative pretext-the concept of structure- which was its philosophical presupposition and its working fiction or ideology."[23] Jameson warns against the innately problematic notion of a structure which will be deconstructed by the theories of Jacques Derrida among others, as Jameson states: "At the same time, it must be said that the notion of the homology rapidly proved to be an embarrassment and turned out to be as crude and vulgar an idea as "base and

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[22] George Ritzer "Introduction", in *The Consumer Society*, 6.
[23] Jameson, 187.

superstructure" ever was, the excuse for the vaguest kind of general formulations…[24]

Therefore, postmodern theoreticians inherit a deep skepticism for an all encompassing

structure which exists independently, as developed by Ferdinand de Saussure.

Ferdinand de Saussure's elaboration of structuralism in his *Course in General*

Linguistics published in 1915 proves to be the point of departure of many of the most

influential poststructuralist thinkers such as Jacques Derrida, Lacan, Barthes and

Foucault.   It is Saussure's theoretical questioning of language's ability to relate reality

which lends itself to the postmodern phenomena. As Gregson points out: "Saussure's

theories call radically into question the common-sense idea that language is simply the

means we use to tell each other real things about reality. For Saussure, language is an

artificial construct."[25] This construct or 'structure' consists of the linguistic sign which is

the fusion of the signifier and the signified. As Saussure elaborates himself:

> The linguistic sign unites, not a thing and a name, but a concept and a
> sound-image. The latter is not the material sound, a purely physical thing,
> but the psychological imprint of the sound, the impression that it makes on
> our senses. The sound-image is sensory, and if I happen to call it
> 'material,' it is only in that sense, and by way of opposing it to the other
> term of the association, the concept, which is generally more abstract.[26]

Postmodernism inherits from Saussurian structuralism the belief in the arbitrary

nature between the signifier and the signified which substantially distances the linguistic

sign from its referent. This results in the incapacity of language to represent reality, a

questioning of the hermeneutics of expression and representation. This structuralist

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[24] Jameson, 187.
[25] Gregson, 3.
[26] Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, 31.

legacy will receive new breath by such thinkers as Derrida, Lacan and Barthes who

continue this hermeneutical questioning to a challenging of the very notion of a structure

thus we enter the 'poststructuralist' discourse. Derrida in his *L'écriture et la différence*

emphasizes the susceptibility of a structure to critical undermining such as the mythical

reworking performed by Tournier due to the innate relationship between the structure, 'la

forme' and the meaning, 'le sens', which dwells within. The structural integrity relies on

the unity between the meaning and the form yet when the meaning is suppressed or

'neutralisé'[27], the structure reveals itself. As Derrida states: "…la structure est l'unité

formelle de la forme et du sens...Le relief et le dessin des structures apparaissent mieux

quand le contenu, qui est l'énergie vivante du sens, est neutralisé. Un peu comme

l'architecture d'une ville inhabitée ou soufflée, réduite à son squelette par quelque

catastrophe de la nature ou de l'art."[28] This is greatly in thinking with postmodern

negation of hermeneutical qualities of narratives, of favoring the notion of a 'text'.

Furthermore, it is precisely through the questioning and the destabilizing, the de-

structuring of a structure, that we better perceive its operative construction: "On perçoit la

structure dans l'instance de la menace, au moment où l'imminence du péril concentre nos

regards sur la clef de voûte d'une institution, sur la pierre où se résument sa possibilité et

sa fragilité. On peut alors menacer *méthodiquemen*t la structure pour mieux la

percevoir."[29] This peril spoken of by Derrida is unquestionably the methodical

undermining achieved by Tournier who menaces the structures of modern mythical meta-

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[27] Jacques Derrida, *L'écriture et la différence,*13.
[28] Ibid., 13.
[29] Ibid., 13.

narratives.

Derrida succeeds in unraveling this structure by putting the objectivity of such a structure in doubt, questioning how can we speak of a linguistic structure and be external to this very structure. Derrida questions the notion of a stable, core center of a structure which evokes modernist ideals. Rather, according to Derrida, the center is outside the structure. As he explains describing Lévi-Strauss' structural science of myth, his 'activité mythologique':

> C'est le moment où son discours sur le mythe se réfléchit et se critique lui-même…C'est ici qu'on retrouve la vertu mythopoétique du bricolage. En effet, ce qui paraît le plus séduisant dans cette recherche critique d'un nouveau statut du discours, c'est l'abandon déclaré de toute reference à un centre, à un sujet, à une référence privilégiée, à une origine ou à une archie absolue. [30]

Thus Derrida announces the postmodern questioning of not only the text's ability to create historical reference but to produce meaning at all. He continues at length to challenge the possibility of temporal grounding of a structure by stating: "Dans le travail de Lévi-Strauss,il faut reconnaître que le respect de la structuralité, de l'originalité de la structure, oblige à neutraliser le temps et l'histoire. Par exemple, l'apparition d'une nouvelle structure…se fait toujours..par une rupture avec son passé, son origine et sa cause."[31] The result of such a collapse of language's structural integrity is a free play in which the laws binding sign to referent are no longer relevant, as Derrida elaborates: "*Cette affirmation* détermine alors le non-centre *autrement que comme perte du centre*. Et elle joue sans sécurité. Car il y a un jeu *sûr*: celui qui se limite à la substitution de

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[30] Derrida, *L'écriture et la différence*, 419.
[31] Ibid., 426.

pièces données et existantes, présentes."[32] Tournier's mythical substitution promulgates this 'jeu sur' by substituting new signifieds to previously established signifying orders.

We have now entered the postmodern for which skepticism towards language's ability to represent is ardently espoused. Derridean free play which results from the decentered structure is enlightening to this study of Tournier's mythical reworkings for the sign separated from its referent seems to simultaneously evoke a more metaphysical contemplation: that of man separated from his world represented by language. In questioning and deconstructing the center of a structure, the very subject itself, the I, of mythical narratives, is questioned by Derridean deconstructionism. This deconstruction is compounded by Lacanian theories that characterized the unconscious as being structured in the same way language is.

For Lacan, the self is a sign amongst other signs and as such the process of signification is the underlying principle. If the unconscious is structured like a language, then that structure determines the psychological makeup of the self. As he discusses in his *Ecrits*: "The register of the signifier is established on the basis of the fact that one signifier represents a subject for another signifier. This is the structure, dream, slip of the tongue, joke, of all the formations of the unconscious. It is also the one that explains the original division of the subject."[33]

This approach exhibits anti-humanistic tendencies in that it subjects the psyche of the individual to the pre-determined structure of the unconscious and in so doing eliminates the possibility of authentic signification. Ian Gregson points this out: "For

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[32] Derrida, *L'écriture et la différence*, 427.
[33] Jacques Lacan, "Position de l'inconscient", in *Ecrit*s (Paris: Seuil, 1966), 829.

Lacan the psyche is so occupied by structures of language and desire that the self is not itself. For this reason his use of the phrase 'speaking subject' is significant: it simultaneously refers to subjectivity and subjection."[34] Subjective in that it is determined by its structural relationship to other signifiers and subjected to the meanings imposed by other signifiers operating in the chain of signification that constitutes language and the unconscious.

The notion of subjection implies a certain hierarchy of order that functions within this framework. The dissolution of the subject into the symbolic realm of signifying chains negates and annihilates the notion of a "subject" as we have seen in the writings of Lacan. According to Lyotard, there results a power struggle on behalf of the subject to retain his authority to speak. According to one of the great thinkers of the postmodern era, Michel Foucault, the notions of the speaking subject who is subjected to subservience is a crucial dialectic: "There are two meanings to the word subject: subject to someone else by control and dependence, and tied to one's identity by a conscience of self-knowledge. Both meanings suggest a form of power which subjugates and makes subject to." [35] Such power relations considered in a poststructuralist approach reach their theoretical vortex in the powerful example of Auschwitz. For Lyotard, this horrendous occurrence provides the most disturbing and true example of a sign which has lost all capacity to represent its referent. As he states:

The silence that surrounds the phrase, *Auschwitz was the extermination*

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[34] Gregson, 6.

[35] Michel Foucault, 'The subject and power', afterword in *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics* (second ed) ed. Herbert L. Dreyfus and Paul Robinow (Chicago, University of Chicago Press. 1983), 212.

> camp is not a state of the mind [état d'âme], it is the sign that something remains to be phrased which is not, something which is not determined. The sign affects a linking of phrases. The indetermination of meanings left in abeyance [en souffrance], the extermination of what would allow them to be determined, the shadow of negation hollowing out reality to the point of making it dissipate, in a word, the wrong done to the victims that condemns them to silence-it is this, and not a state of mind, which calls upon unknown phrases to link onto the name of Auschwitz.[36]

Therefore Lacanian, Derridean, and Lyotardean poststructuralist theories hearken many of the dialectical tensions at the heart of the postmodern narrative of Robinson Crusoe and in particular that between master and servant, powerful and the powerless. It is worth noting the narrative structure of *Vendredi* which is narrated primarily in the third person, the 'he' which decenters and dethrones the powerful ego. The narration is heterodiegetic, that is to say the narrator does not take part in the narrated action, until the log-book in which Robinson assumes an autodiegetic function in that he recounts his own story and in which he reclaims his western heritage of authority. This tension between authority and subservience dominates the entire novel and will be explored shortly. For now, we must turn to the very unique structure which is being decentered and deconstructed by Tournier, which in the case of Robinson Crusoe gains its pertinence from its relevance to the contemporary reader.

According to Tournier himself the myth of Robinson Crusoe is of singular importance to Western man and is rooted in the collectivity and in the individual. It is this mythical attribute of Crusoe that ensures its fertility as a literary and philosophical model, as he states:

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[36] Jean-François Lyotard, *The Differend* (Minneapolis, 1988), 93.

> Bien de tous les hommes, Robinson est l'un des éléments constitutifs de l'âme de l'homme occidental…il est présent et vivant en chacun de nous. Son mythe est à coup sûr l'un des plus actuels et des plus vivants que nous possédions, ou plutôt dont nous soyons possédés. Il n'est pas inutile de reprendre certains de ces aspects..dans lesquels nous donnons forme et profil aux humeurs et aspirations que nous inspire notre commune condition d'hommes du XXe siècle finissant.[37]

The significance of myth in our postmodern society can be most easily resolved through the theories of Jean Baudrillard in his work: *The Consumer Society: Myths and Structures* and those of Roger Caillois in his *Le mythe et l'homme*. Together, Baudrillard and Caillois explore the paradoxical complimentary presence of the individual and the collective in myths which has been a central problematic to this and many other studies. As Roger Caillois explores in his work *le Mythe et l'homme*:

> En ces matières, ce n'est pas une des moindres surprises de l'étude que d'appréhender la profonde hétérogénéité des données qui s'offrent à son analyse…on se demande même s'il n'en faudrait pas un différent pour chaque mythe, comme si chaque mythe, organisation d'une singularité irréductible, était consubstantiel à son principe d'explication, de telle sorte que celui-ci ne puisse être détaché de celui-là sans une chute sensible de densité et de compréhension. En tout cas, considérer le monde des mythes comme homogène et comme tel justiciable d'une clef unique, apparaît manifestement comme une vue de l'esprit…préoccupé de saisir le Même sous l'Autre, l'un sous le multiple.[38]

If we approach myth as a system which centers itself around and elaborates on a previously established order, then we may better understand the transformation of myth in the postmodern era in which both the individual and the collectivity coexist. In the first chapter, I have gone to great lengths to expose Tournier's reworking of myth and the addition of yet another level of signification that alters the myth in the same way myth

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[37] Tournier, *le Vent Paraclet*, 221.
[38] Caillois,18.

alters its denotative model.

Just as Defoe's Robinson Crusoe embellished and gave new meaning to the stranded cast away to justify the means and ends of modernity, so too does our postmodern Robinson Crusoe exemplify and express a societal voice, yet it sings a different tune. Myth's ability to express a collective aspiration through a singular narrative as in the case of Robinson Crusoe is its more peculiar characteristic. As such, paradoxically diachronic and synchronic, singular and collective, myths, according to Caillois: "rattrapent le temps, pour ainsi dire, et mettent en lumière des évolutions qui n'ont pas encore vu leur fin."[39]

The evolutions to which Caillois refers are occurring in a new kind of society, the one which follows the death of modernity, and as a result, suffers from a very particular set of ailments. The story of Robisnon Crusoe, be it Tournier's version or Defoe's version, gives voice to the solitary sufferers of our postmodern age. For the individual finding themselves in the "vertige de la réalité"[40] of the postmodern era, the single narrative of a man cast away in isolation still remains powerfully relevant, but this relevance is mostly due to the structural reworking and narrative innovations performed by Tournier in order to adapt it to our postmodern world. In the simplest terms, I may say that Robinson Crusoe represents and gives voice to the alientation of "we", the mass of individuals void of critical faculties, who comprise the consumer society.

That myth be the vehicle to deconstruct and give voice to this phenomenon is not only necessary but understandable according to one of the foremost thinkers of the

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[39] Caillois.14.
[40] Baudrillard. *The Consumer Society*, 34.

postmodern, Jean Baudrillard. His work *The Consumer Society* expresses the inextricable link between myth and the postmodern. He too, views myth as a structural entity which is comprised of a discourse about a discourse, a system which works as an explanation of a former system. In the case of the consumer based society, consumption is itself a myth. It is precisely consumption which evokes the capitalistic nature of the postmodern. Frederic Jameson equates the postmodern era with the late capitalistic, as he explains: "That means that the expression late capitalism carries the other, cultural half of my title within it as well; not only is it something like a literal translation of the other expression, postmodernism, its temporal index seems already to direct attention to changes in the quotidian and on the cultural level as such."[41] These "quotidian and cultural changes" referred to by Jameson apply to a society in which, if I may say, the consumer consumes consumption and it is precisely for this reason that consumption has become a myth.

Given that consumption is an all encompassing societal phenomenon it proves to be a system similar to language. Baudrillard acknowledges and uses the structuralist heritage of Lévi-Strauss as he states: "so the system of consumption is in the last instance based not on need and enjoyment but on a code of signs (signs/objects) and differences.[42] Therefore in the postmodern system of language and myth, meaning is created through difference.

Just as language's ability to speak language is subject to myth, then so too is consumption's ability to consume subject to myth. In order to understand this, we must understand the very nature of what is being consumed in our postmodern society through

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[41] Jameson, 21.
[42] Baudrillard, *The Consumer Society: Myths and Structures*, 79.

the optic of our mythical model of Robinson Crusoe as presented by Tournier. In order to do so, a logical point of departure would be the plight of the individual in the postmodern world, for Crusoe is above all and in its simplest terms, the narrative of an individual suffering from solitude. Baudrillard himself refers to the myth of Robinson Crusoe as a narrative that expresses the needs of man: "Needs are the most stubbornly unknown of all the unknowns with which economic science deals. But this does not stop the litany on needs being faithfully recited by all the proponents of the anthropological disciplines from Marx to Galbraith, from Robinson Crusoe to Chombart de Lauwe"[43]

In answering and exploring the needs of the mythical Robinson Crusoe, we may gain insight and perspective into the needs of man in the postmodern society. The isolation suffered by Robinson questions man's condition as a social being as well as questions the things he needs in order to survive. According to Baudrillard, man has been replaced by the object. Be it an object of desire or an object of luxury or status, in a consumer based society, man surrounds himself with objects and this is a decisive shift. As he states: "Strictly speaking, the humans of the age of affluence are surrounded not so much by other human beings, as they were in all previous ages, but by objects..Their daily dealings are now not so much with their fellow man, but rather…with the reception and manipulation of goods and messages." [44]

This loss of 'fellow man', resulting from the replacement of the human beings by the objects, the "things", finds its most tangible expression in the narrative of Robinson as a man removed from his society. It is the notion of the solitude and isolation that

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[43] Baudrillard, *The Consumer Society*, 69.
[44] Ibid., 25.

characterizes our postmodern world which is expressed negatively, that is to say in an inverted manner, in *Vendredi ou les limbes du Pacifique*. Robinson's condition as a solitary man devoid of society represents the very isolation felt by many individuals in the late-capitalistic society of our time. Tournier, by negating the collective population in his narrative allows for Robinson to be exemplary of the problems that exist at the core of our society such as human disillusionment, alienation, sexual identity and power relations. Thus, it is the absence of a unified collectivity, i.e. a community, that expresses the problematic it engenders.

We must remember the postmodern tendencies favoring negativity and inversion which allow for this reversal of presence. Derrida in his *La structure, le signe et le jeu* already foretells of this negative game between presence and absence through which meaning is created in the postmodern text: "Tension du jeu avec l'histoire, tension aussi du jeu avec la présence. Le jeu est la disruption de la présence. La présence d'un élément est toujours une référence signifiante et substitutive inscrite dans un système de différences et le movement du'une chaîne. Le jeu est toujours jeu d'absence et de présence."[45]

The Loss of Historicity

This temporal problematic, this 'jeu' of historicity results in the loss of Robinson Crusoe's ability to create historical reference. Robinson, cast away from the societal referent which characterized his modern predecessor, no longer represents his contemporary context in a positive, that is to say, direct manner. Rather, our postmodern

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[45] Derrida, "La structure, le signe et le jeu",426.

Robinson relates through a negative process of inversion and deconstruction, the predominant trends of the society which gave him a voice through Michel Tournier. Derrida's theories which attest to the collapse of such a societal structure, seemingly explain his ostracization. Robinson's uniquely postmodern individuality stands in sharp contrast to its modern predecessor.

In the place of the universalistic hypotext of Robinson Crusoe depicted by Defoe stands the individual Crusoe whose sexual compulsions for Mother Nature border on obscene. In the place of the 'whole' Crusoe whose rationalistic inclinations ensure his survival stands the 'fragmented' Crusoe whose schizophrenic psychological makeup disrupt his orderly conduct. In the place of the maintained cultural hierarchy which affords him a position of authority stands Crusoe the subjugated master who relies on his inferior Vendredi to survive. Yet through the structural reworking accomplished by Tournier, Robinson arrives at a space on his island in which his desire is liberated from modern controlling forces which proves to be a postmodern phenomenon and in fact, representative of the sacred as described by Georges Bataille.

Crusoe, who represents the individual, the center, is forced outside the structure of society and what evolves from this transgression is postmodern and poststructuralist in that his narrative moves beyond the modern structure of society. Here we arrive in the space of Robinson Crusoe, the banished subject searching for identity.

Intertextuality of Robinson: Cannibalization of the Modern

Having arrived at the point in which Tournier's Robinson stands outside the modern structure of regulated society, allow me to explore how Tournier expresses the

postmodern condition through a process of differentiation. As reiterated by Jameson and

other writers, postmodernism is a profoundly heterogeneous movement in which

"difference relates… The former work of art has now turned out to be text, who's reading

proceeds by differentiation rather than by unification."[46] Therefore, it is imperative to the

understanding of the postmodern treatment of the myth of Robinson Crusoe to view the

differences which recombine and disjoin the raw materials of the myth itself. This

process of textualization which decenters and deconstructs the modern work functions in

such a way as to eliminate the depth of meaning of the modern work.

In the following section I will examine several meanings espoused by the modern

work and systematically show how their deconstruction by Tournier creates a depthless

or meaningless narrative whose modus operandi is intertextualization and more precisely

hypertextualization. Jameson explains this in the following way: "What replaces these

various depth models is for the most part a conception of practices, discourses, and

textual play…let it suffice now to observe that here too depth is replaced by surface, or

by multiple surfaces (what if often called Intertextuality is in that sense no longer a

matter of depth)."[47]

 Therefore Defoe's work which represents the modern ideology and belief in

Man's reason is replaced by a superficial or depthless successor, who makes no claim to

universal meaning. In particular, the productivity of Defoe's Crusoe who survives his

ordeal through an arduous work ethic, expresses Marxist theories, be it intentionally or

unintentionally, one of the great modern meta-narratives. Jean Baudrillard remarks on the

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[46] Jameson, 12.
[47] Ibid., 12.

use that Marxist ideology has made of the myth of Robinson to denounce capitalistic and

"bourgeois" society: "If one hypothesizes (as Marxists do) that all the ideology of

bourgeois political economy is summed up in the myth of Robinson Crusoe, then it must

be admitted that everything in the novel itself agrees with the mystical theology and

metaphysics of bourgeois thought, including (and above all) this transparency in man's

relation to the instruments and products of his labor." [48] Above all to Baudrillard, "The

myth of Robinson Crusoe is the bourgeois avatar of the myth of terrestrial paradise."[49] It

is precisely this kind of optimism, that reason may create a paradise on earth, which is

unraveled in Tournier's postmodern Robinson.

In the place of the social forces at work in the modern Crusoe stands an asocial,

individual Crusoe, who echoes the isolation felt in our postmodern world. For Tournier,

Crusoe's ability to represent the solitude that is felt by so many in our population is

precisely the mythological element, for it allows us to transcend or own condition. As he

states: "On voit ce qui fait le prestige de Robinson: cette solitude dont nous souffrons,

même et surtout au milieu de la foule anonyme et oppressante, il a su merveilleusement,

lui, l'aménager et l'élever au niveau d'un art de vivre."[50] Tournier seizes on this

mythological dimension and replenishes its fervor by providing a rich context in which

the myth may flourish due to the presence of a singular and necessary complement:

Vendredi.   It is not the mere presence of Vendredi as slave yet the dynamic

transformation perpetuated by Tournier that allows his version of Crusoe to be

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[48] Jean Baudrillard, *Selected Writings*. 74.
[49] Ibid., 74.
[50] Tournier, *le Vent Paraclet*, 227.

postmodern in that it inverts an established norm, that of master/slave. Tournier

acknowledges the lack of power attributed to Vendredi in Defoe's version "Or qu'était

Vendredi pour Daniel Defoe? Rien, une bête, un être en tout cas qui attend de recevoir

son humanité de Robinson, l'homme occidental, seul détenteur de tout savoir, de toute

sagessse."[51]

As in the character of Abel Tiffauges, Crusoe is not a mere representation of its

model, rather the product of an intricate semiotic reworking of not only the character of

Crusoe, but the context in which he functions. Robinson in Tournier's *Vendredi ou les

limbes du Pacifique,* represents a third order narrative whose purpose is to criticize and

deconstruct the second order representation, which in this case is modern in nature. In so

doing Tournier's Crusoe represents the unraveling of the bourgeois economic mentality

which dominated modernity, and in so doing, shows the dangers of the reduction of

human beings to mere objects in the late capitalistic society. Tournier himself describes

the capitalistic favoring of modern colonial powers: "Nous sommes à l'époque où les

puritains anglais envahissent et colonisent, la Bible à la main, les terres vierges du

Nouveau Monde. Ils devaient s'inspirer d'une morale de l'accumulation …qui, partant

du calvinisme, aboutit à la société libérale et capitaliste."[52]

Max Weber in his *The Spirit of Capitalism and the Iron Cage* defines capitalism

as a historical phenomenon which can only be defined in "concrete genetic sets of

relations which are inevitably of a specifically unique and individual character."[53] Weber

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[51] Tournier, *le Vent Paraclet*,., 227.
[52] Ibid.,233.
[53] Max Weber, *The Spirit of Capitalism and the Iron Cage*, 101.

quotes Benjamin Franklin in identifying these specific, individual parts which together

makeup the historical reality of capitalism in the following manner: "Time is

money…Time is credit…Money is of the prolific, generating nature."[54] Weber's theories

undoubtedly announce the capitalistic trend towards favoring money above all and in fact

the duty that man has to increase his capital. Weber clearly states: "Man is dominated by

the making of money, by acquisition as the ultimate purpose of his life."[55] Furthermore,

man's calling to the accumulation of capital is in keeping with and results from his faith.

This capitalistic view of life is fully embodied by the modern Robinson for whom each

relation and action must fulfill a monetary function in his life. Not only is this capitalism

of social importance for Robinson, more specifically it is religious in nature. Typical of

the thinking of the modern era, Benjamin Franklin himself refers to a quote from the

Bible that his Calvinist father "drummed into him again and again in his youth: "Seest

thou a man diligent in his business? He shall stand before kings."(Prov. Xxii.29).[56]

    This Christian ethic, that of being called toward the earning of money,

undoubtedly motivates Defoe's Robinson for whom the slave, Friday, represents modern

labour which plays an integral part in the machine of capitalism he seeks to recreate

microcosmically on his island. Weber elaborates on the role religion plays in the evolving

capitalism in the following manner: "One of the fundamental elements of the spirit of

modern capitalism, and not only on that but of all modern culture: rational conduct on the

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[54] Weber, 102.
[55] Ibid., 102.
[56] Ibid., 102.

basis of the idea of the calling, was born…from the spirit of Christian asceticism."[57] In

the case of Defoe's Robinson, he is a Calvinist who practices a rigid religion which does

not allow for the questioning of Divine Will. It is God's will that Crusoe has been ship-

wrecked and through his faithful obedience of this Will, that he survives and ultimately

leaves the island.

The agrarian efforts that allow Crusoe to dominate nature are rewarded by God.

The utilitarian aspect of nature that is appreciated by Crusoe is a distinctly modern

perspective. As Jean Baudrillard explains in his *The Consumer Society*: "A fairy story:

'Once upon a time there was a Man who lived in Scarcity. After many adventures and a

long journey through Economic Science, he met the Affluent Society. They married and

had lots of needs. The human fossil of the Golden Age, born in from the modern era;

from the happy union of Human Nature and Human rights, is endowed with the

heightened sense of formal rationality."[58] Nature is a means to an end for Defoe's

modern Crusoe who uses natural bounty to produce goods. Friday in his role as slave to

his white master likewise is a cog in the wheel of this orderly hierarchy created by

Crusoe. This puritan Calvinistic notion is very much in line with the notion that God is

Order and that through Order one can create paradise on the earth. Yet Weber seems to

announce the ultimate demise of such a relationship between religion and capitalism:

"Material goods have gained an increasing and finally an inexorable power over the lives

of men as at no previous period in history. Today the spirit of religious asceticism has

escaped from the cage. But victorious capitalism, since it rests on mechanical

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[57] Weber, 103.
[58] Baudrillard, 69.

foundations, needs its support no more."[59] Truly materialism has far exceeded the boundaries of religion and has taken on a life of its own in our postmodern society in which challenging established religion is commonplace.

The Disposition of the Subject

This modern narrative, the hypotext of Crusoe is violently upturned by Michel Tournier who undermines the outcome and the processes which contribute to the success of Robinson's rationale.   In Tournier's version, Crusoe is a Quaker whose religious inclinations afford him a more liberal view on religion and thus evokes a postmodern approach. Friedrich Nietzsche, who unknowingly announces postmodern tendencies, repeatedly urges man to renounce the ills and falsehood of religion as espoused by its legacy of exerting power, of creating subservience and societal hierarchies exemplified by Defoe's Robinson. In his book *Human, all too Human*, he calls on Man to renounce religion: "Because we have vowed to be faithful, even, perhaps, to a purely imaginary God, are we then inextricably bound? Were we not deceiving ourselves then? Was it not a conditional promise, that those beings to whom we dedicated ourselves really are the beings they appeared to be in our imaginations? Are we obliged to be faithful to our errors…? No—there is no law, no obligation of that kind; we must become traitors, act unfaithfully, forsake our ideals again and again."[60] Nietzsche's proclamation in his *Thus spoke Zarathustra* that "God is dead" puts in perspective Tournier's approach to this modern narrative for there is no powerful entity to reward nor to save Crusoe from his

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[59] Weber, 103.
[60] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human: A Book for Free Spirits* (Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), 261.

abject solitude as in Defoe's version.

If we understand postmodern literature to be a work which is created in reaction against modern narratives, we can discern in Tournier's version of Robinson Crusoe distinctly modern traits to which there is an equally strong reaction in the novel. The first half of the novel represents the modern narrative in which order dominates. Tournier himself names this the period of the "île administrée…qui ne voit de salut que dans le travail et la production."[61] The second half represents the post-modern more chaotic abandon to which Robinson lends himself psychologically and sexually and becomes "Robinson solaire."[62] As we know this postmodern phase is triggered by the explosion of his stockpile of gunpowder, his modern era weaponry with which he armed himself. Although he remains defenseless and threatened by the resurgence of chaos, Crusoe gives to his new postmodern existence a positive turn: he experiences a rebirth which embraces the beauty of nature and the chaos of life. Yet, at the same time, he will also experience a profound fracturing of his Self. This splitting will manifest itself in temporal confusion with his past, present and future.

From his first steps on the island after the wreckage, Crusoe holds true to Modern ideals. His first action is to name the island: "Puisque ce n'est pas Mas a Tierra, dit-il simplement, c'est l'ile de la Désolation."[63] Despite its pessimism, this name amounts to an attempt to humanize the island, in a way to exercise its natural savage state. Robinson even grants to the island human traits, noting that: "ses rochers, ses forêts n'étaient que

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[61] Tournier, *le Vent Paraclet*, 233.
[62] Ibid., 235.
[63] Ibid., 18.

la paupière et le sourcil d'un oeil immense, bleu et humide." [64]   The eye functions

metonymically in that it represents the whole body of the island.

Crusoe's second action is to construct a boat, l'Évasion, with the aim of escaping

his solitude. His work engrosses him on a daily basis and allows him to overcome, albeit

briefly, his anguish: "Les jours se superposaient, tous pareils, dans sa mémoire, et il avait

le sentiment de recommencer chaque matin la journée de la veille."[65] It is above all his

reason which fails in this endeavor. He neglects to remember the importance of launching

the vessel which is of equal importance as its construction. For three days he suffers

from a " panique d'abord maîtrisée, puis vertigineuse."[66] Finally, after renouncing

building the canal that would have allowed his barge to float to the sea, he quickly

realizes all the years of his life would not suffice. He turns to a state of vegetation that

will lead him in *la souille,* a symbol of the demise of his values and his mentality as a

modern individual.

Indeed, these moments in *la souille* express the total collapse of the Self

entrenched in a self-imposed battle for order against impossible odds. Day by day he

witnesses the disappearance of his humanity:

> une croûte d'excréments séchés couvrait son dos, ses flancs et ses cuisses.
> Sa barbe et ses cheveux se mêlaient….Il savait maintenant que l'homme
> est semblable à ces blessés au cours d'un tumulte ou d'une émeute qui
> demeurent debout aussi longtemps que la foule les soutient en les pressant,
> mais qui glissent à terre dès qu'elle se disperse. La foule de ses frères, qui
> l'avait entretenu dans l'humain sans qu'il s'en rendît compte, s'était
> brusquement écartée de lui et il éprouvait qu'il n'avait pas la force de tenir

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[64] Tournier, *Vendredi*, 23.

[65] Ibid., 27.

[66] Ibid.*,* 36.

seul sur ses jambes."[67]

These moments in *la souille* not only represent a disappearance of humanity, but also a return to a primordial time symbolized by the fetal position Robinson assumes. This fetal "limbo" is affirmed by Tournier in the title of this novel for "les limbes" du Pacifique evokes the special place imagined by St. Augustine where the souls of unbaptized children dwell. This is Crusoe's hidden island, a place where the regression of humanity allows ironically for his future advancement and growth. "Dans ses longues heures de méditations brumeuses, il développait une philosophie qui aurait pu être celle de cet homme effacé."[68] The term *effacé* implies a reaction against his former existence; the modern man that he has been, and still was, at the time of the wreckage, no longer exists. This modern type is gone and in his place is a blank slate. Yet Robinson is wary to embrace this new freedom, realizing that it comes at a heavy price which terrifies him. For this reason, he finally rejects this insane freedom and pledges to regain his humanity by discarding solitude: "Il reprendrait en main son destin. Il travaillerait. Il consommerait sans plus rêver ses noces avec son épouse implacable, la solitude."[69]

This travail undertaken by Crusoe hyperbolizes the scale of agricultural production practiced by Defoe's character. In Tournier's version, Robinson strives to amass forty tons of grain. However, this titanic harvest appears to be totally in vain; unable to consume it, Robinson has no other choice but to let it go to the rats. This part of

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[67] Tournier, *Vendredi,* 38.

[68] Ibid., 39.

[69] Ibid, 42.

the novel, named "l'Ile administrée", subtly reworks and exaggerates the production

undertaken by Defoe's Crusoe and in so doing succeeds to invert the positive aspects

which modernity would have attributed to such a production. As a matter of fact,

Crusoe's over and/or hyper-production, allows for an excess of consumption rather than

need, a way to announce the late capitalistic attitude that defines the postmodern.

Robinson's actions at this point are perfectly in line with Baudrillard's description of

production in consumer- based society. In order to ensure his survival, Robinson

embraces a rigorous work ethic which echoes the "geneology of production" laid out by

Baudrillard:

> Over the history of the industrial system, we may trace the following genealogy of consumption.
> 1. The order of production produces the machine/productive force.
> 2. It produces capital/rationalized productive force, a rational system of investment and circulation.
> 3. It produces waged labour power, an abstract, systematized productive force.
> 4. An so it produces needs, the system of needs, demand/productive force.[70]

Robinson's mini-narrative demonstrates microcosmically the macroeconomic

forces at work in the late capitalistic society. In the following passage describing

Robinson's cultivation and methodical examining, we witness the seeds of capitalism

who have taken root in his modern rationalistic cultivation:

> Un triage épuisant, effectué grain par grain, lui permit finalement de sauver, outre le riz-intact mais impossible à cultiver-, dix gallons de blé, six gallons d'orge et quatre gallons de maïs. Il s'interdit de consommer la moindre parcelle de blé…il entreprit de labourer la terre et de semer ses trios céréales à l'aide d'une houe qu'il avait fabriquée avec une plaque de

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[70] Baudrillard, *The Consumer Society*,75.

fer provenant de la Virginie dans laquelle il avait pu percer un trou assez large pour y introduire un manche.[71]

Thus Robinson has accomplished the first step in the genealogy described by Baudrillard: the creation of a machine/productive force through the use of a hoe. Through the systematic use of sewing grain he has successfully accomplished the second task as well which is a rationalized circulating production force. Vendredi is unwillingly obligated to participate in this chain of production and constitutes himself the labour force referred to by Baudrillard. The animals are likewise judged in mesure of their utility and also constitute the work force: "Parmi les animaux de l'île, les plus utiles seraient à coup sûr les chèvres et les chevreaux qui s'y trouvaient en grand nombre, pourvu qu'il parvienne à les domestiquer."[72]

Still acting under the auspices of a western empowered dogma, Robinson views everything through the mesure of its utility. It is through the domination and subjugation of those hitherto uncontrolled elements that Robinson may achieve the ultimate goal of 'humanizing'. As he explains: "Il s'en fallut pourtant que l'île lui parut désormais comme une terre sauvage qu'il aurait su maîtriser, puis apprivoiser pour en faire un milieu tout humain."[73]

Yet that which bridges the gap from this modern approach to the postmodern version present in Tournier's works is precisely the presence of myth. As Baudrillard explains: "That human fossil of the Golden Age, born, in the modern era, from the happy union of Human Nature and Human Rights, is endowed with a heightened sense of

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[71] Tournier, *Vendredi*, 46.
[72] Ibid., 47.
[73] Ibid., 47.

formal rationality, which leads him to :

1. Seek his own happiness without the slightest hesitation;

2. Prefer objects which will provide him with the greatest satisfactions."[74]

It is clear that at this point in the narrative, Robinson exemplifies this Fossel of

the Golden Age. In the midst of the spontaneous and uncontrolled nature of the island,

Robinson clings to objects and the rational means through which he may gain control. As

he exclaims: "Je veux, j'exige que tout autour de moi soit dorénavant mesuré, prouvé,

certifié, mathématique, rationnel."[75] Robinson hails his means to salvation, production:

"Toute production est création, donc bonne. Toute consommation est destruction, et

donc mauvaise."[76] He unknowingly, or perhaps knowingly through the voice of Tournier,

announces the fate of the late-capitalistic consumer society as described by Baudrillard:

> The consumer society needs its objects in order to be. More precisely, it
> needs to destroy them. The use of objects leads only to their dwindling
> disappearance. The value created is much more intense in violent loss.
> This is why destruction remains the fundamental alternative to production:
> consumption is merely an intermediate term between the two.[77]

We need only turn to the violent explosion caused by Vendredi of the precious

stockpiles to ascertain the danger so forewarned by Baudrillard. The following excerpt

describes the explosion: "Il(Robinson) lève la chicote. C'est alors que les quarante

tonneaux de poudre noir parlent en meme temps. Un torrent de flammes rouges jaillit de

la grotte…Robinson se sent soulevé, emporté, tandis qu'il voit le chaos rocheux qui

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[74] Baudrillard, *The Consumer Society*, 69.
[75] Tournier, *Vendredi*, 67.
[76] Ibid., 61.
[77] Baudrillard, *The Consumer Society*, 47.

surmonte la grotte culbuter comme un jeu de construction."[78]

The stock-pile itself attests to the importance Robinson accords objects. Once again, it is through the optic of Baudrillard that we may ascertain the relevance of this hoarding in the consumer based society, a postmodern trait which differentiates Tournier's *Vendredi* from its modern predecessor: "..Most of the time, objects are present by their absence, and why their very abundance paradoxically signifies penury. Stock is the excessive expression of lack and a mark of anxiety."[79] This anxiety so expressed by Robinson will soon find its cathartic outlet in the discovery of an object of a different nature. Robinson will learn that the productive rational hereto employed will neither lead to his salvation nor even to happiness. Rather, it is through the self-expression provided by the writing of the log-book that he may secure a confirmation of his existence as a human being.

The Banished 'I': the log-book

Robinson's most humanistic discovery lies not in his censoring of material things, rather in the discovery of a soaked book from the Virginie whose whitened pages would allow for the creation of his salvation: the log-book. This discovery is of the greatest importance to Crusoe justly because thanks to the written word he finds himself: "à demi arraché à l'abîme de bestialité où il avait sombré."[80] This log-book offers him a new era of restored humanity, he is now able to express in writing his contemplations and meditations. His first act is to date the log-book, September 30, 1759 " vers deux heures

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[78] Tournier, *Vendredi,* 184.

[79] Baudrillard, *The Consumer Society*, 47.

[80] Tournier, *Vendredi*, 44.

de la nuit."[81] Thanks to this "acte sacré", Crusoe is reborn in this new found literary

interiority. The passages in the log-book allow Robinson an autodiegetic function, that is

to say he is able to narrate his own story, which gives voice to anachronic elements of his

narrative. Through his log-book he explores the analepsis, the temporal blurring of his

past, and the depth of his present.

The log-book's function cannot be underestimated and proves to be a critical

device in Tournier's structural reworking of the modern myth. One of its functions is

ironic in that it creates a distancing between Crusoe and existence on the island. It is in

this space that he is allowed to inhabit a critique of his own life. In his writings in the

log-book Crusoe confirms his modern rational intentions: "Ma victoire, c'est l'ordre

moral que je dois imposer à Speranza contre son ordre naturel qui n'est que l'autre nom

du désordre absolu."[82] A clear divide between the moral order of a rational thinker and

the natural savagery of an absolute disorder writhes at the core of Crusoe. It is the log-

book which undermines his obsession for establishing a total control on the natural world.

The role of the log-book in Tournier's *Vendredi* fulfills several essential functions

which contribute to the novel's postmodern characteristics. As previously discussed,

from a structuralist standpoint the log-book creates a narrative which is removed from

and exists outside of the structure of the novel, as Crusoe states himself: "..je ne suis

qu'un trou noir au milieu de Speranza, un point de vue sur Speranza."[83] This

exteriorization personifies the structuralist impasse as described by several

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[81] Tournier, *Vendredi*, 45.
[82] Ibid.,50.
[83] Ibid., 68.

poststructuralists such as Derrida who challenge the notion of a stable structure due to the impossibility of a center.

This 'I' that Derrida and other poststructuralist define as being already inhabited by language is no longer the center of the structure. The nature of the structure in the case of Defoe's Robinson proves to be characteristic of modernity for many reasons already established, which Tournier mimics and recreates microcosmically in the first part of *Vendredi ou les limbes du Pacifique*. At the center of the structure of a society there exists one singular component which is the individual. Cast away from society, both literally and structurally, Robinson fills this voice by transgressing the boundaries of this structure, in the postmodern setting of the novel. Once set apart, thanks to Tournier, Robinson creates his own narrative which is no longer representative of all mankind, in other words existing in the structure of modernity, rather it is the sole narrative of Robinson's life placed squarely in a temporal setting which is yet another trait of the postmodern tendencies in literature.

The insertion of the first-person narrative into a framework of heterodiegetic narration functions as a technique for conveying realism, and yet in his writing of the self-same narrative Robinson consciously challenges assumptions underlying the realist conception of narrative as representation. The log-book is characteristic of the confessional self in postmodern literary theories for it gives voice to the fractured self, the self is no more the center or master of the world. Its primary function is the opening up of the self. Through the linguistic exploration of his rationalistic and his primitive impulses, the contradictions at the core of Crusoe are starkly laid out against the white

pages of his log-book.

The log-book establishes and gives voice to the psychological fragmenting of Robinson which takes place as a result of his isolation. It is this literary and narrative fragmentation which adapts Crusoe to the postmodern era, by using the log-book as a narrative mechanism fracturing the whole of Crusoe. This is very much in keeping with postmodern tendencies for such questions of identity are deconstructed by postmodernists who negate the Romantic and modern ideal of a stable core self which is present throughout one's entire life.

Freud's psychoanalytic theory announces this division through suggesting that one's unconscious is a separate force from the conscious self of the individual and as such Freud proves himself to be a voice of the postmodern, albeit unintentionally and unknowingly. As Roger Horrocks notes in his work: *Freud revisited: Psychoanalytic themes in the Postmodern Age*: "There is also a sense of fragmentation and dissimulation in Freud's model of the psyche which seems sympathetic to postmodernism."[84]

Robinson frequently refers to his "vie seconde" in which he is allowed access to the most secretive places of Speranza. It is this second life which acknowledges the humanization of the island in which Robinson recognizes Speranza not as a nature to dominate but an individual with whom he may co-exist. As Robinson states: "Dans sa

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[84] Roger Horrocks, *Freud Revisited: Psychoanalytic themes in the Postmodern Age* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 4. Horrocks offers further insights into the relationship between Freud and the postmodern: "One can also point to an interesting relationship between psychoanalytic ideas and postmodernis-that while postmodern critics have tended to attack psychoanalysis as a 'grand narrative' which in the guise of liberating the individual produced yet another form of coercion, at the same time there seem to be connections between depth psychology and certain postmodern ideas…Freud invents discursive space…Freud also lays stress on the irrational and fantastic nature of our mental life: and this seems to match the postmodern emphasis on the representation of things rather than things themselves." 4.

vie seconde- celle qui commençait lorsque, ayant déposé ses attributs de gouverneur-

général-administrateur, il arrêtait la clepsydre- Speranza n'était plus un domaine à gérer,

mais une personne, de nature indiscutablement féminine."[85]

This distancing felt and experienced by Robinson manifests itself in this reflexive

function of language and assumes the critical function as developed by Gilles Deleuze.

The log-book "met en crise" his solitude and constantly reminds him of the loss of

"autrui", this otherness presents itself in the writing due to the communicative function of

writing:

> Le langage relève en effet d'une façon fondamentale cet univers peuplé
> où les autres sont comme autant de phares créant autour d'eux un îlot
> lumineux à l'intérieur duquel tout est-sinon connu-du moins
> connaissable. [86]

Cast away from this populated universe, Robinson enters into the unknown, and

language is the tool through which the self-discovery inherent to the rediscovery of the

self may be realized. The log-book assumes this function of revealing the possible as

Deleuze summarizes: "Autrui, c'est l'existence du possible enveloppé. Le langage, c'est

la réalité du possible en tant que tel. Le moi, c'est le développement , l'explication des

possible leur processus de realisation dans l'actuel."[87] This dialectic between the self and

language expresses the postmodern view of the self as profoundly disjointed and

fractured and therefore the impossibility and futility of stability and order. Robinson's

vacillation between rational and irrational is indicative of the postmodern destruction of a

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[85] Tournier, *Vendredi*, 100.

[86] Ibid., 54.

[87] Deleuze, 265.

modern mentality. Ian Gregson points this out in his work *Postmodern Literature:* "The self is now very far from the spiritual haven that the Romantics took it to be and is instead the vulnerable site of historical and social conflicts."[88] In this sense, Tournier's Robinson suffers from the conflicts inherent to the upheaval of modern enlightenment thinking by postmodern tendencies and language is the tool through which Robinson explores this tension.

Robinson himself seems to recognize the distinctly modern aspects of the society from where he was exiled. The sense of self which he is gaining thanks to his solitude allows a distant examination of life alone versus life with *autrui* under the auspices of society. As Robinson confirms:

> Une convulsion a eu lieu. Un objet a brusquement été dégradé en sujet. C'est sans doute qu'il le méritait, car toute ce mécanisme a un sens. Nœud de contradiction, foyer de discord, il a été éliminé du corps de l'île, éjecté, rebuté. Le déclic correspond à un processus de rationalisation du monde. Le monde cherche sa propre rationalité, et ce faisant il évacue ce déchet, le sujet." [89]

The nature of this "sujet" suffers a tremendous transformation once it is ejected from modern society. As a consequence, both the structuring of this individual's character and his experiences demonstrate postmodern tendencies of fragmentation and ontological confusion. The postmodern self is no longer legitimized by all encompassing meta-narratives and thus is no longer afforded psychological consolations for his acts, rather he wanders ostracized and expelled from the conformity of society. Robinson perfectly epitomizes this isolated conflicted existence which is prevalent in postmodern

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[88] Gregson, 48.
[89] Tournier, *Vendredi,* 98.

literature.

The result of the loss of a historical referent in the form of a societal presence can be better understood in the light of Lacan's theories of breakdown of meaning in the chain of signifiers. Lacan incorporated Saussure's structuralist theories in particular that meaning is generated from the movement from signifier to signifier. Once this chain is disrupted, when signifiers no longer refer to a referent or enjoy a relationship to a signified, the result is schizophrenia in that the signifiers no longer function together to create meaning. Deleuze echoes this meaning of schizophrenia as a break down in meaning resulting from the collapse of such a stabilizing structure such as society: "D'une part et d'autre, il y a frénésie, double frénésie définissant le moment de la psychose, et qui apparait évidemment dans le retour à la Terre et la généologie cosmique du schizophrène..Ici, c'est donc la structure Autrui qui tend elle-même à se dissoudre."[90] The ramifications for Robinson of the established referent of the modern era being abolished are a profound confusion and yet an opening of possibilities of meaning. One example of this can be found in the loss of the signifier 'feminine' with all its sexual and emotional signification which is transformed and the meaning shifts to a new signifier, the island Speranza.

That Speranza be feminine in nature compounds the dialectic at work in the narrative of *Vendredi*. As so many other binary pairs, the opposition male/female will systematically be dissolved and abolished by Tournier through a reworking of the signifying elements of these two. Baudrillard in his *Consumer Society* explores the

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[90] Deleuze, 275.

relationship between 'the body' and the 'feminine'. There are numerous references made

by Robinson to the physical traits of the island which seem to constitute a physical body

which is distinctly feminine. As Baudrillard discusses:

> …it is woman who orchestrates or rather around whom is orchestrated this
> great Aesthetic /Erotic Myth. We have to find an explanation for this
> which is not simply of the archetypal sort along the lines : 'Sexuality is the
> sphere of Woman because she represents Nature, etc.'[91]

Tournier's *Vendredi* accomplishes this challenging of the archetype of feminine

due to the radical upheaval of the relationship Robinson enjoys with his feminine

counterpart. In keeping with postmodern tendencies of deconstruction, Robinson's

sexual relations with Speranza are radically exaggerated and scandalous.   Through his

sexual encounters with the island, Robinson fathers countless mandragores as he

describes in the following passage:

> Les mandragores s'y multipliaient au point que la physionomie du paysage
> en était modifié. Robinson s'assit, le dos appuyé à un talus sablonneux, et
> chercha de la main les larges feuilles violacées, aux bords déchiquetés,
> dont il a été l'introducteur dans l'île. Ses filles étaient là-bénédiction de
> son union avec Speranza.[92]

Thus Robinson transgresses even the most romantic appreciations of Nature such as those

expressed by Rousseau in his *Rêveries du Promeneur Solitaire*. His union with Nature is

more than merely spiritual, it is absolutely physical and sexual and is radically

scandalized in Tournier's text. This hyperbolization and perversion of nature's femininity

proves to be a postmodern approach to undoing an established norm which is the

Romantic's ideological conception of Nature's beauty. In this way I may address the

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[91] Baudrillard, *The Consumer Society*, 137.
[92] Tournier, *le Vent Paraclet*, 41.

tension provoked by Tournier's deconstruction of modern Romanticism's adoration of

Nature. Through his scandalous representation of the radical perversion of man's

relations with Nature, Tournier challenges yet another all-encompassing meta-narrative

dominant of the modern era. Robinson, embracing this postmodern freedom enjoys a

union with Nature which is far more fulfilling and radically more erotic than any such

union in the modern. As such, Robinson seemingly expresses an intensity of existence

similar to the existentialistic philosophies announced by Nietzsche, Sartre and Camus, yet

in a postmodern way.

Robinson the Postmodern Existentialist

In the previous sections I discuss the modern aspects of Robinson Crusoe's

actions on his island as a preliminary step toward isolating and emphasizing the

postmodern counteract performed by Robinson which lends this novel its postmodern

characteristics. Having stated that postmodernity constitutes a reaction to modernity, and

having shown the self of Robinson to be fractured and in fact doubled, I now turn to the

notion of this self as an expression of an Existential sensibility. The philosophizing of

existentialism in the works of Jean-Paul Sartre combined with narrative enactment of

these theories in the works of Albert Camus together provide the groundwork upon which

is erected a postmodern view of existentialism in a third-order level. This undertaking

continues the poststructuralist theoretical discussion undertaken earlier in the chapter

whose anti-humanistic tendencies seemingly sterilize the fertile voice of the subject.

As with so many other historical models taken and molded into a new postmodern

form, Tournier disassembles and then rebuilds the key notion of individual freedom as

seen by existentialistic tendencies. Through the life of Robinson Crusoe, Tournier

provides provocative answers to the core questions raised and explored by Existentialism

such as: What are the Individual's passions? How does one's life fulfill these passions?

What is the meaning of existence? We find in Tournier's *Vendredi* a postmodern

response to these questions which redefines the notion of personal freedom.

The status of personal freedom in our postmodern consumer based society which

the example of Robinson Crusoe ironically reveals, echoes the changes which have

reshaped society since the dawn of postmodernity. In their collection of essays contained

in their *Postmodern Existential Sociology*, John M. Johnson and Joseph Kotarba refer to

the postmodern changes of existentialism in two parts:

> The first type of change is occurring in the world out there, the
> postmodern world. The battle cry of existentialism forty years ago-man
> against society-is no longer quite that simple…The "society" has changed.
> It is no longer merely society or even mass society in some sort of
> abstract, Orwellian sense. Social life is increasingly mediated and culture
> and society are increasingly synonymous.[93]

Therefore, through the case study of Robinson Crusoe we may interpret the

changes which have shaped postmodern society such as the fracturing of the self and of

the inversion of power struggles. Yet the postmodern aspects of such a reworking lye not

only in the changes of society or the individual, but also in the ways these changes are

relayed through literature. The literary representation of postmodern transformations of

existential philosophies expresses similar formal experimentation as described by

Johnson and Kotarba: "Postmodernism as an intellectual style has freed scholars to

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[93] Joseph A. Kotarba, ed., John M. Johnson, ed., *Postmodern Existential Sociology* (Oxford: AltaMira Press, 2002), 9.

experiment with a range of writing styles: the autobiography, the essay, the film the short story, the poem…Society is too elusive to be described; we only have the shadows and movements to chase."[94] It is precisely in these shadows, so evocative of the shadows in Plato's cave, that our postmodern Robinson wanders in his third-order level. Here in the darkness the previously established literary dogmas delineating autobiography, biography, poetry, novel, etc. are blurred and through the eruption of the log-book in the seemingly coherent form of the novel appears a postmodern Robinson.

If we accept postmodernity to be a movement which began during the period when the collapse of Man's reason appears to be irrefutable, notably during the Second World War, then modern existentialist theories align themselves chronologically with this movement. Sartre and Camus, in their writings published during the decades between 1930 and 1960, respond to the infamous claim made by Nietzsche that "God is dead." Camus' *La Peste* (1947) explores the thematic of solitude on a grand scale as does *l'Etranger* published in 1942. His *La Chute* (1956) and the collection of short stories *l'Exil et le royaume* (1957) explore the absurdity of life which proves to be highly relevant to Crusoe's isolation.

Although the Sophists over three thousand years ago celebrated the notion of individual freedom and celebrated existence, it is in the last decades that the existentialist movement can be concretely identified. Taking Nietzsche's claim to heart, without God Man is doomed to be free. As Sartre states that God and human nature are "des concepts

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[94] Kotarba and Johnson, *Postmodern Existential Sociology*, 9.

inexistants."[95] In the place of God stands a being for whom "existence" preceded essence

and that being is Man. As he states:

> Cela signifie que l'homme existe d'abord, se rencontre, surgit dans le
> monde et qu'il se définit après. L'homme, tel que le conçoit
> l'existentialiste, s'il n'est pas définissable, c'est qu'il n'est d'abord rien. Il
> ne sera qu'ensuite, et il sera tel qu'il se sera fait. Nous voulons dire que
> l'homme existe d'abord, c'est-à-dire que l'homme est d'abord ce qui se
> projette vers un avenir, et ce qui est conscient de se projeter dans
> l'avenir…et l'homme sera d'abord ce qu'il aura projeté d'être.[96]

Robinson's capacity to create himself through the actions he undertakes in his life

exemplifies this existentialistic attitude. Day by day he attempts to not only understand

his existence but to shape its form. He is suggestive of Camus and Sartre's belief that

Man is thrown into this world and that through the process of living and of reacting to its

environment do they define his nature.

During the modern era, the existential self embodied a being within the world

which reacted to and adapted to the constantly changing social environment. It is

precisely the nature of the world with which the self interacts that is worth noting. The

nature of the society during the modern era is dominated by the lofty aspirations of the

Enlightenment such as the creation of paradise on earth through Man's effective use of

reason. Yet, as shown by the powerful mythical reworkings exemplified in Tournier's

writings, such as *le Roi des Aulnes* which demonstrates the atrocities of the Second

World War, Man's reason is in fact perverted and weak. Now at the dawn of the

postmodern era, we find existentialism reacting against this blind belief in Man's reason.

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[95] Jean Paul Sartre. *L'existentialisme est un humanisme* (Paris: Gallimard, 1977),35.
[96] Ibid., 37.

The fundamental changes which have taken place in society have profoundly altered the relationship between Man and society.

Through the promulgation of technology and the rapid advancement of methods of communication, Man's ability to interact with each other and with the society as a whole has been severely compromised and at worst deceased. Some particularly skeptical postmodernists such as Foucault and Lyotard suggest that the human subject is in fact dead. They wage an attack against humanism claiming that Man used his reason only to dominate and maintain his place of superiority in the social hierarchy.

It is the individual of Robinson Crusoe, isolated from society, who provides us an excellent example of the nature of the existential self in the postmodern era. As Tournier himself comments, the myth of Crusoe allows for a renewal of the self:

> Car le héros mythologique, s'il prend pied au cœur de chaque individu modeste et prosaïque se hausse en même temps au niveau d'une réussite admirable. De telle sorte que chaque héros mythologique…nous engage dans un processus d'autohagiographie. Comme je suis grand, fort, mélancolique! s'écrie le lecteur en levant les yeux du livre vers le miroir. Vraiment, il ne se savait pas si beau![97]

Through the individuality of Robinson, we may affirm the existence of a postmodern self which embraces a new freedom. His vision of the individual desperately trying to define the nature of his own personal freedom is postmodern in that it attests to the collapse of modern hierarchies establishing authority figures. It is no longer Robinson, the white master, who best exemplifies freedom and the fulfillment of life, it is Vendredi the savage, whose intimacy with nature proves to be the best means to

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[97] Tournier, *le Vent Paraclet*, 226.

accomplish personal freedom. Yet, as we see through Vendredi's choice to leave aboard the ship that arrives on the island at the end of the novel and thus entering into slavery, Tournier does not endorse modernity's blind appreciation of the primitive either. Once again, the postmodern discourse is not didactic as its modern predecessor was and Tournier merely plays with both of these models and recombines certain themes to stimulate us into creating our own unique reaction.

The section that follows will explore in greater depth the narrative processes that allow Tournier to create a postmodern view on the existential self. In particular, Robinson's ultimate embrace of the subjugated, who despite his inferior status, incarnates this existentialistic appreciation of life and nature.

The Dark Skinned Other

The role of the other is explored and deconstructed in Tournier's *Vendredi* through the inverted power struggle between Robinson and Vendredi. Robinson incarnates the modern western self whose power is assured on the societal hierarchy due to his white race. His binary pair, Vendredi, exemplifies the slave, or the dark skinned other who enters the equation as the subjugated. It is this impending emancipation of the subjugated dark skinned that is postmodern in nature, and that which distinguishes it from its modern predecessor. The victim of the modern machine of rationalism, the slave, finds himself elevated to the level of the human subject in Tournier's work. This value-laden hierarchy is reversed in the setting of Robinson where the notion of utility, key to rationalist though, is impotent. As Tournier remarks: "Sa présence (Vendredi) suffit déjà à ébranler l'organisation de l'île..Vendredi sème le doute dans un système qui ne tenait

que par la force d'une conviction aveugle."[98].

Robinson in the creation of his "Charte de l'Ile de Speranza" quite literally replicates the legislative means through which social authority and sovereignty was assured to western powers. He defines himself as the monarch as he states: "En cette qualité (Gouverneur), il a tout le pouvoir pour légiférer et exécuter sur l'ensemble du territoire insulaire dans le sens et selon les voies que lui dictera la lumière intérieure".[99] In an apparent inversion of the great Enlightenment, knowledge no longer radiates from a far off ideology, rather it is the luminescence in the individual which is projected outward.

As master, Robinson's subjects are obliged to respect his authority and to ensure his authority enforced by the penal code he creates. For Michel Foucault such penality inherently is a means to subjugation, or "a procedure for requalifying individuals as subjects."[100] These processes clearly engender the subjugated, Vendredi or "le sujet unique"[101], to his master, Crusoe. Yet through the eventual degradation of such rationalistic ideological power, it is the subjugated who gains control.

The counterinsurgency of the Other negates the modern metanarrative of race dominance. It is the postmodernist critique of the totalizing *grands récits* of race and authority which liberate the subjugated. Vendredi, the slave, who is in a position of inferiority through his own existentialistic affirmation of nature and embrace of individual freedom devoid of society, upturns the hierarchy and takes the dominant

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[98] Tournier, *le Vent Paraclet,* 234.
[99] Tournier, *Vendredi*. 71.
[100] Foucault, *Power and Punishment*, 130.
[101] Tournier, *le Vent Paraclet*, 234.

position. It is Vendredi who rescues Robinson after the symbolic destruction of the

stockpiling of gunpowder and in so doing takes the power position in the ensuing and

continued unraveling of the rationalistic ideology which dominated Robinson in the first

part of the novel.

If we closely examine the very first moments that Robinson sees Vendredi on his

island, we find many references to the grand ideals of modernity which praise Man's

reason and assure white man a place of superiority. Startled by the sight of three savages

running on his island, Robinson quickly surmises the nature of the chase. In fact two

savages are chasing down the hunted third, most probably for sacrificial purposes.

Fearing reprisals from the savages, Robinson has to decide quickly how to react to this

invasion. Assessing the dynamics of the relationships governing these three savages, he

decides to align himself with the more powerful two men who are chasing the weaker:

"Ayant à se ranger dans le camp de la victime ou dans celui des bourreaux - l'un et lautre

lui étant indifférents-la sagesse lui commandait de se faire l'allié des plus forts." [102]

Clinging to his musket, he aims squarely at the chest of Vendredi but it is Tenn,

the presence of an animalistic instinct, who foils his shot which lands harmlessly in the

sand. It is hazard and chance which annihilates this well-thought-out rationalistic choice

on the part of Robinson. This upheaval by random chance is inherently postmodern and

attests to the frivolity of such modern endeavors. Although his 'sagesse' fails, he still

continues to assert his dominance from the very first moments during his encounter with

Vendredi:

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[102] Tournier, *Vendredi*, 143.

> Un homme noir et nu, l'esprit dévasté par la panique, inclinait son front jusqu'au sol, et sa main cherchait pour le poser sur sa nuque le pied d'un homme blanc et barbu, hérissé d'armes, vêtu de peaux de biques, la tête couverte d'un bonnet de fourrure et farcie par trois millénaires de civilisation occidentale.[103]

It is precisely Robinson's Western heritage vested by three thousand years of world dominance which justifies his authoritative stance in their relationship. Robinson notes in his log-book his shock and dismay that his first compagnon chosen by God be "au plus bas degré de l'échelle humaine".[104] He is disgusted and repelled by Vendredi's nudity and denotes in his primitive nature an appeal to which nature is sympathetic, be it human nature or animal instincts. From the very beginning of their relationship, Robinson notes Tenn's affinity towards the primitive Vendredi. It seems clear from the start of their time together that Vendredi's innate understanding and instinctive interaction with Nature will be more useful that any authority granted to him by the modern hierarchy of master slave.

At the moment when Robinson encounters Vendredi, his endeavors on the island have been true to the modern man. His efforts to regulate, dominate, cultivate and establish order on the island symbolize the power of Reason. Through his rationality, Robinson will master the island and now God has chosen to send him a servant, a slave to aid him in his toils. As Robinson states himself:

> La voie qui s'impose à moi est toute tracée: incorporer mon esclave au système que je perfectionne depuis des années. La réussite de l'entreprise sera assurée le jour où il n'y aura plus de doute que Speranza et lui profitent conjointement de leur réunion.[105]

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[103] Tournier, *Vendredi,*., 143-144.

[104] Ibid.,146.

[105] Ibid.,147.

The period that follows is one which exemplifies the modern social hierarchy of master and servant for civilization will be achieved on the backbone of the weak. As the narrator claims: "Vendredi appartient corps et âme à l'homme blanc. Tout ce que son maître lui ordonne est bien, tout ce qu'il défend est mal."[106] The interaction between Vendredi and Robinson represents in a microcosmic model the core functions of a society. Yet Tournier merely constructs this mini-society in order to deconstruct it and reveal its naïve weaknesses as he states in his *Vent Paraclet*: "Ce n'était pas le mariage de deux civilisations à un stade donné de leur évolution qui m'intéressait, mais la destruction de toute trace de civilisation chez un homme soumis à l'œuvre décapante d'une solitude inhumaine."[107]

Their work progresses at a satisfactory pace to the self ordained "Gouverneur". The master pays his servant at a respectable interest rate of 5.5%, teaches him to pray and to worship God in despite of the savage's "rire", and allows his slave to purchase a half's day rest or food with his earnings. They spend Sunday's together worshiping God which proves to be a pivotal point of their master/slave relationship. It is in the compelling laughter quieted by Vendredi that we may find the inevitable fate of God. Robinson's faithful recitations and worship of God will soon prove to be futile in the face of the natural force which reigns over Speranza. Tournier in his *Vent Paraclet* refers to the importance of "le rire" in the philosophical work of Gaston Bachelard. As Tournier states: "Bachelard me révélait un trait fondamental de l'entreprise philosophique et qui

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[106] Tournier, *Vendredi,* 148.
[107] Tournier, *le Vent Paraclet*, 229.

est comme sa marque d'authentication: le rire…Simplement, je le répète, l'approche de l'absolu se signale par le rire."[108] This "rire devastateur"[109] so subtly evoked by Vendredi quietly menaces Robinson which denotes something mechanical and overly perfect in nature in Vendredi's submission. This dynamic destabilizes and eventually destroys the master-slave dialectic.

The work to which Vendredi is subjugated is futile, repetitive and therefore completely true to the wishes of the master Robinson. Yet it is through the powerful role of Nature in this dynamic that the roles are reversed, the slave gain power and as Tournier himself states will "sert à la fois de guide et d'accoucheur à l'homme nouveau."[110] Robinson's seduction by nature has been duly noted in the preceding passages and its powerful influence on his sensibility continues to destabilize his efforts at controlling and mastering both Vendredi and the Island. One night, upon hearing the calling of the islands distinctly feminine voice, Robinson abandons his residence to embrace the nurturing of Nature. In the following passage, the call of Nature beckons Robinson who seemingly joins nature in mind and body. Robinson, "blanc comme une racine"[111], "crut entendre la terre elle-même qui gémissait d'amour esseulé"[112]. In the aftermath of this experience, he is going to turn his back on his rational endeavours and join his "filles les mandragores,[113] the physical product of his sexual embrace with Nature.

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[108] Tournier, *Vendredi*, 153.
[109] Ibid.,153.
[110] Tournier, *le Vent Paraclet*, 229.
[111] Tournier, *Vendredi,* 156.
[112] Ibid., 156.
[113] Ibid., 156.

Thus it is the dark, irrational force of Nature which undermines the modern conception of the master slave dialectic. It is Nature's power that reduces Robinson to become its slave and grants Vendredi authority. This trait is representative of the postmodern view of ecology. Nature's role as established in Defoe's modern literary work is reversed in that Robinson attains freedom not through the mastering of Nature, but through his embrace with, albeit scandalous, and submission to Nature. Of the two, Vendredi enjoys a relationship of equality and understanding with Nature which affords him an advantageous position in this hierarchy. In Robinson's absence, Vendredi recognizes that he "était maître de lui, maitre de l'île."[114] In his master's absence, he freely explores the bounties of the island and enjoys the suspension of the order established by Robinson.

The passages which describe the master slave dialectic fluctuate in narration according to who enjoys the position of authority granted by Nature. In Robinson's absence, it is Vendredi who gains control by entering into the favor of Nature. During these episodes the narrative structure focuses on his actions within the context of Nature. When Robinson re-enters the structure, the narration follows his perspective of Master who suffers from a dual desire of mastering and of loving Nature which necessitates his submission to its uncontrollable forces.

In one telling example, Tournier manifests the upheaval of the master slave relationship quite literally through the symbolism of a tree planted in an inverted manner.

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[114]Tournier, *Vendredi,* 157.

Vendredi, during the absence of his master, uprooted and planted "à l'envers"[115] several trees. The sight of the branches in the earth and the roots "dressés vers le ciel"[116] symbolically represents the inevitable reversal of not only his apparent mastery of Nature but of his servant Vendredi. Vendredi rises from the earth "homme-plante" who clearly enjoys the approval of Nature. However, this natural affinity greatly threatens the artificial order Robinson tirelessly works to impose upon the island.

Vendredi: the Eruption of 'le Sacré'

As a profoundly subversive and destructive force in Robinson's quest to create a societal order, Vendredi's assumption of the role of the Other constitutes what Georges Bataille refers to as 'l'hétérogenéité du sacré' or the heterogeneous sacred. This tension between Robinson's attempts to dominate and homogenize the island and its constant undermining by Vendredi perfectly echo the postmodern trends towards deconstructing the modern. Robinsons' rationalistic and orderly actions clearly evoke the modernist ideals, yet Tournier's supplementing of Vendredi as a discursive force leads us outside of this modern structure. As Jean-Michel Heimonet observes, the relevance of Bataille in our discussion of the modern and the dangers that lie within are due to his: "Mauvaise conscience et lucidité d'un modernisme à bout de souffle, il a non seulement levé toutes les questions qui nous hantent aujourd'hui quant au future des sociétés industrielles, mais il les a posées dans un discours radicalement *autre*."[117]   Bataille's theories of the other, of that which is beyond not only a societal structure but human consciousness as well,

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[115] Tournier, *Vendredi*., 163.
[116] Ibid., 163.
[117] Jean-Michel Heimonet, *Pourquoi Bataille? Trajets Intellectuels et Politiques d'une Negativité au Chômage*., 9.

including the religious conception of the sacred, explains the crucial role of Vendredi in Tournier's work. To be precise, the other is that which is not able to be assimilated into the homogenous, that which cannot be equal to any norms and as such is embodied by Vendredi.

Vendredi's assumption of this role of the other leads Tournier's narrative questioning far beyond the societal boundaries imposed by Robinson. As Heimonet observes: "la personnalité "diabolique" prêtée à Vendredi ne s'explique pas tant par les préjugés racistes de son maître que par ses échecs répetés pour le traiter en chose et l'intégrer au parfait système économique et juridique auquel il assujettit la nature."[118] As Robinson remarks himself: "Non seulement l'Araucan ne se fondait pas harmonieusement dans le système, mais- corps etranger- il menaçait de le détruire."[119] Robinson's tireless efforts to homogenize the natural chaos in which he finds himself are violently upturned by Vendredi who seeks to destabilize and ultimately destroy this order. It is in this way that Vendredi and his incarnation of Nature represent a postmodern attribute: the impossibility of conforming Nature into a categorical and controllable system. According to Bataille: "la base de l'homogénéité est la production. La société homogène est la société productive, c'est-à-dire la société utile."[120], Defined as that which is productive, i.e. useful, Robinsons' efforts are solely aimed towards the homogenization of the natural chaos which reigns over the island.

This order Robinson so ardently tries to maintain through his Charte and his

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[118] Heimonet, *La démocratie en Mal d'altérité*, 41.
[119] Tournier, *Vendredi*, 164-65.
[120] Heimonet, *Pourquoi Bataille*, 18.

repetitive quotidian activities is threatened by that which is uncontrollable and disorderly: the heterogeneous. As Bataille defines it, heterology is " la science de ce qui est tout autre, l'hétérologie se caractérise par sa résistance à la science positive."[121] Vendredi's consistent disobedience to the homogeny of Robinson's order threatens the stability of this structure. Vendredi's 'otherness', his inability to be equalized as the fellow man of Robinson, positions him in an antithetical relationship to Robinson. Their relationship is not only one of master and servant but of the homogenous and the heterogeneous and more to the point, the profane and the sacred. As Jean-Michel Heimonet remarks, Bataille's theorizing of the sacred and of the profane is in fact rooted in the work of Roger Caillois, *L'homme et le sacré*: "Bataille reconnaît ici sa dette envers l'ouvrage de R. Caillois, *L'homme et le sacré*, auquel il emprunte la division de l'existence sociale en deux domaines anti-thétiques."[122] The profane, constituting the mundane "soumis à la régularité du travail effectué à des fins de conservation,"[123] expresses itself in Robinson. As Bataille himself remarks: "The profane is the world of *reason*, of *identity*, of *things*, of duration and calculation."[124] The sacred, "où l'homme donne au contrarire libre cours aux forces passionnelles réprimées par les normes"[125] is expressed through the presence of Vendredi. Furthermore, according to Bataille: "The sacred is really, in Rudolf Otto's expression, something that is from the first *completely other*."[126] Oscillating and ultimately inverted, this opposing relationship between the profane and the sacred

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[121] Heimonet, *Pourquoi Bataille*, 28.
[122] Ibid., 28.
[123] Ibid., 28.
[124] *Selected writings of Georges Bataille*, 40.
[125] Heimonet, *Pourquoi Bataille*, 28.
[126] Ibid., 40.

constitutes a dialectic which pervades the entire novel and is one of its most postmodern traits.

Durkheimian views postulate a necessary balance between the sacred and the profane but in Tournier's Vendredi, the balance is violently upheaved and the sacred dominates. The sacred as described by Bataille provokes very intense and conflicted reactions from the profane. Recalling Robinsons' initial revulsion at the first sight of the savage Vendredi, it is clear that repulsion dominates his feelings.

Passing from hatred to adoration, the profane Robinson evolves throughout the novel and in particular after the explosion of the modern stockpiles. From the ashes of the explosion rises the sacred. According to Bataille this emergence of the sacred is inevitable and the necessary end of man's condition: "The human situation is determined in its entirety in the mechanism which opposes the calculation of effort to come to immediate liberation. But the liberation (present life) would remain in these conditions a constant danger and a final end-that is the sacred."[127] Robinson's constant rational efforts to dominate the sacred, that is to say our affinity for nature, our need for transcendence and belief in something that is more than we are, are in vain. It is in this way that Tournier challenges and unravels the modern ideological view of rationalism in a postmodern way.

According to Bataille, man's need and construction of the profane, that is to say constructing a society which regulates, goes against the innate instincts of man which allow for liberation. This is due to the fact that man lives in immanence, in the instant

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[127] *Selected Writings of Bataille*, 40.

which is animalistic and primitive. Vendredi surely represents this imminence in that he lives in the present moment, outside the constraints of time and order imposed by Robinson. Vendredi does not plan his day or his actions, rather he passes from one moment to the next in a naïve jubilance. In so doing, he transgresses many of the boundaries imposed by Robinsons, but in a very particular, postmodern way.

Bataille distinguishes two types of the sacred, one which transgresses the boundaries from 'en haut', which Heimonet defines as: "sacré droit, associés à la dimension supérieure reconnue aux grands hommes, saint, héros ou monarque".[128] This definition clearly does not define the primitive Vendredi who never possesses heroic or saintly qualities. Rather he conforms to Bataille's second type of the sacred or "le sacré en bas" which Heimonet describes as "la transgression par en bas (sacré "gauche") par surcroît d'abjection et de déchéance: folie, criminalité, perversion sexuelle."[129] It is after all, Vendredi who Robinson finds molesting his beloved flower daughters, his Mandragores. This sexual deviance revolts Robinson who subsequently beats Vendredi nearly to death. Vendredi's transgressions are criminal in that he does not conform to the laws established by Robinson. Furthermore, his primitive demeanour is suggestive of 'la folie', 'madness', for his behavior is not regulated by his reason, rather animal instinct.

Symbolically, the profane Robinson follows Vendredi through the transgression of the rational boundaries of his established order. The term transgression is linked to the sacred for it incarnates a desire to rebel against social norms and order. Robinson, through his well thought out Charte defines the conduct and order which will regulate his

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[128] Heimonet, *Pourquoi Bataille*, 29.
[129] Ibid., 29.

society. The taboo, according to Michael Richardson in his Selected Writings of Bataille:

"sets up prohibitions to control and impose rules of conduct."[130] Yet, according to

Bataille's remarks, the desire for order from which the taboo eminates is itself based in

fear, fear of disorder and violence which itself is transgressive. Therefore:

"Transgression does not deny the taboo but transcends it and completes it."[131]   The

transgressive constitutes that which ruptures the established and profane order. It is the

rebel, he who wanders outside the boundaries imposed by society, who constitutes the

transgressive and the sacred. Vendredi is Robinson's necessary but opposing

complement. Vendredi violates the taboo, he announces the sacred in the profane world

of Robinson. Undoubtedly, Vendredi assumes this role and as such is transgressive in the

Bataillian sense of the word. The link between transgression and postmodernity may best

be summarized by the fact that transgression is a mechanism used to deconstruct

established boundaries. Modern ideologies imposed boundaries within which man must

function. The breach, the transgression of these limits is dangerous to the homogeny of

the modern structure, be it societal or cultural. The postmodern represents the

deconstruction, the playful unraveling of these limits and therefore transgression is a

crucial mechanism to this end.

This transgression finds its culmination in the explosion of the rationalistic stock-

pile of Robinson. The explosion of the stockpile symbolizes the destruction of the

homogenous profane and as Jean-Michel Heimonet points out: "L'explosion finale qui

souffle en un éclair la petite usine qu'est devenue l'île, est moins l'effet d'une cause

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[130] *Selected writings of Georges Bataille*, 56.
[131] Ibid., 56.

physique: l'étincelle de la pipe dérobée enflammant la poudre, que psychologique: l'altérite radicale qui soustrait le "sauvage" à la mentalité et aux conduites de *Gesellschaft*."[132] The profane explodes and the sacred reigns. After the violent explosion and destruction of the utilitarian and rationalistic endeavors of Robinson, he himself transgresses the very boundaries he has imposed and embraces a more primitive sacred. Robinson stops wearing clothes and symbolically journeys 'en bas' to stagnate in the rotten stench of la souille.

This transgression performed by Vendredi and ultimately Robinson lends to *Vendredi* its postmodern tendencies. Postmodernism is above all characterized by a deconstruction, an unraveling of established doctrines and meta-narratives. It would seem that Bataille, in his theorizing of the sacred and of transgression already announces this postmodern tendency. Tournier, in his *Vendredi*, repositions the profane, rational Robinson of Daniel Defoe in a deconstructed, inverted and transgressive context. The Robinson of Tournier may start out being rationalistic, profane and homogenous but through the progressive unraveling of his order by Vendredi, he too transgresses the very boundaries he imposed. Tournier's Robinson represents the sacred in the sense that he too revolts against an established order over nature, he ultimately embraces the liberating forces of a more primitive and irrational being. Bataille's theories of the heterogeneous, the sacred and transgression enlighten the dialectical relationship between Vendredi and Robinson, but given that we are exploring the third order of representation, the matter is not so easily resolved.

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[132] Heimonet, *La démocratie en mal d'altérité*. 41.

The role of Vendredi is indeed not limited to heterogeneous liberator and in the section that follows his presence will be explored through the optic of Gilles Deleuze and of Jean Baudrillard. In the postmodern era, simulation is the ruling factor. Together their theories attribute to Vendredi the status of a simulacra, a simulation of the other, a trait which is distinctly postmodern in nature.

Vendredi: Simulacra of the Other

The pairing of Robinson and Vendredi constitutes not only one of the fundamental binary pairs at the core of the narrative structure, but also serves as a point of departure of yet another construction which in effect doubles its model. Just as myth constitutes a second order discourse which forms itself around its predecessor, so too does the world of Crusoe serve as a base from which is erected a doubling formation: the construct of a world without the Other which inhabits a third order level. The complex relationship between Crusoe and the lack of Other resulting from his isolation creates a sexual tension in the narrative through the discursive element of Vendredi.

Gilles Deleuze in his postface to Vendredi "Michel Tournier et le monde sans autrui" promulgates a structuralist and indeed poststructuralist interpretation which accounts for the sexual perversion of Robinson. As previously discussed, the sexual deviation exhibited by Robinson in his numerous encounters with the *Terre-Mère*, "Mother Nature", constitutes a deconstructive menace to the opposition of order/disorder around which Robinson has planned his existence. In a desperate reaction to his isolation, Robinson's only salvation may be achieved through a strict observance of a relentless work ethic, one that has been described by Max Weber, which allows for his

re-humanization. This order attempts to harmonize the binary pairs which polarize

Robinson's existence which, according to Deleuze are : "air et terre, liberte/renfermé,

lumière/ombre."[133]The persistent threat posed by his sexual compulsions destabilizes the

hierarchical divides between these pairs and ultimately results in the collapse of the social

order he has laboriously established.

In keeping with trends of the postmodern towards destabilization and inversion,

this sexual perversion is the result of an intrusion of the "*insolite*" or the "shocking" in

the world of Robinson that finally amounts to "faire devier le monde de l'ordre

économique."[134] Robinson's isolation on the island of Speranza constitutes, as

previously discussed, not only a metaphysical solitude but a structural one as well.

Outcast and expelled from the homogeity of society, Robinson's reaction represents an

attempt to reconstruct the core mechanisms of society, notably that of the regulation of

time through arduous and methodic work. Yet the element which escapes his control is

his sexuality. As David Platten confirms in his work *Michel Tournier and the Metaphore

of Fiction*, Cruose's sexual desire is born from his societal ostracization which: "posits

sexual desire as a socially constructed phenomenon obeying the unwritten laws and

dictates of a specific, historical society." [135]

Therefore, sexuality is entwined in the very fabric of the social structure in which

the individual lives. This situational sexuality becomes impossibly complicated given

that the social structure collapses and is ultimately erased as a consequence of the erosion

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[133] Deleuze, "Michel Tournier et le monde sans autrui", 265.
[134] Ibid.. 266.
[135] Platten,*Michel Tournier and the Metaphor of Fiction*. 49.

of Robinson's *île administrée*. Facing the lack of presence of a sexual counterpart, which

given the fact that he left behind a wife and two daughters, is heterosexual in nature,

Robinson deviates from his banal and repetitive quotidian existence in search of that very

presence. In the place of the feminine he finds the Natural (la Nature) which affords him

the presence of this loss. Yet this natural femininity constitutes a deviation from its model

for it is in a fantastic and imaginary realm that his sexual desires may be achieved. This

eroticism of Nature, proves to be a powerful trait of postmodern ecological discourses

which pervert Nature's beauty to an enticing sexuality. According to Deleuze, this

deviation constitutes a "déshumanisation" and provides Robinson with a "rencontre de la

libido avec les éléments libres."[136] "Dishumanization" means that from now on sexuality

must be achieved through that which is hot human, yet suggestive, of feminity: Mother

Nature.

    The sexualization of Nature proves to be a complex issue in postmodern

theoretical discourse, one which accounts for the self's alienation in the face of the

uncontrollable forces of Nature. Ian Gregson in his work *Postmodern Literature,* quotes

numerous poets characterized as postmodern who explore the role of Nature. For

Jameson, postmodernism is "what you have when the modernization process is complete

and Nature is gone for good."[137] Yet in *Vendredi,* it is clear that Nature is more than ever

present. Crusoe's physical union with Nature exhibits trends characteristic of Eco-

feminism and of ecological attitudes which warn against the assimilation of nature into an

order of production such as the one dominating our consumer based society. As Jean

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[136] Deleuze, 268.
[137] Jameson, *Postmodernism*, ix.

Baudrillard reminds us: "Let us recall here the lévi-straussian principle: what confers on consumption its character of being a social factis is not what it apparently preserves of nature (satisfaction, enjoyment/pleasure), but the essential procedure by which it breaks with nature.[138]

Therefore, the consumer society views Nature solely in terms of enjoyment and of its utility. In Tournier's *Vendredi*, Robinson's attempts to integrate Nature and the other savage forces on the island into his social order result in a total failure. Robinson ultimately embraces Nature in a metaphysical and indeed physical relationship which goes against this postmodern conception.

In order to reconcile this tension at the heart of Tournier's ecological attitude which seemingly espouses a Romantic appreciation of Nature, we must look at the hyperbolization, the eroticization and the discursive force of Nature which is most suggestive of the postmodern. It is impossible to establish one concrete definition of the postmodern ecological discourse. Baudrillard's discussion of the consumer society enslaves Nature into its system of utility. Although the consumer society is postmodern, not all aspects of postmodernity may be suggestive of the consumer society for that would be attributing to the myth of the consumer society a modern, all encompassing trait. Rather, it is possible to find an individualized, transgressive representation of Nature, one which breaks with its modern, romantic model. There are several writers characterized as postmodern who urge for a rebirth of Nature similar to that which we find in *Vendredi.*

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[138] Baudrillard, *The Consumer Society*, 79.

As Ian Gregson points in his work *Postmodern Literature*, writers such as Ted Hughes, Adrienne Rich, Martin Amis and Teresa Brennan express horror in the face of the subjugation of Nature. In particular he quotes Teresa Brennan in the following excerpt:

> If nature is endlessly consumed in the pursuit of a totalizing course, then that course is dangerous for living; it constitutes a danger to one's own survival, as well as that of others. That, approximately, is the technical, legal definition of psychosis.[139]

Tournier in his work seemingly inverts this consumer based enslavement allowing for the authoritative repositioning of Nature through the absolute annihilation of social structure. In this sense it seems that postmodernity is moving forward, surpassing the limits imposed by the consumer based society's digestion of Nature. This tend towards the fragmentation of a single conception of Nature is more in keeping with the postmodern than with the modern for the postmodern narrative in no way tries to offer a single concrete representation. In so doing, Tournier attributes distinctly feminine attributes to Speranza which echoes postmodern ecological discourses. A postmodern writer such as Seamus Heaney practices in his writings a feminization of nature in the same vein as that of Tournier. Together Ted Hughes, Seamus Heaney and Peter Redgrove share a common appreciation of the role of Nature:

> The association of the female, mud or earth, and some form of rebirth, is common to all three… bvcc   gffall of them embody, in varying degrees and proportions, a pervading critique of the masculine intellect, of the Platonic-Christian division between soul and body, and the rape of Nature by Western Civilization. [140]

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[139] Gregson, *Postmodern Literature*, 28.
[140] Ibid., 93.

Robinson's sexual relations may burn with incestuous allures but never does he rape Nature. In fact, in Vendredi, the island Speranza herself assumes a powerfully maternal role. For David Platten, the role of the island mediates Robinson's sexual desire: "The physical form of the island itself mediates the conscious desire of first Robinson and then Vendredi."[141] As mediator, it enters into the complex process of desire centered around the mourning of the object loss of the other.

Julia Kristeva as well defines the self's desire in terms of a relation to the object of desire. It is this complex relation between the self and the self's desire for a given object that enlightens Robinsons sexual compulsions: "…the experience of want itself as logically preliminary to being and object-to the being of the object."[142] The fragmented self of which Robinson is indicative, compounds the relationship between the subject, the I, and the object of its desire. If the object desired by the self is lost, and if the self is fractured as is it happens with the postmodern self, then the process of desire is radically altered and driven in a new direction, one heavily influenced by loss itself.

Freudian and post-Freudian theories such as the post-Lacanian theories of Kristeva define the self as being born from loss, the loss of the mother figure. Out of this ontological loss is born a relentless desire which in the case of Robinson manifests itself in a desire for the object of Nature which represents the absence of the feminine. The resulting conflict creates a power struggle between the self of Robinson and the object of his desire: Nature. If we understand Nature to symbolize the feminine, then the

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[141] Platten, 50.
[142] Julia Kristeva, *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1984), 67.

continuation of the inversion of the power struggle between male/female, or as in the case of Vendredi master/slave, is once again present.

This relationship between object and the self which constitutes desire, finds itself precariously unbalanced when the lens through which desire is focused, the other, is no longer present. As previously explored, the other constitutes a system which Robinson relentlessly tries to recreate amidst his solitude. Robinson refers to this collective loss as a machine and he himself speaks of the birth of his desire:

> Ainsi le desir. C'est un torrent que la nature et la société ont emprisonné dans un bief, dans un Moulin, dans une machine. J'ai perdu mon bief, mon Moulin, ma machine. En même temps que toute la construction sociale, tombée en ruine en moi d'année en année, a disparu l'echafaudage d'institutions et de mythes qui permet au désir de prendre corps.[143]

 Thus, there is no one to inhabit this phantom structure. Once Robinson perceives both consciously and unconsciously the impossibility of such a societal skeleton, his object of desire refocuses and is replaced by a substitute object which is Nature. As Robinson himself describes: "Il ne s'agissait pas de me faire regresser vers des amours humaines, mais sans sortir de l'élémentaire de me faire changer d'élément." [144] This new element proves to be nature, the one abounding presence in his existence.

For Deleuze, the absence of the other abolishes the distinction between subject and object : "En l'absence d'autrui, la conscience et son objet ne font plus qu'un. La conscience colle avec l'objet dans un étérnel présent."[145] It is this eternal union with the object that redefines the desire experienced by Robinson. Substituting Nature for the loss

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[143] Tournier, *Vendredi*, 118.
[144] Ibid, 229.
[145] Deleuze, 270.

of the feminine, Robinson enters into a pure communion with all the elements of Nature.

Stripped of society and of the other, Robinson's desires freely abound toward the more

natural and ultimately de-humanized symbolic reality of Nature. Undoubtedly in

Vendredi, that which separates Tournier's version of Robinson Crusoe from Defoe's is

the sexual perversion which proves to be a profoundly postmodern unraveling and

deconstruction of the sexual dogma dictated by societal morality. Once this societal

structure is decentered and collapses as in the case of the solitary Crusoe, sexuality

becomes perverse in that it releases itself in a new direction and in a new structure. This

is in keeping with Freud's definition of perversion as a sexual desire which premises

desire as the ground zero of a new sexual construct. Once again, Freudian theories of the

unconscious menacing the stability of the self lend themselves to a postmodern view of

the incoherent and fractured self exhibited by Robinson.

Thus, this new mausoleum of Nature in which Robinson's sexual desire pulses

results from the destabilization of the now-empty social structure. Deleuze's singular

commentary on this new construct bridges the gap from this structuralist impasse to a

postmodern milieu which suggests the powerful influence of phantom doubling. As he

comments:

> La structure Autrui organise la profondeur et la pacifie,la rend vivable.
> Aussi bien les troubles de cette structure impliquent un dérèglement, un
> affolement de la profondeur, comme un retour agressif du sans-fond qu'on
> ne peut plus conjurer. Tout a perdu son sens, tout devient simulacre et
> vestige, meme l'objet du travail, même l'être aimé, même le monde en lui-
> même et le moi dans le monde.[146]

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[146] Deleuze, 275.

The postmodern tendencies of inversion and deconstruction explain the progressive erosion of the attempts of Robinson to create a new social structure. The binary pairs collapse and in their place is erected a doubling shadow world in which Robinson's existence finds its natural complement. This new world is not structured in the same way as the social existence that Robinson in vain tried to recreate and it is not an exact replica of the Natural world of Speranza for it is created by the imaginary in Robinson's psyche. It is the world of Robinsons displaced perceptions of Nature which have acquired new sexual force due to the loss or absence of the feminine.

According to Freudian psychoanalytic theory that which distinguishes psychosis and neurosis is questions of depth. In our postmodern era there exists a 'depthlessness' as proven by *Vendredi's* inability to represent a historical referent. It is a shallow text. Jameson's theories of 'pastiche' explore this newfound depthlessness and its impact on postmodern literature. He names four depth models and shows their subsequent repudiation:

> 1. The dialectical one of essence and appearance…2. The Freudian model of latent and manifest…3 the existential model of authenticity and inauthenticity…4 most recently, the great semiotic opposition between signifier and signified… What replaces those various depth models is for the most part a conception of practices, discourses, and textual play…here too depth is replaced by surface, or by multiple surfaces.'[147]

Deleuze beckons Robinson to return to the surface, to a lack of depth, himself. He argues for Robinson's ascent to the "surface pure" of this newly found structure from where : "se lèvent ces doubles ou ces Images aeriennes; ces éléments purs et libérés.

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[147] Jameson, *Postmodernism*, 281.

Alors les simulacres montent, et deviennent phantasmes, à la surface de l'île et au survol du ciel."[148] This metaphorical ascent of Robinson provides an excellent explanation for the abundance of references to Robinson's journeys toward the light or his ascents to the "abîmes" of the island. It is precisely in this second structure, or third order, that Robinson oscillates. It is in this world of shadow and light, of the presence of absence, that the shadow of presence appears: Vendredi.

Vendredi's arrival on the metaphorical island of Robinson's solitude provides solace and constitutes a shadowing of that which Robinson grieves the most: the loss of the other. For David Platten Vendredi is myth himself: "Vendredi-venusté- is myth itself"[149] and a character through which: "Robinson is finally liberated from the contingencies of his 'règne tellurique'."[150] On the most obvious level, Vendredi inverts the power struggle in which Robinson is entangled. Yet his presence becomes far more ominous given a postmodern reading. Given the Deleuzian restructuring of the depthless social structure into a dimension soaring into the sky just as his eolian "cerf Volant": "C'est lui qui fait sauter l'île, en fumant le tabac défendu près d'un baril de poudre, et restitue au ciel aussi bien la terre que les eaux et le feu. Mais c'est lui surtout qui présente à Robinson l'image du double personnel, comme complément nécessaire de l'image de l'ile."[151] Deleuze names Vendredi "a pauvre simulacra"[152] due to his incapacity to recreate and reconstitute the loss of society so mourned by Robinson. Indeed, Tournier

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[148] Deleuze, 276.
[149] Platten, 51.
[150] Ibid., 51.
[151] Ibid., 276.
[152] Platten, 277.

does not place Vendredi on the high throne of an absolute truth which would be a modern

approach. Rather, his primacy is emphasized as an important role in allowing Robinson

to appreciate Nature. However, this primitivity is not idyllic for Vendredi, through his

own imbecile nature, willingly enters into slavery at the end of the novel. The

postmodern treatment of this aspect of the myth of Robinson is neither to furnish a model

of the rational being nor of the primitive, rather a combination of certain parts of each.

Tournier then recombines these mythemes in his third order level in order to allow for

their collapse. Ultimately it is the dialectic interpretation that Tournier wishes to inspire

in the reader, the tension is left open for us to explore in our own mini-narrative.

It is important to remark at this point that this structural reworking so described

by Deleuze complements and explains the semiotic mythical intertextualization

performed by Tournier. In conjunction with Baudrillard's theories of the simulacra and

the third order we perceive the potency of the simulation at work on this third order level.

We are currently exploring the complex semiotic inversions and abolitions of binary

pairing which mutate the mythical Defoe's hypotext into Tournier's hypertext. This is

precisely the level of the third order of representation so feared by Plato in which the

postmodern treatment of myth by Tournier may be identified. Plato's fears of third order

may be summarized as resulting from it being the world of shams, of copies of copies for

which no original exists. Deleuze's characterization of Vendredi as a shadow simulacra

of Autrui squarely posits this narrative in a postmodern space. Autrui is not present to be

sure but far more dangerous is the presence of a *shadow other* in which the comforting

narrative surrounding societal existence is disrobed and threatened becoming a more

discursive force. Jean Baudrillard's theories of the simulacra further enlighten this perversion and are worth noting at this point.

Baudrillard and Robinson Crusoe

In his work *The Political Economy of the Sign* Baudrillard takes up the myth of Robinson Crusoe and comments on the modern ideals espoused by Defoe's Crusoe. As earlier discussed, Defoe's Robinson encompasses an entire bourgeois economic ideology which "transformed Man simultaneously into a productive force and a 'man with needs."[153] I have already explored the needs of Robinson who in his isolation replaces his need for Autrui with Nature. Baudrillard defines "nature" as a regime of use value, a system of production in which man's capacity for labor defines him. This is in keeping with the all encompassing meta- narratives of modernity in that they espouse "an ideal relation of man to the world through his needs and the rule of Nature; and an ideal relationship with God through faith and the divine rule of Providence."[154]

Baudrillard, in describing Defoe's modern version of Crusoe, is discussing the "bourgeois avatar of the myth of terrestrial paradise, an ideal myth" which dominates second order mythical discourses. He suggests and refers to the very problematic undertaken by Tournier's reworking and restructuring of this modern myth on a third order level when he questions the presence of "some Man Friday, some aboriginal servant. (But if Crusoe's relations to his labor and his wealth are so "clear," as Marx insists, what on earth has Friday got to do with this set-up?)[155] In fact, this servant, *this*

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[153] Baudrillard, *Selected Writings*, 74.
[154] Ibid., 74.
[155] Ibid., 75.

Man Friday, claims his hereto appropriated authoritative stance not only by assuming the title of Tournier's novel, but by voicing and giving presence to Autrui in a purely symbolic form.

To fully grasp the complexities of the third order, we must begin at the modern system of production referred to by Baudrillard and is worth noting at length:

> There is no longer such thing as ideology; there are only simulacra. To grasp the hegemony and the spectacle of the present system, we have to retrace an entire genealogy of the law of value and of successive simulacra-the structural revolution of value. Political economy has to be resituated within this genealogy; it thus appears as a simulacrum of the *second order,* in which the so-called "real" is ever put into play; the real of production, of signification, in consciousness or in the unconscious.[156]

Therefore the value system of the modern Crusoe which determines Man's use by his production output becomes a model from which emerge simulacrum which simulate capitalist economical ideology. That is to say that this second order system is the modern system, and the simulacrum of the second order system constitute the third order of simulation in which the means and the ends of mans productivity are "hyperreal", and in fact "murderous of the real". The modern "natural law of value" becomes a referential for a new system, in which exchange value is no longer known or determinable. Baudrillard describes the passage from the second order to the third as a "higher order of simulation" and "a revolution separates each order from the next one: these are the true revolutions. We are in the third order, no longer the order of the real, but of the hyperreal, and it is only in the third order that theory and practice, themselves floating and indeterminate,

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catch up with the hyperreal and strike it dead."[157] Vendredi himself constitutes the

hyperreality of the other, a hypertexuality of the other. Defoe's Friday was 'real' in that

he inhabited a historically valid referential status. Tournier's Vendredi is 'hyperreal' in

that he has ingested and resurrected the 'real' Friday in a new order of simulation or the

third order.

Having explored the phantom nature of the presence of the Other since we are

operating now in the third order, or the realm of shadows, Baudrillard continues to offer

insights into the complex inversions at work in Tournier's *Vendredi* through his

theorizing of the simulacra. Julian Pefanis in his work *Heterology and the Postmodern:*

Bataille, Baudrillard, and Lyotard, offers a highly relevant examination of Baudrillard's

third order theory: "For, without a doubt, Baudrillard is a theorist of the third order, of an

order of representational phenomena composed of such figures as the simulacrum,

simulation, model and the hyperreal."[158] Thus, in citing Baudrillard, we necessarily refer

to the complexities of representation simulation on a third order level.

Baudrillard's definition of simulation describes the negative effects of the

onslaught of technologies of reproduction on postmodern society. Be they literary or

poetic, questions of representation inevitably are susceptible to the threat of reproduction

and simulation. Baudrillard describes "a space whose curvature is no longer that of the

real, nor of truth, the age of simulation thus begins with a liquidation of all referentials-

worse: by their artificial resurrection in systems of signs, which are a more ductile

material than meaning, in that they lend themselves to all systems of equivalence, all

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[157] Baudrillard, *Selected Writings*, 121.
[158] Pefanis, 60.

binary oppositions and all combinatory algebra."[159] Through the simulation of the myth

of Robinson, a textualization of the myth is achieved through a complex semiotic

reworking of binary oppositions. As a result, Tournier's Robinson stands before us

disconnected from his historical context. Isolated and disjoined, he functions in a sign

system of inverted meanings and phantom presences which trick and deceive his

fractured psyche.

Symbolic Disorder: Third Order Simulation

The operation of simulation in this third order level of signification compounds

and complicates the meaning espoused by the myth of Robinson Crusoe. Crusoe in

Tournier's novel no longer signifies a reality, be it historical, sociological, even real or

imaginary. It is a level of representation in which the signifier no longer enjoys a

concrete relationship to its signified. Rather, the signifier slips to another signifier and so

on indefinitely, changing and transforming in the grasp of the individual consumers or the

lecteurs of the text in whom a new seed of meaning is sewn. Crusoe the signifier no

longer represents the modern collective ideological referent, and to say that the

postmodern Crusoe represents a postmodern ideology would be a modern statement.

Rather, he signifies a new meaning, that of an isolated, fractured self who is incapable of

ideological fruition. This meaning, this context provided, in part, by Tournier combines

with the highly subjective perspective of the reader to create a postmodern text which

differentiates itself from the modern by the infinite interpreatations possible. We have

now entered the world of simulation in which "It is no longer a question of imitation, nor

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[159] Baudrillard, *Selected Writings*, 167.

of reduplication, nor even of parody. It is rather a question of substituting signs of the real

for the real itself; that is, an operation to deter every real process by its operational

double, a metastable, programmatic, perfect descriptive machine which provides all the

signs of the real and short-circuits all its viscitudes."[160]

Vendredi undoubtedly is the "operational double" of Crusoe who "short circuits"

the semblance of real. Tournier seemingly provides all the signs of the real in his novel,

a clearly descriptive narrative which describes in profound clarity and minute detailing

the reality of Crusoe. Yet two times removed from its model, we now enter this system

of signs whose semiotic recombination of signifying elements creates a copy of a copy,

which can only generate difference rather than to establish referential meaning.

Baudrillard asks: "Is it thus necessary to play a game of at least equal complexity

in order to be in opposition to third order simulations? Is there a subversive theory or

practice more random? Only symbolic disorder can breach the code.[161] I argue that the

structural transformation of myth is innately open-ended as seen in Tournier's desire to

involve the reader to actively participate in artistic and literary creation. In so doing, the

function of Tournier's mythological restructuring is not operationally limited or perfect.

As he states himself in his *Vol du Vampire*, the act of writing is not a singular act which

is finished as soon as the work is published, rather: "Un livre n'a pas un auteur, mais un

nombre indéfini d'auteurs. Car a celui qui l'a écrit s'ajoutent de plein droit dans l'acte

créateur l'ensemble de ceux qui l'ont lu, le lisent ou le liront."[162] In this sense it espouses

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[160] Baudrillard, *Selected Writings*, 167
[161] Ibid., 122.
[162] Tournier, *Le Vol du Vampire*,13.

the postmodern attributes of free play, of problematizing without engendering a final

meta-narrative ideology to answer these very questions. In the place of a totalizing

ideology stands an individualizing reception which is as unique as the reader of the text,

as Tournier describes: "A peine un livre s'est-il abattu sur un lecteur qu'il se gonfle de sa

chaleur et de ses rêves. Il fleurit, s'épanouit, devient enfin ce qu'il est: un monde

imaginaire foisonnant, où se mêlent indistinctement…les intentions de l'écrivain et les

fantasmes du lecteur."[163] Tournier's Robinson demands of us a participation which the

modern predecessor denied in its pragmatic and didactic form.

In this sense, Tournier's system demonstrates that which Baudrillard describes as

a system which does not "declare A is A, or two and two make four" rather, it

demonstrates this play: "The play of simulation must therefore be taken further than the

system permits. Death must be played against death- a radical tautology. The system's

own logic turns into the best weapon against it. The only strategy of opposition to a

hyperrealist system is paraphysical, a "science of imaginary solutions;" in other words, a

science fiction about the system returning to destroy itself, at the extreme limit

simulation, a reversible simulation in a hyperlogic of destruction and death."[164] Indeed,

Crusoe's recognition of the eternity of the moment in the infinite repetition of time

symbolized by the rising and setting of the sun, seems to echo this destruction of death in

that his mortality is no longer confined by his temporality. Rather Crusoe's immortality is

assured by time and its endless nature as expressed in the last sentences of the novel:

"Redressant sa haute taille, il faisait face à l'extase solaire avec une joie presque

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[163] Tournier, *le Vol du Vampire*, 13.
[164] Baudrillard, *Selected Writings*, 267.

douloureuse. Le rayonnement qui l'enveloppait le lavait des souillures mortelles de la

journée précédante et de la nuit..L'eternité, en reprenant possession de lui, effacait ce laps

de temps sinistre et dérisoire. Une profonde inspiration l'emplit d'un sentiment

d'assouvissement total."[165]

Tournier's mythological simulation embraces some of the most archaic elements

of human society, including birth, death, isolation, fear and love. These traits are

undoubtedly mythical in that they call to all persons in all time. Upon their radical

transformations, these collective notions are endowed with powerful new meanings

which take flight in the imaginations of the readers of this postmodern text. As unique

and individual as each one of us, these mythical attributes mutate in new and unforeseen

ways and in so doing lead the signifying system in phenomenal directions far outside the

boundaries imposed by structuralist, psychoanalytic and even poststructuralist discourses.

It is perhaps above all the perversion of the religious aspects, or the realm of the

sacred, that have the most impact on the reader. As we have seen in the case of

Robinson's postmodern existentialistic tendencies, Man devoid of the meta-narrative of

God is free to transgress all normalizing boundaries. Christianity represents one of the

longest standing ideologies in human history and as such proves to be quite susceptible to

a new structural reworking in our postmodern era. Tournier, in many of his works

undermines and neutralizes this religious dogma through his strenuous reworking and

recombination of many mythical models. By incorporating them into a third order

structure which proves to be deceptive of the reality of its second order model, religion is

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[165] Tournier, *Vendredi,* 254.

turned on itself and loses its credibility. In its place stands a religion based on individual creation which incarnates many elements of Bataille's theories of the sacred and of the immanence of life.

Taking myth to the third order level of simulation puts many Christian mythical figures such as Saint Christopher, Saint Veronica, and even Cain and Abel, at great representational risk. The simulacra, this sinister beacon of the third order, have long struck fear in the heart of zealots who saw in this process of representation a grave danger. To them the image was a trickery of reality out of fear that, ironically, the image would reveal that which does not exist (God) rather than what is actually depicted in the image. Tournier commits literary iconoclasm, which in Greek means image-breaking, in that his works destroy religious images through perverting the defining traits and characteristics upon which the credibility of the said Saint was founded. It is this demise of the sacred that is professed in this mythological simulation and will now be explored at great depth in Chapter 3.

Chapter Three: The Demise of the Sacred

> "Everything that is collapsing, shifty, infamous, sullying and
> grotesque is summed up for me in this single word: God."
> André Breton[1]
> "'Christians', the people who have been called Christian for two
> thousand years, are just a psychological self-misunderstanding."
> Friedrich Nietzsche[2]

In an interview in 1996 Michel Tournier commented on the role of faith in
religion in the following way: "God definitely has an undoubted place in my life because
I am a Spinozist. That is, I believe that I participate in creation and in the divine spirit
when I write and when I understand. And yet, looking at the characters in my novels, I
am surprised to see that in fact this belief is not theirs. My novels are rather atheistic." [3]
This mystical theology described by Tournier is one which emphasizes the creative
faculties inherent to each individual rather than the established doctrine of religion as
represented by Christianity. Tournier's reference to an atheistic tone in his works evokes
Nietzsche's proclamation that "God is dead" which permanently alters the history of
religion and in so doing brings us into the modern era. Through the mythical restructuring
performed by Tournier of many Biblical Saints and figures, this modern ideological shift,
like so many others, finds itself deconstructed and enters into a new era: the postmodern.
Tournier, in his short stories and novels, embarks upon a literary journey in which one of
humanity's most enduring ideologies, Christianity, is unraveled and ultimately perverted.
In so doing, Tournier emphasizes the transformative qualities of myth and the figurative
language through which it is expressed.

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[1] Michael Richarson, *Georges Bataille*, 115.
[2] Nietzsche, *The Anti-Christ*, 256.
[3] Michel Tournier, "Entretien Michel Tournier", *Lire* (1996): 36.

Due to the innately symbolic makeup of Christology, its figurative language finds itself immensely susceptible to the semiotic deconstruction and ensuing reconstruction of many of its core symbolic messengers such as the Saints and myths around which Christianity is centered. In keeping with trends of the postmodern which favors fragmentation, parody and pluralism, Tournier seizes upon many of the essential symbols of Christian theological discourse and progressively unravels the dense network through which their meaning is expressed mythologically.

Given that myth in the postmodern era stands profoundly altered, the narrative re-representation of Christian myths in the works of Tournier expresses a sacred reality whose structural and figurative qualities are profoundly modified. The ramification of such a perversion of the sacred leads us away from the salvation of Christian beliefs and into the demise of the sacred which strikes at the core of the psychological makeup of the late capitalist consumer characteristic of the postmodern. Tournier's redescription of established religious doctrines stimulate in the imagination of the reader a new meaning, one in which they project their innermost world of possibilities. This performative function of the mythical transformation of Christological discourse is referred to by Paul Ricoeur as an "areligious sense of revelation"[4] which emphasizes the importance of the individual's capacity to script his own existence outside the confines of religious doctrines.

The chapter that follows will explore the complex interaction between the transformation of religious ideology through the semantic restructuring of several Saints

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[4] Paul Ricoeur, "Toward a Hermeneutic of the Idea of Revelation," *Harvard Theological Review* 70 (1977): 26.

and Biblical myths which embody many core Christian theological beliefs. Tournier's

reworking of Divine Intervention as embodied by the Incarnation of Christ will be

examined in his work *Gaspard, Melchior et Balthazar* and the dangers of representing

Christ's embodiment of God so feared by the iconoclasts will be explored through a study

of the image in Christian doctrine as portrayed in *Les Suaires de Véronique.*

As Tournier states himself: "Je me méfie beaucoup de l'image"[5] and this key

notion of the image proves to be of profound relevance to the postmodern era in which

the images, or simulacra, as Jean Baudrillard refers to them, are "murderous of the real."

Baudrillard reminds us of the dangers of representation inherent to religion which have

been present since the first icons of Christinainty were created by the Byzantines: "Ainsi

l'enjeu aura toujours été la puissance meurtrière des images, meurtrières du réel,

meurtrières de leur propre modèle, comme les icônes de Byzance pouvaient l'être de

l'identité divine."[6]

Together, these works offer a rich study of the Biblical reworkings performed by

Tournier who describes the influence of the Bible on his works in the following manner:

"Je ne suis pas de ceux qui ouvrent la Bible quand ils ont un problème avec leur femme,

leur fils, leur jardinier ou leur peintre. Mais je passe mon temps à compulser la superbe

bible en vingt volumes de mon grand-oncle..Je m'en suis beaucoup servi, notamment

quand j'ai écrit *Gaspard, Melchior et Balthazar.*"[7] Above all, Tournier inspires himself

with the dynamism of the Biblical legends which are immensely symbolic. Given the

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[5] Michel Tournier, "Entretien", 36.
[6] Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacres et simulation*, (Paris: Editions de Galilée,1981),16.
[7] Michel Tournier, "Entretien", 36.

profoundly figurative makeup of Christian theology, it seems natural that an era such as the postmodern one in which issues of representation and simulation complicate our reality, would allow for a transformation of its key metaphorical figures.

Tournier's works including the short stories "La Famille Adam*"* and "Les Suaires de Véronique*"* as well as the novel *Gaspard, Melchior et Balthazar*, are illustrative of the religious metamorphoses transpiring in our postmodern society in that they demonstrate the decentered central figure of Christianity: Christ. Through a restructuring of the narrative and symbolic processes through which their meaning is created, the altered Saints and Biblical myths in the works of Tournier challenge our molded beliefs and beckon us to reconsider many of the revelatory messages of established religion. Tournier in turn urges us, the readers, to create our own religions, that is to say our own act of creation, through the reception and subsequent creation of a uniquely individual mini-narrative. The theories of Paul Ricoeur emphasize the essential function of scripting one's own life story, of refiguring one's identity in the world of the possible outside the narrative constraints of Christianity. For Tournier, a religious experience is not created through orthodox establishments, rather through an eruption of that which surpasses the limits of human society. As such, Tournier's writings stimulate in the reader that which Georges Bataille refers to as the sacred, previously discussed in Chapter 2.

This notion of the sacred, in the Bataillian sense, describes an experience which transgresses the boundaries imposed by organized, homogenous society. This heterogeneous expulsion constitutes the sacred: a space in which a relationship between man and God, or the absence of this God, takes on a powerful dynamism. It is in this

space that Tournier leads us, into a contemplation of the relation between man and the ideology of God, be he existent or non-existent. Through an unraveling of the key components of organized religion, Tournier renders these orderly elements heterogeneous in that they are no longer productive or utilitarian as they functioned previously in Christianity. Rather, they call to a uniquely individual experience which contemplates the existence of a higher force referred to as God or a sacred Being, freed from the homogenous institution which ironically suppressed the vitality inherent to a sacred experience of the transcendance.

The postmodern world is one which enjoys a parodic imagination, emphasizing free play and parody, which results from a uniquely heterogeneous liberty afforded by the powerful deconstructionist discourses of Derrida and Foucault. Tournier's restructuring of myth is playful in that it creates an interactive fusion between the narrative of the myth and the interpreter. As Paul Ricoeur describes it: " Play is an experience which transforms those who participate in it…What is essential is the 'to and fro' (Hin und Her) of play."[8] Therefore, the postmodern treatment of Christian myths in the works of Tournier provokes a dialectical exchange between we the reader and the mythical, theological narrative from which we emerge profoundly altered and awakened.

As a result of Tournier's semantic reworking of myth, the modus operandi of religion, which is figurative narratology, finds itself dramatically altered and suffers a similar fate as our Robinson Crusoe who cast away on his island lost all ability to represent a historical referent. So too do these Saints so reconstructed in Tournier's

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[8] Mario J. Valdés, *A Ricoeur Reader, Reflection and Imagination* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 90.

works find themselves outcast from the symbolic system in which they have been functioning for centuries. In their place stands an altered and in fact, perverted simulacrum, or simulation of their reality, which conveys an altogether different message.

Once again we witness a mythological textualization, yet in this case it is of the symbolic imagery of Christianity. These altered Saints no longer point beyond the symbolic realm, that is to say they no longer refer to a collective, temporal referent. Rather, we may view the poetic function of the mythological reworkings of Tournier as representative of the *text* as Ricoeur envisions it, one whose power of reference does in fact refer to a 'world', a world of the imaginary and possible as the reader perceives it.

The dangers of the simulacrum, one of the defining themes of the postmdodern era, takes on a prevalent role in several of Touriner's works, in particular through the deranged and violent photographic quest of Veronica in *les Suaires de Véronique*. Transgressing the boundaries of her Christian predecessor, Veronica exemplifies a heterogeneous force and in so doing divorces her own mini-narrative from the all encompassing meta-narrative of the second order. In so doing, Tournier, once again creates a *text* which is devoid of a historical referent.   Roland Barthes' definition of textuality perfectly summarizes the seditious nature of the text: "What constitutes the Text is, on the contrary, or precisely, its subversive force in respect of the old classifications." Indeed, Tournier's rewriting of Biblical narratives attempt to undermine the system in which they functioned: Christianity.

The terms 'mere metaphor', 'empty symbol' or 'exploded myth' characterize the fate of these theological structures in our postmodern era. Using, in particular, Bataille's

theory of an atheology which explores the dynamic relation between man and the possibility of representing God by the means of language, I will demonstrate Tournier's mythical restructuring to be a confirmation of the life and of the immanence of the moment which unleashes in man the very desires suppressed by organized religion. Through the use of myth, Tournier calls to all people and his process of supplementing a third order level of myth transforms myth and propels it into a new level of representation and simulation. In so doing, Tournier successfully allows the individual to enter into this dialogue of which myth is, and always has been, the voice: the relationship between man and God.

Myth and Christianity

For Tournier, a 'grand myth' such as Christianity is: "d'abord une image vivante que nous berçons et nourrissons en nous, qui nous éclaire et nous rechauffe. De l'image, il a les contours fixes, semble-t-il, de toute éternité, mais son paradoxe tient dans la force de persuasion qu'il irradie malgré son antiquité.[9] Having developed extensively in Chapters 1 and 2 the role of myth in the postmodern era as well as its function in the works of Tournier, I now turn to the innate relationship between myth and Christianity for it is through this medium that faith has found its voice for many centuries. Tournier's works continue the revelatory characteristic of the Biblical narratives, yet that which is revealed in our postmodern era stands in contrast to the salvation claimed by Christian discourses. In the place of salvation stands the realization of human individual discovery far outside the realm of Christian dogma. Myth continues to voice the societal trends of

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[9] Tournier, *le Vol du Vampire* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1981), 28.

the milieu in which it speaks which, in this case, is postmodern, due specifically to its

inherently metaphorical construct that takes flight in the imagination of the reader. In the

section that follows I will explore the profound relation between myth and ts expression

of Christian doctrines and then show how this expression is altered and undone by

Tournier's mythical re-structuring in his works.

In his work *God and the Creative Imagination*, Paul Avis argues that due to the

highly figurative language of Christianity which is made up of metaphor, symbol and

myth, imagination is crucial to its understanding and reception. According to Avis,

creative imagination is 'one of the closest analogies to the being of God."[10] In fact, the

language of Christianity expresses itself through myth which is a mode of discourse

capable of representing the sacred due to its ability to recount an encounter with divine

revelation through a highly symbolic discourse. Avis states that myth: "interprets

transactions in the realm of the sacred, the dialogue between God and humanity."[11] This

dialogue has undoubtedly changed in tone in our postmodern society for reasons

discussed in Chapter 2, such as changes in the way we perceive messages and the

complicated simulation at work all around us. Humanity has changed in our society and

myth, still a vehicle of truth and insight, has altered its focus. In the place of an all-

encompassing narrative such as the revelation of Jesus Christ and his salvation stands a

starkly individualized mythical discourse centered around the reader or consumer of the

myth of which Tournier's texts are examples.

The complex relationship between myth and religion has a long history upon

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[10] Paul Avis, *God and the Creative Imagination* (New York: Routledge, 1999),ix.
[11] Avis, 116.

which have been founded many psychological, anthropological and even narrative theories. As I discussed in Chapter 1, myth according to Carl Jung expresses the collective unconscious of humanity and it is in his works on the archetypal make-up of the collective unconscious and religion that I find the logical point of departure for this part of the study. His theories advocate the existence of archetypes which he defines as "the numinous, structural elements of the psyche which possess a certain autonomy and specific energy which enables them to attract, out of the conscious mind, those contents which are best suited to themselves."[12] He subsequently defines them as 'primordial images' in his *Symbols of Transformation*.

These primordial images give voice to a collective need. In the face of man's mortality, man's unconscious has constructed the need for a controlling father figure. Jung in his *The Significance of the Father in the Destiny of the Individual* published in 1909 elaborates on Freud's insight into the complex relationship between man's need for religion and the Oedipus complex. Freud himself discusses the role of the father as a representation of God in the following manner in "Leonardo Da Vinci and a Memory of his Childhood":

> Psycho-analysis has made us familiar with the intimate connection between the father-complex and belief in God; it has shown us that a personal God is, psychologically, no other other than an exalted father..Thus we recognize that the roots of the need for religion are in the parental complex..Biologically speaking, religiousness is to be traced to the small human child's long drawn out helpnessness and need of help.[13]

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[12] Carl Jung, *"Symbols of Transformation"*, in *Collected Works of Carl Jung*, vol.5, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1956), 232.
[13] Sigmund Freud. "Leonardo da Vinci and a memory of his Childhood" in *The Complete Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. XI. (New York: Hogarth Press Limited, 1957), 123.

Born from the demise of the father in the Oedipus complex, man longs for a replacement father figure. This desire of the ego forms an archetype which operates in the unconscious of man. It is in the symbolic imagery of Christian faith that this archetypal desire finds its expression and outlet. Thus the unconscious creates the God figure, he who replaces the lost father. This archetype dominates not only the unconscious of the individual, but due to general nature of the neurosis, that is to say that it is shared by all mankind, the collective unconscious of humanity expresses this as well. Religion is the vehicle of expression of this unconscious need for paternal guidance.

Freud himself acknowledges the powerful link between Man's unconscious and the religion he constructed out of need: "It occurred to me that the ultimate basis of Man's need for religion is infantile helplessness, which is so much greater in Man than in animals. After infancy he cannot conceive of a world without parents and makes for himself a just God and a kindly nature, the two worst anthropomorphic falsifications he could have imagined."[14] According to Freudian psychoanalytic theory, the father figure of God is nothing more than a psychic phenomenon such as neurosis. Freud too recognized the powerful resemblances between mythology, religion and the unconscious:

> A large part of the mythological view of the world, which extends a long way in to most modern religions, is nothing but psychology projected into the eternal world…The obscure recognition ..of psychical factors and relations in the unconscious is involved…in the construction of a supernatural reality. One could venture to explain in this way the myths of paradise and the fall of man, of God of good and evil, of immortality, and so on, and to transform metaphysics into metapsychology.[15]

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[14] Sigmund Freud, "Letter from Freud to Jung, 2 January 1910" in *The Letters of Sigmund Freud*, (New York:McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1960), 270.,

[15] Sigmund Freud "The Psychopathology of Everyday Life" in *The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud,* ,vol. VI , (London: Hogarth Press Limited, 1960), 259.

Therefore both Jung and Freud acknowledge myth's capacity to create a dialogue with both the individuals and the collective archetypical need for a Father figure as expressed through the religious construct of faith, as Jung confirms: "the religious myth is one of man's greatest and most significant achievements, giving him the security and inner strength to not be crushed by the monstrousness of the universe."[16] In the writings of Tournier, it is no longer the monstrosity of the universe which is depicted, rather the monster that dwells in each man as Tiffauges illustrates, a notion that will be explored in the final chapter.

The symbolic makeup of Christianity embodies Man's need for a father figure in one solitary persona, that of Jesus Christ. Christ proves to be the ultimate metaphor of faith and of man's collective need for religion. The case of Jesus Christ the individual proves to be a powerful symbol of the transcendental qualities espoused by religion. Christ was human, a man who lived in a certain, fixed time. Yet, due to a mystical transformation he attained an out of this world status, he transcended the human realm to incarnate the voice and presence of God. Jung acknowledges this dichotomy at the core of Christ: "Christ lived a concrete, personal and unique life which..had at the same time an archetypal character."[17] The reference to the archetypal character of Christ speaks of the collective unconscious of the receiver of Christian theology in whom one's psychic processes allow for the existence of Christ. It is through the symbolic medium of mythical Christological discourse that the psyche of the believer is triggered into

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[16] Jung, *Collected Works*, 231.
[17] Ibid., 88.

accepting the story, or factual myth of Christ's existence.

The Myth of Jesus Christ

That Christ represent a mythical construct has profound implications for the whole of Christianity as a legitimizing force in society. Used as a tool to influence its believers, Christian theology exerted a didactic function on society in that the Gospels conveyed messages in order to alter man's behavior. As a mythical discourse, that is to say, a discourse which expresses itself through the use of a sacred symbolic narrative form, Christianity represents one of the most influential meta-narratives in human history. It is precisely the mythical qualities of the life of Christ, those that allow for the eruption of the sacred in the realm of the mundane life of an individual, that allow for its legitimacy. Jung speaks of the legitimacy of Christianity in the following way: "Legitimate faith must always rest on experience. There is, however, another kind of faith which rests exclusively on authority of tradition. This kind of faith could also be called 'legitimate', since the power of tradition embodies an experience whose importance for the continuity of culture is beyond question."[18] Therefore one of the essential functions of Christianity is to continue the culture in which it flourishes. This intrinsic and necessary link between society and the mythical makeup of religion is confirmed by Paul Avis who states: "religious imagery is humanly and socially constructed".[19]

Tournier himself views this controlling force of Christianity as inherently contradictory to the mystical essence he attributes to his own religious beliefs. He comments on the role of Christ in orthodox Christianity in the following way: "L'Eglise

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[18] Jung, *Collected Works*, 232.
[19] Avis, viii.

catholique n'a jamais cessé de se tromper. L'Evangile, ce livre de vie, est bafoué par son emblème: le cadavre du Christ. Quelle hérésie."[20] In his novel *les Météores*, the scandalous character of Alexandre offers the most vivid critique of Christ's prominence in the Christian faith. This importance placed on the suffering body of Christ in all its physicality is represented by the theological beliefs of Thomas Koussek, a childhood friend of Alexandre, who was a priest enamoured with Christ:

> Le Christ est le corps de l'Eglise, mais l'Esprit-Saint est son âme. Pendant toute mon enfance et une partie de ma jeunesse, j'ai commis la faute la plus répandue en Occident: j'en suis resté au corps. J'étais fasciné par le Christ, par le corps nu et torturé du Crucifié […] Oui, j'ai aimé Jésus comme un amant.[21]

Alexandre's homosexual orientation offers a profoundly altered view on the physicality of God's embodiment in Christ. His view is more perverse, that is to say more erotic and surpasses the limits imposed by conservative Christian discourse, as he vows: "Je n'imagine pas Dieu autrement qu'un pénis dressé haut et dur sur la base de ses deux testicules, monument érigé à la virilité, principe de création." [22] The opposing forces of heterosexuality and homosexuality have long been divided by Christianity, which views the latter as contrary to God's will in that it is not used for a purpose of reproduction and it does not create life. In this non-productive and non-utilitarian perspective, homosexuality becomes heterogeneous as conceived of by Georges Bataille. By allowing Alexandre such a prominent place in his novel *Les Météores*, Tournier affords a position of prominence to this scandalous and perverse voice. Even the body of

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[20] Michel Tournier with Gilles Pudlowski*: "Saint Tournier, Priez pour Nous," *Nouvelles littéraires* (November 1980): 36.
[21]Tournier, *Les Météores*, 150-151.
[22] Ibid., 123.

God as embodied by Christ finds itself succumbing to the sexually erotic imagination of Alexandre.

Alexandre's childhood friend, Thomas Koussek, voices the more conservative theological beliefs upheld by the Christian Church. In particular, his name refers to Saint Thomas, the doubting Saint who refuses to believe in the resurrection of Christ. After the Crucifixion, Saint Thomas demands to place his hand in Christ's wounds before he could believe. Once again, through the narration of Alexandre, this Saint finds himself perverted and transformed into a far more incendiary character whose union with the physicality of Christ takes on unforeseen and more unconventional attributes:

> Saint Thomas, tu le sais, exigea pour croire à la resurrection de Jésus de pouvoir mettre ses doigts dans les plaies du corps sacré…Thomas ne se contente pas de la perception superficielle du Christ. Il ne croit pas ses yeux…Il lui faut l'expérience mystique d'une communion charnelle, d'une pénétration de son corps dans le corps du Bien-Aimé. Ce flanc ouvert dont la blessure n'a pas versé que du sang, mais aussi un liquide incoloré qu'on a appelé de l'eau, Thomas exige que ses doigts- à la suite de la lance du soldat romain-en connaissent l'intimité.[23]

In the subtility of a narration uniquely characteristic to Tournier, the use of adjectives such as "charnelle", "pénétration", "flanc", "ouvert" and "intimité" together culminate in a profoundly altered and more perverse depiction of the acts of Saint Thomas. In so doing, Tournier effectively alters the symbolic message of this Saint. Koussek, in dialoguing with a marginalized homosexual, and in confessing his own doubts on the established Christian idolizing of the suffering Christ, announces the demise of another sacred saint and on a far greater scale, of the idolizing of the body of

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[23] Tournier, *les Météores*, 151.

Christ. Koussek eventually arrives at a position outside the boundaries of Christian theology by proclaiming: "*Le Christ doit être dépassé. La grande erreur de l'Occident chrétien consiste en un attachement trop exclusif à la personne, à l'enseignement, voire même au corps du Christ.*"[24] Together, Koussek and Alexandre dialectically explore the balance between homosexuality and heterosexuality as it sways in the Christian faith. As such, *les Météores* constitutes a work that, through its deconstruction of established Christian doctrine, exemplifies a postmodern exploration of sexuality in Christianity.

This perversion performed by Tournier is explored by Michael Worton in his article *De la perversion et de la sublimation tourniériennes, ou comment aimer si on n'est pas pervers?* Worton astoutly observes the structural nature of the reworking of sexuality accomplished through perversion in Tournier's works: "Suivant Freud, Chassegruet-Smirgel argumente que la perversion est une tentation humaine universelle qui dépasse les limites de la déviation sexuelle, allant jusqu'à affirmer qu'elle est un des moyens essentiels qui permettent à l'homme de faire avancer les frontières du possible et de déstabiliser la société."[25] Indeed, Christianity has long defined the very boundaries not only of sexuality, but of societal behavior for centuries. The Church's condemnation of homosexuality and its imposition of authority are of particular disgust to Tournier, as he comments: "The Church, on the other hand, teaches the respect of property, hatred of the flesh and the respect of existing power."[26]

Tournier's own mystical contemplations on religion do not concur with

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[24] Ibid, 154.
[25] Michael Worton, "De la perversion et de la sublimation tourieriennes, ou comment aimer si on n'est pas pervers?," *Revue des sciences humaines* 232 (1993):120.
[26] Penny Hueston, "An interview with Michel Tournier," *Meanjin* 38 (1979): 404.

Christianity's favoring of the suffering Christ, rather he favors a religion common to all

people in which everyman has a central role. In this way, he favors the Holy Spirit rather

that the body of Christ. In naming his novel, *les Météores*, Tournier emphasizes a more

natural and meteorological view on the essence of religion. As Tournier comments about

his character Abbé Koussek: "

> Koussek was a special case. In *Les Météores* Koussek is the remains of
> the novel I would have liked to write. I wanted to write a theological
> novel, about the Holy Spirit, which would have been the reconciliation
> between the Holy Spirit and the Meteores, that is meteorology: the wind,
> considered as a physical phenomenon, on the one hand, as well as the
> Holy Spirit which breathes the Spirit. The 'Spiritus' is the breath. [27]

The Holy Spirit, or the wind spirit, as it may be translated, is a wonderfully rich

metaphorical representation of the dissemination of myth in the reader of Tournier. It is a

rather decentered and deconstructed view of the essence of religion that Tournier

continually speaks of, as revealed in the following excerpt: "I believe that I participate in

creation and in the divine spirit when I write and when I understand."[28] This seems to

align with a postmodern approach to Christian theology in that the legitimizing forces of

Christianity as embodied by Christ unravel and disseminate throughout the populace and

into the spirit of every man.

The previous chapter explored the notion of the postmodern as the unraveling of

all-encompassing meta-narratives. Having established Christian theology to be

representative of a meta-narrative due to its legitimizing force, what are the implications

of an unraveling or deconstruction of its mythical structure? How may we ascertain the

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[27] Hueston, "Interview with Michel Tournier"Ibid., 404.
[28] Ibid., 405.

impact such a deconstruction exerts on Christology and ultimately on the consumers of

religious discourse in the postmodern world? The answers to these complex questions

find their best expression in the figurative literary world portrayed in the writings of

Tournier. Re-contextualizing established myths allows Tournier to not only address the

religious doctrine but the sensibility of the reader as well, in whom many profound

societal changes have exercised an incalculable influence. In the following interview,

Tournier reaffirms this emphasis on the importance of stimulating the creativity of the

reader through myth: "N.L. En réutilisant les mythes connus par tous, avez-vous pour

ambition de faire participer le lecteur à votre livre? M.T. Oui, De susciter son intelligence

créatrice…j'aime que le lecteur tremble, J'espère que vous avez pleuré en terminant mon

livre."[29]

Postmodern Christian Theology: Christ deconstructed?

The characterization of postmodern is problematic, as I have duly noted, yet it

may be possible to ascertain its genesis in the history of Christianity in the bold

proclamation by Friedrich Nietzsche that "God is dead." This proclamation in his *Thus

spoke Zarathoustra* places established Christianity in a rather precarious position in

which many of its morals and founding principles are jeopardized. In this way, the very

way we speak God is altered. It is in this way that we may speak of an atheology, for the

term "atheology" derives etymologically from the Greek *atheos,* which was applied to

anyone thought to believe in false god or no gods at all and even doctrines which were in

conflict with established religions. In early Ancient Greek, the adjective atheos meant

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[29] Michel Tournier with Gilles Pudlowski, "Saint Tournier, Priez pour Nous," 36.

'godless.' By the 5th century BC, the term acquired definitions of "severing relations with the gods", or "denying the gods, ungodly". This term has withstood the test of time and its meaning has received new impetus by one of the foremost thinkers of the postmodern, Michel Foucault.

Michel Foucault in his article *Préface à la transgression* in the journal Critique published in 1963, comments on the death of God in the following way: "The death of God is not merely an 'event' that gave shape to contemporary experience as we now know it: it continues tracing indefinitely its skeletal outline."[30] This "skeletal outline" now delineates a corpus void of the core presence of a god, the ultimate meta-narrative. The philosophical contemplations on this death of God find their voice in the literary creations of Tournier, who deconstructing myth, enlarges the problematic of speaking and of representing that which is no longer: God.

The Genesis of Atheology: "God is Dead"

The section that follows will begin with a close analysis of the impact Nietzsche's apparent atheological proclamation exerted on modern conceptions of religion and how he bridges the gap from this modern approach to a postmodern one. Combined with Derrida's deconstruction of established systems, we may understand the expulsion of Christ from the conventional theological structure in which he existed for centuries. Yet Tournier's works achieve a degree of personal impact that is unparalleled. We the reader, consume this altered Christianity and allow it to regenerate in us as it does in the characters in his stories. Through a study of the hermeneutical theories of transcendence

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[30] M. Foucault, "Préface à la transgression," *Critique* 195-96 (1963): 751.

and of fusion of horizons discussed by Schleiermacher and Gadamer, we may better understand how exactly we relate to these altered sacred symbols. Finally we will arrive at the culmination of these theoretical digressions which is found in the writings of Tournier. We will explore concrete examples of perversion of the sacred through the theories of Georges Bataille for whom the sacred is a realm outside the boundaries of homogenized society.

Jung comments on Nietzsche's proclamations that "God is dead" in the context of the individualization of the self resulting from the absence of a sacred Father figure: "Nietzsche was no atheist, but his God was dead. The tragedy of Zarathustra is that because his God dies, Nietzsche himself became a god; and this happened because he was no atheist. He was too positive a nature to tolerate the urban neurosis of atheism. It seems dangerous for such a man to assert that God is dead; he instantly becomes the victim of inflation."[31] According to Lévi-Strauss, myth is a process of mediation which plays a large role in reconciling opposites. When Jung inverts the binary pair of mortal/God as he does in this quote, we witness the mythical inversion typical in postmodern works, in particular those of Tournier. Once the collective notion of God is disavowed, then the binary pair of the individual is favored. That is to say that once Nietzsche dethrones God, he himself assumes this sacred position on the altar. Given that in the writings of Tournier, as we shall soon see, Biblical Saints suffer a process of individualization which strips them of their all encompassing legitimizing forces, it seems clear that Tournier emphasizes the individual power of human discovery rather than that

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[31] Jung, *Collected Works*, 86.

contained in Biblical revelation.

Derrida's theories of deconstruction articulate very effectively this dethroning of the central figure of Christianity: Christ. Christianity constitutes a system which is regulated by a series of oppositions centered around the core notion of Jesus Christ or the archetype of the lost Father figure of the collective unconscious. Suffering a similar fate as that of language, once this center is acknowledged to not be the center, then the system collapses. Perhaps it was Nietzsche's proclamation that debunked his Holiness but I would argue that Nietzsche's summary reflects the results of the process of rationalization that swept the modern age. In the face of the psychological reflections of Freud, Jung and Von Franz which offer a credible, rational explanation for Man's need for religion, combined with the atrocities of World War II in which reason was revealed to be inadequate; we may understand our arrival at the current postmodern impasse which jeopardizes religion.

Derrida centers his theories on religion in the construct of a metaphysical existence of God. For Derrida, metaphysics is any science of presence and any discourse is metaphysical if it claims that presence precedes representation. Deconstruction posits Christianity as a sign system amongst others which does not escape the imminent demise of representation, for like other sign systems, the core notion or center collapses. Derrida's comment that "There is nothing outside the text"[32] announces this reductionist tendency toward the totalizing effects of religion. Reduced to a sign system which constitutes a structure similar to language, religion is susceptible to deconstruction due to

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[32] Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 158.

the arbitrary relationship between signifiers and signifieds. For Derrida, to name God is an impossibility due to the progressive slippage or deferral of meaning constantly at work in language.

This transference of meaning metaphorically symbolizes that which it attempts to convey: transcendence. Paul Avis argues that it is the innately symbolic makeup of Christian discourse that allows for a bridge between God and the world. Paul Ricoeur in his work "Figuring the Sacred, Religion, Narrative and Imagination" emphasizes the inextricable link between the religious experience and the linguistic medium through which it is expressed: "Whatever ultimately may be the nature of the so-called religious experience, it comes to language, it is articulated in language, and the most appropriate place to interpret it on its own terms is to inquire into its linguistic expression."[33] The fact that myth is structured like a language has been duly noted through the exploration of the semantic function of myth and of the reworking of these levels of signification by Tournier.

Indeed, Christian theology expresses itself through myth which is structured like a language, including the symbolic and poetic functions. It is precisely this use of symbol that allows for this slippage or transference of meaning between many of the core Christian doctrines. If we apply Derrida's deconstruction to this deferral of meaning then we effectively witness its collapse, that is to say that Christian theological hierarchies dissolve. In its place stands a theology emphasizing immanence instead of transcendence, that is to say, a theology common to all man which espouses the presence of God in the

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[33] Paul Ricoeur. *Figuring the Sacred: Religion, Narrative and Imagination* (Minneapolis: Ausburg Fortress: 1995), 35.

lives of every man and more precisely, the creative function of the man's imaginative

faculties. According to Avis, Christian theology presupposes a 'realist view of symbols'

in three ways:

> 1. Creation: a spiritual interpretation of the material world-a transcendant
> creativity at the heart of universe.
> 2. Sacrament: God can make his presence known through material signs,
> 3. Incarnation: the symbol is united with the thing symbolized.[34]

Furthermore, there exists a Christian hierarchy which orders symbols so that lower

symbols point to "higher ones, human to divine, the world to God, the Church to Christ

and he to God. "[35] Having established the core structure of the makeup of Christian

theology, then Christ is the 'signum efficax' or the sign of God and the Church

symbolizes Christ. It is this metonymic association through continuity of Christ, God and

the Church, that structures Christian theology. This theology functions as a sign system

as previously discussed. Upon the de-structuring of this structure announced by Derrida

in his numerous works, then this transference of meaning through which the existence of

Christ and of the Church is possible, loses its diachronic function. That is to say that the

hierarchy collapses, the center is expelled and in its place stands a constant process of

signification. Such a poststructuralist approach to Christianity undermines the liturgical

need for a stable text which enables a community of faith to worship together. This

destabilization, or textualization of Christological doctrines, results in what may be

termed a postmodern free play of which Tournier's texts are illustrative.

    The notion of transcendence embodied in the symbolic attributes of Christianity

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[34] Avis, 111.
[35] Ibid., 111.

which allows for an infinite transference of meaning, bridges the gap to the works of Tournier. Tournier continues this process of transference by supplementing new meanings and new contexts to the Christian scriptures and in so doing creates a theology of immanence. Tournier gives to the Magi Gaspard a context which allows him to explore his complicated position of authority, one voiced from his own individual perspective and as such constitutes a mini-narrative. It is through a reworking of the symbolism inherent to Gaspard's journey that Tournier facilitates a process of fusion between us, the readers, and his unique mini-narrative.

To fully understand the symbolic fusion which takes place between the mythical restructuring performed by Tournier and the reader, the theories of Friedrich Schleiermacher, the father of modern liberal theology and of Hans-Georg Gadamer, the father of phenomenology, prove to be a fertile ground.

Postmodern Hermeneutics: the Immanence of Incarnation

Religious doctrines present a structuring of the world which constitutes what Gadamer refers to as a horizon. Gadamer's hermeneutical phenomenology argues that there exists a parallel between the world in which we exist as thinking beings and the world in which we perceive, both of which have horizons. When we attempt to enter another consciousness as the one presented in Christianity, then there is an overlap between the two, as Gadamer discusses:

> Just as in a conversation, when we have discovered the standpoint and horizon of the other person, his ideas become intelligible, without our necessarily having to agree with him, the person who thinks historically comes to understand the meaning of what has been handed down, without

necessarily agreeing with it, or seeing himself in it.[36]

This fusion of horizons implies a dialoguing with the 'other' structure, through which meaning is transferred in a dialectical way. Ricoeur comments that this "fusion of horizons is a dialectical concept which results from the rejection of two alternatives, objectivism, and absolute knowledge."[37] Both Gadamer and Ricoeur are preoccupied with the act of interpreting a text across many horizons. This hermeneutical process, or how we interpret classic texts, such as Scripture, is central to our way of being in the world. Inevitably, the plurality of meaning inherent in both the text and the hermeneutic operation by which meaning is inferred, leads to a conflict or plurality of meaning. According to Gadamer, we each bring our own preconceived notions to the interpretive process and in so doing there results a fusion of horizons between our consciousness and the one of the text. This personal insight, squarely planted in a particular time and place, is essential to the grasping of the truth of the text.

It is the importance placed on the context in which the reader is situated which allows for a postmodern approach to be entertained. This fusion of horizons allows for a multitude of interpretations, arguing that there does not exist one singular meaning of a text rather an infinite and individualized process of created meaning. Tournier clearly refers to this individualization of meaning in his *Vol du Vampire*: "Un roman peut certes contenir une thèse, mais il importe que ce soit le lecteur, non l'écrivain, qui l'y ait mise. Car l'interprétation-tendacieuse ou non- relève de la seule compétence du lecteur, et la

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[36] Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (New York: Seabury Press, 1975), 270.
[37] Paul Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences.* Trans. J.B. Thompson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 1981), 75.

pluralité des interprétations- à la limite aussi nombreuses que les lecteurs eux-mêmes"[38]

This abundance of meaning echoes and enlarges the notion of Incarnation in the Christian tradition. If the holy word incarnates Christ, that is to say that he dwells in the Scripture, and we, the reader, fuse our conscious horizon with that of the text which breathes of Christ, then the interpretation of the existence of Christ is as multiple and individual as each one us. This multiplicity and fragmenting of Christian doctrine evokes the postmodern era in which the individualization of all-encompassing meta-narratives dominates. Tournier takes this one step further by rewriting the Scriptures themselves, by creating a new horizon with which we make contact and emerge from profoundly altered. For Ricoeur, the very act of re-interpreting the Scriptures is inherently a means of interpreting life, as he affirms: "the Christian fact is itself understood by effecting a mutation of meaning inside the ancient Scripture."[39] Indeed, for Ricoeur, the interpretative process is an integral function of a religious discourse: "For my part I should link the concept of faith to that of self-understanding in the face of the text. Faith is the attitude of one who accepts being interpreted at the same time that he or she interprets the world of the text. Such is the hermeneutical constitution of the biblical faith." [40]Just as Tournier alters Christian theological discourses, so too do his writings alter us as hermeneutics attest to.

Tournier himself attests to this interactive dynamic: "A peine un livre s'est-il abattu sur un lecteur qu'il se gonfle de sa chaleur et de ses rêves. Il fleurit, s'épanouit,

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[38] Michel Tournier, *Vol du Vampire* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1981),16-17.
[39] Paul Ricoeur, *Essays on Biblical Interpretation*, ed. By Lewis S. Mudge (Philadephia: Fortress Press, 1980), 21.
[40] Paul Ricoeur, *Figuring the Sacred*, 46.

devient enfin ce qu'il est: un monde imaginaire foisonnant, où se mêlent indistinctement-comme sur le visage d'un enfant les traits de son père et de sa mère-les intentions de l'écrivain et les fantasmes du lecteur."[41] For Tournier, it is precisely literature's ability to elicit a creative response from the reader that is divine or God like in nature. Man's creation, "la part créatrice des lecteurs,"[42] lies in his creative imagining, in his constructing his own personal mini-narrative in which he assumes God's position. According to Tournier, man's imaginative capacity results directly from the Divine creation of man in God's image: "Ainsi toute création se veut-elle fondamentalement contagieuse et en appelle-t-elle à la créativité des lecteurs, tout comme Yahvé, ayant fait l'homme à son image, lui a délégué du même coup son pouvoir créateur."[43] Tournier treats this theme of man having been created in God's image in several of works but it is in the short story *Les Suaires de Véronique* that the problematic of the image is the most profoundly deconstructed.

Tournier's Horizon: Christian?

This complex questioning of the relationship between Tournier and Christian narratives combined with the phenomenological notion of the fusing of horizons between the reader and the writer, allows us to examine his works from several angles. If Gadamer and Ricoeur believe that the reader brings to the interpretation of the text his own opinions resulting from his consciousness which combines with the consciousness of the text, then one logical angle of deciphering the degree to which Christianity is either

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[41] Tournier, *Vol du Vampire*, 13.
[42] Ibid., 16.
[43] Ibid., 16.

espoused or condemned would be from the standpoint of Tournier himself.   Does Michel Tournier in his writings profess his own Christian faith in an attempt to create a Christian work? The answer and exploration of this pertinent question was dialectically discussed by two very knowledgeable scholars of Michel Tournier, John Dunaway and Susan Petit. Petit has authored many enlightening works on Tournier including an article published in *Christianity and Literature* in the winter of 2001 which was a response to an article published by John M. Dunaway several months earlier in the Spring of 2000. The dialogue between these two explores the faith of Tournier as well as the representation of Christianity presented in his works. I do not wish to entertain a biographical study of Tournier as pertains to his depiction of Christianity, however to discuss his presentation of the Christian religion in his works from a perspective centered around his personal beliefs will provide us with one side of this argument.

Dunaway explores whether or not Tournier is a 'Christian writer.' Tournier himself in an interview in La Croix in 1970 claims that : "Je me suis toujours voulu écrivain croyant." Dunaway interprets 'écrivain croyant' to mean 'Christian' whereas Susan Petit wisely notes that the verb 'croyant' expresses a 'believer' rather than a Christian who participates in established Christian orthodoxy. This proves to be a profoundly decisive point of difference between the two and arguably so. If Tournier is a believer of the Christian faith, then his writings would express such a liberal interpretation of faith, outside the confines of orthodoxy. Dunaway notices the rather loose interpretation of Christology expressed by Tournier in his works due to the creative unraveling of established doctrines. Dunaway in fact states that Tournier expresses " a

strong inclination to inculcate in the reader his own relativistic credo- a weird and

perverse remythologizing of religion" and that Tournier is "in search of a new religion."[44]

Tournier readily acknowledges this, as he confirms in an interview: "Oui, c'est certain."

Both Dunaway and Petit agree that Tournier's novel *Balthazar, Gaspard et*

Melchior best represents Tournier's attempt to be a Christian writer. In this fictional

rendering of the voyage of the Three Magi to witness the birth of the infant Jesus Christ,

Tournier explores many key themes inherent to religion and humanity. Themes such as

shame, the relationship between art and faith, the Incarnation of God in the body of

Christ and the complex mimetic issues resulting from image making are personalized in

new contexts imagined by Tournier. Dunaway notes that the novel is "rich in

Intertextuality: Cain and Abel, bodily functions, religious syncretism, semiology and

sexual deviancy."[45] It is true, moreover, that the novel promulgates the mythological and

religious retextualization typical of Tournier's structural reworkings. In this novel, it is

the king Balthazar who explores a subject matter relevant to the postmodern treatment of

myth by Tournier, which is the relationship between faith and its expression in artistic

form.

It is remarkable that Tournier inspired himself from the following excerpt of

Matthew 2:1 and from it creates an entirely fictitious narrative:

> Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod
> the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, saying,
> Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the
> east, and are come to worship him. When Herod the king had heard these
> things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. And when he had

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[44] John Dunaway, "Michel Tournier: Christian Writer?," *Christianity and Literature* 49, no. 3 (2000): 358.
[45] Dunway, "Tournier, Christian Writer?", 359

gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born. And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written by the prophet…Then Herod, when he had prvily called the wise men, enquired of them diligently what time the star appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also. When they had heard the knig, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrhh. And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way.[46]

Tournier creates complex narratives which describe each one of the Three Magis' motivations for following the star. The King Gaspard, roi de Mereo, undergoes a journey of self-discovery embarking from the arrival of his preferred slave, a blond, white woman who was lost in the desert with her so called brother. Once again Tournier takes up the issue of racial hierarchical ordering in power relations. We first witnessed the inversion of power relationships with the superiority of Vendredi over his white master Robinson. In the case of the King Gaspard, the black King, himself a product of inversion since he is black, is a tenuous element which is distinctly postmodern. From the very first sentence in which Gaspard exclaims: "Je suis noir, mais je suis roi"[47] the issue of race takes a prominent position in the narrative structure. This "roi noir" will soon be obsessed with "la blondure" or Biltine the blond "hyperboréenne" who was lost in the desert with her brother and subsequently captured and sold to Gaspard.   The repulsion she expresses by

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[46] "The New Testament" in *The Bible: Authorized King James Version* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 4.

[47] Tournier, *Gaspard, Melchior et Balthazar*, 9.

vomiting after their first night of sexual intimacy haunts the negro who begins to hate his own skin color for it stands in such sharp contrast to the pale beauty of the blond white.

Tournier continues to invert the master slave dialectic through the constant self questioning of Gaspard. The more he loves Biltine, the more subtle rejection he suffers. That the white woman be subjugated to the black king jeopardizes the dominant white supremacy favored by Modern colonialism. In this way, Tournier's rendering of the black magi resonates soundly with the postmodern milieu in which such a power position is reversed and ironically, the white reassumes the position of authority.

This inverted and subjugated slave, Biltine, quickly takes on immense power over Gaspard. To him, she herself symbolizes this comet "dorée"[48] which glowed in the night sky, leading the way to the birth of Christ. After having discovered Biltine in the arms of her supposed brother, Galeka, Gaspard views the comet as a cathartic means to rid himself of the oppressive chagrin which has overwhelmed him. Symbolizing the beauty of Biltine, the comet comes to symbolize his liberation and he gleefully embarks on a journey to follow it to his personal salvation.

Tournier subtly explores the contrast between the sedentary and the nomad as incarnated by Cain and Abel. Gaspard, up until the discovery of the siblings in a scandalous embrace, lived the life of a sedentary. Now, he embarks upon a defining voyage which will have profound revelations for his faith. Gaspard explores these opposing states of being in the following way: "Ainsi l'âme de l'homme sédentaire est un vase où fermentent des griefs indéfiniment remâchés. De celle du voyageur jaillissent en

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[48] Tournier, *Gaspard*, 33.

flots purs des idées neuves et des actions imprévues."[49] "Neuve", "imprévue" describe

the qualities of such a renaissance due to the excitement of voyage.

His travels lead him to Hébron : "là que se refugeièrent Adam et Eve après avoir

été chassés de Paradis. Mieux: on y voit le champ dont la glaise servit à Yahvé pour

modeler le premier homme."[50] This journey leads him then to meet the second Magi,

Balthazar. Together these two kings look at the ground, the matter from which God drew

man's bodily form, as a source of divine inspiration: "Il prit dans sa main, et laissa

pensivement fuir entre ses doigts, un peu de cette terre primordiale dont fut sculptée la

statue humaine, et dans laquelle Dieu insuffla la vie."[51] This leads them to a questioning

of mimetic proportions, in recounting the first lines of Genesis: "Dieu fit l'homme à son

image et à sa ressemblance". Together, they explore what difference there exists between

the image and the representation (la ressemblance). Once again, Tournier explores the

charnal Incarnation of God in the skin of Man. It is no longer necessarily and uniquely

the body of Christ which incorporates the Spirit of God, but rather every man. Thus, that

God's making of Man in his image becomes increasingly pluralized and individualized.

Gaspard himself refers to this problematic of representation as trickery, "une image sans

ressemblance".

The dialectic which takes place between Gaspard and Balthazar over the issue of

the representation of God in Man reveals the inevitable individualization of Christianity.

According to the Genesis, God made Adam from the earth, which according to Balthazar

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[49] Tournier, *Gaspard*, 35
[50] Ibid., 43.
[51] Ibid., 47

is certainly brown. Therefore, Gaspard sees himself in the molding of Adam for if Adam is dark skinned, and he is made in the image of God, then God is dark skinned as well. In addition, since Eve was made from Adam, then Eve is dark-skinned as well. Yet Gaspard, due to his own conscious preconceptions, may only perceive of Eve and Adam as white skinned. Not only are they white, but they are blond, with "le nez impertinent et la bouche enfantine de Biltine…"[52] Thus, Gaspard interprets the story of Genesis in a higly personalized manner, he projects upon the myth of Adam and Eve that which he himself experiences, the beauty of his blond, white slave. This illustrates so clearly the process of mythical individualization practiced by Tournier. Through Gaspard's personalizing of Adam and Eve, he renders religion unique rather than collective.

This divisive tension between the binary oppositions master/slave, black/white, is restructured by Tournier and represented in a new context and on a new level of representation. This new framework allows for a revelation of theological proportions, that of the Self and one's conception of Christianity at a time when Christ's birth was sure to change the established traditions.

The second Magi, Melchior or the poor king as he refers to himself, represents a reworking of the Christian doctrine of transformation. As Melchior describes himself: "Depuis la mort de mon père, le temps me paraîssait se dérouler à une vitesse anormale, avec des sautes brutales, des métamorphoses foudroyantes, des bouleversements. L'un de ces bouleversements fut marqué par la découverte de Jérusalem."[53] He encounters the Magi Balthazar's troupe which counted amongst itself many artists. From the simplicity

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[52] Tournier, *Gaspard*, 45.
[53] Ibid., 92.

of his exile, Melchior is struck by the complex artistic foundations upon which Balthazar

created his ensemble. Melchior comments on the dangers of Balthazar's endeavors:

> Croyait-il vraiment qu'une vie plus raffinée aurait mis la cour de mon père
> à l'abri des entreprises de mon oncle? Je compris peu à peu que, dans son
> esprit, le culte du beau langage et des belles choses pratiqué en haut lieu
> devait se repércuter à tous les échelons en vertus moins nobles certes, mais
> essentielles à la conservation du royaume...…..Malheureusement un
> fanatisme obscurantiste suscitait chez ses voisins et dans son propre
> royaume une fureur inconoclaste qui tournait ces vertus en leur contraire.
> ..Mais toutes ses initiatives de grand mécène se heurtaient à l'hositilité
> vigilante d'un clergé farouchement hostile aux images."[54]

Tournier's consistent deconstruction and structural reworking of these Magi, as

well as the perversion of established Saints in his novel *Les Météores*, combine to create

a narrative exploration of the theological discourse of God having made Man in his

image. Once again, one of the core doctrines of Christianity finds itself transformed

structurally on a new level of representation in which its very message is radically altered

in a postmodern way.

The Perversion of the Image

From the words contained in Genesis 1:1 "So God created man in his own image,

in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them" has ensued a

complex questioning of man's capacity to represent the divine in the works of Tournier.

In the contemplations offered by King Balthazar in Tournier's *Gaspard, Melchior et*

Balthazar, and those contained in the short stories *Les Suaires de Véronique* and *La*

famille Adam, we find Tournier's response to this Incarnation of God in Man's image.

In fact Tournier espouses an ardent fear of the image and of its capacity to eclipse its

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[54] Tournier, *Gaspard,* 97.

model as he describes in an interview in Lire in 1996: "Je suis maintenant persuadé de la dangerosité et de la nocivité de la civilisation de la photographie…Dans une nouvelle édition en Folio de mon livre *Le pied de la lettre,* j'ai introduit un mot de mon invention, l'*iconisation*. C'est la destruction soit d'un paysage, soit d'une oeuvre d'art, soit d'un personnage par l'image."[55] The dangers referred to by Tournier are echoed by Jean Baudrillard for whom the simulacra are images "murderous of the real."

Undoubtedly this mimetic relationship between God and his likeness in Man is a core issue in Christianity. That Man be the reflection of God in his physical being, that he be created in God's image, proves to be a fertile groundwork for Tournier. Tournier inspires several stories from this passage which contemplate and in fact challenge this relationship between God and Man. His stories constitute another structural reworking of a Biblical passage, inspired by his profound understanding of Christian theology. He adapts this founding principle to the postmodern era which espouses an over abundance of images as proclaimed by Jean Baudrillard. Walter Benjamin in his works likewise proclaims the dangers of reproducing the image and in particular of the massive over-production of the image in our postmodern society. Together, Baudrillard and Benjamin provide a concise critique of the dissolution of the authenticity of the image due to the methods of production and of simulation at work all around us.

The section that follows will explore the re-representation of this image making in the stories of Tournier and will then expose the profoundly postmodern attributes of this transformation. As in so many other cases of Tournier's mythical reworkings, his

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[55] Michel Tournier, "Entretien", 1.

restructuring of this passage in the characters of Balthazar and in particular Veronique of *Les Suaires de Véronique*, proves to be an unraveling of the sacred message. The result is a perversion of these words, a perversion of the image reflected in Man that distorts the image of God as well. Through the understanding of the reworking of this Biblical doctrine, we gain insight into our condition as Man in the postmodern era.

It is King Balthazar who offers the most enlightening contemplations on the notion of the image of God. Of the three magi which come to life in Tournier's work: *Gapsard, Melchior et Balthazar*, Balthazar proves to be the King exhibiting an artistic sensibility. Through this affinity for the beauty of art expressed by Balthazar, an entire commentary arises around the relationship between the divine and Man's capacity to represent it.

As seen in the previous section, for Gaspard, his journey was a cathartic quest to relieve his suffering at the sight of his beloved in the arms of another. For Melchior, his journey was out of rejection and isolation at the loss of his power that he followed the star. For Balthazar, his embarking upon the journey was a result of the anguish caused by the destruction of his Balthazarium containing the precious artworks he treasured. As noted in the novel: "Et chacun possède un secret et une démarche. Il y a celui qui ne voit dans le ciel noir que les cheveux de la femme qu'il aime. Il y a celui…qui ne voit à l'horizon que le paillonnement d'un grand insecte scintillant. Il y a celui qui va à pied parce qu'il a tout perdu, et qui rêve à un impossible royaume céleste."[56]

For Balthazar, it is his preoccupation with art that drives him to follow the star.

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[56] Tournier, *Gaspard*, 154.

The brief exchange between Balthazar and Gaspard questions God's creation of Man in his image. Being a black king, Gaspard sees in Adam at first that which he longs for, his blond haired lover who is in his eyes a blond haired Eve. Yet upon discussing with Balthazar, Gaspard explores the possibility of a dark skinned black Adam. If the relationship between the image and its representation is a direct one, then Gaspard being black implies that God is dark skinned as well. Just as the little Jesus appeared black only to his eyes, so too would God be a reflection through man of his own image. It is Taor, the fourth fictitious Magi supplemented to the tale of the Magi by Tournier who seemingly resolves this contrast in color. As he comments: "Il y a aussi Adam, deux Adam, si tu me suis bien, le blanc d'après la chute dont la peau vierge ressemble à un parchemin lavé, et l'Adam noir d'avant la chute, couvert de signes et de dessins comme un livre enluminé."[57] Therefore, the skin color reflects Man's fate in the Garden of Eden. The dark skinned Adam is the one created first in God's image then after their expulsion from the Garden, his virgin skin lost its color. According to David Platten, Tournier effectively inverts the Fall of Adam from the Garden of Eden by taking us to the very moment of the Birth of Christ which gives to Man a new image of God:

> Whereas the fallen Adam represents Man divested of his likeness to God but retaining his superficial image, Christ figures the return to the totality of God and Man. The parallelism between Christ and Adam is established by Gaspard , who, with a surreptitious glance in the future direction of Darwin, sees the Christ-child magner as black: 'n'est-ce pas logique? Si Adam n'a blanchi qu'en commettant le peche, Jesus ne doit-il pas etre noir comme notre ancetre dans son etat orginel?" Precipitated by the birth of Christ, it is an inversion of the Fall from the Garden of Eden, a journey back to the oneness of God and Man.[58]

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[57] Tournier, *Gaspard*, 211.
[58] David Platten, *the Metaphor of Fiction*, 140.

That this narrative be a reworking of the Fall of Man proves to be an inherently postmodern approach to the treatment of the myth of the birth of Christ. Merold Westphal comments that: "theological correlate will be human sinfulness rather than human finitude. In other words, postmodernism's unintended commentary is on the doctrine of the Fall."[59] Tournier, in restructuring the context in which the birth of Christ takes place, undermines the all encompassing legitimacy afforded to this event by Christianity and puts in doubt the long assumed belief that Christ was white.

This exchange between Taor, Gaspard and Balthazar centered around Adam as a reflection of God is the ground work upon which Balthazar creates an entire vision of arts mimetic viability. As Balthazar states himself: "Le mythe d'Adam, autoportrait du Créateur, m'a toujours préoccupé, car il me semble depuis longtemps qu'il contient des vérités importantes que nul n'a encore percées. Je me suis laissé divaguer à haute voix devant Gaspard, opposant ces deux mots: image et ressemblance." [60] Image and resemblance constitute the divisive tension expressed in artistic form at the time of Christ's birth. How to represent the divine in human form? All the artistic expressions of the time including statues, paintings and icons were quite controversial due to the Church's fear of such iconography.

Balthazaar's love of the arts is due to his belief that art is a medium through which the divine may present itself on earth to human eyes. He interprets the Biblical passage from Genesis 1 in the most literal of ways. For him, the human flesh itself

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[59] Merold Westphal, "Blind spots: Christiantiy and postmodern philosophy," *The Christian Century* 120, (June 14, 2003).
[60] Tournier, *Gaspard*, 53.

incarnates God's image. Suggesting a rather ogrish affinity for flesh similar to that of

Abel Tiffauges, Balthazar views the human body as the ultimate representation of God.

As a result, he favors the art of tattooing. To him, a tattooed body is one that harmonizes

artistic form in a carnal medium. As Balthazaar describes: "Jamais un tatoué ne m'a

trahi. Un tatouage? C'est une amulette permanente, un bijou qui est le corps fait

bijou…Il appartient indefectiblement à l'empire des signes, signaux et signature. Sa peau

est logos. Le tatoué ne parle ni écrit: il est écriture et parole."[61] Thus, tattooed flesh is the

purest embodiment of the Christian doctrine conveyed by these passages. The art of

tattooing is one that recalls an act sacred to primitive man and tribes. For many tribal

members, the tattoo reflects a rite of passage to gain entry into the tribe. In the

postmodern era, the art of tattooing represents a masochistic act through which the

individual expresses his uniqueness.

According to Balthazaar's ruminations on art, in order to reflect God in his image,

Man may use his own flesh, a theme Tournier further explores in *Les Suaires de

Véronique*. But above all, it is Man's affinity to represent God that preoccupies

Balthazar. All artistic mediums exert a transcendental force in that they allow man to pass

beyond his immediate existence and into the world of the divine. As he states: "J'aime

tout ce qui embellit et ennoblit notre existence, et au premier chef la représentation de la

vie qui nous invite à nous hausser au-dessus de nous mêmes."[62] Just as the baby Jesus

incarnates God's will, so too does art give form to God according to Balthazar. In his

eyes, the artist is the most capable medium to represent God by taking from humanity the

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[61] Tournier, *Gaspard,* 57.
[62] Ibid., 58.

beauty of their physical attributes: "Il me faut des êtres de chair et de sang, exaltés par la main de l'artiste."[63] Flesh and blood, the components of the Eucharistic, are also the raw materials from which the artist creates the divine.

It is important to note the historical context surrounding Tournier's rendering of the King Balthazar. At a time ruled by iconoclastic fearing of the image, Balthazar's artistic penchants will soon find themselves in jeopardy. Iconoclasm, which is Greek for image-breaking, is defined as the "opposition to the religious use of images."[64] In the history of Judaism, King Hezekiah purged Solomon's Temple in Jerusalem and the land of Israeal of figures as recorded in the Second Book of Kings. The process of Christianization brought a new wave of iconoclasm which condemned the polytheistic images worshiped by the Roman Empire. Balthazar comments on the relationship between iconoclasm and the type of idolatry espoused by either a polytheist or a monotheist society:

> Les dieux, les déesses et les héros prolifèrent en Grèce au point de tout envahir.Pour l'artiste grec, l'alternative profane-sacré se résout tout simplement par l'ignorance du profane. Tandis que le monothéisme entraine la peur et la haine des images, le polytheisme-qui préside à un age d'or de la peinture et de la sculpture-assure la mainmise des dieux sur tous les arts.[65]

The relationship between artistic representation of the Divine, and the nature of the Divine is not only complex but quite insightful in our understanding of the perversion of religion performed by Tournier. At the time of Christ's birth, Pagan societies

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[63] Tournier, *Gaspard*, 58.
[64] *The Concise Columbia Encyclopedia* , s.v. "Iconoclasm."
[65] Tournier, *Gaspard*, 69.

worshiped multiple Gods and in their art forms expressed them as such. Yet Christianity

and in fact Orthodox Catholicism condemned such a polytheistic representation of the

Divine claiming that there exists only one God who has taken human form in Jesus

Christ.

Idolatry comes from the Greek word eidololatria, a compound of eidolon meaning

"image" or "figure" and latreia "worship".Balthazar himself practices idolatry in his love

for the arts, yet in his narrative we find a progression from an appreciation of pagan art to

a more Christian one, due to the emphasis Christianity places on man being the image of

God. As he states: "…Les grecs qui ne représentent que les dieux en plastique…Je me

suis alors tourné vers la Bible, charte par excellence d'un monothéisme. J'y ai lu que

Dieu avait crée l'homme à son image et à sa ressemblance, faisant ainsi non seulement le

premier portrait mais le premier autoportrait de l'histoire du monde."[66] According to

Balthazar the Christian conception of Man incarnating the very image of God proved the

richest model for artistic expression.   The union between Man's artistic representation of

God and the existence of only one God allowed Man to enter into a uniquely individual

relationship with God.   Essential to this theorizing is the Incarnation of not any Man but

of, specifically, the baby Jesus. In Tournier's depiction, Christ's birth is narrated by a

mule, a seemingly unsuspecting and insignificant observer of the birth of the salvation of

Man. The following is an extract of the description of Christ's birth in *Gaspard,*

Melchior et Balthazar:

Et brusquement, en un instant, un événement formidable s'est produit…

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[66] Tournier, *Gaspard,* 70.

> Un froissement d'ailes innombrables a attesté que des nuées d'anges messagers s'élançaient dans toutes les directions…La nature toute entière a exulté.. Que s'etait-il passé? Presque rien. On avait entendu,…un cri léger...C'était le doux vagissement d'un tout petit enfant.[67]

That such a small creature give form to the Divine captures Balthazar's essential views on beauty which are derived from humanity in all its banality. Balthazar saw art moving towards " une célébration des humbles réalités humaines" precisely because "cet Héritier du Royaume mêle des attributs incompatibles, la grandeur et la petitesse, la puissance et l'innocence, la plénitude et la pauvreté."[68] Tournier, through the voice of Balthazar seems to emphasize the commonality of the Incarnation, that through Man's incarnation of God through the body of Christ, God has become one of us. As such, his divine beauty reverberates throughout of all humanity, in its imperfections as well as its perfections. Strikingly reminiscent of Reformist attempts to put the language of the Bible into the common dialect of average citizens, Tournier's artistic rendering of the King Balthazar argues for an individualization of Christianity.

It is in his Balthazareum that Balthazar stores his artistic treasures which reflect his individual love of Christianity, as he proclaims: "*Balthazareum*… une fondation royale où seraient exposés mes collections et les trésors artistiques acquis par la Couronne."[69] Yet Balthazar is painfully aware of the menace of the iconoclasm which ravages the priests who council him. He suffers at the hands of his priests who destroy a statue and who silently critique his collection. He announces the dangers in the following passage: "Ensuite quelque chose d'incompréhensible s'est produit, une rupture, une

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[67] Tournier, *Gaspard*, 166-67
[68] Ibid., 155.
[69] Ibid., 79.

catastrophe, et la Bible qui s'était ouverte sur un Dieu portraitiste et autoportraitiste n'a

cessé soudain de poursuivre les faiseurs d'images de sa malédiction."[70] During a journey

to unearth more treasures of art Balthazar is informed of the complete destruction of his

Balthazareum and of the murder of its guards. Balthazar comments: "On voulait en finir

avec un établissement dont les collections insultaient au culte du vrai Dieu et à

l'interdiction des idoles et des images."[71] Enraged, Balthazar assumes his role as King

and initially resolves himself to challenge the priests who stand behind the destruction.

Yet at this time new of a bright star, " une comète…Venant du sud-ouest, elle se dirigeait

vers le nord", offers to him an escape. [72] Thus he embarks on the journey to witness the

birth of the baby Jesus.

Allow me now to emphasize the postmodern characteristics contained in

Gaspard, Melchior et Balthazar. Obviously, narrating the birth of Christ through the

perspective of a mule is an effective means of dethroning established Christian doctrine.

Indeed, Tournier clearly states in an interview entitled *Saint Tournier Priez Pour Nous!:*

"Je suis comme l'âne de mon livre et vous revoie à la page 159 de Gaspard..je dois

surveiller mon goût excessif pour les mots."[73]

In addition, Gaspard and Balthazar's individualizing of Christianity through their

self identification with Adam, be he white or black, provides a different context for

established religious doctrine. Indeed, in his short story *La famille Adam*, Tournier

recounts the creation of man in a rather mocking and insolite tone:

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[70] Tournier, *Gaspard*, 70.
[71] Ibid., 81.
[72] Ibid., 81.
[73] Michel Tournier, "Saint Tournier Priez pour Nous," 36.

> A quoi ressemblait le premier homme? Il ressemblait à Jéhovah qui l'avait créé à son image. Or Jéhovah n'est ni homme ni femme. Il est les deux à la fois. Le premier homme était donc aussi une femme. Il avait des seins de femme. Et au bout de son ventre, un sexe de garçon. Et entre les jambes, un petit trou de fille. C'était même assez commode: quand il marchait, il mettait sa queue de garçon dans son petit trou de fille, comme on met un couteau dans un fourreau.[74]

Yet again, a very sacred moment is depicted in the most trivial of ways. Tournier rewrites this sacred moment in a playful way in the sense that Ricoeur envisions play: a dialectic which engages the reader. In so doing, the omniscient hand of God is lowered to humanity and it is our hand which creates the image through art and our own perception of the narrative of Christianity. Just as Barthes and Foucault proclaim the death of the author, Tournier by allowing the birth of Christ to evolve in the highly personalized context of the Three Magi, proclaims the death of one solitary interpretation. As Merold Westphal discusses in his article "Blind spots: Christianity and postmodern philosophy":

> Under the traditional (modern) approach, the author is related to his text the way God is related to the world. The created reality, whether text or universe, contains all and only what the creator consciously intended…But, say the postmodernists, the human author has no such sovereign power over a text. Whatever the author's intentions, readers will discover unintended dimensions of meaning in a text over whose production the author did not have godlike control."[75]

In this case the narrative surrounding the journey of the Three Magi who witness the birth of Christ is susceptible to the same contextual undermining as was Robinson Crusoe. Tournier once again supplements a new and innovative context, a "different context from that of the author and its original audience" as described by Westphal. Tournier continues to promulgate the interpretative process characteristic of the postmodern era.

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[74] Tournier, "La famille Adam" in *le Coq de Bruyère,* 11.
[75] Merold Westphal, "Blind Spots: Christianity and Postmodern Philosophy," 1.

Instead of accepting Matthew 2 which recounts the journey of the Magi, we are

challenged to enter into the perspective of these fictitious characters and in so doing

partake in the journey.

It is important to note that Biblical narratives represent a first order level

discourse as Westphal states: "But the biblical meganarrative is a first-order discourse."[76]

Given that postmodern thinkers express an incredulity towards the all-encompassing

meta-narratives such as Christianity, Tournier restructures Bibilical narratives and

projects them into a third order level of simulation, which undermines their legitimacy.

Through the fictitional creation of a new signified of the third order level, Tournier

allows us, the reader, to be aware of the incredible influence our own conscious horizon

exerts on the narrative of the birth of the Christ. In this way, Tournier proves to be a

postmodern author as Westphal suggests: "Therefore, postmodern thinkers believe that

the meaning of the texts, and especially classic and scriptural texts, is never exhausted by

interpretation…Every text speaks with multiple voices, some of which, but not all, are the

authors." It is not merely the birth of Christ which Tournier recontextualizes but it is

more precisely the Incarnation of God in Christ. That God made Man in his image, and

that Christ is God incarnate together create the complex mimetic questioning of the

representation of God in an image. This proves to be a dialectic which stands as of yet

unresolved for Tournier in his short story *Les Suaires de Véronique* provides his most

clear and succinct challenge to this literary iconoclasm.

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[76] Westphal,1.

The Image in the Postmodern Era

Jean Baudrillard in his writings extensively comments on the role of the image in our postmodern society. The complex simulation resulting from the technological advancements of the Industrial era profoundly alters the relationship between the image and that which it attempts to represent. Baudrillard comments in the following manner: "A new generation of signs and objects arises with the Industrial Revolution-signs with no caste tradition that will never have known restrictions on their status,..they will be products on a gigantic scale. The problem of their specificity and their origin is no longer posed: technics is their origin, they have meaning only within the dimension of the industrial simulacrum."[77] The simulation of the image, or the simulacrum, of the postmodern era is devoid of a context which affords its authenticity or legitimacy.

Due to the rapid progression of technological advancements in our postmodern age, the image has been copied to a degree that there is now no longer an original. It is now possible, thanks to software, to create images that have no original model, copies of copies. In such cases, to speak of the original model is an impossibility, both linguistically and conceptually. Indeed, our postmodern era is characterized by a rapid development of technological forms of reproduction which result in a dizzying onslaught of images on the consumer. The surrounding images manipulate and in fact disorient the late-capitalist consumer of the postmodern era. This confusion stands in sharp contrast to the vision of salvation and certainty represented by the first icons of Christ.

This reproduction of the image now succeeds in disorienting members of society

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[77] Jean Baudrillard, *Symbolic Exchange and Death* (London: Sage Publications,1993), 55.

both spatially and temporally, given the fact that the simulacra are so detached from not only their own original model, but a concrete meaning as well. In his work *Walter Benjamin and the Aesthetics of Power*, Lutz Koepnick states "To the extent to which postmodern visual culture ever more aggressively supplants us into imaginary elsewheres and elsewhens, it caters with unprecedented means to the urge to pry an object from its auratic shell, its unique location in space and time."[78] Devoid of a original model, these amputated images roam symbolically in many different medias, commercials at the movie theatre, movies trailers on the internet and so forth. As a result we witness the loss of the authenticity of the image, and as a result the consumer suffers from the inability to temporally place them. The result is a certain dissolution of the reality represented through the image.

Lutz Koepnick comments on the confusion resulting from the over-production of images. As he observes: "postmodern culture produces not only despatialized and detemporalized viewing subjects, but also a field of visual images that appears intrinsically heterogeneous and hybrid."[79] The use of the term heterogeneous to describe the role of the image in today's society reinforces its transgressive nature, that is to say its capacity to function outside previously established boundaries.

Walter Benjamin's The *Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproductibility* explores the implications of the advancement of technological reproduction on art and in particular on the image. As he states himself: "The

[78] Lutz Koepnick, *Walter Benjamin and the Aesthetics of Power* (Lincoln: NE, 1999), 214.
[79] Koepnick, 214.

technological reproductibility of the artwork changes the relation of the masses to art."[80] Indeed, such an overpresence of the image distances the human subject from the intended meaning of the image. As Benjamin comments on the re-contextualization of the image afforded by photography which enables: "the original to meet the recipient halfway, whether in the form of a photograph or in that of a gramophone record. The cathedral leaves its site to be received in the studio of an art lover; the choral work performed in an auditorium or in the open air is enjoyed in a private room."[81]

Benjamin favors the painting and condemns film for its quick succession of images which disorients the human subject: "The painter's is a total image, whereas that of the cinematographer is piecemeal, its manifold parts being assembled according to a new law."[82] As he continues: "The painting invites the viewer to contemplation; before it, he can give himself up to his train of associations. Before a film image, he cannot do so. No sooner has he seen it than it has already changed. It cannot be fixed on. The train of associations in the person contemplating it is immediately interrupted by new images. This constitutes the shock effect of film."[83] The sociopolitical impact of the destruction of the authenticity of the image is one of the defining characteristics of the postmodern era according to many critics. Benjamin refers to a democratization of the image which results in the image, even the sacred ones, being lowered and dispersed amongst the populace. Devoid of the context which furnishes their symbolic power, even the sacred

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[80] Walter Benjamin, *The work of art in the age of its technological reproductibility* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2008), 116.
[81] Benjamin, *The work of art in the age of its technological reproductibility*, 103.
[82] Ibid., 116.
[83] Ibid., 132.

images become profane and enter into the infinite process of mechanical reproduction.

The historical period of iconoclasm was, above all, an effort by the Church to control the

images put forth representing God. This artistic protectionism is completely abolished

due to the mechanical production of the image in our postmodern society.   Even the

image of God may be personalized, edited, cropped and skewed in the hands of the

consumer of the photographic image. Such a liberty engenders profound dangers for the

sacrality, in the Orthodox sense, of God's reflection in Man's image.

For Jean Baudrillard, above all, it is a simulation of the image that is at work in

the simulacra around us. His theorizing of the simulacrum expands upon the

mythological reworkings performed by Tournier and adapts it to the postmodern milieu.

Baudrillard extensively discusses not only the third order level of simulation as a

postmodern phenomenon, but adapts this directly to the complex issues surrounding

Man's capacity to be an image of God. As he states speaking of the iconoclasts:

> Had they been able to believe that images only occulted or masked the
> Platonic idea of God, there would have been no reason to destroy them.
> One can live with the idea of a distorted truth. But their metaphysical
> despair came from the idea that the images concealed nothing at all, and
> that in fact they were not images..but actually perfect simulacra forever
> radiant in their own fascination.[84]

The story of *Les Suaires de Véronique* directly explores this problematic and

posits this Biblical myth in a postmodern milieu through its restructuring in a third order

level. Considering the theories of Benjamin and Baudrillard, we may find their

resolution in the writings of Tournier himself who argues for the artistic creation inherent

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[84] Jean Baudrillard, *Simulation*, 8-9.

in image making as a key to Man's own liberation and salvation. In this way, the divine

for Tournier is creation and in fact artistic creation. God dwells in Man when Man

engages in creation, through writing or through facilitating his own mini-narratives.

The myth contained in Genesis 2, that God made Man in his image, is indeed

complex but it may be simplified in the following way. Man is capable of reflecting the

Divine if we consider that the Incarnation of God in Man allows for every Man to

participate in the sublime. Man, through his creative capacities, generates and procreates

and as such is afforded immortality. Tournier's constant obsession with the theme of the

vampire attests to this, for immortality is obtained through consuming the literary or

artistic substance contained in a text or work of art.   As Tournier comments himself:

> Car lorsque la Bible nous apprend que Dieu a fait l'homme à son image,
> qu'est-ce à dire sinon que l'homme est l'autoportrait de Jéhovah?
> L'homme image de Dieu. De quel Dieu? De Dieu modelant sa propre
> image dans le limon, c'est à dire l'image d'un créateur en train de créer.[85]

Through God's incarnation of man passes an infinite process of regeneration. This

process is of the same nature as Derrida's or Charles Pierce's theories of the slippage of

meaning, the constant deferral of meaning from one signifier to the other. God incarnates

man, we the believers consume God's presence symbolically through the Eucharistic or

even by worshiping an image of God. Then, God's presence is passed into us. As

consumers of the creator, we in turn become creators. In fact, Tournier's self proclaimed

mission as a writer is to reinvigorate in his readers their own creative faculties, as he

states: "Il reste qu'une oeuvre artistique- photographique ou autre- se doit d'être

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[85] Tournier, *des clefs et des serrures*, 99.

créatrice."[86]

If we compound Baudrillard's theorizing of the dangers of the simulacra, these murderous images, with the complex questioning of God creating man in his image, then we enter the narrative vortex of the short story *Les Suaires de Véronique*. We find in this story a fusion, an absolute literary culmination, of Baudrillard's theories pertaining to simulation and simulacra which function on the third level as he states: "We are in the third order, which is the order no longer of the real, but of the hyperreal. It is only here that theories and practices, themselves floating and indeterminate, can reach the real and beat it to death."[87] Indeed, the photographic practices of Veronica attain a representation of the reality of life which is death.

The Devouring Image: *les Suaires de Véronique*

The title of the short story *Veronica's Shrouds* announces two of the core inherently Christian myths which are intertwined: the Shrouds of Turin and Saint Veronica. As I previously discussed in the first Chapter, Tournier restructures St. Veronica in a third order of representation which perverts the original message of the Saint. According to Christian doctrine, Saint Veronica wipes Christ's face on his way to the cavalry and upon her veil appears an image of Christ. The name Veronica itself has its roots in the latin "vera" meaning "true" and the Greek "eikon" meaning "image". Thus we are thrust into the complex questioning surrounding idolatry and iconoclasm similar to that contained in Balthazar's comments. St. Veronica was the first to reveal to humanity an image of Christ. This miraculous image gives salvation to Man through

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[86] Tournier, *le vol du Vampire*, 207.
[87] Jean Baudrillard, *Symbolic Exchange and Death*, 3.

offering the image of God incarnate. It is the mimetic viability of the image that Tournier

seizes as the core component in his version of St. Veronica.

Tournier fuses his newly restructured Veronica with another historical relic which

likewise represents Christ: the Shrouds of Turin. The Shrouds engage the same issues

raised by Veronica yet they present a more physical presence, an image of the flesh of

Christ. Upon the Shrouds which wrapped Christ's body one may see the traces of a

human body which is that of Christ. This sacred shroud provides physical proof of not

only Christ's existence but, accepting that he is God incarnate, of the presence of God.

The Shroud of Turin or Turin Shroud as it is also called, is a linen cloth which bears the

image of a man believed to be Christ due to the nature of the injuries suffered by the man.

These injuries are consistent with a crucifixion and as such, the Shroud of Turin is

believed to be the cloth placed on the body of Jesus at his burial. The images of the

Shroud are surprisingly clearer in the negative than in the positive. The image on the

shroud is much clearer in black and white negative than in its natural color. The striking

negative image was first observed on the evening of May 1898, on the reverse

photographic plate of amateur photographer Seconda Pia.[88] Tournier, himself an ardent

practitioner of revealing clarity through negative representation, seizes this religious relic

as a key element to the narrative contemplations surrounding the image of God.

Tournier combines these two Christian symbols on a new level of representation,

indeed a third order level.   The first order which is denotative consists of the act of the

woman Veronica who wipes the face of a suffering man, that of Jesus Christ. The

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[88] Joe Nickell, *Inquest on the Shroud of Turin Latest Scientific Findings*, (New York: Prometheus Books, 1998), 28.

signifier of Veronica combines with the signified, the act of humanity and of kindness, to create the global sign of the act of compassion of a woman named Veronica. This denotative global sign becomes the signifier of the second order connotative level which combines with a new signified, that of a divine act of kindness. It is in this second order level that myth operates and seizes the denotative model, transforming it into a spiritual signification. The connotative second order level hails the woman Veronica to be a Saint, offering to man a sacred image of the savior of man, Jesus Christ and in so doing offers to humanity a concrete vision of their salvation.

This is the level at which Tournier now in turn seizes the established connotative system and perverts it by supplementing a new signified. The signifier of Veronica remains a woman who is a conveyer of a sacred image, yet as we are going to see it, in the case of Tournier's Veronica, it is now a vision of death rather of salvation. The image making practiced by the signifier Veronica is photographic in nature and the second order connotative signified which furnishes the context is transformed into a vampiristic photographer obsessed with capturing an image of death. Tournier effectively inverts and deconstructs the binary pair of life/death around which is centered the salvation offered by Christ. Veronica is a messenger to be sure, yet in this case, a messenger of the demise of man, of the destructive capacities of the image. In this way Veronica echoes the dangers forewarned by Jean Baudrillard who in his *Simulations et Simulacres* warns against the dangers of image making.

Veronica from the beginning of the short story espouses her unique and individual vision of photography. For her, the photographing of the primitive beauty of her subject,

Hector, does not create her ideal form of artistic representation. As she comments after a

photo shoot: "Les photos faites ce matin..pas une à retenir. Cette plage! Cet Hector! Une

banalité à pleurer!"[89] In her eyes, the seemingly physical perfection of Hector is not

desirable and in fact : "ce petit Hector, on aimerait en faire quelque chose. Seulement, ça

demanderait du travail. Du travail et des sacrifices."[90] This notion of sacrifice lends to

Veronica's photographic quest a highly heterogeneous nature in the Bataillian sense. In

his work *Georges Bataille*, Michal Richardson comments that "For Bataille sacrifice was

the opposite of salvation and served the social solidarity of the immediate group, not of

mankind in general."[91] Therefore, Veronica's artistic rendering of the image does not

intend to offer to man his salvation as did her mythological Christian predecessor, Saint

Veronica. She has no desire to save mankind.

Veronica's philosophy surrounding photography consists of a complex rethinking

of not only the Incarnation of the image of God in man but also the transcendental nature

of the image. In Christology, the image of God reflected in man allows man to pass

beyond his banal existence and into the divine. For Veronica, the image as captured in

the photo must be superior to the model itself, rather than a faithful representation.

Hector's beauty created photos which were faithful to their model, but merely

reproducing the model does not suffice. For Veronica, such photos are "inférieures à

l'original réel."[92] Veronica incarnates the transcendental qualities of the image directly

in her photography, as she comments: "Maintenant, il est devenu photogénique. En quoi

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[89] Tournier, "les Suaires de Véronque" in *le Coq de Bruyère*, 155.
[90] Ibid., 155.
[91] Michael Richardson, *Georges Bataille*, 83.
[92] Tournier, "les Suaires de Véronique*"*, 156.

consiste la photogénie? C'est la faculté de produire des photos qui vont plus loin que l'objet réel."[93] Thus her photographic aspirations can only be realized through the sacrifice of the body at the expense of the image, which is a highly transgressive act in that it surpasses the boundaries of representing the object.

For Veronica, in order to obtain the true image which transcends the body, one must be prepared to modify and alter the anatomy of the body. This emphasis on the body recalls Christianity's worshipping of the body of Christ as the embodiment of God. This fetichisism of Christ's body is an essential component of the transcendence of the Incarnation. Veronica, through her emphasizing the permanence of death rather than the transcendence of Christianity, seems to echo that which Baudrillard refers to as the "corpse as a mass grave."[94] As he states: "For religion, the ideal reference of the body is the animal (instincts and appetites of the 'flesh'). The corpse as a mass grave, and its reincarnation beyond death as a carnal metaphor."[95] This "carnal metaphor" takes on, through a process of inversion, a prominence that is denied to it in Christianity. The deceased body is in itself a form of representation. No longer does the corpse point beyond to a referential narrative, that is to say the meta-narrative of Christ who is the savior of man. Rather, the image of the dead body of Hector is in itself the fulfillment of the artistic quest for the image of man. It is in death that man attains his immortality, not through consuming the image of Christ.

The homodiegetic narrator who plays a role in the narrative structure of the short

[93] Tournier, "les Suaires de Véronique", 156.
[94] Jean Baudrillard, *Symbolic Exchange and Death*, 114.
[95] Baudrillard, *Symbolic Exchange and Death,* 114.

story, observes several photos of Hector which reflect to what degree Veronica is

obsessed with her photographic quest and the dangers that lie therein:

> Un silence pendant lequel nous examinons trois épreuves tirées sur papier
> extra-dur. Le corps d'Hector, placé sur un fond noir uniforme-découpé
> par les ombres et les plages de lumière d'une source lumineuse unique et
> violente, paraît figé, fouillé jusqu'à l'os, disséqué comme par un simulacre
> d'autopsie ou de démonstration anatomique.[96]

The nouns and adjectives such as "découpé", "ombres", "lumière", "violent", "fouillé",

"disséqué", simulacre" et "autopsie" create a summary of Veronica's photographic

methodology which reflects the process of simulation at work around us as described by

Baudrillard, as well as the tension between life and death.

The narrator summarizes Veronica's approach as "d'un côté le pris-sur-le-vif, de

l'autre la nature morte. J'ai presque envie de jouer sur ces mots et de dire: d'un côté la

nature vive, de l'autre le pris-sur-le-mort." [97] Veronica openly admits her fascination with

death for in the deceased body she finds the raw material truth of existence, as she

comments: "La mort m'intéresse, et elle fait plus que m'intéresser. J'irai fatalement un

jour ou l'autre faire des photos à la morgue. Il y a dans le cadavre, le vrai, le brut..une

vérité"[98] Veronica sees in the stillness of a cadaver a glimpse into eternity. This

revelatory image of death is a reminder of man's mortality, that everyone will one day

pass into the coldness of death. In opposition to her connotative predecessor St. Veronica

who offers to humanity a vision of their salvation, the photographic Veronica offers to

man a vision of his ultimate demise, of the permanence of death.   Of the binary pair

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[96] Tournier, "les Suaires de Véronique", 160.
[97] Ibid., 161.
[98] Ibid., 161.

life/death, Veronica emphasizes death. She recounts the history of anatomy and of its

importance in the artistic education of many of the world's greatest artists such as

Leonardo de Vinci. Veronica refers to the Renaissance which first allowed for the

examination of cadavers as "l'ère du morbide et de l'angoissé. C'est l'âge d'or de

l'Inquisition et de ses procès de sorcellerie avec ses chambres de torture et ses

bûchers."[99]

Veronica's obsession with death in her photographic quest echoes Roland

Barthes' position surrounding the presence of death in photography in his Camera

Lucida:

> For my part I should prefer that instead of constantly relocating the advent
> of Photography in its social and economic context, we should also inquire
> as to the anthropological place of Death and of the new image. For Death
> must be somewhere in a society; if it is no longer (or less intensely) in
> religion, it must be elsewhere; perhaps in this image which produces
> Death while trying to preserve life. Contemporary with the withdrawal of
> rites, Photography may correspond to the intrusion, in our modern society,
> of an asymbolic Death, outside of religion, outside of ritual, a kind of
> abrupt dive into literal Death. Life/Death: the paradigm is reduced to a
> simple click, the one separating the initial pose from the final print.[100]

According to Barthes, who may not be characterized as either modern or postmodern,

death is announced in the rigid freezing of a moment, the photograph announces: "that is

dead and that is going to die."[101] Veronica exemplifies Barthes theorizing on the

presence of death in the photographic image.

Maurice Blanchot, while commenting on Bataille, notes that the role of death is a

collective one, that calls to all people: "the basis of communication' [for Bataille] is not

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[99] Tournier, "les Suaires de Véronique*",*163.

[100]Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 92.

[101] Ibid., 96.

necessarily speech, or even the silence that is its foundation and punctuation, but the exposure to death, no longer my own exposure, but someone else's, whose living and closest presence is already the eternal and unbearable absence, an absence that the travail of deepest mourning does not diminish."[102] So it seems that Tournier affords death a central role in his 'new religion', and in so doing attempts to stimulate the voice of the individual. That is to say that, as a communicative stimulant, the contemplations that we ruminate while reading his short story encourage our own dialoguing about the limits of our existence as defined by death. By presenting death as the image of our salvation, Tournier elicits in us at first a horrific reaction, yet upon further consideration we may accept the finality and the ultimately individual experience of death. In so doing, we understand our own unique death, rather than the collective vision of death as portrayed in Christianity by Christ's death.

Hector himself comments on the communicative aspects of Veronica's photography in that there is a uniquely physical exchange between the photograph and his own physical body. For Hector, these photographs take of his inner self and will inevitably precede his own death. He comments that she had "tirées de mon corps" 22,239 photographs. He comments on the effects of her photography on him: "Avec vous Véronique, c'est devenu sérieux. La photographie pas sérieuse ne touche pas au modèle…La photographie sérieuse instaure un échange pérpétuel entre le modèle et le photographe. Il y a un système de vases communicants."[103]

After he tries to escape in vain, Veronica "reprend sa victime" and embarks upon

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[102] Maurice Blanchot, *The Unavowable Community*, (Barrytown: Station Hill Press, 1988), 25.
[103] Tournier, "les Suaires de Véronique," 165.

the realization of the complete and utter union of the image with its model in the most

physical manifestation imaginable. She creates a series of experiments named:

"photographies directes." During this method:

> Elle plonge le malheureux Hector dans un bain de révélateur (métol,
> sulfite de soude, hydroquinone et borax). Puis elle le couche, tout mouillé
> encore, sur le papier photographique…Il ne reste plus enfin qu'à laver le
> papier avec une solution de fixage acide…et à envoyer le modèle à la
> douche. Il résulte de tout cela d'étranges silhouettes écrasées, une
> projection plane du corps d'Hector, assez semblables à ce qui restait sur
> certains murs d'Hiroshima des Japonais foudroyés et désintégrés par la
> bombe atomique.[104]

As a result of this process, Hector has to be hospitalized for the dermatological infections

caused by repeated exposure to such toxic chemicals. Veronica progresses from the use

of photographic paper to using "la toile de lin", the very same fabric of the Shrouds of

Turin.   She claims to have surpassed traditional photography in having created what she

calls "Dermographie" for she realizes her theoretical desire to unite flesh and the image.

Her quest echoes the phenomenon of the Shrouds of Turin in that they too capture the

flesh in an image.

The narrator fearfully explores her latest exposition of Dermographie and sees in

the shadows of images on the cloth discreet traits reminiscent of Hector. He fears the

worst for the poor subject and demands of Veronica: "Où est Hector? Qu'avez-vous fait

d'Hector?" She replies: "Hector? Mais, il est…là. J'en ai fait…ça. Que voulez-vous de

plus?"[105] Veronica succeeds in creating the ultimate union of man with immortal

representation in his image, and in so doing offers a mini-narrative of the salvation of the

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[104] Tournier, "les Suaires de Véronique*,.*,169.
[105] Ibid., 172.

image.

Tournier's inspiration is derived not only from the religious relics of St. Veronica and the Shrouds of Turin, but that of another feminine artist named Verushka Lehndorff. As a subject frequently photographed, Verushka herself exemplifies the photographic vision of Veronica in that she unites flesh and image. Verushka's photographs reveal a subject immersed wholly in its physical environment. Frequently Verushka covers her naked body in her physical surroundings, such as the moss of a tree or painting her skin to blend in with her environment. In this way Verushka succeeds in uniting body and image.

It is worth mentioning the historical context from which arose this "l'avatar de l'Etérnel féminin le plus fou et le plus cruel que l'Occident ait jamais produit."[106] As Tournier discusses in his *des clefs et des serrures*, Verushka is the daughter of count Heinrich von Lehndorff who was "l'un des représentants les plus exemplaires de l'aristocratie est-prussienne, viscéralement antinazie, et qui frappe le IIIe Reich à sa tête dès que les circonstances s'y prêtèrent."[107] After the failed assassination attempt of July 20, 1944 the count von Lehndorff was arrested and sentenced to death, even though he had not actively participate in the failed attempt. Twice he tried to escape fearing for his life but out of love for his wife and their four daughters, he surrendered to the Nazis. On September 4, 1944 he was hung with others by the string of a piano all the while suffering under the eye of a camera videotaping the event so that Hitler might amuse himself. Verushka was only five years old at the time of her father's hanging and

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[106] Tournier, *des clefs et des serrures*, 153.
[107] Ibid.*,* 154.

undoubtedly this influenced her future career. For Tournier, this historical context is

essential to her melancholic beauty: "Sans doute fallait-il toute cette splendeur perdue, ce

courage, cette générosité, ces ruines, ce sang, ces larmes pour que s'épanouisse enfin

cette fleur tropicale et vénéneuse que Baudelaire aurait passionnément aimée."[108]

One of Verushka's photographs effectively displays the layering of systems of

representations at work in photography and in artistic representation as a whole. In one

particular image we see Verushka sitting embellished by a primitive looking outfit

decorated by a large golden belt. Behind her sits a large painting perfectly representing

Verushka's pose in every detail. Verushka herself constitutes the denotative model, the

ground zero, the model or original image that will be copied. The painting furnishes the

second level, or the artistic representation of the model and as such is connotative in

nature. Next, we pass into the third level, which is the photograph itself inviting us to

view its subject. We the viewer furnish the context for the third level, that is to say that

we participate connotatively in the artistic process. This triad of systems of

representation perfectly represents the levels developed by Tournier in his writings.

Likewise, the theories of Baudrillard summarize the different levels of the image as

exemplified in this particular photo.

For Baudrillard man's image as a faithful representation of God is indeed ill fated

in the postmodern era. Just as Veronica's images were murderous of their model, Hector,

so too do images of God murder their model. Baudrillard's comments concerning the

dangers of images in the religious domain are worth noting at length:

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[108] Tournier, *des clefs et des serrures*, 157.

> On voit que les iconoclastes, qu'on accuse de mépriser et de nier les images, étaient ceux qui leur accordaient leur juste prix, au contraire des iconlatres qui n'y voyaient que les reflets et se contentaient de vénérer Dieu en filgrane…les iconolâtres furent les esprits les plus modernes, les plus aventureux..Puisque, sous couleur d'une transparition de Dieu dans le miroir des images, ils jouaient déjà sa mort et sa disparition dans l'épiphanie de ses représentations (dont ils savaient peut-être qu'elles ne représentaient plus rien), qu'elles étaient un jeu pur, mais que c'était précisément là le grand jeu-sachant aussi qu'il est dangereux de démasquer les images, puisqu'elles dissimulent qu'il n'y a rien derrière.[109]

Baudrillard is right to affirm that there is nothing behind the image of God and that in fact the divine elusive supremacy afforded to God's absence is betrayed in his images. The image of God as reflected on Veronica's veil is mutated into an image of the individual and his imminent and inescapable death. When we, the postmodern, perhaps atheist reader, consume the image and the text of Tournier, we question this reflection of God. In its place, we see an individual reflection, we question the legitimacy of established Christian doctrine and thus we take God's place as Creator.

This infinite process of individualization is an important part of the simulation at work all around us, according to Baudrillard. As he questions: "Si Dieu lui-même peut etre simulé, c'est-à-dire se réduire aux signes qui en font foi? Alors tout le système passe en apesanteur, il n'est plus lui-même qu'un gigantesque simulacra, non pas irréel, mais simulacre…s'échangeant en lui-même, dans un circuit ininterrompu."[110] This uninterrupted circuit, as Baudrillard refers to it, is the process of communication which passes between individuals. In questioning established religious doctrines, we not only promulgate our own mini-narrative, but we prolong and ourselves incarnate that which

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[109] Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacres et simulation* (Paris: Editions Galilée, 1981), 15.
[110] Baudrillard, *Simulacres et simulation*, 16.

religion claims Jesus Christ accomplished: the act of creation. As such, Tournier's work evokes the sacred in the sense afforded to it by Georges Bataille, that is to say one which allows Man to enter into a dialogue with the idea of God.

In the Margins of the Sacred Experience

Above all, according to Bataille, this sacred experience constitutes a relationship, a communicative act between man and God's presence or absence. This dialoguing implies a process which is not finite, but open-ended and uniquely subjective depending on the individual. Roger Caillois, one of Bataille's colleagues in the Collège de Sociologie, theorizes emphasizes the dialectic nature inherent to the sacred experience:

> On tient peut-être là le mouvement essentiel de la dialectique du sacré. Toute force qui l'incarne tend à se dissocier: son ambiguité première se résout en éléments antagonistes et complémentaires auxquels on rapporte respectivement les sentiments de respect et d'aversion, de désir et d'effroi qu'inspirait sa nature foncièrement équivoque.[111]

Caillois' emphasis on the duality inherent to the sacred which incites in the individual very strong opposing emotional reactions, corresponds and explains the intense reactions critics have to Tournier's reworking of Christian narratives. As Dunway comments himself: "What is even more objectionable is for a writer like Tournier to call himself Christian and yet publish much the same kind of gutter fiction…This is indeed a false prophet, I submit, a wolf whose sheep's clothing is about as transparent as the emperor's, or, perhaps more appropriately, as the skin of the "red men" he describes in *Gaspard, Melchior et Balthazar*."[112] Dunway's perspective is that of a devout theologian who obviously responds to Tournier's religious restructuring with

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[111] Roger Caillois, *L'homme et le sacré*, 42.
[112] John Dunway, 13.

outrage. This vehement condemnation expressed by Dunway in the face of Tournier's

expression of the heterogeneous nature of Christianity articulates this dual nature of the

sacred as Bataille describes it: "Il y a tantôt attraction, tantôt répulsion, et tout objet de

répulsion peut devenir dans certaines circonstances objet d'attraction ou

réciproquement."[113] This is testament to the fact that Tournier succeeds in expressing the

sacred as it exists in the spirit of the reader. Tournier no longer represents the sacred in

the Christain context as Paul Avis referred to it, rather he creates a theology of

immanence which emphasizes the creative forces inherent to every man.

We have seen on numerous occasion in his works *Les Météores*, *Gaspard,*

Melchior et Baltahzar and *Les Suaires de Véronique,* that Tournier seeks to elicit in his

readers a creative imagination that embodies itself as a religious experience, as described

by Bataille and Ricoeur. For Tournier, this individual act of creating personifies the

essence of that which man seeks in his iconic God. Through constructing the meta-

narrative of Christianity which centers itself around the suffering of the physical body of

Christ, religion has ironically succeeded in establishing the very boundaries and limits

which suppress and stifle the spirit of God. For Tournier, religion is a mysticism, a belief

that aspirations for God and the belief in a God is common to all men. Furthermore,

Tournier professes and centers profoundly heterogeneous characters in his works, those

who transgress the boundaries of society. This is necessary due to the fact that

Christianity itself is a homogenous structure in that it defines boundaries within which its

believers must function. Rather than focusing on the expression of the sacred as Bataille

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[113] Georges Batailles, *Œuvres complètes*, 347.

and Caillois envision it, that is to say a force which transgresses all kind of norms and moral and social boundaries, Christianity has become profane or homogenous, in that it constitutes "une assimilation sociale …en même temps qu'une assimilation scientifique". [114] This process of assimilation practiced by the institution of Christiantiy is clearly condemned by the writings of Tournier due to the fact that it suppresses the individual forces of the common man.

The concluding pages that follow will explore the essence of the sacred in the writings of Tournier within the framework of the theories of Georges Bataille. Bataille's theories of transgression, of the sacred outer limit and the "new mystical theology" he envisioned, allow me to posit situate this study in a postmodern context, one in which the established boundaries surrounding God and man unravel and dissolve into postmodern free play. This is in no way to say that we, the readers, witness the demise of the individual as the nihilism of Jean Baudrillard suggests, rather that we engage in a literary experience, in the spirit of phenomenological philosophies, in an inner experience in which the far distance of God is realized in the inner depth of ourselves, as described by Paul Ricoeur in several of his works. In this way, we partake in a heterogeneous experience, one which elicits in us a profoundly unconscious awakening, as Bataille describes: "Les éléments hétérogènes provoquent des réactions affectives d'intensité variable suivant les personnes..La réalité hétérogène est celle de la force ou du choc." [115] Indeed, Bataille's theories of the sacred and of its heterogeneous nature, account for the shocking and often violent nature of Tournier's renderings of Christian narratives.

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[114] Georges Bataille, *Œuvres Complètes*, 345.
[115] Ibid., 347.

Passing through the boundaries of Christianity which have long suffocated the true freedom of the human spirit, in Tournier's experience of the sacred, we enter into the margins of society in which the concept of "God' has long existed. However, due to the proclamation of the death of God by Nietzsche, this space is devoid of God's presence. Instead, we find a phantom doubling of the existence of God, a game of presence and absence in which our own image as an individual plays a crucial role. This suggests the atheological nature of Tournier's texts for they explore how we speak of a God who no longer exists and whose presence in the Scripture is questioned and unraveled. It is in this perspective that we may grasp the wind spirit, that is to say the true essence of religion, rather than the established dogma of 'God' and in so doing, gain a greater understanding of our own unique atheological existence.

Bataille's Sacrality: Passing into the Margins

The use of Georges Bataille in the study of the representation of religion in Tournier's works necessitates a delicacy due to the ethereal and ephemeral characteristics of Bataille. Bataille himself resisted classification and utilitarianism and as such enters, probably, unwilling into my argumentation. Nonetheless, his theories account for the profound transgression of established boundaries undertaken by Tournier in his writings. Unraveling the greatest of human ideologies and grand narratives embodied by myth in a literary medium renders these phenomena individual. As such, his theories of the heterogeneous and of the sacred speak of the profoundly unconscious, that is to say of the emotions repressed by our conscious. Bataille, through his passionate syntax and his intensely melancholic lamentations, offer to this study a glimpse into the human spirit to

which myth, and religion speaks.

In his work *Georges Bataille*, Michael Richardson comments on the elusive nature of Bataille in the following manner: "We will often find that wherever we want to place him, he will not be there."[116] Faithful to the postmodern nature of this study, it is only the phantom presence of Bataille that will enlighten the reworking of humanity's need for religion. Bataille's theorizing of the sacred echoes the emphasis Tournier places not only on the individual, but of man's collective existence as well as proven by his use of myth. Through the solitude of Robinson, Tournier reveals the suffering of the individual ostracized from communal living thus creating a simultaneously collective and unique vision of existence. According to Richardson, "If the essential element in Bataille's thinking is the social, it may be said that the recreation of the communal being is his most immediate concern. This should be borne in mind as we consider his work as a whole."[117] Tournier, through the use of myth and his exploration of the thematic of death, himself proves to be a writer preoccupied with the communal existence of man. According to Bataille, out of the very essence of society emerges the sacred. In fact, the sacred is "the cement that held a given society together."[118] Therefore, Tournier speaks to the condition of each individual who together create a collective whole through his representation of the sacred.

Bataille founded the Collège de Sociologie in the beginning of 1937, and together with fellow collaborators including Roger Caillois, explored the Durkheimian school's

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[116] Michael Richardson, *Georges Bataille* (London: Routledge, 1994), 34.
[117] Ibid., 34.
[118] Richardson, George Bataille, 34.

theories of sociology and religious phenomena. The group clearly emphasized collective phenonema such as myth to be a powerful underlying force: "Just as there exists a primitive, irreducible experience of self constituting the basic dynamic of anarchic individualism, the same sort of existential, inalienable basis of a collective effort must be brought to light."[119] It is the notion of the sacred which gives voice to the individual in that in surpassing themselves, they enter into communication with the other members of society, and ultimately with God. Bataille argues that it is the practice of sacrifice, of self-sacrifice in particular, that allows for the individual to pass beyond the limits of his consciousness and this is the expression of the sacred. This constitutes the expenditure of the individual, as Bataille refers to it, which is an element of the sacred.

The influence of the French sociologist Emile Durkheim is evident in the fact that for Bataille, as for Durkheim, the distinction between the sacred and the profane is a means to understanding society. In addition, the dichotomy between the sacred and the profane was a defining characteristic of religion, as Durkheim states: "religion is a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden." [120] For Durkheim, the separation between the sacred and the profane was absolute. In his *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* Durkheim explores the notion of the sacred as a sociological element accounting for the elements in life that are non-religious yet at the same time, collective. This Durkheimian vision of the sacred is much in keeping with Tournier's deconstruction of myth in that it explains the

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[119] Michele H. Richman, *Sacred revolutions: Durkheim and the College de Sociologie* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), 118.
[120] Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (New York: Free Press, 1995), 47.

intentional divorce of religion from all encompassing narratives.   As the following quote

describes:

> Of all concepts and perspectives in Durkheim the sacred is the most
> striking and, the most radical. His use of the sacred to explain the
> cohesive nature of society, the constraint that society exercises upon man,
> the origins of culture and even of human thought must surely rank as one
> of the boldest contributions of a positivist non-believer.[121]

The distinction both Durkheim and Bataille make between the sacred and religion

is of the greatest importance in understanding Tournier's removal of religion from many

mythical narratives. By rendering the universality of a Saint unique, Tournier voices this

sacred which is rooted precisely in the individual. Furthermore, the emphasis Tournier

places on stimulating the creative imagination of the reader invokes the sacred in that it

engages that individual in a collective dialoguing necessary to our inevitably societal

existence. This seemingly paradoxical existence of individual action and collective

existence permeated the sociological theories engendered by the members of the College

and Bataille refers to this opposition in the following way:

> Mystery had two faces, one turned outside and the other inside, the inside
> being tumult and chaos, and the outside the surpassing with a view to a
> new order. The ceremony took place outside while inside only waiting
> existed. On their own the open eyes made two absolute stains outside as
> well as inside.[122]

The interiority of the individual is in this way referred to as "tumult and chaos"

and the society in which he functions is "a new order." This ceremony referred to is the

union of the two and the resulting 'stain' is the inevitable demise of the communicative

process that takes place between the two.

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[121] Michele H. Richman, *Sacred Revolutions*, 4
[122] Michael Richardson, *Georges Bataille*, 57.

The individual who exists at the core of a society is himself capable of experiencing the sacred and in so doing contributes to a social entity. In this way, a sociological approach to the study of the sacred accounts for the individual's impact on the communicative aspect of society. For Bataille, the sacred is not a characterstic of religion, quite the contrary. Traditional Orthodox Christianity attempts to regulate and define the limits within which must operate the faith of an individual. Even the notion of God has been incorporated into a homogenous structure, rendering it useful and productive as a means of passifying and controlling the public. There results a divisive tension between the individual's aspirations and those regulating the collective body of organized religion. Bataille's distinction between the homogenous and the heterogeneous, accounts for the division that exists between man and his religions aspirations. The profoundly heterogeneous characteristics of the sacred allow it to be placed in a postmodern stance for it contributes to the unraveling of an all-encompassing narrative.

As we have seen in the case study of Robinson Crusoe, the homogenous body is that which regulates existence. The homogenous is above all characterized and measured by its productivity. That which is expelled from this body is the heterogeneous and is characterized by its marked non-productivity. Julain Pefanis defines the heterogeneous in his work: *The Heterology and the Postmodern: Bataille, Baudrillard and Lyotard* in the following way: "what is expelled from the homogeneous body; be this political, textual,

or corporeal."[123] Bataille himself defines the heterogeneous as "tout ce que la société homogène rejette soit comme déchet, soit comme valeur supérieure transcendante. Ce sont les produits d'excrétion du corps humain..les divers processus inconscients tels que les rêves et les névroses; les différentes sortes d'individus violents ou tout au moins refusant la règle."[124] Indeed, Saint Veronica finds herself transformed into a heterogeneous force whose violence embodies the sacred as envisioned by Bataille as she herself transgresses the boundaries of the image being the representation of God's incarnation in Man.

Bataille's distinction between homogeneity and heterogeneity proves to be an essential one in the groundwork of his ensuing ideas on sacrality and man's relation to God. According to Michael Richardson, Bataille's use of the sacred embodies the influence of Tonnies' distinction between gesellschaft (homogeneity) and gemeinschaft (heterogeneity). As he observes: "The distinction can be expressed as between an organized society based upon inflexible law and cohesion (gesellschaft) and one based upon social forms of co-operation, custom and ritual expression (gemeinschaft)."[125] This terminology reflects the forces at work in society which tend towards the homogenization of the individual. Incorporating the individual into a system, such as a society, necessarily suppresses that which is counter-productive to the overall good of that collectivity. Capitalism, as seen through the Weberian principles "time is money" equates even the individual into this system and as such becomes a 'thing' who defines

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[123] Julian Pefanis, *Heterology and the Postmodern: Bataille, Baudrillard, and Lyotard* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991), 43.
[124] Georges Bataille, *Œuvres complètes*, 346.
[125] Michael Richardson, *Georges Bataillle*. 35.

itself by its functionality and its utilitarianism. As a result, modern, capitalist society is homogenous and tends to homogenize all of its counterparts. As Michael Richardson comments: "In capitalism, though, homogeneity is welcomed and indeed imposed by means of an economic accumulation that has a totalitarian function…its very nature is to reduce people to their social roles."[126]

Yet there remains the persistent threat of the heterogeneous. Just as every individual looks upon his mortality with fear and dread, and desperately seeks for the comfort of a God, so does the individual escape the confines of the homogenizing forces around him. In the works of Tournier, characters such as Veronica are heterogeneous in that they are not productive, they do not conform to the laws which regulate society. Rather, they transgress these boundaries and in so doing enter into the realm of the sacred.

For Bataille, the sacred exists at the point of intersection between the homogenous and that which it expels: the heterogeneous. Tournier's description of the penis of God and of the water pouring from the wounds of Christ in *les Météores* perfectly illustrates the presence of the heterogeneous, of an active expulsion of the sacred from established Christianity. As Richardson defines it, the sacred: "is revealed in bodily exhalations (blood, sweat, tears, shit) extreme emotions (laughter, anger, drunkenness, ecstasy); socially useless activity: "poetry, games, crime eroticism."[127] It is in this heterogeneous perspective that we may best perceive the sacred in the texts of Tournier. It is no longer the sacred as described earlier by Paul Avis for whom the sacred speaks of Christological

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[126] Michael Richardson, *Georges Bataille,* 35.
[127] Ibid., 36.

discourse. Rather, the sacred encapsulates all of the diverging forces that bend the relationship between Man and God, those that unite and those that separate.

In their work entitled *Flight of the Gods: Philosophical Perspectives on Negative Theology*, Ilse N. Bulhof and Laurens Ten Kate note the capacity of the term sacred to be suggestive of a severance from God: "The nuance between 'sacré' and 'saint' can be examined by studying the Latin origin of the two words. 'Sacer' and 'Sanctus' are both derived from the same root 'sak-', three root letters that refer …to a rapport. 'Sak-' refers to all that takes place between people and the gods, to the outer limits of human existence, to a fundamental separation."[128] Therefore, in Tournier's texts, when he refers to a religious icon or saint, he is exploring not only our relationship with them but also our separation and our distance from them. In this sense, Tournier's discourse is distinctly atheological, in that he explores the very means of speaking God. As Laurens Ten Kate clarifies: "This experience is the starting point for an 'a-theo-logy': the inability to speak about God (a-logos), as well as the inability to be with God (a-theos).[129] Bataille himself defines atheology in the following way: "I call atheology the discipline that examines the essence of the divine: at its apex it speaks of God, who is most divine in the form of His denial."[130] Therefore, the term atheology appropriately suggests the concurrent existence and non-existence of God, and our ability to express this dialectic. It appropriately refers to an engaging process through which man dialogues with God's presence or lack thereof. By exploring the role of God as existent or non-existent,

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[128] Ilse N. Bulhof and Laurens Ten Kate, *Flight of the Gods: Philosophical Perspectives on Negative Theology*, 258.
[129] Ibid., 255.
[130] Ibid., 266.

nonetheless, He exerts an influence on man's existence. It is this interactive and dynamic

relationship man has with his absent or present God that is reflected in Tournier's

rewritings of religious mythology.

Tournier's exploration of the sacred echoes the doubt that many readers have

towards the existence of God as represented by Orthodox Christianity. By deconstructing

and then subsequently re-constructing Saints into a new context which radically alters

their meaning, not only the authenticity of their purpose is in doubt, but their capacity to

spread God's word is equally in question. In this way, Tournier transgresses the

boundaries and limits within which these 'sacred', in the Christian sense, saints

functioned. In so doing, it would seem that he ventures beyond the realm of Christianity

and passes into the realm of the human spirit. This is precisely what Bataille refers to as

an 'inner experience',as described by Kate: " 'God' is an infraction into

discursivity…This wondrous, contradictory personage is the addressee of the sacred

relationship; in the 'inner experience' people communicate with God's impossible

situation and allow themselves to be violated by it."[131]

Bataille himself did not express an outrage towards Christianity as did Nietzsche,

who inspired him greatly. In fact, he expresses a disappointment with Christianty's

ability to allow him to experience the absolute. As Richardson comments: "Christianity

was too complacent. It was, in fact, not religious enough…it should not be a matter of

turning one's back on Christianity, but rather of going beyond it, creating what he called

a 'hyper-Christianity' which would give meaning to the experience of life as it was really

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[131]Ilse N. Bulhof and Laurens Ten Kate, *Flight of the Gods: Philosophical Perspectives on Negative Theology.*, 274.

lived." [132] This perspective seems to summarize the efforts of Tournier to surpass

Christianity, through using its key narratives, in an effort to represent that which is

suppressed by organized religion: the human spirit.

Tournier's Atheology: Hyper-Christianity

Friedrich Nietzsche was undoubtedly one of the greatest adversaries of the

Christian faith. In his work *The Anti-Christ, Ecce Homo, Twilight of the Idols* he

comments on God in the following way: "The Christian idea of God- God as a god of the

sick, God as spider, God as spirit- is one of the most corrupt conceptions of God the

world has ever seen; this may even represent a new low in the declining development of

the types of god."[133] For Nietzsche, Christianity was poisonous and condemnable for it

deceived and brutally oppressed mankind. Nietzsche blatently argues against the

credibility of Jesus Christ's existence as the son of God: "The concept 'son of man' is not

some concrete person belonging to history, someone individual or unique, but rather an

'eternal' facticity, a psychological symbol that has been redeemed from the concept of

time."[134] Continuing his attack against Christianity as an organized repression of the

human spirit in the most criminal of ways, Nietzsche's Anti-Christ authors his Seven

Propositions which constitutes his self-authored Law against Christianity: "Sixth

proposition"- The 'holy' history should be called by the name it deserves, the accursed

history; the words 'God', 'saviour', 'redeemer', 'saint' should be used as terms of abuse,

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[132] Michael Richardson, *Georges Bataille*,115.
[133] Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Anti-Christ, Ecce Homo, Twilight of the Idols,* 15.
[134] Ibid., 31.

to signify criminals."[135] Indeed, be it the murderous Saint Veronica or the perverse uncle

Alexandre in *Les Météores*, Tournier's rendering of Saints equates them to such a

criminality, but it is not as simple as that.

Tournier in his religious exploration and deconstruction does not express the same

degree of intense hatred espoused by Nietzsche in his *Anti-Christ*. Tournier's favoring of

Biblical legends and myths contradicts such a violent repulsion. Rather, he views the

narratives of Christianity as a symbolic source from which to draw inspiration. For some

of his critics, as Dunway exemplifies, Tournier's use of Biblical narratives is

blasphemous: "Tournier's claim to the title of Christian writer is most seriously

undermined by his failure to tap into the redemptive power of the biblical narratives that

he retells. For him the story of Christ is just one more myth to be toyed with, one more

interesting angle to use in the fascinating game of reinterpreting traditional myths..So

much, then, for the impostor."[136]

In the place of Nietzsche's violent condemnation of Christianity stands Tournier's

pro-creative stance, one which allows for the individual to explore his own liberty

resulting from the death of God, echoing an 'inner experience' as Bataille conceived of.

Perhaps Zarathoustra's urging of his believers to "lose me and find yourselves"[137]

expresses the religious experience desired by Tournier, one in which the individual

abandons iconic figures and instead explores the inner spirituality he himself contains.

In order to complete Nietzsche's urging, in order to transgress Christianity, one

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[135] Ibid., 67.
[136] John Dunway, "Tournier Christian Writer?" 13.
[137] Friedrich Nietzsche, *the Anti-Christ,* 69.

must pass beyond the boundaries imposed by Christianity. Christianity has erected

countless liturgies and rituals which, through the use of order, attempt to regulate and

protect the core notion of God. It is precisely in the undoing or the deconstruction of

these ritualistic and in fact narratological elements of the Church's liturgy, that the

essence represented by Bataille's sacrality breaks through. According to Kent, one of

the key features of the sacred is that "it is the sacred that violates, ruptures, and

interrupts."[138] By violating the Biblical legends from which he draws inspiration,

Tournier transgresses the boundaries they have long imposed on the ardent believers. He

allows the individual reader to partake in this transgression and in so doing elicits in our

own unique human spirit the sacred which reaches beyond Christianity.

The postmodern era is one distinguished by a humanity living in the shadows of

its ideological predecessors. God is no longer controlling us. In fact, God is dead. Does

this imply that he once existed and that he is no more? Or, rather, did he in fact never

exist? Such is the questioning into which we enter after having digested the works of

Tournier. This religious quandary is expressed by Bataille's challenges that : "God is

dead, and as dead God lurks permanently in human existence and human language."[139]

Such is our condition in the postmodern era, God deconstructed, unable to be represented

in language as well as in Christianity, man stands before his absence looking for

redemption. This is the nature of atheology. Instead of looking beyond himself, in

transcendence, he turns to look at his own fractured reflection. In the immanence of

himself he may find true salvation. In the very act of reading and challenging established

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[138] Ilse N. Bulhof and Laurens Ten Kate, *Flight of the Gods*, 262.
[139] Ibid., 270

dogma, man may fully embrace his liberty. Bataille describes man's condition devoid of

God's presence as an 'unknown': "this "inconceivable unknown-wildly free before me,

leaving me wild and free before it."

It is in authoring our own mini-narratives that we may participate in a

heterogeneous and therefore liberating, experience. In fact, our participation in the

creation of a mini-narrative which stands in contrast to the meta-narrative of Christianity,

is one which places us in a postmodern interpretation of Tournier's texts. For Lyotard,

mini-narratives resist the process of legitimization which characterize meta-narratives

due to their uniquely individual versus collective, makeup. As Lyotard states: "They

escape, that is certain, but only on the basis that they no longer have the value of

legimitation." That is to say that perhaps, the defining trait of postmodern is its

resistence to being itself an all-encompassing ideology. In the same sense, a mini-

narrative is postmodern in that it too, resists representing an entire collective truth as does

the meta-narrative. The mini-narratives we author in the face of Tourinier's perversion of

Christian symbols, is unique and individual and the result of a deconstructive process.

Therefore, it is postmodern in nature.

The heterogeneous erupts from the homogenous in a profoundly unconscious

way. The freedom Bataille speaks of results from a psychological liberation which

transpires once we, the individual, embrace that which we perceive as dangerous or

threatening. Tournier's toying with established religion may seem treacherous, even

blasphemous, to the faithful believers of religion. Yet, it is important to understand how

the heterogeneous frees us, through a process of differentiation and of transgression of

established boundaries. For Bataille, the heterogeneous is identical to the unconscious

and as such speaks to the individual's unconscious in a highly symbolic way. As he

states: "Dans la réalité hétérogène, les symboles chargés de valeur affective ont ainsi la

même importance que les éléments fondamentaux et la partie peut avoir la même valeur

que le tout.."[140]

*Le Roi des Aulnes***: The Heterogeneous Symbolic**

This highly symbolic nature of the heterogeneous and of the sacred experience in

which we partake through the readings of Tournier leads us to follow one of his most

profoundly transgressive characters on his symbolic journey in *le Roi des Aulnes*: Abel

Tiffauges. The violence, the shock, the eroticism inherent to this character embodies the

postmodern deconstruction of the homogenous accomplished by Tournier. In *le Roi des

Aulnes,* we find not only a heterogeneous force unparalleled in contemporary literature,

we find the voice of one of the most historically ostracized and persecuted people: the

Jew. The chapter that follows will examine the intensely symbolic nature of *le Roi des

Aulnes,* and as such the heterogeneous nature of his work which exerts a profound

influence on the sensibility and the unconscious of the reader. Through structuring the

novel according to the symbolic attributes of the Star of David, Tournier succeeds in

giving a literary representation to a sacred symbol, that is to say one that is itself

transgressive and heterogeneous. In so doing, Tournier voices the defining moment for

the postmodern era: the Second World War.

To conclude this chapter with the journey of Abel Tiffauges not only opens the

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[140] Georges Bataille, Œ*uvres complètes*, 347.

door to a new perspective on the postmodern treatment of myth in the writings of Michel

Tournier, but is very aptly concludes the discussion of Tournier's reworking of many

Christian narratives. As we have seen, the role of man's image, of his conception of

himself in the postmodern era, stands profoundly altered due to the unraveling and

simulation of Christianity. Instead of seeking transcendence in the body of Christ,

Tournier urges us to seize the immanence, the now, of our own individual existence. In a

way, he urges us to see in our own image, no matter how complicated that may be due to

the problem of the simulacra as described by Baudrillard, a reflection of a creative force

which is no longer called "God".

Just as Tiffauges sinks into the muddy bog, he symbolically melts into his own

image. Yet, through his own demise, he attains the salvation of his jewish star, Ephraim.

The symbolic journey in which we join Tiffauges reflects the defining moment for the

postmodern era, the genesis of Fascism which Bataille refers to as : "forme radicale de

l'exclusion exigeant une avidité."[141] It is this historical period which represents so

clearly the violent expulsion from the homogenous of that which is counter-productive,

the heterogeneous. Sent to Auschwitz, or 'the anus of the world', as it means in German,

the Jewish people incarnate the problem of 'otherness' and of the violence that the

heterogeneous calls forth. Above all, in the following chapter I wish to emphasize the

symbolic makeup of the novel that allows Tournier to achieve this postmodern treatment

of several established myths which create a symbolic, imaginary world into which we

project our own innermost possibilities.

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[141] Georges Bataille, Œ*uvres Complètes,* 355.

Chapter Four: The Power of Symbolism: The Salvation of the Self

"Pour pouvoir engendrer une étoile qui danse il faut en soi-même

encore avoir quelque chaos."

- Friedrich Nietzsche[1]

Through the mythical journey of Tiffauges so rich in symbolic value which calls
to the imagination of the readers, one particular symbol emerges: the Star of David. This
symbol manifests the three dimensions of symbolism as elaborated on by Paul Ricoeur:
cosmic, oneiric and poetic. The Star of David is cosmic in that it incarnates all the
elements of the universe, oneiric in that it summons the psyche of the individual through
its appeal to the unconscious and thirdly poetic, in that it constitutes an expressivity in its
primordial state. This symbol hermeneutically explores the problematic of the 'other' as
previously seen in Tournier's other works, yet in this case the 'other' is the one at the root
of our occidental history: the Jew. It is through the narrative discourse of *le Roi des
Aulnes* that this symbol produces meaning.

Above all, it is imperative to note the role of evil in this narrative which is
substantiated by the historical context in which the novel takes place: the Second World
War. As explicitly evil, Tiffauges journey is mythical in that it narrates events that took
place in the beginning of time and allows us to understand our place in the world today.
Through partaking in Tiffauges' journey to the root of evil as illustrated by the Holocaust

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[1] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Ainsi Parlait Zarathoustra* (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1971), 26.

of WWII, we the readers partake in a quest of the sacred, that is to say we ourselves explore the internal dynamism which gave rise to Nazism. Ricoeur comments in the following manner: "I explore my own sacrality in deciphering that of the world."[2] As such, our common complicity, so subtly evoked, explores the evil present in each one of us. Yet this journey does not end in the triumph of evil, but rather the salvation of the Self, so richly represented by Tiffauges' lifting of his Jewish Star Ephraim from despair. Stimulated by the mythical dimensions of this symbolic journey, our consciousness as readers is awakened to and revitalized by this representation of the Star of David as encompassing the major elements of not only our universe, but also of the forces at the heart of each individual.

Myth and Symbol

Myth narrates the symbol, that is to say that it is a discourse through which symbols create meaning. The symbol, according to Ricoeur, "opens up and discloses a dimension of experience that, without it, would remain hidden."[3] As both mythical and symbolic, Tournier's narratives create and restructure established signifying systems into a new, third order level of representation. This level attributes yet another symbolic intentionality to the meaning of the symbol which in this case is the Star of David. Symbols, like myth, create meaning in levels or signifiying systems. Paul Ricoeur in his *Symbolism of Evil*, elaborates on the capacity of the symbol to create meaning and how this functions with myth. He characterizes the myth as "an expression in language. In it

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[2] Paul Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil* (New York: Harper and Row, 1967), 13.
[3] Ricoeur, *the Symbolism of Evil*, 165.

the symbol takes the form of narration."[4] Therefore, the defining characteristic that

qualifies Tournier's work as mythical is that it is indeed an expression in language of a

symbolic structure. That the symbol takes the form of narration, as Ricoeur describes it,

is perfectly represented by the Star of David, around which the narrative construct of *le*

Roi des Aulnes structures itself.

Ricoeur emphasizes that a symbol is a sign and yet not every sign is a symbol.

According to Ricoeur, the sign may only express a first level of meaning which is literal.

The symbol adds a "second intentionality" to the conventional meaning of the sign.

According to Ricoeur "symbolic signs are opaque, because the first, literal meaning,

obvious meaning itself points analogically to a second meaning…This opacity constitutes

the depth of the symbol, which, it will be said, is inexhaustible." [5] The symbol's infinite

capacity to create meaning is restructured and enhanced by Tournier. In his narrative re-

workings, he supplements to this second intentionality another level of meaning which is

connotative and symbolic. Thus we embark upon a highly symbolic journey in *le Roi des*

Aulnes, one in which the symbolic attributes of the Star of David recombine in a third

order level of signification which profoundly alters the meaning of the symbol.

Myth is the medium through which this symbolic re-signification voices itself.

As Ricoeur notes, myth is a "species of symbol, symbols developed in the form of

narrations."[6] Therefore, Tournier's consistent use of myth as the narrative structure of

his works allows for symbolism to play an integral role. Yet Tournier's work *le Roi des*

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[4] Ibid., 166.
[5] Paul Ricoeur, *the Symbolism of Evil*, 15.
[6] Ibid., 18.

Aulnes does not merely express itself symbolically through myth, more precisely it explores and uses a very specific group of mythical symbols that evoke human's capacity to create and to be evil. Tiffauges' journey through the historical time period of the Second World War explores a temporal setting in which the worst of mankind dominates. Tournier's pool of mythical models includes those which signify the evil in man, such as the murder committed by Cain and the murderous rapt of children in Der Erlkonig, as well as the multitude of symbols which constitute the six chapters in this novel.

Ricoeur's commentary on the symbolic elements of evil quite forcibly grasps the nuances of Toruier's re-mythologization of established myths and places them in the context of evil. According to Ricoeur, the first function of the myths of evil is to "embrace mankind in one ideal history. A time that represents all times."[7] Tiffauges' self proclamation to be the creator of the universe transforms him into the concrete universal, that is to say the representative of the human type. Encapsulating all of humanity in one explicitly sinister persona through the use of mythical qualities, condemns all of humanity to an existence dominated by suffering and murder to which his journey is a testament. Precisely, Tiffauges' narrating the beginning of the universe as well as the end in the final pages of his descent into the bog, gives voice to this "universality of man" described by Ricoeur.[8] That Tiffauges be the first creator, the demigod who expresses himself through myth, affords to the narrative structure of the myth the capacity to represent all of mankind. As such, the myth of Abel Tiffauges tries to decipher man's existence and in particular man's capacity for good and for evil so markably aggravated

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[7] Ricoeur, *the Symbolism of Evil*, 162.
[8] Ibid., 163.

during the Second World War.

Tiffauges' origin in the genesis of the universe explores the myth of the creation of man. As such, it proves to be a primordial drama which opens up and discloses the 'hidden meaning of human experience'according to Ricoeur. By using profoundly archetypal personages such as Abel Tiffauges and the young boy Ephraim molded around the structural reworking of established myths, Tournier creates a narrative which exhibits the first of the three fundamental characteristics of the myths of evil defined by Ricoeur. The following two are: "Tension of an ideal history oriented from a Beginning toward and End and finally the transition from an essential nature to an alienated history."[9]

Therefore, Tiffauges' archetypal representation of the collective mankind affords him a uniquely sinister aspect. His ill deeds represent those committed by all of mankind. The orientation of time represented in the novel begins with the birth of universe in the hands of the supernatural Tiffauges. It is he who creates time and orients the temporal progression of our universe to the final End, a demise of a highly symbolic nature in which he succumbs to the weight of his star Ephraim and caves into the bog. That Tiffauges journey leads us from the Beginning to the End, from the Genesis to the Apocalypse, and therefore recounts the primordial drama, designates the fundamental symbols through which this journey is expressed as those of *distress,* described by Ricoeur in the following way: "the struggle and the victory which marked the foundation of the world."[10]

The world described by Tiffauges is one which emphasizes the fault of human

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[9] Ricoeur, *the Symbolism of Evil*, 171.
[10] Ibid., 171.

existence, both collectively and on an individual level. As such, the myth of Abel

Tiffauges is "the myth as narration that puts the present experience of fault into relation

with the totality of meaning."[11] This 'totality of meaning' expressed mythically, refers to

the reality represented by this novel. In fact, this reality is another level of signification,

another referent which thoroughly engages the reader due to the phenomenological

influence on the interpretative process. This symbolic level of signification, (aka *reality*),

recounts the journey of the collectivity of man as embodied by the archetypal Tiffauges

from the genesis of the cosmos to its demise. The struggles, the distress which mark this

primordial journey lead us into what Ricoeur terms "an alienated history." According to

Ricoeur, the third characteristic of the myths of evil is "the transition from an essential

nature to an alienated history."[12] Here we must take into consideration the historical

context of this narration, which is the Second World War in which the original

marginalized group, the Jew, becomes the hope for salvation. This alienation, this

otherness, represented by the Jewish people, ultimately reigns over the evil incarnated by

Tiffauges. The symbolic elevation of the Star of David in the final sentence of the novel

explicitly represents the conquest of good over evil, of the survival of the other, despite

the rationalization of murder which persecuted the Jews.

The use of mythical and symbolic narrations by Tournier allows we the reader to

participate, as readers, in this primordial journey in a highly active way. That is to say

that due to the multiple meanings suggested by the symbols and mythical models of this

novel, we attempt on an individual basis to reclaim the sacred which exists in each of us.

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[11] Ricoeur, *the Symbolism of Evil,* 171.
[12] Ibid., 163.

Understanding the sacred to be that which transgresses established boundaries, that which allows us to transcend our finite existence, then in following Tiffauges along his symbolic journey, we too pass from the Genesis to the End. We witness the dangers along the way, and it is precisely due to the symbolic nature of the text that this self realization may take place.

In participating with, rather than witnessing the journey of Tiffauges, we may leave the narrative process altered, phenomenologically. Once again, Ricoeur's insights on the function of symbol and myth are highly pertinent: "Because it is symbolized and not lived, the sacred is broken up into a multiplicity of myths."[13] For Ricoeur, the sacred is "a surplus of signification: floating significans".[14] It is precisely the richness of the symbols and myths chosen by Tournier that allow us, as readers, to fuse our horizons in such a richly dialectical way. Therefore, the self may ascertain and realize the sacred that dwells within his own consciousness. Herein lies the potential salvation for not only the Jewish star Ephraim, but the postmodern consumer who has seemingly lost all ability to transgress the norms and to actively engage in the creative process triggered by such a richly symbolic narrative.

Through the supplementing of a third intentionality to the meaning of the symbol in a mythical construct, Tournier allows for the transformation of established meaning and more importantly allows for the active participation of the reader. In fact, this third order level evokes many of the trends of the postmodern as noted in previous chapters in that it is a mechanism which deconstructs established norms and systems. This third

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[13] Ricoeur, *the Symbolism of Evil,* 169.
[14] Ibid., 170.

order level is one dominated by playfulness and by a highly connotative participation of

the reader whom the symbolic, mythical story transforms according to their own psychic

processes. Above all, one of the defining characteristics of *le Roi des Aulnes* which

allows it to be described as postmodern is its narrative representation of the other at a

time in history in which the almighty meta-narrative of man's rationalism collapses: the

Second World War.

The Jew as Other: Postmodern Historicity

The Jew has long enjoyed the precarious position of otherness. When Christianity

attempted its conversion of pagan religion, it placed the Jew and their beliefs as

categorically outside the norms as defined by the Catholic Church and expressed in the

New Testament. Historicity has exerted an enormous influence on the Jewish people,

and the 20th century is certainly no exception. *Le Roi des Aulnes* does not explicitly

narrate the demise of the Jewish people, nonetheless the representation of the Holocaust

through the eyes of a Nazi sympathizer allows, in a postmodern way, for a view of the

plight of the Jews. It must be noted that the representation of the Holocaust and of the

Jewish people occurs on a highly symbolic level. Therefore when Tiffauges recounts, in

"les Pigeons du Rhin", the physical characteristics which make for the most desirable

pigeon, we may refer to the plight of Jew who were qualified in a similar way according

to their physical traits. Thus, this symbolic representation allows for a multiplicity of

interpretations according to the interpreter. Nonetheless, due to the archetypal makeup of

the figurative character of Ephraim, we may participate in his peril. This historical

setting, the Holocaust, is not only a defining moment for the Jewish people but for all of

humanity as well. As Lyotard observes, the Holocaust represents an occurrence which is inexpressible and marks the passage into a new era in which the ideologies of the Modern era collapse and dissolve into free play during which all established religions, even Judaism, are deconstructed.

The fate of the Jew in the post-Holocaust, postmodern era is illustrative of the historical impact of the Second World War in cultural and religious domains. In his work *Renewing the Covenant: A Theology for the Postmodern Jew*, Eugen B. Borowitz comments on the distinctly symbolic role played by the Holocaust: "Once Jews could confront the Holocaust in its own satanic fullness and see it as the terrifying symbol of humankind's demonic energies, they identified Western culture as an ethical fraud."[15] This realization of the fraudulence of modernity resulted from the symbolic destruction of the Jew by the West. From this results a profound skepticism toward the West and an intense pride in the State of Israel. For Borowitz: "Where Jewish modernity gloried in a heady universalism, postmodern Judaism manifests a resurgent particularism."[16] This 'particularism' is practiced by a non-Orthodox Jew who speaks of the sacred in that he attempts to capture the essence of religious aspirations and 'determining for ourselves just what aspects of Judaism we will accept and observe."[17]

Borowitz and other Jewish philosophers speak of a profoundly personalized religious interpretation, one which affords to the self a certain influence denied in Orthodox Judaism. Nonetheless, they speak of the immensely important role of the

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[15] Eugene B. Borowitz *Renewing the Covenant: A Theology for the Postmodern Jew* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1991),5.
[16] Ibid., 5.
[17] Ibid., 5.

Creator, God without whom we, the individual, would not exist. Yet, in a postmodern

spirituality, the individual may enter into a dialogue with God and may be a voice of

God's will. Indeed this is suggestive of Bataille's theories on atheology. This dialectical

relationship with God results in a personal activism not characteristic of established

religions, rather it is highly representative of postmodern theologies which exhibit

heterogeneous tendencies.

The Jewish plight during the Holocaust attests to many of the founding

philosophical theories such as the death of God proclaimed by Nietzsche as well as the

collapse of belief in Man's reason. Borowitz clearly seizes on the Holocaust as a

symbolic passage from the Modern to the Postmodern: "The Holocaust refuted

everything we had identified with modernity, so much so that, before the evidence of

what had occurred became incontrovertible, it was deemed not possible. Trusting human

progress as we did, we could give as little credence to the early reports of the mass

murder as the hindsight historians now can give to our blindness then."[18] This collapse in

the modern belief in human progress affected not only the Jew's cultural existence, but

the relationship between the Jew and God. It is helpful to explore this dynamic

relationship as it stands in the postmodern era just as it was to explore the postmodern

era's effects on Christianity in Chapter 3.

How the Jewish faith reacted to the horrors of Nazism proves to be indicative of

how many people grapple with religion today. The ideology of the supremacy of God

effectively collapsed in Nazi Germany. The Jews had to believe that God may not be as

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[18] Borowitz, *Renewing the Covenant*, 41.

powerful as previously believed and can only do so much in the face of such evil. This results from a belief in man's capacity to create evil. This existential freedom as elaborated on by Sartre and Nietzsche affords to man a central role in his own existence, a freedom which comes with a heavy price. Therefore, it is man's will to do such evil as perpetrated by the Nazis. That God be finite and limited announces a profound divide with the Modern belief in God's universality.

This personalization of Judaism mirrors the same process taking place in Christianity and in particular, echoes the postmodern trend towards the individualization of meta-narratives. Several postmodern theorists such as Julia Kriesteva and Jean-François Lyotard posit the Jew as the decentered, destabilized postmodern subject. As Vincent Brook notes in his work *You Should See Yourself: Jewish Identity in Postmodern American Culture*: "For Jean-François Lyotard in *Heidegger and 'the jews'*, the lowercase 'jews' signifies a resistance to 'domestication within the [Western obsession to dominate] or the unrepresentable."[19] This skepticism turns into radicalized denial in the cynical writings of Jean Baudrillard who refers to Auschwitz and Dachau as "a mythic reconstruction- a media reconstruction".[20] He continues: "the more we have pored over Nazism and the gas chambers in an effort to analyze those things, the less intelligible they have become, and we have in the end arrived quite logically at the improbable question: 'When it all comes down to it, did all those things really exist?"[21] Baudrillard's skepticism in the face of the overwhelming historical evidence voices a profoundly

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[19] Vincent Brook, *You Should See Yourself: Jewish Identity in Postmodern American Culture* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2006), 41.
[20] Jean Baudrillard, "Hunting Nazis and Losing Reality". *New Statesman* 115: 16.
[21] Ibid., 16.

disturbing nihilism and denies the Jews the truth of their suffering.

Tournier himself elaborates on the plight of the Jew in his *Vent Paraclet*. Many condemn Tournier for his fictitious rendering of the plight of the Jew in the Holocaust for in conveying such a symbolic representation, he denies the real suffering of so many. Pearl K. Bell observes in his *Sterile Diversion* that Tournier "with oddly Teutonic ardor for a Frenchman, is fascinated by the abstractly intellectual and formal ingenuity of his fictional house of mirrors than he is by the human implications of the characters and events so cleverly reflected here…Tournier deals with it and his victims as operatic metaphors only, not as the actualities of evil and slaughter that we know them to be." This interpretation is limited and denies the symbolic richness of Tournier's works which convey the horrors of the plight of the Jews in a non-trivial and powerful way.

Symbolism in the Postmodern Era

To fully understand the mythical transformation of many symbols in his works which are suggestive of the predominant traits of the postmodern such as playfulness and deconstruction, one must posit symbolism in postmodernism. Paul Ricoeur defines the symbol as "the movement of the primary meaning which makes us participate in the latent meaning and thus assimilates us to that which is symbolized without our being able to master the similitude intellectually."[22] The defining characteristic of a symbol is the way it expands on the signification of the literal meaning to the opaque, symbolic meaning in an endless process. The symbol evokes its meaning, which is to say that it

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[22] Ricoeur, *the Symbolism of Evil*, 18.

"presents its meaning transparently in an entirely different way than translation."[23]

It is precisely the symbols ability to refer to meanings and to give rise to thought that distinguishes it from the allegory. Ricoeur uses the definition of M.Pepin in his work *Mythe et allégorie* to define the allegory as: "in an allegory what is primarily signified- that is to say the literal meaning- is contingent, and what is signified secondarily, the symbolic meaning itself, is external enough to be directly accessible. Hence, there is a relation of translation between the two meanings; once the translation is made, the henceforth useless allegory can be dropped."[24] Therefore, the allegory seemingly translates its meaning whereas the symbol suggests its meaning in two intentionalities: literal and symbolic. It is in this perspective that we understand the Star of David to be a symbol due to its capacity to stimulate supplemental interpretations in the reader.

The distinction between the symbol and the allegory is one of profound importance for the postmodern era. During the Enlightenment the symbol was the favored mode of discourse for it presented a perfect union between the symbol and its referent, what it stood for. As Jan Jagodzinski points ou in his *Postmodern Dilemmas: Outrageous Essays in Art and Art Education*: "The symbol and what it stood for were one and the same thing…the signifier and its referent were not separated, unlike allegory which alluded to yet another referent."[25] The allegory, during this period of rationalization and cognition, was condemned for its inability to refer to a concrete truth.

During the transformation to the postmodern, it is precisely through the optic of

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[23] Ibid., 16.

[24] Ricoeur, *the Symbolism of Evil*, 16.

[25] Jan Jagodzinski, *Postmodern Dilemmas: Outrageous Essays in Art and Art Education* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1997), 104.

the symbol and the allegory's ability to refer to a meaning or truth that one may

understand the impact of deconstructive philosophies. As Jagodzinski remarks:

> Postmodernism has made the dichotomy between symbol and allegory
> dubious. Allegory, in its failure to close the gap between origin and its
> subsequent truth, i.e., in its failure to become a symbol, highlights the
> constructed truth of the symbol. Even with religious symbols, where one
> expects the immediacy of meaning that is presupposed by a metaphysical
> unity of the finite with the transcendent, the symbol always implies
> "more" than itself. Allegory and symbol are thereby deconstructed
> through this "remainder", this other nonrepresented level of reference.[26]

Postmodernism, through its persistent deconstruction of a sign's ability to create

reference, that is to say of favoring the 'text', effectively attacks the Modernist's belief in

the symbolic intent of a sign. Having lost the dream of progress achieved through Man's

reason, it would seem that the allegory, with its inability to re-create or give

representation to any reality, is the favored mode of expression in the postmodern era.

Postmodernism, which deconstructs the present through a re-representation of the past in

a new context, theoretically favors the allegory. The perfection of the symbol is

interpreted as yet another naïve, rationalistic failure of Modern Man. As Jagodzinski

summarizes: "Because its spirituality is vacant, a contemporary search for symbols seems

illusionary."[27] Yet this search is realized through Tournier's re-contextualizing of

symbol, a process which affords to the symbol a referential quality as we see in *le Roi des

Aulnes* as well as in *Vendredi.*

This question of the sign's ability to create meaning, be it the Star of David or the

character of Robinson Crusoe, may be perceived as a question of depth. The symbol,

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[26] Jagodzinskil, *Postmodern Dilemmas* 105.
[27] Ibid., 105.

through its creation of a literal and symbolic meaning enjoys a depth of signification in

that its ability to refer to a referent is endless. Tournier's restructuring of the sign system

through which the symbol creates meaning operates in such a way as to erase the depth,

the historical referent through a process of semantic deconstruction and pursuant

reconstruction. Recalling how Jameson explains the depthlessness of the text in the

postmodern: "What replaces these various depth models is for the most part a conception

of practices, discourses, and textual play… let it suffice for now to observe that here too

depth is replaced by surface, or by multiple surfaces."[28] Therefore, Tournier's ability to

semantically transform a symbol, such as the Star of David, from one enjoying a rich

historical context into one which functions on a highly individualized way resulting from

a multiplicity of meanings, is illustrative of the postmodern.

Tournier's mythical restructuring has been considered as a process of

textualization in that it increasingly eliminates the sign's ability to refer to a referent. Just

as Robinson Crusoe loses his ability to refer directly to the contemporary society in

which he functions, it would seem logical that the symbol's hermeneutic capacity finds

itself neutralized in the postmodern era. If a postmodern text is merely a textual play

without depth, then how may a symbol with an infinite capacity to create meaning be

treated as postmodern? Here we enter into the symbolic realm of Tournier in *le Roi des

Aulnes*.

Accepting *le Roi des Aulnes* to be a text is first and foremost. Indeed, it does not

refer to a concrete historical referent, and its structure has been deconstructed through

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[28] Jameson., 12.

Tournier's rewriting of the myths through which the symbols are narrated.   Yet this deconstruction and ensuing reconstruction takes place on yet another level of signification, a third order of simulation as defined by Baudrillard. It is precisely on this third order that the symbols in the novel function hermeneutically. The symbol itself takes over the structure of the narrative and in this study of *le Roi des Aulnes*, the symbol of the Star of David serves as the symbolic frame for the narrative structure. The meaning exists in a closed vacuum, in a structure which simulates the mythical, second order level. The particularities of this third order have been duly noted by Plato, who warns against entering into the shadows of the third order. Yet, in Tournier's writings we enter perhaps cautiously into this level of signification which attempts to represent the worst in humanity. Rather than exploring the mythical context of several key myths such as Saint Christopher or the Ogre, Tournier combines their symbolic qualities to create an entirely independent textual level of representation.

What is unique to Tournier's writings is his ability to draw the reader in hermeneutically, through an engaging dialectic spurred by the reworking of many of the founding beliefs of our world. Good and evil, life and death, war and peace are inverted and reworked symbolically and through the stimulation of our imaginations, we the reader are challenged and re-awoken. As John Wall points out in his book *Paul Ricoeur and the Poetics of the Possible*: "Metaphors and narratives share with symbols the potentiality for the self's creation of new meaning."[29] Indeed, Ricoeur's hermeneutics which emphasize the essential role played by the self in the interpretive process, offers a

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[29] John Wall. *Paul Ricoeur and the Poetics of Possibility* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 33.

remedy to the postmodern cynicism in the face of a text's ability to crate meaning.

Instead of there being one concrete referent, as believed by Modernity, postmodernism,

which favors a parodic playfulness, seems to allow for the referent to be a dynamic

medium furnished by the reader. Rather than orienting its referentiality to the Second

World War, Tournier allows for the narrating of our self experience in the face of such

atrocities. Indeed, Tiffauges' journey is itself a deconstructive process, resulting in his

annihilation in order that re-creation may take place of a new self. We concurrently

explore the social historicity as well as the immediacy of our present due to fact that we

engage in a narration of our own creation. This creative capacity, so nullified by our

postmodern world which favors consumerism, finds itself challenged and upturned.

Yet, it is through a deconstructive process that this is attained and therefore may

be characterized as postmodern. The symbol, in such a context, plays a crucial role in

that it requires and necessitates some level of interpretation as John Wall states so

eloquently: "Symbols are not complete in themselves but realize their meaning only in

sofar as they contribute to the project of the will's ongoing formation of its own meaning

in the world."[30] Indeed, Tournier's structuring of *le Roi des Aulnes* around the symbol of

the Star of David speaks to the profoundly primordial aspects of our existence and

demands of us an active participation which modern texts denies. We may now enter into

this symbolic level of representation which is the Star of David.

The Symbol of the Star of David

Using inversion, a technique he uses so frequently, Tournier places the

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[30] Wall, 32.

predominant symbol in the last sentence of the entire novel. As the narrator comments:

"Quand il leva pour la dernière fois la tête vers Ephraim, il ne vit qu'une étoile d'or à six

branches qui tournait lentement dans le ciel."[31] This concluding passage marks the

symbolic beginning of another journey upon which we embark, a symbolic and spiritual

journey in which we take an active role. From the proclamation of Tiffauges: "Tout est

signe!"[32], we begin to interpret the novel in a highly symbolic level. As David Platten

comments, a symbolic interpretation illuminates the hidden meaning of the narrative:

> 'Tout est signe!' he exclaims, and indeed everything is; Nestor's
> gyroscope, the Rhineland pigeons, the deer droppings that fascinate
> Goring, the are all physical signs, jealous guardians of some innate
> essence…We readers follow in the wake of Tiffauge's attempting to
> decipher the signs, as he follows the wake of his own "ogrish"
> prophesying.[33]

The section that follows attempts to enlargen the symbolic interpretation to

include a highly structural perspective, one created around the Star of David. In *le Roi*

des Aulnes, the Star of David represents all the cosmic elements of the universe: fire,

water, dry, moist, cold and hot. This study will reveal the structural relationships that

exist between each of the six chapters and the different elements of the universe as

embodied by the Star of David.

Many critics have commented on the unique structure of the novel and have

attributed diverse theories to its meaning. According to Susan Petit, the inherent

structure of the novel is centered around Tournier's name and that he, effectively uses: "

the letters of his own name to inspire eight different fugal themes, each

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[31] Tournier, *le Roi des Aulnes*, 581.
[32] Ibid,, 15.
[33] David Platten, "Nazism in le Roi des Aulnes" *Romanic Review*, 84 (1993):184.

> beginning with a letter of the name TOURNIER. *Tiffauges*, the protagonist. *The Ogre*, the archetype which haunts Tiffagues, *The Unhold*, an elk representing Germany. *Rominten*, Goring's hunting lodge. *The Napola*, a military school. *Inversion*, the reversal of appearances. *Ephraim*, the Jewish child. *The Roi des Aulnes* himself [34]

According to Petit, the two sources which constitute the intrigue are the legend of Saint Christopher, as previously discussed in Chapter 1, and 'hérésie nestorienne' or Nestor's heresy. Together these two mythical models contribute to Tiffauge's journey a monstruous and perverse legacy.

David Gascoigne himself recognizes the Star of David as a symbol around which the novel is structured, yet his study does not penetrate the symbolic identity of each chapter. As he explains in his work: Michel Tournier:

> The novel thus implicitly presents itself as a narrative replica of the star, its six parts like the six points of the star which, if you follow them round, bring you back in some sense to the starting point. It aspires, like the star, to illuminate the blackness of its setting, in the darkest period of European history.[35]

Therefore, as affirmed by Gascoigne, a study which concentrates on the narrative structure of the novel as well as the Aristotelian elements which comprise the symbolic identity of each chapter will enhance the reader's interpretation of the novel.

Since Tournier uses myth frequently in his works, this study of *le Roi des Aulnes* will look at the Star of David as representative of the common dilemmas inherent to humanity, in particular during the Second World War in which the worst of humanity dominates. The horrific extermination of the Jew takes on the prominent position of the

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[34] Susan Petit, "Fugal Structure, Nestorianism, and St. Christopher in Michel Tournier's *le Roi des Aulnes*" *Novel*, 19 (1986): 233-45.

[35] David Gascoigne, *Michel Tournier* (Oxford: Oxford International Publishers Ltd, 1996), 8.

'other' in this work in that the Jew voices that which is expelled from society during this historical period. Another fundamental dilemma represented through the use of the Star of David is the presence of evil inherent to each and every one of us.   The cosmic elements incarnated by this symbol speak of the universality of that which it represents: the presence of evil.

The Star of David enjoys a long history of mythical meanings. Its history is long and complex and different societies have interpreted it in different ways. The Star of David and *le Roi des Aulnes* combine to create an intriguing narrative undertaking some of the defining moments in our contemporary history, and to be more precise, the very moment in which the meta-narratives dominating the modern society dissolve and break down, just as man's reason does. Above all, Nazism attests to the rationalization of that which is irrational: war and murder. As this meta-narrative collapses, and the belief in man's reason is jeopardized, we witness the dissolution of such an all encompassing ideology. The Star of David in the narrative context of Tournier' *le Roi des Aulnes* represents this collapse and through a profound study of its many symbolic attributes we cannot resist recognizing the harmony which exists between its form and its multiple significations.

The signification of the Star of David as a symbol transgresses many boundaries to include religious, cultural and spiritual. It is necessary to understand the role each of these significations exerts on the narrative and how ultimately this symbol became so important to the Jewish people as to be placed on the flag of Israel.

The Star of David, has several names such as the Seal of Salomon or the Magen

David. As Gunther Plaut states in his work: *How the Six-pointed Star Became and*

Emblem for the Jewish People:

> 'Magen David" (its Hebrew Name) was originally an interreligious and
> magical sign, but later became the Jewish symbol as we nowadays know
> it. The expressions "Magen David" or "Shield of David" has been know
> since the fourteenth century, the more popular expression, "Star of
> David", has probably been used since the nineteenth century. King
> Solomon commanded the world of spirits and demons by the dint of him
> magic ring which was said to have been inscribed with a hexagram which
> was often referred to as the Seal of Solomon.[36]

The Star of David is created by the intersection of two triangles and contains the

four elements of the universe: fire, earth, water and air. These elements are

representative of Greek cosmology. Since Pythagorus, the Greeks recognized the

combination of the four original substances of the cosmos: fire and dryness create hot,

water is moist and cold, earth is dry and cold, and air is hot and moist. The Star of David

represents the marriage of opposing forces, the harmonizing of polarized elements.

Tiffauges himself oscillates between the opposing forces which lie within and as such,

the Star of David is a profoundly appropriate symbolic medium through which mans'

inner conflicts may be ascertained. Other interpretations of the Star of David consider

the two triangles as the union between the masculine and the feminine. Once again, such

an interpretation illuminates Tournier's writings in that he frequently treats the myth of

androgyny in his narratives.

In the fourteenth century, the hexagram was not a uniquely Jewish symbol, as

Gunther Plaut confirms: "Jews would sometimes connect such charms with legends of

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[36] Gunther Plaut, *How the Six-pointed Star became an Emblem for the Jewish People* (Washington, DC:
B'nai Books, 1991), 29.

Solomon and the power of David, which is to say that the hexagram was well known to Jews but had in no way become for them or for anyone else a specifically Jewish sign."[37] The primary function of this geometric form was to protect places and people from evil presences. Different societies believed that unknown forces were created by geometric forms. As a geometric figure, this hexagram constituted of two triangles, its sides are of equal length and one may trace a circle in joigning the six points of the Star. This unique attribute speaks of the universality of this symbol. Within it lie all the elements of the universe and thus of man as well.

We may trace the origin of the hexagram to the third century B.C. in Egypt and in Palestine. Plaut comments on the signification of the hexagram at this time: "In Egypt, the two triangles which create the hexagram were not linked, but separately they had distinct meanings. The delta with its point upward represented fire and/or an angry god; with its point downward N it meant water and/or a gracious god. In sum, for the Jews the symbol spoke of God, of hope and of divine protection."[38] In the 10th century, the hexagram was considered to be a mystical symbol. The mystics searched for a spiritual communion between themselves, the universe and God. At this time, mysticism was an important phenomenon, in particular in the religious life of the Jews.

The perfect form of the hexagram attracted the mystics who privileged such geometric perfection contained in the circle, equilateral triangles and the hexagram which combined the two. Those who practiced mysticism and Kabbalah desired to show that: "The universe was accessible to human mastery if one but had the proper key, the proper

[37] Plaut, 30.
[38] Ibid., 10.

formula, the proper sign and above all, if one knew the secret name of God."[39] This

enigmatic characteristic of the symbol of the hexagram echoes the hidden symbolic

meaning in the narrative of *le Roi des Aulnes*. Throughout its long history, the hexagram

consistently symbolizes the incarnation of all the elements of the universe which combine

in different ways. Thus fire and water, air and earth, moist and dry, hot and cold combine

with each other to create life and as such are the macrocosm as well as the microcosm.

Indeed, the monstrosity of Tiffauges is seemingly neutralized by his Jewish star Ephraim.

This protective aspect plays an important role in the history of the hexagram. The

Star had the ability to protect individuals. People in different centuries used the

hexagram to protect the dead and pregnant women as Plaut notes: "in some instances the

hexagram was placed on sarcophagi and other funerary objects because it was thought

that it protects the dead." [40] That the hexagram protects the mortal from external forces

suggests a transcendental quality, that is to say that the hexagram symbolizes a union

between man and the cosmos in which we live as well as the world which awaits us after

death as Gerbern Oegema notes: "For the late antique period we may even conclude that

both the pentagram and the hexagram were magical and astronomical signs symbolizing

the human beings' dependence on another world, ie the world above, beyond or after, the

world in which we live."[41]

Tiffauges himself describes his cosmic origin in the first pages of his "Ecrits

Sinistres". Not only does this posit Tiffauges as a mythical being in that he narrates the

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[39] Plaut, 29.
[40] Ibid., 55.
[41] Gerbern Oegema,*The history of the Shield of David* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1996), 101.

beginning of our universe but also as a supernatural or cosmic force: "Or moi, j'étais là

déjà, il y a mille ans, il y a cent mille ans. Quand la terre n'était qu'une boule de feu

tournoyant dans un ciel d'hélium, l'âme qui la faisait flamber, qui la faisait tourner,

c'était la mienne. Et d'ailleurs l'antiquité vertigineuse de mes origines suffit à expliquer

mon pouvoir surnaturel."[42] As such, Tiffauges simultaneously symbolizes the elements

of our cosmos as well as those which give life to each one of us. When Tiffauges claims

to be the creator of the universe, to be the spirit of the world, he claims to be a demiurge.

Considering the Star of David to be a symbol which likewise evokes supernatural forces,

we may see the appropriateness of this hexagram to signify Tiffagues and in particular his

journey in *le Roi des Aulnes*. Indeed, the hexagram historically served as protection

during celestial voyages, as Oegema notes:

> The five and six pointed stars are often found on portable objects, seals,
> jars, bowls, amulets, pottery, as if the sign or symbol were to be easily
> transportable or able to be taken on travels or a longer journey, during
> which the person wearing the hexagram needed protection against evil
> powers on his way. Even in the case of tombstones, where the rosette is
> frequently found, one could think of a journey, namely to another world,
> where the "traveler" could also meet evil powers or demons.[43]

The voyage is an essential theme in *le Roi des Aulnes*, in the sense of a physical journey

as well as a spiritual one, of which *la phorie* is indicative. Christopher the voyager

searched for someone who would guide him onto the right path in his journeys. Tiffauges

journeys from France to Germany and embarks a spiritual as well as physical path during

which he discovers the limits of his own personality amidst the unknown places of Nazi

Germany. Searching for *la phorie*, he finds his own salvation in the Star of David

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[42] Tournier, *le Roi des Aulnes*, 4.
[43] Oegema, 88.

represented by Ephraim, the Jewish boy. We the readers partake in this journey with

Tiffauges and explore the darkest parts of our own beings, so that at the end of the novel

we find ourselves in a new mental space.

Jewish mysticism emphasizes the hexagrams ability to protect the voyager. In

Jewish mysticism, referred to as Hikhalot which was active from the 3rd to the 6th

centuries B.C., seals protected mystics during their travels. The seal allowed the mystics

to pass from stations protected by celestial guardians: "the mystic is protected by the seal

during his celestial ascension. Along his path, he encounters not only helpful angels but

hostile ones as well…in the two cases, the spirit needs a permit to continue his journey

without danger: a magic seal which makes the demons and hostile angels flee."[44]

Tiffauges' journey into the heart of Nazi Germany is marked by the presence of helpful

and dangerous spirits and it is the Star of David which will protect the most vulnerable:

the Jew.

Obviously the Star of David does not protect Tiffauges himself during his

journey, for not being a Jew, he does not wear the symbol. Rather, it is Ephraim, the

Jewish boy as well as the other Jews who were forced to wear this symbol. In the context

of the Second World War, the Star of David's ability to protect those who wore it fails.

Quite the contrary, for the Star of David marked imminent death. As such, this symbol

suffers an "inversion maligne," a narrative technique so frequently used by Tournier.

Abel Tiffauges' name is itself the product of a malignant inversion for Abel in the

Bible is suggestive of the good nomad, yet Tiffauges seems to have more in common

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[44] Oegema, 59.

with Cain. Cain, the brother who commits the first murder in the garden of evil, is a

sedentary. Condemned to wander from the Garden of Eden after murdering his brother

Abel, Cain becomes a nomad as a result of his crime. This is true for Tiffauges as well.

Accused of abusing a young girl, Tiffauges is exiled from France to a labor camp in

Germany. This crime affords him the liberty he has yearned for and through this voyage

he will attain his true identity as *porteur d'enfants*. Through this malignant inversion of

Cain and Abel, Tournier presents human nature as cruel and damned to a future of

conflict, murder and war. This prediction is particularly true during WWII. The sections

that follow will explore this journey as presented in the six unique chapters symbolized

by the combination of the four elements of the universe by the Star of David.

Cold: "Ecrits Sinistres"

In the first chapter of *le Roi des Aulnes*, "les Ecrits Sinistres", we the reader enter

into the realm of the underworld which contains numerous symbols of the cold. Symbols

such as the monster, Hades, the Ogre are present which represent the transformation of

the individual. Above all, it is winter which is most suggestive of the cold. On a

symbolic level, we find many similarities between the cold and winter of which three

aspects take on particular importance: winter as a symbol of the realm of the dead, the

cold as a symbol of regeneration and finally, the cold as symbol of Hades. Indeed, Hades

is a realm where the cold of winter is the only season. Hades is defined as: "an invisible

place, eternally lost in the shadows and the cold, haunted by monsters and demons which

torment the damned."[45] Hades exists underground far from the warmth of the sun and the

cold reigns there permanently. It is precisely the symbolic connotations of the cold that

represents Hades, there where the suffering souls dwell. Hades is likewise defined as a

place of "metamorphoses, passage from death to life."[46]

This notion of transformation, of a metamorphoses, which takes place in Hades is

of profound importance for the first chapter, "les Ecrits Sinistres" for it is in these

writings that Tiffauges transforms into *porteur d'enfants*. He transforms in that he learns

to write with his left hand, thus realizing a new side of his personality. He becomes the

sinister Tiffauges, as he so justly names his writings. We witness the germination of his

identity and in particular of his monstrosity which will lead him into the world of the

Nazis which itself may be described as the realm of the dead.

The concept of the monster itself implies a transformation or of a regeneration, as

defined in the following way: "they swallow the old individual, so that the new individual

may be born. The world which monsters guard and of which they are the gateway, is not

the external world of fabulous treasure, but the interior world of the spirit, in which we

can only be entered after an inner transformation." [47] For Tiffauges, this interior

transformation is triggered by his realization that he may express himself with his left

hand and that in these writings his monstrous alter-ego finds a voice. We the reader

ascertain the dichotomy which is at the heart of Tiffauges: man and monster, good and

evil, St. Christopher and the *porteur d'enfants*.

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[45] Chevalier and Gheerbrandt, 405.
[46] Ibid, 405.
[47] Ibid., 491.

The symbolism of the left itself explains the relationship between his use of the left hand to reveal his sinister writings. As we know from New Testament and medieval iconography, after the Last Judgment, the damned are placed on the left of Christ the judge and it is hell which awaits them. To the right of the supreme judge are placed the saved, those who will continue on into an eternal life and paradise. We find once more an emphasis on good and evil which is at the core of the monster Tiffauges.

Furthermore, the androgynous itself symbolizes the struggle between left and right. In the Old Testament, Adam is the original androgyne for he is at once male and female. The characteristics of Adam the androgynous are described in the following way:

> The left side was the female side, and the right, the male. Being female, the left, in accordance with deep-seated prejudice, was nocturnal and satanic as well, while the right was diurnal and divine. Thus the sign of the cross was made with the left hand at Black Masses and the Devil marked the children consecrate to him 'on the left eyelid with one of his horns'.[48]

This conception of the feminine as evil and sinister is present in Tiffauges' "Ecrits Sinistres" when he describes the importance Rachel plays in his life: " J'ai perdu Rachel. C'était ma femme. Non pas mon épouse devant Dieu et les hommes, mais la femme de ma vie, je veux dire sans emphase aucune L'être féminin de mon univers personnel.[49]"

Evoking not only the femininity of her presence, Tiffauges continues to elaborate on the more troubling, negative characteristics of her physicality: "je lui trouvai en effet un air de loup, avec ses sourcils noirs, son nez aux narines retroussées et sa grande

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[48] Chevalier and Gheerbrandt, 370.
[49] Tournier, *le Roi des Aulnes*, 20.

bouche avide."[50] Rachel being compared to a wolf reminds us that the wolf is in fact

"one of the animals of the Apocalypse"[51] who reigns over the realm of the dead.

Tiffauges himself explores the nature of the monster: "Et d'abord, qu'est-ce qu'un

monstre?"[52] We may find Tournier's response in his article: "Comment j'ai construit *le*

Roi des Aulnes" in which he speaks of the universal characteristics of the monster, of the

propensity in each man to commit evil, to which Nazism is a testament. As Tournier

comments himself:

> Alors évidemment, dès le début, j'ai souligné les côtés monstrueux du
> personnage, mais ces côtés sont petitement monstrueux, je veux dire qu'il
> serait facile, à chacun de nous, d'en trouver l'équivalent en lui-même ou
> chez les autres.[53]

Therefore, everyman is a little monstrous. This propensity to be sinister expresses itself

symbolically through the use of diverse metaphors of the element of cold. After all, "the

underworld is also the domain of the monster."[54] Yet Tiffauges is not merely a monster,

but an Ogre. As Rachel exclaims: "Tu n'es pas un amant, tu es un ogre."[55] Her

proclamation recalls to Tiffauges the person whose monstrous characteristics triggered in

him his own propensity for evil, his boyhood friend, Nestor:

> Ô saisons, ô chateaux! En prononçant cette simple phrase, Rachel a fait
> surgir le fantôme d'un enfant monstrueux, d'une précocité effrayante,
> d'une puérilité déconcertante dont le souvenir prend possession de moi
> avec une impérieuse souveraineté. Nestor. Ma nouvelle écriture sinistre et
> le départ de Rachel m'avertissent d'une prochaine restauration de sa

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[50] Tournier, *le Roi des Aulnes*, 20.
[51] Chevalier and Gheerbrandt, 21.
[52] Tournier, *le Roi des Aulnes*, 22.
[53] Tournier, *Comment*, 4.
[54] Chevalier and Gheerbrandt, 645.
[55] Tournier, *le Roi des Aulnes*, 22.

puissance.[56]

This monstrosity controls Tiffauges' spirit for even after his death, Nestor exerts an enormous influence on his personality. In her article "The Fatal Temptation of the Image: Specular Fascination in Tournier's *le Roi des Aulnes*," Karen Levy emphasizes the influence by Nestor upon Tiffauge's monstrous evolution: "Tiffauges appropriates the image of his childhood school companion, the long dead "giant baby" Nestor, and eventually that of the funeral mask of the Erl-King, enacting the apocalyptic dramas he associates with them."[57]

This apocalyptic characteristic likewise is suggestive of the monster for the geneology of the work monstre in French is derived from : *dé-montrer* or to reveal. Tiffauges' monstrosity is revealed by his friend Nestor. Tiffauges' transformation to his new monstrous self is of a distinct nature, for his desire for young children transforms him into an Ogre. The ogre is a type of monster which shares its symbolism:

> The ogre is attached to the symbolic of the monster, swallower and fire-eater, place of metamorphoses, from where the victim emerges transformed. The idea of the ogre, in the perspective of Crono and of the monster, joins the traditional myth of time and of death.[58]

Above all, the Ogre consumes the warm flesh of children. During the progression of his journey, Tiffauges' transformation takes on an ogrish affinity as evidenced by his proclamation: "J'aime la viande, j'aime le sang, j'aime la chair!"[59] Tournier himself characterizes Tiffauges as an ogre:

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[56] Tournier, *le Roi des Aulnes*, 22.
[57] Karen D. Levy. "The Fatal Temptation of the Image: Specular Fascination in Tournier's le Roi des Aulnes". *The International Fiction Review*. 19(1991): 76-89.
[58] Chevalier et Gheerbrant, 693.
[59] Tournier, *le Roi des Aulnes*, 112.

> Cet Abel Tiffauges, j'ai trouvé un nom pour definir sa pseudo-
> monstruosité, c'est un Ogre…je crois qu'il serait facile de trouver en
> chacun de nous des traits, des traces d'un complex qu'on pourrait appeler
> le complexe de l'Ogre; par exemple l'obsession que nous avons tous de la
> fraîcheur..C'est cette obsession de fraîcheur qui lui fait manger de grandes
> quantités de viande crue, le fameux bifteck tartare puis pour boire
> beaucoup de lait.[60]

For David Platten, the ogre is "inherently harmful to human society." He speaks of the

image of the ogre that Tournier attempts to draw in *le Roi des aulnes*:

> If Tournier is at pains to stress the physical characteristics and behavioral
> traits of his Ogre-the enormous stature, the under-developed penis, a
> voracious appetite for fresh meat, and, most significantly, the sensitive,
> bearing hands-it is not merely done so that we will recognize Tiffauges'
> fellow travelers for what they are; these characteristics are emphasized
> because they are symbolic.[61]

Platten reinforces the symbolic qualities as the most important in the narrative which

allows for the mythical narrative to retain a profound importance. The ogre evokes the

influences of several myths which are essential to its understanding. The first influence

is derived from *le Petit Poucet* from which Tournier borrows the mythology of the ogre,

as he states: "Je reviens à mon personnage d'Abel Tiffauges. Là nous sommes au

troisième étage, l'étage de la mythologie…j'ai creusé la personnalité de l'Ogre, la

mythologie de l'Ogre. Bien entendu j'ai relu le Petit Poucet, et j'ai vu que l'ogre

mangeait des enfants, de préférence des petits garçons."[62]

Yet another influence on the mythological heritage of the ogre comes from Lewis

Carroll. Tournier inspires himself from his writings, yet he inverts certain traits.

Tournier speaks of this inversion in the following manner: "C'était le contraire de Lewis

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[60] Tourenier, "Comment," 81.
[61] David Platten, 188.
[62] Tournier, "Comment", 84.

Carroll qui avait une grande passion pour les petites filles..et un jour, il eut cette phrase absolument admirable que je me suis dépêché de reprendre en la retournant: "J'adore les enfants, à l'exception des petits garçons."[63] Tournier seizes this mythical model and inverts it. Whereas Carroll's ogre has a pension for girls, Tournier's ogre favors young boys, adapting him to his role in Nazi Germany as he who steals young boys to join Hitler's Jungmannen. Tournier explicitly speaks of the ogrish affinities of Nazis for young boys in the following manner:

> Il fallait que je trouve dans l'Allemagne nazie également le côté ogre. Toute la recherche que j'ai accomplie sur l'Allemagne nazie a consisté à souligner ce qui pouvait y avoir d'ogre…ce goût d'une chair blonde, ce goût des yeux bleus, cette obsession…d'une certain odeur. Et je retrouve 'l'odeur de la chair fraîche' de l'ogre car parmi les pires raciologues S.S., il y en avait qui prétendait pouvoir reconnaître la race d'un homme les yeux fermés à son odeur, et notamment reconnaître l'odeur d'un juif.[64]

Therefore the symbolism of the element cold represented by the ogre and the monster signifies on an individual, diachronic axis as well as on a collective, synchronic one. Together, these transformative symbols through which the sinister metamorphoses of Tiffauges express themselves, constitute the realm of the underworld: Nazi Germany. In the following chapter, les Pigeons du Rhin, we will follow Tiffauges' transformation to the next level in which the symbol of fire dominates, which evokes the purification so desired by the Nazis.

Fire: "Les Pigeons du Rhin"

"Les Pigeons du Rhin" creates a symbolic identity which corresponds to the element of fire on the Star of David. It is in this chapter that we find a striking parallel

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[63] Tournier, *le Roi des Aulnes,* 84.
[64] Ibid., 82.

between the Jews and the pigeons. Tournier uses the pigeon as a symbolic medium to

represent the persecution of the Jews by the Nazis. On several occasions during this

chapter, there are descriptions of the treatment of the pigeons which parallel the treatment

of the Jews by the Nazis in their quest for extermination. The Nazis considered the Jews

as weak and inferior, nomads without belief or law, and therefore their entire race should

be eliminated. Nazi scientists classified and qualified the bodies of Jews according to the

color of their hair, their eyes, their skin pigment, the formation of their cranium, all of

their physical traits, to determine whether or not the individual was in fact a Jew and

should be exterminated. The entire goal of the Nazi ideology was to eliminate this

inferior race, and the means through which they attained this purification was through the

use of fire and burning the bodies after they had been stripped of all valuables. Tiffauges

himself elaborates on this:

> La pureté est l'inversion maligne de l'innocence…La pureté est l'horreur
> de la vie, haine de l'homme, passion morbide du néant. L'homme
> chevauché par le démon de la pureté sème la ruine et la mort autour de lui.
> Purification religieuse, épuration politique, sauvegarde de la pureté de la
> race, nombreuses sont les variations sur ce thème atroce, mais toutes
> débouchent avec monotonie sur des crimes sans nombre dont l'instrument
> privilégié est le feu, symbole de pureté et symbole de l'enfer.[65]

Fire purifies. The chapter contains numerous examples of fire's ability to purify the

impure, to destroy the evil to create good. In the case of Tiffauges, this purification is

inverted and that which is good is destroyed in the ultimate creation of evil as perpetrated

by the Nazis. Karen Levy speaks of the importance of purity in the transformation of

Tiffauges: "By examining the different forms of purety in the text and the different

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[65] Tournier, *le Roi des Aulnes*, 161.

crescending contexts in which they appear we shall be able to … grasp more fully the implications of his (Tiffauges') descent into the hell of the Nazi terror." Levy, like Tournier, links purification to fire since through the process of burning something, all that is evil is burned to ash. Burning is the means through which the Nazis destroyed the corpses of the Jews in their efforts to purify the human race. Tournier represents symbolically this purification through the microcosm of the pigeons used to deliver messages during the War. Tiffauges and his fellow captives classify the pigeons according to their physical traits: "le pigeon militaire…doit avoir la tête aux muscles ciliaires vifs et sensible, au regard franc et dur, chez le male…un cou ben plumé, un sternum solide, des ailes solidement attachées aux épaules.."[66] The words "bonne race" strongly evoke the Nazis' classification of Jews and through the act of burning them they effectively purify the human race.

It is important to note that Nazism was not only the product of an individual, Adolf Hitler, but of a collectivity as well. As David Platten points out: "*le Roi des Aulnes* forces us to face the pessimistic reality that what we know now and remember as fascism, or Nazism, is not the product of external historical circumstances, with all the reassuring distancing and unburdening of individual responsibility that this diagnosis implies, but the mobilization, in thought, of something which may form part of the human condition."[67] That this racist discrimination is rooted in the human condition itself implies a certain spirituality inherent to Nazi ideology. This spirituality is echoed in the symbolism of fire:

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[66] Tournier, *le Roi des Aulnes*., 219.
[67] David Platten, "Nazism in le Roi des aulnes", 188.

> Flames rising skywards depict impulses towards spiritualization. In its developing form, the intellect is subservient to the spirit. But the flame may flicker and thus fire may come to symbolize the intellect oblivious of the spirit…the fire which smokes and devours symbolizes an imagination inflamed..the subconscious..the hole in the ground..hell-fire..intellect in rebellion, in short, all forms of psychic regression.[68]

Nazism effectively attests to the complete destruction of the intellect by hidden, darker forces of the subconscious. The regression to such brutal acts is not explicable by man's rationality, rather the dichotomy between man's intellect and his spirit may explain fire's capacity to explain the purification undertaken by the Nazis.

Yet another aspect of the pigeon symbolizes fire. Religious elements exert an enormous influence on the novel and in this chapter colored by fire, the pigeon takes on a new connotation. In the New Testament, the Holy Spirit presents itself in the form of a dove, a bird quite similar to the pigeon. In particular, the dove and the pigeon share symbolic meanings which further suggest fire. The dove arrives amidst the apostles in the form of the tongues of fire. The Holy Spirit is the third divine force who represents to man God's eternal love. Perhaps Tournier offers an optimistic view by suggesting that through fire, God may reaffirm his presence, or perhaps the presence of the spirit of the Jews who were burned. Nietzsche himself comments on the incarnation of the soul in the flame in the following way: "This flame is mine own soul, insatiable for new distances, Speeding upwards upward its silent heat."[69]

Numerous are the number of Jews whose bodies were burned. Fire was the chosen means through which the Nazis attempted to wipe Jews from the face of the earth.

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[68] Chevalier and Gheerbrant, 382
[69] Nietzsche, *The Anti-Christ*, 280.

All that was left of their bodies was the gold in their teeth and their bones. By using the symbol of fire to convey this horrific reality, Tournier succeeds in expressing a historical referent which is inherently inexpressible. We now follow Tiffauges' journey from the fires of "les Pigeons du Rhin" to the far north, to the Hyperborean which represents his personal utopia.

Water: "Hyperborean"

The third chapter of the novel is represented by the element water on the Star of David. The title of the chapter "Hyperborean" has its roots in Greek mythology. It is a utopia, a land enshrouded in mystery and magic, a land where our dreams are realized. Water, in this chapter, functions as a source of life. For Tiffauges, this journey to the north, to a prisoner camp, gives him a new life, that of the *porteur d'enfants*. Tiffauges paradoxically attains his personal freedom and his new identity in his captivity.

Hyperborean is situated in the north: "Nord, dans l'extreme nord, plus loin que le pays d'ou souffle Borée, au-delà du vent du nord."[70] There exist several similarities between the symbolism of water and the land of the Hyperborean. The most obvious is water as a source of life. If water is essential for life, on a symbolic level it is "un centre de régénerescence."[71] The symbolic identity of this chapter evokes water in many ways. Tiffauges journeys to the north to the prisoner camp and it is there that he may find a new life, one which he believes to be pure.

Germany is not only pure to Tiffauges but "le pays des essences pures."[72] For

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[70] Tournier, *le Roi des Aulnes*, 280.
[71] Chevalier and Gheerbrant, 374.
[72] Tournier, *le Roi des Aulnes*, 281.

Karen Levy, Germany " after a new snowfall stretches out immaculate in front of

Tiffauges, presenting an image of the world which is as clear, as reassuring and as eternal

as that which Barthes' myth consumers gaze upon."[73] Tiffauges speaks of his sentiments

upon leaving France in the following way: "Il avait laissé derrière lui comme vêtements

souillés, comme chaussures éculées, Paris et la France"[74] Adjectives such as "dirty", and

"just ended" contribute to the idea of cleansing of Tiffauges which will lead to a

regeneration. He wants to cleanse himself, a function clearly performed by water. Here

in the camp he begins a new life through a baptism: "C'était une nouvelle étape dans

l'étrange évolution libératrice qui se poursuivait au sein de sa captivité."[75] Here too, the

symbolism of water represents this transformation: "Water represents the infinity of

possibilities, to submerge oneself in water to emerge without dissolving oneself

completely, except by a symbolic death, it is a return to the source, to obtain a new

force."[76] Tournier describes the land in the far north as "terre noire qui était gorgée

d'eau."[77]

Even the work undertaken by Tiffauges evokes the symbolism of water.

Tiffauges is responsible for digging trenches, "une vaste entreprise de drainage des

champs situés en bordure d'Angerapp."[78] Tiffauges runs the water from the earth. He

expels the water in order to dry the earth so that the water may flow more easily through

canals. We may interpret this action symbolically. In flowing water from the earth,

[73] Karen Levy, 82.
[74] Tournier, *le Roi des Aulnes*, 249.
[75] Ibid., 271.
[76] Chevalier and Gheerbrant, 374.
[77] Tournier, *le Roi des Aulnes*, 256.
[78] Ibid., 256.

Tiffagues absorbs the vitality of the earth and in so doing is purified and transformed, in a

sense baptized. Water's capacity to cleanse and to purify is duly noted in the following

definition of the symbolic of water: "it possesses by itself a purifiying value and for this

reason is considered sacred…By its virtue, water erases all infractions and all stains.

Alone, water of the baptism washes away sins and allows access to anew state: that of a

new person."[79]

Indeed, in Germany Tiffauges becomes a new man. In this prisoner camp, in his

own inverted Hyperborean, Tiffagues becomes *le roi des aulnes*. Mark Facknitz believes

that in Germany, Tiffagues embarks upon a quest of a highly symbolic nature:

> The low region of eastern Prussia where, under the Hyperborean sky, Abel
> Tiffauges expects to make sense of the signs that have swaremed about
> him as he followed the straight line of his destin yon a course east by
> north-east from Paris…the order he presupposed is revealed as a
> construction of his own desire, deleterious and deceitful, one that
> implicates him in the Holocaust.[80]

The North represents "the evil that takes hold to the north of Satan, as principle of

seduction, the principle of evil comes from the north. The north is the place of

infortune."[81] The Bible describes the North in a similar way. In Jeremiah 1:14 we read :

"Then the LORD said unto me, Out of the north an evil shall break forth upon all the

inhabitants of the land."[82] Embarking to the North, Tiffauges enters into a land doomed

to evil and the waters in which he purifies himself will not lead to salvation, rather to his

own personal damnation. In *le Roi des Aulnes*, the Hyperborean suffers a malignant

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[79] Chevalier and Gheerbrant, 382.
[80] Mark Facknitz, "Fascism, Phoria and the Symbolic Destiny of Abel Tiffauges", *The Journal of Narrative Technique* 22 (Spring 1992): 107.
[81] Chevalier and Gheerbrant, 679.
[82] *The Bible: Authorized King James Version* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 827.

inversion and its inhabitants still offer the possibility of self-realization yet for Tiffauges, it is a far more sinister self.

Moist: "The Ogre of Rominten"

Remembering the symbolic structuring of the Star of David, there are two triangles one of which is the 'Fire'triangle which is cut by the base of the 'Water' triangle. It is this water triangle that symbolizes earth and in fact the land far north in the Hyperborean as we have just seen. Now we enter into the symbolic world of the fourth chapter of the novel, "the Ogre of Rominten", in which the element moist is represented. Moist is one of the points on the Star of David and when it combines with cold creates water, as defined by Chevalier and Gheerbrants: "Fire combines hot and dry: Water, moist and cold."[83] Having already explored the symbolic of water in the chapter "Hyperborean" and cold in "Ecrits Sinistres," we may see how these elements recombine in the chapter which describes many of the hunting scenes of the Nazis. Together, the symbols of the chapter evoke moist in that they combine images of monsters and of purification to represent the hunting escapades of the Nazis, in which Tiffagues plays an important role.

The entire chapter takes place in a fertile environment, juxtaposed with the cruelty of the hunt. The intitial sentences of the chapter evoke the impending risk to the purity of nature, which evokes the purety of water: "Ainsi évitait-on autant que possible de violer la pureté de la nature en introduisant des engins motorisés dans l'enceinte de

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[83] Chevalier and Gheerbrant, 930.

Rominten."[84] The wholesomeness of nature is emphasized as existing in a womb-like environment, the womb being after all the primordial place where life exists entirely submerged in water. Throughout the chapter we witness the defamation of nature, of that which creates life through the use of water. Rominten itself is a nature reserve created by Hermann Goring. He constructed two hunting pavilions where the Nazi elite may enjoy the chase and killing of the animals that dwelled there.

Tiffauges' intital task is to lure the savage pigs of the reserve to a space where he may kill them for they posed a risk to the hunting escapades of the Nazis. Ironically, Tiffauges is ordered to destroy horses and use their cadavers as bait. The horse, this "animal phorique par excellence,"[85] now will be the prey. As he remarks himself: "Tiffauges ressentit comme une épreuve cruelle, mais sans doute chargée de signification- et donc bénéfique- ces opérations d'abattage où on lui imposait le rôle de tueur."[86] It is in the womb of the woods, in the wetness of nature's privacy that Tiffauges commits the murderous acts as ordered by his Nazi superiors.

In the numerous descriptions of the hunts in the woods of Rominten, many symbols evoking the combination of water and cold are present. The woods themselves constitute the environment in which the majority of the descriptions take place. Tiffauges describes the numerous herds of animals which move majestically through the trees: "Sur la droite, trottant à vive allure au milieu des troncs ébranchés des grands sapins, accourait un troupeau de bêtes énormes, noires, velues comme des ours, bossues comme des

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[84] Tournier, *le Roi des Aulnes*, 305.
[85] Ibid., 312.
[86] Ibid., 311.

bisons."[87] This evocation of nature of its maternal role conveys the symbolisms of moist

or wetness which creates life.

Yet, this maternal beauty of nature is severly violated and inverted in this chapter

for the Nazis treat nature with all the animals that dwell within it with extreme and

murderous contempt. It is for this reason that we may compare the woods of Rominten

as a hell on earth, one in which every living is threatened. Above all, the animal

preferred by the Nazis is the stag. Symbol of the physical perfection that their reign of

purification seeks to create, the stag was the most desired hunting prey for the Nazis and

in particular of Goring. The Nazis, in a typical fashion, embrace a scientific method in

their hunting. Tiffauges recounts the scientific methodology of a German professor

named Otto Essig who in his doctoral dissertation on the symbolism of the old and new

Germany, defines the different formulae for measuring the antlers of the stag. This

measuring is illustrative of the Nazi's attempts to quantify scientifically the Jew,

resorting to a similar system of classification in order to define them. Tiffauges

comments on the joy of the Nazi hunters in using this classification:

> Connaissant désormais le sens phallaphorique des bois de cerf, Tiffauges
> s'émerveillait de cette arithmétique qui apportait précision et subtilité dans
> un domaine aussi secret. Les chasseurs, ayant tiré chacun de leur gousset
> un mètre à ruban…échangeaient des bois de mue et des massacres en se
> lançant des chiffres à la tête, rappelaient les mensurations fantastiques de
> tel ou tel cerf fameux."[88]

This wooded context in which the hunts take place reveal the racial purification

engendered by Nazism while at the same time eliciting their monstrous capacity to

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[87] Tournier, *le Roi des Aulnes*, 314.
[88] Ibid., 336.

annihilate and murder even the most respected and adored animal.

It is in this symbolic perspective that this chapter functions, as revelatory of the transformation of Tiffauges for amidst his hunting escapades he discovers his own beast of choice, his horse Barbe-Bleue upon whom he will carry countless young boys to the castle of Rominten in the following chapter. The symbols of transformation and of the monstrosity of the Nazi's hunts combine with the purifying qualities of water which once again are seen through a parallel with an animal: the stag. Water's capacity to purify is inverted malignantly in this chapter and take on a more ogrish form. The Nazi's use of scientific methodologies allowed for precise calculating and defining of the physicality of an animal, be it a Jew or a stag. Together, these elements, water and cold combine to symbolize the transformation of Tiffauges during these hunting escapades and attempt to reveal the bestiality of the Nazis and of Tiffauges as well.

Hot: "The Ogre of Kaltenborn"

The fifth chapter of the novel, "The Ogre of Kaltenborn," is symbolized by the element of heat on the Star of David. Heat above all symbolizes the sexual libido which is particularly ablaze in this chapter during which Tiffauges spends much time in intimate presence with his Jungmannen. As Chevalier and Gheerbrant observe, Jung himself links the libido with the symbolism of hot: "Jung makes of it a symbol of the libido. Heat matures, biologically and spiritually. The heat of fire transfers itself best in the body."[89] Indeed, Jung's work: "Psychology of the Unconscious, A Study of the Transformations and Symbolisms of the Libido" evoke the numerous parallels between the libido and

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[89] Chevalier and Gheerbrant, 203.

element of heat. He defines the libido in the following way: "Sun and fire—that is to say, the fructifying strength and heat—are attributes of the libido."[90] Above all, Jung emphasizes the dangerous nature of the libido, and evokes the image of a wild boar in heat whose rage threatens due to his sexual prowess. He emphasizes the primitive nature of the libido and in Tiffauges, this drive directs itself towards the innocence of pre-pubescent boys.

Along the journey of Tiffagues, we the reader observe his obsession for young boys, after all his mythical heritage condemns him to this. As the Erl-king, he who rapts a young boy from the arms of his father while riding a steed, Tiffauges himself takes his place upon his steed aptly named Barbe-bleue and commences with his own rapture. For him, this rapture of the child elicits in him a phoria, which is a leitmotiv in the novel and symbolizes his libidinal urges.

This chapter contains several passages and images which are particularly erotic and render Tiffauges' sexual energy quite palpable. The most provocative example of his sexual desire for young boys is contained in the following passage:

> Pendant que j'achève ces notes, il attend docilement, en station hanchée, posé sur sa jambe gauche, vivante et fragile colonne, la cuisse droite, molle et inerte, faisant opposition. Sexe piriforme, le gland et les testicules sont réunis en trois masses à peu près égales par un réseau de plis qui convergent vers l'étroit pédoncule soudé au pubis. Je lève la tête, et il me sourit.[91]

From the very beginning of the novel we are aware of Tiffauges' attraction for young children. We have to remember that it is after having been convicted of sexually abusing

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[90] Carl Jung, *Psychology of the Unconscious: A Study of the Transofrmations and Symbolism of the Libido*, 105.

[91] Tournier, *le Roi des Aulnes*, 485.

a young girl that Tiffauges is emprisoned. But Tournier refrains from recounting graphic incidents of sexuality, rather he expresses symbolically this desire. Nonetheless, the vocabulary of this passage is particularly graphic. Words like "testicules", "pear shaped sex", "right thigh," evoke a man fascinated by the sexuality of young boys. Tiffauges frequently speaks of the euphoria he experiences in the presence of young boys as a state of ecstacy, which he describes as "la phorie". According to William Cloonan, this *phorie* represents symbolically Tiffauges' affinity for young boys which remains elusively described by Tournier: "Tiffauges is tempted by little boys. Yet what he seeks is not sexual gratification. He wants instead, *la phorie*, which is the experience of the emotional satisfaction that comes from carrying a child on his shoulder. *La phorie* is as innocent as it is bizarre. Nowhere in the novel does Abel molest a child, but he does seek and achieve a type of fulfillment that falls outside the established categories of homosexual and heterosexual love."[92]

Indeed, this transgressive nature of Tiffauges' *phorie* is one which surpasses the boundaries of established sexual dogma. In so doing, Tournier once again challenges such established preconceptions of sexuality and attempts to evoke its individual nature:

> C'est son affaire à lui, la phorie;…La phorie vous la retrouvez dans Saint-Christophe, Christo Phorus, le porteur d'enfants, celui qui accomplit la phorie du Christ. …Si vous réunissez toute l'imagerie de ce roman et si vous cherchez à dégager ce qu'il peut y avoir de commun pour tous les hommes, je voudrais qu'on comprenne que la phorie, un concept qui peut paraître fou, est aussi dans le cœur de chacun de nous. La phorie c'est l'ambiguité de l'amour.[93]

For Tiffauges, this ambiguity of love is directed towards young boys and in fact has its

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[92] Cloonan, 22.
[93] Tournier, "Comment," 87.

roots in Tiffauge's own childhood. Nestor, Tiffauges' boyhood friend, once carried the

young Tiffauges on his shoulder. In so doing, Tiffauges experiences such extreme

satisfaction that he begins to connotate love with the act of lifting up on ones' shoulders.

According to Maria Marosvari, this initial *phorie* experienced by Tiffauges on the

shoulders of Nestor is mirrored by Tiffauges' last act of lifting a child upon his shoulder

when he collapses under the weight of Ephraïm in the bog: "Les circonstances de cette

première phorie sont exactement les mêmes qu'aux dernières pages du roman, où

Tiffauges, ayant perdu ses lunettes porte l'enfant juif sur ses épaules pour se perdre avec

lui dans le marécage."[94]

It is precisely the libido of Tiffauges which is triggered by his ecstacy or *phorie.*

This evokes his monstruosity and indeed, his ogrish propensities. As he comments: "Tous

ces enfants bouillent dans un chaudron géant avant d'être mangés, mais je m'y suis jeté

par amour, et je cuis avec eux."[95]   This exerpt quite clearly expresses Tiffauges' desire

as ogrish and is consistently expressed throughout this chapter.

The element heat on the Star of David also symbolizes regeneration and re-birth.

Tiffauges' role at Kaltenborn, as the Ogre of Kaltenborn, is one which allows him the

realization of the inner desires that have haunted him throughout his journey. His desire

for children, in particular young boys, combined with his symbolic heritage of he who

carries the child, culminate in a new life in Nazi Germany with his Jungmannen.

Tiffauges' comments himself: "[ses] mains sont faites pour porter, justement, pour

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[94] Maria Marosvari. "Le personnage Tournierien en quête de son double", *Acta Litteraria Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae 32* (1990): 111.

[95] Tournier, *le Roi des Aulnes*, 516.

soulever, pour emporter."[96]

Nazi ideology based itself in large part on this notion of a re-birth of the Germanic people into a purer race. Tiffauges himself notes this role in Nazism: "L'hitlérisme est réfractaire à toute idée de progrès, de création, de découverte et d'invention d'un avenir vierge. Sa vertu n'est pas de rupture, mais de restauration: culte de la race, des ancêtres, du sang, des morts, de la terre…"[97] Therefore, Tiffauges identifies and sympathizes with this transformative drive of Nazism and in it finds his destiny as he who lifts children above his shoulders in a loving and sinister embrace.

That Tiffauges incarnate symbolically many of the core beliefs of Nazi ideology is duly noted. Tiffauges' constant struggle between good and evil, between Der Erlkonig and Saint Christopher, demonstrates one of the core meanings of the libido which according to Jung is its capacity to harmonize these opposing forces. Using the symbol of the Sun, Jung stresses the libido's ability to scorch as well as giving life through its heat and that likewise, in the interiority of man, the libido has the propensity to destroy and to create life: "That is to say, that driving strength of our own soul which we call libido, and whose nature it is to allow the useful and injurious, the good and the bad to proceed."[98] Crumbling under the weight of the last young boy to be lifted upon his shoulders, Tiffauges' self-sacrifice is one which ultimately allows for the salvation of his soul in aiding the Jewish star Ephraim.

Dry: "Astrophore"

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[96] Tournier, *le Roi des Aulnes,* 504.
[97] Ibid., 413.
[98] Jung, *Psychology of the Unconscious*, 128.

The final chapter of the novel, "Astrophore", is symbolized by the element of dry on the Star of David. The symbolic definition of dry describes a space in time during which one's spirit is distanced from God. As Chevalier and Gheerbrant comment: "Dryness designates in mystical theology a phase of tests, during which the spirit no longer feels its God, no longer experiences an uplifiting, no longer conceives any idea: neither light, neither heat, neither touch, no sign of the presence of God. It is the test of the desert, of the end of life where faith itself seems to dry up."[99]

The last sentences of this chapter offer to us a vision of not only Tiffauges' isolated world, but of the entire Western world. The graphic and catastrophic nature of the descriptions offers us a representation of the Apocalypse, an idea linked to death, to the Final Judgment and final Redemption. The Apocalypse itself is the final book of the New Testament and it conveys the end of the world and of the coming of Christ for his final judgment. The term Apocalypse means "revelation" and this revelatory quality reveals Tiffauges' ultimate destiny.

The imagery of the final pages which recount the Soviet invasion and destruction of Kaltenborn mimic several Biblical symbols in particular the crucifixion of Christ himself. One of Tiffauges' final moments describes his discovery of the impaled trio of the twins Haoi and Haro and Lothar : "Ils étaient là tous les trois, Haio, Haro et Lothar, les deux jumeaux roux encadrant en compagnons fidèles l'enfant aux cheveux blancs, percés d'oméga en alpha, les yeux grands ouverts sur le néant, et la pointe des épées

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[99] Chevalier and Gheerbrant, 856.

faisait à chacun d'eux une blessure différente."[100]

      This crucifixion is suggestive of a second coming, not of Christ but rather, of a new destiny for Tiffauges which prolongs his destiny as porteur-d'enfants yet no longer for an evil end. Tiffauges' attempts to save Ephraim by carrying him on his shoulder open his eyes to the evils of Nazism and of the importance of the innocence of youth. It is in this sense that the apocalyptic end of Kaltenborn reveals to Tiffauges his own salvation in his final moments. As Chevalier and Gheerbrant remind us: "The Apocalypse is above all revelation, carrying on mysterious realities: then a prophecy, for these realities are those to come, at last a vision, of which the scenes and numbers are all symbols…Once it describes a vision, the visionary translates into symbols the ideas that God suggested to him."[101] Ironically, Tiffauges becomes the visionary, in that he will see that which is most essential to him which is that which he has coveted and destroyed throughout his journey: youth. Fleeing the Soviet invasion, Tiffauges loses his glasses following an explosion and pleads to Ephraim upon his shoulders for help: "Ephraïm, dit Tiffauges, je n'ai plus mes lunettes. Je ne vois plus rien. Guide-moi! -Ce n'est rien, Cheval d'Israël, je vais te prendre par les oreilles, et te guider."[102] It seems in his final moments Tiffauges sees the hand of God yet it is enraged and crushes the horrific scene: "Ephraim, je vois un poing fermé dans le ciel noir. Il se serre, et il en sourd des gouttes de sang."[103]

      Thus Tiffauges claims his destiny as he who carries the child upon his shoulders.

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[100] Tournier, *le Roi des Aulnes*, 577.
[101] Chevalier and Gheerbrant, 857.
[102] Tournier, *le Roi des Aulnes,* 578.
[103] Ibid., 578.

The very title of the chapter is illustrative of this act for the term astrophore means he who carries a star. "Astros" is derived from Greek and means star. "Phore", as in la phorie, is Greek as well and means to carry. Combined they convey the symbolic transformation of Tiffauges into he who carries the star. The astrophore symbolizes the innocent Jewish boy Ephraim who wears upon his shirt the Star of David which is the final image of Tiffauges' life: "Quand il leva pour la dernière fois la tête vers Ephraïm, il ne vit qu'une étoile d'or à six branches qui tournait lentement dans le ciel noir."[104]

During this quest, this symbolic dryness, far from God's favor, Tiffauges finds his own personal salvation through the realization of his drive for euphoria. From Saint Christopher, he who carried Christ, then to the malignant inversion into Le Roi des Aulnes, he who carries away children, we arrive at Tiffauges the Savior of the Star of David. We witness the harmonization of the opposing forces of the cosmos which dwell simultaneously in each individual. Through Tiffauges' symbolic journey we arrive at a personal level of resolution to the problematic Nazism offered to all of humanity which is that of personal accountability. In is in this sense that the symbolic of the term astrophore is enlightening for light symbolizes knowledge and enlightenment. Ephraim the astrophore is he who awakens Tiffauges' to the evils of Nazism and to the atrocities they commit.

This symbol of the Star of David is a perfect symbol which represents the universe and lasts for eternity. Therefore all of the cosmic elements, fire and water, wet and dry, hot and cold combine amongst themselves and form the elements of our

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[104] Tournier, *le Roi des Aulnes*, 581.

universe. The Star symbolizes the macrocosm as well as the microcosm as we see through the narrative of Tiffauges which, through an individual voice, expresses the anguish of all humanity in the face of the horrors of WWII. It is as defined by Alain Gheerbrants: "the marriage of opposites and an expression of oneness of the cosmos at the same time as its complexity."[105] This study emphasizes the interiority of Abel but it also emphasizes the structural fidelity to this integral symbol: the Star of David. This symbolic structure functions as a natural bond between the human spirit and the world corrupted by man. When this harmony between man's nature and our world is upset, as it is in the case of war, then there are profound repercussions.

The chapters of the novel narrate the evolution of Tiffauges, his progression to his apocalyptic end, with which we actively participate. It is this hermeneutical activity that Tournier creates through the use of symbolism. Thanks to the literary act of *le Roi des Aulnes*, we become conscious of the powerful truth of our human condition. Josette Wisman comments on this truth in her article "Une lecture Hermeneutique du *Roi des Aulnes*": "la vérité littéraire triomphe, comme le remarquait Flaubert, car elle donne une représentation de la réalité plus durable et plus forte."[106] It is the representation of the evil which exists in each man that is represented, that which allowed the horrors of the Nazis to take place. Wisman continues to claim that : "*le Roi des Aulnes* essaie d'expliquer, pour un public averti et sous le couvert d'un personnage fictive, comment beaucoup ont vu et vécu la deuxième guerre mondiale..Un des buts de Tournier était de montrer que beaucoup ont été complices du nazisme sans souvent s'en être rendu

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[105] Gheerbrants and Chevalier, 930.
[106] Josette Wisman, "Une Lecture Hermeneutique *du Roi des Aulnes*." *Romanic Review* 80 (1989): 597.

compte."[107]

Indeed, it is not only the role of the individual that the narrative of Tiffauges puts in crisis, but the very interiority of the individual: the propensities, the euphoria, the libido which exists at the core of every individual. The context and means to express and to evoke these unconscious areas are through the use of the symbol as David Platten confirms by stating that this is the "nature and function of the symbol."[108] Tiffauges initial proclamation that "Tout est signe!, emphasizes the importance of symbolism in the narrative structure and according to Michael J. West, it is " a questioning of the limits of introspection during historical moments as complex and dangerous as those experienced during wartime."[109] That this particular war demarcates the entry into a new era is profoundly important, for with the collapse of rationalism to which Tiffauges' journey attests, we step into the postmodern space in which the interiority of the individual is prey to new afflictions. Yet, above all, that which the novel *le Roi des Aulnes* reveals is the power of the symbol to elicit the dormant unconscious of the reader. The hermeneutic interpretative process is renewed and in fact gains new strength in our postmodern world.

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[107] Wisman, 605.
[108] Platten, 185.
[109] Michael J. West "Cannibalism and Anorexia, or Feast and Famine in French Occupation Narrative." *Visions of War: World War II in Popular Literature and Culture.* (Bowling Green: Popular, 1992) 198.

CONCLUSION

As we have seen in the final chapter and throughout the course of this study, Tournier's mythical reworking stimulates the creative activity inherent to the literary process. Literature's ability to arouse man to create or re-create himself and to ascertain his rapport with the society around him is profoundly transformed by Tournier's reworking of the founding elements of our collective existence. The very nature of man's psychic processes upon which his texts exert an enormous influence have been overwhelmingly distorted by the numerous technological advancements commonplace in the postmodern era. The information society resulting from the technological revolution of the 1960's and 1970's is one which defines a new theory of society which radically undermines the social dynamics of our world. The relationship between individuals, the distribution of information, the simulation, all contribute to a new ideological and historical context which impacts the literary process as well as the critical faculties of the individual.

The automatization of the human mind which results from the substitution of software for human intelligence extends its reach far into the darkest parts of our intellectual and psychic existence. To the question posed by literature, "What is reality?" responds the blinking cursor on the screen of the global symbolic network dominating our existence. The repetitive nature of mass-media such as the television, the internet and the radio contribute to the blunt force trauma suffered in the postmodern era. Through Facebook or Myspace, media attempts to demassify or to allow the individual to express

their personalization. Yet this individualization is a trickery for it functions in a new,

abstract, simulated spatio-temporal level which is not rooted in a grounded empirical

reality. Instead of affirming one's individuality, the person ironically loses his capacity

to question and to challenge the technological imposition which stifles his critical

faculties.

Tournier's ability to infiltrate the fading consciousness of the individual is

achieved through his appeal of the archetypal makeup of our mind. Products of societal

evolutions, the individuals of the postmodern may exist in a distinct temporal setting, yet

we have psychic memories extending far beyond the boundaries of the postmodern

limitations. Such mythical attributes voicing the archetypal, founding stories of our

existence are adapted to the current milieu which lends to them their transgressive and

sacred characteristics.

Through a complex simulation of established mythical predecessors, Tournier re-

contextualizes the essential elements of the myth which accentuate myth's transformative

capacities and concentrate them into an intensely symbolic third order level of

representation. Having defined myth as "un système particulier en ceci qu'il s'édifie à

partir d'une chaine sémiologique qui existe avant lui, c'est un système sémiologique

second"[545] by Barthes, we have seen in the previous chapters Tournier's ability to

supplement an additional signifying system which functions in a simulative capacity, one

which ingests and subsequently rebirths established myths. Baudrillard's theories of

simulation and of simulacrum describe this third order as: "no longer the order of the real,

[545] Barthes, *Mythologies*, 187.

but of the hyperreal."[546] Indeed, the third order, through its re-representation or

simulation of the second order, extends beyond reality and is in fact a hyper-reality. Such

is the nature of our postmodern existence in which the founding ideologies of the modern

era are re-interpreted, re-represented and all that remains is a phantom doubling, or

simulacrum.

Tournier undertakes this representational simulation on a narrative level. His

semantic restructuring of core mythemes simulate their second order mythical models

and result in the creation of a textualization of the work in which playfulness and a

multiplicity of meanings results. Inherent to this process and the element which saves it

from the representational demise forewarned by Plato, is the phenomenological dialectic

as described by Gadamer and others which allow for the imagination of the reader to play

a profoundly important role. In the place of the transcendence promised by the modern

work, stands the immanence of our existence in the postmodern text. Instead of the

salvation offered by Christiantiy stands the individual's act of scripting his own life-story

which constitutes a critical re-working of God's creation. This transgression of

established societal, philosophical and literary boundaries performed by Tournier

undermines the legitimizing forces of the modern meta-narratives and re-establishes the

communicational activity essential to social existence as described by Lyotard. Through

the questioning, the dialoguing of Tournier's representation of founding, primordial

narratives, we become the creators of our own myths and as such, offer to the postmodern

subject a "lucidity of the tragedy" which has befallen man after the collapse of modern

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[546] Baudrillard, *Simulacre et Simulation*, 117.

rationalistic discourses as described by Jean-Michel Heimonet in the following way:

"Pourtant elle correspond à un changement qui a déjà eu lieu dans le monde, l'apparition

et le maintien en l'homme de la double exigence, métaphysique/critique, qui, mieux que

tout savoir prétendu positif, le garde contre la barbarie."[547]

Indeed, the critical faculties stifled by rationalism ironically contributed to the

very collapse of modern ideologies and led to the profound isolation of the human spirit

who seeks comfort in the technological simulation of reality rather than in the empiric,

positive interaction with other humans. The dangers of this simulation cannot be

undersestimated, as Joseph Rychlak describes, "There is an ill wind chilling American

consciousness today, stemming from a deep concern over the steady decline of decency

in personal character and social relations."[548] Such a critical deprivation may be reversed

by the very means through which we explore our existence: narrative. In the face of

Tournier's radical, heterogeneous, blasphemous mythical transformations we are

stimulated rather than simulated, we transgress and we overcome the limitations of our

existence and become that which Nietzsche referred to as the Over-man and therefore

through our imaginative processes the life that we script passes far beyond what we ever

imagined possible.

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[547] Jean-Michel Heimonet, *De la Révolte à l'Exercice: Essair sur l'hédonisme contemporain*, (Alabama: Summa Publications, 1990), 248.

[548] Joseph F. Rychlak, *The Human Image in Postmodern America* (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2003), xi.

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