Traumatic Dreams: Lacanian Love, Kubrick's *Eyes Wide Shut*, and the Ancient Greek Novel, or, Gliding in Phantasmagoric Chains of Metonymy

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I. Introduction

During Greg Nagy's last visit to Basel, we had an intense discussion about adolescence and the work of psychologist Carol Gilligan, who has made great strides toward giving a voice to young women.[1] On this occasion I realized that I had not yet told him in detail about the progress of my current book on the ancient novel, entitled *Youth in Fiction*, which deals, among other topics, with love and the crisis of coming of age. Immediately we had arrived at another common interest. Since we share already interests in theory as well as metonymy,[2] and as he is a movie enthusiast and expert, I wish to tie these subjects together in a varied bouquet and offer it as a modest birthday present to a dear intellectual friend and wonderful colleague.

I would like to focus on how art expresses the overwhelming feeling of love in Lacanian terms. The excessive erotic sensation, the crisis of awakening sexuality, and the difficulty coping with anxieties are transferred in gliding movements of, for example, speech, narrative, and fantasy. The sliding tropes —metaphors and metonymies—express a fundamental disconnectedness and therefore revolve around sex itself in ongoing variations based on an erotic poetics. Love as quintessential lack and decentering intrusion, which strives for an unreachable union, is projected onto the symbolic level of the unconscious—onto sound, language, and images. In imaginary scenarios and dream-like phantasms we are screened from the unbearable reality of hazardous encounters with others and given the opportunity to work through that reality by way of even more tremendous nightmares.[3]

In a paper from 2003 I ventured for the first time to associate the ancient novel with dream and Lacanian psychoanalysis,[4] and at its presentation at Harvard in 2004, David Elmer, one of the editors of the present volume, mentioned to me a filmic parallel in Stanley Kubrick's *Eyes Wide Shut*, which has repeatedly been given a Lacanian reading.[5] Just as psychoanalytic insights from Sigmund Freud to Jacques Lacan are essential for Kubrick, they also feed into my considerations on the ancient novel.[6] In what follows I will attempt to demonstrate that *Eyes Wide Shut* and the ancient ideal romances are comparable, meeting in their common focus on love.

Despite the intellectual attraction it initially provoked, *Eyes Wide Shut*, as far as I know, has never been associated with Greek erotic fiction, which flourished between the first and the third centuries CE. As so many years have passed since 2003/4, I wish to compare both media through the lenses of my current approach.[7] I am well aware of the anachronism that the ancient novel could certainly not be concerned with philosophical or psychoanalytic reflections on the subjects that were valid in specific circles of twentieth-century Paris. However, it is perfectly legitimate to draw on Lacan to understand love, which is constitutive of the genre. With this in mind, some of the essential features of the Greek love novel that encountered so much criticism,[8] particularly in the case of Xenophon of Ephesus, find an explanation in the nature of love itself.[9]

II. The Ancient Love Novel and *Youth in Fiction*

Based on anthropology as well as psychoanalysis, my approach could be summarized as a cultural close reading. The analysis highlights the erotic poetics of the love novel and applies modern theory with the aim of creating accessibility also for readers of modern fiction. As a starting point I will begin with the nature of love and the anthropological fact that adolescents undergo a deep crisis, ideas that help to explain the two main aspects of the genre: love and adventure. I intend to show that the ideal love novel, as well as its more satirical forms, deals with the troubled and difficult phase of puberty, acting it out in fictional and dream-like realms.

Young girls and boys are the protagonists in this genre; they experience love at first sight and discover their sexuality. Their stories involve long journeys through the vast Greco-Roman world, attacks by robbers who eventually fall in love with them, separations, shipwrecks, and continuous threats to their chastity and fidelity, which are constantly put to the test. They are confronted with various horrendous situations, even death, though it inevitably turns out not to have happened (*Scheintod*). The stories finally culminate in a happy ending where the lovers are reunited and a wedding at home is often celebrated, notwithstanding those novels where the dramatic adventures start shortly after a honeymoon.

In the Greek conception, *Eros* has to do with lack. We never love what we can easily obtain, but yearn for what is achieved only through effort. Thus love always implies—to quote Roland Barthes—a “discourse of absence.”[10] In this discourse longing is the desire (ὄρεξις) for the beautiful and pleasant. Anne Carson emphasizes that everyone who yearns after something does so in and through his imagination (φαντασία). The act of recalling the past or the anticipation of events in the future helps to close the gap of desire and grant the wish of satisfaction (Aristotle *Rhetoric* 1370a14–1370b29).[11] Every lover struggles for fulfillment, but suffers because the goal can never really be reached. The Tantalus situation is kept at bay by fantasies of a complete union, which materializes in the novel’s happy ending. However, marriage is not a viable solution; it defers sexuality only into the symbolic order of society. On the other hand, the ideals of faithfulness and chastity are not only a reflection of new concepts in the history of sexuality, developing in parallel to Christian ideas.[12] They can also be read as an expression of a typical idealization of the Woman, just as in courtly love, and are thus representative of a deficient relation between both sexes, since women pursue a different, not-whole ‘sexuation’ in melancholic or non-faithful phantasms.[13]

The lovers transfer their lack into speech and eventually also into writing.[14] Departing from Sappho, Carson suggests that the novel pursues *in extenso* the lyric strategy of “triangulation” – both partners, due to their god-like beauty, are attracted by third parties who threaten the faithfulness or union of the ideal couple. The ongoing alternation of intruding potential sex partners illustrates the fundamental gap and intersubjective floating of love, in Lacanian terms. Novelists use their literary imagination to transform these erotic circumstances from lyric into narrative. The fictional prose about love and adventure is thus composed in evolving chains of textualization according to the principles of metaphor and metonymy.[15]

Space, the realm of the Other where journeys and adventures take place, is hence a ‘tropological’ manifestation of love, which is constituted by a typical lack. Desire is projected onto a spatial axis as a series of threats, and it is transferred on the level of narration onto episodes of robbery, sacrifice, violence, death, slavery, shipwreck, and fire. Therefore, the adventures of the Greek novel are neither supplementary nor a means of providing a dull genre with action; rather, they are constitutive of the sliding erotic discourse of absence, lack, loss, and triangulation.[16]

I suggest that all ancient novelists shaped their stories with regard to the critical biographical threshold of puberty and marriage, which was ritually acted out in ancient Greece as a special turning point in life, a *rite de passage*. The fictional texts mirror this liminal experience, as well as the circumstance of excessive love before reunion. In a kind of dream sequence, on the level of an oral and/or folklore structure, the suppressed fears and passions are set into action. This scenario forms a deep, anthropological subtext that applies also to the more refined romances. It goes without saying that many authors try to disguise this underlying layer, elevating the sexual and corporeal elements by enriching them with new cultural codes. Most important are sublimations into allegory, philosophy, mystery cults, and religion. In later and more sophisticated novels, such as those of Longus, Heliodorus, and even Apuleius, this trend is evident, and in further novel-like textual productions, i.e. the so-called fringe novels, desire can also be presented as curiosity, lust after knowledge, justice, piety, or mystery-like wisdom.

On the other hand, strategies of elevation are part of the idealization of a perfect union, which is projected

onto the divine and which reflects the difficulty of a real sexual relation. According to Lacan, there is no such relation, and desire is rather only “the Other’s desire.”[17] In this vein, the mysteries—which for a long time have served as the deeper background for critics like Reinhold Merkelbach or Karl Kerényi, and which some novelists, in particular Achilles Tatius, notoriously equate with the sexual act[18] —become the typically unspeakable kernel of love that is located in the Other. This idealization, following Lacan, is characteristic of female love. Thus love in the novel can be seen as primarily female, as the excessive *jouissance* of the unfathomable, and even the young men are feminized in their passion. That said, the phallic love of men presents female partners as an endless chain of projected *objects petit a*, a relation that is bound to fail because they are illusory and thus elude their pursuers. This sort of male love is part of the strategy of triangulation—each partner is basically the beloved ideal that cannot be attained.[19]

Exaggerated allegorical readings—like that of Merkelbach, who pleads for novels to be seen as mystery texts—are bound to be frustrated from the very beginning. However, even if we acknowledge that many novels enrich their stories by presenting initiations into mystery cults, it is nevertheless a mistake to reduce them to texts only understandable for the initiated. Instead, I would suggest an interpretation that revolves around the ‘initiation’ of youths, on their imaginary experience of coming of age, and on the mysteries’ link with the abyssal state of love. The underlying theme of a *rite de passage* in the novels seems obvious, though it has only been associated with the novel within the last few years.[20] The tripartite pattern of action detected by Arnold van Gennep (separation, liminality, reintegration) forms the basis of almost all stories.[21] In the love novel, it becomes self-evident: boys and girls act in their years of adolescence, and the goal—the *telos*—of their initiation story is marriage. The excessive experience of first love, as well as any intense sexual relation which involves desire, is so overwhelming that they fall into an abyss of nightmares, which are all linked to gliding chains of erotic metonymies. From the phantasms they reenter into the framing story. Thus the novelistic plot takes place practically entirely in the liminal, which conveys the transition into the symbolic, or the Other. Therefore, I would argue that the novels are less stories of identity than stories of excessive erotic sentiment, entailing an ambiguous floating in chains of tropes.[22]

Moreover, even marriage is a dramatic transition, especially for the young girl. In order to understand its psychological impact we have to rid ourselves of modern conceptions of romantic love and the glitters of the Hollywood wedding. In traditional societies, such as in antiquity, marriage was a threatening experience full of uncertainties; the girl was forced to leave her parents’ home and move into a new one where the promise of her care and security would have been unforeseeable. Furthermore, the upcoming defloration indicated a drastic change that involved danger and anxieties. In short, the step towards the wedding or first sexual contact had considerable consequences for the girl’s (and boy’s) body and psyche. The transition meant a stage of crisis full of anxiety; in order to cope with it, the crisis was ritually acted out and thus deepened. In almost all cultures marriage is associated not only with joy, but with death, mourning, and loss.[23] This is the material with which the novel is concerned.

To some extent, the Greek novels are the modern myths of a new imperial age, comparable to contemporary romantic films. I believe that such myths in their basic function are not very different from folktales or other forms of popular traditional stories. Ancient novels often have to do with dreams or nightmares, and they often resort to the fantastic and miraculous. Myth and ritual typically generate the material of the ancient novel—both the ideal Greek novel of love and adventure and the more parodic and satirical Latin novel.[24] Both are associated with the imaginary and the unrealistic. Consequently, the dividing line between the ideal and the satirical novel is much more blurred than is usually assumed. Even in ideal Greek novels we find breaches of the norm, ironic twists, and comic perspectives.

According to Margaret Alexiou, myth and ritual, defined in such broad terms and with the same real life preoccupations, underlie the oral forms of folktale and popular stories as well.[25] With the dominance of literacy, oral and performative elements of myth and ritual do not disappear, as is commonly believed, but are transformed and live on. In the novel they have, as Alexiou contends, the same functions of acting out, playing with, affirming, undermining, deferring, and transferring threatening elements in order to better cope with life.[26] Myth and ritual as well as traditional story patterns therefore have many elements in common with novels that occur less frequently in other forms of literature: violence, terror, miracles, contact with gods, heroes, the supra- and supernatural, excess, excrement, corporeal fluids, food, sex, and the foreign or the ‘Other’. By entering into this world of the ‘Other’—and by ‘emerging from it’—the novel shares with these forms of expression the structure of the *rite de passage*.[27]

I would argue that the novels and some modern romantic movies about love are somehow based on orally transmitted traditional fairytales, or better, wonder-tales. In the same way as do some myths, they circulate

and help young people to overcome their central crisis: the moment of first love, the sexual awakening and ritual threshold to marriage. The stories are very often told from the vantage point of the pubescent girl. Both novels and popular Greek stories deal with these issues in a dream-like manner, in positive and negative ways. Fears, nightmares, and scenarios of blood and sacrifice are mingled with euphoric fantasies. Love thus becomes decisive for the genre.

The trajectory of the fictions about young adolescence is marriage, but between the frame of a beginning and an ending, we find the immature lovers during their phase of marginality in a loop of destabilizing thoughts and adventures in liminal spaces. Everything concerns the drama of puberty, the traumatic experience of coming of age. This means that behind the novelistic plots and traditional tales, we can detect a "biological track," a psycho-anthropological foundation. We have to deal with the "maiden's tragedy,"[28] but less in the sense of Walter Burkert, who tries to establish a structural program of action in these terms, than as a loose set of motifs which can be freely associated in various combinations. Love, and the irritating sentiments connected with it, is the engine of the genre.[29] Erotic feelings, experienced as disease (*nosos*), express desire. The sense of absence gives way to dreadful fantasies of loss, fear, sexual threats by third parties, death, and rebirth; they are transformed into stories of separation, sacrifice, rape, and violence. The quintessential absence, the deep longing, leads to a gliding concatenation of signifiers at work in a metaphorical and metonymical process. In modern Greek culture, such wonder-tales are called *paramíthia*, stories that go in between, transform, transgress, and, by telling, provide *paramuthía* 'relief, reassurance, and consolation'.[30]

Although the Greek novel as product of the Second Sophistic represents high culture, it displays a low-culture or popular substratum. With its emphasis on anthropological and bio-ritual explorations, it pursues as well a completely different poetics, which, despite all the intertextual allusions to classical drama and narrative, could be characterized, following Alexiou, as popular and myth-like "*oneirodrama*."[31] Moreover, many ancient and post-antique Greek narratives and popular songs depict crises and states of fear in a highly pathetic manner, which allows them to adopt a nearly ritual function. Specifically, the world of the young girl during puberty and the dramatic, liminal situation of marriage also represent an important theme. The woman, who in novels is bewildered by her first experience of love and, despite its repression, is confronted nonetheless with sexuality, is an ideal mediator between patriarchal demands, new religious forms, sexual daydreams, and power fantasies.[32]

As I mentioned above— and as will be a guiding principle of my interpretation—excessive erotic desire can in turn be connected to Lacan's theory of the permanent shifting of meaning, which assumes a fundamentally deficient and structurally split subject. According to this theory, the ego only deceives itself into believing in a unity through imaginary means, in opposition to the real. In an intersubjective web, it succumbs to the symbolic, an alienated Other or id, as the unconscious, which is encoded in speech, language, or images. Moreover, the decentered *ex-istence* of man is constituted on the basis of chains of signifiers—according to the linguistic turn based on Ferdinand de Saussure and Roman Jakobson—by way of the supplementarity of signs in the tropological play of metaphor and metonymy.[33] The subject and, even more so, the lover, whose desire is the Other's desire, are located in a state of continuous gliding, a "*glissement incessant du signifié sous le signifiant*,"[34] which closes the opened gaps to the Other. Therefore, the lovers are particularly subject to language, and in the reference play of signs a meaning-generating narration is born. Jakobson associates "Freud's metonymic 'condensation' and synecdochic 'displacement'" on the one hand, and "Freud's 'identification and symbolism'" on the other hand, which are all typical of the structural process of dreams, with the paradigmatic and syntagmatic axes of language that determine the textual fiction.[35] In other words, love, stemming from the Other and projected onto it, in its constitutive lack makes way to speech or narrative, be it the love novel or a film, as sliding images about love. And according to the two linguistic principles of similarity and contiguity, Jakobson links prose fiction particularly with metonymy and poetry with metaphor.[36] This is also the reason why in both film and novel we will discover a sliding chain of contiguous semiosis.

III. Modern Film: *Eyes Wide Shut*

Stanley Kubrick's *Eyes Wide Shut* (1999) represents a rather faithful adaptation of Arthur Schnitzler's *Traumnovelle* (1926). The scenery is transferred from Vienna, with its carnival balls, to Manhattan and its fancy Christmas parties. Many names are changed: Fridolin and Albertine become Bill (acted by Tom Cruise) and Alice (acted by Nicole Kidman), an allusion to Lewis Carroll's famous children's fantasies *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) and *Through the Looking-Glass* (1872). Moreover, instead of the literary analepsis of the adventure at the ball, we witness the party with both protagonists' flirting in real time.

Both the novella and the film draw heavily on psychoanalysis, elaborating a journey in the realms of dreams, nightmares, and the unconscious within the context of love, jealousy, and sexual relations. Schnitzler's text is basically a Freudian reading, while Kubrick is deeply influenced by Lacan, who rereads Freud using philosophical and linguistic lenses. Whereas Freud's goal consists of finding out the deeper meaning hidden behind the superficial—his statement "*Wo Es war, soll Ich werden*" ("where id was, there ego shall be")[37] is indicative of his belief that the cognitive subject should take control of the subconscious mess—Lacan locates the existence of the deficient subject, the *je* or the "*subject de l'Autre*" in the id, by commenting and practically reversing the sentence ("*Wo Ich war, soll Es werden*.)"[38] The reflexive, specular *moi* produces (as I) only an illusion or mirror image of an auto-sufficient, cognitive, and self-conscious subject, while the real subject (I as *je*) is decentered and located in the Other as id, i.e. in the symbolic chain of signifiers. Desire and lack are constitutive of the human being. To bridge the gap in an intersubjective web of social claims and relations we turn our desire over to the symbolic concatenation of signs.[39]

Love and sexual desire are quintessential for our lack of being. In this flux of signification we are exposed to the Imaginary, or fantastic, which provides us with a screen from the Real and an illusion of presence.[40] Both literary text and movie emphasize the blurring boundary between reality and dream—in the words of Pedro Calderon de la Barca one might even say 'life is a dream'. We witness the typical sliding in signs, words, sounds, and images, all of which establish and enhance desire by way of metonymies.[41] Love happens in the Other. Sexual desire toward the other becomes so intense that both parties fall into an abyss of gliding, dream-like, amorous vicissitudes. The exposure to the desiring other is overwhelming and unbearable. Thus the lover shatters from within his alleged identity (e.g. Bill as renowned medical doctor) and dissolves his illusory subject, which is structured by symbolic behavior, norms, and rules, in the Other of phantasm.

Eyes Wide Shut is not just a film about the boredom of marriage or a disclosure of the consumerist view.[42] Nor is it merely a sterile puritan product that fails to excite the spectator.[43] Rather, it is a cinematographic study about the impossibility of a couple's sexual relation, about unfathomable desire, the difference of gender-behavior in this context. It displays the fantasies of nightmares, the mutual intertwining and generative primacy of Alice's dreams and Bill's sexual wanderings in nocturnal New York, and the unclear line between dream and reality—with dreams building on the alleged reality, all the while working to keep the Real at bay. Most of all, it deals with the different forms of love.[44]

Bill typically displays the phallic love that projects an endless series of *objects petit a*, or other desirable girls, which are lost before they can be consumed, particularly since he takes refuge in his cocoon of symbolic norms. Alice, on the other hand, displays a female *jouissance*. Overconfident, she does not want to be reduced to a name on the eternal list of Don Juan.[45] She enjoys fantasies, resorting to daydreams in which she is infatuated with a naval officer (for whom she would leave husband and daughter behind), or to dreams or nightmares in which she sleeps with innumerable men in front of her husband in order to ridicule him. She indulges herself in a sexual dream-world where she completely shatters the symbolic masquerade of her marriage. On the other hand, she is sad and melancholic, almost frigid, and she commits her amorous adventures only in her dreams or when she is under the influence of drugs.[46]

Both fall into a chasm where they are confronted with a chain of metonymically linked, erotic vicissitudes, and they escape from the spiral of various sexual encounters only at the very end. Alice triggers Bill's jealousy and ruptures his symbolic image when she tells him about her daydreaming—the sexual fantasy with the naval officer. Both imaginary worlds are intertwined: in her dreams she anticipates a variant of what he will later encounter. The lack of desire gives way to chains of signification in the realm of dreams, the Other, death, and the unconscious.

Bill reacts to her disclosure with a nocturnal journey to explore the forbidden, both in red-light New York and in the realm of sacral orgies full of symbolic conventions. Yet the imagined objects are none other than imaginary variations of his nude wife Alice, whom he seems to have lost; these sexual objects of the other, i.e. other women, are lost the moment he wants to grasp them. He meets Marion, the daughter of a deceased patient who unexpectedly kisses him and confesses her love to him next to her father's deathbed, but he renounces the temptation. Soon the doorbell rings and her fiancé enters. Bill's male image is broken when a group of men insult him as if he were homosexual ("faggot"). In the jungle of the city he enters the house of a prostitute named Domino, but when they intimately look into each other's eyes and start to make love the cellular phone rings—it is Alice, his wife.

Then he looks for the Sonata Café and meets his friend Nick Nightingale, who tells him about his blindfolded

performances at strange orgies. Nick gives Bill the password to the coming orgy: ‘Fidelio’, an ironic allusion to love and fidelity. In addition to the password, Bill must don a costume and Venetian mask, part of the masquerade’s lack of identity. In pursuit thereof, he stops at a shop called *Rainbow Fashion*. A strange Eastern European man consents to open the shop, and he provides Bill with the necessary equipment. But before Bill leaves, he sees the shopkeeper’s daughter, who has had sex with two other men. The father detects what has transpired, and she, in a maniacal state, flees naked into Bill’s arms.

Bill visits the strange, sacral orgy at Somerton mansion. Here, naked with the exception of masks, girls perform and copulate in a most sterile manner of sexual non-relation. Despite several warnings, Bill is revealed, and he is threatened with a severe penalty. However, one of the girls (Mandy?) intervenes, sacrificing herself for him. Bill escapes home and meets his wife, who, having indulged in her sexual nightmares, wakes up and tells them to him in detail.

The following morning Bill goes to return his mask—at the *Rainbow Fashion* the daughter is now together with the two men, having obviously been sold by her father as a prostitute—and he searches for Nick, who has disappeared. He wants to see again the prostitute Domino (the name denotes a costume for a masked ball and is an allusion to a *domina* and the blending of the sexes), but in her apartment he finds another girl named Sally, who starts seducing him and then tells him that Domino was diagnosed with HIV. He escapes into the streets and is pursued. He buys a newspaper and reads that a famous beauty queen named Amanda Curran (the woman who sacrificed herself the previous evening?) died in the hospital. He examines her body in the morgue and returns very worried to his elder friend Ziegler. Ziegler tells him that Nick is not dead but that he had to leave for Seattle. Moreover, Ziegler enlightens him that the phony sacrificial victim was a junkie who would have died anyway. Finally at home, Bill sees his mask—he has apparently left it beside his wife—and when she wakes they tell each other everything. After a night of tears, they decide to go Christmas shopping with their daughter. At a famous toy store, Bill asks Alice how they can go on. She contemplates the blurring line between dream and reality and suggests that they go home and “fuck” in order to escape the nightmares.

Already from the title it becomes clear that prominent elements of Lacanian theory—the eye, the view, and the gaze, as well as the mirror—are key themes of this film.[47] We know also from the novel how important the eye is as organ for the reception of love. Love at first sight occurs via the eye, and it is immediately felt as an all-consuming disease that causes terrible suffering. Through the gaze one affects the eye of the other and makes it succumb to the Other. The oxymoron of eyes that are wide shut refers to the fact that the protagonists gaze at their objects of desire with eyes wide open. At the same time, Bill and Alice are introverted, and they fall, with closed eyes, into the vortex of dreams where they encounter things with eyes wide shut.

Mirrors are prominent in several scenes. In a sort of initiatory image preceding the film, Alice is shown nude from the back in front of a mirror, like a Venus framed by two Doric columns, and in an advertisement the couple are again framed in a mirror-like image clearly intended to draw a gaze. At the beginning, a half-naked Alice faces the bathroom mirror making herself up for the party. She asks her husband whether she does not look great, but he takes little notice of her; his mind is occupied with many other symbolic things, e.g. his missing wallet. Thus, already at this point, the couple can be viewed as a typical example of non-communication.

When they return home after the party, she again stands naked in front of the mirror, but this time in a strangely distanced manner. Bill embraces her from behind to make love. She looks into the mirror, puts down her glasses, makes eye contact to the outside spectator via the reflecting glass, then shuts her eyes and enters the chasm of dreams. The glimpse into the mirror represents the reflexive *moi*, the imaginary security of an identity, the illusion of a narcissistically centered subject. The immersion into the mirror with closed eyes amounts to the entrance into the realm of death and the Other. Alice literally falls *Through the Looking-Glass* to her *Wonderland* of nightmares, where she, as erotomaniac, meets innumerable variants of her “*ideal incubus*.”[48]

The scenery of the Christmas party anticipates this fall into the Other. Again dream and reality, previous and subsequent, are mysteriously intertwined. After many years Bill unexpectedly meets his former fellow student Nick Nightingale, who dropped out of medical school to become a piano player. His name alludes to death, lament, and music. Two attractive girls link arms with Bill and promise to take him to “where the rainbow ends.” Alice, on the other hand, drinks a glass of champagne and meets Samdor Salas, a Hungarian Casanova and attendee of the coming jubilee. They look deeply into one another’s eyes and start

sliding in the open gap of desire. This movement is expressed in a close, slow waltz during which she comes dangerously close to his lips. She glides in words and dance, like in *jouissance* and trance. Salas tries to pick her up, making a passing mention of Ovid's *Art of Love*.[49] Alice wonders whether Ovid did not cry his eyes out in exile, and the Hungarian gentleman replies that, despite this, he did a great job in his seduction. When she tells Salas that she is married, he pontificates about his theory of marriage, which presupposes that husband and wife search for another partner: Why should a girl lose her virginity? Women enter marriage only to be free to sleep with other men. This given wisdom is equivalent to the deconstruction of the symbolic order—also part of the ideal novel. Salas offers to show her the host's gallery of Renaissance bronzes upstairs. Alice rejects the proposal: the nude statues are an allusion to the display and sexual consumption of her body.

In the meantime, Bill is flattered by the two models who profess to having met him before. He does not initially remember them, but one of them reminds him of her name, enunciating the sounds N-u-a-l-a. He opens his eyes. Nuala calls to his mind that, at a photo shoot in Manhattan, she had something in her eye and he, in his role as doctor, removed it with a handkerchief. Their eyes then also meet deeply.

Bill does not reach the end of the rainbow; instead, he is called by servants to apply his medical knowledge for the host Ziegler. The prostitute and junkie named Mandy has fainted in the bathroom, and Ziegler, who has just had sex with her, is worried that she might die from her overdose. Doctor Hartford arrives upstairs—now to examine yet another nude statue (above whom hangs a nude drawing by Modigliani): the perspective of the camera glides over the girl's naked body, which mirrors the posture of the nude woman in the picture and which, with eyes closed, seems to be dead. In a professional manner he asks her to open her eyes, looks deeply into them with his ophthalmoscope, and brings her back to life.

What I would like to re-emphasize now—what has yet to be explored in the film's numerous treatments—is that the film proceeds through an incessant chain of sliding metonymies in an erotic key that expresses the typical shifting movement in the gap of desire. The signified, Eros, glides similarly under the endless concatenation of signifiers that revolve around sexual vicissitudes. Certain key motifs are endlessly deferred and displaced, and they pop up again and again in the texture of the film, one element evolving out of the previous. The different sexual partners and threatening encounters are merely particular variations in an endless plot.

We have already looked at the emphasis on eyes, views, and mirrors. We have scenes of parties, orgies, drugs, and a shift from the pursuit of the end of the rainbow to *Rainbow Fashion*. We witness a series of beauties and prostitutes—Mandy and her variants, the doubling of Alice's dreams about the naval officer, the mass orgy in the sacred space and sex with innumerable men in Alice's fantasies—telephones that ring; cases of death; professions of love; scenes of masks and masquerade; returns, both to the scene of the party and to the costume rental; and the substitution of masks for real persons. Moreover, speaking and symbolic names are used: Jason, the hotel where Nightingale lodges and from which he disappears, hints at the decentered Jason, whom Medea brought into trouble. And will the couple's daughter Helena be another Helen, imitating her mother? Last but not least, we have framing devices, but in these frames of reality the boundary to the oneiric is already blurred. The entire technique recalls the Freudian dream-work through condensation, displacement, representation, symbolism, and secondary elaboration.[50]

IV. The Parallel of Xenophon of Ephesus

The similarities between *Eyes Wide Shut* and the ancient romance are striking. After the excess of desire, these novels' protagonists fall into an abyss, that same gliding chain of erotic vicissitudes, dreams, and nightmares in the Other. In the end, they return to reality and celebrate their wedding, after which they can finally have sex.

Anthia and Habrocomes, by Xenophon of Ephesus, provides a good example of these types of techniques used in the ancient novel.[51] Habrocomes, a sixteen-year-old boy of high Ephesian aristocracy, is extremely beautiful. Following Lacan, we could consider his initial pride in his own beauty and the general rejection of love toward someone else as a narcissistic phase of moi that remains absolutely illusory. Eros, furious about such behavior, enacts revenge by making him fall in love with the beauty Anthia, two years his junior and of high birth herself.

The occasion for Eros' stratagem is the famous festival of Artemis. The god of love instills them with mutual desire. Through their "eyes wide open" (1.3.2) they fall madly in love at first sight. The sensation is overwhelming, and the desire (as lack) is expressed as a terrible disease (1.4.6–1.5.4). The lovers lose

control of themselves due to their excessive emotion, and their imaginary delusions of a self-sufficient life are shattered. Thus Habrocomes' narcissistic mirror phase comes to an abrupt end, though his fixations on symbolic norms will cause his phallic love to fail since he remains close to the imaginary. Anthia's female love, on the other hand, elevates her beloved object to the status of a god. Despite their non-relation, they feel the gap of love. Due to the lack of desire, the *je* experiences itself as the true other, the decentered self in the stream of signifiers, and the loving subject extracts itself and gives space to semiosis in a gliding chain of metaphors and metonymies, that is, to the novelistic plot.

The protagonists wither away. Anthia's parents even try to cure her with "diviners and priests," a sort of *magoi* to perform sacrifices, libations, and the pronouncement of barbarian sounds, but to no avail. Sacrifices and prayers cannot provide remedy for Habrocomes either. At this point, the fathers send out envoys in order to consult the oracle of Apollo in Colophon (1.5.5–9). The often criticized reply of the god (1.6.2) is ambiguous from the point of view of motivation.[52] On the level of the plot, the oracle serves, in the same way as dreams sometimes do, as prolepsis, i.e. a preview to the continuing chain of events. But here it is an additional part of "dissemination," the pluralization of meaning that Eros tends to cause. Oracles, by nature, are unclear, and people typically find many ways to interpret them. Critics have tended to overlook the fact that nearly all contents of the oracle are confined to the sickness of love in a metaphorical way.[53]

The fathers are at a complete loss as to what to do with these signs. After long deliberations they decide "to palliate the oracle as far as they could" (1.7.2) and to unite the young people in marriage. Thus, without understanding, they make the right decision; marriage is truly the desired goal. However, it comes too early. Since love, the crisis of sexuality, and the transition from youth to adulthood are obviously too irritating the couple drops into the abyss of nightmares, dreams, and phantasms, which are condensed and displaced in concatenations of metonymic variations of the erotic situation. In the first sexual union of the wedding night, with the pathos that they release in intense emotion on a bed with a canopy designed with the mythic wedding of Ares and Aphrodite (1.8.3), the full decentering of both lovers' subjects comes to light in an especially impressive manner (1.9.1–8):

> Both of them felt the same emotions and were unable to say anything to each other or to look at each other's eyes but lay at ease in sheer delight, shy, afraid, panting—and on fire. Their bodies trembled and their hearts quivered. And at last Habrocomes recovered and took Anthia in his arms. And she wept, as she poured forth the tears that symbolized her inward desire. And Habrocomes spoke: he sighed at the arrival of the night he had longed for and reached with such difficulty after many previous nights of misery. "Girl sweeter to me than the light of day, and luckier than anyone in any story—you have a husband the man who loves you! God grant that you live and die with him a chaste wife!" With this he kissed her and caught her tears, and they seemed to him a sweeter drink than nectar, more powerful a remedy than any against pain. She said only a few words: "Is it true, Habrocomes? Do you really think I am beautiful? Do I really please you even after your own handsome appearance? Unmanly coward! How long did you delay your love? How long did you neglect it? I know what you have suffered from my own miseries. But look, here are my tears; let your beautiful hair drink a cup of love; and as we lock together, let us embrace and wet the garlands with each other's tears so that these too may share our love." With this she kissed him all over his face, pressed all his hair to her own eyes, and took off the garlands and joined his lips to hers in a kiss; and their feelings passed through their lips from one soul to the other. Anthia kissed Habrocomes' eyes and said to them: "It is you who have often brought me grief, you who first implanted the goad in my heart; then you were full of pride, now you are full of desire; you have served me well, and well have you brought my love into Habrocomes' heart. So I kiss you again and again, and let my eyes meet his, for mine are the servants of Habrocomes. May you always look on the same objects and not reveal anyone else's beauty to Habrocomes, nor may anyone else appear beautiful to me; accept the hearts that you yourself set on fire; and preserve them both in the same way." With this they relaxed in each other's arms and enjoyed the first fruits of Aphrodite; and there was ardent rivalry all night long, each trying to prove they loved the other more.
>
> Trans. G. Anderson

The scene appears so intensive and the exchange of souls so unnatural to Kerényi that he, and later Merkelbach, connects the embrace of Isis and the dead Osiris with it.[54] Yet its sense does not necessarily lie in hidden myths and mysteries. It seems more appropriate to take the passage from a love novel at face value, that is, as an expression of love in the course of an erotic plot that all revolves around love and its complications. The tears become first the fluid of exchange that can be drunk and used to wet each other's hair and garlands. These braided and plaited objects metonymically underline the mutual embrace of the couple, who seek complete union. At the same time, the *unio mystica* that Kerényi and Merkelbach detect cannot be achieved and is bound to fail.[55] Anthia reproaches Habrocomes for his narcissistic behavior and is afraid that he might not have completely changed. Because he has delayed and might continue to delay love, she scolds him as "unmanly and coward" (1.9.4). On the other hand, they lock together in their kisses, and through their lips the excessive passions pass from one soul to the other. Achilles Tatius (2.37.6–10) will later reflect on the exchange and union of the souls in even more extreme tones.[56]

Then, Anthia kisses Habrocomes' eyes, the organs that serve to love but were first the messengers of his narcissistic rejection. She even lets his eyes join with hers. Simultaneously, she displays jealousy and an envy that will be decisive for non-relation, as well as for the journey into the Other, where a series of other partners—as negative extensions—threaten the desired union. She is full of anxiety and afraid of losing him. Love remains a source of suffering, and they start gliding into the Other as decentered beings.

After the *erga* of love, the sexual intercourse as an agonizing fight in bed (1.9.9), an end to the illness seems to be reached. The following day they are doing splendidly: "Their whole life was a festival, everything was full of enjoyment …" (1.10.2). They forget the oracle since it has been fulfilled in a simple way. At this point the narrator intervenes with the remark: "but destiny had not forgotten" (1.10.2). Those who misunderstand the oracle trigger the events, unwittingly doing precisely what they wish to avoid. For παραμυθία (see 1.7.2 and 1.10.3), for reassurance and abatement, the pair go on a honeymoon to Egypt. But this is exactly the place they should avoid given the predicted disaster. From a psychoanalytical point of view, the *primae noctis* experience is too intense and abrupt for the still immature adolescents. Desire and the gap it creates between them can never be relieved completely. Therefore, the condition of lack expands now in the chain of signification and unfolds in space toward the Other.

The excessive longing for each other becomes traceable in the auto-annulment of meaning. Subjects and clear referents of signifier to signified extract themselves, making space for signs and meaning to float freely. The couple's separation, the resulting pursuit of the lost other, the splitting of the male hero into two figures —himself and the good robber—Hippothous' missed and partial recognition of Anthia, and the extreme deferral of the final reunion elucidate the gap between the lovers and between signifier and signified. The search for a sign and the supplement for the lost other turn into key themes of the animated plot.

After the precipitous and intensive fusion of the souls (1.9.6), the fear of separation returns. Possible assaults that deal with the loss of sworn fidelity and chastity are projected onto the space in the form of a third person. Another form of triangulation occurs with unfaithful sexual encounters with other partners. After a terrible dream about a frightful, superhuman woman dressed in red clothes (1.12.4), we fall into the yawning chasm of a nightmare. This gliding movement is expressed in the oneiric association of episodes where, just like in a textile fabric, one sign is interwoven with another.

In another article, I argue that Xenophon's novel, in its agglomeration of adventures that can all be read in erotic keys, resembles a dream.[57] After the introduction, where the birth of the pair's love is told, the actual wanderings are placed between two sets of frames: an exterior, stops at Rhodes, where the lovers consecrate a panoply and where the final recognition takes place (1.11.6–1.12.2 and 5.10.6–5.15.1); and an interior, two dreams (1.12.4 and 5.8.5–6) that give the entire series of nightmarish adventures the appearance of an endless dream. The gap of desire between the couple finds its textual expression in the separation after the Manto-episode. Directly after it, in 2.8.2, Habrocomes dreams, while in prison, that his father wanders in a black robe over land and sea and finally enters the dungeon to free him from his chains. Moreover, the hero imagines himself as a horse pursuing a mare over the whole globe, in order to find her and become human again. The dream, as well as the oracle, functions as prolepsis and at the same time as symbolic and associative dissemination. From now on, the lack of love is transferred into the oneiric pursuit of the lost other.

I would like to point out in detail how Xenophon carries these gaps inscribed in love over to his fictional story as a sliding chain of signifiers and names in the tropological game of metaphor and metonymy—the signified glides under the signifiers as well. This technique, which heavily draws on allusions and speaking names as

functions of narrative, bears again a great similarity to *Eyes Wide Shut*.

Let us begin with the sudden calm on their journey from Rhodes to Egypt (1.12.3), Habrocomes' dream about the oversized woman in red (1.12.4), and the assault on their vessel that follows (1.13). The transition of signifiers from φοινικῆν (1.12.4) to Φοίνικες (1.13.1), i.e. from blood-red clothing to the Phoenician pirates, is striking. Corymbus, 'the ship's figurehead' or the 'braided hair tuft',[58] and Euxinus, the 'well-meaning guest-friend', attack the couple, fall madly in love with each of them, and decide that Euxinus should win over Habrocomes for Corymbus, and Corymbus, in turn, Anthia for Euxinus (1.13.1–1.16.7). But their chief Apsyrtus claims the beautiful pair for himself; he is called by the same name as Medea's brother, whom the barbarian sorceress dismembers and throws into the sea. Through this allusion he is connected with Habrocomes' teacher, who jumps into the water out of desperation and remains behind with the other corpses (1.14.4–6).

Apsyrtus' daughter Manto, who is infatuated with the hero (2.3.1), hints back to the disseminating oracle (1.6.2). Moeris (2.5.6), Manto's new husband—who falls in love with Anthia—alludes to *moira*, the fate. The name of the goatherd Lampon (2.9.3), to whom Anthia is sent by Manto out of revenge, refers to the brilliance of marriage and to some hidden illumination or enlightenment in the context of mysteries.

After Habrocomes' release from imprisonment by Apsyrtus, who finds out that Manto's allegations that the faithful hero raped her were wrong, he starts his search for the lost Anthia and bumps into Hippothous (2.14.1). The 'fast stallion' resumes the image of Habrocomes' dream (2.8.2). The horse primarily functions as a symbol of young people's initiation into the status of maturity.[59] Furthermore, in the famous image of the chariot in *Phaedrus* (245c5–254e10, esp. 246a3–246d5), Plato portrays the soul as a charioteer with a team of two winged horses. One stands for that which is instinctively driven, whereas the other, as instance of the spirit or ego, attempts to control it. Hippothous, the good robber, whose band captures the fugitive Anthia in Cilicia (2.11.11), is, so to speak, Habrocomes' alter ego, who is governed by his desire[60] and who embodies homosexuality and aggressive erotic inclinations toward the heroine.[61] With this in mind, it is no wonder that he is connected with the practice of human sacrifices for Ares, or that his band is about to kill Anthia by hanging her from a tree and throwing spears at her body from a distance, a metonymy for her rape by militant robbers (2.13.1–3). This fact, in turn, refers to Ares' presentation on the wedding canopy (1.8.3) and to Areia, an Egyptian village, which Hippothous will plunder (5.2.4; 5.2.7).

Perilaus arrives at the last moment to rescue the heroine. He is irenarch in Cilicia, a high official in the Roman Empire, and his name accordingly means the one who 'stands above the people' or 'cares about the people'. As soon as he sees the girl, he naturally falls in love with her and lies in wait for her (2.13.3–8).

In Hippothous' *metadiegesis* (3.2), his lover Hyperanthes is analogous to Anthia, she 'who is blooming' and thus sexually attractive, merely in an excessive form. The story denotes the practice of pederasty before marriage and complements the picture of Eros with homosexual love. The poison of the doctor Eudoxus, he 'of a good reputation', who comes from Ephesus like the author and the heroes, turns into a remedy against Perilaus' propositions.

Anthia's apparent death mirrors the death experience of the bride (3.4.1–3.8.2). Robbers break the grave open (3.8.3–3.9.1), and she is sold to the 'desert sandman' Psammis (3.11), whose name alludes to pharaoh Psammetichus and anticipates their Egyptian trip (4.3.1–4). The barbarian merchant from India presses to marry her again, but she uses the excuse that they still have to wait one more year due to her consecration to Isis (3.11). On their way to India, they pass through Memphis where she prays at Isis' shrine for help (4.3.3–4). Right at the border to Ethiopia, at which point they would cross over the border and disappear completely from Habrocomes' world, she is again kidnapped by Hippothous, who kills Psammis. They do not recognize each other, and Anthia pretends to be an Egyptian girl called Memphitis (4.3), recalling the fact that Hippothous had stopped in Memphis shortly before (4.1.3). The name again builds a bridge to Anthia's next episodes in Memphis, where she takes refuge at the sanctuaries. At the temple of Isis, she can defend herself against Polyidus' attempts to rape her, and she makes him swear not to harass her any more (5.4.5–7). At the shrine of Apis, she receives a positive oracle that the reunion with her spouse is close (5.4.8–11).

It is worthwhile to consider the drift of signifiers more specifically by taking up the theme of the dogs. Dogs, like robbers, represent the sexual threat that further extends the gap between the two lovers. After the shipwreck at the end of Book 3, Habrocomes is sold to Araxus by Egyptian robbers. Araxus' lewd wife Cyno, the personification of the bitch full of sexual drive, lusts after Habrocomes, and he nearly responds to her overtures. But when she kills her husband, things become too much for him and he flees. Out of revenge,

Cyno accuses him of the crime (3.12). The Egyptian prefect learns the truth only after many attempts to put Habrocomes to death, and Cyno is finally crucified (4.2; 4.4).

Then the dog motif leads directly into Anthia's story line. When Anchialus, a member of Hippothous' band, attempts to rape her, she kills him in self-defense. Her punishment is to be thrown in a hole guarded by two ravenous Egyptian dogs. They will eventually rip her to shreds and then consume her (4.5.1–4.6.4). However, Amphinomus, a guard whose name alludes to the just and noble suitor in the Odyssey (esp. 16.394–398), and who is, of course, already in love with Anthia (4.6.5), rescues her from the male robbers threatening her chastity, and he feeds the hungry dogs (4.6.5–7) with meat. It is only later that he feels desire for her.

After an inserted narrative about Aegialeus (5.1), the story of Amphinomus' civilized love to Anthia resumes. Both abscond from Hippothous' gang, and the girl responds to his promises not to touch her until she agrees by her own free will (5.2.3–5). They set off for Coptus; "the dogs, however, did not leave them, for they had become close to them and loved them." (5.2.5). Both care for the hounds and supply them with sufficient food (5.2.6). The dogs are turned into the externalized male threat, so to speak. With the meat they receive a substitute for their sexual instinct. This hints at Anthia's consent in 'tamed' sexual services. The carnivorous mammals are simultaneously connected with Cerberus, the dog of the underworld, which can be associated with Anthia's pit (4.6.3–4), and here in Egypt with Anubis, who accompanies Isis on her search for Osiris.[62] The jackal-like god of mummification, in turn, prefigures Thelxinoes' condition in Sicily (5.1.9–11).

In Coptus (5.2.6), which is punningly associated with κώπτω 'to strike', Amphinomus is struck down and caught by Polyidus (5.4.3). As 'a frequent on-looker', he calls the heroine's intactness once more into question (5.4.5–7). His desirous male gaze anticipates the prostitution scene in Tarentum (5.5.4–8; 5.7.1–2), in which Polyidus' jealous wife Rhenaea has Anthia sold to a brothel keeper in Italy (5.5). Through her simulated epilepsy, Anthia acts as if she is suffering an excessive dissolution of her imaginary self (5.7.3–5), and she expresses a sensation complementary to female *jouissance* and orgasm. Having returned to her senses, she claims that a ghost put a hand on her. This explanation of the sacred disease includes again the theme of a sexual threat (5.7.6–9).[63]

In the meantime, Hippothous is the only one of his band who can escape from Polyidus' attack. He arrives in Taormina, marries a rich older woman, inherits a fortune after her death, and comes with a lover to Tarentum as well (5.9.1–3). Since Hippothous recognizes Anthia as the girl who killed Anchialus, he acquires her from the brothel keeper, who has put her up for sale (5.9.4–9). Even as a homosexual he is attracted by her beauty and wants to sleep with her (5.9.11). In her predicament, Anthia decides to tell Hippothous that she is the lover of his friend Habrocomes (5.9.12–13). Soon both decide to return to Ephesus, and on their way home they stop in Rhodes (5.11).

At the same time, Habrocomes, who meets Aegialeus in Syracuse after leaving Egypt (5.1), will remain—with this step to Italy—one step ahead of his object. In addition, he misses his goal and lands in Sicily so that his search becomes completely random. In desperation Habrocomes leaves for Nuceria in Southern Italy, and since he cannot find Anthia he starts working in a quarry (5.8.1–4). The hard work of breaking the earth and splitting the rocks again symbolizes love and the vain search for the lost object of desire. Without being aware of it, he follows Anthia's tracks again and they are close. However, since he cannot bear his labors any more, he wishes to return home. On his way, he arrives in Rhodes, and both storylines finally merge (5.10.1–5).

Moreover, the good servant Rhode is also associated with Rhodes, where the complicated *anagnorisis* takes place (5.10.6–5.15.1). Rhode accompanies the couple with her husband Leucon via Rhodes (1.11.6–1.12.2) up to the point when Manto causes the split of the loving protagonists. Manto later separates the benevolent pair from Anthia in Syria by selling them off to Xanthus in Lycia (2.9.1–2; 2.10.4). After the death of their good master, Leucon and Rhode decide to return home (5.6.3–4), and they make a stop at Rhodes, where the nightmares come to a happy end. After the recognition, which is postponed over many phases, we break out of the chain of signifiers that are constitutive of the erotic plot.

V. Conclusion

We have seen that the ancient, so-called "ideal" novels, in particular those of Xenophon of Ephesus—but also those of Chariton, Achilles Tatius, Longus, and Heliodorus—and Kubrick's *Eyes Wide Shut* are comparable in their treatment of the central subject of love. Since ancient sources explain love already as a

“discourse of absence” and its consequences as suffering and disease, it makes perfect sense to link the love novel also with Lacan’s psychoanalytic reading, which emphasizes even more the quintessential lack of desire. Love entails a loss of the illusory self, the subject’s dissolution. The feeling of being desired by another human being is so overwhelming that we tend to act out the anxieties in phantasms and dreams. The gap of longing in an intersubjective, social field articulates itself in speech, language, narration, and images, that is, in a chain of gliding sign production where the signified constantly slides under the signifiers. The Other takes control over the lovers, who start gliding in dreams of erotic rivalry, envy, and triangulation. The excessive sensation revolves around condensed and displaced erotic constellations. Love circulates around, and mediates between, opposites such as eternal fidelity and unfaithfulness, nightmare and daydreaming, idealization and disdain, elevation and violence, tenderness and rape fantasies, chastity and erotomania, sacralization, and prostitution. The crisis of the first sexual encounter is particularly traumatic. Therefore, in the ancient novels, we often witness adolescents who fall vehemently in love at first sight and for the first time. In a sort of coming of age story, their floating in excessive desire articulates itself in a dream-semiosis where all details are incessantly displaced, switched in metonymic and metaphoric chains, and based on an erotic poetics.

However, love does not manifest itself only in stories centered on rites of passage. It can also have devastating results for a married couple, as is portrayed in the film. Moreover, in the novel marriage can be contracted at an early stage of the plot and must not be the happy end or goal of the narrative. Thus the wedding often comes too soon, such that both young partners must still work through traumatic experiences in phantasms. Even at a later stage the symbolic, legal bond cannot keep the violent power of Eros at bay.

The typical idealizations of the chaste and faithful couple can be seen as strategies of the erotic discourse itself. Many elevate their object to the essential Other, a god-like figure, comparing beauty with a hero(ine) or statue. Desire is thus sublimated into a high, spiritual feeling, and the sexual act is circumscribed as the unspeakable Other of mysteries. However, even the ideal novel features transgressions and breaches of the norm. It incessantly exhibits daydreams of unfaithfulness and phantasmagoric displacements of sexual practices with other partners. Thus the so-called comic novel, as represented by Achilles Tatius, which slides dangerously along the borderline of becoming pornographic, simply belongs to the general category of the erotic novel.

Like *Eyes Wide Shut* ideal novels combine high and low culture;[64] besides all of the intertextual allusions, they reflect popular wonder-tales. Ancient Greek romances and Kubrick’s movie—among many filmic examples—meet in an anthropological substratum that deals with acting out and working through the traumatic experience of love in chains of sign production. These dreamlike and pathetic articulations in text or image, or combinations of the two, might be a reason for the particularly iconic quality of the Greek novels as well.

All of Greg’s friends know that he enjoys movies and that he appreciates the iconic dimension of Greek literature. Moreover, he often reads texts through anthropological, intercultural, and theoretical lenses. With the application of diachronic and synchronic methodology, originally derived from linguistics, our jubilee attempts to reach both backward and forward in time. His seventieth birthday will be an occasion to reflect about the past and what lies ahead. With all the insights of this contribution in mind, let us happily glide into the future!

Footnotes

[back] **1.** See Gilligan 1982; the theme arose when Greg told me about Classics@, Issue 9, “Defense Mechanisms,” which includes a contribution by Gilligan (2011).

[back] **2.** Greg Nagy’s current project is entitled Masterpieces of Metonymy.

[back] **3.** See Bierl 2006, esp. 82–93 (on Xenophon of Ephesus). See also Lacan 1966 (Engl. 2006); esp. 1957; 1958; 1962; 1977; 1998. On Lacan, see Mitchell and Rose 1982; Frank 1983:367–399; Gallop 1985; Welsch 1996:275–290; Tholen 2002:61–92, 139–146; Barnard and Fink 2002; Zizek 2006.

[back] **4.** Published later as Bierl 2006.

[back] **5.** See Dauverchain 2001; Sharpe 2003; Pizzato 2004; Ragland 2005; Zizek 2006. I thank David Elmer for referring me to Kubrick’s 1999 posthumous masterwork.

[back] **6.** Freud 1900; 1905; 1912; 1917; 1925; on Freud, see also the introduction by Mitchell 1982; Lacan

1966 (Engl. 2006); esp. 1949; 1952; 1957; 1958; 1960; 1962; 1977; 1998; Lacan has the ancient novel in mind, particularly the Lycaenion scene in Longus; see Lacan 1958 (1966:687; 2006:576) and 1977:199, 204.

[back] **7.** This approach has been further developed in Bierl 2007 and 2009.

[back] **8.** E.g. the lack of motivation and suspense, the dream-like flux of events in repetitive variations full of inconsistencies, the stereotypical figures with missing characters, the pathetic wallowing in suffering and self-pity, the effeminacy of the male protagonists.

[back] **9.** See e.g. Rohde 1876:421–435; Gärtner 1967:2060–2072.

[back] **10.** Barthes 1979:13–17.

[back] **11.** Carson 1986, esp. 77–95.

[back] **12.** Foucault 1977–1986; Konstan 1994.

[back] **13.** Lacan 1962 (2006:617–619; 1966:733–736); 1982:170; 1998, esp. 64–77, 83–89. See also Fink 2002.

[back] **14.** Carson 1986, esp. 10–76. Above all, she assumes that the primary reason for writing lies in this act of yearning. The lyric poet understands the nature of love through writing (esp. 53–76).

[back] **15.** Carson 1986:77–95. On “triangulation” in the novel, see also Fusillo 1989:219–228.

[back] **16.** See Bierl 2006.

[back] **17.** Lacan 1998: “there’s no such thing as a sexual relationship” (12); Lacan 1960: “man’s desire is the Other’s desire” (2006:690) – “le désir de l’homme est le désir de l’Autre” (1966:814). On the tendencies of idealization, see Lacan 1962 (2006:617–619; 1966:733–736); 1982:170; 1998:64–77, 83–89.

[back] **18.** Kerényi 1927; Merkelbach 1962; 1995.

[back] **19.** On failure, see Lacan 1998:58; Fink 2002:37. On asymmetrical sexuation and the difference between male and female sexual behavior, see Lacan 1962; 1998; Fink 2002; Zizek 2002; Morel 2002.

[back] **20.** I have raised the idea of reading the novel as an elaboration on the ‘initiation’ or rite of passage in a number of articles (Bierl 2002; 2006; 2007; 2009), and it has been raised independently by Lalanne 2006, who approaches it, however, from the perspective of ancient history and not from literature. According to Lalanne, the romances as texts of paideia serve the Greek elites in Asia Minor to redefine their identity under the dominance of Rome, and they provide a medium for self-assertion and gender modeling.

[back] **21.** Van Gennep 1960.

[back] **22.** On identity, see Whitmarsh 2011 pace Bierl 2007.

[back] **23.** Alexiou 1974.

[back] **24.** Bierl 2007; 2009.

[back] **25.** For the following remarks I have heavily profited from Greg Nagy’s wonderful colleague Margaret Alexiou, with whom I had inspiring conversations during my years at Harvard, as she completed her monograph *After Antiquity* (2002).

[back] **26.** Alexiou 2002:151–413, esp. 152–167.

[back] **27.** Alexiou 2002, esp. 211–265, 317–348 and Bierl 2007:246–249.

[back] **28.** See Burkert 1979:6–7; 1996:69–79.

[back] **29.** Brooks 1984, esp. 37, 55–56, 58–59, 105, 234, 278–279 links narration and plot with Lacan’s concept of desire.

[back] **30.** Alexiou 2002:162–171; 211–216; Bierl 2007:255–258.

[back] **31.** Alexiou 2002:297; see also 304 and 310 (“dream drama”); she also places great emphasis on the narratives’ ethopoiia, i.e., the pathetic sketching of the emotionality of young people in the state of love,

and the oneiric textual linkages (“êthopoieía and plokê”).

[back] **32.** See Bierl 2007:254–255.

[back] **33.** See Alexiou 2002:151–171 and Bierl 2007:255–258.

[back] **34.** Lacan 1957 (1966:502); Engl. Lacan 2006:419 (“incessant sliding of the signified under the signifier”); see also Bierl 2006:85–86.

[back] **35.** Jakobson 1971, esp. 258, referencing Freud 1900. Lacan 1957 (1966:511; 2006:425), on the other hand, interprets condensation as a mechanism of poetry and metaphor. On Lacan’s answer to Jakobson, see Lacan 1977:14–25.

[back] **36.** Jakobson 1971:258–259; on the realistic novel and contiguity, ibid. 255, on metonymic techniques in film, ibid. 256.

[back] **37.** From the thirty-first of his “Neue Vorlesungen” (Freud 1933).

[back] **38.** Lacan 1956 (1966:417; 2006:347). See also Lacan 1977:44–45.

[back] **39.** Lacan 1957.

[back] **40.** See Zizek 2006.

[back] **41.** See Lacan 1957 (1966:505; 2006:421): “It is among the figures of style, or tropes – from which the verb ‘to find’ [trouver] comes to us – that this name is, in fact, found. This name is metonymy.” With this trope, an author finds the concatenation of signs that result in a plot.

[back] **42.** Sharpe 2003.

[back] **43.** See Meeker 2004 (with her reply in terms of Sade).

[back] **44.** Zizek 2006.

[back] **45.** Lacan 1998;1–13, esp. 10; Salecl 2002:96–97.

[back] **46.** Lacan 1962 (1966:731–736; 2006:616–620); Morel 2002; Salecl 2002.

[back] **47.** On the eye, the view, and the gaze as well as the picture, see Lacan 1977:67–119. On the mirror, see e.g. Lacan 1949.

[back] **48.** Morel 2002:81, with reference to Lacan 1962 (1966:733; 2006:617).

[back] **49.** Clitophon actually puts this text into practice in Achilles Tatius.

[back] **50.** Freud 1900; see also the remarks by Jakobson 1971:258.

[back] **51.** On Xenophon, see among others Hägg 1966; Gärtner 1967; Scarcella 1979; Schmeling 1980; Laplace 1994; Ruiz-Montero 1994; O’Sullivan 1995; Bierl 2006; König 2007.

[back] **52.** On the oracle, see Rohde 1876:424–425; Gärtner 1967:2066–2067; Ruiz-Montero 1994:1098–1101.

[back] **53.** See Bierl 2006:87.

[back] **54.** Kerényi 1927:42; see also Merkelbach 1962:94.

[back] **55.** See Lacan 1998:66–68; Barnard 2002:174–180.

[back] **56.** On the female jouissance, see Lacan 1998:1–13, 64–77.

[back] **57.** Bierl 2006, esp. 82–85.

[back] **58.** See Ruiz-Montero 1994:1108; the latter would refer back to the hero, he ‘of the luxurious hair’.

[back] **59.** On the horse as a key symbol of the young girl on the threshold of womanhood, see Alcman’s Louvre Partheneion, fr. 1 Davies.

[back] **60.** Laplace 1994:466.

[back] **61.** The fact that Hippothous owns a horse (2.14.5) emphasizes the glissement des signifiants.

[back] **62.** See Merkelbach 1995:361n2 and 100–101.

[back] **63.** Puiggali 1986, esp. 328.

[back] **64.** Caduff 2006.