



Summer 1990

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Viti, Elizabeth Richardson. "Genet's Fantastic Voyage In *Miracle de la Rose*: All At Sea About Maternity." *Studies In Twentieth Century Literature* 14.2 (1990): 195-205.

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Abstract

Though homosexuality is not uncommon in the literary world, few if any writers have chose, like Jean Genet, to place their own inversion flamboyantly center stage. This phenomenon explains the temptation to apply psychoanalytic theory to Genet's work, but the author and his homoeroticism intrigue feminist criticism as well. In the sixties Kate Millett's *Sexual Politics* praised the portrayal of a homosexual society which, because of its hyperbolic aping of an arbitrary masculine and feminine exposed the oppressive social system of patriarchy. And most recently, a dissertation by Cynthia Running Row, *Jean Genet and Helene Cixous: Reading Genet through the Feminine*, proposes Cixous' essay as an appropriate vehicle for examining Genet's homosexuality. In fact, it seems to me that the convergence of psychoanalytical and feminist criticism permits a better understanding of Jean Genet's inversion and , indeed, reveal its very composition.

Keywords

Treatment of Homosexuality, Psychoanalytic Approach, Feminist Approach

Disciplines

French and Francophone Language and Literature | French and Francophone Literature

Genet's Fantastic Voyage in *Miracle de la Rose*: All at Sea about Maternity

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Though homosexuality is not uncommon in the literary world, few if any writers have chosen, like Jean Genet, to place their own inversion flamboyantly center stage. This phenomenon explains the temptation to apply psychoanalytic theory to Genet's work, but the author and his homoeroticism intrigue feminist criticism as well. In the sixties Kate Millett's *Sexual Politics* praised the portrayal of a homosexual society which, because of its hyperbolic aping of an arbitrary masculine and feminine, exposed the oppressive social system of patriarchy.¹ Later, in *Le Rire de la méduse* [*The Laugh of the Medusa*] Hélène Cixous cited Genet as one of only three twentieth-century writers who successfully inscribe femininity in their work.² And most recently, a dissertation by Cynthia Running Rowe, *Jean Genet and Hélène Cixous: Reading Genet through the Feminine*, proposes Cixous' essay as an appropriate vehicle for examining Genet's homosexuality.³ In fact, it seems to me that the convergence of psychoanalytical and feminist criticism permits a better understanding of Jean Genet's inversion and, indeed, reveals its very composition.

Most notably, *Miracle de la Rose* [*Miracle of the Rose*] provides fertile ground. Among texts in which dreams are typically pervasive, here one dream in particular emerges as exceptional and calls for psychoanalytical interpretation much in the way that Swann's dream, noticeably different from the myriad daydreams in *A la recherche du temps perdu* [*Remembrance of Things Past*], provoked, inspired an analysis by Jean Bellemin-Noël.⁴ Because the author announces the phantasy as such and constructs it coherently, it is admittedly a product of the conscious; and yet, like the Proustian passage, it clearly exposes a conflict with the unconscious. Of course, one might easily ask whose unconscious is revealed, for in the case of *Un Amour de*

Swann [*Swann in Love*] it is Swann's dream, not the narrator's or Proust's. In the case of *Miracle de la Rose* it is Harcamone's dream, not the author/narrator Genet's. But in the latter instance Genet insinuates himself into the dream,⁵ and as Derrida observes in *Glas*, the confused reader consequently asks: Who is dreaming? Who is writing? What is he writing? Whose signature is on the miracle of the rose?⁶ Bellemin-Noël makes clear that the point is moot in literature: author, narrator and character merge and all that remains to analyze is the dream text and its context.

In both phantasies qualities that characterize a veritable dream are unmistakable. Each confuses the real and the fantastic so that Swann, for example, dreams of the Verdurin clan but at the same time pictures a Mme Verdurin whose nose lengthens and sprouts a healthy moustache. On the other hand, Harcamone, a convicted murderer, sees himself facing execution, but as a condemned man dressed in silk and lace with the Order of the Golden Fleece around his neck. In addition, the two dreamers envision unusual circumstances. Swann watches himself walking around publicly in his nightshirt and Harcamone observes a Jules Verne-like voyage in which a judge, lawyer, executioner and chaplain—as well as Genet—enter and travel through his body. Finally, placed at the end of their respective works, the dreams authenticate a sentiment preoccupying the dreamer's thoughts for quite some time. On a purely novelistic level, Swann's dream validates his suspicion that he has exhausted his greatest passion for a woman who really wasn't his type, but on a Freudian plane it reveals Proust's Oedipus Complex (Bellemin-Noël 52).

Harcamone's dream permits him to confront his long-awaited execution, a sequence which, as with dreams, is an amalgam of previous moments (here, textual). The four men who enter Harcamone resemble the four guards who enchained the convict after his death sentence. The labyrinthine passageways they travel to find the Mystic Rose are reminiscent of those that Genet describes at the Mettray and Fontevrault prisons. The young drummer in the heart's first chamber is a counterpart to Divers, percussionist for Sunday "parades" at Fontevrault.⁷ Nor is it surprising that the monstrous red rose should grow in Harcamone's body: Bulkaen had been told, as so many children are, that a swallowed cherry pit would flower. And the well-like center of the rose recalls that center of amorous activity, the Fontevrault stairway, "plutôt un puits qu'un escalier" (270) [a well

rather than a stairway].⁸ Nonetheless, on a Freudian level this dream sequence is again similar to Proust's text, for as I shall explain, it too exposes the essential nature of Genet's relationship to the Mother.

Although this bond is ultimately of extreme interest to both psychoanalysis and feminism (as the dream is for psychoanalysis) initially it is the bisexuality of Harcamone's body, what Kate Millett calls the "unmanning of superman" (Millett 484), that evokes the feminist perspective. On the face of it, Harcamone, a remorseless killer, is yet another exaggerated instance of masculine strength and brutality in Genet's *mundus inversus* where "Fidelity to the aesthetic of pure violence is proof that one no longer retains a loyalty to the moral world of ordinary men."⁹ However, once the unusual tourists enter Harcamone, indisputably feminine recesses greet them and call up the Medusa of Cixous' essay. Harcamone seems the very incarnation of bisexuality as defined by the feminist, that is to say "repérage en soi, individuellement, de la présence, diversement manifeste et insistante selon chaque un ou une, des deux sexes, non-exclusion de la différence ni d'un sexe, et à partir de cette 'permission' que l'on se donne, multiplication des effets d'inscription du désir, sur toutes les parties de mon corps et de l'autre corps" (Cixous 46) [each one's location in self . . . of the presence—variously manifest and insistent according to each person, male or female—of both sexes, non-exclusion either of the difference or of one sex, and, from this "self-permission," multiplication of the effects of the inscription of desire, over all parts of my body and the other body].

Psychoanalytic and feminist theoretical concerns begin their more intimate connection as the dream unfolds. The first leg of the journey is rife with feminine sexual symbolism. Openings are everywhere, not only as body cavities but as gorges, a mine, a well, a door. Frequently these spaces are corridors or narrow alleys paved with a "sol élastique" [elastic ground], making their equivalence to female genitalia hard to ignore. Trees "descendant en pente douce, presque voluptueuse" [descending in a gentle, almost voluptuous slope] and moss become the hairs of the pubis. In fact, Genet's text simply follows a Freudian dream interpretation formula in which rocks, woods and water often represent the complicated topography of the female sexual organs. Most significant, though, is the prurient pilgrims' means of entry, Harcamone's ear and mouth: "Ils avancèrent un peu sur le bord de la lèvre inférieure et tombèrent dans le gouffre" (462) [They moved forward a little along the edge of the

lower lip and fell into the gulf]. Curiously, this penetration echoes a scene from Genet's play *Les Nègres* [*The Blacks*] in which Félicité, the Black Queen, calls upon her people to penetrate her where they will—her mouth, her ears, her nostrils—in order to come to terms with their negritude.¹⁰ But in *Miracle de la Rose* the call is for recognition of the feminine.

That what we have here is the picture of a female psyche trapped inside a male body is too easy and too reductive an explanation. The dream's second stage makes this clear: "Enfin, tous les quatre se rencontrèrent à une sorte de carrefour que je ne saurais décrire avec précision, qui creusait, encore vers la gauche, un corridor lumineux bordé d'immenses miroirs" (463) [Finally, all four met at a kind of crossroads which I cannot describe accurately. It led down, again to the left, into a luminous corridor lined with huge mirrors]. Because they redouble an image, mirrors enhance the theme of binary identity. However, they do not do so by holding captive one identity inside another but instead by providing a *réplique*, a reverse image or the other side of the coin. Genet plays on this idea in the title of his only ballet 'Adame Miroir [*Adam Mirror*]: The pronunciation of 'Adame, slang for Madame in that working class section of Paris known as Belleville, makes it nearly homonymous with the masculine name Adam, allowing the one word to signify both sexes. But then Cixous notes that within woman there is *always* the source, the locus of the Other. Appropriately, Genet's "mirror stage" appears, thus, to correspond to Lacan's. As the psychoanalyst explains in "Le Stade du Miroir" ["The Mirror Stage"], the mirror signifies the moment when the infant proleptically takes on a cohesive identity through the mediation of a mirror, and more important, the Other.¹¹ In short, the first stage of phantasy reveals the feminine as the Other whereas the second stage illustrates the mediation of Subject and Other.

The third and final stage, which takes place in Harcamone's heart, expands the theme of mediation and, indeed, culminates with a symbol which, by circumscribing contradictions, is reconciliation itself. The Mystic Rose, "une rose rouge, monstrueuse de taille et de beauté" [a red rose of monstrous size and beauty] symbolizes feminine beauty which, for Genet, is exceedingly dangerous, even—as Richard N. Coe points out in *The Vision of Genet*—"an invitation to transgression, an open doorway leading to death."¹² Trying to find the heart of the rose, the four travelers push back its petals. "L'ivresse de la profanation les tenait" [They were in the throes of drunken

profanation]. Once uncovered, the flower's center hypnotizes the four men and they lean in, "l'on ne sait quel vertige les prit . . . ils tombèrent dans ce regard profond" (464) [they. . . were seized with a kind of dizziness . . . they toppled into that deep gaze]. However, Coe adds, death also leads to the "unhallowed proximity of the gods." Death is, after all, transformation.

This notion holds singular significance for the fifth traveler, Jean Genet. In *Miracle de la Rose* the author admits to an unreasoned conviction that even in the most desperate of situations there is always a way out. And in his study, *Saint Genet, comédien et martyr* [*Saint Genet, Actor and Martyr*], Sartre suggests that Genet's worst situation is his "situation originelle," his relationship with the Mother. Abandoned by his biological mother, Genet was, says Sartre, a fake child born undoubtedly of a woman but one whose origin had not been noted by the social memory. As far as everyone (and consequently Genet) was concerned, he appeared one fine day without having been carried in the womb. He was a "produit synthétique." Alone, Genet made of this unknown Mother a character in his personal mythology whom he both despised and adored. But the child had a foster Mother as well, and Sartre feels that it is this second mother-son relationship which represents the fundamental crisis. Everyone remembers the story of how the foster mother witnessed the ten-year-old stealing, accused him of being a thief and of how Genet assumed the role, playing it to perfection. Sartre feels that this accusation pushed the boy to all possible contradictions of acceptable behavior, most notably, homosexuality.¹³

However, when Sartre says of this "situation originelle" that there is no exit, so to speak, but that because Genet does not kill himself *there must be one* despite the evidence, he is momentarily forgetting the importance that the author places on belonging to someone, that "être, c'est appartenir à quelqu'un" (Sartre 14) [to be is to belong to someone]. With this in mind, a question asked by Jane Gallop in *Psychoanalysis and Feminism* is particularly curious. She wishes to know who ever heard of a maternity suit, "a maternity dress, yet, but a maternity suit?", simultaneously deriving her humor from a play on words and what is ostensibly a ludicrous idea.¹⁴ Needless to say, Gallop's point in asking the question is to underscore what is really at stake here: the Name-of-the-Father. Any hint of the mother's infidelity exposes this label as an arbitrary imposition working solely in a symbolic register. Yet the very words "maternity suit" encom-

pass, by the indisputable femaleness of the first word and the presumed male clothing of the second, a reconciliation of opposites. This mediation is pre-symbolic order, what Kristeva calls the semiotic and what psychoanalysis calls pre-oedipal. I suggest that escape from Genet's "situation originelle" as well as the source of his homosexuality are manifest in what I shall indeed call a maternity suit—filed in the author's unconscious. Genet simply does not exist unless he can establish the "Name-of-the-Mother."

It is no coincidence then that this intriguing dream sequence is in a novel which intermingles two prison experiences that conjure up Genet's childhood. Imprisoned in Fontevrault, the author encounters Divers, a former lover, and Bulkaen who becomes his lover, both of whom were with Genet at Mettray, a reformatory for wayward youth. At present confronted by his past, Genet makes a point of recapturing it and moves back and forth ambiguously through time, alternating descriptions of the Central (Fontevrault) and the Colony (Mettray) and creating his usual dream-like prose. Moreover, when he reflects on his first incarceration, the author characterizes Mettray as a home not a prison and describes how the boys were divided into groups of thirty, which were called families. Genet states plainly that his unit, Family B, was his family and declares a special kinship with Mettray's inhabitants: "je veux dire 'mes frères' en pensant aux colons" (317) [I mean "my brothers" when I think of the colonists].

More revealing, Genet admits that he speaks of Mettray as he would a Mother when he christens her "la vieille" (The Old Lady) and "la sévère" (The Dreadnought).¹⁵ These expressions had come from a young Genet growing weary of his isolation as an abandoned child and, thus, calling for a mother:

Et tout ce qui n'est qu'aux femmes: tendresse, relents un peu nauséabonds de la bouche entrouverte, sein profond que la houle soulève, corrections inattendues, enfin tout ce qui fait que la mère est la mère. . . . Je chargeai la Colonie de tous ces ridicules et troublants attributs du sexe. . . . (387)

And everything that one associates with women: tenderness, slightly nauseating whiffs from the open mouth, deep, heaving bosom, unexpected punishment, in short, everything that makes a mother a mother. . . . I endowed the Colony with all these ridiculous and disturbing attributes of womankind. . . .

Ambivalence towards the Mother is unmistakable, and key here is Freud's observation that there is no better way to resolve ambivalence toward the Mother (ambivalence which Genet felt because of the double maternal rejection) than by killing her and becoming her.¹⁶ The author states his ambivalence in the dream's initial stage, in the description of Harcamone's feminine landscape. It is silent ("Ce qui les étonna le plus fut le silence" [462] What surprised them most was the silence) and dark ("le feuillage était très haut et formait le ciel du paysage" [462] the foliage was very high and formed the sky of the landscape). Incomprehensible, this landscape is Freud's dark continent. Furthermore, it is perverse. Openings quite often threaten sequestration: the doors and windows of houses are shut or the walls of passageways keep converging suffocatingly. And they are not simply narrow but winding, meandering and complicated, an extraordinary maze through which the men "tournèrent à gauche, croyant que c'était par là, puis à gauche, à gauche. Toutes les rues étaient pareilles (463) [turned left, thinking that was the right way, then left, left. The streets were all alike].

The terrain is so unfriendly that the travelers meet their death there, and in fact, these four are all different manifestations of the Mother. The judge and the lawyer, representatives of society's laws, recall the biological mother who abandoned her child and made him a misfit in the community. The foster Mother reinforced this evaluation, of course, when she labelled her son a thief. The executioner, on the other hand, emphasizes both women's roles because each undermined the child's sense of self, each killed the young Genet. Finally, the priest encompasses the author's ambivalence: there was always a part of Genet that continued to love the Mother with religious fervor.

Yet the mirror of the second stage is a reminder that there is inevitably another side to the story. With the flower's petals serving as labia surrounding a "trou noir et profond comme un oeil" (464) [pit, which was as murky and deep as an eye], this precipitous fall into the Mystic Rose is also the orgasmic end to penetration. The drummer beats out "la plus haute vie d'Harcamone" [Harcamone's highest life] and, at the same time, seems to mark with Ravel's precision a Bolero-like crescendo so frequently associated with orgasm. Certainly Genet's account of the men's entry supports this interpretation: "ils se précipitèrent, écartant et froissant, avec les mains ivres, les pétales, comme un satyre sevré d'amour écarte les jupons d'une fille. . . . Ils arrivèrent les tempes battantes, la sueur au front, au coeur de la

rose . . .” (464) [they rushed in, pushing back the petals and crumpling them with their drunken hands, as a lecher who has been deprived of sex pushes back a whore’s skirt. . . . With their temples throbbing and their brows beaded with sweat, they reached the heart of the rose]. In Coe’s view, nothing better captures Genet’s own sexuality than the rose, the journey’s destination. The author, says Coe, sees his desire not as a knife to penetrate or as water to plunge into, but as something between the two. Rather it is the expansion and unfolding in color and richness of the Mystic Rose. But because it has a hard, thorn-protected stem, as unfeminine as barbed wire, the Rose can also be unyielding (Coe 80).

Appropriately, this perception of Genet’s sexuality straddles both male and female and ultimately permits Genet to re-produce the Mother within himself. Fearing a recurrence of his “situation originelle,” as Sartre says, the way an epileptic fears the return of an attack, Genet avoids this possibility by becoming the Mother. Indeed, he appears to exemplify what Luce Irigaray states in her opening sentence of *L’Une ne bouge pas sans l’autre* [*And the One Doesn’t Stir Without the Other*]: “Avec ton lait, ma mère, j’ai bu la glace.”¹⁷ [With your milk, my mother, I drank the ice]. Irigaray accentuates the double meaning of *glace*: it is both mirror and ice. The fluid from the mother, so necessary for life, contains both ice which fixes and paralyzes movement and a mirror, a representation, as Gallop notes (121). Genet not only finds his identity through the mediation of a mirror, explicit in the dream’s corridor of mirrors and more pointedly in the mirror engraved with a heart pierced by an arrow (another sign of Genet’s ambivalence) leading to the Mystic Rose but, more important, through the Other which the Mother frequently embodies. However, in contrast to Irigaray who bemoans the “ice” as entrapment, Genet wants the maternal fixed within him.

Moreover, although speaking of the mother-daughter relationship, Irigaray also talks of the interpenetration of the two which, again, seems to characterize Genet’s relationship to the Mother. In fact, Genet prefigures his ability to blur boundaries in *Journal du voleur* [*The Thief’s Journal*]: “Mon trouble semble naître de ce qu’en moi j’assume à la fois le rôle de victime et de criminel. En fait même, j’émet, je projette la nuit la victime et le criminel issus de moi, je les fais se rejoindre quelque part . . .”¹⁸ [My excitement seems to be due to my assuming within me the role of both victim and criminal. Indeed, as a matter of fact, I emit, I project at night the victim and criminal

born of me: I bring them together somewhere]. Yet most important is Hélène Cixous' observation in *Le Rire de la méduse* that the Mother is the very metaphor for reconciliation of Subject and Other. Clearly here is a victory of the pre-oedipal over the oedipal, a symbiosis of mother and child which merges representations of self and object. Genet appears to realize what would be for Irigaray the ideal relationship to the Mother in which intimate interrelatedness nonetheless allows each its individuality.

Two essential motifs emerge in Genet's metamorphosis, suggested fittingly in the implicitly feminist *Glas*, a two-texts-in-one volume which itself blurs boundaries in Genet-like fashion, when Derrida focuses on the word *navette* (Derrida 233).¹⁹ Commonly known to mean "shuttle," the word indicates in the Church an incense boat, simultaneously suggesting religious and nautical themes. Indeed, Harcamone bodies forth from between the legs of a galley captain who appears intermittently in Genet's phantasies. The galley represents an important refrain in *Miracle de la Rose* and is surely the author's preferred dream vehicle. Furthermore, Derrida finds it to be a word, in Genet's vocabulary, synonymous with the Mother (Derrida 75). Not unexpectedly then, the very movement through Harcamone's body implies intrauterine life requiring maritime navigation.

These narrow passageways lead to sainthood ("Les voies de la sainteté sont étroites" [446], the ways of saintliness are narrow), to the mediation of life and death. Through writing, Genet can realize his unconscious wish to establish his own existence through existence of the Mother. He can undo the work of death, a process that Hélène Cixous characterizes as that of examining the Same and the Other, of wanting both. Thus, with his phantasy travel through Harcamone's body, Genet—admittedly obsessed with sainthood—announces a virgin birth:

Le fils . . . couche donc immédiatement avec sa mère, le père mort (ou écarté par l'Immaculée Conception mais se dispensant aussi bien, de ce fait, de passer essentiellement par la mère, engendrant dès lors son fils tout seul, s'auto-inséminant et s'appelant en lui: le fils qui est la mère. . . (Derrida 120)

So the son . . . sleeps immediately with his . . . mother, the father dead (or set aside by the Immaculate Conception, but because of

this fact, excusing himself just as well from passing essentially through the mother, consequently engendering his son all by himself, self-inseminating himself and calling himself in him: the son that is the mother. . . .

Miracle de la Rose is a tribute to the Mother²⁰ (and in this respect much like Cixous' *Souffles*) whose "opération génétique" (birth-giving operation), carried out in the novel's extraordinary dream sequence, establishes the primacy of the Mother and at last permits Genet to say emphatically, "Je nais" [I am born].

NOTES

1. Kate Millett, *Sexual Politics* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1970).
2. Hélène Cixous, "Le Rire de la méduse," *L'Arc* 59 (1975) 42. Colette and Marguerite Duras are the other two.
3. Cynthia Running Rowe, "Jean Genet and Hélène Cixous: Reading Genet through the Feminine," Diss., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1985.
4. Jean Bellemin-Noël, "'Psychanalyser' le rêve de Swann?," *Vers l'inconscient du texte* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1979) 29-64.
5. "Je m'étonne encore du privilège qui me permettait d'assister à la vie intérieure d'Harcamone et d'être l'observateur invisible des aventures secrètes des quatre hommes noirs." [I am still amazed at the privilege which allowed me to witness Harcamone's inner life and to be the invisible observer of the secret adventures of the four black men.] Jean Genet, *Miracle de la Rose, Oeuvres complètes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1951) 463.
6. Jacques Derrida, *Glas* (Paris: Editions Galilée, 1977) 72.
7. The drum's erotic image is prefigured as well when Genet explains that Divers called him "mon tambour" [my drum] and goes on to say, "Il me battit doucement, de ses baguettes fines, élégantes" (417). [He beat me gently with his fine, elegant drumsticks.]
8. All translations of *Miracle de la Rose* are taken from Bernard Frechtman's 1966 translation for Grove Press.
9. Larry David Nachman, "Genet: Dandy of the Lower Depths," *Salmagundi* 58-59 (1982-1983), 367.
10. Dahomey! . . . Dahomey! . . . A mon secours, Nègres de tous les coins du monde. Venez! Entrez! Mais pas ailleurs qu'en moi. Que me gonfle votre tumulte! Venez. Bousculez-vous. Pénétrez par où vous voudrez: la bouche, l'oreille—ou par mes narines. Narines, conques énormes, gloire de ma race, pavillons ténébreux, tunnels, grottes béantes où des bataillons enrhumés sont à l'aise! Géante à la tête renversée, je vous attends. Entrez en moi, multitude, et soyez, pour ce soir, seulement, ma force et

ma raison. [Dahomey! . . . Dahomey! . . . Negroes from all corners of the earth, to the rescue! Come! Enter into me and only me! Swell me with your tumult! Come barging in! Penetrate where you will: my mouth, my ears—or my nostrils. Nostrils, enormous conches, glory of my race, sunless shafts, tunnels, yawning grottoes where sniffing battalions lie at rest! Giantess with head thrown back, I await you all. Enter into me, ye multitudes, and be, for this evening only, my force and reason]. Jean Genet, *Les Nègres*, (Paris: Marc Barbezat, 1963) 110. Trans. Bernard Frechtman, Grove Press, 1960.

11. Jacques Lacan, “Le Stade du Miroir,” *Ecrits* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1966) 89–97.

12. Richard N. Coe, *The Vision of Genet* (London: Peter Owen, 1968) 89.

13. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Saint Genet, comédien et martyr* (Paris: Gallimard, 1970) 15.

14. Jane Gallop, *Psychoanalysis and Feminism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982) 48.

15. John P. Leavy, Jr. and Richard Rand choose to use the word “Motherfucker” in their translation of the text as it appears in the English version of *Glas* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986). As the reader shall discover, this is particularly important for my dream analysis.

16. Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams* (New York: Avon Books, 1965) 226.

17. Luce Irigaray, *L’Une ne bouge pas sans l’autre* (Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 1979) 7.

18. Genet, *Journal du voleur* (Paris: Gallimard, 1949) 16. The translation is Bernard Frechtman’s (New York: Grove Press, 1964).

19. How can one see *Glas* otherwise? Derrida places two texts side by side so that the reader cannot decide what *is* the text. Should the reader choose the one on the left or the one on the right? The appropriate decision is not either/or but rather both/and, leading back to the mediation of Subject and Other à la Cixous and Irigaray. Furthermore, foregoing choice it is always “elsewhere” (“Car si mon texte est (était) impenable, il ne sera (it) pas pris, ni retenu.” 77 / For if my text is (was) ungraspable, it will (would) be neither grasped nor retained). This brings to mind Irigaray’s “Ce Sexe qui n’en est pas un” which describes woman as always “ailleurs.”

20. Not insignificant then is the thought Genet gives Harcamone’s mother at the novel’s close: “il me vint à l’idée que peut-être Harcamone avait une mère—on sait que les décapités ont tous une mère qui vient pleurer au bord du cordon de flics qui gardent la guillotine—je voulus songer à elle et à Harcamone, déjà partagé en deux, je dis doucement, dans la fatigue: ‘Je vais prier pour ta maman’ ” (465) [it occurred to me that perhaps Harcamone had a mother—everyone knows that all men who are beheaded have a mother who comes to weep at the edge of the police cordon that guards the guillotine. I wanted to let my thoughts run on her and Harcamone, who was already divided in two. I said softly, in my state of fatigue: “I’m going to pray for your mamma”].