

Abstract

It is common to think of the love object lost through either death or betrayal as preserved by mourning 'inside' the recollecting subject. This image appears in psychoanalysis (for instance the writings of Freud, Klein, Abraham and Torok) where the process of introjection and reality-testing show how successful mourning escapes the risk of melancholia or pathological mourning. It also appears in fictions such as the poetry of Hugo and Rilke, or the prose of Gide or Proust or the authors of 19c *réécits*: in all of these the lost beloved is conserved 'in' the poet's imagination, and may reappear only in a textual version that is, actually, a kind of re-interment. The first part of this paper examines these representations; the second, written as part of a longer project on the theory of psychoanalyst Didier Anzieu (*Le moi-peau*, 1985, 1995), explores three ways in which we might theorise the survival of the lost object 'outside' the mourner. As an imaginary friend, it might appear to walk beside or hover over us, protecting or gratifying us, but liable to disappear if we exceed the decorum of its magical existence. As a phantom limb it perpetuates sensation in a part-object, apparently lost but still capable of 'hurting' us – and also of making us less real to ourselves than the phantom that haunts us. Or, finally, the lost object might be something we carry with us, on us, as a second skin: the other of whom we are a kind of replacement child, simultaneously inside and outside and making us into the garment of the other.

'Is the lost object an imaginary friend, a phantom limb or a second skin?

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Let me start by saying that what I'll be talking about today is the lost love object and that there are two kinds of lost love objects, the ones who disappear by death and the ones who disappear by betrayal. The mourning process for these two is similar in a number of ways, and it might well be argued that the latter process is simply the former process with a preamble – a point is reached where the object feels as though they are dead, and at that point mourning of the 'proper' kind may begin. Another way of comparing the two might be to observe that the extreme ambivalence towards the lost object that follows betrayal is probably more overt, more conscious than in mourning for a dead object – and we know from Freud that mourning is as conscious in its ambivalence as melancholia is unconscious: 'Mourning and Melancholia' (1917) (Eng tr Joan Riviere 1925, James Strachey 1957 *SE* ['Trauer und Melancholie', 1917], PFL 11: *On Metapsychology*, 266): so we might view the three processes as being on a continuum, in which anger plays a diminishingly visible part. But that is not to argue that the kind of mourning I want to look at here is less fraught or complex than the other two. It is in the nature of any kind of loss to be deeply dramatic and complex and to haunt by little bites. The main point is that while both kinds of lost object have left the orbit of the mourning subject, one still exists in the material elsewhere and the other doesn't.

What I'll try to look at today is a variety of metaphorical angles on the relationship one cultivates with a love object that is lost. In Patrick's very interesting 'blurb' to this series he notes: ¹ 'Shadow' privileges a visual relation to the object, while other variations – the trace, the imprint, the echo – emphasize instead a tactile or an auditory experience thereof. My own interest is in the tactile – not so much in the sense of a 'trace' or 'imprint' as in a spatial relation of containment. The psychoanalyst who most interests me at the moment, Didier Anzieu, has done for the container what Melanie Klein, other object-relations theorists, and (as we shall see) many creative writers have done for the contents. His model for the container is, of course, the skin – the conceptual boundary of our immediate body-space and thus, in an argument derived from Freud's *The Ego and the id* (1923) the psychic limit of the

ego. And the images I am going to offer as variations on the spatial identification of the lost love object are all bodily ones. Not who, what or why is the lost object, but *where* do we imagine the object to be in relation to the space we assign as our self?

I shall begin of course with the classic metaphor of loss as the object incorporated or encrypted inside one's psychic body-space. Then I'll look at my three main alternatives: what would it be to imagine the other

- as my *'imaginary friend'*: ghost, risen messiah or guardian angel;
- or as the *phantom limb* in which the amputee still feels pain although, objectively, it is no longer in material existence;
- or, finally, as the *second skin* of the flayed Marsyas, the sloughed snake or the replacement child?

For the present I won't distinguish between the two kinds of lost objects – that will, I hope, emerge as I go. But *un objet perdu peut en cacher un autre*: here is one instance that might surprise you.

In Victor Hugo's *Les Contemplations*, written mainly from exile in Guernsey, the collection is divided into two halves, each containing three 'books', with the first three, sweet and positive and the second three heavy, portentous and coloured by mourning. Hugo wrote: [2](#) *Qui ne lit que le premier volume (Autrefois) se dit: C'est tout rose. Qui ne lit que le second (Aujourd'hui) dit: C'est tout noir* ([1856], Paris: Garnier, ed Léon Cellier 1969, xiii). We know – ambivalences and the mourning process being what they are – that he fiddled around with real and pretended dates in order to put all his sad or lapidary poems into the second half – which is full of the loss of his beloved elder daughter Léopoldine in 1843. But did you also know that the dividing line actually doesn't come at the point of her death by drowning on her honeymoon: it comes at the point of her marriage. Two poems precede the famous line of dots representing the date of her death. In other words, the loss that the father mourns is not so much a bereavement as a 'betrayal', her choice of another man to love in his place – and this may be why the most interesting of the poems carries a quite daring ambivalence.

In it, the lost object is both conserved and cannibalised, *inside*. We shall see many more instances of such 'insides', tho my main purpose is to find outside locations. In poem V: XXV, « O strophe du poète », this inside is the place where poetry is made, and, identified with the brain of Dis/Pluto, it makes the lost girl (carried off from the natural world / her mother) a Persephone who has been consumed and is now re-formed (regurgitated) as language. She is already language in the title, an apostrophe - « O strophe du poète » - and it is the job of the poem to re-inter her so that she can never get back to the light except on this page. A verse is like a girl, abducted by force from a flowery meadow 'out there' by [3](#) *lui, le chercheur du gouffre obscur, le chasseur d'ombres* (Hugo 319) and held (like a Kleinian object surrounded by other objects) :

[4](#)
 Prisonnière au plus noir de son âme profonde,
 Parmi les visions qui flottent comme l'onde,
 Sous son crâne à la fois céleste et souterrain,
 Assise, et t'accoudant sur un trône d'airain,
 Voyant dans ta mémoire, ainsi qu'une ombre vaine,
 Fuir l'éblouissement du jour et de la plaine,
 Par le maître gardée, et calme, et sans espoir,
 Tandis que, près de toi, les drames, groupe noir,
 Des sombres passions feuilletent le registre,
 Tu rêves dans sa nuit, Proserpine sinistre.

(Hugo, 319-320)

The beloved preserved inside is kept dead : this girl-verse, who will come out again only as the Soyent Green of a published poem, has turned as sinister as her baleful abductor – why? because we do indeed digest our inner people with the sour juices of our psychic self.

As Klein puts it: [5] the inside is felt to be a dangerous and poisonous place in which the loved object would perish (Klein 265, 'Psychogenesis of manic-depressive states'); she's referring here to the introjection of the ambivalently loved mother by the infant – but if we adapt it to a really dead person we can see that this entrapment by language, while a useful sublimation, is also a double murder.

Something very similar happens in the Romantic récit (*Manon Lescaut*, *Atala*, *René*, *Adolphe*, *Carmen*, *Sylvie* and the like), in which the misloved woman – whose fault it obscurely is that the man could not love her properly – has to die so that the protagonist can turn narrator and not so much recover as re-inter her – recall the long-drawn out disposals of *Atala*, *Manon* or *Carmen* – in text. A late avatar can be found in Gide: in his three best known récits of course (*L'Immoraliste*, *La Porte étroite*, *La Symphonie pastorale*) but also in two other places: in his earliest and one of his last texts, both heavily autobiographical - as far as anything ever is. The first of these is *Les Cahiers d'André Walter* (1891). This book, a rather creepy amalgam of over-heated biblical quotations, occasional sexual fantasies (fascination with boys and terror of women) and a minimal narrative in which the protagonist writer AW is losing a race with his own protagonist as to who will go insane first – was (bizarrely) written as a plea to Gide's cousin Madeleine to get her to marry him. The beloved in the text is called (as M. was in most of G's writings) 'Emmanuèle'. In the fiction she marries another man, at AW's mother's insistence, and then soon dies. Losing her to marriage, AW finds an interesting compensation, which concords at least somewhat with his fear of heterosexuality: [6] *Mère chérie, bénie sois-tu! par-dessus ton lit d'agonie, nos âmes se sont retrouvées* (CAW 87). Losing her to death, however, he triumphs: [7] *Elle meurt; donc il la possède... [...] Ton existence maintenant? rien qu'en moi: tu vis parce que je te rêve, lorsque je te rêve et seulement alors* (CAW 119 & 153).

This strange anticipation of revenge Manon-style, Carmen-style upon the evasive object of his [just as evasive] desire uses almost identical terms to another text, published 60 years later in 1951 after they were both dead [1398] and written soon after Madeleine died in 1938. The title of the text, « Et nunc manet in te », is taken from Virgil's account of Orpheus & Eurydice and means 'and now she remains [only] in you'. The curious elision of the 'she', the object in every sense of this homage, is apt enough, and there is an element of the same triumph in the text itself. Though ostensibly it seeks to make reparation and revive the beloved, it serves mainly to insist how much the chronically unfaithful Gide truly loved her and to show how pathetic she was: he recounts a hotel boy saying to him (of her) [8] « Madame votre mère vous attend dans la voiture » (*Souvenirs*, 952). He certainly did grieve – but as his memoirist Maria Van Rysselberghe wrote in April 1938: [9] *il a perdu son contrepoids, la mesure fixe avec quoi il confrontait ses actes, sa vraie tendresse, sa plus grande fidélité; de sa dialogue intérieure, l'autre voix s'est tue [...] Je pense que son souvenir va prendre de l'accent, et qui sait? elle occupera peut-être dans sa vie plus de place que de son vivant* (CPD3, 78).

The lost object conserved 'inside' by a sort of revenge may well, then, be disinterred in text as a way of reintering, sealing him or her in another kind of crypt (I'm messing with Abraham & Torok's term here) which is the crypt of literature: a rather exposed tomb indeed, where 'elle meurt, donc il la possède'. Revenge, why? Well for many reasons, but not least of these is the terrifying possibility that Eurydice no longer even knows who her mourner is. In Rilke's version, she is so enwrapped now in death (sought and found in the labyrinthine tangle of [10] *der Seelen wunderlichen Bergwerk – the soul's strange mine/earthwork*) that she looks pregnant with her own death: *ihr Gestorbensein / erfüllte sie wie Fülle [...] Sie war schon aufgelöst wie langes Haar [...] Sie war schon Wurzel – her being dead / filled her with fullness [...] she was already dissolved like long hair [...] she was already root*

And then:

[11]

Und als plötzlich jäh
 der Gott sie anhielt und mit Schmerz im Ausruf
 die Worte sprach: Er hat sich umgewendet -,
 begriff sie nichts und sagte leise: *Wer?*

Fern aber, dunkel vor dem klaren Ausgang,
 stand irgend jemand, dessen Angesicht
 nicht zu erkennen war.

*And as suddenly, abruptly
 the god stopped her and with painful voice
 cried out the words: 'He has turned round' -,
 she understood nothing and said softly 'Who?'*

*But far off, dark before the bright way out,
 stood someone or other, whose countenance
 could not be recognised.*

The reflexive nature of loss – whether to death or betrayal – is that it destroys the loser as much as the one who has gone. Without the reciprocal gaze (or the ‘counterweight’) of the beloved, we become simply ‘someone or other’. Loss is something weirdly contagious. As Anna Freud observes in a somewhat lighter vein (not talking of bereavement or betrayal but the child briefly gone astray in a department store): **12** *It is interesting that children usually do not blame themselves for getting lost but instead blame the mother who lost them. An example of this was a little boy who, after being reunited with his mother, accused her tearfully, ‘You losted me!’ (not ‘I lost you!’) (‘About losing & being lost’ [1967], in eds Richard Ekins & Ruth Freeman, *Selected Writings by Anna Freud*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1998, 101).* There is also the case of the girl climber who weeps disconsolately after having mislaid a cap on a mountainside, thinking how ‘lost’ it must feel without her.

I want to go on a bit longer about the lost object ‘held inside’. This will be a rather over-rapid tour of the three main theorists of mourning as ‘introjection’ (a progressively more complicated term as we go through them). By tracing some of the issues they raise, we may be able to see how these issues may adapt to the idea of the object preserved ‘outside’.

The first is of course Freud. In ‘Mourning and Melancholia’ (1917) (Eng tr Joan Riviere 1925, James Strachey 1957 *SE* [‘Trauer und Melancholie’, 1917], PFL 11: *On Metapsychology*, 247-68), he insists that mourning, unlike melancholia, is not pathological; tho it involves a similar withdrawal from the world to melancholia/depression, it is simply a slow and painful process of **13** *reality-testing [... a] compromise by which the command of reality [acceptance that the beloved is gone] is carried out piecemeal* (253). Where mourning shades into melancholic pathology is where reality-testing is complicated by ambivalence. The more conflictual the feelings for the lost person, the ‘further down’ (more embedded in the unconscious, less accessible to the preconscious and gradual healthy dissipation) the process occurs: **14** *by taking flight into the ego love escapes extinction* (267).

In the course of his discussion, Freud observes the shading of ‘normal mourning’ not only into melancholia but also into mania, a point picked up and developed by both Abraham & Torok and, earlier, Melanie Klein. Klein’s essay on ‘Mourning and its relation to manic-depressive states’ (1940) (MK, *Love, Guilt and Reparation and other works 1921-1945*, in *The Writings of MK*, eds Roger Money-Kyrle, with Betty Joseph, Edna O’Shaughnessy & Hanna Segal, vol 1 [London: The Hogarth Press & the Institute of Psycho-analysis, 1985; 344-69]), argues that the process of getting through any kind of grief in later life reproduces the process by which every child enters and lives through the depressive position in infancy. The infant has **15** *incorporated his [sic] parents, feels them to be live people inside his body in the concrete way in which deep unconscious phantasies are experienced – they are, in his mind, ‘internal’ or ‘inner’ objects* (345). Reality testing at that stage – for after all the actual

mother & father are probably present and alive – consists of a slightly risky checking in **16** *the visible mother [for] continuous proofs of what the 'internal' mother is like* (346 – *and we shall meet another internal mother presently*). These internal objects are coloured by extremes of energy or sorrow, goodness and badness. Triumph towards the internalised parents arises from the child's (like Hugo's or Gide's) sense that it has reversed the power its parents have over it in the 'real', ie external & resistant world. In mourning, Klein argues, because **17** *infantile death-wishes against parents, brothers & sisters are actually fulfilled whenever a loved person dies [...]* early psychotic anxieties are reactivated (354), so the bereaved person must work **18** *to reinstate the lost love object in the ego* (353), both by reconstituting the good parental objects and by gradually finding a renewed **19** *trust in external objects and values of various kinds* (355). This requires a renewed reality-testing, the re/acquisition of the ability to give vent to feelings and thereby 'eject or project' the bad stuff. Eventually, as in Freud's scenario, **20** *the love for the object wells up and the mourner feels more strongly that life *inside and outside* [my italics] will go on after all and that the lost love object can be preserved within* (360).

The ambiguity of this last line is interesting; by 'preserving the good object within', Klein sees the mourner as able to restore goodness outside as well (in, presumably, other objects). She is however only talking about bereavement; whereas the infant has a external mother to test against the internal one, the mourner is dealing with a good object that cannot change in the reality 'out there' – and thus has a certain stability, a stability that we might contrast with the fiancée done to death in *Les Cahiers d'André Walter* while her original was still very much around (and still refusing to marry Gide), as were the originals of Constant's, Nerval's or Musset's equally murderous *récits*.

If internal objects need a lot of burying, this might help to explain the proliferation of good/bad terms for them in the essays of Nicolas Abraham [no relation to Karl] and Maria Torok's *L'Écorce et le noyau* (first pub 1978, revised 1987, Flammarion, ed/intro Nicholas Rand, 2001; Eng: *The Shell & the Kernel* ed/tr/intro Rand, Chicago & London: U of Chicago Press, 1994). The familiar *introjection* [attributed to an article of 1909 by Sándor Ferenczi: 110] has come to mean a healthy and productive process that may happen automatically and will in any case be aided by good psychoanalysis: **21** *[l'introjection] se définit comme le processus d'inclusion – à propos d'un commerce objectal – de l'Inconscient dans le Moi [...] la visée de l'introjection n'est pas de l'ordre de la compensation mais de l'ordre de la croissance* (236). *Incorporation*, on the other hand, is a kind of **22** *prise de possession de l'objet*. The contrast is also one of time and 'realism': incorporation *se distinguera toujours de l'introjection, processus progressif, de par son caractère instantané et magique* (237). Further, **23** *l'incorporation correspond à un fantasme et l'introjection, à un processus* (259) : incorporation is not part of effective mourning but is a refusal to mourn, **24** *refuser le deuil et ses conséquences, c'est refuser d'introduire en soi la partie de soi-même déposé dans ce qui est perdu* (261, *their italics*). (And a third term, another one under the negative rubric, is 'inclusion', defined as a kind of topography of incorporation or **25** *refoulement conservateur* (272, *their italics*).

Introjection, then, is expansive, an **26** *acquisition* or *self-fashioning* (Rand intro to section [Eng]: 100), while incorporation is a kind of enclosure that seals off material from conscious access in a secret place, a 'crypt'. Abraham & Torok pick up hints in Freud and Klein of the other direction that mourning can take - to mania rather than depression – developing a note from Karl Abraham to Freud about the tendency of bereaved people to feel a sudden access of sexual energy. This mania (unlike the frantic cleaning or sorting that often follows a bereavement) produces guilt: Freud's own failure to pick up on KA's point is indicative, they say, of **27** *'Pénétrer ... intime'* again – I wonder why these 'internalising' terms – after all, this is a case of external action if ever there was one.

I am not attempting to negate the centrality of the concept of inner reality in psychoanalytic theory – but rather (along with Anzieu) to examine the limits of insiderness

and the usefulness of setting up a contrasting outside where things may be happening too. In this connection, then, I am going to retrace my steps through these 3 [4] theorists to look for further examples of where the concept of insideness quivers a little bit.

Abraham/Torok: their theory is, of course, about shells/envelopes as well as kernels. They argue that an encrypted/incorporated entity (person, object, memory, secret) is 'sealed' or 'immured': [28](#) comparable à la formation d'un cocon autour de la chrysalide et que nous avons nommé: *inclusion* (297). Indeed they are interested precisely in the way that, in Freud, [29](#) la Périphérie elle-même comporte a son tour un Noyau avec sa propre Périphérie qui, elle aussi, comporte un Noyau et ainsi de suite... (217). Messages go from Kernel to Periphery and vice versa – and, very much like Anzieu, they show that [30](#) la trace de l'inscription pourra se prêter ainsi à un double usage: nucléique par sa face tournée vers l'Inconscient et périphérique par son regard vers le Conscient (218), for l'on situe les traces mémorielles à la limite nucléo-périphérique (219) - that is, at the point of a 'psychic skin'. Yet there is some sleight of hand. In their theory, [31](#) l'originalité de Freud [...] a consisté à enraciner cette conscience intentionnelle dans un système nucléo-périphérique et, par là, lui conférer une profondeur non insondable, ainsi d'ailleurs qu'à l'Objet; symétrique extérieur du système (220); the unconscious is an un « territoire étranger, interne » [et] l'étranger interne sera fondateur de l'étranger externe, l'Objet (221) ; thus, in a version of phenomenology's principle of the toucher touched, consciousness, though l'organe de l'Enveloppe [...] porte sur la scène intérieure les drames nucléo-périphériques, traduits dans des innombrables figures de la réciprocité objectale.

In Abraham & Torok, then, however aware they are of peripheries, it is always the internal to which they return. This is, of course, much more dominant in Melanie Klein. But there are moments of indeterminacy: let's examine a couple of footnotes in her paper on 'Mourning'. In relation to a dreamer she is citing as an example, she notes: [32](#) I have often found that processes which the patient unconsciously feels are going on inside him are represented as something happening on top of or closely round him (365). But two pages later this is swept away: An attack on the outside of the body often stands for one which is felt to happen internally. I have already pointed out that something represented as being on top of or tightly round the body often has the deeper meaning of being inside (367). I wonder what 'felt to' means here – and it seems to me that 'deeper meaning' is precisely preempting what it needs to prove.

In Freud's essay the outside is there everywhere, most particularly in the basic contrast he draws between melancholia/mania, which are *pathological* versions of 'normal mourning', and the latter which is the ability, bit by bit, to submit a loved and lost object to the reality-testing of its lostness. The external world may be a very empty one, but it is there. Actually, when people speak about this essay (and that includes both Klein and Abraham & Torok) they seem to elide the essential difference – potentially, of course, it is a continuum rather than a contrast – by carrying across to mourning many remarks that apply only to melancholia, or pathological/failed mourning. In reference to 'normal mourning', Freud says little about introjection. And a phrase he uses about melancholia in fact suggests something more external than internal: [33](#) The complex of melancholia behaves like an open wound, drawing to itself cathectic energies (262); an open wound can only be on the surface of a body, facing outwards and drawing cathexis away from the 'internal' psyche. It is strange, then, that Abraham & Torok somewhat perversely turn this [34](#) image qui revient (272) (?) inside out: c'est cette plaie que le mélancolique cherche à dissimuler, à entourer d'un mur, à encrypter (272). They (again) put the surface 'back inside'.

I want to begin looking, then, at some possibilities of 'externalising' the lost love object. My examples are somewhat speculative, and will gather together a variety of approaches – literary, psychoanalytic and others. First: is the lost object an 'imaginary friend'?

In the weeks after Princess Diana died, I collected together all the pieces that appeared on her in newspapers and magazines for an article looking particularly at the way her skin and use of the sense of touch were represented. In a review in November 1997 of various books on her, Adam Mars-Jones wrote: ³⁵ If celebrities are, as one theory has it, the equivalent in adults' lives of children's imaginary friends, then how does an imaginary friend go about making real ones? (*Observer Review*, 30 Nov 1997, 17). One of the sources of the intelligentsia's bewilderment, contempt or anger at the time of the outflow of grief over Diana's death was the view that, since most of the people who were mourning her had never met her in person, this was unreal in an important way: merely ³⁶ virtual grief (Steven Levy, *Newsweek*, 15 Sep 1997, p. 33; see also Judith Williamson, *The Guardian Weekend* 13 Sep 97, p. 8: ³⁷ just like a message in a bottle, they were outpourings of emotion to someone *who wasn't there*. I have no doubt that the feelings expressed were real, just as I know my own tears on August 31 were real. But how much easier it is to pour out all that intensity to someone we didn't know, *who's not there* and, in a sense, never was).

But isn't this always so? Isn't all grief virtual, in a way? Aren't we, in every case, dealing with the ghost of someone whose presence has now been drastically problematised – all the more in betrayal, but in bereavement too – by our ambivalence and their inability or refusal to provide any reality-testing of a positive kind? All we test when, as Freud rather cheerfully notes, we gradually accept loss, is the *absence* of the beloved's existence in real space around us. Now we can, if we wish, use this imaginary friend fantasy in a positive way: friendly ghosts, risen messiahs or guardian angels. Here is one:

³⁸

Who is the third who walks always beside you?
When I count, there are only you & I together
But when I look ahead up the white road
There is always another one walking beside you
Gliding wrapt in a brown mantle, hooded
I do not know whether a man or a woman
- But who is that on the other side of you?

T. S. Eliot, *The Waste Land* V: 'What the Thunder Said'

Here is another, from Wim Wenders' *Der Himmel über Berlin* (*Wings of Desire*, 1987). ³⁹



Angels are the internal externalised, as are other creatures of faith – but they are not what Klein called *on top of or closely [tightly] round you* (quote 32). They do not even 'walk beside' you. On the contrary, they lean from afar or hover, like an authority – the nearest they might get to you is standing looking over your shoulder, where you can't see them. They are understood to have your best interests at heart, but not to emanate from you as your imaginary friend might.

⁴⁰

Binker – what I call him – is a secret of my own,
 And Binker is the reason why I never feel alone.
 Playing in the nursery, sitting on the stair,
 Whatever I am busy at, Binker will be there.

(A. A. Milne, *Now we are six*, 1927)

An imaginary friend is the interlocutor in a dialogue you reliably write. An identical twin? They eat up your mental scraps – or allow you, like Binker, to get double helpings. They have a partial relation to desire, perhaps because they too easily fulfil it, and the desires they fulfil are childish ones, like the wishes fulfilled by children's dreams. In Edith Olivier's *The Love Child* (also 1927) a longed-for daughter appears in the life of a lonely single woman – and sticks around for several years. She disappears, though, when adolescence brings sexuality, both because she desires and because she is desired: she is no longer the emanation only of the protagonist, but of a young man's fantasy. *Hungry ghosts?*

Or is the lost object something more like a phantom limb?

41 Most people know what is meant, writes the neurologist V. S. [Vilayanur] Ramachandran, by a phantom limb. A patient has an arm amputated because it has a malignant tumour or has been irreparably damaged in an accident but continues to feel the presence of the amputated arm. A famous example concerns Lord Nelson [...] (*The Emerging Mind* London: Profile 2003, p. 10). The feeling might be tingling, clenching or twisting of fingers or toes – but the most common type of feeling in the phantom limb is pain.

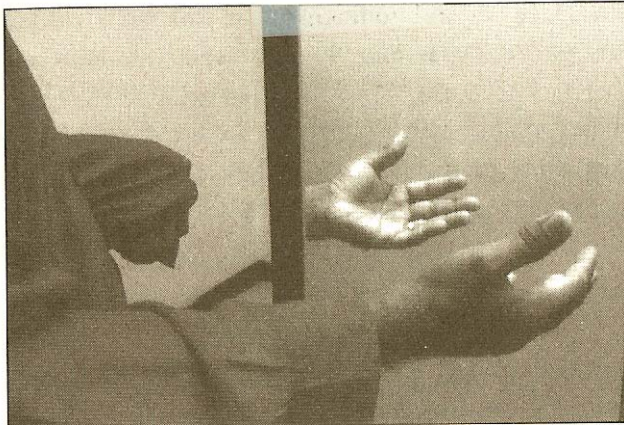
Unlike an imaginary friend, the phantom limb is an externally projected part-object and, just like the lost love object, it is hard to know what exactly is meant if we say that 'it hurts'. Remember the impersonal 'it' in 'it's raining – *il pleut*, etc: that is meant to be God or Jupiter. But the pain I might feel in a phantom limb is more like the sense of combined grief and accusation that Anna Freud's child patient felt on behalf of the mother who let him get lost. We always have this mixture of ownership and repudiation in relation to body parts that plague us, but in specific relation to the phantom limb this is a bereaved relation: the bit of me that hurts is demanding to be mourned for longer than its due.

Are phantom limbs only a harmful thing? Oliver Sacks points out how they may not be: **42** All amputees, and all who work with them, know that a phantom limb is essential if an artificial limb is to be used. Dr Michael Kremer writes: 'Its value to the amputee is enormous. I am quite certain that no amputee with an artificial lower limb can walk on it satisfactorily until the body-image, in other words the phantom, is connected with it (*The Man who mistook his wife for a hat* London: Picador, 1986, 64). In such cases, the disappearance of a phantom may be disastrous, and its recovery, its re-animation, a matter of urgency. In Abraham & Torok (before they adopted the term 'phantom/fantôme' as the ghost-like effect of the encrypted secret) use it to mean a phantom limb rather in the way I am proposing (Nicholas Rand commentary). And, as I am proposing, it is somewhat like Binker in the way it can help exploit other people. The analyst mistakenly targets the melancholic patient's phantom rather than himself. **43** Or, *l'objet-fantôme hante aussi le contre-transfert. Dans l'effort d'objectaliser l'agression on le prend souvent pour cible*. For the patient too, it plays a seductive role : *On ne sait s'il aime vraiment son fantôme mais il est sûr que celui-ci est « fou » de lui : pour lui, il serait prêt à tout. Ce fantôme éperdu, le mélancolique l'incarne dans tout ce qu'il endure « pour lui »* (274). So here, again, reciprocation, like a blood flow into and out of a real limb, binds the non-existent thing to me. *Rilke, 'das Große'*

A couple more points about phantom limbs, before we develop the analogy. They are, of course, more commonly thought of as problematic than as useful – ie, in psychological terms, as frustrating adaptation [mourning] rather than facilitating it. When a cure is sought for the continuing discomfort – which sometimes lasts for ever – an interesting solution is the

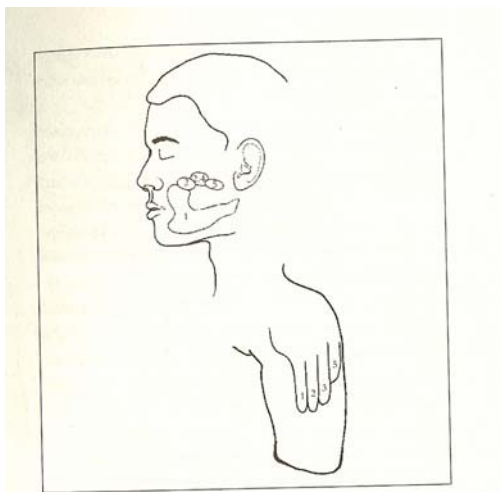
'mirror box'. This is a device that uses the visual effect of the remaining hand to delude the brain into thinking the lost hand is really there. The person wiggles right-hand fingers and the absent, painfully cramped left-hand fingers wiggle back, which (temporarily or permanently) releases the tension in the phantom.

44 Ramachandran p. 18



In this instance, a sort of twinning not unlike that of the imaginary friend (but still of a part-object only) produces an effect of false – but effective - reassurance.

Another recent discovery is that stimulation of certain places on the skin of the face produces a sensation in a missing hand: There was **46** a complete, systematic map of the missing phantom hand draped on his face, Ramachandran marvels.



Ramachandran p. 12

Conference Goldsmiths Jan 2005: More peculiar still, we might think – and parallel to the strange ways in which we preserve intact *and outside us* the dead or rejecting lover, is the fact that you do not have to have had an amputation in order to have a phantom limb. A woman born without arms or legs described the peculiar feeling of crossing her phantom arms 'the wrong way', exactly like the rest of us who are used to putting our left hand into our right elbow – or whatever - and not the other way around. (Peter Brugger, Zurich). Conversely a woman with two arms and two legs was convinced she had a third one of each at the left side of her body: she had to give up her job in a fish-sorting factory because the 'extra arm' kept getting in the way; it also made her avoid supermarkets because she felt it was liable to shoplift (Dave McGonigle CNRS). This syndrome is known as 'supernumerary' or 'anarchic limb'. Chris Frith [Wellcome]: **47** We all have phantom limbs except that most of the time our real limbs coincide with them.

A moment to take this in.

Is our whole body a phantom limb? Are we all our own Doppelgänger? Leaving this extremity aside, if we take the last remark and apply it to the lost object, what it suggests is that our 'real' objects are as lost as the lost ones, and that not only is all grief 'virtual' but that all other emotions are too. (When I suggested to one of the scientists that the fish-sorter's anarchic arm was acting – like Mr Hyde – on unconscious intentions, he looked bemused and a bit irritated: a contradiction in terms.) This is, we all know, where psychoanalysis comes in.

How might the lost object be like a phantom limb? Because 'it hurts us' even though it isn't there. But differently in the two cases of bereavement & betrayal. In a case viewed twice by Oliver Sacks (*A leg to stand on* [1984]; *The Man who mistook...* [1985]), a person believes his leg to be a dead leg even though it's intact and attached to his body: when he throws it in horror out of the bed he finds himself on the floor. This weirdly resembles something called Capgras syndrome (Ramachandran 7ff) in which a person recognises a close relative, say their mother, but fails to feel the normal response to her (Meursault, come back, all is forgiven!) and thus takes her for an imposter. After a betrayal we know the person who once loved us is still alive; we might even see them from time to time (reality-testing in the way Freud doesn't consider). But when, like Rilke's Eurydice, they fail to recognise us with love – when, that is, they manifest Capgras's syndrome towards us – then we become *their* phantom limb.

And what of the second skin? Mourning Albertine – first as betrayal, then (without seeing her again) as bereavement – Proust's Marcel recalls the skin-like effects of (first) love and (then) loss: 48 je pensais avec désespoir à tout ce tégument de caresses, de baisers, de sommeils amis, dont il faudrait bientôt me laisser dépouiller pour jamais [...] D'ailleurs le souvenir de tous mes désirs était aussi imprégné d'elle, et de souffrance, que le souvenir des plaisirs (MP, *A la Recherche* eds Pierre Clarac & André Ferré, Paris : Gallimard Pleiade, 1954, 482-3). Mourning is very complex: by 'désirs' here he means the things he wanted but she didn't fulfil when she was there. It is because she was both the skin of his desires and pleasures *and* also of the feeling of frustration at being prevented by monogamy from seeking other pleasures that, paradoxically or not, she is now an obstacle to finding those other things: 49 Albertine m'avait semblé un obstacle interposé entre moi et toutes choses, parce qu'elle était pour moi leur contenant et que c'est d'elle, comme d'un vase, que je pouvais les recevoir. Maintenant que ce vase était détruit, je ne me sentais plus le courage de les saisir (483). What this image tells us is that the love-object is the skin of our experience of the world: once it is lost, our hand cannot touch – or (like a dead limb) grasp.

What is the second skin? I am thinking of a particular aspect of the *moi-peau* or psychic skin (Anzieu) that would describe how the remainder of the lost object is experienced as something happening on top of or closely/tightly round us (Klein). After all the skin is never something that fits us exactly. At an extreme (Jay Prosser on pre-operative transsexuals), 50 the body [is] a false outer casing with nothing inside: a hollow shell or empty skin [...] the body's skin [is] the 'clothing' that the subject needs changing (Jay Prosser, *Second Skins*, New York: Columbia UP, 1998, 68-9). For one thing, the *moi-peau* (like any skin) is always double-sided: 51 toute écorce végétale, toute membrane animale, sauf exceptions, comporte deux couches, l'une interne, l'autre externe [...] l'une protectrice, c'est la plus extérieure, l'autre, sous la précédente ou dans les orifices de celles-ci, susceptible de recueillir de l'information, de filtrer des échanges (Didier Anzieu, *Le Moi-peau*, Paris : Dunod, 2^e ed, 1995 : 31). We have already seen this doubleness observed by Abraham & Torok in relation to the embedded structure of Kernels inside Shells which in turn have shells with kernels in them. Though embeddedness appears in Anzieu (and, interestingly, also in his wife Annie Anzieu's theory of psychoanalytic practice), I want to look at a single instance of it here: the relation between the psychic skins of mother and child.

Both Abraham/Torok and Klein, too, have spoken of the internal or introjected mother. The fact that this is a paradox (mothers contain children, not the other way round) and has implications for the dynamics of second skins goes unspoken – perhaps it is too obvious. But, according to Anzieu, all babies develop the phantasy of a [52](#) *peau commune à la mère et à l'enfant, interface d'un côté de laquelle se tient la mère, l'enfant étant de l'autre côté* – an illusion of reciprocal inclusion: *fantasme, ravivé plus tard par l'expérience amoureuse, selon lequel chacun des deux, en le tenant dans ses bras, envelopperait l'autre tout en étant enveloppé par lui* (AMP 85). But just as love can fail, the common skin can appear too tight, too loose or violently torn away, leading to pathologies of the skin-ego.

The doubleness of any experience of surface or skin lends itself both to the vertigo of embeddedness and to the paradox whereby we have both a Janus-faced relation of one-each-side and (almost without it becoming clear that it can't really be both these at the same time) a relationship of intensive containment, two people holding and being held simultaneously. Here is this image again in relation to two mother/child pairs in Anzieu's writing, first Borges's (the mother is reading to her blind son) and then his own (explaining his motive for becoming a psychoanalyst):

[53](#) Image de deux êtres en un seul corps. Elle est l'œil et la main et le sein. Il en est le cerveau et l'appendice. Il est la bouche qui écoute sa bouche. Ils sont un même code en diverses langues, tour de Babel, bibliothèque totale, et tous les plaisirs de Babylone. Ce corps fusionné, cette bouche parlante parlent aux souvenirs, aux images, aux émois que chacun de nous a plus ou moins obscurément conservés de ce qui fut une étape décisive de sa propre genèse psychique.

(Anzieu, *Le Corps de l'œuvre*, Paris : Gallimard, 1981 [ACO] 316)

[54](#) Je pourrais risquer une formule banale, mais qui, pour mon compte personnel, m'apparaît vraie. Je suis devenu psychanalyste pour soigner ma mère. Non pas tant pour la soigner dans la réalité, encore que je sois parvenu, dans le dernier quart de sa vie, à l'aider à trouver une existence relativement heureuse et équilibrée. Je veux dire : soigner ma mère en moi et chez les autres. Soigner en eux cette mère menaçante et menacée...

(Anzieu, *Une Peau pour les pensées*, Paris : Apsygée, 1991 [APP], 20 ; interview 1983)

As for mourning in Anzieu, it is one of a trio of Freudian versions of 'work' that culminate in creativity : [55](#) *le travail du rêve, le travail du deuil, le travail de la création* (ACO 18). His first publication, a doctoral study of Freud's production of *The Interpretation of Dreams* under the influence of his father's death in October 1896 – we might think also of Proust's inability to write *A la recherche* until his mother had died – stresses the way that the three *travaux* are connected. But there is something more direct. In Anzieu's own case, death was hovering **on top of or closely round him** already many years before he was born, and it is this version of the second skin that I want to focus on finally. *Why* was his mother *menaçante et menacée* and why did he need to shelter her as an internalised container that he has to learn to (in both senses) contain?

[56](#) [Ma mère] était le troisième enfant de sa fratrie, le troisième ou le quatrième... Là réside le problème. Avant elle, en effet, étaient nées trois filles. La famille vivait dans une grande maison en pierre, près de l'étable et des champs. La pièce commune avait seule le chauffage dans une grande cheminée où brûlaient de grosses pièces de bois, où l'on faisait la cuisine, à l'intérieur de laquelle on pouvait s'asseoir sur des bancs. La scène s'est passée avant la naissance de ma mère. C'était jour de fête. Pour aller à la messe, Marguerite, la plus jeune des trois filles, avait été habillée d'une robe d'organdi. On l'a laissée un moment à la garde de la plus grande, celle qui sera ma marraine. La petite était légèrement vêtue, il faisait froid, elle s'est approchée du feu... et elle est morte brûlée vive. Ce fut un choc atroce pour ses parents, pour ses deux sœurs. Ma mère alors a été conçue pour remplacer la défunte. Et comme c'est encore une fille qui est née, on lui a donné le même

prénom, Marguerite. Une morte-vivante, en quelque sorte... Ce n'est pas par hasard si ma mère a passé sa vie à multiplier les moyens pour échapper aux flammes de l'enfer... Cela s'appelle subir son destin, un destin tragique. Ma mère ne m'en a parlé ouvertement qu'une seule fois. Mais je le savais par la légende familiale. Sa dépression provient, je pense, de ce rôle intenable. APP 19-20

The mother, then, carries with her, like Marsyas (a favoured image in Anzieu's mythology),

57 Valverde, *Marsyas*



the ever painful skin that represents the sister whose name she received as a 'replacement child'. And her son too is a replacement: a sister died strangled by the cord a few years before his birth. She is, he tells Gilbert Tarrab in the same interview of 1983, not a big sister, though older than him, but **58** pour moi restée définitivement petite, car elle est morte à la naissance [...] j'ai vécu en enfant unique. Mais en esprit, ce n'était point le cas. Cette sœur disparue, qui avait signé leur premier échec, est restée longtemps présente dans les pensées et les paroles de mes parents (APP 14). This looks very much like what Abraham & Torok call a family ghost: **59** Le fantôme est une formation de l'inconscient qui a pour particularité de n'avoir jamais été consciente [...] et de résulter du passage [...] de l'inconscient d'un parent à l'inconscient d'un enfant (419). But it is not the same. Not buried in an internalised crypt that passes with its walls intact from generation to generation, but this is a haunting that *is* known and spoken of - and still doesn't go away.

This ghost is the lost object as second skin. If we think of the image of Albertine as integument, the container of lost desires (including those that once appeared to exclude her), then we can put these two images - Albertine and Marsyas - together to represent the way mourning is all about growing new skins.

There is something worrying about Freud's presentation of healthy mourning as reality-testing. As I said a moment ago, it is a test that only works if it fails: what we have to find 'out there' to contradict our internal object is - nothing. The new skin we must grow is not necessarily a skin of new memories, ones that should successfully overlay and replace the dead or lost beloved. It may instead be a skin of loss, a skin of mourning itself, made up of successive nothings that represent our own skin unshared or unseen. That also is a second skin. The replacement process might not be the discovery of a new, living and presumably faithful object who does not threaten us with the Capgras effect: it may be the coat stitched together out of all the lost objects in Anzieu's weird short story 'L'épiderme nomade' which, in the closing phrase, **60** m'habillera de son illusion pour le long passage de l'éternité (Anzieu, *Contes à rebours*, Paris: Archimbaud, 1995: 233) - or it might be Freud's old Loden coat in which, we read in Elisabeth Young-Bruehl's biography (*Anna Freud* London: Macmillan, 1988, p. 453), Anna Freud wrapped herself in her dying days.