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JEALOUSY AS A DRIVING FORCE FOR MURDER

Nicolas Evzonas

This essay draws on analytic concepts and artistic examples in order to explore murder as the ultimate fate of jealousy. The paper first explores two seemingly neurotic forms of possessive fury that result in a crime of passion. Both cases probe the criminal potential of a supposedly normal subject and question the frontiers of narcissism and self-love, while discussing gender stereotypes. The author then examines criminal jealousy from the vantage point of the specular stakes at play: the enamoration of the double pervaded with aggressiveness that stems from the pre-oedipal fraternal complex and leads to outbursts of psychotic allure. Furthermore, this contribution appraises the hedonistic possibilities created by crimes of passion that are “beyond the pleasure principle.” Finally, the figure of the jealous criminal is understood as a radicalization of a universal logic, according to which primary narcissistic wounds are felt to be an unbearable injustice that requires reparation through an infringement of the law.

And therefore, since I cannot prove a lover,
To entertain these fair well-spoken days,
I am determined to prove a villain
And hate the idle pleasures of these days.
—William Shakespeare, *Richard III*,
I.i.28-31

Jealousy is an affect inherent to the human psyche with a likely anthropological (Goldschmidt, 1983) or even ethological scope (Zückermann, 1937). However, in certain cases when it is “abnormally reinforced” (Freud, 1922, p. 221), diverse psychopathological expressions can ensue. In the present contribution, psychoanalysis is used to elucidate a few specific aspects of jealous desire when it deviates toward criminal acts. Crime is not understood

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here in the strict sense of a penal infraction that may vary according to the times and the society, but rather in the broader sense of an overwhelming drive that violates the body of the other and/or the body of oneself, regardless of its legal status.

The “veils” of our civilization should not occlude the very elementary nature of criminal jealousy, since it lies at the source of our law and culture, as suggested by the biblical story of the fratricide of Cain and the Freudian construct based on the inaugural parricide perpetrated by a coalition of brothers within the primitive hoard (Freud, 1913). Although these two mythical allegories around the “originary” story consider the crime to be an envious reaction to someone who enjoys desirable prerogatives, the homicide in the former case leads to the proscription of the death penalty along with the acknowledgment of violence per se (Isnard-Davezac, 2005), while the crime committed in the latter results in repression and induces an unconscious culpability by contributing to the formation of the Superego, whose absence in the civilized man—or rather its overwhelming presence according to the Kleinian perspective (Klein, 1934)—seems to “drive” criminality.

This essay will focus on three axes: the possessive fury for the object that overhangs passionate crimes of neurotic allure; the enamoration of the specular double permeated with aggressiveness—“hainamoration”—that takes root in the preoedipal fraternal complex and leads to psychotic eruptions¹ and finally, the hedonic opportunities created by the crime of jealousy, which I associate with the Lacanian notion of the “Other jouissance.” Note that this third dimension is intertwined with the two preceding ones and is only differentiated for the purpose of this paper.

Regarding the clinical corpus used for this study, I draw the examples from the limitless source of artistic imagination—notably from literature and film—rather than the abundant “psychopathology of daily life.” My objective is neither to apply metapsychological concepts to art nor to apply art to metapsychology, as this would show a disregard for the specificities of these different fields of expression and knowledge. Above all, I aim to make the understanding derived from psychoanalysis resound with the creativity of artists who are able to grasp the striking truths of psychic life through their art.²

CRIMES OF PASSION

“There is always a sensational and romantic aspect in love crimes, but this finds no legal basis.” This statement of Maître Rouas-Elbazis is based on the current failure of the French penal code to legally define crimes of passion, even though the love affair often forms part of the plea (Picquet, 2015, p. 2). While an offense committed under the effect of jealous passion is, in the eyes of the law, viewed as a crime like any other, it nevertheless remains a distinct crime in the collective imagination, as it concerns a love affair with an oft-tragic fate. People tend to sympathize with the perpetrator and show him or her a sort of secret benevolence, all the more so as the criminal of passion is generally presented as an ordinary, honest, and no-nonsense citizen who seemingly fell onto the path of crime out of passion. Notwithstanding, as the criminologist De Greeff (1942) maintains, the crime of love is but a crime of self-love (*amour-propre*) and above all an act of revenge: the reparation of a painful and prejudicial experience endured by the jealous partner. Enriching this thesis about the potential contribution of psychoanalysis, Lagache (1947) states that such reprisal takes place “against the backdrop of chronic and acute conflict in the form of intentional objectification in the moments immediately preceding the murder” (p. 708). Going beyond the oedipal nature of this conflict, Mijolla-Mellor (2011) explains crimes of passion as regressions to the primitive stage of the ontogenesis of the ego when “the original hatred takes aim at the exterior world as the bearer of excitement, thus deemed to be foreign and uncontrollable” (p. 94). With this in mind, the crime of passion, described by Freud (1921) with the famous formula “in the blindness of love—one becomes a criminal without remorse” (p. 89), would thus “affirm the stranglehold over an object [perceived to be invasive and hated under the mask of love], which threatens to escape into the hands of another” (Mijolla-Mellor, 2011, p. 94). From this perspective, the crime would be compared to an “attempt to preserve the illusion of the all-powerful autarky that pre-existed the investment of the object” (Mijolla-Mellor, 2011, p. 94).

Feminine Fury: The Universal Wound of Betrayal

Before turning to our literary and cinematic corpus, let us evoke Freud's (1925) citation about the specific fate of jealousy in young girls:

Even after penis envy has abandoned its true object, it continues to exist; by an easy displacement, it persists in the characteristic of jealousy. Of course, jealousy is not limited to one sex and has a wider foundation than this, but I am of the opinion that it plays a far larger part in the mental life of women than of men and that is because it is enormously reinforced from the direction of displaced penis-envy. (p. 253).

This proposition was later endorsed by Lacan (1973-1974), who directly affirmed that "it is in women's nature to be jealous" (p. 234), as well as by Klein (1945), who emphasized the struggle and rivalry between mother and daughter for the imaginary babies and paternal penis concealed within the maternal body.

While the modern novel runs counter to these analytical theories by making man the central figure of jealousy, the mythological tradition would appear to advocate these phallogocentric ideas. Recall the jealous ire of Hera when confronted with Zeus's flings, the "collateral damage" of which was the tragic end of several mortals? Or Deianira, who, to ensure Hercules' fidelity, made him don the magical tunic of Nessus, which burnt him atrociously? The record of jealous fury nevertheless belongs to Medea, the incandescent sorceress abandoned by her spouse after he sought to ascend the throne by wedding a Greek princess, who was depicted masterfully by Euripides in his eponymous tragedy, to which we will now turn.

An initial analysis of this work allows us to understand Medea's anger as a phallic claim and hateful revolt against the feminine sex. Irreversibly wounded by Jason's betrayal, the heroine shows no hesitation in attributing her misfortune to the pathetic fate of women forced to "rely on a single being" and give themselves to a master who will dispose of their bodies as he sees fit, a husband who cannot be refused without being struck with infamy, even though he is free to frolic elsewhere whenever he grows tired of his family. These reflections make her affirm: "Of all creatures that have breath and sensation, we women are the most unfortunate" (vv. 230-231). Medea unabashedly contests the social role attributed to her sex by declaring: "Men say that we leave a life free

from danger at home while they fight with the spear. How wrong they are! I would rather stand three times with a shield in battle than give birth once” (vv. 248-251). In the vein of the Hesiodic tradition, this ferocious rejection of maternity, heralding the filicide later committed by Medea, coincides with the feminine sex’s supposed aptitude to excel in the accomplishment of deleterious undertakings: “And furthermore, we are women unable to perform great deeds of valor but most skillful architects of every evil” (vv. 407-409).

It is interesting to note how the characters in the tragedy converge around the specific violence of women’s reaction to infidelity, which leads us to psychoanalytic views on feminine jealousy. King Creon, the father of Jason’s fiancée, admits his fear of Medea: “You are a clever woman and skilled in many evil arts, and you are smarting with the loss of your husband’s [*λέκτρον*, bed] love” (vv. 285-286). Jason is much more explicit in this respect: “But you women are so far gone in folly that if all is well in bed you think you have everything, while if some misfortune in that domain occurs, you regard as hateful your best and truest interests” (vv. 569-573). As to Medea, she outdoes the bloodthirsty fury of the scorned lover: “‘A woman is fearful about everything, cowardly in the face of battle—or the sword’ but when she is injured in [carnal] love [*εὐνήν*, bed], no mind is more murderous than hers” (vv. 263-266). Is passionate vengeance not the inevitable consequence of Jason’s abandonment of Medea for the love of power? The spurned partner offers poisoned finery to her rival, causing her to perish in atrocious pain and also take Creon to his death. The amorous fire that burns Medea becomes a literal blaze, turning into flames of poison that set alight her two victims. Yet worse still, she uses her sword to slit the throats of her and Jason’s children, which marks the apotheosis of her jealous inferno and attests in a spectacularly bloody manner to the crushing of her maternal nature by the feminine force that refuses to be scorned (Assoun, 2014). We may further note here the male lover’s “rescue” from this murderous rage, which is an eminently feminine approach in Lagache’s view (1947, p. 787), in contrast to the homicidal drive of jealous males that tends to focus on the spouse rather than the rival.

The wealth of symbolism of this tragedy allows us to go beyond the sociological war of the sexes and the “essentialist” in-

terpretation of women's visceral jealousy. Medea, the infanticide mother, is raised as a universal symbol of the distraught being who sacrificed and lost everything in the name of love. Following Mijolla-Mellor's (2011) thesis on jealous passion, we could argue that she is the emblematic figure that attests to a "primary incapacity to enter into contact with the other except by giving herself completely" (p. 95), hence the vacillations in her identity and her hatred linked to a sense of self-preservation. When the lover becomes everything to the impassioned being, the latter regresses to the stage when the exterior world merged with the mother and did not differ from her, when separation was tantamount to the catastrophe of the world. Listen to Medea speaking to Jason: "To my own kin I have become an enemy, and by my services to you I have made foes of those I need not have harmed. That, doubtless, is why you have made me so happy in the eyes of many Greek women, in return for these favors" (vv. 506-510). The bitter price to be paid for such overreliance on Eros is not only the ingratitude of the beloved but also total isolation: "I, without relatives or city, am suffering outrage from my husband. I was carried off as booty from a foreign land and have no mother, no brother, no kinsman to shelter me from this calamity" (vv. 255-258).

Medea's misadventures point to the folly and blindness caused by the mirages of carnal pleasure, hence the grievance of the heroine: "O Zeus, why, when you gave to men sure signs of gold that is counterfeit, is there no mark on the human body by which one could identify base men?" (vv. 516-519). And when Jason launches the accusation that she "killed [her children] because of sex and the marriage-bed, [whilst] no Greek woman would have dared to do this" (vv. 1336-1340), beyond the explicit reference to Medea's foreign origin, should this not be understood as a plea against the "disturbing foreignness" of lust and the "barbarous"³ otherness of amorous inebriation? This is undoubtedly why the chorus, as the expression of a tempered collective voice, sings a prayer that could well be the moral lesson of this tragedy: "May moderation attend me, fairest gift of the gods. May Aphrodite never cast contentious wrath and insatiate quarrelling upon me and madden my heart for love for a stranger's bed" (vv. 636-640).

Masculine Fury: The Rivalry Between Self-Love and Narcissism

Let us leap forward to examine Michael Kakogiannis's *Stella* (1955), one of the most emblematic films of Greek cinema that depicts a story of passionate love ending in an equivocal crime. Melina Mercouri incarnates a traditional singer in an Athenian cabaret, of whom all men are enamored. This proud and rebellious woman, who obstinately refuses any kind of durable relationship with her admirers to avoid risking her freedom, falls deeply in love with a football player—Miltos—who is just as fiery and proud as she is. Their incandescent idyll continues until Miltos forces Stella to agree to marriage (otherwise, he will leave her). Terrorized by the idea of becoming a reproductive machine and enslaved housewife, Stella fails to appear at the church on the wedding day, preferring to wander throughout the city and party all night with one of her many suitors. When she returns home at daybreak, she discerns Miltos's silhouette, and despite his warning that he has a knife and will kill her, she keeps walking toward him. He yells out that if she agrees to marry him, he will throw away the knife and forget everything. But Stella keeps moving without uttering a word. Miltos then stabs her in an ultimate passionate embrace punctuated by the overtones of the song *Love, you've become a double-edged sword*.

From a sociological perspective, this film questions the extant patriarchal model and the relationship between the sexes just prior to women's suffrage in Greece in 1954, while from a psychopathological perspective it probes the criminal potential of a supposedly normal subject. In this respect, Miltos displays a fragile and ambiguous vileness, caught between the public sphere where he is forced to flaunt his masculine dominance and the private sphere where he portrays himself as Stella's equal and feels a tender attachment for his mother. It is in complicity with his mother that he decides to marry Stella, and determines the date of the wedding as well as the purchase of a house situated near the family home, while the future bride is never consulted. It would be redundant, even fallacious to rush to an oedipal interpretation here, and we should instead note Miltos's attachment to tradition and intergenerational transmission to the detriment of the young lovers' independence. The marriage announced to Stella in a peremptorily unilateral manner and accompanied by Miltos's frank

and unapologetic declaration, “I cannot stand sharing you with the gaze of other men,” openly expresses his desire to jealously keep his conquest away from what is precisely a vital need for her: the narcissistic assurance that stems from a multitude of gazing eyes. This is in stark contrast with the social gaze necessary for the masculine partner, thus dictating his possessive fury: “Either I will possess you all to myself or not at all [. . .]; Once we’re married, everyone will say that you are Miltos’s wife.”

Aside from her performances and the omnipresent posters of her in the cabaret, Stella’s apartment is filled with mirrors and photos of her, which point to a form of self-eroticism and self-fueled narcissism. Quite significantly, the film provides absolutely no information about Stella’s family, past, or origins, leading us to think that this character incarnates an absolute independence in the manner of mythic heroes, founded on infantile megalomania, someone “who owes their life to no one” (Grunberger, 1971, p. 134). The heroine’s grievance that “everyone wants to change me as if I were a record” forms part of this excessive desire to conserve her unimpaired narcissism while yearning for “free love like that of wild beasts.”

What finally leads to the crime is the insurmountable tension between two contradictory ideals: on the one hand, the thirst for liberty represented by the woman who is freed from all subjugation to norms and traditions; on the other, the desire for power and domination represented by the man who feeds off group recognition³/implicitly identified with the dictator Mussolini, since the wedding date of October 28, 1940, marks the Hellenic national day of Greece’s refusal to submit to Italian fascism. The stabbing, presented as a mutually consented act, thus holds a different signification for each party. For Miltos, it expresses his possessive fury and restores his scorned virility after Stella abandoned him at the altar. For Stella, it embodies the defense of her ideal of sexual, social, and existential emancipation until the point of death. For both characters, it is an act of honor, since each remains faithful to what constituted the essence of their existence: a supple and moving narcissism capable of wavering between the ego and the object (Stella), and a self-love dependent on the recognition of the other (Miltos).

Mijolla-Mellor (2011) should be credited with making the clear distinction between these two notions, explaining in the same vein as antique moralists that self-love (*amour-propre*), like vanity,

is an alienating subjection to the regard and opinion of others, the avatar of an Other experienced as the only one capable of endorsing the accomplishment of the ego ideal during early childhood. In her view, self-love is a “failure of narcissism, condemned to a sort of vital hemorrhage like the Danaïds’ barrel as it tries to fill up with an ever-insufficient supply of love in order to face the deleterious attacks of ridicule, shame, and humiliation” (p. 67-68). This revelation of the painful nature of self-love allows us to “de-psychiatrize the criminal act and see here an alteration of the link to the other” (p. 68). Indeed, any “narcissistic wound [could] potentially become criminogenic in a person provided that several conditions are met” (p. 70). From this perspective, the passionate killing of Stella does not stem from the hatred of an object that “dares” to differ from the madly enamored subject, as in the case of *Medea*, but it is rather “a condition to exist and endeavor, while cutting the Gordian knot of the conflict, to repair the wound of self-love” (p. 69).

SPECULAR CRIMES

The “Fraternal Complex”: The Assault of One’s Own Ideal

Let us now turn to another type of jealousy that can lead to crime, the mechanisms of which were highlighted by Lacan. At the very start of his career, the French analyst studied the case of Aimée (Beloved),⁴ who had attacked a popular actress of the time with a knife and was subsequently committed to a psychiatric institution. Lacan’s daily observation of the patient made him realize that the artist represented the signifying link in a chain of female persecuting characters and an avatar of Aimée’s elder sister, who was concomitantly cherished, admired, and hated. Lacan (1932, p. 253) stated that the assaulted lady “symbolizes social prominence and professional success, which constitute Aimée’s objects of intimate envy. This ambivalent feeling therein contains a significant part of identification” (p. 253). Indeed, all women in the patient’s delirium, chosen according to the prototypical image of Aimée’s sister, epitomize the magnified female figure whom she wished to embody. Hence, “Aimée attacks her exteriorized ideal through her victim, just as the passionate lover strikes the unique object of his desire and hatred” (Lacan, 1932, p. 253).

In a later text, Lacan (1938) conceived sibling rivalry as the envy-filled identification with a younger brother or sister. He thus mentioned the famous quotation of Saint Augustine: “I have personally watched and studied a jealous baby. He could not yet speak and yet, pale with jealousy and bitterness, he glared at his younger brother sharing his mother’s milk” (p. 37). We can readily discern the interlacing of scopophilic drive, jealousy, and jouissance of the other. This particular state of “jealousissance”—the jealousy of the jouissance of the other (Lacan, 1972-1973, p. 91)—experienced by the weaned boy while gazing at his little brother savoring the maternal milk is consubstantial to the emergence of the ego and underpinned by specularity, namely the imago of the idealized double. Lacan (1938) points out that “jealousy primordially represents a mental identification rather than a vital rivalry” (p. 37) and “manifests even when a weaned child presents no signs of competition with his sibling” (p. 39). In his unpublished *Seminar IX*, Lacan (1961-1962) clarifies that “it is inaccurate to state that me and my brother whom I envy are alike. The former is my reflection in the sense that his image finds my desire” (p. 103). Accordingly, the “fraternal other” constitutes the mirror image of the lost jouissance but also a mesmerizing ideality—an *Ideal-Ich*—that simultaneously structures and alienates the Ego by its invasive exteriority (Lacan, 1948). This is why sibling rivalry is called “intrusion complex” by Lacan (1938).

An interesting clinical illustration of the Lacanian theory of specularity that is intrinsically linked to jealous aggression can be found in his article on the true story of the Papin sisters and their crime (Lacan, 1933-1934). In a “double delirium,” the maids of an honorable bourgeois family attacked their employers one evening (a mother and her daughter) by gouging out their eyes and massacring them horrendously before climbing into bed together. Lacan emphasizes the psychological twinship of the two criminals, attributable in his view to a precocious and unresolved form of aggressive homosexuality and a fixation on a solipsistic, antisocial, and incestuous world. “I really think that in another life, I must have been my sister’s husband,” declares one of the young women in a frenzied moment. According to Lacan, the key to understanding the crime resides in the *confusion between the self and the other*, which triggers the illusion of hetero-aggressiveness. “That fatal evening, under anxiety of an imminent punishment [for having caused an electrical failure], the two maids mingled

the mirage of their illness with the image of their mistresses. They detested the distress of the couple whom they carried away in an atrocious quadrille.”⁵ Although not explained in this paper, the reference to Aimée—studied in Lacan’s (1932) thesis on paranoia—who “strikes the brilliant being that she hates precisely because she represents the ideal of her self” (Lacan, 1933–1934), suggests that the Papin sisters massacre their idealized doubles, as they reflect the unbearableness of their “jealousissance”—the jealousy of the jouissance of the other.

Since art rivals psychoanalytic explanations, let us look at Jean Genet’s (1947) play *The Maids*, which brilliantly depicts the identity unease and jealousy at the origin of this crime. The sisters Claire and Solange, who in Freudian terminology would represent the Macbeth couple of the Shakespearean tragedy as “two distinct parts of a single and unique psychic individuality” (Freud, 1916, p. 158), admit their frenzied admiration for the lady of the house, but this is linked to a profound disdain of themselves: “I’m sick of seeing my image thrown back at me by a mirror, like a bad smell” (Genet, 1947, p. 61). While the transformation of the self seems to relate to the social aspect—“Everything that comes out of the kitchen is spit” (p. 16)—the magnification of their idol simultaneously concerns the physical, aesthetic, and social dimensions. Their desire for osmosis with the sovereign poise of their employer comes to sight in diverse scenes in which the two sisters revel in sporting the clothes of Madame and mixing up their roles. The homonymy in the original text between the substantive “bonne” (maid) and the adjective “bonne” (kind), applied respectively to Solange/Claire and their employer, accentuates the specularly of this relationship. Solange says to Claire: “I’m the maid [bonne]” and “She’s kind [bonne]. Madame is kind [bonne]. Madame adores us” (p. 52). And Claire says to her sister while playing the role of Madame: “I might say cruel things, but I can be kind [bonne]” (p. 106).

The impossibility for the maids to rise to the level of their employer means that their adulation of Madame is matched by their ferocious animosity toward her, which deflects from their disaffection (“Nobody loves us!” p. 40) and self-hatred (“And we, can’t love one another,” p. 40) founded on a single psychic individuality: “We’re merged, enveloped in our fumes, in our revels, in our hatred for you” (p. 46). Much more so, the detailed description of Madame’s beauty amounts to an avowal of homosexual

hainamoration: “I hate your scented bosom. Your . . . *ivory* bosom! Your . . . *golden* thighs! Your . . . *amber* feet! I hate you! [*She spits on the red dress*]” (p. 28). The homoerotic desire is otherwise suggested by the ambivalence of the term “mistress (*maîtresse*),” which designates both “employer” and “lover” (Solange: “I love you.” Claire, in the role of Madame: “No doubt. As one loves a mistress,” p. 40.) The ambiguity of identity is also accentuated when Claire admits to her sister: “Through her, it was me who you were aiming at. I’m the one who’s in danger. When we finish the ceremony, I’ll protect my neck” (p. 48). Does this not echo the Lacanian thesis in which the prototypical image of jealous hatred is that of a brother or sister, identifiable specular objects, imbued with ideality and aggressiveness (Lacan, 1938, p. 23-84)? Recall here Aimée, who assaulted the famous actress but in reality attacked her older sister, whom she both admired and detested (Lacan 1932, p. 253).

The identity confusion culminates in the final scene of *The Maids*, when Claire, playing Madame, drinks the tea destined for her unattainable and envied ideal. The mistress’ death substituted by the maid’s suicide showcases the interchangeability of sadism and masochism inherent to specular identification, not to mention the ravages of a sameness radically split from alterity. This autolysis is also an indirect fratricide, since Solange carries the fatal cup to Claire-Madame.

Diverse Avatar Villains: The Hainamoration of the Double

When Freud refers to object love, instead of the usual German term *Liebe* he mostly writes *Verliebtheit*, which we can translate as “enamoration.” Lacan (1972–1973) invented the neologism “hainamoration”—a portemanteau word that blends the French words *amour* (love) and *haine* (hate)—in order to stress the inextricability of infatuation and hostility. According to the French analyst, the paradigm of hainamoration is the mother–infant relationship prior to the introduction of pacifying thirdness. This state of emotional ambivalence reaches a peak in our primitive fascination with our own reflection in the mirror, the prototype of which is the fraternal complex. Lacan (1938, p. 40) emphasizes the precedence of the specular identification compared to aggressiveness, which only interferes secondarily in order to deflect the death drive that originally targets the mother, as the embodiment

of the primordial Other.⁶ The fraternal complex thus derives from the maternal complex despite the paradigmatic value that the French analyst accords to the former. If we adhere to this logic, we may interpret Abel's murder by Cain in the Bible—the archetypal suppression of a younger sibling—as a transposition on the brother of a wrath addressed to the divine Other, who refuses Cain's offering but accepts that given by Abel.

While the “fraternal complex” remains the prototype of the innate aggressiveness of the specular relation and hainamoration of the double (Lacan, 1938), the fundamental connection between jealousy, specularity, and crime cannot be ignored in several artistic examples that evade any reference to fraternity. Take the example of Oscar Wilde's novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890): a man enchanted by his own portrait makes a Faustian wish to invert the laws of nature so that the picture ages while the extraordinary beauty of his face remains intact. Yet Dorian, who feels progressively persecuted by his own image (the word “*picture*” used in the original text designates both the portrait and the image), can only escape through suicide. The genius of the author presents this autolytic gesture as Dorian's assassination of the picture, which suggests the sensitivism of the subject who remains fixed on the original rapture of his own reflection, but also his self-hatred, which is transposed on an externalized object devoid of its ideality. Moreover, Dorian's kiss of the portrait's painted lips translates into primary, specular, and mortifying homosexuality, inherent in the myth of Narcissus.

In the short story “William Wilson,” Edgar Allan Poe (1839) recounts the arrival of a young boy in an English country school, where another pupil bearing the same name as the narrator imitates his every deed and attitude. No longer able to tolerate this continuous presence and his homonym's disclosure of his impositions, the narrator flees abroad but remains repeatedly persecuted by this enigmatic being who sabotages all his plans of “ambition, aggressiveness, and lust” (p. 12). At a masked ball in Rome, the narrator meets his adversary dressed identically to him for one last time. Exasperated that this inopportune clone has interrupted one of his attempts at seduction, he pierces him with his sword. He quickly looks away, but when he turns back to face him, he sees only a mirror in which he recognizes himself, pale and smeared with blood. The reflection of his agonizing double thus says to him: “Yet from now on you are also dead—see by this face,

which is your own, how wholly, how completely, you have killed—yourself!” (p. 28). The distinction between the ideal ego (*Ideal-Ich*) and the ego ideal (*Ich-Ideal*), introduced by Lacan (1954, pp. 205-227), becomes all too obvious: What the hero fatally attacks is an illusory ideal ego (imaginary instance), undifferentiated from an ego ideal (symbolic instance) as the bearer of the law—a fledgling ego ideal, as suggested by the whispering voice of William Wilson’s clone. The fusion of the two instances—a characteristic of psychosis—underlies the act of Dorian Gray when he stabs the portrait, which is not only his ideal image but also a superegoistic reminder of his depraved acts.

A final case of specular criminality occurs in *The Talented Mr. Ripley* by Anthony Minghella (1999), centered on a young, penniless man asked by a wealthy patriarch to persuade his prodigal son to return to the United States to look after the family business. The hero shows such fascination for this flamboyant boy and his extravagant lifestyle abroad that he desires to totally absorb his being: He wears his clothes, mimics his mannerisms, imitates him in front of the mirror, and, when his advances are rejected by the jealously venerated being, kills him and assumes his identity. The homoerotic attraction and identification with the idealized reflection of the mirror that ends in murder—explicitly portrayed in the film—attest to the psychotic ravages of specular objectalization. The hero with his degrading self-image, who thinks that “it is better to be a fake somebody than a real nobody,” compensates the loss of his sacred double by symbolically becoming him. This incorporation of melancholic allure—the object absorbs and abrades the ego—thus supersedes the imaginary enthrallment. The film masterfully depicts the loss of the self in the image of the mirror, the lure of ego identifications, and the simultaneously subjugating and estranging desire of the other.

Let us terminate this section by quoting a French psychoanalyst and professor of literature who encapsulates the mechanisms of specular hainamoration in a Lacanian vein: “Every time that I encountered jealousy in my personal life or in that of my patients, this emotion manifested to me as a diversion of hatred. The lover idealizes the beloved, but it is rather his own ego based on the troublesome frontiers of narcissism that he glorifies in the ordeal of passion. We hate ourselves a little bit less by suspecting the ghastly blows inflicted by the other” (Kristeva, 1994, p. 52). She continues, “Jealousy deflects hatred and constitutes a sort of

gloomy lust in this exacerbated frustration that some people mistake for love” (p. 54). “As soon as jealousy is deprived of an object, self-loathing remains the only vestige of what had once been a liaison. One’s body henceforth becomes the target and is doomed to death. It is the self that perishes, not the sexual partner” (p. 57).

HEDONIC CRIMES

While jealous crime seems consubstantial to the fury-dominated possession of the beloved and the alienating stranglehold of the imaginary other, it would also appear indissociable from sexual excitement, which is not only of a libidinal nature. Already in 360–347 BC, Plato (*Philebus*, 47–48b) listed jealousy as a mixed pathos, namely, as a psychological affection amalgamating pleasure and pain and liable to increase without limit, similarly to the scratching and itching caused by scabies and accompanied by aching jouissance. For his part, Freud (1910) noted the *need* for jealousy in some subjects, which allowed them “to experience the strongest sensations” (p. 167), while Lacan (1950) evoked a “criminal satisfaction” linked to the neurotic and the pervert’s ineffable pleasure “to lose themselves in the fascinating image” (p. 148). Can extreme jealousy that ends in crime not be conceived as the paroxysm of a utopian quest for the mythical jouissance rendered to the absolute Other, which is the unbearable and overwhelming enjoyment attributed to a fantasized great instance? This firmly idealist quest, or this “illness of ideality” (to borrow Mallarmé’s expression), is situated “beyond the pleasure principle” and in direct relation to jouissance in the very sense that Lacan (1972–1973) conferred on this notion toward the end of his work, that is to say, without the mediation of castration and the phallic signifier. It is a jouissance of a mystical type, neither measurable nor quantifiable, which manifests as true dispossession, rapture, a total loss of self-control that initially touches the body as an orgasming substance (pp. 83–98).⁷

Let us look at what the Greek master of jealousy, the novelist Papadiamantis (1894), wrote about a sailor who was fond of playing out criminal scenarios in his head while sailing beneath a starry sky in the company of his wife Sweetheart: “It was like a stab in the heart. He was convinced that she must have a lover in her homeland. And it was because of this lover that he worked

so hard, because of him that he had embarked on this crazy adventure. Indeed, who was he in this matter? A simple gateway destined to bring together two amorous beings, the Charon of infernal love!" (p. 175). The jealous character continues to torment himself until the narrator-author takes over and unravels his own erratic scenario:

He then felt a flame devour him, the fury of a tragic hero below within him! (It would be so easy here to turn this idyll into a drama, if only my professional consciousness as a writer would allow me to do so! Let us imagine that the rowboat pursues the light craft of the two fugitives, that Mathios miraculously nears it by the sheer strength of his paddling, and that he discovers at the last moment that the Nostalgic woman has a lover with her. Imagine that he stabs him in his chest, capsizes the boat, drowns this woman, and that he ends up drowning himself in the open sea! That finally the rowboat arrives and that its passengers discover two moonlit corpses lying on the seabed! What a romantic masterpiece that would be! What tears would be shed!). (p. 176)

Reformulating the Stendhalian aphorism, "in love, possession is nothing, only enjoyment matters," Dumoulié (1999) writes that "for the jealous, more so than for lovers, only enjoyment matters. Indeed, the Everything of the *jouissance* is their true obsession. And as we know that this total *jouissance* does not exist, since the Other does not exist, a fiction must be invented, a theatre of the *jouissance* of the Other" (p. 153). When Othello, whose delirious jealousy drives him to crime, admits "I had been happy, if the general camp,/ Pioneers and all, had tasted her sweet body,/ So I had nothing known" (*Othello*, III.iii.355-357), is this not the intoxicating and monstrous *jouissance* that is rendered to the Other? Does this not supplant the mediocre pleasure promised by the real prospect of possessing the beloved's body? "Let's teach ourselves that honourable stop/ Not to outsport discretion" (*Othello*, II.iii.2-3).

Other great artistic works illustrate the infinitely hedonic possibilities of criminal jealousy and the quest of this Other *jouissance* that is bounded by no border and confined by no limit. Let us cite the hero of Tolstoy's (1889) "The Kreutzer Sonata," who connects

his wife with a charismatic violin player, but when she is seduced by this man—thus fulfilling her husband’s unconscious scenario—he stabs her “with physical violence and rage that resemble an ultimate and horrible jouissance of bodies” (Dumoulié, 1999, p. 154), not dissimilar from the stabbing sealed with a passionate kiss in *Stella*. Does not this jouissance of the Other also overwhelm Marcel, a man in the grip of insane possessiveness in Clouzot’s (1964) unfinished film *Hell* [*L’Enfer*], as he binds his wife to the bed and subjects her to torture, with his fantasies mingling with reality? The apotheosis: the dazzling, naked Romy Schneider is chained to the railway tracks with the train hurtling toward her. Never has the crime of jealousy been clad in such beauty!

In *The Torments* [*Él*], Buñuel’s (1953) version of paranoid jealousy, a man skillfully courts a woman promised to another—Freud’s “love of the whore” (1910, p. 170)—but once he conquers and marries her, he subjects her to punitive humiliations with a Sadean tinge. On one occasion he almost throws her off a bell tower, while later he wanders far and wide throughout Mexico to hunt her down. According to his regressive-specular logic, the other is him, and he is the other. Is it not evident that the jealous criminal experiences the full depths of suffering, rage, pleasure, sadism, and farfetched masochism?

This is also suggested in Tornatore’s (2000) *Malèna*, which portrays the exquisite Monica Bellucci as a war widow. As the object of all male covetousness in a Sicilian village, she arouses hatred among the jealous wives and fuels many fantasies. In a striking scene, a group of enraged women, using Malèna’s supposed collaboration with the Nazis as a pretext, publicly lynches her, cuts her hair, and leaves her for dead. This collective release, which assumes all the traits of an honor crime since the widow’s agonizing beauty and “alimentary” prostitution offend the traditional values of the Italian town, echoes the group identification in frustration as noted by Freud (1921, p. 170) and unmask the repressed criminal tendencies lying dormant in the exemplary wives. In short, there is also a collective quest for this ideal of sexual identity, pleasure, and jouissance, which the mythical and unfathomable Other is supposed to incarnate.

CONCLUSION

An extract from a soliloquy in Shakespeare's *Richard III* was chosen as the epigraph of this essay because it is an apt paradigm for the true motivations behind criminal jealousy. Gloucester, the future king, invokes his congenital prejudice—the deformity that cripples his vain attempts at seduction—to justify his envious hatred and prerogative of being “a villain” or, according to Freud's (1916) gloss, to legitimize his “right to be an exception, to disregard the scruples by which others let themselves be held back” (p. 144) and redress the injustice inflicted by nature. The figure of the jealous criminal is thus a radicalization of a universal, individual, and collective logic, as “we all demand reparation for early wounds to our narcissism, our self-love” (p. 145). Indeed, the devastation of this victim logic is now seen on a global scale, most tragically epitomized in the actions of Islamist gangsters.

The purpose of much art is to exalt beauty, including the beauty veiled in ugliness. Yet art also seems to exert an educative influence on the soul, since it provides a cathartic outlet for our polymorphic criminal tendencies of an infantile origin (Klein, 1927). In this respect, great works that present instinctual outbursts with the finesse of suggestion and illusion should not be confounded with the products of subculture that arouse sensoriality in a direct manner through their use of spectacularly bloodthirsty and sordid images. The paradigm of great art is the ancient tragedy in which the depiction of violent scenes was strictly prohibited except through words. Indeed, the mental activity and imagination stimulated in spectators and readers as well as the gratification of drives found in their indirect identification with deviant individuals would provide a sort of protection against their taking any violent action. By contrast, the emblematic expression of subculture lies in video games that simulate the active murder committed by the player with blunt realism; do these not risk inciting people to criminal consumption through such “pornography of destruction” (Bertrand & Papageorgiou, 2012, p. 977)? According to this hypothesis, art, with its psychic potentials, is an antidote to the “temptation of innocence” (Bruckner, 1995) of the dormant villain within us all.

NOTES

1. “Hainamoration” is a neologism of Lacan’s (1972-1973). See Lacan (1972-1973), segment 2.2, Diverse avatar villains: The hainamoration of the double.
2. My methodological approach is inspired by Mijolla-Mellor (2002).
3. In Ancient Greek, *bárbaros* signifies someone who is not of Hellenic origin and, by extension, someone who is uncivilized and thus barbarous. It is interesting to note that in the original text, Jason’s desire for Medea is called “*βάρβαρον λέχος* [barbarous bed]” (v. 591), meaning “lust for a foreigner.”
4. “Aimee” (Beloved) is the name given by Lacan to his patient Marguerite Anzieu, the mother of famous psychoanalyst Didier Anzieu, after the name of the heroine of the patient’s projected novel.
5. The Lacanian thesis gains a solid foundation in light of Balier’s (1988) research, whose rich clinical experience with delinquents pointed to the confusion between the self and the other during the perpetration of the criminal act, the blurring between internal and external scenes, in an intense struggle against the animation of the threatening internal object.
6. Lacan distinguishes the “other,” our equal incarnated in the model of the brother (1938), from the great “Other” as the embodiment of the mother, God, or the unconscious (1972–1973).
7. I will avoid confounding this *jouissance* with “ordinary” sexual satisfaction and orgasms, whose notable absence in criminals, especially the perpetrators of sexual crimes, was stressed by Balier (1988).

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