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Sacrifice and the Inner Organs of the Cold War Citizen

Adam Piette

As a historical continuum within the citizen imagination, the Cold War existed as a set of internalized mechanisms for the imperiling and domination of the subject. In the more extreme fictions staging this anxiety this appears as a fear for one's internal organs, according to a sacrificial logic threatening innocent citizen 'insides': through repressed terror about radiation's genetic damage, paranoid scening of victimization of the unconscious, and fallout hypochondria dramatizing the triangular nature of Cold War geopolitics as inward disease. I will be exploring such anxieties in a series of texts which include Samuel Beckett's Trilogy and its parodies of Sartrean politics, inwardness and the French Cold War; Elizabeth Bowen's 1964 novel *The Little Girls* and its representation of bunker mentality; J.G. Ballard's 1969 *The Atrocity Exhibition* and its exploration of victimizing technology; Douglas Oliver's 1973 novel *The Harmless Building* and its staging of inner organ anxiety and warfare. Theoretically, the chapter will be underpinned by René Girard on scapegoating and mimetic desire, as well as Walter Benjamin's

'Critique of Violence' and his essay on Goethe's *Elective Affinities* with its exploration of sacrificial history; these will be used to revise Agamben's Homo Sacer theory slightly (following Anselm Haverkamp) to enable a targeted interpretation of Cold War sacrificial codes.

Samuel Beckett's Trilogy, Sartre and the French Cold War

In Beckett's *Molloy*, two men cross paths outside a small town, between 'treacherous hills', the sea to the east, with Molloy as hidden observer, observing too his own imagined interiority: 'all that inner space one never sees, the brain the heart and other caverns where thought and feeling dance their sabbath, all that too quite differently disposed'.[1] This triangle, Molly, two men crossing paths, is spatio-temporalized to imply a treacherous form of fourth-dimensional identity. The outgoing wayfarer, named B in the French and C in the English translation, fixes the details of the terrain in his mind as he moves down from a vantage point in the hills (a monument), vowing to himself to act differently if he were to return. Fixing landmarks in his mind enables the future returning self (the figure whose path he crosses, we presume) to be an expert on the landscape, capable of blending the possibly

[1] Samuel Beckett, *Three Novels: Molloy, Malone Dies, The Unnamable* (London: John Calder, 1959), p. 10.

treacherous prospect of the view from the vantage point with the detailed mapping of features the walk along the road has made possible. The two experiences together create the conditions for the possibility of a successful third passage along the road, topographical expertise allied with new knowledge about the secret dispositions of inner space. All the while, paranoid fear is being generated by the wayfarer's act of observation; body, reason, self are 'threatened' and the 'anxiety' has been sexed up into a battle between innocence and dark actors (10) which is somehow related to carnal interiority: 'that unstable fugitive thing, still living flesh' (11). The incident is troubling, fusing non-event with radical suspense, as though political anxiety were somatic and phenomenological, a spacetime event.

Naming the two figures A and B alludes, parodically, to the discussion of relations between time and self-perception in Sartre's 1943 *L'Etre et le néant*, particularly the chapter 'Ontologie de la temporalité' on the problems posed by temporal difference to self-identity: 'Let us suppose a temporal content A existing as a being-in-itself, and a temporal content B, posterior to the first and existing in the same mode — that is, in the self-inclusion of identity.'[2] But, Sartre argues, because A and B must be mutually incomplete

[2] Jean-Paul Sartre, *L'Etre et le néant: Essai d'ontologie phénoménologique* (1943); *Being and Nothingness*, translated Hazel E. Barnes (London: Methuen, 1969), p. 132.

without the determination figured by the other temporal content, then it follows that A and B cannot be autonomously self-identical: the 'liaison' between them 'hang[s] in midair, deprived of any substratum, without power to get any hold on either A or B — in a sort of non-temporal nothingness' (*Being*, 132).

Sartre's naming itself plays with Poincaré's formula for the idea of temporal succession between selves: a = b, b = c, a ÷ c, which acknowledges the necessity of the third witness as B to adjudicate the differences between A and C. This explains the translation Beckett made of his French A and B as A and C in the English version. To act as intermediary, B must chronologically 'occur' *between* A and C, and therefore cannot know C. Sartre suggests that only by distinguishing between the supposed 'en-soi' of A and C and the 'pour-soi' nature of B can the triangle be achieved. Molloy, then, is a 'pour-soi' witness of both A and B, because his own destructively negative and negating selfhood is contained, existentially, within both forms as the shadow to their differential autonomies. He can act as both divisive C to their ontologies, as in the French, and as mediating B, as in the English translation. And C/B is appropriate since it signals Corps/Body: for the body can play the role of the 'pour-soi', according to Sartre. Indeed, the unsettling fact about our own bodies is that they contain a mysterious set of features such as 'a nervous system, a brain, glands, digestive, respiratory, and circulatory organs whose matter is capable of being analyzed chemically into atoms of hydrogen,

carbon, nitrogen, phosphorous etc.' (*Being*, 303). The silent witness of our journeying through space and time in the mind can be identified, fraudulently, with our silent somatic companions, the inner organs so faithfully acting 'pour soi'. Why, however, is the act of witnessing so fraught with anxiety?

In the French, Molloy is watching B move out of the town as though with the eyes of B's former self, since he occupies the high ground perspective B learned from the monument. Molloy equally resembles B's present self, since he can speculate, as if remembering, about B's inner state of mind as he walks, knows that B is scanning the landscape to commit them to memory. Sartre's anguished man wrings his hands and cries: ' "Qu'est-ce que je vais faire? Mais qu'est-ce que je vais faire?"' (64);[3] Molloy's B is prey to a deadly inner voice, rising from murmur to scream, 'cet insatiable *Comment faire? Comment faire?*" (11)[4] Molloy is present, too, at the possible return of the wayfarer: in the future, B will be hunting for signs of his human presence in the scene, presence as rock, feature, look-out. The returning wayfarer is figured in the shape of A, confident of the landscape, but with a club in his hands, aware of something in the surroundings which might prove harmful to

[3] Jean-Paul Sartre, *L'Etre et le néant: Essai d'ontologie phénoménologique*, ed. Arlette Elkaim-Sartre (Paris: Gallimard, 2000), p. 64.

[4] French *Molloy* (Paris: Les Editions de minuit, 1951), p. 11. 'What shall I do? What shall I do?' (10)

him, despite his indolence, his lazy kindness to the dog, despite even Molloy's own imagined meeting with him, for he walks with 'anxious looks' (14). The ghost presence of Molloy's own anxiety haunts the scene and the imagined interiority of A and B. Yet it is a ghost presence founded on an idea of interiority as flesh, as somatic inner space, as fugitive body, dark shadow in the landscape. Molloy is the idea of the treacherous diasporic body inhabiting the existential situation as fleshly-ghostly witness-'autrui'. He is both feared by the two manifestations of his 'en-soi', A and B (because they are potentially subject to Molloy's anxiety), and fearful of the possibility of falling prey to their hunger for victim flesh.

The triangle resolves itself, with the foregrounding of political violence when the malevolent A returns, as allegorical of the politics of the time – the allusion to Sartre is so strong as to summon urgent contexts of the late 1940s that might account for the triangulation and somatic anxiety. Founder member of the *Rassemblement Démocratique Révolutionnaire* (RDR), in 1948, Sartre had mimicked a far-left version of De Gaulle's third-force strategy with his *Rassemblement du peuple français* in 1947. Sartre hoped, with the help of the ex-Troskyist David Rousset, to create a political meeting-place at the frontier between Stalinist communism and reformist socialist (or SFIO) policies. Initially successful in recruiting left-wing militants and left-leaning 'sans-partis', the RDF at its meetings voiced strong opposition to the Cold War's 'politique des blocs' in favour of a radically democratic grass-roots

movement of social emancipation and European socialist integration. Sartre's contribution at the RDR's first press conference in March 1948 gives the tone:

> Most Europeans seem to have already chosen their conquerors. We are in a state of war by proxy. The R.D.R. refuses to choose one side out of fear of the other. It seeks to counter insidious propaganda, to establish contacts with all the European democratic groupings to ensure that Europe leads the way in the movement for peace.[5]

The R.D.R.'s apogée was the enormous meeting at the Salle Pleyel, 13 December 1948, with a star-studded platform — André Breton, Richard Wright, Carlo Levi, Albert Camus, and intellectuals from India, Madagascar, Vietnam, Spain and Morocco. Its demise was brought about by Cold War politics. David Rousset chose to align the party with American unions and invited the anti-communist Sydney Hook to a 'Journée internationale de résistance à la dictature et à la guerre' in April 1949, as a riposte to the communist-organized peace movement. The RDR split up as a result of the

[5] Quoted Annie Cohen-Solal, *Sartre: Une vie, 1905-1980* (Paris: Gallimard, 1985), p. 393 (my transl.).

ensuing arguments between the pro-communists and the Rousset pro-American group.

It is in the light of these 'third force' initiatives that we can go back to revisit Molloy spying from the rock, experiencing his two others. As an old dying writer confined to his mother's bed, forced to write pages for a nameless group who pay him for reasons obscure, he is asked to start at the beginning, and the beginning is this strange vision of the encounter of two men in a bare landscape. It is not too far-fetched to speculate that this is Beckett's mocking vision of the postwar French intellectual. Hack scribe to invisible forces, enslaved by political power as figured in the intermediary who collects his manuscript *récit*, power internalized as psychoanalytic drives detaining the imagination within the parental bed, the writer scripts the inaugural moment of the story of writing as an empty allegory of Cold War encounter. The writer as third-force *témoin d'autrui* is a mere mediating language machine, abject witness to the polarization of the world into opposing entities, A and B/C. As vagrant and 'sans-parti', the writer as Molloy is ironically well suited to serve as allegorist of the French Cold War, for he occupies the triple subject position of the Resistance: fugitive member of the underclass dislocated from patriotic attachments like the internationalist resistance of the left; obsessed by religious imperatives like the Christian resistance movement; driven by obscure desire for the mother country in his quest for his mother, like the Gaullistes fighting for the 'mère–patrie'.

Accustomed, as if by wartime Resistance habits of concealment and subterfuge, to fugitive manoeuvres, secret surveillance and *maquis* survival tactics, Molloy gives us his vision of the Cold War encounter as conditioned by wartime suspicion and dread of the solitary resister. He spies upon A and B/C as a political fugitive or returning Forced Labour Service (STO) deportee might: they are enemies, *milice* alter-egos, men of casual alien power. He is in his own country, yet cannot recognize his own home town: it has been taken over by the malevolent forces he spies upon with such fear.

Writers, Sartre argued, are situated in a no-man's land between a proletariat locked into the Soviet-governed Communist Party and a dying bourgeoisie, between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R., between abstract capitalism and international bureaucratic communism. The writer under such a regimen is presumed guilty, 'the scapegoat of all the political purges'.[6] A and B in the French *Molloy* bear features of fabulous icons of power: B with his 'bâton' or 'massue' recalls Gargantua, African shamans and head-men, a pilgrim-Merlin, a Celtic war-god. A with his 'paresse flânante', his cigar and espadrilles and accompanying Pomeranian has the arrogance of a modern master, in holiday ownership of these foreign fields, like a Supreme Headquarters Allied

[6] Sartre, *What is Literature?*, transl. Bernard Frechtmann (1947) (New York: Philosophical Library, 1949), p. 192.

Expeditionary Force (SHAEF)or Red Army colonel strolling through the liberated devastations of Europe.

If Molloy by his very name is a mollifying, mollified *tertium quid* secretly and fugitively acting as haunting *troisième force* 'pour-soi' to the two masters of the world, he is also the viscous middling subjectivity which is the only role available to the European intellectual in the Cold War. 'The *mou* or *soft*,' Sartre argued in *L'Etre et le néant,* signalled 'this rather louche character of the "substance between two states"':

> In the slimy substance which dissolves in itself there is a visible resistance, like the refusal of an individual who does not want to be annihilated in the whole of being, and at the same time a softness pushed to its ultimate limit. For the *soft* is only an annihilation which is stopped half way; the soft is what furnishes us with the best image of our own destructive power and its limitations. (*Being*, 608)

Molloy is half-way to his own destruction, drawing Moran towards him with tentacular force. Seemingly docile victim inviting possession and the exercise of arbitrary power, he nevertheless secretly possesses Moran's mind. Viscous mollitude has this capacity to invert the power relations that would rather it reflect the image of our sovereignty, as Sartre goes on to argue:

> I want to let go of the slimy and it sticks to me, it draws me, it sucks at me. […] it is like the supreme docility of the possessed, the fidelity of a dog who gives *himself* even when one does not want him any longer, and in another sense there is underneath this docility a surreptitious appropriation of the possessor by the possessed. (*Being*, 609)

It is the passive dog-like and docilely *mou* Molloy who mollifies the man of power, the intellectual with the soft hands caught up in the mysterious network of agents of some secret service, *milice*, resistance cell, subject to the authorities of the world, forced to abandon the possessions of his world in the quest for the fugitive, like Sartre with his viscous insides. Moran becomes obsessed by the errant fetish Molloy, is hobbled and humbled so as to resemble him, and the deep mental image he has of him – the Molloy 'de mes entrailles, la caricature que j'en faisais' in the French (French Molloy, 156), 'he that inhabited me, my caricature of the same' in the English (115) – becomes a startling libidinous monster surfacing from his unconscious, an absolutely viscous creature, neutral and neuter. As his quest progresses, the certainties of the clandestine political world Moran inhabits, stony as the 'blocs' of superpower, are dissolved, leaving only the liquid viscous nightmare of Molloy's *mollesse*:

> what words can describe this sensation at first all darkness and bulk, with a noise like the grinding of stones, then suddenly as soft as water flowing [...] then little by little a face, with holes for the eyes and mouth and other wounds (149)

This liquefaction of his inner somatic drives whenever he thinks about his political target, is a consequence of the confusion of Cold War bloc-politics with the conflicted existential secrecies of the body. Victim target of the network's secret service to one of the two superpowers, he is also a libidinous energy confusing and liquefying the secret narratives of Moran's inner powers, ego and superego.

Yet precisely because he is the scapegoat of 'all the political purges', he is also at the heart of the Cold War. As a bourgeois, he is central and essential fodder for the propaganda drives of the two superpowers — Youdi-Gaber-Moran must reach Molloy at all costs, either to recruit him to 'their' bloc, or eliminate him from the landscape. Either way, Molloy dominates the A/B/C bullying project. As fugitive, liminal, othering presence on the margins of power, he is the somatic uncertainty principle which secretly structures the opposition between the two powers, the Neuter hidden in the entrails and other caverns of the Cold War comedy. Disaggregating fourth *troisième force*, he becomes internalized by the agents in service to the superpowers in a self-liquefying dynamic of creation-destruction. Like Europe, Molloy's world is

simultaneously a marginalized abdicating territory casually owned and dismissed by the new powers, and also the scene of their conflict, the real battlefield of the spectral war, like the Ruhr or Indochina. Glimpsing this from his rock, Molloy realizes the two powers are in cahoots, meeting, exchanging polite words, moving on across this annexed landscape. Yet he cannot begin to understand, obsessed as he is with his private quest, that he might really be the target of their forces. For he is the *mollesse* of the project itself, docile substratum formed at the unsteady frontier between two rival mental images of the two structuring forces each imagining the other and the third forces between them. Molloy, simply because he lies between the forces at play in the dark comedy as supplementary 'fourth' third, is cause of all backsliding and internal collapse in the system itself.

The Cold War writer, Beckett-Sartre, is interpellated, recruited, hunted and disciplined as deadened neutral, as thin membrane between east and west, left and right, superpower poles, between fictions of interiority within the skull and fictions of a political world of ministering dominions:

> perhaps that's what I am, the thing that divides the world in two, on the one side the outside, on the other the inside, that can be as thin as foil, I'm neither one side nor the other, I'm in the middle, I'm the partition,

> I've two surfaces and no thickness, perhaps that's what I feel, myself vibrating, I'm the tympanum.[7]

What the Cold War system generates, then, for Beckett channeling Sartre channeling the Marshall Plan/Cominform seductions of postwar France, is a sacrificial machine targetting the bourgeois subject at the membranous surface between bodily interiority and the world of consciousness, as though singled out by twin superpowers. The Trilogy delves deep into the somatic/psychoanalytic body-inwardness of the sacrificial membrane, Sartrean anxiety imprinted on the substratum of the body's organs. Unspoken yet pressing in on the text, in the wake of Truman's announcement in September 1949 that the Soviets had exploded a nuclear device, is the nightmarish fact of nuclear power: that it targets, potentially, every citizen in the world. The knowledge that the Bomb targets the subject from *both sides* is played out in Molloy's somatic terror: nuclear anxiety occupies every cell in the body, at the level of the nucleus to each cell – the body pierced and wounded, mind reduced to irradiated flesh, sacrificial *mollesse* at bay, witness-scapegoat little more than a membrane structured by Cold War superpower.

Bunkers, Beckett, Bowen

[7] *The Unnameable*, *Three Novels*, p. 386.

In his essay 'Les Peintres de l'empêchement' (1949), Beckett defines modern painting in terms of the 'mourning of the object', and describes Bram van Velde's work as figuring 'burial within the singular, in a space of impenetrable proximities, cell painted on the stone of the cell, art of incarceration.'[8] Beckett crosses the prison cell with something like the self-reproducing organic cell: the creative generative impulse has been killed off by an external force that has buried the creative unit, isolating it radically from all others, emptying it of any function beyond reproducing the fact of its own incarceration/burial. The object being mourned is, therefore, not just an aesthetic predicament, but occasioned by a political act that isolates, buries, forces stagnant self-regard as though locked away within the isolate body. Molloy's anxiety as Cold War sacrificial victim has its corollary at the level of the 'cell' of the body-as-witness, the prison-cell of the compositional context as carceral tomb for the subject. The figure of burial, the radical obstacle or 'empêchement', is only logical if understood within the context of imminent nuclear annihilation. As Derrida argued towards the end of the Cold War, 'the only referent that is absolutely real is thus [...] an absolute nuclear catastrophe that would irreversibly destroy the entire archive and all symbolic capacity, would destroy

[8] 'l'ensevelissement dans l'unique, dans un lieu d'impénétrables proximities, cellule peinte sur la pierre de la cellule, art d'incarcération' (*Disjecta*, p. 136)

the "movement of survival", what I call survivance, at the very heart of life.'[9] Survivance, or the very idea of human survival, is symbolically buried within a tomb-like archive, a memory cell that only records the mourned object as trace within an empty space. The superpower triangle structuring the targeting of the subject generates another sacrificial triangle within each entombed subject, in this apocalyptic fantasy: the cell and the painter and the painting of the cell The triangle is enclosed within the imagined somatic interior (lmodeled on the radioactively destroyed cell within the body) where the art object and cell represent the subject as mourned object, as if in endlessly impossibly postmortem melancholia.

Beckett's art of incarceration is imagined, in 1949, in the year of the Soviet A-Bomb, in the aftermath of Hiroshima and its revelation of the species-destructive power of the technology. Jean Epstein, meditating on cinema in 1947, its power to twist spacetime and multiply the real, compared experimental film to the bomb:

> We do not yet know what the A-Bomb will or will not do or if its disintegration will not also devour, in an instant, its masters along with

[9] Jacques Derrida, "No Apocalypse, Not Now (full speed ahead, seven missiles seven missives)," *Diacritics*, "Nuclear Criticism," (Summer 1984), pp. 26-28 (p. 28).

> the whole of their species. The extraordinary realising, materialising force of cinema already shines through the banality of the plots and stories used in film, and burns whole populations with its creed. Before destroying Japan, the mobilized electrons were happy just to pierce a little hole in Pierre Curie's waistcoat.[10]

Epstein's semi-conscious triangulation of replicating art, species-destruction and the targeting of the individual citizen anticipates Beckett's sense of the new art of incarceration. The loss of the object in Beckett's bunker figures the dream of the loss of species. The idea of the atomic end of the world has a piercing effect, psychologically: the imagination under Cold War compulsions, in fear of radioactivity's penetrating fallout, figures its end as a piercing of each somatic cell in the body. That fear of contamination has a withering effect, destroying the urge to regenerate within the Cold War's machinic spacetime.

Beckett's carceral space anticipates the bunker mentality that Cold War nuclear weapons generated at the level of the pierced and wounded citizen imagination. The sepulchral underground state of mind is taken up by another

[10] 'Le Cinéma du diable' (Paris: Editions Jacques Melot,1947), digital edition: < http://ks356591.kimsufi.com/~mediasli/IMG/doc/le_cinema_du_diable.doc> [my translation]

Irish writer, Elizabeth Bowen, in her 1964 novel, *The Little Girls.* It opens with Dinah in a cave in her garden preparing to bury objects in its underground. The novel posits an impossible posthuman future inhabited only by what Dinah refers to as 'expressive objects', remnants of current commodities: '"It's for someone or other to come upon in the *far future*, when practically nothing about us – you or me, for instance – would be otherwise known' (*The Little* Girls, 9). The objects will reverse the cellular nightmare of the Beckettian art of incarceration: preserving objects beyond the destruction of the species that made them: ' "I'm looking ahead to when *we* are a vanished race' (9), Dinah says. The expressive objects carry with them, superstitiously, the aura of the human singularities they occasioned as fetishised things, for each object is chosen because it materializes each individual's unique being: '"a person's only a *person* when they have some really raging peculiarity"' (10). Dinah's project, then, is to isolate and bury, acknowledging deep 'inside' the loss of species; yet *still* countering the nuclear targeting of the individual citizen and her lost object-world. It is a childish gesture, perhaps: yet this is Bowen's point too, for Dinah's anti-nuclear gesture, though it mimics the representational catastrophe of the nuclear sacrificial economy, as though painting a cell on the cell's wall like some weird new petroglyph, is designed (as creative bunker art) to crystallize and preserve multidirectional memory too.

For her art of preservation unconsciously repeats a childhood gesture – as a girl, she and two of her childhood friends had, on the eve of the First

World War, buried a box, with this sign: '*We are dead, and all our fathers and mothers. You who find this, Take Care. These are our valuable treasures, and our fetters*' (134). Written in blood, the text seals the ritual: each girl had put significant objects in the little box, including each 'her secret thing'. Each had had to stop their ears in the dark as each individual girl boxed her secret object. The memory hoard was sealed up with wax, and 'signed' with the imprint of their thumbs: the body, its interiority (blood) and surface (thumbprint) is inscribed on the buried archive, materialising a fiction that plays on the loss of survivance within a hostile parental world entering terminal wartime. It is this memory, triggered by her own terrified nuclear anxiety in 1963, that sends Dinah on a journey to discover those old friends again. When the box is discovered, it is empty, as though grave-robbed, or its contents annihilated by time itself. Yet the three are brought together by the failed quest for the mourned objects, not as empty vessels of past time, but as subjects loving against the grain of the species-targeting sacrificial war god. In the Brashfield Address to the American Academy of Arts and Letters in 1953, Bowen had meditated upon the relations of the artwork to time, and her mind had turned to sacrifice. Men and women, she argued, rather than face up to the immediacy of sensations of the contemporary moment, will prefer to sacrifice that living immediacy for the sake of a factitious sense of order:

> It is to our fixed wish, to our wish to envisage "life" that we sacrifice what is most true and meaning in the momentary spontaneities of existence. And the result of the sacrifice is estrangement; we cannot but wonder from time to time, how it is that we seem to be cut off from some great part of our power to be.[11]

Contemporary art enables us to inhabit the world again, to perceive the unestranged sensations that incite the imagination to create, regenerating the power to be. It does so by carefully placing its object (as the subject of art) so that it begins to register time's energies: 'To an extent, our time is our art's subject. In so far as – in the novel, in the non-abstract picture – there must be an ostensible, concrete subject, that is so chosen, and so placed, as best either to illustrate time's action, to reflect time's colour, to register time's pulse' (150). In the novel, the art object that is designed to function as just such a contemporary register of contemporary time is not an illustration of what has been destroyed – Dinah turns instinctively against the rather kitsch picture of the vanished high street where she and her girl friends had lived and experienced before the two World Wars.

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[11] 'Subject and the Time' (1953), in Elizabeth Bowen, *Listening In: Broadcasts, Speeches, and Interviews*, ed. Allan Hepburn (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010): 147-52 (p. 148).

The art object as contemporary statement is rather the sealed box the little girls had sealed with their bodies; and it is in the resurrection of that box in the anti-nuclear time capsule Dinah buries. Yet the memory of the emptiness of the first box, and the annihilating knowledge that it will not be our species who in the future will open and 'read' the expressive objects in Dinah's cave, conspire together to suggest a bleaker acknowledgement of the sacrificial economy that legislates relations between social blindness to the contemporary threat and an art of carceral repetition of the lost object. *The Little Girls* suggests that there is something at work in the time-consciousness of those born to the twentieth century ('a time of scientific threats, sense-deadening scientific concessions', she argued in the Brashfield Address (150)): it suggests that the estranging sacrifice that cuts us off from our power to be is structuring the act of making at its empty core. The little girls, and later Dinah as an adult, sacrifice their own imaginations as embodied being-in-the-world; they cut themselves off from the objects that materialize their passions and sensations within a dead and deadening simulacra of the body: as metal box sealed with blood and imprint; as nuclear bunker. The art object can only register and repeat the empty gesture, signifying the airlessness and timeless void of the sacrificed mourned object-world of affect and living time-consciousness. In a grim sense, despite the urgent community Dinah manages to summon from the past and its wreckage, one is left not with an art of preservation, but an art of sacrifice; sacrifice of little girls to the war Moloch.

Cold War Victimhood and Nuclear Sacrifice:

Benjamin, Ballard, Oliver

If Beckett and Bowen turn to a sacrificial rhetoric to register the fallout from the bunkered imagination under Cold War compulsions, it is because of the queasy sense that what is being mourned within nuclear time is also what is being emptily preserved; and that the lost mourned object will take the shape of the childhood most felt to figure what is vulnerable and human, exploiting the figure of the female child in particular as most vulnerably the target of the masculinist fictions being generated by nuclear patriarchy. Demonstrably, the sacrificial rhetoric being conjured has its roots in German Romanticism as analyzed by Benjamin in his long 1921 essay on Goethe's *Elective Affinities*. Benjamin explores the hinterland to the idea of sacrifice of the figure or 'semblance' of the girl-child as foundational to the economy of Romantic art and death-drive desire. Ottilie is driven towards suicidal self-starvation as a result of the drowning of the child in the lake; but Benjamin does not read this as a drive that is external to Ottilie. She is being driven by the internal logic of her own self-representation, as though her imagination itself harbours the hostile power. That hostile power inhabits the archaic and chthonic underworld, underground, the deep waters of the landscape in the novel, but only begins truly to signify when Ottilie is drawn towards her own death as

hunger-strike sacrifice. It is therefore a self-destructive hungry force within her flesh and mind, inhabiting her carnality because she so resembles the sacrificed ghost she will become:

> It is not to be understood, however, as if external need and force bring about Ottilie's destruction; rather, her type of semblance itself is the basis for the imperative that the semblance be extinguished and extinguished soon.[12]

She is silenced as 'the archetype of the innocent sacrificed by the mythic law', according to Kir Kuiken: 'It is an almost *unconscious* death sentence, a speechless, secret drive which starves her.'[13] Ottilie's withdrawal into herself through refusal of food and of speech enacts an entombing of the subject within the body-as-sepulchre according to the dictates of a law that Benjamin

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[12] Benjamin, Walter, 'Goethe's *Elective Affinities*', *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings, , Volume 1: 1913-1926,* edited Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), 297-360 (p. 349).

[13] Kir Kuiken , 'On the Delineation of Choice and Decision in Benjamin's "Goethe's *Elective Affinities*', *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature* 31.3 (2004), 286-308 (pp. 297-8).

insists again and again is nothing to do either with her individuality or with an external force. Her inner semblance is the sacrificial agent:

> This silencing of the moral voice is not to be grasped, like the muted language of affects, as a feature of individuality. It is not a determination of the boundaries of human being. With this silence, the semblance (*Schein*) has installed itself consumingly in the heart of the noblest being. ('Goethe's *Elective Affinities',* p. 337)

The self-silencing signals the hungry consumption of interiority that constitutes the sacrifice of the little girl within. *As though* enacted by a monster of the underworld, *as though* triggered by suicidal impulse, the act of sacrifice is in fact, for Benjamin, a self-cancelling emptying-out of subjectivity as the price paid for resembling such a perfect victim of the law. The law internalizes itself as radical self-estrangement, as a self-consuming death drive which monumentalizes the sacrificed subject as both a tribute to art's power to fabricate tragic resemblances, and as a dehumanizing *graving* of the ego as uncanny allegory of the secret, silent, immobilized and underground unconscious. Ottilie withdraws into her non-being, allows the law of semblance to emerge from her insides, allows this semblant force to rob her of voice and nourishment, and dies under the death sentences of a patriarchal law she has taken in deep within her abandoned vitals.

It is this fiction of the self-consuming sacrificial girl which Beckett sets spinning in the form of the 'feminized' Molloy courted by Cold War agents, which we have seen Bowen explore in similar fashion with her nuclear fiction, *The Little Girls*. It returns again in later texts of the period, as if to underline further how far Romantic self-sacrifice as a tribute to internalized patriarchal law is felt again to have returned in the nuclear threat targeting every subject in the Cold War. J.G. Ballard's 1969 *The Atrocity Exhibition* explores the victimizing effects of technology in the nuclear era, with celebrity fanaticism and mediatized consumer cultures transformed by the death drive written in to the postwar contemporary by Hiroshima. In one of the peculiarly haunting paragraphs of the novel, 'The Persistence of the Beach', Ballard's Bomb-traumatized and lustful focalizer dreams of the sacrificed victim projected by nuclear fantasy as he wanders round a surrealist landscape, the weapons range beach (a cross between Trinity sands and Bikini):

> The white flanks of the dunes reminded him of the endless promenades of Karen Novotny's body – diorama of flesh and hillock; the broad avenues of the thighs, piazzas of pelvis and abdomen, the close arcades of the womb. This terracing of Karen's body in the landscape of the beach in some way diminished the identity of the young woman asleep in her apartment. He walked among the displaced contours of her

> pectoral girdle. What time could be read off the slopes and inclines of this inorganic musculature, the drifting planes of her face?[14]

The *mise-en-scène* sketches a Dali-esque world of nuclear-technologized sexual politics, the beach a projection of both unconscious sexual desire for the death-resemblant sleeping woman, and of cravings for radiation and apocalypse in a nuclear cinema of sacrificed affect. The mix has the taste of atrocity insofar as it makes a gigantic goddess-fetish out of the female body at the same time as burying her within a lethal genocidal fiction in an act of monumentalizing identity-destruction. This is sacrifice as pin-up and torture-porn, but strikes up the resemblances to Ottilie's self-consuming and self-silencing death-drive as Romantic pretext for the indulgence of its killing technophilia. The sacrifice is a fraudulent diorama, sacrificing the nobility of the victim on the altar of lethal sex comedy.

A similar crisis-point fusion of emptied Romantic gesture and low sadistic comedy informs Douglas Oliver's 1973 novel *The Harmless Building* and its staging of inner organ anxiety and warfare.[15] For Oliver, we are all subject to the stream of news (114), and the media saturation of the

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[14] J.G. Ballard, *The Atrocity Exhibition: Annotated* (1970) (London: Flamingo, 2002), p. 59.

[15] *Three Variations on the Theme of Harm* (London: Paladin,1990).

subject infiltrates the novel's link between the revolutionary struggle in Uruguay between Cold War right and left and the kidnapping and death of a Down's Syndrome child. It is as though the melodrama of the Cold War has to infect even the power to mourn the death of one close to you on the very closest of home fronts. The protagonist's struggle to keep the child 'alive in [his] mind' is equated with the very grounds of the possibility of a world without harm – figured as 'an area of almost no-harm like a clearing in the middle of harm' (113). The fusion of supranational politics and domestic feeling goes deeper, though: Douglas sees politics shaping our inner world as though that no-harm clearing were the zone of affect deep within the citizen's insides. Those insides, paradoxically, begin to leak out into the landscape, as Karen Novotny's body had done. In *The Harmless Building*, there is a surreal beach too, fusing scene and guts: 'They talked of brown estuary mud at sunset, comparing the gleaming patterns to endless stomach muscles stretching towards a tide-line' (128). It is as though the saturation of worlds by rival worlds renders bodies porous, hungry for the unknown without as if consuming the unknown patterns within the silent realm of the body. The novel witnesses what it calls an eyelid swarm, a perceptual assault on and by the body figured in the mysterious rhythms of self-firing neurons in the brain – the mystery of the inner body is compared to the mystery of international politics, the 'bits of information' streaming through time (131). Donald's anxiety and hypochondria is very close to political paranoia: 'the treachery of

wrong air pressure between various enclosed body areas from anus to brain', as though the fractured world of Cold War blocs and factions and secrecies is a double projection effect, body beaming out to globe, and globe to inward carnal space. His fear of cancer is fear of something nameless as death, and this creates an 'alternative identity site' within the body, 'schizophrenic patterns' in the eyes (147). This double system of alternative identity is generated, I would argue, by the ways each mind and body in the postwar period feels targeted by nuclear culture. This is troped in the novel in the repeated reference to assassination: a pointing gun is said to give the naked body a double sensation, both as a small black circle within a white target spot and as whole body expanding nervously in fear of being targeted (194). This is a Kennedy fantasy as semblance of the Cold War body-landscape interface, mutually doubling up the alternative identities under compulsion.

And at the heart of the whole system is the dark fiction of child sacrifice: the novel turns remorselessly towards the little hut in the woods and the figure of the sacrificed Down's Syndrome child. That little hut is, unspeakably, in the exact same spot as the harmless building in the clearing where no-harm was fitfully dreamed in defence against the Cold War mechanics. The very dream of no-harm is complicit in the sacrifice of child, complicit at the infected, toxic level of the politicized insides of the Cold War citizen: 'The voodoo death is in all of us who are dominated. All who snub and have contempt for us curse our stomach, lungs and heart' (168). Oliver's

pitiless sensing of Cold War sacrifice takes on the evil comedy of political domination's fictions of sacrifice as voodoo death; and finds release only but importantly in its political animus against the enemy dreaming inside.

The mimetic triangle and *homo sacer* scapegoat: Girard and Agamben

René Girard's theory of mimetic desire is useful when trying to think through Oliver's sense of doubleness. Girard understands emulation of the other in terms of double mediation. Two desiring subjects coming together will act out their emulation in a doubling struggle generated by the imbalance in power that reproduces Hegelian master-slave dialectic. The master-slave double act creates and is created by *two* superimposed triangles, for Girard, made up of subject, object and mediator of desire – and this double mediation leads to the metamorphosis of the object that is common to both partners.[16] Girard was clearly influenced by the gigantic double mediation at work in the superpower world of the Cold War, for he writes of the doubles in terms of a totalitarian duality, and understands that duality in terms of 'twin structures' that read very like the world of nuclear politics: 'All the forces of being are gradually organized into twin structures whose opposition grows ever more

[16] René Girard, *Deceit, Desire and the Novel: Self and Other in Literary Structure*, translated Yvonne Freccero (1961) (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), pp. 99-101.

exact' (137). The mediator in between the twin structures resembles the mediating role taken by UN and non-aligned figures in the Cuban missile crisis. The curious mutual effect of having the triangle in operation acknowledges the ways in which superpower talks and threats have infiltrated citizen interiority: 'Double mediation has invaded the growing domain of collective existence and wormed its ways into the more intimate depths of the individual soul, until finally it stretches beyond national boundaries and annexes countries' (138). What becomes as clear, if we adduce Girard's late Cold War books on the scapegoat, the 1982 *Le Bouc émissaire (The Scapegoat* in the 1985 translation), and the 1985 *Job, the Victim of his People*, is that the mediator, in acting as the object common to the twin structures, can become, and is always fantasized as becoming, a sacrificial subject. As surrogate victim, the mediator acts out 'that powerful element shared in common by so many biblical texts yet mysteriously ignored by everyone. There is no doubt that the intellectual expulsion of this scapegoat victim is the continuation of the physical violence of antiquity'.[17] The scapegoat victim begins to resemble the 'bare forked animal' targeted by biopower in Agamben's celebrated analysis: as though the sacrificial quarry were foundational to politics itself, necessary

[17] René Girard, *Job the Victim of his People* translated Yvonne Freccero (1985) (London: Athlone Press, 1987), p. 8.

agent of the manner in which late modernity summons up primitivist rituals to sanction the paralegal violence of its dialectic.

For Giorgio Agamben, the body is always already biopolitical, caught up as it is in the nets and networks of power once reduced to the *nec plus infra* of bare life: nothing in it, or the economy it is caught up in, seems to allow for opposition to the demands of sovereign power (187). But one can use Girard's discussion of sacrifice to suggest some way forward. Girard defines as one of the four signs of the scapegoat that the victims are chosen not for the crimes they are accused of but for the fact they bear the marks of the victim on and in their bodies, marks that act as symbols of their guilty relationship to the crisis – for instance, Oedipus's infirmity of body (*The Scapegoat*, 24). If we think of Ottilie's semblance, the sign she must always have to act the role of scapegoat is this *Schein,* the resemblance she bears on the surface to her body, as if shining from within. For Girard, this identificatory signal might be anything that combines 'the marginality of the insider with the marginality of the outsider' (25) – or, one might argue, anything that fuses the marginality of one's insides with the marginality of the political world as (mis)understood by the collective citizen imagination. What shines out is the holy victimhood that was always primitively there before the sacrificial dialectical machinery even began to grind into action. What is perceived as if it had been always there is the deep inner vulnerability of the subject withdrawn into shining entrail and sacrificial inner organ. Agamben

distinguishes between those who are sacrificial victims and those whose bare life renders them killable and unsacrificeable since beyond ritual. Yet if one reads Girard and Benjamin together, and holds in mind the self-entombing nuclear subject dreamt by Bowen and Beckett, then the distinction breaks down. The *homo sacer* under conditions of Cold War speciescide threat shines out from the citizen's insides as though irradiated by the nuclear imagining imposed by the three-way dialectic of Cold War sovereignty: the citizen becomes killable at any moment *as* sacrificial victim. That is if we take the act of sacrifice to mean the fusion of insider and outsider marginalities through internalization of sovereign chthonic powers and silencing reduction of the subject to cursed 'stomach, lungs and heart'. Anselm Haverkamp defines the *homo sacer* as the 'zone in which the actual addressee of all violence is laid bare':[18] this helps to wrest Ottilie and other semblant victims from the state of exception: we are all potential addressees of violence. Elsewhere, Haverkamp argues that 'the rhetorical establishment of the enemy in confessional warfare both hides away and displaces the interior sacrifice, the victimization and

[18] Anselm Haverkamp, 'Anagrammatics of Violence: The Benjaminian Ground of Homo Sacer', in *Politics, Metaphysics, and Death: Essays on Giorgio Agamben's* Homo Sacer (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 135-144 (p. 140).

traumatization possibly and necessarily of every body'.[19] If we follow Benjamin's *Schein*, if we follow Beckett to the Molloy of one's entrails and the incarceral art of the abandoned subject/object, and if we understand Bowen's sense of the nuclear bunkering of interiority and Oliver's vision of voodoo death as child-sacrificial under the compulsions of Cold War nuclear sovereignty, then that interior sacrifice must be the zone in which all citizens under power dream their victimization: the deep insides that are silently ours and not ours, the fleshly unconscious of the organ world within.

The sacrificial triangle turns on the victim-mediator, the substance between two states: the inner organs of the Cold War citizen figured as 'child' to be sacrificed to the nuclear future, as soft mollitude between political forces that have annexed the body and enforced the interior sacrifice according to the twisted and internalized (silenced) logic of semblance and double mediation. This somatic third force within stands crudely (because so viscerally) for the mystery of our own drives as troped and hidden within organs, buried in the earth as expressive object offered to the gods of this world – but aiming, nevertheless, as zone of no-harm too, towards some

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[19] 'The Enemy has no Future: Figure of the Political', *Cardozo Law Review* 26.6 (May 2005: < http://www.kuwi.europa-uni.de/de/lehrstuhl/lw/westeuropa/Haverkamp/publikationen/rara/The_Enemy_2003.pdf> [Accessed 5/10/2014].

impossible post-nuclear future beyond futurelessness, as a bunkered interiority sealed by the child's body imprint. This zone becomes a hut where a child is also sacrificed: on the weapons range beach or in the terminal burial zones of the Cold War. The victim is at once another Iphegenia whose exploded sacrificial body acts itself out as theatre of the Cold War; and our own child self/own children's selves victimized and traumatized by voodoo Cold War politics. The two spectral enemies of nuclear culture impose two triangles on the mind and focus their target on the inner child as inner organ: 'They were suspended within the large mansion as in a miraculous egg formed in the infertile stomach of the dreaming building within the spiritualized body of the dreaming baby' (*Three Variations*, 125). The bare life sacrificed to biopower in the Cold War needs to be redefined as a child's vulnerable being, both host to all dreaming and spiritualizing of all intimate relationships, and sacrificial victim of the double mediation of scapegoating politics. That double child lived (and still lives) within each and every citizen body under nuclear threat and targeting, the politics of blocs (in our guts and entrails, in 'that inner space one never sees, the brain the heart and other caverns') always ready to kill the child as surrogate target of the victimization and traumatization possibly and necessarily of every body in the world.