Death, Men, and Modernism

Trauma and Narrative in British Fiction from Hardy to Woolf

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Introduction

On May 5, 1910, a large advertisement in the *Times* heralded the first edition of the Woman's Supplement, which was to be included as an insert on May 7. A small article in the same paper reported that the King was suffering from a "severe cold." On the seventh, the paper was bordered in black and the Woman's Supplement was indefinitely postponed. A few lines explained,

> Owing to the death of the king we have decided to postpone the publication of the first issue of the Woman's Supplement which had been prepared and announced as part of the *Times* of today. We cannot doubt that our readers will agree with us in thinking that in such an hour of national tragedy the appearance of a supplement which necessarily deals with some of the lighter sides of life would be untimely. [1]

The introduction of the Woman's Supplement in the *Times* reflected an increasing interest in women as readers and as a specific demographic with particular interests not fully satisfied by the rest of the newspaper. But women's interests were displaced by national interests, and the "lighter sides of life" had to wait for the end of the period of mourning.

The fact that news of Edward's death displaced the women's section of the newspaper was purely coincidental, and the woman's supplement appeared as planned some time later. Nonetheless, the coincidence seems structurally to replicate the rhetorical mode used to understand Edward's death and to measure the grandeur of his funeral. Queen Victoria's death and funeral ten years earlier formed the inevitable point of comparison for Edward's, and the papers and the court seemed anxious both to establish a continuity and equivalence between the two royal funerals and to maintain Edward's unique character, his distinction from Victoria, and the particular contribution of his reign. While Edward's funeral and the public mourning that followed his death continued the model established by Queen Victoria, the language used to understand his death was quite different, and the

major factor used to establish his distinction from Victoria was his masculinity.

King Edward's death, as the death of any British monarch, was an occasion for grand public mourning. The *Times* reported that all members of the court were to go into mourning for the year and speculated about the effects of the King's death on society and trade, predicting a brisk business in black.[2] The *Times* seemed to go out of its way to assert that Edward's death had eclipsed Victoria's. In a section on the funeral titled "The Victoria Memorial" the paper reported,

> The Palace of mourning fascinated the throng. Ordinarily it seems to stand for that part of the life of the King that is unlighted by publicity, with a certain majesty of mysteriousness. Now it stood, gloomily and silently, for his death, with all the added mystery of an extinguished life. So the crowd continued to peer through the railings, to turn away, and come back. It was not, perhaps, a matter of wonder that no one in the circumstances seemed to notice the memorial to Queen Victoria a little farther away.[3]

Victoria's unfinished monument, still "muffled in scaffolding," became merely an impediment for visitors on their way to the Palace. The memorial lost its status as an object of veneration and became an obstacle to clear passage to the palace and the king.

The day after the funeral the *Times* wrote, "splendid as had been the funeral of Queen Victoria, the spectacle of yesterday was far more so." The May 7 obituary reported,

> The mourning for King Edward will be deep and wide. It will not be like the mourning for Queen Victoria, the true Mother of our people, a pathetic and solitary figure, our reverence for whose wisdom and devotion was mingled with a tenderness inspired by the sad loneliness of her long life. It will rather be the mourning for a sovereign who did much for his country at a critical time . . . the mourning for one who was essentially a man among men.[4]

Edward is a "sovereign" while Victoria remains a "solitary and pathetic figure"; Edward is characterized in relation to his achievements in matters of state while Victoria is remembered for the loneliness of her life; and most importantly, Victoria is "our true Mother" while Edward is a "man among men." King Edward's funeral was an affair of state, and the mourning for his death was a matter of mandate. Victoria went into mourning under the auspices of a wife and not a queen, and her practices provided a domestic model of mourning for the Victorians.[5] In contrast, Edward's funeral was a moment of spectacle restricted to the death of a King.[6] However, if the *Times* established Edward's difference from Victoria through insistence on Edward's masculinity, that insistence has drawbacks as well as benefits. It serves to make mourning for his death public rather than

personal, thereby retaining ritual rather than emotion. Victoria seems to haunt the account of Edward's death.

In this book I argue that dead men become a locus of attention and a symptom of crisis in British writing of the early to mid-twentieth century. As Edward's death replaced Victoria's death but could not displace it completely, these dead men are haunted by the dead women who precede them. Nonetheless, the dead men replace dead women as the climactic, and, therefore, the most meaning-laden figures in the text. Thomas Hardy's final novel, *Jude the Obscure*, the first text I examine, follows this pattern in the structure of its composition. In his prologue Hardy wrote that the circumstances of his novel were suggested "by the death of a woman."[7] The woman is unidentified and quickly forgotten as the novel commences its extensive elaboration of the life and death of its male hero. Hardy weighted his story of the death of a young man with *fin de siecle* significance: in Jude's inevitable decline and end he attempted to chart an already doomed modernity. This use of Jude directly influenced the other writers I examine: D. H. Lawrence, E. M. Forster, Ford Madox Ford, Katherine Mansfield, and Virginia Woolf. Jude gave modernist writers a language to represent increasing fears about modernity and masculinity. The particular ways they used this language is one of the subjects of this book.[8]

For the early twentieth-century tragedy wears a male face. The face of the disaster is the face of a young dead man: with a cap and uniform, he is a soldier; with a crown of thorns he is a God. He is the culmination of masculinity, and at the same time, the sign of its decline. This book argues that the young dead man is both a symptom and a symbol for the failure of modernity and a locus of aesthetic, structural and historic concerns. As a lower-class ingenue, he is Jude Fawley or Leonard Bast, sacrificed to the immobility of social structure; as an upper-class gentleman, he is Edward Ashburnham or Gerald Crich, a perfect but empty facade. As Septimus Smith or the anonymous young man in Katherine Mansfield's "The Garden Party," he is nameless. He is doomed from the very beginning of the novel which plots his death, and the death comes, when it comes, as both shock and culmination. If Edward's death is exceptional because his is the death of a monarch, it is unexceptional in the ambivalence of what it signifies. Is it a continuation of the past or does it indicate some new meaning?

The novels which follow Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure* in making a young man the central figure, foreshadowing his predicament as a particularly "modern" one, and plotting his death as the climactic moment of the plot, form a canon of early twentieth-century works centrally concerned with a revaluation of the meaning of death. I read E. M. Forster's *Howards End*, D. H. Lawrence's *Women in Love*, Ford Madox Ford's *The Good Soldier* and Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* for their treatment of what becomes, partly through their efforts, the quintessentially modern figure of the young dead man. In my chapter on E. M. Forster's *Howards End* I examine Forster's turn from Thomas Hardy's traumatic narrative structure of

repetition as recurrence to an emphasis on repetition as substitution. In retaining the climactic death of the young man but focusing on the lives of the two sisters, Forster balances Leonard's doom with Helen and Margaret's destiny, implying that his death makes way for their lives. While in *The Good Soldier* and *Women in Love* female agency is also emphasized, the women are noted for the roles they play in the death rather than for their modes of continuance. Continuance is instead portrayed in the sterile figure of the male witness to tragedy. Katherine Mansfield and Virginia Woolf retain the figure of the witness, but as they reverse the gender they reverse the signification. While John Dowell and Rupert Birkin are left bereft and incomplete through the loss of their doubles, Laura in Mansfield's story "The Garden Party" and Clarissa in *Mrs. Dalloway* are consummated through their visions. I want to suggest that the generic paradigm of the modernist death plot which traces the destiny and death of a young man shifts from the sterility and pessimism of Hardy's Wessex to the hopeful and potentially utopian renewal of Woolf's London. The reasons for this shift are manifold but my primary emphasis is on the paradoxical effect that the Great War had in amplifying a modest optimism and an emphasis on survival and continuance. In arguing first that the pessimism of the death plot precedes the Great War by nearly twenty years, and second, that the effect of the war is not simply to increase cynicism and irony among British writers, but to make more urgent, and therefore more necessary, a model of consolation and response, I am disputing the familiar notion that the First World War marked the loss of innocence of the British writer.[9] *Mrs. Dalloway* and "The Garden Party" are stories of innocence carefully and deliberately regained over a male dead body.

As I examine these shifts in the rethinking of the death in the modern British novel, I am also concerned with Freud's contributions to the creation of a new narrative of mourning. For this reason, I end with the encounter of a modern novelist with Freud's theories in H. D.*'s Tribute to Freud.* H. D. continues the paradigm of privileging male death. She does so explicitly by claiming the cause of her trauma was the death of her brother in the First World War and implicitly by making her mourning for Freud's death the hidden subject of her memoir. Nonetheless, her memoir participates in the same alchemy as the stories of Woolf and Mansfield by transforming her preoccupation with these deaths into the story of her own self-discovery and self-assertion.

Umberto Eco once proposed that while philosophy has been grounded in the question "Who speaks?" perhaps it must begin to ask the more urgent question: "Who dies?"[10] But he does not mention the essential connection between these two questions; who dies helps determine the question of who speaks. In most of the books I am reading, the men are scapegoats. Male characters die in the place of female characters: Jude for Sue, Gerald for Gudrun, Leonard for Margaret, Septimus for Clarissa. And since it is the man who dies, increasingly it is the woman who speaks, most

dramatically in the two final texts I look at, *Mrs. Dalloway* and Mansfield's "The Garden Party."

Kaja Silverman marks a similar shift in World War II films, writing, "in order to shore up the ruins of masculinity, many of these films are obliged to confer upon the female character the narrative agency which is usually the attribute of a male character."[11] While Silverman reads this trope as one that shores up masculinity, Gilbert and Gubar claim it as a trope of breakdown: "modernist formulations of societal breakdown consistently employed imagery of male impotence and female potency."[12] While I agree with Silverman that female characters are given the narrative agency the male characters have lost, and with Gilbert and Gubar that these representations are symptomatic of a crisis in modernity, I also argue that the sacrificial implications of these male deaths allow the men in these novels a privileged subject position. They occupy the center stage through having been removed from the stage entirely and their deaths at the end color the entire novel. While women are given more narrative power in these texts, the men are also given a privileged position—the privilege of a sacrificial death. Roland Barthes writes "for us the 'subject' (since Christianity) is the one who suffers."[13] The dominance of male death in modernist narrative not only indicates a crisis in the mastery of masculinity, but also an attempt at reassertion.

Other critics have preceded me in exploring the meaning of female death in the nineteenth century. If the beautiful dead female body is the icon of the nineteenth century, then the male one is the icon of the twentieth.[14] I take Gail McDonald's advice that it is not of modernism but of modernisms that we should speak.[15] Nonetheless, the young dead man assumes a new priority in twentieth-century fiction. This priority involves not only a shift in gender, but a shift in the strategies used to make meaning of death. In Carolyn Dever's words, "this paradigm [of loss] opens up a series of representational possibilities ranging from the conservative to the radical."[16] Dever traces the range of responses which fill the empty space opened up by the Victorian dead mother. The ways in which the male death plot reverses the melancholic plot of the dead mother resonate beyond gender to structure: dead or absent mothers begin the Victorian novel and the subsequent narrative is occupied with working through the death, while the dead men of modernist fiction are the culmination of the novel, leaving no space or time for the activity of working through. For this reason, while Dever's critical paradigm of loss for the Victorian novel is melancholy, mine is trauma: the inassimilable and sudden loss which resists both reconciliation and interpretation. I emphasize the uncanny, repetitive structure of traumatic loss. Freud's exploration of the uncanny leads him to his realization of traumatic repetition in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* and, in the novels I examine, trauma is uncannily foreshadowed through a series of repetitions. The feeling of ineluctability, one of Freud's symptoms

of the uncanny, is the primary effect of the death plots I examine even before the justification of their tragic endings.

A similar uncanny logic marks the way that Hardy foresees the decay of modernity at its very inception. Many of the authors I am discussing made the figure of the young dead man central, not because they foresaw the materialization of that figure in the events of the war, but because this was their way to portray what they already saw as a doomed modernity. World War I is generally interpreted as introducing a new vision of death. In my account, however, the events of the war supplemented changes that were already well underway. I see a literary response to the war not in the depiction of male death or in increased pessimism or irony, but rather, in a new emphasis on witnessing. The two novels I read which precede the war, *Jude the Obscure* and *Howards End*, lack the witness figure which becomes the central counterbalance to a death in the later novels. *The Good Soldier* and *Women in Love*, both finished during the war, emphasize the sterility of the non-participant, a sterility which Freud also focuses on in his writings on war and death. In the post-war writings of Woolf and Mansfield this sterility is transformed into an emphasis on survival and continuance. Ford Madox Ford is exceptional for having fought in the First World War, but at the time of his composition of *The Good Soldier* he was also a watcher, waiting for England to become embroiled in the national conflict. Lawrence, Woolf, Mansfield and H. D. all experienced the ambivalent safety of the home front.

If the question these writers express has to do with the proper response to a traumatic experience like the war, the war itself is curiously repressed. Lawrence cautiously commented on this repression, claiming the war was to be "taken for granted" in his wartime novel[17]; Woolf began *Mrs. Dalloway* with the spectacle of a post-war London, but shifted attention to a party which retained the mood of pre-war England; Mansfield left the landscape of "The Garden Party" uncluttered with the specificity of either time or space. Their complex and indirect avowals of the war are eclipsed through a mode of indirection which involves a shift in focus: instead of concentrating on a historical and general landscape they write psychological and particular dramas.

Although Freud's work is only one of many attempts to conceptualize death in the twentieth century, his psychoanalytic methodology is the closest correlative to the psychological narrative of the novel, and has provided a compelling account of the dynamics of narrative in general. Freud's development of the idea of the death instinct is contemporaneous with the novels I will be reading, and bears some unmistakable similarities despite its generic differences. Like the novelists I examine, most of Freud's work depicts modernity as an endgame, and rejects positivist and evolutionary accounts of human development in favor of the fatalist and devolutionary death-plot. The death-plot is expressive of a twentieth-century crisis in meaning. The analysis of repetition in Freud's work provides a way to read

repetition in these modernist novels as a structural correlative of their fatalism. In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* Freud extends his observations on traumatic repetition in shell-shock victims to a general account of the economy of human existence. Rather than emphasizing particular and exceptional traumas, like the trauma of a survivor of war, Freud claims in this text that repetition points to a universal trauma located not in a past event but in an event which is yet to come—the subject's own death. In this psychoanalytic formulation, as in the modernist novel, the movement of the subject is always a movement towards death: towards the trauma that has not yet occurred, but is still inscribed in the novel's anticipations and repetitions. Trauma becomes a foundational principle rather than an exceptional event.

Several other critics have already discussed the role that trauma plays in narrative as well as the role that narratives play in working through trauma. Like these critics, I rely heavily on the work of Sigmund Freud in my account of modernist novelists' attempt to reimagine death. Unlike the two most prominent theorists of death and narrative, however, I consider Freud's work on death and trauma as contributions to early twentieth-century attempts to rethink death, not as a master plot that somehow explains either death or narrative. Peter Brooks has been the most influential in clearing the way for a new kind of synthesis between psychoanalysis and literature.[18] More recently, interest in literature of the Holocaust has opened up an interdisciplinary discourse on trauma and narrative. Cathy Caruth's *Unclaimed Experiences* revises Brooks' work on the death plot by focusing on the effect of trauma on the witness and survivor, rather than its effect in shaping the mechanism of plot.

Peter Brooks turns to Freud for a model of the textual dynamics of plot, claiming "by attempting to superimpose psychic functioning on textual functioning, we may discover something about how textual dynamics work and something about their psychic equivalences."[19] To read the text not only in terms of its formal qualities but also in terms of psychic correspondences is to say something about the way plot dynamics reflect human dynamics and the way people use stories to channel and express the energy of the psyche. Brooks' argument is an important precursor to my own, so I will try to outline our crucial similarities and differences. I follow Brooks in turning to the death instinct as what he calls "Freud's masterplot." Brooks argues that the death instinct contains within it its own narrative logic: "Repetition towards recognition contains the truth of the narrative text"(108). He reads Freud's statement, "the aim of all life is death," as an "evolutionary image of an organism" doomed to return to origin. Between the origin and the return to origin is the dilatory, digressionary, painful space of narrative.

Brooks reads sub-plots as meant to prevent "the danger of the short-circuit: the danger of reaching the end too quickly, of achieving the improper death"(104). The repetitions of the narrative serve to bind and contain tex-

tual energy and to lead to the proper ending. They also allow for "movement from the passive into the active" (98), for the entry of an element of will and choice. Brooks names the nineteenth-century plot as one particularly susceptible to "the machinations of desire" but traces the workings of the plot in the modernist novel, emphasizing the emergence of a hermeneutics of suspicion, but ultimately, no real shift. Plots still achieve their meaning through ending, even if that meaning is ultimately deferred to the retelling of the reader, as Brooks argues of *Heart of Darkness*. Narrative is a kind of working through, leading to resolution in ending—even if that resolution is necessarily incomplete.

My critique of Brooks has to do with his focus on the nineteenth century and his analysis of plot as "meant to make meaning." Brooks' description of the "evolutionary image" of the death drive misses the fact that it is precisely a devolutionary image; his interest in the way "the death of the ending quickens meaning"(96) elides the fact that, for Freud, often the death instinct is at odds with meaning. For Brooks, "repetition" is a positive way of making meaning and constitutes the activity and mastery of the plot, but for Freud repetition is often an experience of passivity. The Freud of working through, the therapeutic Freud Brooks chooses to emphasize, is at odds with Freud the dark prophet, the Freud who claims he comes with no words of consolation, no magic bullet, no therapeutic end.

My aim in this project is to place Freud's idea of the death instinct in its twentieth-century context, alongside the experience of the First World War and alongside other explorations of death plots in twentieth-century fiction. My argument is that death plots in the twentieth century are symptoms of a crisis in meaning. In the novels I am exploring, the deaths are always what Brooks would call "improper": they are accidental or suicidal, and always inappropriate. They serve not as devices of binding but of unbinding. The texts also betray a deep suspicion of the mastery of the subject, using repetition not to establish choice but to emphasize the individual's passivity in the face of society, or fate, or god. If the death plot in the nineteenth century, as Brooks claims, points us to the end as origin, then in these novels the origin is often already the end. They begin in devastated landscapes, in the empty fields of Hardy, or the post-war London of Woolf. The death plot as devolutionary narrative decays meaning and undermines the effect of autonomy. This is not to say that the death-plot is entirely without meaningful elements; as in Freud, repetition as inexorability is in tension with repetition as therapy. In *Howards End*, for example, the promise of working through is located in the repetition of the father, the prodigal son. The novelists I look at invent other kinds of compensations for death when death itself is no longer its own compensation. Brooks observes that in *Heart of Darkness* "Marlow seeks illumination of his life in another's death"(323) and in many of the works I am examining death supplies meaning not for the dead but for the living. This meaning, transferred as gift from the dead to the living, allows a shift from death as

end to death as continuance—or from a death economy to what I will call a gift economy.

A more recent narrative of the relation between Freud's ideas on the death instinct emphasizes trauma and the figure of the witness.[20] In Cathy Caruth's *Unclaimed Experience*, witnessing trauma is both a necessity and an impossibility, since trauma is by its nature always belatedly constructed and essentially enigmatic. She argues that in the relationship of the witness, "the shock of traumatic sight reveals at the heart of human subjectivity not so much an epistemological, but rather what can be defined as an ethical relation to the real."[21] This ethical relation to the real is defined by Caruth as a recognition of both the need and impossibility of understanding the past and the transmission of a sense of urgency and a need for awakening from generation to generation. Caruth uses the traumatic model as a model for the telling of history and explores the instances of trauma in Freud's text, as well as examples from Duras, Resnais, Kant, de Man, Kleist, and the film *Hiroshima mon Amour*. She examines these texts as if they were comparable and even equivalent examples of witnessing and weights the testimony of a film on Hiroshima with as much authority as the testimony of a survivor. Caruth can do this because she describes less an ethical than a rhetorical relation to the real. This explains the inclusion of de Man's relation to rhetoric in her chapters; for Caruth, the question of trauma and witnessing is a question about the nature of reference, and the answer is articulated in de Man's theoretical explanation of the impossibility of reference. Because her approach reduces every moment of witnessing to its rhetorical signification, the response to each moment of witnessing must be the same: witnessing as reference in the work of de Man is both necessary and impossible, urgent yet continually elided. Witnessing as text is always inscribed with the same message.

The difficulty I have with Caruth is primarily in her establishment of equivalencies. She writes as if every instance of witnessing was an equal responsibility and opportunity, and manages to flatten out both context and content. If witnessing will continually signify the impossibility of witnessing, then the content of testimony is a foregone conclusion. Caruth also imagines the witness as utopic figure, ignoring the possibilities of violence in the act of witnessing. To tell the story of the other is perhaps a responsibility but is also an act of appropriation.

Caruth and Brooks alike tell genderless narratives.[22] Death is an androgynous category and male and female death have the same meanings. My interest is in exploring death not as a universal category, the great equalizer which erases gender along with all other differences, but as an experience shaped by gendered meanings. Freud seldom talks generically of death: his concern is with the death of the mother or the death of the father, the death of the daughter or the death of the son. His analysis of the death drive is continually linked to his analysis of sexuality. Fear of castration metonymically replicates fear of death and masochism transforms eros into thanatos.

Freud's analysis of death is inseparable from his analysis of sexuality and needs to be examined as a gendered construction.

Though the death drive is one of Freud's most biological and literal tropes, the place death occupies in Freud's system is both elusive and abstract. Laplanche points to the enigmatic nature of the death drive's appearance in Freud's system, first "radically excluded from the unconscious" and then emerging "at the centre of the system" in 1919 in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*.[23] The nature of the enigma is never resolved and is foreshadowed even before Freud's explicit formulation of it. Nonetheless, Freud persists in his insistence on the real existence of the death drive, despite considerable resistance from the analytic community. In the 1937 article "Analysis Terminable and Interminable" he expresses delight on having finally encountered an ally for his dualistic theory of the instincts—Empedocles of Acragas.

Freud's theories are crucial to the modernist reconceptualization of death, although he needs to look back to Empedecles for an ally. Why does Freud find it necessary to posit a death instinct despite the resistance from the analytic community, his own resistance, and the death instinct's manifestation as a dangerous force potentially destructive to psychoanalysis itself? In *Civilization and Its Discontents* Freud claims that the contingency of his initial discovery of the death instinct has gained the force of inexorability in his mind: "To begin with it was only tentatively that I put forward the views I have developed here, but in the course of time they have gained such a hold on me that I can no longer think in any other way."[24] This pattern of inexorability is repeated in Freud's description of the uncanny and in the novels I will be reading. The death drive vacillates between the doubt caused by the impossibility of proof and the certainty caused by the *zwang* or compulsion which replicates the force of the death instinct in the force of Freud's repeated insistence on its existence.

Over the next few pages, I will demonstrate that Freud's discussion of death is repeatedly shadowed by a discussion of debt. Because of the impossibility of proving the existence of the death instinct, Laplanche suggests that its place in Freud's system may be "more ethical than explanatory" (6). The ethics of Freud's formulation of the death instinct replaces a discourse of rights with a discourse of debt. The death instinct comes as a challenge to a human sense of mastery or property—the illusion that you can own your life—and claims instead that you owe your life. Freud finds evidence of this debt in works of literature, and his mode of discussion is often literary. Schiller, Goethe and Shakespeare are mobilized as supporting evidence and as precursors for Freud's formulation. Psychoanalysis and literature are closely intertwined. In the attempt to find support for his theory when the support of other psychoanalysts is notably absent, Freud turns to literature. The idea of the death instinct becomes an insight Freud "owes" to literature.

The Interpretation of Dreams first establishes the ethical valence of death and foreshadows some of Freud's later thinking on the death instinct. Freud narrates a dream he has of three women making dumplings in his kitchen. The three women symbolize the three fates, a group he will return to in his 1913 essay "The Theme of the Three Caskets." The fates in turn introduce the theme of inexorability. Freud explains the dumplings by a memory more uncanny and more dream-like than the dream itself.

> When I was six years old and was given my first lessons by my mother, I was expected to believe that we were all made of earth and must therefore return to earth. This did not suit me and I expressed doubts of the doctrine. My mother thereupon rubbed the palms of her hands together—just as she did in making dumplings, except that there was no dough between them—and showed me the blackish scales of epidermis produced by the friction as a proof that we were made of earth. My astonishment at this oracular demonstration knew no bounds and I acquiesced in the belief which I was later to hear expressed in the words: 'Du bist der Natur einen Tod schuldig.'[25]

The passage introduces both the origin of Freud's theory on the death instinct and the origin of Freud himself. This, we are told, is one of his "first lessons," taught by the mother who is like the fates in holding the power of life and death over the child. The young Freud already demonstrates his courage and unwillingness to accept received wisdom (not to mention his desire for immortality); the scientist acquiesces to his mother's impromptu demonstration and presentation of physical evidence. It is still a leap to the poetic and moral formulation of the Shakespeare quote that gives a later expression to the child's feeling of ineluctability: "Thou owest Nature a death." Freud's modernist reconceptualization of death is closely linked to literary writers and literary forms and the leap to his revision of Shakespeare's quote is the leap to literary form. In this context, Freud's first association when he wakes up makes a little more sense. After his dream Freud writes,"I thought quite unexpectedly of the first novel I ever read." [26]

The links between literature and Freud's formulation of the death plot are more than contingent. If death is "the debt we owe to nature" then the death-plot is the debt Freud owes to novelists. Another early Freud text points us to the link between the death-plot and literature. "Notes Upon a Case of Obsessional Neurosis" is the most novelistic of Freud's treatments of death. Again, it is written before the death drive is explicitly theorized. The story of the "Rat Man" incorporates elements of memoir, romance, mystery and *bildungsroman.* The rat man's treatment also contains a story within a story, narrated in the subject's voice with Freud's occasional interjections, and used as the centerpiece of the clinical section of the discussion. The experience serves as trigger for the patient's visit. Freud uses a novelist's strategies in the "rat man" and establishes an implicit link between neurosis and the male subject's relationship to death.

The experience which leads the rat man to Freud has to do with his inability to pay a debt to a certain Lieutenant A. His story follows the drama of his attempt to ensure that his money reach the proper destination. Quite late, Freud reveals that the patient had never owed Lieutenant A. the money at all: he had made a vow he already knew he could not keep. The rat man's neurosis contains elements which are also found in Freud's discussion on the uncanny, and later in his discussion of the death drive. The rat man's belief in the omnipotence of his thoughts and his sense of external compulsion or *zwang* place him in a world laden with threat and supernatural meaning. The rat man comes to Freud because of the debt which he cannot pay—a language reminiscent of Freud's quotation in *The Interpretation of Dreams*. Death is the common debt, and is the debt we are unable pay while we are living.

The rat man's sense of debt is traced back to his father. Since his father's death he has felt guilty over a childhood wish that his father would die. This wish has taken on the weight of responsibility for his father's actual death. He owes his father an irreparable debt and torments himself with guilt because he was not at his side when he died. Freud discovers that the metaphorical debt reflects a literal debt. The father had a debt left unpaid when he died which the son implicitly took on in his insistence on paying back the lieutenant. These impossible debts, passed on from father to son, can never be paid. To be cured, the rat man needs to accept the debts he cannot pay.

Freud uses the theoretical part of the case study to abstract and develop the idea of the neurotic's attraction to doubt and uncertainty. The four primary causes of doubt—paternity, time of life, time of death, and the afterlife—are all evoked in the patient's refusal to believe in his father's death. Freud writes that neurotics need help believing in death because death comes as a resolution to their ambivalence. Death is both the problem and solution: the problem when it seems an uncertainty, the solution when it seems like an ending. Freud comes as his own mother comes in the story he cites in *The Interpretation of Dreams* with the message of the finality of death. He comes to resolve the patient's uncertainties, and in doing so, to resolve his neuroses. We could say that the problem with the rat man's desire to pay back his debt is that you cannot pay the debt of death to another individual. The debt is unpaid until your own death. Though Freud does not bring death, he brings analysis as a temporary solution. The case study has a happy ending: the young man is cured.

Death makes a final, uncanny appearance at the end of the case study. A footnote added in 1923 tells us of the success of the cure, but adds an unsettling coda. Freud writes that "the patient's mental health was restored to him by the analysis which I have reported upon in these pages," but then adds, "like so many other young men of value and promise, he perished in the Great War."[27] The study looks retroactively like a work of mourning, or perhaps like Freud's payment of a debt to the young man who is his sub-