

Die Liebes- und Ehekonzeptionen des deutschen Idealismus und der Romantik

The Conceptions of Love and Marriage in German Idealism and Romanticism

by

Yu Huang

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Author's Declaration

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

Abstract

In his *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, G. W. F. Hegel considers ethical love the basis of marriage and family, which comprises the state and higher ethical entities. For Hegel, marriage should be seen as an immediately ethical relationship. Although marriage is only discussed in a small section of the work, it is of great importance in Hegel's overall ethical edifice. In order to capture the deadlocks and dichotomies in Hegel's account of marriage, I use Lacanian psychoanalysis as the methodology of this thesis, thereby mapping the distinction between ethical and Romantic love and identifying the philosophical roots of the prevailing love conception in contemporary society.

Hegel's philosophy of marriage is primarily formulated against two opponents: Immanuel Kant and the Romantics. This thesis starts with Hegel's criticism of Kant by paying close attention to the significance of the wedding ceremony in Hegel's account—an element that both Kant and the Romantics consider to be unnecessary. Through examining the necessity of the wedding ceremony, I elucidate how the third element, or, the higher ethical entity—the big Other—plays a crucial role that irreversibly alters the subject's identity and social position. Then, I turn my attention to J. G. Fichte's deductive system of marriage, which lays a critical foundation for the Romantic conception of love. I investigate the relation between subjectivity and objective reality in Fichte's metaphysics. Moreover, an alternative reading of Fichte's sexual difference through a detour via Lacanian sexualization is provided. I make the case that the Fichtean distinction between masculinity and femininity can be read as different kinds of desire and enjoyment obtained by male and female subjects. In the final chapter, E. T. A. Hoffmann's *The Sandman* [*Der Sandmann*], in which both ethical and Romantic love are incorporated, is used as a literary example. I use psychoanalytic terms such as transference love, sublimation, idealization as well as the relation between courtly love and masochism to unpack the two loving dispositions in the

story. Furthermore, I argue that this story is an example of the perverse relation to the big Other, as the pervert enjoys an instrumental relationship with the big Other and thereby avoids a fully sexual relationship.

It should be clear that it is not my aim to impose psychoanalytic terms on Hegel, Schlegel, or Hoffmann: instead, these psychoanalytic concepts offer a framework with which we can systematically define the different positions on Romantic and ethical love, and thereby opening a new vein of the conception of love in contemporary philosophy.

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List of abbreviations

PR: *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* [*Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts*]

PS: *The Phenomenology of Spirit* [*Phänomenologie des Geistes*]

MM: *The Metaphysics of Moral* [*Die Metaphysik der Sitten*]

FA: *The First Appendix of the Foundations of Nature Right: According to the Principles of Wissenschaftslehre* [*Grundlage des Naturrechts nach Prinzipien der Wissenschaftslehre*]

Foundations: *The Foundations of Nature Right: According to the Principles of Wissenschaftslehre* [*Grundlage des Naturrechts nach Prinzipien der Wissenschaftslehre*]

LA: *Lectures on Aesthetics* [*Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik*]

The symbol § denotes the paragraph quoted in Kant's, Hegel's, and Fichte's works.

Introduction

The philosophy of marriage and love has a long history. Ideas such as forming a family, reproduction, and polygamy have been discussed by philosophers throughout history in both the West and the East. However, conceptions of marriage and love have varied across historical periods and political contexts. Because marriage is highly interrelated with political and social change, scholarly works on the topic tend to debate the meaning of marriage and predominantly focus on how different theories of marriage can be applied in contemporary societies and discourses. Therefore, it is not surprising that an overwhelming amount of literature in political and social philosophy addresses topics such as same-sex marriage, feminism, and gender roles (e.g. Firestone 1970; Boonin 1999; Calhoun 2000; Arroyo 2018). Works that pay close attention to the history of philosophy and the question of how marriage is portrayed by philosophers also tend to apply contemporary values when evaluating texts (e.g., Altman 2010; Brooks 2013). The purpose of this thesis is thus to revisit theories of marriage in German Idealism and Romanticism without criticizing or “re-writing” them in the light of contemporary ideologies. The goal is not so much to provide a clear-cut definition of love and marriage or “solutions” to contemporary controversies regarding marriage. Instead, my hope is to be faithful to the major philosophical works on marriage within the movements of German Idealism and Romanticism, especially works by Immanuel Kant, G. W. F. Hegel, J. G. Fichte, along with a literary example from E. T. A. Hoffmann. It is crucial to note that this thesis is not an investigation of the history of marriage; this thesis begins with Hegel’s account of marriage by examining the rationale behind his theory. Then, I investigate his criticism of his main components and thereby outline the different core positions of philosophers and authors through (Lacanian) psychoanalysis.

The theory of marriage is a crucial topic in political and moral philosophy insofar as marriage as a union is associated with concepts such as the state, religion, love, and sexuality. In the West today, it is often believed that the foundation of marriage is mutual love between two subjects. However, this has not always been the case throughout history.¹ There are many ways to define the term “marriage,” and many ideas about the conditions that are necessary in order to be considered married. While this thesis does not attempt to offer a historical or modern investigation of marriage, I do hope to shed light on the abovementioned debates by providing a close reading of philosophers’ and writers’ different accounts of marriage.

However, before I outline my main arguments and how I will scrutinize these different positions in greater detail, I must explain why I have chosen to use (Lacanian) psychoanalysis. Why is such a reading of German Idealism and Romanticism needed?

I must first clarify that my aim is not to impose psychoanalytic terms on the thinkers whose works I address but to establish a conversation between philosophy and psychoanalysis, which is a “lost” tradition in contemporary philosophical research. This means that this thesis is essentially Lacanian, and the methodological purpose of this thesis is to call attention to the significance of the connection between Lacanian psychoanalysis and philosophy.

To provide a broader overview, Jacques Lacan started to give seminars on the theme “return to Freud.” It is well known that Sigmund Freud was skeptical about philosophy, and his methodology is often seen as different from that of most philosophers. Lacan, on the other hand, actively attempts to connect psychoanalysis with other disciplines, above all,

¹ See Part Three (“The Love Revolution”) of Stephanie Coontz’s *Marriage, A History: How Love Conquered Marriage*.

philosophy. Although Lacan attended Alexandre Kojève's lectures on Hegel,² the relation between Lacanian psychoanalysis and German Idealism was more explicitly established by the Slovenian philosopher, Slavoj Žižek.

The broader aim of this thesis is to use concepts established by Lacan and Žižek such as sublimation and drive, to discern contradiction and ambiguity in Hegel's account of marriage. On the one hand, the subject, as an independent person in his or her own right [*für mich*], seems incomplete; on the other, the subject gains his or her full self-consciousness and independence in another person. Marriage is a contradiction whereby two subjects self-consciously abandon their personalities and identities. The use of psychoanalysis as a method corresponds to this Hegelian contradiction and deadlock: in psychoanalysis sexual love is above all "a *concept* that formulates a persisting contradiction of reality" (Zupančič, *What is Sex* 3). Psychoanalysis, as Louis Althusser aptly points out, is itself a conflictual theory that requires attempts at "annexation" and "revision" because the truth residing within the theory must be revised in order to be neutralized (19). While psychoanalysis identifies the conflicting and antagonistic nature of symptoms and problems surrounding the topic of love, it is itself part of what it recognizes as a contradiction. This contradiction is captured in the main arguments presented throughout this thesis.

Moreover, this deadlock is central to Lacanian psychoanalysis insofar as what differentiates Lacan from other psychoanalysts (theoretical or clinical) is that Lacan looked for the contradiction and deadlock situated within the subject's desire (Žižek, *How to Read*

² The early Lacan did not yet occupy himself with the structuralism but rather had a clear "Hegelian" vision. However, his understanding of Hegel is far from Hegelian but is instead mediated by Kojève. As Žižek reminds us, "Lacan referred to Kojève as his maître [...] Kojève's central aim was precisely to bring together Hegel and Heidegger, i.e., to read Hegel's motifs of negativity and, exemplarily, the struggle-to-death between the (future) Master and Slave, through Heidegger's topic of being-towards-death" (*Less than Nothing* 507).

Lacan 4). This means that Lacanian psychoanalysis is not used to cure symptoms of psychological disturbances; instead, the methodology attempts to engage with reality reflected through the subject's desire. In other words, Lacan believes that every subject is always-already pathological, despite the fact that many pathologies may only be realized retroactively. Furthermore, Lacanian psychoanalysis is not limited to clinical practices. In his teachings, Lacan combines psychoanalysis with other disciplines, including Saussurean linguistics, structural anthropology, and philosophy (e.g., Socrates, Plato, Kant, Hegel, Heidegger, de Sade).

Although this thesis is Lacanian, it is not just about Lacan. As Žižek states, “[w]hat better way to read Lacan, then, than to practise his mode of reading, to read others’ texts *with* Lacan” (ibid. 5). This is why, instead of writing a thesis introducing different Lacanian concepts regarding the topic of love and marriage, it is more meaningful and helpful to analyze philosophical and literary texts through Lacanian theories. The other reason for not providing a Lacanian glossary is because Lacan’s *Seminars* were “works-in-progress.” Many of his concepts and theories were developed between 1952 and 1980, and during these years, Lacan revisited and revised his teachings multiple times, which resulted in him sometimes expressing apparently contradictory ideas in different *Seminars*. This requires readers to critically engage with Lacanian theories in an extensive way to obtain a full picture of his thought. Therefore, concepts such as the big Other, desire, drive, sublimation, idealization, jouissance, and *objet petit a* are frequently applied and discussed in different contexts throughout this thesis, with their meanings varying depending on the context. Because Lacan

himself elucidates his teaching differently based upon specific contexts and circumstances, avoiding generalization of any concept is a faithful approach to his teaching.³

My project should not in any way be seen as a literary analysis that attempts to offer a psychoanalytic reading of a particular novel or story; it is a thesis that starts from Hegel's ethics and follows his criticism to unfold and materialize his theory. Similarly, it should not be seen as a historical investigation of the encounters and rivalry between the philosophers. It is also crucial to note that the purpose of psychoanalysis is never to provide a straightforward solution to a symptom or problem, nor do I intend to claim that the psychoanalytic approach is the best way to read any of the texts that I deal with in my thesis. The nature of psychoanalysis, especially in the Lacanian lineage, is essentially non-dogmatic.

The thesis starts with a discussion of Hegel's account of marriage in the *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* [*Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts*], which he mainly formulates to confront two different beliefs: Kant's marriage as a contract and Romantic love. Hegel's account of marriage and ethical love is established on the condition that two subjects voluntarily give up their autonomy to form an ethical union, marriage.⁴ This ethical union is actualized and mediated by language and signs at the wedding ceremony. In order to grasp the logic of Hegelian ethical love at stake, I pay close attention to the function of the wedding

³ Indeed, there are helpful psychoanalytic dictionaries, such as *The Language of Psychoanalysis* by Jean Laplanche and Jean-Bertrand Pontalis, that provide the original Freudian definitions of concepts (which is what Lacan works from). However, it is important to note that Lacanian concepts such as the big Other are not included in the above dictionary.

⁴ In PR, the term "ethical love" [*die sittliche Liebe*] is only mentioned in paragraph 172: "Durch eine Ehe konstituiert sich eine neue Familie, welche ein für sich Selbständiges gegen die Stämme oder Häuser ist, von denen sie ausgegangen ist; die Verbindung mit solchen hat die natürliche Blutsverwandtschaft zur Grundlage, die neue Familie aber die sittliche Liebe." Although the term is only mentioned after the sections dedicated to marriage, it is clear that Hegel believes that ethical love is the foundation of marriage and family.

ceremony, which both Kant and the Romantics thought unnecessary, although for different reasons. For Kant, the contract that enacts a marriage of two subjects is no different from the contract that protects the subject's possessions. In other words, Kant views the subject's sex organs as equivalent to objects and properties. Kant goes so far as to claim that the married couple's possession of each other is only granted and actualized after the use of sexual organs (MM §27). The Romantics believe that formalities such as the wedding ceremony are external obstacles to authentic love. Hegel takes a different standpoint insofar as he believes these so-called external obstacles enact and actualize the most ethical love, making it possible. Primarily drawing on the existing scholarly work that bridges German Idealism and psychoanalysis, I elaborate and expand on arguments that have been made in the field and hope to contribute to the Hegelian, Lacanian, and newly established Žižekian scholarship. The psychoanalytic approach helps to discern the role of public recognition in the wedding ceremony. This symbolic ceremony is not merely a formal recognition of the wedded couple by the community, but more importantly, it is a recognition of the subjectivity of the two parties involved. In PR, Hegel does not specify who this third party really is. Lacanian theory (and Žižek, who points this out explicitly) reveals that this third element is the big Other—the subject supposed to know [*S.s.S. sujet supposé savoir*] (Lacan, *Seminar XI* 232; Žižek, “Hegel on Marriage” 4). The Lacanian interpretation enables us to understand that this third party in Hegel's account of marriage is not someone or something external *per se*; instead, it is precisely this “external” third party that changes the very subjective position and provides the subject with the most immediate autonomy.⁵

⁵ Another MA thesis that deals with the topic of Hegel on marriage by Joshua Bisig rightfully identifies the necessity of the wedding ceremony. He argues that the reasons behind this necessity are the performative act and the recognition of the community. His first reason is plausible, yet the second reason he proposes does not convey the transformation that the

One of Hegel's main opponents, Kant, infamously claims that the wedding ceremony is not necessary insofar as the couple are not actually wedded until the marriage is consummated through sex. However, I argue that although the wedding ceremony is absent, the big Other is nevertheless present in Kant's contractual marriage. In order to decode the role of the big Other, I take up Žižek's homology, which compares Kant to the psychoanalytic desire, and Hegel to drive (*Less than Nothing* 496). The main argument is that while Kant's moral subjects pursue impossible reciprocity, that is, desire. The Hegelian ethical subjects correspond to drive insofar as the subjects are always-already satisfied in the process of pursuit, regardless of the external qualities of the partner.

The second chapter turns to Hegel's criticism of the Romantics, which I argue should first be seen as a criticism of Fichte. Fichte, whose philosophical system provides the critical vocabulary for German Romanticism, believes that love and marriage were essentially the same. He radically claims that a loving disposition automatically gives rise to a marriage union, an idea accepted by many Romantics, including Friedrich Schlegel. From a philosophical historical point of view, it is not an overstatement to say that Fichte was one of the first philosophers to promote this revolution of love. For Fichte, feeling and autonomy should be maintained and actively pursued within a marriage union. Indeed, Fichte's arguments might make perfect sense from today's perspective, and it might be surprising to hear that Hegel, who wrote the PR 20 years after Fichte proposed his theory of marriage, still claimed that the form of arranged marriages is what he considers truly ethical. I investigate the reasons behind Fichte's omission of the symbolic ceremony and argue that, unlike Kant's account, Fichte's deductive account of marriage entirely excludes the role of the big Other

subjects must undergo themselves. In other words, his argument fails to recognize the connection between the public and subjectivity.

insofar as Fichte sees the big Other as an “external intruder” in the subject’s autonomy and subjectivity. Indeed, Fichte is often perceived as the philosopher of subjective Idealism. Hegel made many explicit and implicit references to Fichte and criticized Fichtean selfhood [*Ichheit*].⁶ Psychoanalysis makes it clear that Hegel’s criticism of Fichte is not that he is too subjective but that Fichte’s subjectivity is only established on the basis that it is part of objective conditions. Fichte’s deductive marriage is essentially a deduction of subjectivity—freedom in the marriage is only achieved when nature and reason grant the union.

The remaining part of the second chapter deals with the question of sexual difference in Fichte. Fichte is infamously understood as the “sexist” philosopher because of his claim that the destiny of a woman is love (FA §4). This claim is commonly seen as anti-feminist in various studies (e.g., Coontz 149). While this reading is justified in the context of today’s ideological discourses, it was not a valid argument in Fichte’s time. Therefore, I provide an alternative analysis of Fichte’s sexual difference through a detour via Lacanian sexuation. Hereby, I argue that masculinity and femininity in Fichte can be seen as different kinds of desire. The broader scope of the second chapter thus corresponds to today’s post-modern gender discourse. Psychoanalysis, unlike gender theory, does not presume the existence of the gender binary. In other words, the rejection of a non-binary gender or biological sex already assumes that two opposite sexes exist (e.g., masculine vs. feminine). As Juliet Mitchell writes in her introduction to the essay collection *Feminine Sexuality*, psychoanalysis does not adhere to the sociocultural distinction of gender that is widespread in the media today but instead makes the point that “a person is formed *through* their sexuality, it could

⁶ Works that include such references include but are not limited to the section on *Irony and Morality* in PR, *Lectures on Aesthetics* [*Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik*], the section on *Morality* in *The Phenomenology of Spirit* [*Phänomenologie des Geistes*], and *The Difference Between Fichte’s and Schelling’s System of Philosophy* [*Differenz des Fichteschen und Schellingschen Systems der Philosophie*].

not be ‘added’ to him or her” (2). Firstly, this implies that in psychoanalysis, sexuality is not a biological concept; moreover, it cannot be seen as a sociocultural concept insofar as socially constructed gender tacitly gives consent to this biological distinction. The sociocultural conception of gender is essentially built upon (yet argues against) biological sex. So, what psychoanalysis tries to argue here is that sexuality is what shapes a person in terms of desire. This is also the ultimate purpose of psychoanalysis. Contrary to the well-known and clichéd criticism that psychoanalysis focuses too much on sexuality, psychoanalysts believe that sexuality reflects a person’s most immediate and honest desire and enjoyment. In other words, it is not sexuality *per se* that forms identities, but rather it is the desire and enjoyment that comes from sexuality that constitutes a subject’s identity.

After providing a close reading of the passages from the abovementioned philosophers that deal with marriage and love, in the third chapter, I outline my argument with reference to the story of *The Sandman*, which responds to both standpoints. Although *The Sandman* does not deal with the topic of marriage, I argue it can be read as a story that epitomizes both Hegel’s ethical love and Romantic love. I make the case that this story is about a pervert who enjoys an instrumental relationship with the big Other to avoid a fully sexual relationship. Hoffmann’s *The Sandman* has been extensively discussed by psychoanalysts and psychoanalytic critics since Freud. However, instead of focusing on the uncanny aspect of the story, I call attention to the two different kinds of love portrayed in the story. In so doing, I not only provide an alternative reading of *The Sandman* but also demonstrate Hoffmann’s rejection of Romantic desire and idealization.

Hoffmann portrays a “love triangle” between the (masochistic) pervert Nathanael, the active lover Clara, and the passive automaton Olympia. Following Mladen Dolar’s argument (“Lacan and the Uncanny” 9), I use psychoanalytic concepts such as transference love and

perversion in courtly love to analyze the emergence and dissolution of the artificially produced love between Nathanael and Olimpia. The reason Nathanael falls in love with Olimpia is two-fold: first, it is a case of “mistaken identity” insofar as Nathanael deceives himself into believing that Olimpia is the “analyst” who holds the solution that will resolve his childhood trauma (Fink, *Lacan on Love 2*; Dolar, *A Voice and Nothing More* 159). Second, Nathanael loves Olimpia precisely because of her status of impossibility and unattainability. Nathanael is the masochistic knight who carefully controls the reflexive distance from his Lady-object. The reason that Nathanael pursues Olimpia is precisely because he cannot attain her. In this chapter, I introduce the concepts of sublimation and idealization, making the case that Hoffmann attempts to criticize the idealization of the subject in Romantic love.

Without doubt, many positions in this thesis might seem peculiar from today’s standpoint. Rather than romanticizing love and marriage, thinkers such as Hegel and Lacan provided a radically different perspective on love and marriage that may not be considered “ethical” today. What is crucial about Hegelian and Lacanian ethical love is not so much finding the “right” person; instead, one can even claim what is right in their ethics is precisely what is not right. In their discourses, this “unmatch” is what results in the most ethical form of love. This is why Lacan believes that psychoanalysis “has brought a very important change of perspective on love by placing it at the center of ethical experience” (*Seminar VII* 8).

Although the thesis primarily concerns the topic of marriage and love, some discussions extend beyond marriage itself. For example, both the symbolism of the wedding ceremony and Nathanael’s relation to the big Other hint at the therapeutic effect of Lacanian psychoanalysis: although the big Other is considered the subject supposed to know (*Seminar XI* 232), the big Other knows *only* when the subject attributes the knowledge to the big Other.

Therefore, working on one's symptoms is really working on and *against* oneself. Further, this thesis does not address the role that marriage and family play in the overall philosophical systems of Kant, Hegel, and Fichte and their concepts of ethical and moral life. Marriage is a broad topic insofar as it never only pertains to two subjects and their inner feelings for each other. While there are many aspects of marriage could be further discussed, this thesis cannot address all of them due to space limitations. However, I hope this thesis will successfully demonstrate how philosophical and literary texts can be read with Lacan and by revisiting psychoanalysis. Just as Lacan infamously stated the necessity to return to Freud and Žižek called attention to the necessity to return Hegel, it is now our turn to "return to Lacan." As I have argued, his return requires readers to critically engage with Lacan and to read texts *with* Lacan.

Chapter 1 The Resolution and Autonomy of the Self: G. W. F. Hegel's

Ethical Love and Wedding Ceremony

Marriage is at the ethical core of Hegel's PR insofar as he claims that permanent property and the institution of marriage constitute the basis of states and civilized social life (§170).

Marriage is or should be, the "immediate ethical relationship" [*das unmittelbare sittliche Verhältnis*] that forms an intimate union (i.e., the family); this union does not only fulfill the social norms and ethical duties in the broader context of civil society and the state but also denotes and transforms one's internal subjectivity and spirituality into an external form (§161). Yet, surprisingly enough, a topic that constitutes Hegel's ethical edifice has not drawn much scholarly attention in the Hegelian discourse. Major Hegelian works on PR have not paid particular attention to Hegel's constitution of marriage (e.g., Taylor 1979; Wood 1990); in particular, they have failed to note the importance of the wedding ceremony. Furthermore, among those who discuss Hegel and marriage, Alice Ormiston (2004) overlooked the aspect of the wedding ceremony. Moreover, much existing scholarship (Landes 1981; Pateman 1988; Mills 1966) has chosen to focus on gender roles and inequality from today's post-modern viewpoint, arguing that Hegel's philosophy is problematic from a (neo-)feminist perspective. This moralistic reading prevails over historical facts, impeding understanding of Hegel's work, since today's discourse and standards cannot be used to measure a period of history in which such ideologies did not exist. Instead, Hegel's philosophical enterprise should be understood in his own context.

Hegel's account of marriage is formulated against two main opponents: Immanuel Kant's contractual theory of marriage and the Romantics, above all Friedrich Schlegel. While Hegel's critique of Romantic love is extensively discussed in the second chapter, in this chapter I primarily deal with his formulation of marriage by examining the symbolic function of the wedding ceremony. I provide a detour via Lacanian psychoanalysis by translating

Hegel's arguments into psychoanalytic terms, such as the level of enunciation and the big Other. By scrutinizing the role of the big Other at the wedding ceremony, I argue that the big Other is the higher authority who confirms the marriage and that the vows exchanged by the subjects are inscribed into the big Other's vocabulary, thereby permanently shifting the subjects' position and identity. I then take up Hegel's criticism of Kant's contractual marriage by mapping the rift between Kant's and Hegel's theories into Lacanian concepts of desire and drive.⁷ In doing so, I elucidate Kant's moral law, which requires the subjects to achieve impossible reciprocity. This impossibility, which is structured around lack, corresponds to the Lacanian topology of desire. Contrastingly, the Hegelian subject always-already knows the contradiction and reversal of marriage but still voluntarily enters the union. The Hegelian marriage therefore bears a resemblance to the Lacanian drive.

An important component of marriage for Hegel is the wedding ceremony, as the bond between the married couple is only ethically constituted only after this proceeding (PR §164). Hegel himself did not provide a satisfying explanation of why the wedding ceremony plays such a crucial role. In his essay "Hegel on Marriage," the Slovenian philosopher Žižek alludes to this subsequent element (i.e., the symbolic ceremony) in Hegel's ethics and political philosophy and provides us with an initial explanation. Žižek argues that the wedding ceremony is "performative," and that during this ceremony, the sexual link is inscribed into the big Other, who radically changes the subjective position of the couple through their exchange of their spoken vows ("Hegel on Marriage" 3–4). Žižek claims that Hegel's limitation lies in the fact that he does not point out "a drive that gets thwarted as to

⁷ This homology is borrowed from Žižek's *Less than Nothing* (496). Colby Chubbs' thesis *Hegel avec Kleist: On Marriage* also employs this homology. The difference between my argument and Chubbs' is that he works from the "Entschluss" (resolve, resolution) in marriage in contrast to "Entscheidung" (decision), yet I focus on desire and drive in relation to the question of subjectivity (20–21).

its natural goal (reproduction) and thereby explodes into an infinite, properly meta-physical passion” (“Hegel on Marriage” 1). I would like to make the case that this interpretation is inaccurate, as Žižek diminishes Hegel’s ethical edifice into something that is strictly “transformed/civilized” (ibid.). Although some of Hegel’s writings might give rise to this explanation (such as his remark on arranged marriage), I argue that Hegel nevertheless allows the space for this “meta-physical passion” that alters the very essence and substance of sexuality. Thus, this chapter (and the following chapter) elaborate on Žižek’s essay, examining the role of the wedding ceremony in greater detail. Herewith, I argue that the wedding ceremony plays a critical, if not decisive, role in Hegel’s ethical love. Moreover, it is precisely because of the performance at this ceremony that the subjects concerned voluntarily surrender themselves to the ethical union by giving up their subjectivity; this process results in the “non-subjectivized” drive.

Hegel’s Ethical Love

Hegel’s constitution of love is primarily outlined in his discussion on marriage in PR:

Die Familie hat als die unmittelbare Substantialität des Geistes seine sich empfindende Einheit, die Liebe, zu ihrer Bestimmung, so daß die Gesinnung ist, das Selbstbewußtsein seiner Individualität in dieser Einheit als an und für sich seiender Wesentlichkeit zu haben, um in ihr nicht als eine Person für sich, sondern als Mitglied zu sein. (§158)

This passage demonstrates that the goal of falling in love, getting married, and founding a family is to surrender one’s autonomous individuality and thereby establish a higher organic ethical unity. For Hegel, love emerges at the very moment of forming such a unity: as he aptly argues, love is both the “production” [*Hervorbringen*] and the “resolution” [*Auflösung*] of surrendering one’s self-consciousness (ibid.). What Hegel points out here is a

predicament in every ethical marriage: on the one hand, the subject feels incomplete as an independent person in his or her own right [*für mich*]; on the other, the subject gains his or her full self-consciousness and independence in another person. Marriage is essentially a contradiction and deadlock, in which two people self-consciously abandon their personalities and self-identities. To illustrate what I mean by calling the Hegelian marriage a “deadlock,”⁸ I showcase the Lacanian conception of the drive in a later section.

The Importance of the Wedding Ceremony

Although a crucial element of Hegel’s ethical love, the importance of the wedding ceremony is overlooked by many major Hegelian scholars. David Ciavatta, as an example, believes that the commitment between the couple arises from the everyday interaction in marriage life as opposed to the expressive, outspoken vows that each makes to the other during the wedding ceremony:

If I feel betrayed when I discover that my spouse has been keeping something from me—that she has been treating some aspect of her life as *estranged* from our relation—I appeal, not to some explicit, reflectively stipulated vow of honesty we made to each other when we first were married, but rather to the actual, concrete bonds of mutual familiarity that join us in our everyday dealings. The actual, shared life we have come to live is *itself* the expression of our commitment to each other—a durable, living actualization of spirit that says more than any contractual commitment would—and it is precisely to this that we are most directly answerable as spouses.

(104–105)

⁸ The word “deadlock” is used by Žižek in many of his works, where he uses it to capture the fundamental predicament in human desire.

The problem of this kind of reading is that it neglects the wedding ceremony in Hegel's ethics, to which the writer devotes only a paragraph; thus, many questions arise in relation to Hegel's extensive discussion on the topic. Examples of such questions are why, if vows are really unimportant, Hegel states that the bond between the couple is not *ethically* constituted *until* the completion of the wedding ceremony, in which language acts as the "most spiritual existence of the spiritual" [*das geistigste Dasein des Geistigen*]? (PR §78, §164).

Furthermore, in the same paragraph, Hegel emphasizes the role the church plays in the actuality of marriage. If what really matters in marriage is only the everyday life that comes after the ceremony, then why does Hegel accentuate the necessity of the mediation of the third party, given that this third party only appears at the ceremony as an embodiment of formality and bureaucracy and is not part of married life? Is it not in this case the church, or, even more radically, the entire wedding ceremony, that becomes unnecessary and superfluous? And, if so, why does Hegel criticize Kant precisely because Kant believes that the ceremony can be omitted? Would Hegel's account of marriage not be equivalent to Kant's contractual marriage, as the actual confirmation and actualization of the marriage do not take place until married life begins, which happens only after the ("unnecessary") ceremony?

Clearly, neglecting wedding ceremony does not faithfully capture what Hegel believes to be ethical love and union and fails to explain Hegel's formulation against his main opponents (Kant and the Romantics). Therefore, the wedding ceremony cannot be treated as something *not* indispensable; instead, the performative function of the wedding ceremony that enacts the confirmation of marriage in Hegel's ethics must be acknowledged.

The Performativity of the Wedding Ceremony

The wedding ceremony is an inevitable element to enact the marriage insofar as the language and vows exchanged between the two subjects are not a mere formality but the performative speech act *par excellence* that conveys an objective significance. Moreover, it is required that a third party, or a higher authority, witnesses, recognizes, and thereby actualizes the marriage, as Hegel writes, “Die objektive Bestimmung, somit die sittliche Pflicht, ist, in den Stand der Ehe zu treten” (PR §162). Here, Hegel clearly distinguishes marriage from love, as getting married does not equate to an internal, subjective process such as two lovers passionately falling in love with each other. On the contrary, this disposition is public and requires objectivity to measure its ethicality. Thus, the wedding ceremony is not a discursive element that has to take place after the disposition of love; conversely, the wedding ceremony is what enables the loving disposition, and the disposition would have otherwise been impossible. In order to discern what Hegel means by the “objective determination” [*objektive Bestimmung*], in this section of the chapter I first provide a close reading of paragraph 164 in PR, where Hegel explicitly discusses the role of the wedding ceremony. I focus on the performative speech acts (i.e., the vows exchanged between couples). To unpack the role of the third party, I turn my attention to the Lacanian concept, the big Other, translating Hegel’s mysterious “third party” into a psychoanalytic concept.

In §164, Hegel claims that a disposition cannot be called marriage until the wedding ceremony is completed under the witness and mediation of a third party, or, differently put, a higher authority. Hegel’s thought on this matter deserves to be quoted at length:

Wie die Stipulation des Vertrags schon für sich den wahrhaften Übergang des Eigentums enthält (§ 79), so macht die feierliche Erklärung der Einwilligung zum sittlichen Bande der Ehe und die entsprechende Anerkennung und Bestätigung desselben durch die Familie und Gemeinde (daß in dieser Rücksicht die Kirche eintritt, ist eine weitere, hier nicht auszuführende Bestimmung) die förmliche

Schließung und Wirklichkeit der Ehe aus, so daß diese Verbindung nur durch das Vorgehen dieser Zeremonie als der Vollbringung des Substantiellen durch das Zeichen, die Sprache, als das geistigste Dasein des Geistigen (§ 78), als sittlich konstituiert ist. Damit ist das sinnliche, der natürlichen Lebendigkeit angehörige Moment in sein sittliches Verhältnis als eine Folge und Akzidentalität gesetzt, welche dem äußerlichen Dasein der sittlichen Verbindung angehört, die auch in der gegenseitigen Liebe und Beihilfe allein erschöpft sein kann. (PR §164)

The inclusion of a wedding ceremony is crucial because, to Hegel, the ethical core of marriage specifically resides *within* a wedding ceremony. As Žižek rightfully points out, unlike the Romantics (e.g., Friedrich Schlegel) who believe that the ethical core is the passionate love while the marriage itself is nothing but an external contract, Hegel believes that “the external ceremony is precisely not merely external” (“Hegel on Marriage” 3). It is through this ceremony that the externality between the two distinct subjects with different personalities is eliminated and the internality of the two subjects, which enables them to form an intimate ethical union, is created. During this ceremony, the so-called bureaucratic formality is not something external that has nothing to do with the subjects’ personality and spirituality. Instead, it is *the* moment that the ethical union is confirmed, and the identity and autonomy of the parties concerned are transformed by the formality. This formality is what Lacan calls the big Other.

However, before moving to the discussion of the function of the big Other, we must answer the question of what or who exactly this big Other is, or, in other words, why the big Other is *the* third party in Hegel’s account of marriage? The concept of the big Other is, perhaps, not only one of the most complex Lacanian terms but one which Lacan frequently mentioned throughout his analytic and teaching career. Lacan uses “the big Other” so frequently that no simple definition is adequate. The meaning of the term should be

interpreted according to the specific context at hand. What is at stake is the subject's relation to and enjoyment of the big Other, as this is a critical factor to distinguish different kinds of pathology. For example, what makes a person hysterical is the struggle to accept the fact that she is the object of the big Other's enjoyment, insofar as she finds it intolerable to be used as a mere object and nothing more. A pervert serves the big Other's enjoyment and is the "instrument of the big Other's enjoyment" (Žižek, *Less than Nothing* 92). I discuss this in chapter three, using a literary example from E. T. A. Hoffmann.

For present purposes, I provide a brief overview of the concept of the big Other and its relation to other relevant Lacanian concepts in this chapter. In *Seminar II*, Lacan introduces the difference between the two others for the first time: the other with a small "o" and the big Other (236). This distinction remains central in Lacan's analytic practices: the analyst must differentiate *A* (*Autre*; Other) and *a* (*autre*; other) so that he or she can situate him- or herself in the place of the big Other instead of the other. Unlike the other, which is the reflection of the ego that is situated in the imaginary order, the big Other is the language and law, which is inscribed in the symbolic dimension. The big Other must be considered "a locus, the locus in which speech is constituted" (Lacan, *Seminar III* 274). Lacan's argument for this assertion is that speech and language are not controlled by our consciousness. Instead, they originate from outside consciousness; hence, the unconscious is the discourse of the Other:

If I have said that the unconscious is the Other's discourse (with a capital O), it is in order to indicate the beyond in which the recognition of desire is tied to the desire for recognition.

In other words, this other is the Other that even my lie invokes as a guarantor of the truth in which my lie subsists.

Here we see that the dimension of truth emerges with the appearance of language.

(“The Instance of the Letter in the Unconscious” *Écrits* 436)

The big Other, in Lacan’s eyes, is the guarantor of the truth, and the truth is revealed through language. To put it differently, the big Others are the true subjects that reside somewhere which the subject cannot reach:

They are on the other side of the wall of language, there where in principle I never reach them. Fundamentally, it is them I’m aiming at every time I utter true speech, but I always attain *a’*, *a’’*, through reflection. I always aim at true subjects, and I have to be content with shadows. The subject is separated from the Others, the true ones, by the wall of language. (Lacan, *Seminar II* 244)

Lacan continues to claim that it is the big Others to whom the subject tries to reach out and address in the speech, but what the subject receives at the end is nothing but the echo of the others (ibid.).

So, can we equate the analyst in an analytic session to the big Other? In the last years of Lacan’s teaching, he no longer necessarily considers the analyst to be someone who occupies the privileged position of the big Other but as someone who exposes the big Other’s desire through transference that places the unconscious into the realm of the big Other. As Mladen Dolar accurately explains, the analyst is the “material token of this, the shorthand of the Other” (“The Speaking Lion” 15), or, differently put, the desire of the analyst is a kind of “white desire” (Žižek, *The Indivisible Remainder* 168). Hence, the analyst is the courier of the big Other, who helps the analysand to understand that the big Other wants something from him or her, although what the big Other really wants remains unclear to the analyst.

Žižek uses an apt example to present the big Other in his book *Less than Nothing*: he recalls a story that a lady from Germany had told him about how she had to seduce her husband once a week only for the sake of sharing the story with her psychoanalyst so she

could claim she still had some sort of sex life (91). The fact that the lady tried to pretend and make an appearance in front of the analyst enabled the analyst to become the big Other in this context. The big Other was thus not an immediate part of her private life, but, rather, the subject that she constantly attempted to approach and convince.

One may argue that, considering Hegel's background and immense interest in theology as well as the historical context, the big Other for Hegel is undoubtedly God, but is God really a fair equation of the big Other? This question is not as easy to answer as it appears. Saint Augustine responds to this crucial question by posing another seemingly simple yet strikingly pertinent one: why is a confession necessary if God already has full access to what we are thinking? (Žižek, *Less than Nothing* 95). The problem at stake is the level of enunciation. Even if God already knows my dirty secret, I should still confess it to him because the moment I articulate my thoughts fully and openly, the position of enunciation completely differs. My dirty secret is now inscribed into the realm of the big Other, leaving myself no possibility of regretting or undoing.

Therefore, the confession to God is a rather subjective matter. In the preface to PS, Hegel outlines the relationship between the subject and God. In the dialectic of recognition [*Anerkennung*], the presence of a "subjective" mediator is required:

Das Bedürfnis, das Absolute als *Subjekt* vorzustellen, bediente sich der Sätze: *Gott* ist das Ewige, oder die moralische Weltordnung, oder die Liebe usf. In solchen Sätzen ist das Wahre nur geradezu als Subjekt gesetzt, nicht aber als die Bewegung des sich in sich selbst Reflektierens dargestellt. Es wird in einem Satze der Art mit dem Worte »*Gott*« angefangen. Dies für sich ist ein sinnloser Laut, ein bloßer Name; erst das Prädikat sagt, *was er ist*, ist seine Erfüllung und Bedeutung; der leere Anfang wird nur in diesem Ende ein wirkliches Wissen. Insofern ist nicht abzusehen, warum nicht vom Ewigen, der moralischen Weltordnung usf. oder, wie die Alten taten, von reinen

Begriffen, dem Sein, dem Einen usf., von dem, was die Bedeutung ist, allein gesprochen wird, ohne den *sinnlosen* Laut noch hinzuzufügen. Aber durch dies Wort wird eben bezeichnet, daß nicht ein Sein oder Wesen oder Allgemeines überhaupt, sondern ein in sich Reflektiertes, ein Subjekt gesetzt ist. (PS 26-27)

Hegel argues that the existence of God is only meaningful when the subject gives meaning to it. God becomes the subject supposed to know only when the subject consciously confesses to God. The process of confession is necessary to enable God to become the subject who possesses the knowledge and “dirty secrets” of the subject, the big Other. The matter of God and subjectivity is discussed in the second chapter.

Žižek’s summary of this issue is thought-provoking: he suggests that what we are encountering here is two different roles of the big Other. The first big Other is the “subject supposed to know” [*S.s.S. sujet supposé savoir*] (Lacan, *Seminar XI* 232), while the second big Other is “the agent of pure appearance,” or someone supposed not to know (*Less than Nothing* 95). Therefore, as long as I do not confess, God is nothing but a pure appearance to me; God does not know. Once I confess, God becomes God that knows.

Another point is that this big Other is not simply some religious or mysterious figure and, therefore, should not be reduced to “an anonymous symbolic field” (Žižek, *Less than Nothing* 92). Although the big Other may have a mysterious appearance, it can be embodied in many concrete persons and roles.

To return to the wedding ceremony, we see that the subject’s internalization is not what makes the subject realize that he or she voluntarily enters marriage. The decision is not taken because of an excessive amount of passionate love or feelings. The role of the big Other in Hegel’s account of marriage should be read as contradictory: on the one hand, it is something *external* to the subject, a third party, that enacts and actualizes the marriage and makes the wedded couple become *One*. On the other hand, this big Other is not completely

irrelevant to the subject insofar as it exists only if the subject acknowledges it and is willing to shift the level of enunciation. The big Other is the higher ethical authority that ties the married couple together and makes them harder to separate than they would have thought:

Es ist aber eine dritte sittliche Autorität gefordert, welche das Recht der Ehe, der sittlichen Substantialität, gegen die bloße Meinung von solcher Gesinnung und gegen die Zufälligkeit bloß temporärer Stimmung usf. festhält, diese von der totalen Entfremdung unterscheidet und die letztere konstatiert, um erst in diesem Falle die Ehe scheiden zu können (PR §176).

Then, what exactly is the *performativity* of the wedding ceremony? Why is this performance not merely a performance? Why does Hegel think this seemingly superfluous, discursive element is a necessity? During a ceremony, the subjects exchange vows through language to inscribe the symbolic status of marriage into the big Other without knowing how the language itself will affect them. As one could argue, the purpose of vows is to gain public recognition so that the marriage becomes actualized by the public—but who is this public? This public recognition is more than having someone play an external role in announcing the marriage. This public is the big Other, in front of whom the wedded couple makes an appearance and with whom they register their most honest desires. The big Other is the public domain that effectuates the marriage, and it is only with the approval of the big Other that the marriage union can be dissolved.⁹

⁹ The debate on who is the big Other is a rather immaterial question here. The big Other during the ceremony should be considered whoever officiates the marriage. Nevertheless, the big Other should not be read as the State because we must remember that, according to Hegel's narrative, the State still has not entered this stage of ethical life [*Sittlichkeit*]. Everything that takes place within the family (including love, marriage, family duties) is still, in a sense, *prior* to the State. Thus, equating the big Other to the State is misleading in the context of Hegel's argument.

In other words, the purpose of vows is not for the couple to promise each other how much they love each other or how they will never leave each other, as such promises would be meaningless without the mediation of the big Other. Instead, the words exchanged are what will be inscribed into the big Other's vocabulary, thereby permanently changing the subjects' social status and identity and resulting in an ethical bond between them. Making a marriage work, then, is less a matter of disappointing the partner than of disappointing the big Other.

Kant's Marriage as a Contract

Indeed, if only passionate love between two subjects gives rise to a marriage, then marriage is nothing but an external contract. Hegel's refusal of the idea should not be surprising, as he was explicitly working against Kant's significant formulation marriage as a contract, which frames marriage in the same section as contracts that guarantee the possession of things.

In PR, Hegel more than once explicitly spoke against Kant's contractual theory of marriage:

Unter den Begriff vom Vertrag kann daher die *Ehe* nicht subsumiert werden; diese Subsumtion ist in ihrer - Schändlichkeit, muß man sagen, bei *Kant* (»Metaphys. Anfangsgründe der Rechtslehre«, S. 1 06 ff.) aufgestellt. - Eben sowenig liegt die Natur des *Staats* im Vertragsverhältnisse, ob der Staat als ein Vertrag aller mit allen oder als ein Vertrag dieser aller mit dem Fürsten und der Regierung genommen werde. (§75)

Hegel's criticism of Kant concentrates on Kant's "simplistic" equation of a marriage and a contract. For Hegel, Kant's account of marriage reduces marriage to a piece of paper in which subjects make deals and exchanges with each other. Hegel's refusal of this idea is not a matter of taste or preference; what Hegel opposes is Kant's attempt to omit the wedding

ceremony on which Hegel places great importance. In Kant's defense, since the nature of marriage is based on the contract, there is simply no need for the wedding ceremony, as it does not actually confirm or actualize anything or change the status of the subjects involved. Before further elaborating on the differences between Kant's and Hegel's theories, let us look at how the contract itself plays a role in Kant's moral philosophy.

Kant believes that a contract gives the subject (i.e., the acceptor) the right to acquire something from the other person (MM §20). A contract requires the other person to *immediately* deliver his or her promise and transfer the thing to the subject so that no party involved is disadvantaged (ibid. §21). However, once a deal is accepted by both parties, for a certain period the acceptor only has a promise from the promisor that latter will perform whatever he or she has promised. Only when the thing is delivered does the acceptor no longer have a right against the promisor; then, the acceptor acquires a right to the thing. Since there is a period of time between promise and acquisition, Kant stressed that in this case, a separate contract is required in order to specify the remaining time for which the promisor will possess the thing:

Denn daß dieser eine Sache zum Gebrauche eines anderen auf eigene Gefahr in seine Gewahrsame nehmen werde, versteht sich nicht von selbst, sondern dazu gehört ein besonderer Vertrag, nach welchem der Veräußerer seiner Sache innerhalb der *bestimmten Zeit* noch immer Eigentümer bleibt (und alle Gefahr, die die Sache treffen möchte, tragen muß), der Erwerbende aber nur dann, wann er über diese Zeit zögert, von dem Verkäufer dafür angesehen werden kann, als sei sie ihm überliefert. Vor diesem Besitzakt ist also alles durch den Vertrag Erworbene nur ein persönliches Recht, und der Promissar kann eine äußere Sache nur durch Tradition erwerben. (ibid. §21)

Turning to how this contract relates to marriage, oddly, Kant himself neglects the connection between marriage and contract despite putting them in the same section. Note that Kant believes that, through a contract, a subject holds an account for the seller's performance to satisfy the subject with the right they agreed upon in the contract. Kant did not explicitly outline how this works in the mechanics of marriage, but he did make a comparison between the acquisition of the thing and the acquisition of the person.¹⁰ Moreover, as the possession of each other's sexual organ is related to what Kant said, we can assume that the deal between the married couple is established in the marriage contract in the following way: the husband promises the wife (and vice versa) that she will acquire and possess his sexual organ as long as the contract is valid. However, Kant considers that a marriage contract remains a mere "simulated contract" [*simulierter Vertrag*] until "conjugal sexual intercourse" [*eheliche Beiwohnung (copula carnalis)*] takes place (ibid. §27). Furthermore, if the couple did not get married, then they would simply treat each other as means to have sex, which violates "pure reason's principles of Right" [*Rechtsgesetze der reinen Vernunft*] and the principle of humanity [*Gesetz der Menschheit*] (ibid. §24). Hence, the couple signs the contract for practical reasons (i.e., in order to have sex with each other). Thus, it is the moral Law that *makes* the couple get married.

Kant does not mention the role of the wedding ceremony in actualizing marriages; instead, he believes that a marriage is confirmed through a contract and the act of having sex based upon the contract. Such an account of marriage gives rise to several areas of ethical confusion. First of all, according to Kant, marriage is a form of contract that establishes a monogamous union, and what differentiates this union from other relationships and contracts

¹⁰ "Der Mann erwirbt ein Weib, das Paar erwirbt Kinder und die Familie Gesinde" (Kant, MM §23). Kant uses the same verb, "to acquire" (*erwerben*), for both the acquisition of the person and the acquisition of the thing, which further proves his attempt to draw a connection between the two actions.

between people is sex. Then, the purpose of getting married is to enjoy and possess the other person's body. This claim reduces marriage to a purely contractual status, as the only difference between marriage and concubinage is a piece of paper (i.e., a contract).

Furthermore, the omission of the wedding ceremony makes it hard to actually differentiate between marriage and concubinage, as in both formats there would be no need to go through a symbolic ceremony in which a third party steps in and confirms the union between the two subjects.

However, instead of reading Kant's account of marriage as something purely deductive, another immediate problem, which arises when Kant talks about the scenario that the subject's partner runs away with someone else, should be considered:

Daß aber dieses *persönliche Recht* es doch zugleich *auf dingliche Art* sei, gründet sich darauf, weil, wenn eines der Eheleute sich verlaufen, oder sich in eines anderen Besitz gegeben hat, das andere es jederzeit und unweigerlich, gleich als eine Sache, in seine Gewalt zurückzubringen berechtigt ist. (ibid. §25)

The problem here is that Kant equates the subjects in marriage to commodities, because the subject had the right to request his or her partner's return as, according to the legal contract, he or she possesses the partner's sexual organ and thereby the entire person (as one's sexual organ is inseparable from personhood). Žižek quickly points out the hidden problem here: the only way to enable emancipation of the subject is "to progress to the end of the path of commodity, of self-objectivization, of turning oneself into a commodity" (Žižek, *Sex and the Failed Absolute* 204). Hence, in Kant's contractual marriage one's subjectivity is simply reduced to the level of objectivity; marrying someone means possessing the person as an object. Moreover, since Kant does not attempt to argue that the relationship between a wedded couple is maintained through passionate love, as the Romantics do, what is the purpose of maintaining this relationship? What satisfaction do the subjects gain within the

marriage contract? Could there be some cases in which the married couple has no desire for each other and is only bonded by a contract? If so, why would they choose to get married at all? These questions are difficult to answer as Kant's contractual marriage allows for the decision to dissolve or end a marriage ("to forgo the use of a part") through a separate contract if there is no more sexual enjoyment between the couple (MM §26). Clearly, instead of running away from the partner, Kant's moral subject could have simply requested a separation and then legitimately enjoyed another subject's sexual organ. Kant contradicts himself insofar as, although he believes that there is no need to have a third party to be involved in the marriage contract, the very fact that he considers the scenario of a wedded couple leaving each other instead of properly filing a contract of separation indicates the existence of the big Other. Even if they do not necessarily know of the existence of the big Other, the mysterious force is nevertheless there. The problem in this case of omitting the existence of the big Other is that the married couple would simply claim they cannot divorce because the contract prevents them from doing so; in reality, however, it is the couple who is fully responsible for their decision and action (Zupančič, *Ethics of the Real* 58). The fact that the subject chooses to cheat instead of signing a contract to legally separate is due to the secret enjoyment he or she feels: "the subject attributes to the Other (to Duty or to the Law) the surplus-enjoyment he derives from his actions: 'I am sorry if my actions hurt you, but I only did what the Other wanted me to do, so go and talk to It if you have any objections.' In this case, the subject is hiding behind the law" (ibid.).

Indeed, the fundamental principle of Kantian ethics is that the subject makes a duty his or her duty. This duty is not created outside of his or her subjectivity; thus, the duty is not imposed on the subject by the Law. Therefore, as Alenka Zupančič points out, the only way to unmask this kind of hypocrisy, when the subject hides behind the Law, is to ask the questions "[w]hat makes you believe this is your duty? Are you ready to answer for your

duty?" (ibid.). In this context, it can be seen that, even though the subjects in Kantian contractual marriage might claim they have no choice but to cheat on their partner, in reality, they have the more ethical choice of confronting the lack of enjoyment in their sexual life and thereby legally separating from one another. The fact that Kant talks about how the moral subject would call the police and take back the possession of his or her partner's sexual organ is a self-contradiction in terms of a truly moral relationship.

Nonetheless, Kant's contractual account of marriage does not lack higher ethical concerns: he makes the point that marriage denotes higher ethical duties, such as raising a family and children, and, although the distinction turns out to be rather unclear, tries to differentiate between marriage and concubinage (MM §23). Why, then, does Hegel still speak against Kant's marriage if the higher ethical needs, which are Hegel's goal, can still be fulfilled? In order to answer this question, a more fundamental level of the problem must be considered, namely how Kant and Hegel define the term "contract" differently. Unlike Kant, Hegel makes a distinction between marital and non-marital contracts: Hegel believes that when two subjects enter a non-marital contract, each retains his or her subjectivity and the two remain distinct (PR §73). In contrast, however, a marriage, as opposed to a contractual relationship, would not be possible without the dissolution of one's individuality within the union (ibid. §158). Two subjects become *One* and are no longer independent of one another. Marriage transcends and transforms the subject's self-identification but the contract itself does not grant this transformation. In Hegel's eyes, the subjects in Kantian marriage remain two individuals with distinct subjectivity who narcissistically enjoy each other's sexual organs for the sake of gaining enjoyment and hide behind the moral Law. Hence, Hegel aptly speaks against Kant and claims that marriage is not a contractual relationship (PR §163).

The question thus arises of why Žižek says that marriage means the contract of a contract for Hegel, a claim which contradicts what Hegel said himself. While two

autonomous individuals maintain their freedom and autonomy in a contract, marriage is *de facto* another kind of contract insofar as the subjects constrain themselves for the reason of being constrained within the marriage (Žižek, “Hegel on Marriage” 3). Hereby, the differences between Hegel and Kant should be quite clear at this point: while Kant could not accept contradictions and antinomies in things, he overlooks the fact that these contradictions and deadlocks are what constitute things and they are the innermost features of things (Žižek, *Sex and the Failed Absolute* 83). Kant believes that the emergence of contradictions is a purely subjective process that causes contradictions as such. However, Kant’s obsession with the “pure” characterization of things resulted in further contradictions and reversals (as the subject’s relation to the big Other illustrates). Hegel, on the other hand, believes that contradictions and deadlocks are what drive subjects to enter a marriage union and make things ethical.

Kant and the Dialectic of Desire

The question remains of what role the big Other plays in Kant’s contractual marriage. The role played is not as apparent as in Hegel’s account, and, since Lacan says, “man’s desire is the desire of the Other” (*Seminar XI* 38), it is helpful to bring in the Lacanian dialectic of the drive and desire to answer the question with clarity.

In *Less than Nothing*, Žižek puts forward a useful homology between Kant and Hegel. He claims that the shift from Kant to Hegel corresponds to the shift from desire to drive (496). In short, the Kantian account of marriage represents desire because it is structured around lack and the inaccessible Thing-in-itself. Unlike Kant’s, the Hegelian account of marriage exemplifies drive, which achieves satisfaction in the “repeated failure to reach the object, in repeated circling around the object” (*ibid.*).

The dialectic of desire is captured in Kant's moral dilemma within a contract between the action of promising and fulfilling the promise. For Kant, the only way to ensure the absolute fairness of a contract is to make and fulfill the promise simultaneously. However, as Kant himself quickly points out, there is no possible way to reach a synchronous and simultaneous point to enact the contract:

Aber weder durch den *besonderen* Willen des Promittenten, noch den des Promissars (als Akzeptanten), geht das Seine des ersteren zu dem letzteren über, sondern nur durch den *vereinigten Willen* beider, mithin so fern beider Wille zugleich deklariert wird. Nun ist dies aber durch empirische Actus der Deklaration, die einander notwendig in der Zeit *folgen* müssen, und niemals zugleich sind, unmöglich. Denn, wenn ich versprochen habe und der andere nun akzeptieren will, so kann ich während der Zwischenzeit (so kurz sie auch sein mag) es mich gereuen lassen, weil ich vor der Akzeption noch frei bin; so wie andererseits der Akzeptant, eben darum, an seine auf das Versprechen folgende Gegenerklärung auch sich nicht für gebunden halten darf. – Die äußern Förmlichkeiten (*solennia*) bei Schließung des Vertrags (der Handschlag, oder die Zerbrechung eines von beiden Personen angefaßten Strohhalms (*stipula*)), und alle hin und her geschehene Bestätigungen seiner vorherigen Erklärung beweisen vielmehr die Verlegenheit der Paziszenten, wie und auf welche Art sie die immer nur aufeinander folgenden Erklärungen als in einem Augenblicke *zugleich* existierend vorstellig machen wollen, was ihnen doch nicht gelingt; weil es immer nur in der Zeit einander folgende Actus sind, wo, wenn der eine Akt ist, der andere entweder *noch nicht*, oder *nicht mehr* ist. (MM §19)

Indeed, perfect simultaneity and synchronicity are simply impossible insofar as there is always-already a delay between the moment of one subject making a promise and the other subject actually possessing the promised thing. Kant's demand for the impossibility of

morality is what Lacan calls the topology of desire: “Kant discovered the essential dimension of ethics: the dimension of desire, which circles around the real *qua* impossible” (Zupančič, *Ethics of the Real* 3). This impossibility of perfect reciprocity is far from being an unfortunate byproduct of the external ceremony whereby the actual exchange (of each other’s sexual organ) has to be delayed. Rather, the impracticability is part of the contract *par excellence*. This unattainability of the moral Law, this void, signals that “the moral subject is fully responsible for the translation of the categorical imperative into a concrete moral obligation” (Žižek, *The Indivisible Remainder* 169). Moreover, far from calling out this moral dilemma that resides within the nature of the Law, Kant’s moral subjects take great pleasure in trying to reach the impossible perfect reciprocity, making the desire Thing-in-itself. Therefore, as a consequence of situating desire in Kant’s moral Law, the subject’s relation to the Law is ambiguous: it is not the case that the subjects strive to behave perfectly morally, and yet the Law prevents them from achieving absolute morality. This ambiguous prohibition is connected to one’s subjectivity—specifically, to one’s status as a desiring subject of the big Other.

Yet Kant’s subjects are not perverse in the sense that the subjects chase the Law to an endless chain because they know that it is unattainable. This interpretation would presuppose that the desire is the subject’s desire. What Lacan means by the dictum “man’s desire is the desire of the Other” is that the desire of the subject is essentially the desire for recognition by the big Other (*Seminar XI* 38). We desire things that the big Other desires, or what we think the big Other desires, because we never truly know what the big Other desires. That is why we want to make an appearance in front of the big Other in order to seek Its approval.

The desire for the big Other, according to Žižek, should be read as both “genitivus subjectivus” and “genitivus objectivus” (*The Indivisible Remainder* 167). What the subject desires is essentially a recognized object of the other and the subject’s desire is constituted

through the big Other (ibid.). Lacan says that “the desire for recognition dominates the desire that is to be recognized, preserving it as such until it is recognized” (“The Freudian Thing” *Écrit* 359). The big Other’s desire remains impossible insofar as the enigma of such desire resides precisely within its “impenetrability” (Žižek, *The Indivisible Remainder* 168). The encounter with the big Other is never clear; even if the subject succeeds in constructing his or her own desire, there is always a gap between what the subject desires and what the subject actually wants. The perfect synchronicity of desiring the same thing at the same time will never occur:

It should be noted that a clue may be found in the clear alienation that leaves it up to the subject to butt up against the question of his essence, in that he may not misrecognize that what he desires presents itself to him as what he does not want—a form assumed by negation in which misrecognition is inserted in a very odd way, the misrecognition, of which he himself is unaware, by which he transfers the permanence of his desire to an ego that is nevertheless obviously intermittent, and inversely, protects himself from his desire by attributing to it these very intermittences. (Lacan, “The Subversion of the Subject and the Dialectic of Desire” *Écrits* 690–691)

Lacan’s critique and appreciation of Kant lie in the fact that Kant’s moral philosophy opened a new vein that asks us to follow the principle that it is impossible (*Seminar VII* 315). For Lacan, Kant introduced the dimension of desire into ethics. However, according to Lacan, a further critical step is necessary to complement the Kantian ethics: the transformation of the dialectic of desire into the dialectic of the drive:

You love mutton stew. You’re not sure you desire it. Take the experience of the beautiful butcher’s wife. She loves caviar, but she doesn’t want any. That’s why she desires it. You see, the object of desire is the cause of the desire, and this object that is

the cause of desire is the object of the drive—that is to say, the object around which the drive turns. (*Seminar XI* 243)

What Lacan means essentially, is that the *object a*, as object-cause of desire, is the object of the drive. In order to better grasp the concept between drive and desire, it is useful to consider a simple and well-known story, “Snow White” [“Schneewittchen”], to make the case that, in contrast to the subjectivity of desire, drive is non-subjectivized and gives rise to enjoyment that occupies a privileged position above one’s subjectivity.

Desire vs. Drive

In the well-known fairy tale “Snow White,” the evil queen dies because she cannot stop dancing in a pair of red shoes: “[D]a waren eiserne Pantoffeln im Feuer glühend gemacht, die mußte sie anziehen und darin tanzen, und ihre Füße wurden jämmerlich verbrannt, und sie durfte nicht aufhören bis sie sich zu todt getanzt hatte” (Grimm 249–250). Dancing to death is, perhaps, most commonly viewed as her punishment. Yet in psychoanalysis, those red shoes stand for nothing but drive in its purest form: the red shoes are an undead partial object that illustrates the non-subjectivized drive, or, to put it plainly, “what the shoes want.” This drive here is particular because it is sadomasochistic, meaning that the pain transforms into the subject of the drive. Even more extremely, only when the subject makes his or her life come to an end can the drive be terminated (Lacan, *Seminar XI* 183). It is through (compulsive) repetition [*Wiederholungszwang*] or repeated movement that this drive continues, regardless of the price to be paid.

Positing the question and listening to this compliment is never enough, since the queen does so repeatedly and, finally, realizes there is more enjoyment behind as such.

Indeed, it is a pleasure for the queen to hear from the mirror that she is the most beautiful person, yet she eventually realizes that there is a *jouissance* beyond the pleasure principle.

This drive is non-subjectivized and it brings the subject an enjoyment or pleasure; albeit sometimes the subject does not enjoy it, there is nothing he or she can do to prevent it from occurring in a repetitive pattern. The queen does not know what her real drive is, but the red shoes keep reminding her: this is what we (the shoes) want. However, she can never subjectivize this drive as part of her, because it is something of “her own” but also something “above her.”

Hegel's Arranged Marriage and Drive

The dialectic of the drive is well reflected in Hegel's ethical love. The “above the subject” of the drive precisely and faithfully represents Hegel's contingent partner. The fact that a wedded couple surrender themselves to the marriage does not necessarily mean that they are more in love with each other. However, the drive makes them commit to each other even if there is no passionate attraction or obsession. In other words, the satisfaction that Hegelian subjects gain from marriage is refreshed over and over again without the partners trying to love each other more and more each time. Unlike in Kant's theory, the enjoyment that Hegelian subjects gain from repetition is not through perfect reciprocity, as it is impossible for the desire ever to be satisfied. Instead, a different kind of enjoyment first happens at the moment of the wedding ceremony. Kant requires a perfectly synchronous wedding ceremony that is impossible to achieve; the ethical core of Kant corresponds to the dialectic of desire, which is grounded in its “constitutive lack” (Žižek, *Less than Nothing* 496). In contrast, Hegel's ethical subjects go through one additional process of exchanging vows promising something that they already know (that, as married couples, they should love each other). Moreover, it does not matter if the couple does not have the most passionate love for each

other, as this repetition will nevertheless give rise to “self-conscious love” [*selbstbewußte Liebe*] (Hegel, PR §161).¹¹ At its most extreme, Hegel argues that the true ethical form of marriage is arranged marriage:

Die objektive Bestimmung, somit die sittliche Pflicht, ist, in den Stand der Ehe zu treten. Wie der äußerliche Ausgangspunkt beschaffen ist, ist seiner Natur nach zufällig und hängt insbesondere von der Bildung der Reflexion ab. Die Extreme hierin sind das eine, daß die Veranstaltung der wohlgesinnten Eltern den Anfang macht und in den zur Vereinigung der Liebe füreinander bestimmt werden den Personen hieraus, daß sie sich, als hierzu bestimmt, bekannt werden, die Neigung entsteht, - das andere, daß die Neigung in den Personen, als in *diesen* unendlich partikularisierten, zuerst erscheint. - Jenes Extrem oder überhaupt der Weg, worin der Entschluß zur Verhelichung den Anfang macht und die Neigung zur Folge hat, so daß bei der wirklichen Verheiratung nun beides vereinigt ist, kann selbst als der sittlichere Weg angesehen werden. (ibid. §162)

As the passage above shows, for Hegel, what brings the couple together is not passionate love *per se*; rather, the act of repeating these words at a wedding ceremony makes the partner committed to the union regardless. The “self-conscious love” is thus not consciously felt in terms of one’s feeling [*Empfindung*]; instead, the subject should be aware of his or her ethical duty and the surrender of his or her subjectivity. Therefore, even if the couple has never met or gone on dates to get to know each other and fall in love, the moment that they decide to get married nonetheless gives rise to the mutual inclination. To use Žižek’s words, this kind of marriage is defined as follows:

[A] drive does not bring satisfaction because its object is a stand-in for the Thing, but because a drive, as it were, turns failure into triumph—in it, the very failure to reach

¹¹ The relation between repetition and drive is further discussed in Chapter three.

its goal, the repetition of this failure, the endless circulation around the object,
generates a satisfaction of its own. (*Less than Nothing* 498)

To this end, the realm of the drive explains why Hegel believes that the “transient, capricious, and purely subjective aspects of love” [*das Vergängliche, Launenhafte und bloß Subjektive*] should be excluded from marriage (PR §161).

It is nevertheless crucial to keep in mind that Hegel does not say that marriage for love is not allowed or that it directly contradicts “ethico-legal love” [*rechtlich sittliche Liebe*], as he does acknowledge the ethicality of those who fall in love first and then get married.

Hegel continues:

In dem andern Extrem ist es die *unendlich besondere* Eigentümlichkeit, welche ihre Präentionen geltend macht und mit dem subjektiven Prinzip der modernen Welt (s. oben §124 Anm.) zusammenhängt. - In den modernen Dramen und anderen Kunstdarstellungen aber, wo die Geschlechterliebe das Grundinteresse ausmacht, wird das Element von durchdringender Frostigkeit, das darin angetroffen wird, in die Hitze der dargestellten Leidenschaft durch die damit verknüpfte *gänzliche Zufälligkeit*, dadurch nämlich gebracht, daß das ganze Interesse als nur auf *diesen* beruhend vorgestellt wird, was wohl für *diese* von unendlicher Wichtigkeit sein kann, aber es *an sich* nicht ist. (PR §162)

What Hegel argues is that subjective love and feeling should not be the fundamental basis of an ethical union. What makes marriage for passionate love “problematic” for him is that it is more difficult to test or prove that the reason the subjects are getting married is *not* primarily love but higher ethical duties.

Conclusion

To conclude, Hegel's ethical love is dependent on the action of subjects voluntarily giving up their self-autonomy and establishing an ethical union. This ethical union is only ethical if the big Other, the higher authority, openly confirms it during the wedding ceremony. Kant's contractual marriage, on the other hand, attempts to omit the big Other but only results in its further fetishism as the subjects become the desiring subjects of the big Other. Hegel's and Kant's accounts of marriage essentially represent their distinct conceptions of ethicality [*Sittlichkeit*] and morality [*Moralität*]: Hegel's ethical life is independent of "moral norms, laws, ideals, principles, or ends" (Bernstein 394). Unlike that of Hegel, Kant's morality of marriage attempts to disavow the intervention and mediation of the big Other and the self-contradiction in the mechanics of marriage-in-itself. Therefore, it allows the subjects to hide behind the moral Law, making the claim that it is the Law that requires them to behave in a pathological manner. Although I have tried to argue that Kant's morality resembles the Lacanian concept of desire and Hegel's ethicality corresponds to drive, I do not intend to argue that drive can simply replace the logic of desire; instead, drive is the point that one reaches only when one "pass[es] through desire and insist[s] on it until the very end" (Zupančič, *Ethics of the Real* 239). The Hegelian ethical subject "has traversed" the fundamental fantasy, which is situated within the realm of desire. The Hegelian subject, even if he or she does not end up being together with the idealized partner, is perfectly aware of the fact that he or she must surrender his or her autonomy but nevertheless *decides* to love the person. Desire and drive are further discussed in the third chapter.

Chapter 2 The Debate on Freedom and Subjectivity: J. G. Fichte's Metaphysics of Love

In PR, Hegel openly criticizes his Romantic contemporaries and their conceptualization of love; above all, he targets Friedrich Schlegel's *Lucinde*:

Daß die Zeremonie der Schließung der Ehe überflüssig und eine Formalität sei, die weggelassen werden könnte, weil die Liebe das Substantielle ist und sogar durch diese Feierlichkeit an Wert verliert, ist von *Friedrich v. Schlegel* in der *Lucinde* und von einem Nachtreter desselben in den Briefen eines Ungenannten (Lübeck und Leipzig 1800) aufgestellt worden. (§164)

For Hegel, Romantic love is not “ethico-legal” [*rechtlich sittliche*] love but rather “passion” [*Leidenschaft*] or “liveliness” [*Lebendigkeit*]. One of the main reasons why Hegel poses such a strong criticism is that the Romantics attempt to neglect the importance of the wedding ceremony. Furthermore, Hegel considers Romantic love as an obsessive internalization of the self and genuinely ethical love as created precisely by external elements (e.g., speech act, vows) at a symbolic ceremony. Although Hegel directly addresses Schlegel and his *Lucinde* in PR, it is not surprising that he also directs his criticism against Fichte, whose philosophical system provides a critical foundation for the Romantics, especially on the conception of love its relation to subjectivity.

In his book *Uncivil Unions*, Adrian Daub uses the term “Fichtean moment” to highlight Fichte's influence on thinkers who came after him (36). Many German Romantic and Idealist thinkers either studied with Fichte directly or learned about him indirectly. Indeed, Fichte's philosophy marks the intersection of German Idealism and Romanticism and provides the critical vocabulary for the Romantic ideal of love and marriage. Žižek argues that the history of German Idealism should be read as to how each “predecessor” overcomes his

“successor” in the progressive line of “Kant-Fichte-Schelling-Hegel-late Schelling” (*Less than Nothing* 137). Therefore, the reading of Fichte proposed in this thesis is important for this thesis since he does not only play a crucial role in terms of being a successor of Immanuel Kant and his moral and political philosophy but also lays a critical foundation for both later German Idealism represented by Hegel and Schelling, and Romanticism in different aspects.¹²

For this purpose, it is inevitable to discuss Fichte’s system of love and marriage contained in the first appendix (hereinafter, FA) of the *Foundations of Nature Right: According to the Principles of Wissenschaftslehre* [*Grundlage des Naturrechts nach Prinzipien der Wissenschaftslehre*]. This work appeared in 1796–1797—approximately the same year as Kant’s MM, published in 1797. It is unlikely that the two philosophers were familiar with each other’s ideas and arguments when they wrote their respective works: therefore, Fichte’s account of marriage cannot be considered a direct correspondence to Kant’s MM. However, a crucial aspect of Fichte’s philosophical enterprise is to reconstitute Kant’s moral philosophy foundations. Hegel’s PR was published 20 years after MM and FA, and both Kant’s and Fichte’s works were on the reading list for the young Hegel.¹³ Hence, the main goal of this chapter is to investigate Fichte’s deductive account of marriage through a psychoanalytic lens and assess how it differentiates from Kant’s and Hegel’s theories. In doing so, I draw attention to the question of subjectivization and sexuation and argue that

¹² It is fair to say that German Idealism provides a critical ideological basis for German Romanticism. Friedrich Schlegel explicitly acknowledged Fichte’s influence on his work: “Die Französische Revolution, Fichtes Wissenschaftslehre, und Goethes Meister sind die größten Tendenzen des Zeitalters” (Schlegel A[216]). The idea of free spirit is an important theme in German Idealism and one of Fichte’s main contributions.

¹³ See “Hegel’s ‘theological period’: a reactionary legend” and “Hegel’s role in Schelling’s break-away from Fichte” in Georg Lukács’ *The Young Hegel*.

Fichte's attempt to construct a dual relationship without the mediation of a third element reflects the pursuit of self-consciousness and individual freedom in his overall philosophical system. The main points discussed in this chapter include, first, Fichte's failure to provide a satisfying reason for the necessity of the public recognition of the marriage union. Second, I use psychoanalysis as a tool to prove that Fichte's sexualisation should not be read as a biological or sociological gender construction of man and woman as two opposite parties forming a totality, as already indicated in existing literature (e.g., Daub 2015; Bisol 2017). In my interpretation, Fichte's division of masculinity and femininity does not pinpoint the difference of biological sex or sociological construction of gender but rather two different kinds of sexual *desire* that thrives for two different kinds of *jouissance* in Lacanian terms. As a result, I argue that Fichte's sexualisation coincides with Lacanian sexualisation, whereby the woman is the subject of the unconscious who gains its subjectivity by surrendering its individual freedom and identity, thus becoming a part of the big Other.¹⁴

Marriage and Love in Fichte

¹⁴ Yolanda Estes argues that Fichte's sexual difference is an expression of two different desires. However, the purpose of Estes' argument is to prove that sexuality is fluid across all sexes and gendering indexes, whereby a fluid gender role that corresponds to the one defined by contemporary ideology can be established in Fichte's work. It is not my intention to use the contemporary ideological belief to justify Fichte's philosophy. The one reason why sexualisation is crucial to Fichte's account of marriage is outlined by Fichte himself instead: "Eine Verbindung, wie die beschriebene, heißt *eine Ehe*. Die Ehe ist eine durch den Geschlechtstrieb begründete *vollkommene Vereinigung* zweier Personen beiderlei Geschlechts, die ihr eigener Zweck ist. Sie ist durch den Geschlechtstrieb in beiden Geschlechtern *begründet*, für den forschenden Philosophen" (FA §8). Therefore, in order to be faithful to Fichte's philosophical system, one should neither provide a positivist reading of his account of marriage and accuse him of being sexist nor attempt to justify his philosophy to serve contemporary ideologies.

Before discussing the role of the wedding ceremony in Fichte's approach to marriage and how it differs from Hegel's, it is useful to preliminarily consider the general structure of the appendix and highlight some key points. The structure of the appendix is itself a crucial hint at its difference from Hegel's PR. In this appendix, Fichte outlines the conception of love before discussing marriage. The concept of marriage is not mentioned until the eighth paragraph, suggesting that Fichte considers love as a prerequisite of a marriage rather than its byproduct. Unlike Kant, Fichte's marriage is not dependent upon a contract to resolve the dignity problem: marriage is autonomous from juridical reasons, and sexuality within a loving disposition automatically gives rise to it (FA Remark, §8). As David Archard points out, the Fichtean union is a union "for its own sake and for ever" (191). Fichte seems to distinguish between a perfect union deriving from love and matrimony imposed by the state (ibid.). Specifically, he defines marriage as follows: "Die Ehe ist eine durch den Geschlechtstrieb begründete *vollkommene Vereinigung* zweier Personen beiderlei Geschlechts, die ihr eigener Zweck ist" (FA §8). Therefore, a preliminary conclusion is that Fichte's deductive account of marriage emphasizes the underlying sensual feeling between two free subjects that are independent of any bureaucratic authority.

As for the role of the state, Fichte believes that the state must watch over the reciprocal relationship between two parties who enter a marriage union. Marriage is not only a moral but also a spiritual union that makes two subjects become one soul (ibid. §15). For example, a divorce does not take place when the married couple goes to court because in this case, the marriage union would have been juridical. Moreover, Fichte argues that if two subjects actually love each other and therefore become one unified totality, it is not possible for them to go to court since one cannot take oneself to court (ibid.). Thereby, Fichte rejected the juridical verification of a divorce, claiming that a divorce automatically occurs at *the* moment when two subjects no longer feel that they belong to the same soul, because only

when two subjects are no longer an entirety, they can go to court on their own behalf. The juridical process is thus only a formal procedure of the state to confirm the couple's separation, but the actual separation already happens at the very moment in which mutual love no longer exists.

On the other hand, Fichte claims that love is not enough to give rise to marriage since the latter is only truly consummated when sexual intercourse has occurred within the married couples (ibid. §14). More radically, Fichte posits that whoever has had intercourse is considered married (ibid.). Here, the essential similarity between Fichte and Kant can be spotted in both of them considering the need for something external to justify sexual behavior to preserve humanity or dignity. The solution that Kant comes up with is the contractual marriage, in which Kant believes a married couple rightfully possesses each other's sexual organ (MM §25). Fichte's answer to this is love because he believed that as long as two partners love each other, the dignity [*Würde*] that is threatened by sex is protected by the form of love (FA §4).¹⁵

As discussed in the first chapter, Kant's moral subjects obsessively pursue subjectivity because Kant believes that sex out of a contract reduces a person's humanity. However, the paradox and flaw in Kant's theory are that the pursuit of subjectivity results in reducing each subject into a kind of sexual object possessed by the other being. In a similar vein, Fichte also emphasizes the sexual role in his deduction of marriage, but the role accounts for a different purpose. While Kant's theory of marriage is established within a moral framework and the subjects get married for the sake of the approval of the moral Law, it is not clear how the subject chooses his or her sexual partner. Whom the subject has sex with seems irrelevant to Kant as long as sexual intercourse is legitimized by contract. In extreme cases, the contract would be used as a tool for the subject to protect his or her

¹⁵ Fichte exclusively refers to feminine dignity, which is further discussed in the section on sexual difference.

humanity when he or she *accidentally* had sex with a stranger. Fichte, on the other hand, insists that there has to be a loving disposition or relationship established before the consummation of sex in order to protect one's dignity. Therefore, Fichte's consummation of sex cannot be as accidental as portrayed in Kant's contractual marriage.

Fichte's Wedding Ceremony

Hegel does not place importance on the consummation of sex since he believes that sexual intercourse must occur after the decision to get married. The difference at stake is that there needs to be a preestablished fantasy frame for the Hegelian subjects before having sex instead of a direct sexual relationship with each other. What both Hegel and Fichte discuss in their works is the role of the wedding ceremony.

What differentiates Fichte from Hegel is that, for Hegel, the wedding ceremony counts more than the subjects' inclinations; in other words, love is a decision insofar as the subjects first *decide* to love each other, and then the loving disposition arises. Conversely, Fichte believes that the wedding ceremony is only a formal confirmation of the inclinations of the two loving subjects. The passage where Fichte discusses the role of the wedding ceremony should be quoted in length in preparation for further analysis:

Jede Ehe muß juristische Gültigkeit haben, d. h. das Menschenrecht des Weibes muß nicht verletzt sein; sie muß sich mit freiem Willen, aus Liebe, und nicht gezwungen, gegeben haben. Jeder Bürger muß gehalten sein, dies vor dem Staate zu erweisen; widrigenfalls der Staat das Recht haben würde den Verdacht der Gewalttätigkeit auf ihn zu werfen, und gegen ihn zu untersuchen. Aber er kann diesen Beweis nicht füglich anders führen, als dadurch, daß er die Frau ihre freie Einwilligung gerichtlich erklären läßt, bei der *Trauung*. Das Ja der Braut sagt eigentlich weiter nichts, als daß sie nicht gezwungen sei. Alles übrige, wozu die Ehe verbindet, versteht sich daraus

von selbst, daß sie *eine Ehe* schließen. Was das Ja des Mannes bedeuten könne, wird sich tiefer unten zeigen. Daß er nicht gezwungen sei, geht daraus hervor, daß er ja die Frau zur Trauung führt. - Daß die Ehe, da sie etwas auf Moralität Gegründetes, und schlechthin nur durch sie Bestehendes ist, unter den Augen derer, die die Erzieher des Volks zur Moralität sein sollen, d. i. der Geistlichen, geschlossen wird, ist sehr vernünftig. (FA §14)

From the passage above, it can be inferred that Fichte believes that language is *external* to a marriage union, as the vows that are exchanged between two subjects do not enact or confirm it. This is especially true considering that the Fichtean wedding ceremony is a formal juridical process aimed at ensuring that nobody is coerced into the union. The Fichtean wedding ceremony is different from the Hegelian one because Hegel believes that language is internal to love and radically shifts the subjects' social position before and after the symbolic ceremony. Hence, for Hegel, the wedding ceremony is symbolic, whereas it is formal and juridical for Fichte.

Moreover, Fichte quickly points out that the state or the clergy has no right to refute two subjects who want to marry if they are connected and inclined to get married (ibid.). As Fichte believes, only nature and reason can prohibit an inappropriate marriage, and if a marriage is prohibited by nature and reason, there is simply no need for any state authority to do anything to prevent the marriage from happening (ibid.). To that end, both Hegel and Fichte come from the same direction insofar as they both recognize the significance of public recognition of the marriage; however, they end up drawing remarkably different conclusions. In Hegel's account of marriage, the ethical core is established *qua* the wedding ceremony, meaning that the two subjects commit to each other through exchanging spoken vows at the symbolic ceremony. The formality passes over to become a necessity that confirms the legitimacy of the union. In Fichte's marriage system, the wedding ceremony comes after two

subjects' commitment to each other: therefore, the wedding ceremony is *qua* love. For Fichte, the role of the clergy at the wedding ceremony is thus not the big Other because the clergy does nothing that actually affects the subjects' inclination but only openly verifies the marriage's morality (i.e., that no one is coerced into the union). The clergyman, although appearing to be the one who actualizes the marriage during the wedding ceremony, only confirms the union *pro forma*. He is not the self-imposed big Other of the subjects through whom the wedded couple decides to commit to each other and who is continuously part of the couple's married life. Hence, the clergy is irrelevant to aspects other than the juridical ones in the couple's life and therefore does not play any further role in their marriage disposition. Therefore, it should not be surprising that the Romantics influenced by Fichte are convinced that the wedding ceremony is a purely external bureaucratic formality that can be fully omitted.

Along these lines, Fichte is comparable to Kant in terms of attempting to dismiss the role of the big Other. However, unlike Kant's moral subjects who intend to omit the big Other but end up fetishizing it further and hiding behind the moral Law, Fichte believes that forming a union is the consequence of a straightforwardly dual relationship that does not require a third party for mediation. This difference is crucial because the big Other only exists when the subject attempts to address it or, to use Žižek's words, the existence of the big Other depends on the subject's belief in it (*Less than Nothing* 92). While Hegel's big Other is external and intentional, the big Other plays an unintentional internal role in Kant's theory of marriage. This argument can be proved by the fact that the big Other in both accounts of marriage does more than officially announce the union. While Fichte considers the wedding ceremony as nothing but a formal confirmation from the state, this ceremony itself can be understood as a discursive element. One may say that the purpose of the wedding ceremony is to ensure the moral legitimacy of a marriage, but this argument would hardly make sense

here, as Fichte explicitly points out that marriage must arise from love, and nature will prohibit marriages that are deemed to be inappropriate: “Sie ist vollkommen bestimmt, sage ich, d. h. nur eine solche Ehe, wie die beschriebene, und schlechthin keine andere Verbindung beider Geschlechter zur Befriedigung des Geschlechtstrieb, verstaten Natur, und Vernunft” (FA §9).¹⁶ If there is such coercion, would nature have not already prohibited the wedding ceremony from happening in the first place? If not, when exactly will nature and reason intervene in inappropriate wishes and attempts to get married? In this sense, Fichte’s explanation of the wedding ceremony is confusing since he is not clear enough about the purpose behind such a ceremony taking place.

As mentioned in the previous section, even though there is no more love between the couple, the couple still needs to go to the state to confirm the dissolution of the marriage. However, the state or the church does not have the right to change the couple’s decision, as they can only inform the couple about moral principles and education. To conclude, Fichte attempts to lessen the role of the big Other in a marriage union, entirely and firmly grounds the unity or the separation between two subjects on their subjective feelings. Nevertheless, the question at stake is whether those feelings are genuinely subjective and autonomous. In the following sections, I discuss the problem of subjectivity in Fichte’s philosophical system and its relation to objective nature.

¹⁶ Nature and reason cannot be seen as the big Other insofar as both are purely objective conditions. The big Other, on the other hand, is conditioned upon and particularized for each subject. The big Other is not a rule or a law that the subject has no choice but to obey. As Lacan tells us:

Now love itself is related to the questioning of the Other regarding what he can give us and what he can furnish by way of an answer. Not that love is identical to each of the demands with which we assail the Other, for love is situated in what lies beyond this demand, insofar as the Other can or cannot respond to us as an ultimate presence. (*Seminar VIII* 170)

Dual Relationship in Fichte

I have established that the main reason behind Hegel's and Fichte's different positions on the wedding ceremony is the necessity of a third element. For Fichte, there is simply no need for a third element to mediate in the relationship if two subjects are in love with each other. In his deductive account, Fichte considers marriage as automatically established by love; hence, a wedding ceremony is purely external and unnecessary since marriage is a dual relationship in which the two subjects fall in love with each other and reciprocally express their love and affection.

At first sight, what Fichte argues does not seem to be any different from Lacan's and Hegel's claims. For Hegel, love in a marriage is a kind of self-conscious love [*selbstbewußte Liebe*], meaning that the moment that the two people get married, they know they *will* love the person and that the other person will love him or her back (PR §161). As Lacan articulates, "to love is, essentially, to wish to be loved" (*Seminar XI* 253). Differently put, to express one's love for someone means to receive a reply from the other person to confirm that one is reciprocally loved by the beloved. The loving disposition is therefore always-already narcissistic, as it functions almost like a mirror reflection of the subject expressing love to him- or herself. As Bruno Moroncini phrases it, saying "I love you" in a conscious loving disposition becomes no different from saying "I love myself" (14).

Now, the following questions arise: if two subjects can simply have a perfectly reciprocal relationship, why do Hegel and Lacan still insist on the necessity of a third party to mediate the relationship? Would this third party not be completely unnecessary and even disturbing? Would a reciprocal relationship only between the two subjects concerned be more sincere and ethical in its being more straightforward? What are the limitations of a reciprocal dual relationship, and why is it impossible in both Hegelian and Lacanian ethics?

The answer to these questions is the different standpoints on subjectivity and the alienation of the self. Both Hegel and Lacan are aware of the pathology behind love and therefore radically reject the idea that love is, or can be, a straightforward dual relationship. A relationship, according to Lacan, must be “an identity that is based on an absolute non-reciprocity” (“Kant with Sade” *Écrit* 653). The fundamental problem behind this kind of dual relationship is not simply narcissism but rather the recognition of the subject. Fichte argues that the subject is essentially self-positing, meaning that the constitution of the self is only based on the subject’s self-reflexive activities (Foundations §1). For Hegel and Lacan, on the other hand, the subject cannot directly perceive his or her selfhood through a mirror reflection. The Lacanian subject is divided and alienated from him- or herself, and it is “a form of existence of the contradiction, antagonism, at work in the very existence of objects of objects” (Zupančič, “Ontology and the Death Drive” *Subject Lessons* 161). Hence, the subject itself is a contradictory concept since the subjectivization comes from objectivation. In Lacanian psychoanalysis, no subject can exist independent of an object, which is the *objet petit a*. The subject can only come into being when there is a void to fill.

Hegelian subjectivization is a process that arises from the substance, whereas the substance is retroactively posited and mediated by the subject (Radnik, “Subjectivity in Times of (New) Materialisms” *Subject Lessons* 53).¹⁷ Such retroactivity is evident in Hegel’s discussion of subject and substance:

Sie ist dasselbe, was oben das Subjekt genannt worden, welches darin, daß es der Bestimmtheit in seinem Elemente Dasein gibt, die abstrakte, d. h. nur überhaupt *seiende* Unmittelbarkeit aufhebt und dadurch die wahrhafte Substanz ist, das Sein

¹⁷ The *objet petit a* is fundamentally missing in Hegel’s philosophy. The existence of *objet petit a* is intimately linked with pure repetition. The excess *a* is what sets the repetition, makes it impossible to stop, and forever remains stuck in the repetition (Žižek, *Less than Nothing* 500). This repetition retroactively produces something as if for the first time.

oder die Unmittelbarkeit, welche nicht die Vermittlung außer ihr hat, sondern diese selbst ist. (PS 36)

What differentiates Hegel and subjective Idealists is thus not the fact that the Hegelian dialectic is less subjective, because if the subject perceives him- or herself through the mirroring of the objective world, this process is essentially *passive*. However, Hegel (aligned with Lacan) argues that this process of reflection and recognition is *active*. What enables this mediation is the reflecting subject who objectifies him- or herself in the active process of recognition and thereby gives rise to the subject's self-consciousness. Thus, the Hegelian subject, like the Lacanian subject, is *always-already* mediated by the objective substance.

Fichte's Self

Before returning to the discussion of Fichte's deductive account of marriage, it is useful to turn to subjective freedom in Fichte's account of marriage.

In his book *Uncivil Unions*, Daub makes an excellent point regarding the dual relationship in Fichte: “[o]n Fichte’s account, on the other hand, the loss of dignity requires a certain kind of relationship, and it is this relationship, not the people involved in it, that creates and solves the problem of dignity” (52). This statement marks a crucial distinction between Fichte and Kant because, although Kant’s account on marriage seems to require a contract to actualize a marriage, this contract could be seen as a formality for people who wish to save their humanity should they accidentally have sex with each other. Kant’s contractual marriage lacks both the Hegelian self-conscious love and the Fichtean preestablished relationship between the subjects. Fichtean dignity is maintained by subjects who have a loving disposition toward each other. Hegel further radicalizes this point by arguing that in a truly ethical love, the decision to love another subject comes even before establishing a loving disposition. Therefore, the difference between Fichte and Hegel does

not lie in the cause but in the consequence of love. For Fichte, the loving disposition is determined by two subjects, and the subject's decision will automatically be the most suitable disposition that is permitted by reason and nature: "Liebe ist der innigste Vereinigungspunkt der Natur, und der Vernunft; sie ist das einzige Glied, wo die Natur in die Vernunft eingreift; sie ist sonach das Vortrefflichste unter allem Natürlichen" (FA §4). However, a contradiction resides within Fichte's system: although Fichte claims that it should be the subject's absolute freedom to choose one's partner, there is an underlying Absolute that serves as the higher entity that judges the subject's decision. If the subject and his or her self-consciousness is indeed the determinant of the objective reality, which includes nature and reason, why would an inappropriate union (e.g., one subject is coerced into a marriage union) take place at all? Would it not mean that all unions are always-already legitimate? If we look at the following paragraph, Fichte does not specify how nature and reason will prevent inappropriate unions from happening:

Die Ehe ist sonach kein erfundener Gebrauch, und keine willkürliche Einrichtung, sondern sie ist ein durch Natur, und Vernunft in ihrer Vereinigung notwendig, und vollkommen bestimmtes Verhältnis. Sie ist vollkommen bestimmt, sage ich, d. h. nur eine solche Ehe, wie die beschriebene, und schlechthin keine andere Verbindung beider Geschlechter zur Befriedigung des Geschlechtstrieb, verstaten Natur, und Vernunft. (FA §9)

Fichte's contradiction is acknowledged and altered in Hegel's philosophy of love when he criticizes the excessive internalization of the self. As a consequence, Hegel explicitly points out the importance of a third element, the big Other, being part of the wedding ceremony. One may say that Hegel's love is less subjective in the sense that there is a third party to mediate the wedding ceremony and the married life that comes afterward. However, what is radical about Hegel's position is a *reversed* contradiction in comparison to

Fichte. Fichte's contradiction lies in the fact that although he claims that only the subject makes purely free decisions, the subject has to be reflexive of the objective reality insofar as Fichte regards the objective condition (i.e., the Absolute) as a pure appearance that can be deduced. This is what Žižek calls the "objective irony" in Fichte's subjectivity: "[t]herein resides the objective irony of Fichte's development: Fichte, *the* philosopher of subjective self-positing, ends up reducing subjectivity to a mere appearance of an immovable absolute In-itself" (*Less than Nothing* 144). Subjective decision and reflection are therefore passive.

Hegel reverses the Fichtean contradiction because although there appears to be a third party meddling in the union, this third party reflects the subjectivity; therefore, the Hegelian subjects are the ones who actually achieve the autonomous love. As Žižek points out, the difference between Hegelianism, subjective Idealism (Fichte), and objective Idealism (Schelling) is that unlike the latter two forms of Idealism, Hegel's point is that subjectivity is "re-inscribed into objectivity" but not simply deduced as a part of objectivity (*ibid.*). In other words, Fichtean freedom is deductive, as the subject's choice is in agreement with the order of nature and reason and therefore part of the objective reality. For Hegel, subjectivity is not a simple reflection of the objective nature; on the contrary, its expression reconstitutes the objective reality. Nevertheless, the concurrence of subjectivity and objectivity does not occur through a third element that is completely external to the subject because this third element (e.g., the big Other) is only possible when the subject believes its existence (*ibid.* 92). Hence, Hegel regards ethical love as a form of self-consciousness. This self-consciousness is not the same as the self-consciousness as the one outlined in Fichte and entailing that the subjects try to eliminate every external obstacle and use subjective reflection to substitute part of reality. It is rather the self-consciousness that is built upon these external obstacles already imprinted by subjectivity. Differently put, it is only the subjective condition that can grant the existence of the third element. For Hegel, there is no concrete, well-established third element (i.e.,

nature and reason) that automatically resolves the subjective condition and objective reality dilemma. The big Other is only there when the subject recognizes its existence through a symbolic ceremony. The big Other is inscribed into the subject's reality, and once this big Other is gone, reality will also disappear. Therefore, the true Hegelian criticism against Fichte is not due to Fichte being too subjective but to his failure to formulate the importance of the Absolute in constituting self-reflection and self-actualization.

Thus, the problem that Kant and Fichte share is that both believe that the introduction of the big Other as a third element threatens the purity of subjectivity. In MM, the Kantian subjects attempt to hide behind the moral Law and claim that immoral behaviors are not the subjects' desire but the desire of the big Other. What the Kantian subjects do not realize is that their subjectivity is always-already inscribed in the big Other. The existence of the big Other will not transform their subjective reflection, and the subject will not have to become the "puppet" of the big Other and do everything that the latter requires because in this case, the desire of the subject will not be the desire of the big Other. The desire of the big Other is irrelevant to the subject. Conversely, the subject's desire is reflected in the desire of the big Other because the lack in the big Other "opens up the space for the subject to articulate its authentic desire" (Žižek, *Sex and the Failed Absolute* 168). Like Kant, Fichte believes that the mediation of the big Other makes the subjectivity less authentic. Both philosophers misunderstand the role of the big Other, portraying it as an intruder who disturbs the subject's authentic desire, and both believe that subjectivity has to be a pure thing so that subjective desire can represent or replace part of the objective condition. The ultimate lesson from Lacan about the big Other is that the latter is *the* space for the subject to reveal his or her subjective desire. The desire of the big Other and the desire of the subject should completely coincide. The object or substance is not part of objectivity as a pure appearance but something that is actualized by the subject's self-reflection.

The other problem of the Fichtean subject that arises from the omission of the big Other is the recognition of the self. What Fichte assumes is that the subject would be able to identify him- or herself and his or her partner precisely, which is granted by nature and reason because Fichte tries to establish a self-evident certainty in his philosophical system. The way alienation works in Fichte's system is that how I perceive objective conditions is always based on my practical purposes at hand (Seidel 102). George Seidel offers an example of how alienation works for Fichte: "if my ideal as a health professional is to save lives, then I will begin to see in my patients the things I need to be concerned about; I will begin to see 'things' such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol levels, etc." (ibid.). External or objective reality is determined by the subject I. What Fichte believes is, to quote Žižek's words, "the unconditional spontaneity of thinking or the self-activity of the subject" (*Sex and the Failed Absolute* 74). Fichte thinks that self-identification in love is a spontaneous process that can be recognized in the Thing-in-itself and therefore does not require anything external to mediate. This is different from psychoanalysis because the psychoanalytic subject condition is never a direct reflection of objective reality:

The most elementary form of this gag is, of course, that of delayed self-recognition: I pass a glass door and think I see behind it an ugly, disfigured guy; I laugh, and then, all of a sudden, realize that the glass was a mirror, and that the figure I saw was myself. The Lacanian thesis is that this delay is structural: there is no direct self-acquaintance; the self is empty. (Žižek, *Less than Nothing* 145)

The argument of this quote is that the subject's self-recognition is always-already mediated by a third element. Even since our childhood, we learn how to identify ourselves in the mirror reflection so that our alienation is based on the speech and recognition of the parental Other (Fink, *The Lacanian Subject* 36). As subjects, our image of the self is cultivated by a third element that stems from the process of subjectivization. Bruce Fink indicates that Lacan

describes the subject's relation to the big Other as an oxymoron— “a forced choice” (ibid. 50). The paradox of the question of subjectivity resides in a two-sided, contradictory relation: on the one hand, it seems that the subject loses his or her subjectivity by accepting the surrender of the self to the big Other; yet, on the other hand, submitting to this big Other is a necessary condition for the subject to become a subject (ibid.). The Lacanian subject is always a split from him- or herself, there is always a fundamental lack in being: “[t]he subject's first guise is this very lack” (ibid. 52). The best Lacanian dictum to summarize the relationship between the subject and the big Other is what he repeats again and again in his teaching career: “man's desire is the desire of the Other” (*Seminar XI* 235). What Lacan does not enunciate clearly but one should bear in mind is that the desire of the big Other is not different from the desire of the subject: “[f]or man not only desires *what* the Other desires, but he desires it *in the same way*; in other words, his desire is structured exactly like the Other's. Man learns to desire *as an other*, as if he were some other person” (Fink, *The Lacanian Subject* 54).

In other words, identification of the self can only be produced retroactively [*nachträglich*]. The Lacanian subject at its most fundamental is a void that only what comes later can fulfill. Therefore, the recognition of the self is always-already delayed and can only be posited retroactively.

Sexual Difference in Fichte

Apart from the debate on recognition, what makes Fichte interesting in psychoanalysis is the framework of sexual difference in his deductive account of marriage. The Hegelian subject is not sexed, but the Fichtean and Lacanian subjects are traversed by the sexual difference. By saying sexual difference, it is not my purpose to use a postmodern, nonbinary gender theory to provide a feminist reading and criticize how Fichte differentiates the role of male and

female as sexist. Conversely, sexual difference is Fichte's alignment with (Lacanian) psychoanalysis because the female subject in Fichte's theory is the subject of the unconscious.

The first and most crucial question before getting into the discussion of sexual difference is, what does masculinity or femininity mean in psychoanalysis? Why is it called sexual but not gender difference? Or, in other words, why is the subject sexed yet it is not so in the same terms as biological sex or sociological gender? Why does psychoanalysis reject the idea of a gender-blind society where there is no boundary between males and females? Why is there no neutral sex in Lacan's sexualization?

The answer to this question is not sexism or discrimination against one of the sexes because, as Žižek points out, the difference between two sexes is not a matter of two opposite or contradictory sexes originated from one and split into two—masculinity versus femininity (*Sex and the Failed Absolute* 140). In other words, psychoanalysis does not consider masculinity and femininity two radical oppositions that require something in the middle (i.e., gender neutrality) to “harmonize” the contradiction and therefore refute sexism. Since the prerequisite of sexism is to put masculinity and femininity in competition, the concept of sexism is irrelevant to psychoanalytic sexualization. Lacanian sexualization does not refer to a biologically or sociologically constructed concept such as gender but to two different jouissances that males and females obtain. Therefore, psychoanalysis does not consider the one between men and women to be the same kind of opposition as that of black versus white. Furthermore, masculinity and femininity do not necessarily correspond to male and female in terms of biological sex but to the subject who gets to enjoy the phallic or the Other jouissance.

The difference between masculinity and femininity is not a matter of one thing split into two oppositions. The difference comes from a contradiction that lies within its own:

The basic division is not [...] that of the One which divides into Two; it's the division of a non-descript thing into One and its rest, excess or surplus. This is how sexual difference works: human species does not divide into two (masculine and feminine), it divides into One (masculine) and its excess, so it is M+. (Žižek, *Sex and the Failed Absolute* 141)

This is also why psychoanalysis cannot equate to gender studies; more radically, speaking, psychoanalysis is in direct opposition to gender studies. The problem of neo-feminism and gender studies is that even though they try to deny the biology of sex, the fact that they make such an attempt suggests they have already assumed a ready-made, clear-cut distinction between two sexes, between masculinity and femininity. Psychoanalysis, on the other hand, refutes this clear-cut distinction, and the psychoanalytic gender is not equivalent to the division of male and female. Regarding femininity as a surplus of masculinity is not to deduce femininity as part of masculinity; rather, it is due to the female is the subject of the unconscious who obtains the jouissance of the Other. When Lacan says that “woman does not exist,” this claim is not a denial of the existence of female beings (*Television* 38); what he really means is that woman comes into being as a symptom of man (Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* 79). A man can make a woman come into being through courtly love by making her the object of desire, the excess *a* (Lacan, *Television* xv). This is further discussed in the third chapter.

Does it mean that there is only one sex (male) in psychoanalysis and the other sex (female) is something extra that adds to the male sex? Reducing sex into one is not what occurs in psychoanalysis: as Zupančič explains, if there is only one sex, then this thing would

be called NO sex at all (*What is Sex* 45-46). The fact that this “second sex” is missing does not automatically indicate that we only have the “first sex.” Rather, “[w]hat splits into two is the very nonexistence of the one (that is, of the one which, if it existed, would be the Other)” (ibid. 46). This means that pure masculinity or pure femininity does not exist. The split of two sexes does not lead to a symmetrical relationship between the two sexes. This is why Lacan says, “the impossibility of establishing as such, anywhere in the enunciable, the sole One that interests us, the One of the relation ‘sexual relationship’ (*rapport sexuel*)” (*Seminar XX* 7). What he means is not that sexual intercourse does not exist. The message behind this dictum is two-fold: first, there is no direct, unmediated relationship between the positions of masculinity and femininity insofar as the big Other plays a role in the sexual relationship, as discussed in the previous sections of this chapter; second, the male and female positions are structurally asymmetrical and nonreciprocal.

In sum, sexual difference in psychoanalysis is based on neither one’s biological sex nor socially constructed gender identity. What differentiates masculinity from femininity is the different kinds of *jouissance* and the subject’s relation to the big Other. While the Other *jouissance* desires what the big Other desires, the phallic *jouissance* is not related to the big Other (Lacan, *Seminar XX* 9). Sexual difference in Lacan is asymmetrical. As shown in the following section, this asymmetrical sexual relation also pertains to Fichte’s theory of marriage.

In Fichte’s system, men and women are represented as entirely active [*nur tätig*] and entirely passive [*nur leidend*] (FA §2). At first sight, Fichte’s masculinity and femininity seem to be closer to the conception of male and female in the stereotypical sense where two sexes are opposed to each other. Nonetheless, I argue that what Fichte really means in terms of sexual difference should be understood as male and female sexual desire.

In Fichte's work, love works differently for men and women, as a man cannot fall in love with a woman before getting married, yet a woman will *have to* fall in love with and surrender herself to the man before establishing the union. By falling in love with the man, the woman loses her autonomy and finds her new identity in love: "Sie behauptet ihre Würde, ohnerachtet sie Mittel wird, dadurch, daß sie sich freiwillig, zufolge eines edlen Naturtriebs, des der *Liebe*, zum Mittel macht" (ibid. §4). Here, Fichte's female love can be juxtaposed to Hegelian love because both Fichtean females and Hegelian ethical subjects surrender their identity and themselves into the union, and yet they gain their ultimate freedom and autonomy through surrender: "Das Weib gibt, indem sie sich zum Mittel der Befriedigung des Mannes macht, ihre Persönlichkeit; sie erhält dieselbe, und ihre ganze Würde nur dadurch wieder, daß sie es aus Liebe für diesen Einen getan habe" (ibid. §5). The crucial difference between Fichte and Hegel is that this formula does not apply to the Fichtean male. While in Hegelian ethical love there is no indication of sexual difference in terms of losing one's identity since both men and women go through the same process, it is only women who play the role of sacrificing one's selfhood in Fichte. Yet the difference between men and women in Fichte should not simply be read as men being superior to women. On the contrary, Fichte hints at a crucial psychoanalytic understanding of sexual difference—namely, that it is only through the female gaze that a sexual relationship can take place: "Nur dem Weibe ist die Liebe, der edelste aller Naturtriebe, angeboren; nur durch dieses kommt er unter die Menschen" (ibid. §4).

The woman who loses her identity and selfhood in a loving disposition is the psychoanalytic path to become a subject and gain subjectivity, the process of subjectivization. The Lacanian subject is not equivalent to an individual in everyday vocabulary or a conscious subject in analytic philosophy. This subject is not an active subject that can accurately position him- or herself in the world; instead, the subject is formed through the speech

addressed to the big Other and corresponds to the big Other's alienation and desire. This is why Lacan concludes: "man's desire is the desire of the Other" (*Seminar XI* 235). The person who attempts to fulfill his or her own desire is not the Lacanian subject because the desire should not be the subject's desire, but the subject is the *desiring* subject of the big Other. The subject can only identify him- or herself through the recognition from the big Other: "desire full stop is always the desire of the Other. Which basically means that we are always asking the Other what he desires" (Lacan, *My Teaching* 38). As already explained in the previous section, the paradox here is that psychoanalytic subjectivity is gained in the barred subject of the big Other.

In psychoanalysis, the existence of Man [*l'homme*] is straightforward and self-evident; specifically, the masculine structure occurs when the divided, dissatisfied subject fails to recognize the desire of the big Other and turns the big Other into the *objet petit a*. However, the existence of Woman [*la femme*] is more complex because the woman is the big Other in the sexual relationship (Lacan, *Television* 40). What does this mean? Lacan is certainly not saying that the woman's existence can fully replace the role of the big Other because, otherwise, there will not be a triad relationship. What Lacan hints at here is that when the subject inscribes herself into the big Other, this big Other simultaneously becomes what represents the woman's subjectivity. The contradiction here is that, although a woman surrenders her subjectivity for the sake of the big Other, she becomes the subject who enjoys the *jouissance* of the Other, thereby regaining her subjectivity.

When considering the Lacanian sexuation of the female side, the following two claims are present: "[b]eing the Other, in the most radical sense, in the sexual relationship, in relation to what can be said of the unconscious, woman is that which has a relationship to that Other" (Lacan, *Seminar XX* 81) and "there is no Other of the Other" (*ibid.*; *Television* 40). The woman's relationship to the big Other is different from that of man because the woman's

subjectivity is inscribed in, and gained from, the big Other; hence, the woman will “remain forever Other” (Lacan, *Seminar XX* 81). In a sexual relationship, a woman will be reduced to the object of the male fantasy—the *objet petit a*. (Fink, *The Lacanian Subject* 117). However, this loss of subjectivity signifies that the female subject comes into being because “[t]he very adoption of a position or stance with respect to (an experience of) jouissance involves and implies subjectivity” (ibid.). Zupančič’s excellent interpretation of these two arguments reveals that the major difference between the man and woman is that the woman is the true Lacanian subject that situates itself as the desiring subject of the big Other:

[T]he relationship to the Other is, so to speak, included in the Other; it is “part” of the Other. Whereas a man can think of the Other as the exception to the rule, to his rule, on the basis of which he relates to women, a woman cannot think of the Other as the exception to her rule, but as part of the rule, as included in the rule. This affects significantly the nature of this rule, making it “not-all.” The nonexistence of the Other is itself inscribed into the Other. (*What is Sex* 53)

Thus, the true difference between psychoanalytic masculinity and femininity is the question of subjectivization and the different kinds of jouissance that they get to obtain: the male enjoys the phallic jouissance and the female enjoys the Other jouissance. The masculine position mistakenly believes that an object can fully satisfy a man’s desire and need by turning the big Other into the *objet petit a*, whereas a woman who loves a man will desire to fulfill the desire of the Other, which is ultimately the desire of her own. This can be observed in what Fichte writes: “[D]iese Liebe ist der Naturtrieb des Weibes, einen Mann zu befriedigen. Es ist allerdings ein Trieb, der dringend seine Befriedigung heischt; aber diese seine Befriedigung ist nicht die sinnliche Befriedigung des Weibes, sondern die des Mannes” (FA §4). The phallic jouissance requires an object and a fantasy frame, meaning that a man cannot relate his jouissance to the big Other since his jouissance must be obtained directly

from a female object. The Other jouissance, on the other hand, inscribes the jouissance that she obtains as part of the satisfaction of the big Other: “[a] man serves here as a relay so that a woman becomes this Other to herself, as she is to him” (Lacan, “Guiding Remarks for a Convention on Female Sexuality” *Écrits* 616).

Returning to Fichte’s homology of the male being entirely active and the female being entirely passive, one understands that what Fichte really means is that the man is the subject who fantasizes about obtaining direct enjoyment from a passive female object, whereas the woman is the subject who gains enjoyment from her own subjectivity.

This is why, according to Fichte, a woman’s sacrifice for love is ultimately aimed at satisfying her own desire:

Darum ist auch das Weib in der Geschlechtsvereinigung nicht in jedem Sinne Mittel für den Zweck des Mannes; sie ist Mittel für ihren Zweck, ihr Herz zu befriedigen; und nur, inwiefern von sinnlicher Befriedigung die Rede ist, ist sie es für den Zweck des Mannes. (FA §4)

From a male perspective, the subject believes that he can directly enjoy an object and thus treats the woman as a “means” [*Mittel*] to the enjoyment. On the other hand, femininity surrenders herself to the inscription of the big Other through becoming the latter’s desiring object. In doing so, the woman gains her identity and subjectivity by learning to desire what the big Other desires. The desire of the big Other becomes the desire of the woman; hence, the subjectivized woman becomes a part of the big Other. The sexual relationship only works when the active man accedes to the passivity, the passive woman, situates her in his fantasy, and makes her become the *objet petit a*.

To conclude, when Fichte says that woman is purely passive and man is purely active, Fichte is really trying to say that woman is “the result of man’s withdrawal into passivity”—

she is the man's "non-being" (Žižek, "Fichte's Laughter" *Mythology, Madness, and Laughter* 166).

Conclusion

Returning to Hegel's criticism of the Romantics, which is also likely a criticism against Fichte, one can observe that the main problem behind is the question of subjectivity and recognition. Fichte's problem is not that he is too subjective for Hegel; the paradox is that the Fichtean subject deduces his or her subjectivity by behaving in accordance with the Absolute, a higher entity that is considered as the objective condition. Fichte's deduction and failure to recognize an object/substance as part of the self leads to the question of whether his subject can actually achieve a truly autonomous love. Hegel, on the other hand, reverses Fichte's discourse: although there appears to be a third element mediating Hegelian ethical love, this third element acts precisely as the placeholder of the subject's desire. In this way, the Hegelian subject is the one who obtains true autonomy.

What is included in Fichte's theory of marriage but not Hegel's is sexual difference, as Fichte differentiates masculinity and femininity as the pursuit of two different kinds of desire. Undoubtedly, one cannot assume or claim that Fichte, as Lacan, believes that masculinity and femininity do not attribute to biological sexes. However, one should not criticize Fichte by using contemporary values and discourses to judge what was considered conventional and acceptable at his time. As shown in this chapter, instead of regarding the Fichtean male and female as binary concepts, my interpretation offers an alternative reading of Fichte's sexual difference. The Fichtean notion of sexual activity is that the male subject actively sets himself to become a passive recipient from the woman object, and the female subject gains her new identity and enjoys the Other jouissance through becoming the passive

object of the male fantasy. Perhaps, before imposing contemporary feminist ideology on Fichte, one should reconsider his sexuation.

Chapter 3 The Most Sublimated Romantic Love: E. T. A. Hoffmann on Romantic contra Ethical Love

The previous two chapters investigated the conception of love and marriage by Idealists including Hegel, Kant, and Fichte, examining the role of the big Other in a loving disposition and its relation to the question of subjectivity. Several questions from these chapters remain unanswered: for example, what exactly is the relationship between the Hegelian arranged marriage and drive? Apart from the problem of subjectivization, what are the other differences between Romantic and ethical love? What does transference love have to say about subjectivity and objectivity? The best way to answer these questions is through examples. In this chapter, I will address these questions by examining a literary case, Hoffmann's *The Sandman*. The chapter's focus is the perverse relation to the big Other, where the pervert does not seek to gain jouissance by positing himself as the desiring subject of the big Other and thereby inscribing his subjectivity into a part of the big Other; rather, the pervert has an instrumental relationship with the big Other by making himself the instrument of the big Other's desire in order to avoid a fully sexual relationship.

To summarize the story briefly: in *The Sandman*, Hoffmann portrays a "love triangle" between Nathanael, Clara, and an automaton, Olympia. In short, Nathanael is engaged to Clara, as is clear from their letter exchanges. What is also evident from the letters exchanged between Nathanael, Clara, and Clara's brother, Lothar is that Nathanael is traumatized by his childhood terror of the Sandman, who is said to steal the eyes of children. This childhood trauma has given rise to Nathanael's obsession with eyes. Clara tries to cure him, helping him to overcome his inner fear by assuming the role of a "therapist" via her letters. Nevertheless, Nathanael does not appear to be "cured" by Clara. One day, Nathanael encounters a beautiful automaton through his telescope and falls hopelessly in love with this wooden doll, Olympia,

which has been created by the Doppelgänger of the Sandman. Eventually, this love dissolves at the very moment when Olympia is destroyed, and Nathanael must finally face the reality that she is nothing but an automaton.

Psychoanalysis has its significance in the story. Starting with Sigmund Freud's essay "The Uncanny" ["Das Unheimliche"], *The Sandman* becomes closely related to psychoanalytic concepts—the uncanny, primary narcissism, the Doppelgänger, the sister-image, and so on. The purpose of this chapter, however, is to focus on the two relationships portrayed in the story: namely, the relationship between Nathanael and Olympia and the relationship between Nathanael and Clara. These two contrasting relationships enables the construction of a more complete picture of Hoffmann's depiction of the Hegelian ethical love and the rejection of Romantic love. In constructing this picture, it is necessary to introduce Lacanian psychoanalytic concepts such as transference, idealization, and sublimation, analyzing the emergence and disappearance of the love between Nathanael and Olympia. A simple and yet most difficult question that orients this chapter: how does *The Sandman* reflect different positions of the conception of love that can be situated in German Idealism and Romanticism? I work from an account of love based on the theory of transference from Freudian lineage to Jacques Lacan's *Seminar VII: The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*. I present a close reading of transference love and the concepts of Lacanian sublimation and the Thing

[*das Ding*],¹⁸ following Lacan and Žižek’s analysis of the courtly love [*l’amour courtois*] tradition of medieval literature.¹⁹

Transference and Mistaken Identity

In order to situate transference love in Hoffmann’s story and thereby investigate the emergence of love between Nathanael and Olimpia, it is worth turning to a point made by Dolar on the story:

The mechanical doll only highlights the mechanical character of “intersubjective” relations. It is the character exploited by the position of the analyst: the analyst, too, utters at the most an “Oh!” here and there (and perhaps a “Good night, love!”); he makes himself an automaton in order to give rise to the dimension of the Other, the real interlocutor of the patient’s “monologue,” and also in order to produce that

¹⁸ Lacan extensively discusses the Thing in *Seminar VII*, in which he draws attention to the difference between the two terms that mean “thing” in German—*das Ding* and *die Sache*. In short, Lacan argues that *die Sache* is the representation of a thing in the symbolic order: “the *Sache* is clearly the thing, a product of industry and of human action as governed by language” (*Seminar VII* 45). *Die Sache* is opposed to *das Ding*, as Lacan regards the latter as the thing that “substitutes itself for that dumb reality” (ibid. 55). However, Lacan’s definition of *das Ding* is ambiguous: later in the *Seminar*, he defines it as an unknowable thing and states that it “is impossible for us to imagine it” (ibid. 125). These seemingly contradictory statements essentially signify two processes: sublimation and idealization. This is discussed further in the section “Sublimation and the Thing” in this chapter. Furthermore, readers should know that the concept *das Ding* disappears in Lacan’s teaching after *Seminar VII*. In later Seminars, he develops the concept *objet petit a* to replace *das Ding*.

¹⁹ Romantic love can be traced back to courtly love, which was a medieval European literary conception of love. Courtly love emerged in early medieval times (11th-century France) and this form of love was not confined to the Middle Ages. Although courtly love’s origin and influences continue to be a matter of critical debate and are not a concern of this thesis, there is a close connection between courtly love and Romantic love. In *Seminar VII*, Lacan considers courtly love and anamorphosis; what he discusses in particular is *Minnesang*.

strange kind of love, perhaps love in its strictest and purest sense, which is transference love. Nathanael's lengthy conversations with Olympia prefigure the analytic session. (Dolar, "Lacan and the Uncanny" 9)

This passage gives rise to the following questions: what does Dolar mean by transference love? How is this artificial, mechanical love produced between Nathanael and Olympia? Since this love can be artificially created, can it also be destroyed?

The concept of transference love was first introduced by Freud's essay "Observations on Transference Love" ["Bemerkungen über die Übertragungsliebe"] in which Freud expresses his surprise at the regularity and predictability of the analysand falling in love with the analyst during the analytic session. Freud starts by discussing two possible outcomes of the analysand falling in love with the analyst: firstly and rarely, the analyst and analysand are mutually in love and enter a permanent legal union; secondly and more commonly, the treatment has to be terminated so as not to breach moral and professional standards. However, Freud is critical enough to outline the fundamental problem behind the second outcome:

[...] Arzt und Patientin gehen auseinander, nachdem sich die Patientin in den Arzt verliebt hat; die Kur wird aufgegeben. Aber der Zustand der Patientin macht bald einen zweiten analytischen Versuch bei einem anderen Arzte notwendig; da stellt es sich denn ein, daß sich die Patientin auch in diesen zweiten Arzt verliebt fühlt, und ebenso, wenn sie wieder abbricht und von neuem anfängt, in den dritten usw. (*Zehnter Band* 308)

As Freud aptly points out, the nature of transference love means that it is not the case that the analysand is in love with the analyst *per se*; instead, the analysand loves the particular role that the analyst plays regardless of who he or she actually is. As Fink accurately concludes,

transference is a case of “mistaken identity” (*Lacan on Love* 2). The analyst acts as the subject who is supposed to know and who listens to the analysand attentively. Through such sessions, the analysand gradually comes to believe that the analyst is someone who holds the solution that can cure his or her symptoms and pathological nature (Dolar, *A Voice and Nothing More* 159). As Lacan tells us, transference exists as long as there is a subject who is supposed to know (*Seminar XI* 232). From this perspective, transference means the subject attributing his or her knowledge to the big Other (the process of subjectivization). In other words, Olimpia is the embodiment of the big Other for Nathanael, and Nathanael attempts to express his desire through talking to Olimpia.

The nature of transference love is the analysand’s resistance to repressed memory, and Freud refuses to urge the analysand to suppress, renounce, or sublimate his or her desire because otherwise the analytic session would have been futile: “Zur Triebunterdrückung, zum Verzicht und zur Sublimierung auffordern, sobald die Patientin ihre Liebesübertragung eingestanden hat, hieße nicht analytisch, sondern sinnlos handeln” (*Zehnter Band* 312). Hence, to sum up, transference love is provoked by the analytic situation, intensified by the analysand’s resistance, and lacks concerns with reality.

In *The Sandman*, Hoffmann hints at the mechanical nature of Olimpia when Nathanael first espies her: “starre Olimpia höchst gleichgültig und nur zuweilen sah er flüchtig über sein Kompendium herüber nach der schönen Bildsäule, das war alles” (396). Indeed, it is strange that Nathanael already knows that Olimpia is nothing more than a beautiful statue [*die schöne Bildsäule*] yet still falls hopelessly in love with her. However, it is not simply the case that Nathanael is deceived by Olimpia, as there is no conscious or intentional attempt on Olimpia’s side to conceal her mechanical nature. The irony of their love lies in the fact that Nathanael already *knows* he is deceived by his fantasy (considering a beautiful statue as a real, lively, and beloved person). And precisely because he knows, he

falls into the trap and is willing to be deceived by his fantasy to an even greater extent. In other words, it is Nathanael's resistance and disavowal of reality that gives rise to transference love between them. Hoffmann's "misleading" narration also further suggests that the logic of transference is at play: "Erstarrt stand Nathanael - nur zu deutlich hatte er gesehen, Olimpias toderbleichtes Wachsgesicht hatte keine Augen, statt ihrer schwarze Höhlen; sie war eine leblose Puppe" (407). It is not accurate to conclude that there is a sudden realization by Nathanael that Olimpia is an automaton because as a matter of fact, he always-already knows it. As the analysand in the analytic context, Nathanael regards Olimpia as the only person in the world who truly understands him: "'O du herrliches, du tiefes Gemüt', rief Nathanael auf seiner Stube: 'nur von dir, von dir allein wird' ich ganz verstanden'" (Hoffmann 405). Nathanael keeps talking to Olimpia, although the only response he receives is "ach, ach." Olimpia's minimal use of language evokes the most profound and dramatic feeling and gives access to Nathanael's unconscious thoughts. These small grunts and groans serve to further entice Nathanael, as opposed to turning him off and making him lose his attraction to her.

Silence as objet petit a in Transference

To use Lacanian terms, transference love between Nathanael and Olimpia emerges from silence and a lack of speech, because silence entices the subject to fill the lack and thereby seduces him. Simply put, the analysand (i.e., Nathanael) assumes that the analyst (i.e., Olimpia) possesses profound knowledge that holds the key to curing his symptoms. Thus, transference arises from Nathanael's language addressed to Olimpia (as the subject tries to address the big Other). Olimpia's silence and limited speech confirm his desire and produce the love between them. Why does Nathanael find Olimpia's muteness so intriguing? The

silence is a kind of void—*objet petit a*—around which Nathanael can articulate his insatiable desire. By addressing the big Other, what Nathanael really hears back is the echo of his own voice (Lacan, *Seminar II* 244). More specifically, Olympia’s silence, or mechanical sounds (“ach, ach!”), is *objet petit a* as the Voice (one of the guises of *objet petit a*). It is because of this void that Nathanael can produce and thereby make sense of something out of nothing—Olympia’s mechanical nature and muteness. Nathanael expects a response from Olympia as the analysand hopes to get a profound answer from the analyst—the subject who is supposed to know. Nathanael is not only responsible for what he says to the “analyst,” but he also needs to *provide himself a response to what he says*. The response from himself through the big Other fulfills his narcissistic pursuit: essentially, he turns his own speech into the voice of Olympia through the loop of its void. He repeats the process of talking to Olympia because “repetition is fundamentally the insistence of speech” (Lacan, *Seminar III* 242). The big Other is where the speech is constituted (ibid. 274).

Now, the question at stake is why can Clara not evoke the same desire from Nathanael? Is she not, in reality, the one who actually tries to be an “analyst” to cure Nathanael? Here, it is necessary to examine more closely Lacan’s account of transference, as he suggests that it is even better if the analyst is blind to the transference so that she is “well suited to contain within herself the object of that desire” (*Seminar VIII* 193). In other words, there is no contingency on the degree to which the analyst should understand the analysand: as Lacan says precisely, “the less you understand the better you listen” (*Seminar II* 141). One problem of understanding [*compréhension*] is, according to Lacan, that the analyst simply applies what he or she already knows to the speech of the analysand, so that he or she believes there is an understanding between them (*Seminar VIII* 197). This understanding is not perceived as positive and is what Lacan calls the “liminal understanding” (ibid. 204). It is therefore crucial for the analyst to ignore the theory that he or she is already familiar with.

Lacan goes as far as to claim that the analytic relationship can only be developed through an initial misunderstanding (ibid. 389). As a consequence, the passive Olimpia is perceived by Nathanael as a better analyst than the active Clara. Apart from this negativity of understanding, the passivity rather than activity of the analyst can evoke more “free associations” of the analysand, with the result that the analyst becomes the object of the analysand’s desire. Indeed, Clara’s problem is that she talks and analyzes too much and gives Nathanael advice that is far too concrete: “Sei überzeugt, daß diese fremden Gestalten nichts über Dich vermögen; nur der Glaube an ihre feindliche Gewalt kann sie Dir in der Tat feindlich machen” (Hoffmann 384). Although the big Other is described as the subject who is supposed to know, the knowledge of the big Other comes from the attribution or confession of the subject him- or herself. The big Other should not be seen as someone who actually knows everything about the subject. This is why Nathanael calls Clara “Du lebloses, verdammtes Automat” despite the fact that Clara is the person who actively helps to cure him (Hoffmann 393).²⁰ Thus, the mechanism of the analytic session functions only when the interpretation during the analytic session is subjectivized by the analysand. As Žižek would say: “[y]es, my God, that’s me, I really wanted this” (“Desire: Drive = Truth: Knowledge” 1).

Childhood Trauma and Narcissistic Projection

Through the lens of transference love, it is now clear how love between Nathanael and Olimpia is artificially produced by one active lover (analysand) and one passive beloved

²⁰ In the plot, Clara asks Nathanael to throw away the disturbing poem he wrote about Coppelius. The irony is that when, later, Nathanael reads to Olimpia the poem and the mysteries that have bored Clara, the only response he receives from Olimpia is “ach, ach.” Yet Nathanael is still convinced that Clara is the automaton and Olimpia is the lively person who truly understands him. The difference between Clara and Olimpia is that Clara does not fit Nathanael’s fantasy frame; in other words, Nathanael cannot project his fantasy onto Clara but only onto Olimpia.

(analyst). However, the detailed analysis above still does not answer the final question I proposed earlier: since the love between Nathanael and Olimpia can be artificially created, can it also be destroyed? Or simply put, how does this love eventually dissolve? Lacan expands the theory of transference by drawing attention to *reproduction* behind the theory:

The reality of transference is thus the presence of the past. Isn't there already something that stands out in this, allowing us to provide a more complete formulation? It is a presence that is a bit more than presence—it is a presence in action and, as the German [*Übertragung*] and French [*transfert*] terms indicate, a reproduction. (*Seminar VIII* 174)

Indeed, it is Nathanael's childhood trauma relating to the Sandman and Nathanael's ambivalent relationship with the father figure that creates the transference love and idealization of Olimpia. It is not a coincidence that Olimpia is created by the Doppelgänger of the Sandman (i.e., Professor Spallanzani); Olimpia is therefore the sister-image of Nathanael so that Nathanael can project his narcissistic features onto her (Dolar, "Lacan and the Uncanny" 9).

In his essay "The Uncanny," Freud regards Olimpia as Nathanael's sister-image that embodies his castration complex and his ambivalent relationship with the father figure. On the one hand, Nathanael tries to identify with the father; on the other, he offers himself as an object of love for the father (what Freud calls the "feminine attitude"): "Diese automatische Puppe kann nichts anderes sein als die Materialisation von Nathaniels femininer Einstellung zu seinem Vater in früher Kindheit" (*XII. Band* 244).

Nathanael's narcissistic projection and Olimpia as the cold, mute mirror surface function analogously to Lacan and Žižek's discussion of the courtly love tradition in medieval literature: Nathanael is the knight who elevates the Lady Olimpia to the status of Ideal and Impossible—a disavowal and avoidance of a fully sexual relationship with her.

Courtly Love and the Lady

Lacan and Žižek's criticism of courtly love begins with the cliché of the knight pursuing the Lady, but the Lady always rejecting his advances; the Lady is marked as the unattainable object. The following passage from Lacan is worth quoting:

The Lady is never characterized for any of her real, concrete virtues, for her wisdom, her prudence, or even her competence. If she is described as wise, it is not because she embodies an immaterial wisdom or because she represents its functions more than she exercises them. On the contrary, she is as arbitrary as possible in the tests she imposes on her servant. (*Seminar VII* 150)

The Lady is not a warm, charming lover but rather a cold person, an "inhuman partner" who is not "one of our fellow-beings" (*ibid.*). Žižek compares the Lady to an automaton, who evokes the knight's desire at random (*The Metastases of Enjoyment* 90). But why can the knight not see the cold nature of the Lady, instead imagining her as an ideal partner? This is not because the knight is blinded by love and cannot see the flaw of the Lady. On the contrary, the elevation of the Lady as the Ideal is a secondary phenomenon of the knight's narcissistic projection that attempts to make the traumatic Otherness of the Lady impossible.

Essentially, this elevation of the Lady as unattainable is *idealization*: an idealized object (i.e., the Lady) is pursued in order not to be obtained. The enjoyment of idealization lies in the process of pursuing itself: a happy ending of the knight obtaining the Lady will not do any good but will ruin this jouissance of repetitively pursuing.

Amor Interruptus and Masochism

The dialectic of courtly love is perverse, and it is not until the emergence of the masochist couple that we understand its logic. Lacan was not the one who directly pointed out the association between courtly love and masochism, although in *Seminar VII*, he makes a passing remark on the postponing nature of courtly love:

The techniques involved in courtly love—and they are precise enough to allow us to perceive what might on occasion become fact, what is properly speaking of the sexual order in the inspiration of this eroticism—are techniques of holding back, of suspension, of *amor interruptus*. (152)

Later, it was Žižek who puts forward Lacan's thoughts by linking this *amor interruptus* to masochism. Lacan and Žižek point to the obstacles that the knight or the masochist sets up in the game of chasing so that the Lady or the woman-master becomes unattainable: “external hindrances that thwart our access to the object are there precisely to create the illusion that, without them, the object would be directly accessible—what such hindrances thereby conceal is the inherent impossibility of attaining the object” (Žižek, *The Metastases of Enjoyment* 94).

The Lady is a mere void who therefore can be perceived only through fantasy. The knight fantasizes about attaining the Lady through endless postponement, precisely as the masochist suspends fully sexual enjoyment through a contract. The knight behaves as the man-servant to the woman-master, carefully remaining a reflexive distance from the Lady and repetitively pursuing her in order to not obtain her. The sexuality of the logic is “when a gesture that ‘officially’ serves some instrumental goal becomes an end in itself, when we start to enjoy the very ‘dysfunctional’ repetition of this gesture, and thereby suspend its purposefulness” (ibid. 127).

The masochistic nature of the contract can only take place when the subject is perverse, because a perfectly symmetrical relationship is only possible in a well-negotiated contract between the dialectic of master and slave. In an actual relationship, symmetry only exists in the imaginary illusion.

Sublimation and the Thing

For Nathanael, Olympia is not only an idealized object but also a sublimated Thing. Before arriving at this point, it is necessary first to understand what sublimation is. Sublimation [*Sublimierung*] first arose in psychoanalysis when Freud defined it as the process of transferring libido into socially appreciable and well-celebrated achievements.²¹ Lacan, however, in *Seminar VII*, reverses how Freud defines sublimation. Lacan proposes an equally enigmatic formula, in which he claims that sublimation has to do with a process that “raises an object...to the dignity of the Thing” (*Seminar VII* 112). At first sight, this formula suggests nothing different from idealization: the ordinary everyday object becomes the representation of the Thing. It is true that at some point Lacan himself becomes confused by the formula and does not clearly articulate the difference between sublimation and idealization in his teaching. However, Joan Copjec suggests that the elevation in the Lacanian sublimation does not equate to entailing of the representation of the Thing; instead, there are moments when the elevation entails “the substitution of an ordinary object for the Thing” (37). The difference between representation and substitution is that the first still requires an object as the Thing, while the latter, by contrast, directly replaces the Thing and gains its satisfaction elsewhere instead of stubbornly waiting for the arrival of the Thing. It is important to understand that this Thing is not an idealized object situated in the imaginary but

²¹ See Freud's *Civilization and Its Discontents* [*Das Unbehagen in der Kultur*].

something that firmly reflects “dumb reality” (Lacan, *Seminar VII* 55). In other words, idealization means an idealized image of the Thing that cannot be concretized, yet sublimation elevates an object to the position of the Thing, and it does not matter what this object actually is. Through sublimation, the fantasized *objet petit a* is reduced to being an ordinary object. Now, through this reversal of the elevation, it is possible to have a more complete and precise understanding of the Lacanian sublimation: this sublimation exists without the fantasy of *the* idealized object. It is also different from the Freudian sublimation insofar as Lacan’s sublimated object can exist *without the detour of libido to something commonly considered more ideal or more socially acceptable*. What Lacan urges his readers to do is to accept this most “dirty” part of libido, surrendering the hope of using the elevation to represent an ideal or to attain some arbitrary enjoyment.

Therefore, two crucial aspects mark the main distinction between Freudian and Lacanian sublimation: firstly, the object of the Freudian sublimation is something that is originally refuted by the society and has to go through the process of sublimation to become what is considered socially acceptable. For Freud, sublimation is achieved via culture; only cultured people can achieve sublimation. By contrast, Lacan rejects the idea that sublimation can be “achieved” through the cultural transformation of the object. The first difference leads to the second one: while Freudian sublimation alters the object itself (from socially unacceptable to cultural), Lacanian sublimation does not change the object *per se* but rather how the subject perceives the object (i.e., the structure of fantasy that surrounds the object).

Nathanael’s Perversion and Self-Deception

To return to *The Sandman*: what makes Nathanael similar to a knight or a masochist is that despite his claim of wanting an intimate relationship with Olympia, he is in reality afraid of a

sexual relationship and creates barriers of endless postponement as a result. The Lady, or Olimpia, becomes a symbol for both enjoyment and castration. This is also why he cannot love Clara—a woman who tries hard to approach him, to cure him, in order to have a full relationship with him. As mentioned earlier, it is not a sudden realization that Nathanael finds out Olimpia's mechanical nature; like the knight and the masochist, he knows from the very beginning that this love can only take place through idealization with precise control and reflexive distance. A *double* self-deception occurs in the story, and Nathanael's perverse behavior signifies the first aspect of this: he knows that he cannot fall in love with an automaton so that he needs to use a telescope to look at her and thereby to appreciate her; without a telescope, there would have been no love. This is the first self-deception. The second self-deception occurs at the moment when Nathanael directly confronts Olimpia's mechanical nature (i.e., when he sees her being dismembered): "Erstarrt stand Nathanael – nur zu deutlich hatte er gesehen, Olimpias toderbleichtes Wachsgesicht hatte keine Augen, statt ihrer schwarze Höhlen; sie war eine leblose Puppe" (407). Nathanael rejects his own disavowal of her nature by trying to convince himself that he loved her because he did not know who she really was. He deceives himself about the need for a fantasy frame to fall in love and believes his love for Olimpia is authentic. The irony, and the challenge Hoffmann poses to his Romantic contemporaries, is this obsession with the so-called authentic love, in which external formalities (i.e., "obstacles") should be eliminated and subjective feelings should be the only determinant. This Romantic obsession paradoxically leads to the most inauthentic love: essentially, it is not love but passionate desire. Yet it is crucial to note that the lesson from the story is not that we should have no fantasy, as rejecting a fantasy structure precisely results in another kind of idealization. Here, Hofmann's conception of fantasy aligns with Hegel and Lacan: it is a necessity for the subject to create a fantasy structure that is not directly related to his or her partner in order to fall in love, but what is ethically at stake

is that although the subject knows precisely that there are differences between fantasy and reality, he or she loves the person nonetheless.²² Nathanael, by contrast, hides behind his perversion through this double self-deception, thereby legitimizing his pathological behavior.

Does Nathanael Have Freedom?

The other question that needs to be answered is whether Nathanael plays an active role in this transference love. In other words, does Nathanael have freedom in terms of starting and ending the relationship with Olimpia? Is he, as some literature suggests, also an unfortunate automaton who lacks humanness? This question concerns the problem of subjectivity, which was a central theme of early Romanticism, when whoever did not have absolute freedom was considered a kind of automaton.

Elizabeth Purcell points out this “crisis of subjectivity” in *The Sandman*, arguing that the fate of Nathanael is not determined by Nathanael himself; instead, he is an automaton that is controlled by someone else and has no actual freedom in terms of subjectivity (45). Purcell believes the proof of her argument can be seen in the following quotation from the story:

Alles, das ganze Leben war ihm Traum und Ahnung geworden; immer sprach er davon, wie jeder Mensch, sich frei wählend, nur dunklen Mächten zum grausamen Spiel diene, vergeblich lehne man sich dagegen auf, demütig müsse man sich dem fügen, was das Schicksal verhängt habe. Er ging so weit, zu behaupten, daß es töricht

²² This marks a crucial distinction between the logic of desire and drive: desire, as can be seen in Nathanael’s case, is the obsession with the argument of “this is not that,” whereas drive *qua* sublimation enables the subject to accept “this *is* that” (Žižek, “Hegel on Marriage” 7). Therefore, in the case of authentic sublimation, even when the subject realizes his or her partner does not match his or her ideal image or fantasy, the subject still loves the partner. Therefore, the fantasy for love is not created around the partner but around the loving disposition itself.

sei, wenn man glaube, in Kunst und Wissenschaft nach selbsttätiger Willkür zu schaffen; denn die Begeisterung, in der man nur zu schaffen fähig sei, komme nicht aus dem eignen Innern, sondern sei das Einwirken irgendeines außer uns selbst liegenden höheren Prinzips. (Hoffmann 390)

Purcell thereby argues that Hoffmann is using the character, Nathanael, to criticize Kant's moral subjects. She considers that the Kantian moral subjects only appear to be free. The subjective freedom is constrained by the objective moral Law. This interpretation appears to be valid at first sight, but two problems of her argument immediately arise: firstly, it is not the case that Kant's moral subject has no choice but must behave in accordance with the moral Law; instead, it is, in reality, the subject makes choices and uses the moral Law as an excuse for his or her immoral behavior. The reason why some scholars, such as Purcell, understand Kant's moral philosophy in the way that they do is that they believe the big Other as a third element restricts the freedom of the subject, preventing the subject from doing what he or she actually wants to do. However, psychoanalysis points out that "there can be no freedom without a subject, yet the very emergence of the subject *is already the result of a free act*" (Zupančič, *Ethics of the Real* 41). This means that the path of subjectivization requires the subject to situate him- or herself in the position of the desiring subject of the big Other, as a part of the big Other, and the subject learns how to become an other and desires like the big Other. In other words, the very process of becoming a subject is already a free act insofar as one has to voluntarily submit oneself to the big Other. Therefore, the very decision of becoming a subject is "always-already" free.

However, what if Nathanael is manipulated by reality and childhood trauma and therefore has no choice but to behave pathologically? To answer this question, it is necessary to recall the story of a jealous husband that Lacan tells in *Seminar III*. In this story, a pathologically jealous husband follows his wife and witnesses that she is in the same

bedroom as another man (Lacan, *Seminar III* 76). Even though the husband's suspicion that his wife is being unfaithful could very much be true, this does not change the fact that his behavior is pathological. Nathanael is a free subject in a similar vein even if he is controlled by his horrifying childhood character, the Sandman. The big Other that pertains to Nathanael's childhood trauma does not know more about him because the traumatic experience is suppressed. The paranoid big Other is the one who knows him more.

The difference between a masochistic pervert (i.e., Nathanael) and the Kantian subject is that the enjoyment of a pervert is obtained through instrumentalization: “[t]he subject here makes him the instrument of the Other's jouissance” (Lacan, “The Subversion of the Subject and the Dialectic of Desire” *Écrits* 697). Nathanael is the instrument of the big Other instead of enjoying the Other jouissance. The difference between the one who is an instrument of the big Other and the one who enjoys the Other jouissance is that the former acts this way only because he knows it is prohibited so that he will never enjoy a full sexual relationship: “the pervert is a subject who directly assumes the paradox of desire and inflicts pain in order to enable enjoyment, who introduces schism in order to enable reunion, and so on” (Žižek, *The Metastasis of Enjoyment* 111). The purpose of a pervert is not to actually enjoy his partner sexually; it is the instrumental, non-sexual relationship itself that excites and provokes him. The way that a pervert achieves a non-sexual relationship is through putting in place artificially created external obstacles: “[i]t is a highly refined way of making up for (*suppléer à*) the absence of the sexual relationship, by feigning that we are the ones who erect an obstacle thereto” (Lacan, *Seminar XX* 69). The subject who enjoys the Other jouissance, however, attempts to fulfill the desire of the big Other and thereby obtains the enjoyment by subjectivizing herself in the big Other.

To conclude, his traumatic childhood does not make Nathanael less pathological. Instead, what makes a subject pathological is the attempt to justify the pathological nature of love and desire.

De-Idealization without De-Sublimation as Ethical Love

Despite his use of different narrators in the story, in the following paragraph Hoffmann gives a clear refusal of idealizing one's beloved:

Aber viele hochzuverehrende Herren beruhigten sich nicht dabei; die Geschichte mit dem Automat hatte tief in ihrer Seele Wurzel gefaßt und es schlich sich in der Tat abscheuliches Mißtrauen gegen menschliche Figuren ein. Um nun ganz überzeugt zu werden, daß man keine Holzpuppe liebe, wurde von mehreren Liebhabern verlangt, daß die Geliebte etwas taktlos singe und tanze, daß sie beim Vorlesen sticke, stricke, mit dem Möpschen spiele u.s.w., vor allen Dingen aber, daß sie nicht bloß höre, sondern auch manchmal in der Art spreche, daß dies Sprechen wirklich ein Denken und Empfinden voraussetze. Das Liebesbündnis vieler wurde fester und dabei anmutiger, andere dagegen gingen leise auseinander. "Man kann wahrhaftig nicht dafür stehen", sagte dieser und jener. In den Tees wurde unglaublich gegähnt und niemals genießt, um jedem Verdacht zu begegnen. (Hoffmann 408–409)

Hoffmann explains that as a result of Nathanael's story, many young men fear their partners being mere automata; hence, young men expect their female partners to accomplish various activities such as singing [*singen*], dancing [*tanzen*], stitching [*sticken*], knitting [*stricken*], playing with their puppy [*mit dem Möpschen spielen*], and so on, all at the same time. What Hoffmann criticizes here is another kind of idealization: in order to avoid having an automaton as a beloved, the lover demands that the beloved pretend not to be an automaton—

despite being more oblique, this demand is still an idealization, because it can be understood as the lover saying to his or her beloved, “I can love you only if you behave in this and that way.” The most ethical love will exist when, although the lover knows the beloved is an automaton, he or she simply de-idealizes the beloved and accepts the reality. Ethical love is not about idealizing one’s partner and treating him or her as someone who represents or embodies an ideal object. It is important to note that it is not the case that Nathanael is unable to sublimate Olimpia—after all, he does disavow her flaws and intentionally blinds himself through two self-deceptions, as already discussed. The problem here is that in their love, sublimation cannot survive without idealization: “[in] true love, there is no need for an idealization of its object, no need to ignore the object’s discordant features” (Žižek, *Less than Nothing* 449).²³ In other words, it is Nathanael’s inability to undergo the experience of de-idealization that makes ethical love impossible. So, what should ethical love look like? In ethical love, the partner is de-idealized but not necessarily de-sublimated (Žižek, “Hegel on Marriage” 7). To better make sense of this point, we return to Hegel in a moment.

To sum up, the love between Nathanael and Olimpia stems from transference: Olimpia fulfills Nathanael’s desire as a make-believe analyst, the subject who is supposed to know and who remains silent and gives him no concrete advice. This love dissolves because of Nathanael’s lack of capacity for de-idealization: what the masochistic Nathanael wants is not an actual partner; instead, all he wants is a fetishized Lady-Object who embodies his idealization and passionate desire to repetitively pursue her without having a fully sexual

²³ Žižek’s story about a blinded ex-soldier is a good example of sublimation *with* idealization:

In an old Christian melodrama, a temporarily blinded ex-soldier falls in love with the nurse who takes care of him, fascinated by her goodness, forming in his mind an idealized image of her; when his blindness is cured, he sees that, in her bodily reality, she is ugly. Aware that his love would not survive extended contact with this reality, and that the inner beauty of her good soul has a higher value than her external appearance, he intentionally blinds himself by looking into the sun for too long, so that his love for the woman will survive. (*Less than Nothing* 448)

relationship with her. Only in a masochistic world is the symmetry between two subjects possible.

Hegel's Contingent Partner

In the first chapter, I pointed out the link between the dialectic of the drive and the Hegelian arranged marriage. What that chapter left unanswered was how drive results in repetition. The purpose of not addressing this point in the earlier chapter is that this point will make more sense in the context of the repetition that occurs in Nathanael's case. To recapitulate the Hegelian arranged marriage: Hegel claims that arranged marriage is the most ethical form of love not because the elder has better vision in terms of matchmaking but rather because "the contingency of the partner is directly and openly assumed" (PR §162; Žižek, "Hegel on Marriage" 5)

Nathanael's story and Hegel's arranged marriage stand for two different kinds of repetition: the repetition of desire and the repetition of the drive. The repetition in Nathanael's love for Olympia is *desire* because Nathanael repetitively pursues the Lady-Object in order to not obtain her; each time, the repetition results in the same outcome: avoidance of a fully sexual relationship. By contrast, the repetition occurring in Hegel's arranged marriage is the repetition of the drive insofar as the subject is well aware of the love and commitment even if the other subject is not his or her idealized partner.²⁴ The Hegelian

²⁴ I use the example of arranged marriage here because this is what Hegel claims to be the most ethical form of love possible.

The arranged marriage means that two subjects who are deemed marriageable do not evaluate each other on external qualities. They simply decide to love each other regardless, which makes arranged marriage possess the best qualities. They simply decide to love each other regardless, which makes arranged marriage the best example of sublimation without idealization.

repetition is not simply repeating the same thing, because the latter would be the form of desire as opposed to drive. Repetition, for Hegel, is a form that retroactively produces and posits something that is always-already present in the first place. The symbolic ceremony that repeats the couple's decision to marry is not a mere bureaucratic procedure but a necessity that forever changes the couple's subjective positions. For Hegel, the repetition of the decision to love is necessary insofar as "it is only through its repetition that the inner notional necessity is asserted" (Žižek, *Sex and the Failed Absolute* 210), because repetition would cause the "sublation" [*Aufhebung*] that results in the contingent necessity (ibid.). This is why Hegel insists on the necessity of the wedding ceremony insofar as it is through repetition that the subject can sublimate his or her partner.

One of the most crucial distinctions between desire and drive is their different ways in which they are satisfied. The best example of the repetition of the drive is the story of Don Juan. In this story, Don Juan pursues all kinds of women, regardless of their different external qualities or identities. The matter at stake for Don Juan is not who is the right woman; rather, every woman is the right one for him. Zupančič frames this as "one of the purest instances of repetition compulsion" insofar as what Don Juan constantly looks for is not a new woman but a new experience of conquering a Woman (*Ethics of the Real* 131). The other characteristic of Don Juan is that the pleasure of enjoying women occurs one by one (*une par une*), whereby he finds the satisfaction of the drive is achieved through his action (Lacan, *Seminar XX* 10). Don Juan does not move to the next woman because he thinks the previous one was not the right one (Zupančič, *Ethics of the Real* 136). What motivates Don Juan to keep sleeping with different women is the repetition compulsion insofar as he thinks every woman is the right one (ibid.). Nathanael, on the other hand, repeats his behavior of pursuing an automaton because of failure. This is what Lacan calls *encore*, the satisfaction of being dissatisfied so that the subject wants to repeat the dissatisfaction (Fink, "Knowledge and

Jouissance” *Reading Seminar XX* 34). Hence, Don Juan’s repetition derives from his being satisfied every time, so that the satisfaction repeats through the action of pursuing, whereas Nathanael’s repetition stems from the satisfaction that comes out of being dissatisfied in terms of a fully sexual relationship.

Finally, how is the case of Don Juan and Nathanael related to Hegel’s arranged marriage? They are related because, in an arranged marriage, the subjects who already know that they are supposed to marry each other still repeat the process during the wedding ceremony. The repetition is inscribed in the language and shifts their enunciation. The satisfaction of an arranged marriage is achieved through repeating the decision at the symbolic ceremony. The satisfaction is not gained directly through the object (i.e., the partner); instead, the satisfaction comes from a formal, symbolic ceremony. To put it in an extreme way, the person whom one is going to marry does not matter to the Hegelian subject; the satisfaction of love stems from the process of becoming married. Lacan’s words on drive should clarify my argument:

Even when you stuff the mouth—the mouth that opens in the register of the drive—it is not the food that satisfies it, it is, as one says, the pleasure of the mouth. That is why, in analytic experience, the oral drive is encountered at the final term, in a situation in which it does no more than order the menu. This is done no doubt with the mouth, which is fundamental to the satisfaction—what goes out from the mouth comes back to the mouth, and is exhausted in that pleasure what I have just called, by reference to the usual terms, the pleasure of the mouth. (*Seminar XI* 167–168)

Indeed, the satisfaction of the drive arises from the very act of doing something—eating, pursuing, speaking, and so on. As opposed to drive, desire attempts to gain its satisfaction from the object (the menu, food, a woman, and so on). The satisfaction of desire is because

desire can never be fully satisfied; while the satisfaction of the drive will always repeat insofar as the drive cannot rid itself of the satisfaction in its action. The repetition of the drive does not have a goal of satisfying anything; it is precisely because of this lack of goal that the repetition itself becomes satisfying.²⁵

Conclusion

In Romantic love, the lover's attempt to pursue the higher objective, authentic love results in his or her most intimate subjectivity; whereas in ethical love, the contingency of the partner is directly and openly assumed. In this account, it is no wonder that Hegel claims he prefers arranged marriage over marriage of attraction. For Hegel, what distinguishes arranged marriage from marriage out of "free love" is not that the elders who arrange a marriage necessarily have a more prolonged vision, nor does he suggest that those elders could objectively and adequately assess two people's qualities and thereby make the best decision in terms of matchmaking; what is ethically at stake is the contingent partner. Here, Hegelian ethical love parallels Lacanian sublimation: even though the partner does not meet the idealized image of an object, he or she remains the sublimated object, the Thing, around whom drive is articulated.

²⁵ Žižek's words summarize the difference between desire and drive well: "[i]nstead of trying to obtain the jouissance that cannot be obtained, the drive finds its jouissance through the very act of pursuing: desire desperately strives to achieve jouissance, its ultimate object which forever eludes it; while drive, on the contrary, involves the opposite impossibility—not the possibility of attaining jouissance, but the impossibility of getting rid of it" (*The Ticklish Subject* 354).

Indeed, Hegel and Hoffmann did not have many explicit associations or encounters during their lifetime,²⁶ yet one can clearly see their mutual juxtaposition of Lacanian ethics: even though the partner does not meet the idealized image, marriage elevates the partner, the ordinary object, to the position of the Thing. The repetition at play is that of drive as opposed to desire, which repeats for the sake of not being satisfied, drive is always-already satisfied. It can be concluded that *The Sandman* is a literary embodiment of Hoffmann's rejection of Romantic desire and idealization: true love is not two lovers looking at each other and passionately falling in love with one another inwardly, so that love overcomes all external obstacles—on the contrary, things that appear to be external obstacles enact the most ethical love possible. Moreover, the topic of subjectivity and freedom is also crucial to understanding *The Sandman*; the story should be seen as a criticism of the Romantic discourse that requires absolute subjective freedom insofar as freedom is already embedded in the act of becoming a subject. The story shows the (masochistic) perverse relationship to the big Other, wherein the pervert enjoys an instrumental relationship with the big Other so that his desire can be forever deferred and postponed.

The devastating logic of transference love, as seen in Nathanael's case, makes one realize that a loving disposition is far from what we think in postmodern times. In ethical love, the positions between two lovers are “not only distinct but above all unequal” (Moroncini 12). This means that one subject plays an active role, yet the other subject remains passive. The relationship is thus not aligned from subject to subject but from subject to object (ibid.). Because the difference between ethical and Romantic love is the structure of

²⁶ Even though, from Hegel's *LA*, it can never be known for sure if Hegel extensively spoke of Hoffmann, his reference to Hoffmann there does count as a documented reference.

fantasy, while the beloved remains fantasized and idealized in Romantic love, to an ethical lover the beloved is the *objet petit a* qua ordinary object.

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