THE PERSISTENCE OF THE FATHER IN HIS HAIR

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We may be starting a long way from Miroslav Krleža's brilliantly misanthropic novel of decaying Croatian aristocracy, *The Return of Filip Latinovicz*, but Frazer tells us in *The Golden Bough* that an Ajumba hunter in West Africa, having killed a female hippopotamus, stepped into the eviscerated corpse and "washed his whole body with the blood and excretions of the animal, while he prayed to the soul of the hippopotamus not to bear him a grudge for having killed her and *so blighted her hopes of future maternity*" (606, italics mine).

This scene is reasonably familiar to anyone who's read one of those condescending books on American Indians or watched a National Geographic documentary. The savage, touchingly close to his animal brethren, propitiates the spirit of the beast he has killed; in his misguidedness, his lack of education and of mass-produced consumer goods, he seeks to blunt the ghost's instinct for revenge.

What exactly is this ghost, though? Why should it seek revenge and how would it go about the project?—The hunter's concern is not at all for the hippo, strictly speaking, but for that hippo's potential *progeny*. In delivering a supplication to the animal's soul he is in fact apologizing to her thwarted descendants. Indeed, by stepping into the dead womb and bathing himself in its fluids, he offers himself as a substitute child; he inserts himself into the hippo's kinship structure by delivering himself from her opened uterus.

This is not particularly anomalous. Taboos on the slaughter of dangerous animals are justified, as a rule, by their disruptive effect upon the family structure of animal society (imagined as a mirror of human society) rather than a fear of the

slain beast's own return. The Siberian Koriaks refrain from killing whales and the Cherokee abstain from killing rattlesnakes, not because they fear the ghost's capacity for corporeal revenge, but because they fear that the phantom will incite its *relatives* to reciprocate the violence. Thus when a humpback staves in a fishing boat or a sidewinder bites a heel, these acts of violence are interpreted as familial revenge, as blood-feud; Shakespeare's King Claudius might have done well to consider this phenomenon before upending a bottle of poison into Hamlet Sr.'s ear.[1]

The phantom, the ghost, is therefore not so much a presence as a gap within the kinship structure, which drives the descendants of the slain to commit violence in its name. The living become substitutes for the dead. This is not terribly surprising if we consider that, in a long view, the fundamental categories of society tend towards the future generations that will perpetuate the culture rather than the representatives of the present one. The two Hegelian prerequisites of society, for example—property and marriage—give rise to social structures precisely because they project self-interest into the future: the category of ownership is a means of instituting inheritance, while property's twin, marriage, safeguards paternity and ensures that the father's possessions pass on to the appropriate child. Both institutions thus involve, not merely a desire for self-preservation, but a desire to preserve that self in offspring (complete with the inheritance of capital that stabilizes the social hierarchy through time).

We are dealing here with what Danilo Kiš calls "taj sled živih i mrtvih, taj sveopšti mit o smeni generacija" ("the succession of the quick and the dead, the universal myth of the chain of generations" [63]).[2] Countless cultures, the Hebrew

1 For, while we all know the traditional Freudian interpretation that Hamlet resists murdering his uncle because Claudius had enacted the prince's own suppressed fantasy, kinship structures play a role that has little to do with the family romance. The problem of the play is not the Prince of Denmark's problem: it is his father's problem, since his father was the one who got knocked off. Unfortunately, being dead and therefore unable to exact his due revenge, the missing father commands the son to take his place—to become the paternal function of vengeance. Hamlet resists this total identification with the father, the certainty of where the guilt lies and the absolute responsibility to revenge the killing in the name of the dead (a name which is, of course, literally his own).

2 Kiš's version, to be fair, is different from Krleža's; in particular the notion of a hereditary name works differently, as "The Encyclopedia of the Dead" grounds itself in the Hebrew tradition of bestowing upon children the given names of a dead ancestor, on the assumption that names reflect essences

and the Greek and the Chinese among the better-known examples, have considered the continuation of the family line to be a form of immortality. The father lives on in the son; the homunculus matures into the image of its origin. Thus in the Hebrew Bible Abraham is multiplied and immortalized in a nation of his progeny, and to die childless is a sufficiently horrible fate that the dead man's brother must be enlisted as a proxy to inseminate the widow in his sibling's name. When, in classical myth, Tereus rapes Philomela, the supreme punishment is his son's death rather than his own: deceived into eating innocent little Itys, his stomach becomes the tomb of his own flesh, his own blood; guilty of spreading his seed outside the legitimate bounds of the family, his legitimate seed as well—his son by marriage—is returned to his body.

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The title character of *The Return of Filip Latinovicz,* himself suffused with the interpenetration of conception and the grave, also subscribes to this "universal myth of the chain of generations." Catching sight of his mother sitting on Dr. Liepach's lap, Filip Latinovicz experiences disgust at the thought of sex in general and sex between his mother and Dr. Liepach in particular, but then derides himself for being so shocked:

> Glupo. I život staraca, kao i drugih organizama, nije drugo nego otvaranje tijela i tjelesnog. To je nagon u čovjeku, koji nas goni za produženjem života. Za trajanjem! Za produženjem trajanja! (104)
>
> Silly! Even the life of old men, like that of other organisms, is nothing else but an expression of the body and the physical. It is a human instinct making for the perpetuation of life. For duration. For the prolongation of duration. (87)

Our hero thus grounds the phenomenon of sexual desire in a universal life process applicable to organisms of all sorts (and reiterated even in the paragraph's structure, with its relentless, obsessive repetition of the words *trajanje* [duration] and *pro-*

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and that the same identity thus circulates over and over within the same family line. A detailed analysis is, however, grounds for another paper, which I won't try to cram into a footnote.

duženje [prolongation]). He does not yet realize that—at least according to his mother's testament at the novel's very end—Dr. Liepach is his father: he himself might well be the product of this particular genital conjunction and thus the extension in time of the Dr. Liepach he despises. When Dr. Liepach's hands "hvataju za sam život iz mračnog već predgroblja" (102) ("[grasp] at life itself from the already dark approaches to the grave" [86]), they claw at Filip's body.

For the whole course of the novel Filip Latinovicz is not certain who his father is, although he is keenly, neurotically aware that he must have had one. The illegitimate child of a courtesan, with a brace of potential paternities in a book obsessed with lineage—the tracing of noble bloodlines and illustrious names, antique family portraits and patents of hereditary nobility—Filip Latinovicz experiences his father only as a *gap*. Yet, like Hamlet or the offspring of a slaughtered hippo, he senses that unknown, absent father as an active force.

At stake here is the question of identity. If to engender a son is—as Filip claims—to perpetuate the father, then that son's identity can only be established in reference to that of his sire. Thus the fairy-tale prince, raised by shepherds in ignorance of his birthright, always becomes a king himself: the father returns in the son, who assumes his possessions and social function. "The king is dead, long live the king," runs the paradoxical chant, which mourns the passage of one individual while celebrating his reincarnation in the son: the two individuals are collapsed into the single identifying function of kingship. So too the orphan of sentimental literature who "wants to know who he is" thinks that he will name himself by discovering the name of the father. "Mučno pitanje očinstva što ga Filip postavlja" ("The painful question of paternity which Filip poses"), as Mladen Engelsfeld notes, "—tko mu je zapravo otac?—zapravo je pitanje njegova identiteta: tko sam ja?" (13) ("—'who his real father is'—is really the question of his own identity: 'who am I?'"). Indeed, when Filip Latinovicz, né Sigismund, chooses to take the Christian name of his legal father as well as his last name, the act represents the novel's most literal "return of Filip Latinovicz."

Paternity is traditionally inscribed in a hereditary name—leading, in Krleža's lampooning of a decadent, anachronistic gentry, to hybrid titles as ridiculous as "Count Uexhull-Cuillenband-Cranensteeg" (a ghost, incidentally), "Countess Maria de la Fontaine et D'Harmoncourt-Uverzagt," or "Count François de Paul Maria Zaharia Anton Wenzel Deym." For Filip Latinovicz to overcompensate (by assuming both the given and family names of his mother's husband) is a sign of his insecurity, his desire to pin down his identity in reference to that of a forebear. Of course to change his name does nothing to assuage Filip's doubt; he re-

mains unsure of who his father was even as he senses that unknown patriarch working in his own flesh:

> Mrtvaci, nepoznati i hipotetičnini mrtvaci u Filipu, ti su bili sastavljeni od beskrajnih kompleksa najnevjerojatnijih pretpostavaka i fiksideja: biskupi, sluge, stare žene sa gavranovima u mračnim sobama, lica iz baršunastog albuma, poljski činovnici u krznom opšivenim bundama, svi su ti vikali u njemu i kretali se oko njegove dječje postelje kao živi! On je i poslije već kao odrastao osjećao, kako njegovi nokti rastu sami dalje, sami od sebe, kao nokti na mrtvim rukama u zatvorenim grobovima, a to su nokti tih nepoznatih mrtvaca u njemu i njihova kosa! Čovjek i nije drugo nego posuda puna tuđih ukusa i užitaka! Bilo je takvih gledanja u Filipovu životu, kad je bio uvjeren, da on lično subjektivno sigurno nije vidio ono što je vidio; to netko dalek nepoznat u njemu gleda svoje stvari na svoj način. Slušajući zvonjave, kako zamiru nad krajinom u plosnatim krugovima, kao kad se rasplinjuju kružnice kolobara nad vodenim ogledalima od dodira ptičjeg, Filip je često mislio o nepoznatom i stranom voštanom mrtvom uhu, koje kroz njegovo vlastito uho sada sluša tu zvonjavu. Dolazile su na njega iznenada, bez ikakva razloga, bolne i neizrecive tuge: to netko ostavljen u njemu tuguje za nekim. Njega (Filipa) nije nitko ostavio, ali on tuguje… (171-72)

> The dead, the unknown hypothetical dead, in Philip, were all made up of endless complexes of the most impossible hypotheses and obsessions: bishops, servants, old women with ravens in dark rooms, faces from the velvet album, Polish civil servants in fur-trimmed leather coats—all of them had shouted within him and had moved about his child's bed like living creatures. Even later, as an adult, he could feel his nails growing by themselves, like nails on dead hands in closed graves, and they were the nails of those unknown dead beings within him, and his was their hair too! Man is nothing but a vessel full of other people's tastes and experiences. There were times in his life when he was convinced that it was not he, personally, subjectively, who was seeing the things he saw, but some distant and unknown being within him who had been looking at things of his own, in his own way. Listening to the ringing of bells dying away in flat circles over the Krajina, like ripples on the shining surface of water at the touch of a bird, Philip often thought of that unknown and alien, wax-like, dead ear which through his own, was now listening to those bells ringing. Suddenly, without reason, he was oppressed by

a painful and unutterable sadness; some forsaken being within him was grieving for someone. He, Philip, was not forsaken, but he felt sad… (143-44)

These "inexpressible sorrows" are in fact not expressed in this passage, which carefully avoids naming the phenomenon as that of unrecognized paternity. Yet this diagnosis could not be plainer: the obsession is an obsession with his possible fathers, which has gripped him since childhood and of which he has only hypotheses; the figures in the procession—the bishop, the manservant, the photo album Filip used to leaf through hoping to recognize the picture of his dad—are the figures of potential parents.[3] Their voices shout within him. When his hair and his nails grow, they grow with the ghostly force of a life that persists beyond the boundaries of its own body. The child becomes a grave in which the father's identity is buried, and hair growing after death is a vivid and frequently repeated emblem of past paternity actively extending in the son; a single strand of hair can always be identified as the same strand, although it grows longer and longer in an iconic representation of *trajanje*, the uninterrupted growth of a single chain of paternities. The alien resident's experiences are not with Filip, *kod Filipa*, but physically within him, *u Filipu*: he is a shell containing another self and even the experiences of his body belong to this other being. It is a dead ear that listens through his own. The grief of a forsaken being—a being that has been excised from the family structure as effectively as by an Ajumba spear or by "juice of cursed hebona in a vial" (*Hamlet*, I.v.62)—exerts itself within Filip's physical body.

Who then is Filip, if his experiences properly relate to this alien self inside him rather than his "own" ego? The attempt to establish his identity loses itself in the lacuna represented by the nameless phantom:

Razmišljajući o sebi i o svome trajanju, o svojim počecima i o međama svoje ličnosti, Filip se gubio u mutnim slikama, te nikako nije mogao da se snađe.

Doista, izgledalo je tako, kao da kroz naše ruke kulja tuđi život…sve to ne može biti ništa drugo nego odgovaranje na stara i davno pročitana pisma, odjekivanje na zaboravljene riječi, sjećanja na stare krivnje i mučenja na tuđim bezizlaznostima. (172-73)

3 The woman with the raven is from the traumatic night when young Filip realized that his mother was a prostitute; the Polish civil servants would seem to be more ancient ancestors on his mother's side. As we shall see, their experiences continue to affect Filip's behavior in various ways.

> Thinking about himself and his own existence in time, about his beginnings, and about the limits of his own personality, Philip lost himself in vague pictures, and could not find his bearings.
>
> Really, it seemed as if somebody else's life streamed through our hands…all nothing but replies to old letters read long ago, echoes of forgotten words, memories of old guilt, suffering for somebody else's helplessness. (144)

Filip's own persistence in time (*trajanje*—the same word used to describe Dr. Liepach's desired persistence into another generation), the origin of his ego (conception, most literally), and the borders of his personality (which already seems confused with that of the ghost who lives inside him) all disappear into this gap of the unknown father. Yet without being able to name that father, his conclusions must be as vague as the pictures in that photo album: "povorke mrtvih slugu, biskupa, kanonika, pokojnih kamerdinera, nepoznatih prolaznika iz trafike" (171) ("processions of dead servants, bishops, canons, chamberlains, unknown chance customers of the tobacconist's" [143]), any one of whom could be *the* father he feels in his flesh.

When that father exerts an emotional force—phobia or desire—the imperative of heredity is always evident. Filip's experience of sexual attraction, for instance, that urge for *trajanje*, is felt as an alien force within him: "pred raznim ženama uvijek netko drugi u njemu čeka" (173) ("[it was always] somebody else in him who was…waiting before the various women" [144]). Read on one level as a neurasthenic distancing of the self from the body, the phenomenon is just as much that of a parasite ancestor gunning for one more generation of survival[4]—or, conversely, the homunculus waiting to be placed inside the womb (if the chain of generations is intact, perhaps there is no real difference between the two).

Filip is also afflicted with a bizarre constellation of fears, seemingly random persons and things which, although he knows "da su isključivo prikaze i fantomi" (187) ("[that they] were only ghosts and phantoms" [155]), grotesquely affect him. One object that comes up rather frequently in this connection is the terror-inspiring top hat: "šešira svoga profesora matematike, na primjer, bojao se on mnogo više nego same matematike, ili onog starog, sivog bedaka s virdžinkama u džepu" (188) ("he was far more afraid of the hat of his professor of mathematics, for

4 Let us join our hands in prayer and thank the Good Lord for birth control.

instance, than of mathematics itself, or of that old, gray-haired fool with Virginia cigarettes in his pocket" [156]).

These fears are not, however, simply irrational; it is only that they stem from other people's experiences:

> Strah pred sjajnim crnim cilindrima, taj je jedamput slučajno odgonetnuo u sebi: pričala mu je mati kako je Valentijevima u Poljskoj sve došlo na bubanj, a ovrhovoditelji, koje je njen otac kao dijete gledao, kako bubnjaju nad njegovim roditeljskim domom, imali su visoke dlakave crne cilindre! (173)
>
> For his fear of shining black hats he found, quite by chance, an explanation; his mother told him how all the Valentis' property in Poland was auctioned off; how her father as a child had seen the auctioneers beating a drum in front of the parental home, and they had worn tall hairy black silk hats! (145)

Here Filip's dictum "da u nama stanuju drugi kao u starim grobovima i svi mi da smo samo kuće pune nepoznatih, mrtvih stanara" (170) ("that within us other beings live as in old graves, and that all of us are mere dwellings full of unknown dead occupants" [142])—which at first seems simply to prefigure the Freudian mantra that, as H.D. once put it, "we are all haunted houses" populated by the neurotic bequests of our childhood homes—is taken a step further, to involve a repercussive effect within the larger kinship structure rather than just the molding of personal experience: the phobia of hats originates in some kind of hereditary memory. This fear, rooted in a childhood experience of the maternal grandfather he never met, is somehow able to affect him even before he has ever heard the story. Oddly enough, Filip, along with the book he returns in, accepts this explanation for the phobia as a perfectly rational one. Experiences, along with their attendant neuroses, can, it seems, be passed on like any other inheritance. And in the weird "hairiness" of those hats we even have an echo of Krleža's most vivid trope of dead life growing out of another, living, body.[5]

5 In *On the Edge of Reason* Krleža develops a theory of *Homo cilindricus*, whose top hat is the emblem of bourgeois idiocy. It may also be worth mentioning here that one unexplained picture in the album is that of a man in a top hat, which Filip remembers "neobično živo" (79) ("very vividly" [67]). Filip's last inquiry before he destroys the book of photos is: "Kakav je…ovaj

There is actually a psychoanalytic model that attempts to explain such phenomena.[6] First expounded in a 1975 essay by Nicolas Abraham, the concept of the phantom seeks to formulate how the unexpressed neuroses of one generation recur elsewhere in an unconnected member of the family, who has never consciously been aware of their cause. "Meant to objectify…the gap produced in us by the concealment of some part of a love object's life" (171), the phantom

> passes—in a way yet to be determined—from the parent's unconscious into the child's… The phantom's periodic and compulsive return lies beyond the scope of symptom-formation in the sense of a return of the repressed; it works like a ventriloquist, like a stranger within the subject's own mental topography. (173)

The stranger within Filip Latinovicz's psyche, however, is produced—not by the concealment of "some part" of his father—but by the concealment of that father's

nepoznati gospodin tu s cilindrom, tko je od tih tipova tu u toj prokletoj knjizi moj otac?" (265) ("Who is this unknown gentleman with the top hat? hich of these faces here in this accursed book is my father?" [217]). It is tempting to say that this unknown gentleman is Filip's actual father, that Regina ascribes his paternity to Dr. Liepach only in order to justify their upcoming marriage, and that in looking at those hats Filip is directly confronted with the phantom, the father who has never been alluded to. I cannot, however, find any absolutely ironclad evidence that this or any other man is Filip's real father—which I suppose is the point.

This top hat also oddly resonates with Donald Barthelme's passage on "The death of fathers: When a father dies, his fatherhood is returned to the All-Father… Transfers of power of this kind are marked with appropriate ceremonies: top hats are burned" (178).

6 As with most psychoanalytic paradigms, its truth-value is questionable, but its metaphoric value is potentially significant: its terms resonate with Krleža's to an astonishing degree (which at any rate may be of chief importance in academic writing). The identification of the son with the father is of course well-trodden psychoanalytic territory, but I would like to resist the facile application of a hard-and-fast model by remembering that the Freudian schema are secondary or tertiary displacements of family structure, more concretely rooted in phenomena such as the division of labor within the family and the inheritance of social position through passed-on names, capital, and social function.

entire identity. The whole force of this gap, which Filip's mother has enforced by never telling her child his paternity, has been transferred into Filip's psyche.[7]

Even more important for our purposes here are the larger implications of inherited neurosis. Maria Torok observes that the concept of the phantom debunks "the prejudice of the 'I,'" which in traditional psychoanalytic practice

> consists in hearing the first person singular whenever somebody says "I." Yet, when faced in particular with phobia, we are hard put to find the identity of this "I" who is claiming to be fearful. Can we take it for granted that, at the tender age when these symptoms usually appear for the first time, the "I" really means the legal identity of the subject? "I am afraid of…" might better be rendered as: "There is a fear of…" (180)

This would certainly seem to be the case for Filip's phobia of tall hats, which expresses itself through his own body although it originates in an ancestor's experience. We are brought again to the question of the ego vis-r-vis the structure of kinship relations that gives it its social context, its name and objective identity. For, if the son's identity is defined by that of the father, the father's existence also persists in the offspring as "a stranger within the subject's own mental topography." Who is it, then, that experiences the fear of hats; can the phobia properly be said to be Filip's, or is it the phantom's, who expresses his fear through Filip as an instrument, just as he listens to the bells through Filip's ear? I am not sure that it is even

7 Abraham gives the example of a young scientist, an expert on human spermatozoa, whose hobby is the heraldry and genealogy of the European nobility; the cause, Abraham argues, is that the subject's *father* was illegitimate, so that developed a fantasy wherein he was of noble descent. This paternal neuroses manifests itself in the son as an obsession with heraldry—parallel, incidentally, to the obsession with heredity that Krleža bequeathed to his novel. (I would like to point out also the curious symmetry between his twin occupations of genealogist and spermologist: stretching simultaneously in the distant past and immediate future of the family line.) Although I have no wish to psychoanalyze Krleža and am not in any case qualified to do so, it is perhaps worth mentioning that Krleža himself was fatherless and illegitimate; he and his mother were comfortably supported by an anonymous benefactor and, as is the case with his character Filip Latinovicz, Zagreb swarmed with rumors that the local bishop was Krleža's father. For the biographical angle see Kulundž's *Tajne i kompleksi Miroslava Krleže,* in particular chapters like "Nezakonito dijete—Krležina životna opsesija."

possible, at this point, to draw a useful distinction between Filip's ego proper and the extensions of his missing paternity, which are so mutually interdependent. We have succeeded only in naming the problematic of the ego that tortures him, although we are no closer to knowing who that father is, or how he differs from the son he haunts.

The emblem hung like a heraldic device above the main door of Filip's childhood home is "Meduzina glava nad ulaznim vratima" ("[Medusa's head] above the entrance door"), which "zgrčila se sva kao da umire, a usne su joj bile natečene, zmije riđovke u glavi tuste, uznemirene" (11) ("contorted as if in a death agony; her lips were swollen, the vipers on her head clustered and writhed" [11]). First appearing in the initial paragraph, the ghastly head stands over the entrance to the novel as well as the entrance to Filip's childhood home. The statue of the face (the face which ought to make a statue of the onlooker) is simultaneously frozen into a death agony ("kao da umire") and alive, in motion—the hair, as might be expected, continues to writhe independently. This is the device of Filip's family, the shield hung above his door. And in another example of the novel's omnipresent ambiguity of identity, this dead face that sprouts live vipers, according to myth,[8] may be apprehended only by looking at it in a mirror.

In fact this is exactly what Filip Latinovicz does when he first faces the question of his ego. "Gdje nam je dokaz" ("Where is the proof"), he asks himself, having breakfast in a café on the morning of his return to the town of his birth, "da naše 'ja' traje, da smo 'mi' još uvijek trajno i neprekidno 'mi'" (46) ("that our ego lasts, that 'we' are always and uninterruptedly 'we'" [39]). Here the concept of *trajanje* is applied to the objectively present, visible self rather than the self prolonged through generations—although, as we have seen, it may be difficult to distinguish the two.

Filip runs through the possible safeguards of identity: the Christian name and surname are superficial distinctions (he ought to know, having changed his without any appreciable improvement in the clarity of his ego's identity), his face and gestures have completely changed over the course of his life, and even the body is suspect: "u njemu danas više nema ni jednog atoma od onog tjelesnog stanja prije jedanaest godina" (47) ("today there was no longer in him a single atom of his bodily constitution of those many years ago"[9] [40]).

8 This myth, incidentally—like many Greek myths—has for its hero one of Zeus' bastards, whose divine parentage is originally denied by society.

9 For some unknown reason, Zora Depolo either translates "jedanaest" as "twenty-three" or avoids it entirely; I'm not sure why. Possibly my Croatian copy is corrupt.

Filip turns to the mirror and describes himself physically, as a detached object; then he returns to metaphysics. "Čudno! Sjedi takav jedan nerođeni 'netko' u jednom ogledalu, naziva samoga sebe 'sobom' nosi to svoje sasvim mutno i nejasno 'ja' u sebi godinama" (48) ("Strange! Such an unborn 'somebody' sits in a mirror, calls himself 'himself,' carries his utterly vague and cloudy 'self' within him for years" [40]). On the surface, the passage is a parody of the fundamental dilemma and driving force behind idealist philosophy, "biti misleći subjekt i osjećati identitet svoga subjekta" ("to be the thinking subject and to be conscious of the identity of one's own subjective self" [41]), yet we can also find traces of the chain of generations. The man in the mirror, Filip's propagated image, is, oddly, "unborn."[10] And though Filip may be *conscious* of his identity, this brings him no closer to establishing what that identity is; it resides impenetrably far within him.

Eventually Filip concludes that the continuity of his ego does in fact exist: "pod njom negdje zamotan, tajnovito sakriven, kuca i bije taj njegov identitet i to nije fantom, nego meso" (49) ("wrapped away beneath, well concealed, there palpitated and beat that identity of his; and it was no phantom, but flesh" (41). The rationale of this epiphany is as concealed as the identity itself, and while it may make a distinction between the phantom and the flesh, it does not tell the reader how to make it. In any case, Filip changes his mind in the next paragraph. Thinking of how much he has changed over the past eleven years, Filip concludes, "danas on više nije onaj isti 'ja' to je istina!" ("today he was no longer the same 'I'—that was true!") He returns to a sense of continuity only through the metaphor of "jedan nevidljivi most" (50) ("an invisible bridge" [42]), which connects his past and his present. How far back does this bridge extend?—"On se jutros vratio u jednu svoju staru i nesavladanu sliku…kao da se probudio u svom vlastitom grobu" ("This morning he had returned to an old picture he had never mastered…as if he had awakened in his own grave").

The whole passage leaves us with a feeling of doubt and inconstancy; it certainly does not impart that definition of the ego that Filip obsessively searches for, and the fact that the search continues for the remaining two hundred pages of the novel shows that even Filip finds it ultimately unsatisfying. Having just returned to his birthplace, looking at his own image in the frame of the mirror, he sees himself as the picture he has worked on for a lifetime but cannot finish. While this scene

10 "Mirrors and copulation are abominable, for they multiply the number of mankind" (68) writes Borges. There is a sense in which a reflection is not so different from a child: the recognizable self that lies outside the borders of its own body.

is the natural counterpoint to Filip's other protracted meditation on identity (the section on the phantom in his body, growing in him like the hair on a dead man, which we have already examined), it rather vacillates than leads us to the kinds of conclusions that his phobias and his dead inhabitants do. Furthermore, it deposits us, having returned to the beginning of the bridge, in the same place as the stranger in his psyche did: he returns to the grave, where, presumably, his hair continues to grow with that same instinct for *trajanje* that conceived him. So, if we reconstruct the entire span of the bridge, it stretches from the "unborn" image in the mirror to the grave he returns to: the future and past of the family line, stressing the interpenetration of the cradle and the tomb just as our original argument did. For Filip to "return" to "his own grave," he must have died, or at least some self within him must have died; the temporal scheme of identity as a bridge through time only reiterates the model of paternity perpetuating itself through the generations that we began with.

* * *

It is no more possible for Filip to know himself than it is for him to know his father;

he is asking an impossible question whose only answer is that gap which can be felt but never named. The immortality theory of fatherhood itself turns upon the age-old problem of the thinking subject that Krleža invokes while Filip looks at himself in the mirror. Thinking about "yourself," the self you contemplate is not the same as the self that is contemplating. An image in the mirror obviously cannot be "you" since it is only a reflection. And how can a father continue in the child when the child is other than him? In one sense Filip's unknown father is a foil for this fundamental quandary; because Filip can no more have absolute knowledge of his father than he can of himself, he is able to displace the problem entirely onto the issue of determinant heredity—which, having a concrete if unnamed object, is theoretically solvable in a way that the problematic of the ego is not.

This same paradox is, in its modest way, embodied in the phenomenon of hair, nails, teeth, all the parts of the body which are separable from it. Is your hair a part of you, and if so are you removing a part of yourself when you cut it? And when it grows after death, can it still be said to be "your hair" when "you" may no longer exist? Occupying a marginal position on the frontier of our physicality, hair tests the limits of our conception of personal identity in a body.

Because of this very separableness, however, hair has long served as a synecdoche of the self. No enchantment is complete without a piece of hair, a drop

of blood, or a fingernail from its target; the part serves, in the symbolic framework of the spell, as the entire affected person. Anna Akhmatova, curious to know if the Soviet secret police were nosing about in her papers while she was out, would leave one of her own hairs among her manuscripts. If it was disturbed in her absence, she knew that the NKVD had paid her a visit—the single strand of hair served as a substitute for the rest of her, and informed on the doings of the secret police just as if she had been wholly there to observe the break-in. Think too of lockets and bracelets, the strands of hair given as tokens and which serve as reminders of the loved body even in that body's absence; although separated from their person of origin, they provide an immediate identification with that individual.[11]

We can understand, then, Filip's sense that his hair—so easily separated from himself—is not himself, that it is the hair of someone absent, and yet that it continues to signify that other person's identity. Paternity is, after all, mixed up with hair in even more grotesque ways in *The Return of Filip Latinovicz*—consider the bequest of the dermatologist Kyriales, who "je…godinama radio na znamenitim histološkim prerezima i jedan takav znameniti histološki prerez mišje dlake nosio je u znanosti ženski pridjev: kyrialica!" (190) ("had been working for years on important histological sections and one such important section of a mouse-hair had been named after him the Kyrialic!" [158]).

11 In fact, in the Renaissance, believing that on the Day of Judgment corpses—including all their discarded hair—would be made whole again, lovers and family members would exchange locks of hair in order to ensure their meeting after death. (I am indebted to Marie Rutkoski for this fact.) Thus Donne's (dead) lyric subject says of his exhumer:

> *And he that digs it [the grave], spies*
> *A bracelet of bright hair about the bone,*
> *Will he not let us alone,*
> *And thinke that there a loving couple lies,*
> *Who thought that this device might be some way*
> *To make their soules, at the last busie day,*
> *Meet at this grave, and make a little stay?* (70.6-11)

Note that Donne speaks of "a loving couple," although his partner is represented only by that bracelet of hair. Fingernails, for some reason, are less popular as love-tokens.

Kyriales' transference of his family name onto a section of mouse hair serves, in the end, the traditional function of a child: to keep the name and memory of the father alive. When the doctor is lying in his grave, Boba

> dala je vlastima podatke o identitetu doktora philosophiae et universae medicinae S. K. Kyrialesa, bivšeg izvanrednog profesora carigradske univerze, imena po kome je međunarodna nauka na njegovu vječnu uspomenu krstila mikroskopski prerez jedne dlake. (243)
>
> gave the authorities details as to the identity of S. K. Kyriales, Doctor of Philosophy and Medicine, former professor of the University of Istanbul, after whom and to whose eternal memory international science had named a microscopic section of a hair. (200)

This is the last we hear of Kyriales, but presumably the section of mouse-hair carries his identity into perpetuity; this seems, in the final reckoning, to be his best shot at immortality. The Croatian word *krstiti* underscores the parody of paternity here, meaning that the hair was, like a child, *christened* after him. The ironic stress on the significance of this cross-section of hair, in combination with the conceit that the name alone carries some sort of fundamental identity, allows us to read in this passage a lampooning of the local gentry, who treasure their (mostly recent) patents of nobility from an empire that no longer exists, and take great pride in compound names like "Countess Juliana Drašković-Erdödija" and "Countess Orcyval, née de la Fontaine-Orcyval et Doga-Ressza of the de la Fontaines of Žabokrek." (The word *žabokrek*, just in case you're trying to salvage some aristocratic dignity, refers to the croaking of a frog.)

Heredity, these aristocrats would admonish Dr. Kyriales, is a matter of blood and not decree. That stance is, however, undermined in the novel by the fluidity of its characters' names (Filip was born Sigismund; Boba's original name is Xenia) as well as by the fact that Krleža takes great pains to give us the exact dates on which their patents of nobility were issued. The Liepach family, for instance, had its blood blued only in 1818—a mere hundred years before the action of the novel.

The myth of ancient lineage, applied *ad absurdum*, inevitably leads beyond the social to the evolutionary horizon; as Andrei Bely introduces one of the characters of his novel *Petersburg*, "Apollon Apollonivich Ableukhov byl ves'ma pochtennogo roda: on imel svoim predkom Adama" (13) ("Apollon Apollonovich Ableukhov was of venerable stock: he had Adam as his ancestor" [3]). A sufficient-

ly detailed genealogy will always provide a common ancestor—in the sense both of a generally shared ancestor and a non-aristocratic one. So, in *The Return of Filip Latinovicz,* the myth of a decadent nobility finds a mirror image in the myth of atavism, a "divlji, prapočetni elemanat: kosmat kao gorila" (176) ("wild and primitive force…hairy as a gorilla" [147]), which constantly threatens to show itself beneath the genteel fashions of the characters. Filip's own mother's face is "zapravo majmunsko" (89) ("really a monkey's face" [75]), and in their quest to keep up with the trends of the times the local noblewoman are also revealed to be genetic throwbacks, "ljudske opice" (136) ("human she-apes" [113]). However much they strive to keep up with the latest Hollywood fashions, their ancient blood shows through the finery.

This unavoidable origin in common, even subhuman blood, is the root cause of Boba's seductiveness. "Gnjusne i mutne pojave obavijati čarolijom plave krvi, obmanjivati tom plavokrvnom magijom našu pučku gospodu bankire i parvenije, a istodobno ispražnjivati njihove masivne i okovane blagajne, to je bila Bobočkina tajna" (141) ("To clothe perverse and obscure phenomena with the magic of blue blood, to deceive upstart gentlemen, bankers, and parvenus, with that blue-blooded nonsense, and at the same time to empty their massive iron safes, was Bobočka's secret" [118]). Since, as we have seen, every noble family is in some sense, at some point in time, an upstart one—Dr. Liepach's own father was born a commoner—we can understand Boba's appeal for the parvenus.

Yet she has a strange way of going about it. Her blue-bloodedness is not in doubt; she belongs to the Radaj family and, listening to Filip's invocation of the dead being within him,

> u njoj su se otvarali njeni vlastiti prostori, njene vlastite daljine i njena čudna svitanja. Doista! Ona je gledajući portaite svojih baba i prababa po budimskim sobama često razmišljala o tome, kako je i ona samo jedan od tih mnogih Radajevskih portaita, da se miče (doduše) živa, ali da spada u one tamnosmeđe prostore sa žutim naslonjačima i tamo da joj je mjesto iznad komode, u zlatnom okviru! (171)

> it opened up within her her own perpectives, her own distances, and her own strange dawns. Indeed, when looking at the portraits of her grandmothers and great-grandmothers in the rooms at Buda, she had often considered the idea that she herself was merely one of the many Raday portraits; that she was, it was true, moving about, alive, but that she really belonged in one of those

> dark brown rooms with yellow armchairs, and that her place was there above the cupboard in a golden frame! (143)

Like Filip, she senses her heredity as her true identity; she traces herself back to her own obscure "strange dawn" through a line of mothers.[12] Filip sees himself as an "unfinished picture," while Boba sees herself in relation to a sequence of portraits, a more legitimate version of Liepach's family portraits, "kič osamdesetih godina, slikan s pogledom unutrag, da bi se liepachovska loza prikazala što starijom" (105) ("kitsch from the eighties, painted in an old-fashioned style to make the Liepach family look as ancient as possible" [88]). However, in the one instance when we are privileged to witness her seductiveness in action, her infusion of blue-bloodedness has nothing to do with this portrait gallery of venerable forebears. Rather, she tells Baločanski about monkeys, and that seems to do the trick. "Ima Bobočka pravo" ("Bobočka was right"), Baločanski muses on the verge of breaking with his bourgeois lifestyle, "Trebalo bi živjeti slobodno, kao što žive majmuni u tropskim šumama!?" ("One should live an uninhibited life, like monkeys in tropical jungles!" [128]).

In saying this, Boba is only quoting the doctor from Berlin who originally deflowered her (145/121), an irony given its capstone when Baločanski, convincing himself to give his life over completely to Boba, asks, "Što je volja? Majmunska imitacija nekih uobičajenih kretnji!" (155) ("What is will power? An ape-like [lit. monkey-like] imitation of the customary gestures!" [129]). As Boba's dictum and Baločanski's self-conversion occur on facing pages, the two versions of monkey-like behavior are clearly juxtaposed. In repeating her deflorist's argument that we should live like monkeys in tropical jungles, Boba is imitating him, monkey-like, while in Baločanski's analysis of willpower we see that the essence of the social graces is itself imitation and repetition, and that the ancestral monkey thus fuels the more august social conventions as well as the call to debauchery—think of Krleža's women of provincial society, all aping the fashions of movie stars..

Indeed, Bobočka's downfall is that she pushes this identification with an evolutionary forebear too far. Under her influence, Baločanski feels an ultimately primeval ancestor stir within him. Accompanying Boba to a den of sin, "ta sluzava, mjehurasta, nagnjila monstruozna zvijer u njemu osjetila je potrebu, da se

12 Interestingly, lineage in Krleža seems to be gender-specific; Filip himself sees women essentially as a vessel for the male homunculus.

rastegne kao ogromna, pretpotopna neman, da poživi, da zaboravi, da pregrize nečiji grkljan"(164) ("that slimy, flatulent, rotting, monstrous animal within him felt the need to stretch itself like an enormous antediluvian beast, to live, to forget, to bite into somebody's throat with its teeth" [137-38]).

This then is the original father, the primeval founder of the line: a saurian beast from the very earliest, antediluvian fringe of time. Acting through Baločanski's body just as Filip feels his unknown father to exert itself in his own flesh, it is this beast, awakened by Boba, who tears out her throat when, in the final scene, Baločanski murders her to prevent her from leaving him. If, as Filip maintains, everything "samo od sebe, po sebi se hoda i zakapa, i opet ponovo rađa" (68) ("walks and buries itself, and is reborn" [56])—an amazing cluster of reflexive verbs perhaps better rendered something like "only from itself, in itself, walks, buries, and once again gives birth to itself"—then there is no longer a distinction between the dead parent and the living child, and the subject and object of generations have been collapsed into the persistence of a single being; if an invisible bridge traces the identity of the self from the primal birth through a series of resurrections, if experience and phobia are inherited, then the ultimate patriarch, for aristocrat and commoner alike, must be exactly such a primeval lizard. This conclusion is the natural result of the inflated emphasis that these provincial gentry place upon the antiquity of their bloodlines.

It cannot be Baločanski alone who bites out Boba's throat because Baločanski *has no teeth*. (As in the case of our hereditary phobia, we are forced to step for a moment outside the frame of rationality and mimesis.) Toothlessness is his leitmotif; it often occurs in connection with the vampiric image of Baločanski as an animated corpse (if you can imagine a toothless vampire). Among the litany of Filip's phobias we find that he "se bojao…mrtvačkih zubala" (173) ("was afraid of…the teeth of corpses" [145]); we discover a surprising object for that fear when Krleža writes of Baločanski that "dva mu prednja zuba fale, te izgleda kao krezubi mrtvac" (170) ("two of his front teeth were missing, so that he looked like a toothless corpse" [142]). And when Baločanski leaves Filip's room to murder Boba, Filip thinks to himself, "Ne, Baločanski nije opasan! On je gnjila, kukavna mizerija! Suludi smrdljivac krezubi!" (259) ("No, Baločanski was not dangerous! He was a degenerate, cowardly wretch, insane, evil-smelling, toothless!" [212]).

Can an ur-father persist in teeth as well as hair? All the images of male sexual vitality in the novel—in every instance minor characters gathered around Boba—stress both. In the first flush of adolescence Boba fights off boys

"kovrčave kose i zdravih zubi" (144) ("who had curly hair and healthy teeth" [120]); Baločanski is jealous of her relations with men "s gustom, čekinjavom, briljantinom zalizanom kosom, s jakim zubom" (156) ("with their thick, coarse hair smoothed back with brilliantine, their strong teeth" [131]). Most ominously, the highly sexualized gravedigger who exhumes Kyriales' body so that Boba can identify it has "kovrčave kose" ("curly hair"), and, drinking soup from their shared cup, "čulo se kako caklina njegovih zuba tucka o emajl" (242) ("[she could hear how] his teeth clinked on the enamel" [199]). If hair is the emblem of a persistent paternity, it seems that teeth are coupled with it and share its basic characteristics; in this last, ghoulish example, the living hair and teeth preside over a corpse. Yet when hair provides an image of *trajanje* in the lengthening of its strands, it is at least continuous, and at least mammalian, while teeth can only be incorporated into the scheme of a dead father's return as a violent rupture, a disorienting leap back to the beginning of time—the way our "adult" teeth painfully push out our "baby teeth" in real life.

Judging by Boba's bitten-out throat, Baločanski certainly finds himself some teeth somewhere. The paradox is explained—if in a slightly irrational manner—by Kyriales' drunken, prophetic vision "o tome, što misle mrtvaci po grobovima o vraćanju na ovaj svijet" (233) ("of what the dead in their graves think about returning to this world" [184]). In this return there is already an echo of the return of Filip's father (which is, given the confusion of their identities, *The Return of Filip Latinovicz* itself). There in the grave, "sve je samo jedan truli zub, koga više nema, i savršeno hladan, mramoran, tuđi jezik. A tu je zub bio na tom mjestu…tu je jedno nezakonito dijete proplakalo svoje djetinsjstvo od stida" (224) ("There is nothing and all that remains is a decayed tooth no longer there, and a cold, marble, alien tongue. But there was a tooth there once…there an illegitimate child spent his childhood crying in shame" [184]).

In this passage the paradoxes we have been dealing with are made concrete through the image of a tooth that simultaneously is and is no longer there, the loss which is also a presence. I take this as a reference to Baločanski's toothless mouth that somehow manages to rip through a throat, just as I take this unnamed bastard's miserable childhood, spent in the shadow of an unknown father, to be a reference to Filip. The topos of the phantom tooth is also that of the illegitimate child's shame; sharing a single site, they can be read as two incarnations of a single phenomenon. The absent presence of the father is paralleled by the absent presence of this atavistic tooth, which returns from its tar-pit grave on the novel's last page in

an exact quote of the passage where it originally stirred and flexed within Baločanski's will—only with the victim's name plugged in. "Ležala je Bobočka, sva u krvi: Baločanski pregrizao joj je grkljan" (271) ("Bobočka lay in her own blood: Baločanski had bitten through her throat" [222]).

Like Filip Latinovicz, then, we have returned to our beginning, the slaughtered hippo in this paper's first paragraph: the dead beast has exacted a revenge through the instrument of its descendant's body. The quick and the dead are not, in *The Return of Filip Latinovicz,* easily marked off the one from the other. An invisible bridge maintains a nebulous identity from the original cradle to the future grave. According to Kyriales, at the moment of death "pupovnica se rastrgala" (226) ("the umbilical cord is broken")—which is another way of speaking of a birth. The constant recurrence of Filip's ancestors in his own flesh, their extension in his hair and nails, is ultimately echoed by the sudden return of that vicious, animal forebear to the mouth of Baločanski. Filip's fear of the carnivorous teeth of corpses, like his fear of hats, can be explained only by marching back to the beginning of the bridge, to the original unknown father, whose teeth, like his hair, sprout inside the instruments of our living bodies.

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