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Amour: Preserving the Alter Ego

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Abstract

One witnesses the sudden dissolving of the diegetic musical piece into an utter silence in *Amour*. One finds no departure, but to admit the abrupt and yet ever likely and expected transition of life to death. The concert is over. One is to take a bus ride home gracefully. All is done. Anne has been a superbly competent master whose pupil has managed to surpass her skills. The very own daughter is raised to become a musician herself. The apartment is in the most orderly manner one can imagine. The partner has become his most elegant being. It sounds about the right time for death to impose itself in the manner of catechism to the elite couples' routine and orderly life. It strikes Anne as a philosophical dilemma, whereas for Georges, death bell tolls to remind him of his most monumental responsibility. In *Amour*, Georges portrays the ultimate responsibility towards the friend through responding to the other's elegance, illness, deterioration, and death; he shoulders the aforementioned through sincerity and the welcoming of wounding. The paper intends to undertake a *philia*-thematic study on Michael Haneke's *Amour* (2012) through the ideas of Luce Irigaray's transcendence of the other, Aristotle and Derrida's friendship, and Levinas's responsibility towards the other.

Keywords: Amour, Michael Haneke, Friend, Other, Responsibility

Introduction

The elderly couple Anne and Georges Laurent, both musicians, live in their modest and yet elegant apartment in Paris. Their living space, not only represents their sensibility and intellectualism, but their morality between the two and towards the others, specifically those of a lower social class –the building's concierge-, and the less privileged. The audience is left with no doubt in the strong ethical stance and practice of the couple. It is no longer the matter of expectations from life and its materiality with the Laurents, nor is it the intellectual accomplishments, it is the riddle of approaching the other -the most intimate other- that imposes itself on the two. The ellipsis of the breakfast scene, where every aspect of life sounds in an utter peaceful status into the bedside scene -after the stroke- delineates Anne's abrupt decay, hence the portrayal of the theme of unanticipated deterioration of human life.

Irigaray's imperatives of the ethical approaches towards the other find a deeper and more complicated application when the catastrophe occurs, and so does Derrida's notion of friendship, and its most undeniable embodiment between Anne and Georges. The element of time and its relative nature paralleled with the theme of alterity poses the ever-fluid concept of futurity onto the elderly couple's life. Levinas tends to the idea of the

inevitable passage of time and the consequences it brings to our friendships. His concepts of sincerity and vulnerability towards the other map out the possibilities Georges and Anne have to opt for.

Levinas's alterity brings forth the inevitability of death, triggers the question of an ending and its parameters, and quality in the audience's consciousness. We have no departure, but to fear the severity and the nature of the resolution that is to be brought on the two. Derrida discusses friendship and the inevitable death of the friend in his *The Work of Mourning*, the moment is thus imposed on us in Amour. Heidegger defines an unalterable concept of anxiety that human being is to face until the moment of death, the anxiety one is to bear and take actions in response to. The intention of this paper is to conceptualize the above-mentioned theories, hence the portrayal of Georges's undeniable loyalty and responsibility towards the other, her vitality, personhood, decay, and death.

“Pourquoi tu n's pas reagi?”

(Ménégoz, Arndt, Heiduschka, Katz, 2012, 0:12:30)

Why didn't you react?

“When one is with one's friends one is, in a way, perceiving oneself.” (Barnes, 1995, p. 232)

Although the apostrophe pertains to a causal dialogue as a result of Anne's losing touch with reality, Georges's expectation to be recognized and responded to resembles a dire need. The necessity of Anne's recognition of Georges in the moment of the stroke, which constitutes not merely a physical decay and insufficiency, but also an absence from the constitution of partnership in the couple's life, strikes the audience as both the starting point and the resolution of the friendship. Georges begins as a character, incapable of recognizing Anne's transcendence. He is unable to admit Anne's transcendence within the constitution of friendship –relationship-, which is the gist of Irigaray's concept of the transcendence of the other: the irreducible transcendence of you.. (Irigaray, 2004, p. 24). Georges defines himself in the proximity of the other and only one specific other –Anne.

To perceive oneself in relation to the other requires a constant cluster of responses from the other. It no doubt, gives rise to a series of catastrophes and unprecedented shortcomings; shortcomings whose backlashes shatter the definition of the self. Being the loyal spouse, Georges's existence depends on his dimensions and those received from the other-Anne. He has taken the habit of making his own the tokens of the relationship with Anne. Irigaray poses:

“We have been educated to make our own all that was pleasing to us, all that we admitted into our proximity, into our intimacy, all that surrounded us. On the level of consciousness, on the level of feelings, we make our own what we approach, what approaches us.” (Irigaray, 2004, p. 9)

The more conscious of a choice the individual makes about their surroundings –the beings- one bathes their existence in, the more burdensome the reaction of the beings' turns out to be. Georges's conscious making Anne his own has clearly taken place in a lifetime of marriage. And thus, it is crystal clear that a moment of absence of Anne's approaching Georges has in its heart a threatening consequence, i.e. Georges's shattered existence.

Not only is this approach towards the other unethical, but it reduces the autonomy of the self. The unethical sense of the manner -as Irigaray defines- limits the other:

“But we reduce the other to ourselves. We incorporate the other in turn: through our knowledge, our affection, our customs. At the limit, we no longer see the other, we no longer hear the other, we no longer perceive the other. The other is part of us. Unless we reject the other.” (Irigaray, 2004, p. 24)

Obviously, Georges is in no condition, nor is he in the mental poise to reject Anne, hence the reduction of her into himself, which takes place rather unquestionably. Thus, when Anne worries about the trivial task of calling the caretaker and the possibility of the need to call the police, Geroges amiably and decidedly tells her: Don't let

this put a damper on your good mood (Ménégoz et al., 2012, 0:5:30), which obviously reflects on that of Georges.

Nonetheless, Georges is an ethical being, recognizing his responsibilities towards Anne. He refuses to receive any help from their daughter –Eva- on the grounds of not being a burden to her. He never complains, not even in Anne’s absence about the misfortune of Anne’s surgery being among the five percent that goes wrong. Georges is a realist, thinking and acting based on the present reality, settling Anne his top priority. The relationship has always been that of a romantic nature, and all the caring Georges displays throughout the movie is that of a genuine-habitual manner in the constitution of their marriage. Eva says: I remembered how I always used to listen to the two of you making love as a child. This always reassured me. It gave me a feeling that you loved each other and we’d always be together (Ménégoz et al., 2012, 0:19:54).

Georges’s manners in taking care of Anne and tending to her are so delicate, Anne has got to object: “you don’t have to hold my hand all the time. And don’t feel guilty. That would be pointless.”, to which Georges immediately replies: “I don’t feel guilty.” It is an arduous task for Anne to see it upon herself that all the cordial caring she is at the receiving end is out of love and responsibility that it entails, what negates Irigaray’s commentary: Intimacy, familiarity, and proximity do not exist only through living alongside one another and sharing the same space. On the contrary, that often leads to their destruction (Irigaray, 2004, pp. 132-3). There is no guilt and pity involved as far as Georges is concerned. There exists merely love and respect, to create the perfect equilibrium: For love can be regarded as attraction and respect as repulsion, and if the principle of love bids friends to draw closer, the principle of respect requires them to stay at a proper distance from each other (Kant, 1991, p. 261). And that is precisely why, Anne recognizes the right to herself, putting her existence at a distance, to request never to be taken back to the hospital. She sees it on Georges -the friend- to situate himself at a proper distance to grant her the wish, although the element of love may draw stronger than the element of respect.

The couple’s sanctuary in their apartment is so solidly set that they never feel the need to leave. After the first stroke, when Anne returns home from the hospital, she asks to be taken to the living room, where she instructs Georges step by step to lift her from the wheelchair and help her into the armchair. Two armchairs are set in front of each other, signifying the only spots in the life of the two that matter, contrasting the large sofa that remains unused and insignificant –except for one occasion-.

Georges continues to seek his own image into the reflection of Anne’s. He is dependent on being defined by the other, as Derrida puts forward: What does the friend’s nostalgia reveal? That we wish to believe in the other, because we want, in vain, to believe in ourselves. (Derrida, 1997, p. 281). The urgency reaches its highest point when Georges recounts a childhood memory of having been touched by a movie and crying over the romantic plot. Anne wonders why she has never heard of this tale, to which Georges replies the tale to be only one amongst the many. The implication is Georges’s constant attempts in filtering the mortifying tales. However, under the present conditions, he feels more secure sharing those so-called embarrassing memories. Further on, when Anne speaks of the mental image she has accumulated of Georges over the years, he gets slightly disappointed.

Anne: Don’t tell me you’re going to ruin your image in your old age?

Georges: But what is my image?

Anne: Sometimes you’re a monster. But you’re nice (Ménégoz et al., 2012 0:33:19).

The ramifications of conceiving himself to be a “nice monster” manifest themselves in large measures. And yet, there is a small room left in Georges’s interpretation of Anne’s description; that Anne is prone to be deflecting her own image, -how she sees herself- describing Georges’s.

Friendship

The Call of Vulnerability

Being musicians, sharing similar intellectual interests, Anne and Georges's friendship is that of having substantially in common, "virtue" and "respect", as Aristotle puts forward: ..but the best friendship of the best men is the friendship of mutual respect and virtue. It is the best kind of friendship and therefore the primary example of friendship (Barnes, 1995, p. 229). This mutual respect and virtue is precisely the reason for which Georges feels annoyed when Anne reads her horoscope to him. Georges finds it difficult to respect Anne while hearing her trivial train of thoughts and says: You've got only yourself to blame if you read this nonsense (Ménégoz et al., 2012, 0:35:02). For Anne to take herself to be the pre-stroke Anne, the elegant musician, is simply a lost notion, yet Georges strives to revive the image all the more, as we wish to see ourselves in the other.

Further on, Anne wants to know every bit of detail about Pierre's funeral. She wants to picture her own through another's. Georges resists giving in to this morbid fantasy of hers, and yet he is aware enough that she has the right to what she asks.

Anne: How was the funeral?

Georges: It was bizarre. The priest was an idiot (Ménégoz et al., 2012, 0:39:47).

So, he continues giving a full account of what happened at the funeral, in spite of his own taste. It is difficult not to notice that Georges is getting closer to Irigaray's transcendence of the other, as a result of which Anne asks to her death.

Anne: There's no point in going on living. That's how it is. I know it only gets worse. Why should I inflict this on us, on you and me?

Georges: You're not inflicting anything on me.

Anne: I don't want to carry on. You're making such sweet efforts to make everything easier for me. But I don't want to go on. For my own sake, not yours.

Georges: I don't believe you. I know you (Ménégoz et al., 2012, 0:40:55).

Whether either of the two, or both for that matter, are trying to save themselves or the other, the principle at play is the principle of justice.

Anne does her best to set Georges free, making that wish her own. Derrida paraphrases Kant: "One must help the friend –not to help him, not because he needs assistance, or because that would be the principle or the end of friendship, but in order to give him the signs of friendship (Derrida, 1995, p. 256). And consequently, Georges presupposes a duty on himself to be just towards the friend. He has the responsibility of considering the friend an autonomous being, whose wishes are to be granted. Aristotle puts forward justice in friendship: When men are friends they have no need of justice, while when they are just, they need friendship as well, and the truest form of justice is thought to be a friendly quality (Aristotle, 2000, p. 1155a25). Georges's dilemma consists of saving the friend through the principle of justice and saving her from Kant's imperative of helping the friend not to help you.

When Georges implies that Anne is not inflicting anything on him, Anne accuses him of lying, and Georges is in no manner concerned about defending himself, rather he wants Anne to put herself in his situation: Put yourself in my place. Didn't you ever think that it could happen to me too? (Ménégoz et al., 2012, 0:41:25). And by saying so, he suggests the unity of them two. Levinas paraphrases Rimbaud:

"Is it certain that Rimbaud's "I is another" means only alteration, alienation, betrayal of self, strangeness of self, and servitude to that stranger? Is it certain that the most humble experience of the one who puts himself in the other's place, that is, accuses himself of the other's illness or pain, is not already animated by the most eminent sense in which "I is another"?" (Levinas, 2003, p. 62)

For Georges, Anne is rhetorically another, whose wishes are to be met, as the principle of distance and justice suggests, however, he is the most just friend, and the most vulnerable, whose image is saved in that of Anne's

wholesome existence. He is not on the pursuit of saving Anne, no matter the price, rather he wishes he could do so with the other's transcendence being savored. Stoehr states:

"Georges's deep love for his wife has made it unbearable for him to continue seeing her fade painfully into a mere semblance of her former self. It is far from being a selfish or even nihilistic decision, especially given all that we have witnessed of his selfless dedication up to this point." (Stoehr, 2016)

And that is why he puts forward his vulnerability in the eyes of the other, wanting the other to experience it, through their own "I is another".

It goes without saying that to display one's vulnerability takes courage on the part of the self and trust in the other. Georges poses his vulnerability at the very moment that Anne requires to be heard and her wish to be granted. Let us keep in mind that Georges is an utterly ethical character in *Amour*, considerate of Anne's every need. To imagine Georges's courage to dare to put forward his vulnerability while it is the other that is at a vulnerable state, one needs to keep in mind his ethical stance:

"Who could ever answer for a discourse on friendship without taking a stance? The urgency of the question is in no way lessened by the fact that this discourse on friendship, this *de amicitia*, claims to be theoretical or philosophical." (Derrida, 1997, p. 228)

Noting Derrida's notion of taking a stance and its necessity, as well as Rimbaud's "I is another" seem more than crucial in understanding Georges's intention and the source of his decision to display his vulnerability.

Levinas scrutinizes vulnerability:

"Vulnerability is more or less than passively receiving form or shock. It is the aptitude –that any being in its "natural pride" would be ashamed to admit- for "being beaten" for "getting slapped"... in vulnerability lies a relationship to the other that is not exhausted by causality, a relation prior to all affection by the stimulus. The identity of the self does not set limits to submission, not even the last resistance that matter "in potential" opposes to the form that invests it. Vulnerability is obsession by others. It is for others, from behind the other of the stimulus." (Levinas, 2003, pp. 63-64)

Georges could potentially be in Anne's situation, and that is what he is inviting Anne to witness, the impossibility of surpassing his vulnerability and granting Anne her request. The ego from top to toe and to the very marrow is vulnerability. (Levinas, 2003, p. 63). To act upon Anne's wish is to admit his own death, he does not have the strength to bring his ego to accord with it.

In a few stages ahead, handling Georges's vulnerability does seem to be a task Anne has accepted to shoulder. Alexandre –Anne's former pupil- paying them a visit, is taken aback and does not bear to see her in that condition, specifically when he recounts a memory of his first session with Anne, which she fails to remember. He has got to ask what has happened to Anne.

Alexandre: What has happened to you?

Anne: My right side is paralyzed. That's all. This can happen when you get older (Ménégoz et al., 2012, 0:47:02).

During the cold and detached recount of the catastrophe that has befallen her, Anne gratifies Georges -with the strength of utter objectivity- he is in dire need of. In the close-up of their faces, Georges drops his head down, at the hearing of the shockingly possible ending awaiting anyone and everyone.

Responsibility

Death

"I didn't want to make a social drama, but an existential drama that deals with the question: 'How do I cope with the suffering of a loved one?'" (Calhoun, 2012).

The coping Haneke speaks of, is of course spoken to through the responsibility one shoulders towards their loved one(s). What Bosch asserts to be a "threat" is precisely what Haneke paraphrases as "suffering". Haneke's

vision of threat is correct. If we live long, we will not escape aging's threat to our bodies and perhaps to our minds. (Bosch, 2013, p. 518). However, what is neglected in Bosch's assertion is that the threat is not to the self, yet to the vulnerable other.

A vast cohort of romance in the literature available to us neglects the inevitability of the death in the best of friendships and relationships. Anne and George are far from mundane and primitive responsibilities of a romantic relationship –friendship-. They have the inevitable before their eyes and their very existence.

Responsibility grows in time. Levinas elaborates: .. Time is not the achievement of an isolated and lone subject, but that it is the very relationship of the subject with the other (Levinas, 2003, p. 39). It would be rather naïve to define the other, the ethical approach towards the other, friendship, responsibility, and yet neglect that all is subject to time and alterity. Not only does every parameter of the aforementioned concepts have to be defined and re-evaluated through time, but the alterity of the self and alter ego –friend- is at its very core.

Any long-lasting relationship with the other brings upon its participants the unavoidable death and the subject's responsibility to respond to that. Levinas elaborates: What is important about the approach of death is that at a certain moment we are no longer able to be able [nous ne pouvons plus pouvoir]. It is exactly thus that the subject loses its mastery as a subject. (Levinas, 2003, p. 74). And this losing subjectivity in a relationship is the grandest of all responsibilities it brings forward for the other of the other. Heidegger's views on death are of a complete isolated nature. The anxiety he ascribes to death, in his opinion, is of a solitude nature, as if negating himself that Existence means ecstatic involvement in the world, not simply self-consciousness raised to its limits. (Cohen, 2003, xix.)

In his *Being and Time*, Heidegger approaches death as an inevitable stage of Dasein, yet he neglects the fact that death of the subject is merely an experience in solitude.

"We may now summarize our characterization of authentic-being-towards-death as we have projected it existentially: anticipation reveals to Dasein its lostness in the they-self. And brings face-to-face with the possibility of being itself, primarily unsupported by concerned solicitude, but of being itself, rather, in an impassioned freedom which has been released from the illusions of the 'they' and which is factual, certain of itself, and anxious." (Heidegger, 1962, pp. 310-311).

Although "being-towards-death" is the characteristic of an authentic being and Anne has no lacking in this regard, Georges's stance and responsibility are not thought through. Levinas further explains the concept: The relationship with the other is indeed posed by Heidegger as an ontological structure of Dasein, but practically it plays no role in the drama of being or in the existential analytic (Levinas, 2003, p. 40). The neglecting of the unavoidable interweaving of "being-towards-death", authenticity and the relationship with the other –as an ontological part of Dasein- brings us back to Haneke's questions: 'How do I cope with the suffering of a loved one?' and inescapably, how do I respond to her suffering and death? For How can a being enter into relation with the other without allowing its very self to be crushed by the other? (Levinas, 2003, p. 77).

I have mentioned Levinas's stance towards the death of the other which is an essential parameter of futurity and alterity in the relationship with the other. While Bosch believes that Georges's resolution to take care of Anne at home is an act of vulgarity: In later scenes of the film, Anne is often crying out in pain. Why Georges does not seek out hospice care to help Anne with pain management at this point is the huge unanswered question in the film (Bosch, 2013, p. 518). It is the bare manifestation of responding to the alterity of the other –in this case, Anne's deterioration- and keeping an unwanted promise to Anne, that is, never returning her to the hospital.

My intention is in no way to attire Georges with the cloak of an angel or a flawless human being. No doubt, the time comes when he falls short on taking care of Anne after the second stroke. He is having a quiet meal in the kitchen when he hears Anne's scream from the bedroom. Instantly he gets to the bedroom, and he loses it, partly because Anne has tried doing something without seeking his help –thus declaring a sort of freedom from him- and partly due to the fact that she might have hurt herself falling off the bed. He complains, dismissing Anne's sincere apologies.

Georges: what are you doing? Have you completely lost your mind? I can't believe it. See what you have done. Can't you call me if you need something? The lamp is broken too! (Ménégoz et al., 2012, 0:51:53).

Consequently, what befalls Georges is a nightmare; answering the door to an unknown and vanished caller, walking endlessly in search of the intruder, calling out, and hearing nothing in response. Meanwhile, in the background we hear Anne's voice, calling out, inquiring, wanting to know what has happened, which Georges completely ignores. Anne is asking for a togetherness, Georges denies. "Being-with is a meeting of incomplete beings, of deficient selves.. (Bauman, 1995, p. 50). Georges denies Anne that togetherness, facing the unknown together. It has got to be him unmasking the unknown, encountering and resolving it, for Anne -in his consciousness- is the one in need of help. Bauman further clarifies: The intermittence of revelation and secrecy is, as a matter of fact, the major building technique of being-with type of encounter (Bauman, 1995, p. 51).

Eventually, he steps into water ankle-deep, and Anne's hand suffocates him from behind. He wakes in terror, and ironically, it is the same hand that consoles him. The revelation is complete. Anne is taking away parts of Georges, of which Georges has no vivid understanding until it is revealed to him in his dream. The task of sharing the revelation with Anne –a prerequisite of being-with- has proven among the most difficult for Georges now. If he admits that there used to be a life that has been taken away from him due to the misfortune befalling the other, he has to put an end to the misfortune. Long ago Georges has dismissed the idea of Anne inflicting any pain on him; he has got to remain truthful to his statement. To protect the other from helping him, Georges has no choice but to deny his own alterity and merely recognize that of Anne's. And it is not merely the ethical responsibility he has towards Anne, granting her the request –letting her go-, it is certainly the admittance of letting himself go along with the freeing of her.

George is to respond to Anne's death, and that is to be accomplished far from the passive sense of the concept. It is on him to decide for the most intimate other's death; its time, manner, quality, and necessity. Anne is far from "being-towards-death-anxiety" (Heidegger, 1962, pp. 310-311). at this stage –considering her almost always painful existence-, rather it is being-towards-life-torture-anxiety. Anne is being tortured with her painful presence, both for herself and for Georges. The previous "mastery/logos" of the balanced and orderly life has given in to the new "exhaustion/silence" (Hassan, 1987, p. 92). Although we witness Georges's imagining Anne's grace and togetherness in the scene that she plays the piano, it is cruelly revealed in an instant when he turns around and switches the stereo off. Both are exhausted at this stage. The friend's nostalgia does not remain with them long enough. Nothing accompanies them, except for the silence that is merely disrupted by Anne's frequent moaning of "Mal". Georges very well knows that time has come to make the unspoken decision; to bring forth and respond to the other's death.

He presupposes on himself now, to be for-Anne rather than to be with-her. Being-for, as Bauman defines:

"Being-for is a leap from isolation to unity; yet not towards a fusion, that mystics' dream of shedding the burden of identity... being-for is entered for the sake of safeguarding and defending the uniqueness of the Other; and that guardianship undertaken by the self as its task and responsibility makes the self truly unique, in the sense of being irreplaceable." (Bauman, 1995, p. 52)

carries with itself a sense of honesty, courage, and uniqueness. The scene where they are having lunch together, and Anne –rather impulsively- asks Georges to bring her the photo album, obviously disturbing him is a clear juxtaposition of her being a burden, having decided to die and giving the responsibility to Georges. The clarity with which she willingly disturbs Georges to leave a few minutes of peace that he has –having lunch- and fetching the photo album –an ordeal that can clearly wait- delivers merely one message: that it is only going to get worse, and it is Georges to be irritated and disconcerted innumerable times more if he does not comply with Anne's wish to go and fetch the photo album.

Undeniably, Georges has got to experience for himself the impossibility and yet inevitability of the task on his shoulders. Eventually, he opts for not solely being-with Anne, rather "being-for" her. Bauman asserts: Being-for

is the act of transcendence of being-with (Bauman, 1995, p. 52). As a result of this choice, he resolves to do the inconceivable.

The anxiety Heidegger defines as the result of being-towards-death then turns into Georges's anxiety rather than Anne's. Anne has made her decision long ago, that to go on would be pointless. The death does not threaten Anne, yet it is to take away all that Georges has left and is left of him. The experience of death as the inevitable is no longer in a deity's hands to be put forward, yet in his own very hands. Critchley in his critique of Heidegger's death explains:

"Despite its baroque linguistic grab, Heidegger's analysis of being-towards-death is exceptionally direct and powerful. However, it is open to the following objection. Heidegger argues that the only authentic death is one's own. To die for another person, he writes, would simply be to 'sacrifice oneself'. To that extent, for Heidegger, the deaths of others are secondary to my death, which is primary. In my view (and this criticism is first advanced by Edith Stein and Emmanuel Levinas), such a conception of death comes into our world through the deaths of others, whether as close as a parent, partner or child, or as far as the unknown victim of a distant famine or war. The relation to death is not first and foremost my own fear for my own demise, but my sense of being undone by the experience of grief and mourning." (Critchley, 2009)

Thus, Georges not only sees the death of the other, but he is the one to be it. By being the death of the other, Georges metamorphoses into the death of himself, hence his remainder being the shady memory of the two leaving the apartment for the very last time.

Georges has got to identify with Anne, to see himself one last time in the other, in the friend. Anne begins moaning "Mal". He sits beside her in bed, caressing her hand endlessly, shares a rather traumatic experience of his childhood, which was meant to make him stronger, yet resulted in his alienation and abandonment. Having put his trust in his mother, he had always kept the hope of leaving the abominable place where he was supposed to grow strong. He recounts a traumatic experience to Anne at the old castle, while she still moans ceaselessly.

"I was to write to her every week. I was to send her a postcard. If I like the stay, I was to draw flowers, if not, stars. She kept the card. It was covered all over in stars... I was taken to the nearest hospital and sent to quarantine. Which meant that mum, when she came to visit me, could only wave at me through a window. At some point, I lost the postcard. It's a pity." (Ménégoz et al., 2012, 1:42:49)

By the end of the childhood tale, Anne has calmed down. Georges lets her know that he felt how she is feeling now, trapped, and only to be waved at from behind the window. Once, she is calm and at peace, the death occurs, bringing with it the annihilation of the Other.

Conclusion

"I do not define the other by the future, but the future by the other, for the very future of death consists in its total alterity.. in the very heart of the relationship with the other that characterizes our social life, alterity appears as a nonreciprocal relationship-that is, as contrasting strongly with contemporaneity. The Other as Other is not only an alter ego: the Other is what I myself am not... because of the Other's very alterity." (Levinas, 2003, p. 83)

No matter how strongly Georges sees his vitality dependent on that of Anne's, it is Anne's alterity reaching out to him and asking for his responsibility in return. He goes out of his way not only to bring hope back to Anne's life, but more heroically, he dismisses his own ethical belief for the sake of a slight chance of reviving Anne. Georges is very well aware that Anne refuses to go on, and consequently, he isolates her from the world, and from her very own daughter. None of the ordeal is undergone in Georges's framework of the right and just, but in that of Anne's. In one attempt to force-feed Anne, he slaps her, which then clearly weighs heavily on his conscience.

In one of the final scenes, when Eva returns to visit her mother, Georges locks Anne's bedroom door to save her from the unwanted visit. Eva naturally insists, to which Georges responds: She is turning more and more into a helpless child. It's sad and humiliating for her and for me. And she doesn't want to be seen in that state. Even the last time she didn't want you to come (Ménégoz et al., 2012, 1:31:08). Eventually, when Eva forces her way into Anne's room, Anne starts moaning "Mal", sending Eva out of her sanctuary.

To take a clear stance towards the other's death is one thing as Levinas puts it:

"To have a friend, to look at him, to follow him with our eyes, to admire him in friendship, is to know in a more intense way, already injured, always insistent, and more and more unforgettable, the one of the two of you will inevitably see the other die." (Derrida, 2001, p. 107)

Yet to bring forward the death is another. To make the existential decision for another being –considering their alterity-, to refuse to give in to the delirious talks they deliver, while validating them to some extent, and to separate one's morals from those of the other are the arduous afflictions Georges accepts to respond to ultimately; to bring an end to the friend's existence and to the self, for one can only wave at the other through a window.

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