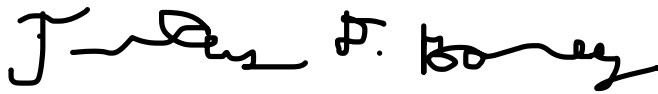The Trauma Theory of Love

Spring 2022 PHIL Honors Thesis

X _____

Danny Bean

Student

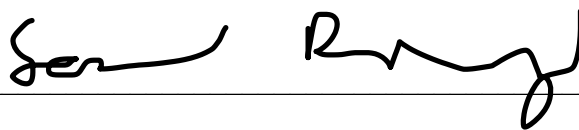X _____

Dr. Julius Dion Bailey, Departmental Chair

Professor of Philosophy

X _____

Dr. Heather Hadar Wright, Political Theory Concentration Allows Substitution for 2nd

Departmental Chair

Associate Professor of Political Science

X _____

Dr. Scott Rosenberg, Outside Chair

Professor of African History

Abstract

Although there is an entire field of theory devoted to trauma and numerous philosophical accounts discussing love, there has been little research on the connection between the two. To begin rectifying this glaring omission, I analyzed the seminal work for trauma theory, Cathy Caruth's *Unclaimed Experience*, and numerous accounts of philosophies of love (amongst other topics). Using a synthetic approach, I then extrapolated certain elements to propose my own theory of love, the trauma theory of love. Under this framework, love can only be born out of a twofold traumatization experience. The first trauma fragments the self and allows for the reconstruction of the true self. To recover the subject from a suspended state of emotional vulnerability, the second trauma is issued in the form of rejection. This latter step aids in communalization, ensures love is not displaced from its focus object, and prevents disillusionment concerning the acquired object.

There is a fundamental gap in the philosophical canon. One can find theories of love dating as far back as the seminal works of Plato and Aristotle, and, as Cathy Caruth describes it, there is "a field known as 'trauma studies'" in terms of trauma (116). However, after performing an analysis of fundamental works on both topics, I found very little commentary on the connection between the two. This likely stems from a human want to disassociate the generally positively conceptualized love from the indelible stain of trauma, which carries a primarily negative connotation. However, the two are inescapably linked. My research has led me to develop the trauma theory of love: *True love can only be born out of a twofold traumatization process. The first trauma must shatter every version of the self, allowing for a reconstruction of the true self. The second trauma must come in the form of rejection, maintaining an extended isolation between the lover and the loved.*

One of the primary difficulties in conducting this research is the relative ambiguity of the associated terms. There is no firm definition of love, and it is instead considered to be a phenomenon that can only truly be known when perceived. However, as any philosophical debate concerning what is and isn't love will reveal, there is a large discrepancy in this determination based on subjective biases and resultant understandings of reality. The general lack of definitions is a common trait within the many conjectures concerning love, as an initial analysis of the many excerpts in Alan Soble's *Eros, Agape, and Philia: Readings in the Philosophy of Love* proves. For example, Aristotle's conceptualization of philia is measured simply through the act of living together (62), D.W. Hamlyn can construct no better definition than love being the pure positive of the "feelings toward" (229), and Geoffrey Gorer, like most others, simply neglects to provide a definition.

W. Newton-Smith offers the most cogent definition of love in his article, where he defines love in terms of "love-comprising relations" (204). As Newton-Smith understands them, the LCRs are a sequential path one must follow to achieve love (see Appendix A). They are "the material of which love consists" (204). Thus, they can only be applied retroactively as a standard of measurement of a current relationship. To be in a love-compromising relation is to be an active participant in one of the necessary components of love. This is not necessarily a flaw, as it accomplishes the primary goal of distinguishing relationships in which love is involved and those in which love is not. However, the usefulness of Newton-Smith's formulation quickly dissipates when he argues "some LCRs may be satisfied to only a low degree or not satisfied at all" (204). Without specification of which LCRs this rule applies to, which is further exasperated by Newton-Smith's supposition that this is subjectively based upon "the variability in possible conceptions of love," a firm, logical definition of love cannot arise (217).

The only certainty to be drawn from Newton-Smith's theorizing is that love does not exist in a relationship "[that denies] that any of the LCRs [are] satisfied," and that if multiple LCRs are fulfilled, they must follow the prescribed order (204). To point out the fatal flaw in this lack of specificity, one could hold that only the first condition, "A knows B (or at least knows something of B)" need be fulfilled to classify a relationship as love (204). Unless one is operating from the Christian agapic tradition that holds love—as expressed by God, and thus to be mimicked by humans—"[has] no motive outside itself," and is instead rooted in the "infinite value" of every human being, this conclusion cannot hold (Nygren 86, 87). Simply knowing someone, especially when modified to the point of knowing something of them, cannot produce a relationship properly labeled as love in a non-colloquial sense, as (to be discussed below) love requires a desire that can only develop given time and a more intimate knowledge—or at least a more

intimate façade of knowledge. While it may be argued that what is necessary for love is not itself sufficient for love, Newton-Smith does not make this distinction in his argument. Rather, the very subjective nature of the conceptions of love suggests a rigid framework with clearly delineated boundaries is more of a pipe dream with no basis in reality. This is not to suggest that none of the conditions outlined in Newton-Smith's theory are necessary components of the condition of love—knowing the subject or at least knowing something of them certainly is—but rather that his framework, as currently constructed, does not provide a cogent means of analysis.

The most commonly referred to form of love in Soble's work is agapic love. Agapic love cannot be used as a fundamental standard to define love simply because it is impossible to exhibit. It is unreasonable to expect humans to be capable of expressing agapic love, as it is believed to be expressed by God and Jesus, two infallible deities, and thus cannot be replicated in fallible beings (Nygers). This is reminiscent of Fyodor Dostoevsky's supposition that the church asks too much in its request that human beings behave like Jesus; such a request will certainly fail because it asks for the suppression of human nature. This lack of general applicability should prove troubling to any attempts to formulate a working theory of love.

On top of this, in the interpersonal romantic context (which is my primary focus), agape is undesirable. As L.A. Kosman astutely notes, the individual is only loved "*per accidens*" in this formulation, as the love is issued indiscriminately (153). One is not loved for their particular characteristics, but rather for their identity as human. While this may seem unproblematic in an altruistic sense, its lack of specificity does not configure into a version of interpersonal love that distinguishes between individuals. Likewise, this conceptualization of love is rather thin due to its universality, and this thinness further renders it inoperable in a situation where there has been any type of localized interactions and judgments. This is demonstrated in the following example:

Alex and Greg are tied to a pair of train tracks. Danny informs Hannah that, in exactly one minute, a train will run over Alex unless she pulls the lever; in that case, it will run over Greg. Under the agapic conceptualization, Hannah should not be able to make a choice. And this may very well be her answer if she knows neither Greg nor Alex. However, if Alex were, say, her husband, and Greg was still a random stranger, we would undoubtedly expect her to rescue him. To let her husband suffer such a horrific fate simply because she (in some odd conception) loves both potential victims equally would be astonishing to the average observer. Of course, the decision may change if Alex were an abusive husband whom Hannah deems less worthy of continued living than Greg. Either way, we would (axiologically) expect Hannah to issue a decision on Alex's worthiness to live based upon her localized experiences, instead of refusing to choose on the grounds that she loves both equally.

Likewise, if love is indeterminate, then the idea of "settling down" or pairing with less parties than there are people on Earth would be highly suspect; the equal love exhibited toward all humans should make the idea of giving preferential treatment to some subset unpalatable. And, since love does imply a certain knowing of the subject, these localized conceptions should already be established. Interpersonal romantic relationships (hopefully) have some form of localized attachment, and the agapic tradition is thus an inadequate means of defining love.

Additionally, under the agapic formulation, it is easy to enter predatory relationships— primarily due to the lack of consideration for localization. The expression of love to another in a form that disregards potential harm to the self needlessly exposes the self to extremely dangerous circumstances. Considering these shortcomings, Newton-Smith's conceptualization and agapic love cannot hold as an adequate base for the definition of love. Instead, the trauma theory of love defines love itself to be *an intimate desire for a crystallized version of another exhibited by one's*

true self. Each of these components will be defined and defended in the analysis below, which will also prove this response is only possible after the infliction of a dual trauma.

There is some debate on the distinction to be made between "love" and being "in love"—usually issued by defenders of the agapic tradition. However, grammatically speaking, the distinction is rather slight; love would simply be the condition expressed by the transitive state of being "in love." In other words, the object that one experiences love toward is the object that induces the act of being in love. Therefore, at least in terms of an interpersonal romantic love, the distinction is minimal. The trauma theory of love is a facilitating method in which one may be able to fall in love with the object of the emotion.

Trauma is equally difficult to define. As Caruth notes in her seminal work, "there is no firm definition of *trauma"* for trauma scholars to operate from (12 footnote 2). However, Caruth proposes a guiding definition: trauma is "an overwhelming experience of sudden or catastrophic events in which the response to the event occurs in the often delayed, uncontrolled repetitive appearance of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena" (11-12). While the catastrophic element of this definition differentiates trauma from other phenomena that produce similar feats (i.e., dream production), it is missing a foundational element discussed elsewhere in Caruth's work. Perhaps best exemplified in her opening discussion of Torquato Tasso's *Jerusalem Liberated* (see Appendix B), this is the infliction of the wound. The lack of this term in Caruth's definition is concerning and perplexing, given she traces the Greek etymology of the term trauma back to its meaning of "wound." For the purposes of this paper, Freud's refashioned definition of trauma, in which "a wound [is] inflicted not upon the body but upon the mind," is more suitable (Caruth 3). While most catastrophes themselves do inflict wounds, it is necessary to highlight the capacity for events that are comparatively non-catastrophic to a natural disaster to wound. In the

trauma theory of love, trauma is understood as *an inflicted wound that results in the delayed and uncontrollable repetition of intrusive phenomena.*

In terms of the initial trauma, I have been unable to discover a specific type that is materially superior to another. Rather, any trauma that performs the task of shattering the selves will do (see below). In terms of the secondary trauma, for reasons explained below, rejection is the superior option.

I.   The False Self

Martha Nussbaum, in explicating upon Donald Winnicott's conceptualization of the false self, describes the construction of "a false veneer of competence and normalcy that [people] present to the world" (194). She closely connects this with Christopher Bollas's normotic personality, or a constructed identity meant to present an "externally 'normal' and competent person who may get along very well in a career, and who often deploys to good effect an intellectual approach to life" (194). In both of these scenarios, an artificial personality is constructed and presented to society, with little to no suggestion given to the reality of the truth behind the façade. In terms of the reasoning for the construction of the false self, Nussbaum refers to a principle she terms "primitive shame," or shame experienced by an infant as it begins to realize its own dependency upon the caregiver and that it has left the "Golden Age" in the womb—this phrase describes when all the infant's resources were immediately available to it (184, 179). In a case study of primitive shame, Nussbaum notes how the demand for perfection results in the production of the false self. She analyzes one of Winnicott's patients, referred to as B, who becomes "obsessed with the way in which others will look at him, wanting them to see him as perfect, and knowing that if they see the *real* him, they will not see perfection" (191). The underlying theme in these examples is a fear of vulnerability; because we do not wish to subject

ourselves to the pain of rejection or abandonment by others, we construct artificial selves meant to serve as intermediaries. Then, when an essence of the false self is rejected, it is not truly a character judgment. Rather, it is a sign that the construction itself was flawed and is simply in need of revision. As Nussbaum notes, the shame that produces this response is "closely connected with narcissism" (192).

The false self is therefore *an artificially constructed version of the self meant to provide some means of protection from an exposed vulnerability in the true self or to avoid some form of negative outcome*. The history of B provides a prime example: B's "signs of humanness were rejected by his mother, who… was pleased only by a quiet, perfect baby" (190). This was the source of B's preoccupation with perfection. As a result, he erected a "petrified and lifeless persona" and subsequently suffered from "an inability to be spontaneous or to express any personal thought" (189). Nussbaum traces this phenomenon back to her theory of narcissistic shame; "shame… causes the real vulnerable self to hide, the robotic and inauthentic 'False Self' to come to the fore" (192). The false self is a shield meant to protect the true self.

The erection of the false self can occur both consciously and subconsciously. The prior example illustrates the latter; B was unaware that his social shutting down was the manifestation of a false self stemming from his childhood experiences. However, to see how the false self can be constructed consciously, consider the following example: Heather is at a bar. Julius notices her and walks over. Heather, not wanting to pursue a relationship, "accidentally" drops a photo of her brother, Scott, out of her wallet and introduces him as her boyfriend to Julius. Here, Heather is making a conscious choice to create a fake persona in which she is dating somebody else for protection; she is trying to avoid a possible negative reaction stemming from her informing Julius that she has no interest in dating him.

However, it is possible for there to be a simultaneous experience of subconscious and conscious choice to construct a false self. According to Jean-Paul Sartre, an act of bad faith is "a performative relinquishing of agency that is itself an act of individual agency, a submission to a social order that contradicts the self, and thus an essential hypocrisy" (Bailey xxiii). The key term is "hypocrisy," or the lack of correlation between one's beliefs and their actions (Bailey xxii). As Julius Bailey notes, this process can occur consciously or subconsciously; "an individual who demonstrates hypocrisy knowingly or unknowingly acts in a way that contradicts or undermines their principles" (*ibid.*). However, it could be that they happen both consciously and unconsciously; consider Audrey, a fictional politician who is personally opposed to the death penalty and was sexually assaulted as a child. As a newly elected judge, Audrey sentences multiple child sex offenders to death, despite having run on an anti-capital punishment platform. She maintains that she is fundamentally opposed to the death penalty in all instances. Here, assuming Audrey is correct in her belief that opposition to capital punishment is a component of the true self, she is consciously sentencing convicts to a punishment she purports not to believe in; she is guilty of conscious hypocrisy. However, there is also a subconscious element at play— her past experience causes her to subconsciously (and disproportionately) view sexual assault against children as an especially heinous crime, worthy of death, despite her belief that the state should not have the power to execute; she is guilty of subconscious hypocrisy. She may be masking her former vulnerability at the hands of her assaulter and/or attempting to dispel any persistent feeling of vulnerability stemming from her past experience. Therefore, in the use of bad faith as a construction of the false self, the hypocrite betrays their true self in terms of their actions. This masks the vulnerabilities of the true self by presenting a façade that is more

appealing to (or perhaps more likely to evoke a reaction from) the intended audience than the true self.

During the construction of the false self, the true self is effectively shielded internally. It is not similar to the Freudian superego's ideal self, which functions as more of a *telos,* or potential. It is rather like the core of an onion in this regard; there are layers (the false selves) covering it, and, if one wishes to uncover the core, the layers must be peeled off. Thus, the true self, while extant, is masterfully hidden.

Nussbaum's hermeneutical analysis of the Aristophanes myth in Plato's *Symposium* offers an interesting clarification needed to increase the cogency of the trauma theory of love. According to the myth, human beings initially existed in a spherical form, "with back and sides in a circle" (Plato 25). However, after they "made an attempt at the gods," they were severely punished; Zeus "cut those human beings in two" (26). As part of the reconstruction of the human body, Zeus sewed the anthropomorphic entities at what "is now called the navel" (26). Every human being on the planet has a "matching half" that we are "always seeking"—this is known in colloquial terms as a soulmate (27).

The fact that this being was severed into two is inherently polyphobic; it suggests that one may only be made whole again through the union with one other. Thus, if Tyler loves both Danny and Presley and the only way for Tyler, a polyamorous person, to be whole is to be with both, the Aristophanes myth effectively invalidates his sexuality. This holds true even if love is examined in terms of relationships between two people (i.e. Tyler and Presley and Tyler and Danny) existing outside of a conjunctive unit; the spherical being can only be reformed by uniting the missing halves. Thus, Tyler must only be completed by Presley *or* Danny. It cannot be both, as Tyler will reform the spherical being with one and thus will be unable to do so with

the either. There is simply no way for polyamory to operate without the Aristophanean conception, and it must therefore invalidate the identities and desires of those who are not monogamous.

There is another alarming flaw in this story, which Nussbaum cleverly extrapolates from the text. The navel "really reminds us of… our separation from the sources of nutrition and comfort and the beginning of a needy life" (182). A yearning for "an original omnipotence and completeness" then drives our search for a soulmate, or somebody who is quite literally our perfect half and whom we are destined to be with (182-3). The ability to become complete is then reliant upon the union with another. While this may appear endearing, Nussbaum connects it with her concept of primitive shame; "the very fact of being human and nonwhole" drives us to seek the perfect other. The quest for a soulmate is then inherently narcissistic, especially if the Aristophanes myth is taken to the extreme of its logic and one believes somebody else was specifically crafted just for them to find and reunite with.

This is separated from the rejection of agapic love above in terms of rationality. There does not appear to be a secondary motive in the Aristophanes myth that is driving the search for a soulmate; it is simply that one who used to be whole is seeking to become whole again. In the rejection of agapic love, there is the selfish impulse to derive benefit, but this is also supported by a protective urge to prevent the formation of toxic relationships[1]. The rationality of this dual motive places it into a category distinct from the narcissistic impulses present within the Aristophanes myth. While some may argue that the lover in the Aristophanes myth seeks a form of mutual unity, a valid secondary motive, this logic neglects to examine the final goal of the

---

[1] Toxic relationships can best be understood as those in which at least one partner behaves in a way that is unhealthy for both themselves and the other partner(s). This is typically manifested through a form of exploitative or abusive behavior, such as gaslighting.

reformation: a return to the "spherical shape" that presented "the outward image of our totality and power" (Nussbaum 182). In other words, the final result is the fusion of two individuals insofar as their individuality is sacrificed in the name of a reclamation of power; the *telos* serves a purely selfish end and requires the absorption of another into oneself, creating a deindividuation in the seeking of an almost completely self-serving pursuit. (Further discussion of the narcissistic nature of the Aristophanes myth can be found in Section V). The rejection of agapic love also does not preclude attachments with others, which narcissism, as a sociopathic tendency, does.

This distinction also reveals why narcissistic behavior cannot lead to love. The narcissist seeks a "strenuous identification," a term Amelia Zurcher coins to describe "an intentional and self-conscious effort to complete [a] mirroring relationship" (93). In this distortion of the mirror relationship, "the ideal" is held as a "faithful mirror," reflecting a perfect version of the self back to the self (93). The production of an idealized other is discussed in section V, but the implications of this narcissistic tendency when that other is the self warrant discussion. In terms of the false self, the usurpation of the identity of the ideal and subsequent transposition onto the self can only result in a delusional production of a superficial veneer of the self. Diverging from Nussbaum's formulation of primitive shame, the narcissist truly believes they are perfect and constructs an identity as such. However, since imperfection is a natural component of human nature, this is necessarily facetious. The self-aggrandizement undergone by the narcissist presents a truly difficult obstacle; the false self is believed to be true. The only way to dispel this notion is to cure the afflicted of their disorder, which in turns makes love possible only after the dissipation of the narcissistic supercomplex.

II.   The True Self

Defining the true self is another daunting task, but, given the definition of the false self above, a contradistinctive rendering proves useful. That is, the true self *is simply the self that is not the false self(ves)*. However, when analyzed under a number of frameworks, this simplistic definition reveals numerous contingencies that result in an arduous identification process.

Per Hegel's theory of sense-certainty, our spoken observations will fail to communicate our true intent because they are rooted in a "now" that is falsely described in its recording. Thus, a "written truth" will automatically "become stale" (60). This failure forces the analysis to shift toward the person conveying the information, the subject. The subject-as-speaker will identify themselves as "I," but since "everyone is 'I,'" the "I" can only be interpreted as a universal (62). While Hegel intends this construction to describe relationships amongst various independent observers, it can be applied to the constructed selves theory. Thus, every version of the self is rooted back to a universal. While it may be tempting to argue that this universal is the absolute true self, this is a dubious claim—see below. Rather, the universal is an "immediate," comprehended as "what simply *is*" (58). This immediacy begins as the foundation of identity, or the nascent true self. The "definition of an object" is "the absolute negation of all other-ness" (76). Thus, the "Thing has its essential being in another thing" (76). Hegel introduces the idea of identity-through-negation in his theory of the absolute reality. This absolutism suggests a fixed and unwavering identity of the true self.

As psychoanalytical theory reveals, this claim to universality rests on unsteady ground. Judith Butler briefly describes Freud's internalization theory, derived from his "Mourning and Melancholia." Under this framework, "the ego assumes the features of [a lost] object," metamorphosizing itself into a new entity that contains the remnants of the absorbed object (Butler 62). The sublimation process then constitutes a reconfiguration of the ego, which is the

Freudian equivalent of the true self. The Freudian superego and id, while also part of the

individual, are best understood as subcomponents of the true self. The superego is primarily

responsible for the construction of the ideal self, which, for reasons discussed above, should

cause hesitation when considering what constitutes the true self. While the id, unmuddied by

ration, may seem like the more appealing option, its pure impulsivity neglects to account for any

decisions in which ration is applied. Since the construction of the false self can occur

consciously, the id alone cannot suffice. The ego, as the balancing force between the impulsive

(id) and the strive toward the impossible-to-achieve (false) ideal self (superego), is the best

option for the true self; it applies ration to impulse (while not completely neglecting the latter)

and also takes into account the (im)possibility of becoming more ideal. The true self is thus stuck

in a fluctuating state, constantly assuming the qualities of newly absorbed objects. As Butler

notes, this process need not only apply to lost elements—which Freud studied in terms of

mourning—as "the construction of the interior ego ideal involves the internalization of gender

identities" (62). Thus, gender, which is not lost, can become a constitutive element of the ego,

and can be expressed in the form of the true self. The fluidity inherent within this definition of

the ego runs counter to the Hegelian absolute. Hence, when Butler remonstrates on how "the

body is figured as a mere *instrument* or *medium* for which a set of cultural meanings are only

externally related," she is not arguing the true self consists of a return to a blank fetal state of

nondifferentiation[2] (8). Instead, she is rejecting the Hegelian position and analyzing the ways in

which the (oftentimes fickle) absorbed elements of the personality are constitutive elements of

the true self.

---

[2] Butler later rejects this theory of the body, but that is beyond the scope of this paper.

The stunning implications of this fluid identity can be observed in Caruth's discussion of trauma. Namely, truth is rooted in "what remains unknown in our very actions and in our language," in addition to what is known (4). The constantly evolving nature of the identity of the true self bars the possibility of a true knowing of the self. Elements of the false selves may even become internalized and transform into components of the true self. In terms of deconstruction, this presents a fundamental issue. When you are not able to identify the elements of the true self—they are not the same as when the false self was constructed, and the manufactured false self now may be truer than the nascent true self—it is impossible to isolate the true self and the emotions solely produced by it.

This is not to suggest that the self itself does not exist. Take the following example: It is common knowledge that a caterpillar metamorphosizes into a butterfly. Now imagine that the metamorphosis process does not suspend itself. The butterfly will become a pigeon, the pigeon a bald eagle, the bald eagle a pterodactyl, the pterodactyl a legged whale, and so on until the organism perishes. It would be absurd to assert that, simply because the organism is constantly evolving, the organism itself does not exist. Rather, there would be great difficulty in determining the categorical identity of the organism at any given time.

III.   <u>Why Trauma?</u>

According to Nussbaum, when the false self has been constructed, Winnicott's patient, B, suffers. Because the false self has shielded the true self from vulnerability and involvement in social situations, the true self has remained underdeveloped. "Real intimacy," on the other hand, "requires the exchange of subjective feeling and trust" (194). The miseducation of the true self means the subject has not "learned to attend to and communicate [its] inner needs and is averse to trusting any other person" (194). Thus, the false self has rendered the true self incapable of

forming meaningful attachments. This sentiment is echoed in the second tenet of the 12th century code of love, "who can dissemble cannot love" (Stendhal 336). The enactment of concealment meant to protect the true self from the trauma of its own humanity has in fact hindered it and rendered it incapable of forging meaningful interpersonal connections.

The inauthenticity proffered by the false self should prove extremely alarming and inconducive to the production of love. Stendhal recognizes that naturalness is the "essential condition of happiness in love" (116). In other words, that which is unnatural will prove incapable of producing a happy, loving relationship. Therefore, in the guise of protecting the vulnerable true self, the false self has further isolated the individual and precluded the formation of "happy" intimate connections. The very unnaturalness of the artifice inherent within the false self makes it impossible to forge a sustainable, loving relationship. This partially stems from the fact that love, as even Hamlyn acquiesces, is associated with positive affect. There is a deceptive quality to the facetiousness of the emotions produced by the false self, as they are not constructed from a place of truth or goodwill. Rather, they are a means of foolery, a distraction meant to blur the line between reality and the invented. They may even fool the inventor. This inevitably runs contrary to the fundamental requirements for a sustainable relationship; as de Rougemont notes, "nothing enduring can be founded on deceit" (305). While I fundamentally disagree that every relationship which does not endure was not love, de Rougemont's sentiment is that artificiality automatically poisons a relationship. While I disagree with this on the part of the loved (see Section V), it holds true for the lover because the true self is the site of the authentic production of emotion.

The false self in all its forms must therefore necessarily be abandoned if one wishes to love. Any emotional product otherwise will be superficial at best and the invention of a self lacking

authenticity. The expression can then only be a product of a constructed entity different from the self. However, as a fictive manifestation of a delusional want for perfection by the true self, any "love" relationships exhibited by the false self should not be labelled as such. Instead, the fictional representation should be seen as manifesting a buried desire for interpersonal connection that is not being received otherwise. While one could argue that the elements of the false self rooted in the Hegelian universal are capable of expressing this emotion, this ignores the lack of substance behind the constructed false self that departs from this reality.

The question remaining is if this emotional complex rooted in only a portion of the true self can properly be classified as love. It cannot. A portion of the self is not solely responsible for expressing the desire necessitated by love (see section V). The emotions exhibited by the parts of the self that are not completely the true self have some foundation in an artificial, non-substantive idealization. This is not love. Finally, even if differentiation between the selves was possible per se, the idea is untenable. Because we are unable to distinguish between the false and true selves once a false self has been erected due to the process of internalization, we would not be able to deduce if the "love" emotion was a product of the portion of the true self. This knowledge becomes necessary in the establishment of intimacy, as we cannot communicate our "subject feelings" and establish "trust" when we are unaware if the emotional product is authentic (Nussbaum 194). As noted in section II, the naturalness of the production of emotions plays a pivotal role in establishing the facticity of love.

If the knowledge of the entire constituency of the true self is completely isolated and beyond the realm of knowing, and yet sequestering the true self as the realm for the authentic production of emotions is necessary to love, there appears to be little hope. However, this only means that the true self cannot be exposed through internal processes. An external stimulus, on

the other hand, may be able to pierce through the false selves and expose the true self, or allow for the reconstruction of the true self. Trauma is such an external stimulus and is effective in the isolation process. As Erin Peters and Cynthia Richards note, trauma "[fragments] the notion of identity and community" (5). The fragmentation then allows for the restoration of the Hegelian absolute, or the "blank slate," so to speak. It is for this reason that Melinda Rabb argues trauma "influences the formation of the individual and communal self" (363). The repetitive process associated with Caruth's definition of trauma (see above) plays a fundamental role in revealing what constitutes the true self, suggesting there may be limited agency in the reconstruction process. The repetition may even force fragmented aspects to become fundamental in the newly constituted true self. However, by effectively shattering the personality of the individual and thus undoing all the constructions of the false self (and taking the true self as collateral damage), trauma allows for a move towards knowing that the internalization process rendered inconceivable when given purely internal resources.

Caruth maintains this framework when she discusses the branch of trauma that deals with the "'shattering' of a previously whole self" (60 footnote 2). The previously whole self consists of the fluid true self and the many false selves erected. It is only through the destruction of the self (selves) that the true self, like a phoenix, can be reborn from the ashes. In this manner—through the destructive loss of the self—the constructive process of truth emerges. Trauma, in wiping the slate clean, offers a second chance in a way. The truth is able to emerge again (the Hegelian absolute can be restored) because there is an act of knowing produced through the elimination of the not knowing. This circumvents the impossibility of knowing brought about through the constant evolution of the ego.

The fragmentation process, unique to trauma, proves extremely important in the exposure and reconstruction of the true self. Trauma may, in a sense, force our hand and cause us to live according to our true commitments and principles—to live according to good faith (the opposite of bad faith) or "integrity" (Bailey xxii). However, as expanded upon in the conclusion, this is not the inevitable result. Given the extreme difficulty of discerning the true self in light of the internalization process, the necessity of the fragmentation process becomes even more apparent. It is only through the destruction of the all the selves that the reconstruction can begin, and one may be exposed to the possibility of acting in good faith. Otherwise, given the constant evolution of the true self, one is unable to discern their true beliefs and principles from those of the false self. This explains Audrey's (see above) inability to truly know whether her opposition to the death penalty is a product of the true or false self.

Caruth herself links trauma to the "very identity of the self," arguing that we come to define ourselves through our traumatic experiences (95). While analyzing Lacan's interpretation of Freud's dream of the burning child (see Appendices C and D), she discusses how the repetitive nature of the trauma of loss comes to define the father's identity as a father. Thus, trauma also facilitates the development of a new identity through a repetitive experience. The repetition itself is an "attempt to master what was never fully grasped in the first place" (64). In this exposure to the unknown, pursued in the hopes of coming to an ultimate knowing, identity formation begins to take place. The repetition also dramatically increases the likelihood of the internalization process occurring, meaning that, even if the traumatic event does not constitute a new form of identity per se, it is likely to become a part of the identity.

The process of living through trauma has another intriguing aspect; Caruth holds that "the act of seeing, in the very establishing of a bodily referent, erases, like an empty grammar, the reality

of an event" (29). The effacement of reality implies that the subject holds power over interpretation. In the suspension of reality, the bodily referent chooses what to recognize as true and what to reject. Thus, the process of trauma offers a starting point for the initiation of the act of knowing the true self. It may then be that trauma does not completely destroy the self, and instead leaves a small remnant than can be comprehended through the understanding of the subjective interpretation of a traumatic event. The reconstruction process would then not begin blindly, but rather would begin to reconstruct the self from the understanding—ingrained through the process of the continual living through of trauma—of how the true self chose to interpret the traumatic event. The experience of trauma "too soon, too unexpectedly" provides limited time for reaction (4). Thus, the subjective interpretation of the trauma cannot issue from that which requires prolonged mental exertion; the interpretation cannot flow through the filter of the artificial false selves, but instead must strike true to the source of innate or primary cognition before the self is fragmented.

****

Thus far, I have defended the first half of the trauma theory of love. I distinguished between the false self and the true self, with the former being artificially constructed as a means of protection or defense and the latter simply being the self that the former is not. I then discussed how Freud's internalization theory creates a fluid and constantly evolving true self that one can never truly know. I took a small detour to justify my classification of the true self as the source of the authentic production of emotions and, therefore, love. And, finally, I described how the fragmentation process inherent in trauma and its repetition process deconstructs every iteration of the self (while leaving behind a potential starting point) and allows for the reconstruction of the true self. Indeed, under Caruth's conception, trauma and its concomitant wounding "attempt

to tell us of a reality or truth that is not otherwise available" (4). Under my framework, this truth is the true self. However, there is still a repetitive element at play in this traumatization process. Thus, any attempts at reconstruction appear futile, as they will simply be deconstructed again in the next reiteration of the trauma cycle. The repetition process must be terminated.

IV.   **The Second Trauma**

Caruth describes trauma as "insistently recurring," which logically follows from her analysis of trauma as a repetitive cycle meant to help the subject know that which cannot be known (5). They do not exercise control over the repetition; trauma deprives them of agency. Therefore, they are left in an emotionally vulnerable state. In such a state, any relationship that occurs is unavoidably predatory. In the continual cycle of deconstruction and reconstruction of the self, and the repetitive process of striving toward knowing, we are made vulnerable. Adam Beach refers to the state as one of being "extremely susceptible" to those who "[lavish us] with affection and indulgences" (242). Beach is discussing masters who knowingly manipulate their slaves into loving them, but the logic still stands; as we are processing trauma, we are placed in a state of immense vulnerability. It is possible that any relationship formed during this "coping" period is nonconsensual, but predatory, or at the very least exploitative, is the superior term.

Assault provides a prime example: Zackariah Long argues that this trauma results in "the splitting of consciousness and the dissolution of ego" (56). This process inherently produces the "state of extreme vulnerability" that renders relationships developed in the wake of unprocessed trauma predatory and allows for the victim to become "contaminated" through the mirroring of the identity of the aggressor, who begins to imprint upon their consciousness (56). Trauma becomes a "'breach' in the ego's 'protective shield' that induces psychic paralysis by drawing

resources away from one part of the psyche to another" (57-8). The victim is then robbed of the cognitive resources necessary to form meaningful attachments.

The immorality of preying upon the vulnerable is perhaps best seen in the more extreme example of Ovid's *Ars Amatoria*, a guidebook for men (and women in book 3) to establish loving relationships. In Book I Part II, he employs a hunting metaphor, where the man is to "roam" as he "[searches]" for a lone pleasing girl (l. 1; 4). Much like the a "hunter," "fisherman," and "wild-fowler," he should know the spots frequented by his prey (l. 7; 8). What may be more shocking than the written content is the implied content; the *wounded* animals are the easiest prey. Therefore, in his search for a partner, the hunter-male looking for an easy kill will target the vulnerable. However, this conquest depends on the weakness and susceptibility of the wounded animal to attack. Because they lack the full health and strength of the other animals, the wounded are incredibly susceptible to being killed. This does not mean that the action taken will necessarily work, but it does mean that the wounding necessarily factors into the conquest and cannot be discounted.

Ovid's advocation for the exploitation of vulnerability takes no purer form, however, than his condoning of rape in Book I Part XVII. Here, he claims that "struggling she still wants, herself, to be conquered," as "it's force that pleases girls" (l. 8; 15). Ovid imposes a physical vulnerability upon the female sex that his male hunters are supposed to exploit. They are to remain steadfast in their sexual aims despite a clear lack of consent, which is only made possible through their superior physical strength. However, this ideology can be transposed into the realm of trauma. The mentally attenuated victim may attempt to resist the force of the mentally stronger party, but the stronger will triumph. This should become deeply problematic, especially when placed within the framework of consent. Trauma, through the continual deconstruction of

the self, renders one unable to know one's own wants. In this mentally vulnerable condition, consent cannot properly be given. Of course, the traumatized may turn toward sex as a coping mechanism, but that does not render the other party justified in taking advantage; the desire to have sex as a means of escape rather than because of desire cannot be viewed as engaging in love. While there is nothing wrong about consensually having sex with someone who wants to use the endorphins as an avoidance mechanism in general, this is highly complicated in a state of emotional vulnerability, where one may not be able to comprehend the implications of their actions or decisions. The desire also lies not in the sexual partner, but in the connotations of the sexual act itself, meaning it cannot be established as love for another.

This should not be taken as a rejection of the role of emotional vulnerability in love in general. Rather, trauma produces a very specific form of emotional vulnerability that rests on the insufficient ability of the traumatized to properly and knowingly provide an enthusiastic consent to intimate interpersonal relationships, which itself results from the stripping or preoccupation of mental faculties inherent in trauma. There is an emotional vulnerability in the exposure of the true self, which can again be seen in the reasons provided for the erection false self; the false self is a protective cloaking of the true self meant to avoid vulnerability.

Other authors have recognized the use of force and implied vulnerability in the realm of love. Denis de Rougemont records a shift in the diction of love that configures it within a war-like setting. In this linguistic study, "woman *surrenders* to man, and he *conquers* her because he is the better warrior" (244). This process is the inevitable result of the "battle of love" (245). War is another such activity in which vulnerabilities are exploited by the other side to gain an unfair advantage. However, with trauma, there is no means of waging battle without inherently having

to take advantage of the wound because it is so pervasive and demands such a large devotion of mental faculties.

Considering the peculiar case in which one supposedly chooses subjugation as a manifestation of the true self, ala a Nietzschean master-slave relationship, a clarification must be issued. The consensual act of subjugation differs largely from a manipulative, exploitative preying upon the emotional vulnerability in trauma, stemming back to the distinct emotional vulnerability created by the traumatization process. If one has the proper mental faculties available to knowingly and enthusiastically consent to subjugation, as an expression of the true self, the first part of the theory would suggest the produced relationship would have to be considered one of true love. However, given the analysis in section V below, a successful relationship in which acquisition has occurred would not stand muster under the second part of the theory.

The explication of another example will help to further refine this point. In that instance in which those who love God choose to completely subject themselves to her will, a form of obsession, rather than love, has manifested. There is a parallel to the agapic deindividuation process that occurs in this context, in which the individual sacrifices their own agency and subjectivity to become absorbed into the divine. Such deindividuation remains highly problematic because it requires a complete dissolution of the self into the other; the true self disappears to attempt to become part of a higher power. The desire for a complete consumption, beyond being categorically odd, then presents a complete disregard for the self that does not figure into a conception of love that necessarily relies on the presence of some personal benefit; once the self has been absorbed, any benefit cannot logically be said to relate to the individual but rather to the higher entity. A desire for complete consumption is therefore a form of

obsession, in which the lover is unable to shift their focus from the desired object despite obvious perils to the self—it is the beginning of a (likely) toxic relationship.

Once the emotional vulnerability of the traumatized is successfully exploited, there is often the formation of a trauma bond. Beach, while only naming the phenomenon once, explores this concept within his article on slaves who love their masters. Okeley's master, while also abusing him, "wields affection and kind treatment as a weapon against his slave" (243). The repetitive cycle of abuse and positive reinforcement creates an emotional bond that is difficult to sever. Instead, a connection of psychological need is established. Rather than being love, the need is a form of dependency and inability to extract oneself from the harmful consequences of a toxic relationship. The need for the termination of this sequence, or the coming out of the repetitive cycle of trauma to avoid such a situation is thus apparent. While some forms of trauma clearly make the situation worse (see the discussion of assault above), this does not necessarily render all forms of trauma irredeemable.

In the field of trauma studies, the coping of trauma takes two divergent routes; the first is re-creation, seen in both the repetitive cycle of living through and the infliction of trauma on others. The second is what is known as "'working through'" (Rabb 367). In the world of drama, the latter is depicted as a "'tragic mimesis,' in which the subject achieves coherence and closure or a stance of distanced 'reflection' or even redemption" (Zurcher 83). Known more generally as communalization, the working through process results in the cessation of the repetitive cycle. To use breakup terminology, it is the equivalent of moving on from your ex. As the name suggests, communalization requires a sharing of the trauma with the community, often expressed through the act of speaking—hence why Caruth claims that a traumatized man entering a traumatized woman's story "makes the answer to her story speak more than it can possibly tell" (42). It is

through the creation of a shared community of bonding that the acting of knowing can begin to grasp the unknown. The primary goal of this process is the resolution of the "painful split in self" brought about through trauma (Zurcher 86). Thus, the communalization process is restorative and breaks one from the cycle. For one to love, they will need to work through the initial trauma (and do so with a reconstruction of the true self that is known to them). While it may seem odd to say, a second traumatization is exactly what is needed to bring this process about.

This being said, my endorsement of communalization should not be read as a regression back to the ideals of agapic love. While establishing a sense of trust and bond within a community is important, recognizing the individuality of the participants involved and their unique experiences of trauma is equally (if not more) essential. The deindividuating nature of agape would then be counterintuitive in this setting. And, if the members of the community are unknown (which should not matter under the tenets of agape), the possibility of a predator taking advantage of the emotional vulnerability of the victim and establishing a new trauma bond is heightened. This is to say nothing of the possibility of the perpetrator of the trauma being a part of the community—again, under agape, this should not matter. Thus, communalization works far better when it takes localized interactions and experiences into account—especially since this promotes a differentiation in responses to the different forms of trauma.

As Caruth notes, the repetitive cycle induced by trauma issues a "command to respond" (132). It does not allow for a denial unless an avoidance mechanism is employed, and this must be extremely severe to successfully dodge the command. It is this very demand to respond that forces the choice between re-creation and communalization. However, as was seen in the example of assault, not all forms of trauma push toward the communalization option. What is

more, if a second traumatization occurs, it must encourage either a simultaneous or consecutive working through of the first and second trauma. Enter rejection.

V.   Rejection

In his discussion of tantric sex, Denis de Rougemont makes an important observation: "if [two lovers] surrender to desire, it is proof that their love is not *fin' amors*, true love" (350). True love is found in the resistance to the embrace of desire. In this chosen rejection of a relationship, one is paradoxically able to prove their devotion to another. However, there is another element present within this scheme. As de Rougemont phrases it, "tantric 'chastity'… consisted of making love without actually making it" (117). The construction of the façade provides a veneer that allows for both the recognition of the desired object and its refusal. However, this requires a fundamental knowing of the self that stems from one's own desires. Thus, the self-imposed rejection already implies a knowing of the self, even if this operates at the subconscious level.

However, rejection need not be self-imposed to produce this result. Rather, it is better if it stems from an alternative object. Should one endure the first trauma, reconstruct and know the true self, and maintain a sufficient amount of mental faculties, the opportunity for "self-reflection" emerges (Antonucci 192). Rejection automatically reflects a value judgment of the self that is presented, and thus will initiate an evaluation process that leads to the discovery and comprehension of the true self. Rejection is a form of loss that brings about grief, and, as Eamon Darcy notes, "the language of grief [provides] the necessary tools… to articulate… emotional pain" (216). This articulation fulfills the fundamental role of "constructing a narrative," which "'re-externalizes' the traumatic event and enables the survivor to reassert the hegemony of reality' through which process they may historicize the event and thus gain some closure" (Pells 137). The process of rejection then promotes an acknowledgement of the self that facilitates the

sharing of experience. Since the two traumas are inextricably linked through their connection to the self, the narrative element will allow for their simultaneous working throughs. While other forms of trauma also supply grief and may encourage the same working through, love can only be born out of those related to another individual.

According to Stendhal, crystallization is "the operation of the mind which, from everything which is presented to it, draws the conclusions that there are new perfections in the object of its love" (23). This is a natural process that occurs whenever a human goes through the process of falling in love. Therefore, the object of love is not a person themselves, but rather the crystallized version of the person we have constructed in our minds. It may see odd for this to fit within my theory, seeing as it very heavily prioritizes the need of emotion to stem from the true self, but the trauma theory of love does not seek to stifle human nature. If it did, it would simply dictate that one should not construct a false self—then they will be free to fall in love as they please.

Stendhal also comments on the means of dissolution for crystallization. He holds that recognition of reality is enough to create a "pang of humiliation" that goes against "every judgment formed by crystallisation;" the acquisition of the object automatically "poisons the source of love and may destroy it" (150). Hence, it is through the acquisition of the desired object that love begins crashing down on itself. W. Newton-Smith, in direct response to the theory, believes we are able "to love in spite of being mistaken" (209). However, the full panoply of forces (outlined subsequently) working against this recognition makes this supposition extremely doubtful.

Plato argues that "love [is] such as to be a love of something" (40). Because love has such an object, desire is commonly understood to be a key component of love. de Rougemont recognizes as much when he quotes Ibn Davoud: "nothing makes me more envious than an object that

always escapes me" (349). It is the desire to fulfill a lack, sustained through the continual inachievability of the object, that drives the feeling of desire. D.W. Hamlyn disagrees with this position, countering that he is "not sure" that a lover must "[desire] the beloved," using a perplexing example of a toxic relationship where, despite not wanting to be together, the parties still somehow love each other (226). The mutual animosity held by the outlined parties seems incongruous with Hamlyn's general assertion that love is a positive feeling toward, and the theory that the parties somehow still love each other in the absence of desire is objectionable. It is possible that they desire a return to the times when positive affect was itself produced. It is also possible that a trauma bond—or something similar—has formed and, rather than being in love, the two parties simply lack the emotional resources to leave each other and are now searching for a means to justify their behavior.

Plato also holds that "a thing that desires desires something of which it in need; otherwise, if it were not in need, it would not desire it" (41). As Alexander Nehamas paraphrases it in his introduction to the work, "no one desires what one already has or is" (xviii). Once the desired object has been acquired, the desire shifts to a want "to possess these things in time to come" (Plato 42). This is troubling in the realm of love, as it, like agape, is deindividuating. The desire becomes displaced from a want for the individual (in crystallized form) to a want of the continued ownership of the individual. This is predicated on the act of possessing another and their emotional connection, rather than merely desiring its establishment in the first place. Additionally, while the act of crystallization need not involve the consent of the actual individual, this becomes highly problematic in the context of a relationship. The thoughts of the acquired other are supplanted by the desire for a permanent (or at least prolonged) continuation

of the possessive relationship. The individual, having fulfilled their role in establishing the bond, it brushed swiftly to the side.

The distinguishment between the two is further clarified in Hegel's master-slave dialectic. Under this framework, a self-conscious being "must proceed to supersede the *other* independent being in order thereby to become certain of *itself* as the essential being; secondly, in so doing it proceeds to supersede its *own* self, for this other is itself" (111). A self-conscious individual only establishes itself as such through the recognition of another self-conscious being. However, realizing this dependency, the self-conscious being will begin to attempt to establish its own independence from the other being. Since the self-conscious individual is only established as such through their relation to the other self-conscious individual, the destruction of the latter simultaneously produces the destruction of the former. This is thus a double bind. The establishment of a relationship will inevitably lead to the battle for recognition, as we all seek to establish ourselves as self-conscious individuals, and a power struggle will ensue. As the term master-slave dialectic implies, this is especially true in situations in which possession or ownership are fundamental tenets. The only way to prevent this conflict is to avoid recognition. Of course, the crystallized version of another is unable to provide recognition and thus does not have to be destroyed. And, in the case of acquisition, the desire for continuation may even evolve into a desire to win the struggle for recognition through sustained battle. At the very least, the two desires will exist simultaneously.

de Rougemont argues that the "myth for the avidity for possession [is] so much more delightful than possession itself" (284). As such, "to possess [the desired one] is to lose her" (284). Here, we become so obsessed in the wanting of acquisition that, when it occurs, we ultimately fall prey to our own delusions and are inevitably disappointed with the reality of the

situation. In terms of the myth of Tristan and Iseult (see Appendix E), which de Rougemont

analyzes extensively, there is a need for "one another's absence" (42). Here, "the partings of the

lovers are dictated by… the love they bestow on their passion rather than on its satisfaction or on

its living object" (42). The passion—de Rougemont's marker of love that is closely correlated

with desire—is "compelled by its very nature to reject satisfaction," creating an almost insatiable

appetite (141). In so doing, the passion for the crystallized other becomes so consuming that the

longing for process becomes more important than the acquiring and straining to maintain

process. The individual, however, still plays a fundamental role, as they are the object of desire.

Once they are acquired, they are pushed to the periphery, and the want for seemingly eternal

ownership takes center stage.

Sarah Ahmed recognizes the disappointing nature of the acquisition of desired objects. In her

theorizing on happy objects, she argues that a doubling of positive affect exists; "to say that we

love what tastes delightful is not to say that delight causes our love but that the experience of

delight involves a loving orientation toward the object, just as the experience of love registers

what is delightful" (24). Under her conceptualization, love is produced through both that which

is delightful in its very nature and that in which the delightfulness is created through an

expectation of happiness. After all, "what is apt to cause pleasure is already judged to be good"

(28). However, "the very promise of happiness may acquire its force by not being given by the

objects that are attributed as happiness-causes" (32). In fact, "happiness becomes 'whatever' is

pursued and hence achieves its affectivity by not being given or found" (32). This leads to an

almost paralyzing fear. Ahmed holds that "not getting what you want allows you to preserve the

happiness of 'the what' as fantasy," and we are terrified of having to confront the reality that the

promise will be unfulfilled (31). The holding onto of the fantasy is the only means of fooling

ourselves into the deception of the promise of happiness, as it is the only means of maintaining

desire. Happiness plays a fundamental role in love because love is directed toward positive

affect, as even Hamlyn admits. It is because of this threat of the dissipation of happiness that

Ahmed holds "there is nothing more terrifying than getting what you want" (31).

This disappointment of acquisition is also implied in one of Plato's stories. As Alexander

Nehamas astutely notes, there is a sad and deceptive element within the Aristophanes myth: "the

goal of loving, the forging of one person out of two, is not to be achieved" (xviii). The very

purpose of the act of living, of the narcissistic pursuit for the soulmate, will never come to

fruition; the spherical being will never reform. There is an inherent cruelty in the conscious

involvement of another in these futile efforts, which requires a blatant disregard for their

resultant suffering. Thus, even if one were to claim that the pursuit of a soulmate is not a

(completely) narcissistic endeavor because it (non-consensually) attempts to reform the whole,

the unwillingness to sacrifice either the primary (delusional) goal of the return to the spherical

form or a present bond with the other to ensure they avoid the crushing weight of disappointment

at realizing the primary objective of the fusion was a fool's errand represents a self-absorbedness

that reeks of narcissism.

In further analyzing the Tristan and Iseult myth, de Rougemont provides grounds to believe

that recognition and acquisition dispel desire and thus stifle love. Tristan does not love Iseult in

her true form, but rather in the crystallized form that "revives in him the delightful cautery of

desire" (152). To examine the effectiveness of this strategy, we need turn no further than to the

Iseult Tristan actually marries; because he has acquired her and she is now his wife, Tristan

"must not and cannot any longer desire" Iseult of the White Hand (130). This also forms the crux

of de Rougemont's critique of marriage; he believes that "passion and marriage are essentially

irreconcilable" (277). That is, marriage itself stifles passion. This is likely because "love

beautifies its object," and "passion seeks the inaccessible" (74; 377). The qualities presumed to

be possessed by the lover are constructed by the desirer, but these perfect qualities can only

persist in the absence of contradictory information. It is for this reason that de Rougemont

concludes "whatever turns into a reality is no longer love" and supports the continual erection of

obstructions to acquisition (34).

The trauma of rejection then provides the perfect mechanism for establishing and

maintaining love (albeit toward a crystallized version of another) and facilitating the process of a

simultaneous working through. Rejection is the trauma that has "the ability to forcefully

penetrate the consciousness" (Long 71). In doing so, the result may be another psychic paralysis.

However, as noted above, the trauma of rejection, in its drive into the consciousness, can also

facilitate the process of self-recognition and evaluation, which produces the language necessary

for a working through. Caruth claims that "the traumatic (missed) encounter that dispossesses

each character of his or her own story is also the sight of something new, the emergence of the

possibility of *an address between life and death"* (129). When this address is vocalized, the

process of working through begins. And it is in this healing that true love is able to emerge.

VI.   Case Study

Aphra Behn's play *The Rover* is an odd choice for locating an example of love in

connection to trauma. Locating said example in a character other than Florinda, who is almost

raped multiple times throughout and the play (and once before its content begins) appears an

even odder choice. However, the character of Angellica Bianca provides the most coherent

example of the functioning of the trauma theory of love.

When the play opens, Angellica is a courtesan—her false self. She has constructed an identity as a prostitute who charges "a thousand crowns a month" for her services (2.1.107). Here, the false self protects her from the vulnerability present within common sexual engagements; the emotionality associated with the process is completely stripped, and it becomes a purely transactional affair. In a display of pure classism, she also limits her access to a very wealthy clientele. However, she soon meets Willmore, a libertine who has "pow'r too strong to be resisted" (2.2.150). She agrees to sleep with him, clarifying that "the pay I mean, is but thy love for mine" (2.2.146). While this may appear to be a deconstruction of the false self, her inability to move beyond a transactional framing of their relationship reveals that she has not truly been able to shed her false self—or that this characteristic of the false self has become a part of her true self. However, the correct option here is not clear, and this ambiguity can be attributed to the internalization process (or rather the lack of certainty concerning its commencement). Nevertheless, in choosing[3] to pursue a relationship based upon her emotional desires rather than pure financial gain, Angellica begins to show aspects of the true self. It is also here that the first remnants of crystallization appear, as Angellica values Willmore well above his worth (proved through his continual deception and betrayal of her, described below).

Ironically, the initial trauma is also rejection. After she sleeps with Willmore, Angellica witnesses his burgeoning relationship with Hellena in Act 3 Scene 1. Being properly traumatized by his rejection, she can "endure no more" and decides to "retire" to avoid any further pain (193; 195). In this state of emotional vulnerability, she later confronts Willmore and demands that he "undeceive [her] fears and torments" by fulfilling one simple request: "stay" (4.2.538; 4.2.207). It is here that the true self, in being continually reconstructed, is able to manifest itself. The

---

[3] The choice displays a form of cognition that takes desire into account, so it is the ego rather than the id in operation.

passions of the heart are on full display, and they have been wrested free of the transactionality of the original relationship. Angellica is a woman who knows what she wants and can communicate it. However, her very actions suggest that this knowing does not mean she is in a proper emotional state to enter such a relationship. She is consciously choosing to initiate a repetition of the traumatic incident; her crystallization may have become too strong and, even in the face of reality, she believes there is still hope for them. However, given her knowledge of Willmore's engagement to Hellena, it is clear that she is already aware of the fact that "there's no faith in anything he says" (4.2.374). Her mental faculties are so consumed with the repetition of the initial trauma that she cannot take these factors into consideration, and she should not be viewed as able to knowingly give consent in such a condition.

The confrontation then issues the second trauma, which, as the trauma theory of love necessitates, is rejection. Willmore informs Angellica that she "can spare [him] now" and that he is "glad of this release" (4.2.387, 388). Here, Angellica is supplied with the tools necessary to communalize her trauma and begin the working through process. Part of this communalization occurs in an unintentional breach of the fourth wall, when Angellica discusses her trauma with the audience in a soliloquy; she is "not fit to be beloved" (4.2.406). While this admission is deeply rooted in problematic, self-degrading logic, and is not knowingly addressed to the audience, it reveals that Angellica has begun to harness the language of grief supplied by her second trauma. Beyond the recognition of deception Angellica had presented before, she is now beginning to analyze the impact of the traumatic events on her own view of herself, offering alternative perspectives that, up until this point, had been impossible to know. She has moved closer to a complete understanding of the true self.

It is this second trauma that leads to Angellica's (extreme) expression of love and communalization. In the final scene, she "draws a pistol and holds it to [Willmore's] breast" (51.196sd). During this confrontation, where she has maintained some semblance of control, she is finally able to express herself and process her experience: "with thy oaths, / which on thy knees, thou didst devoutly make, / softened my yielding heart—and then, I was a slave— / yet still had been content to've worn my chains, / worn 'em with vanity and joy forever / hadst thou not broke those vows that put them on" (5.1.241-6). Here, she begins by analyzing Willmore's actions. However, she shifts to a reflection on the effects his actions had on her and her own self-perception, which occupies most of the passage, before finally returning to his wrongs. This type of self-recognition and self-analysis present an unveiling or uncovering in the true self. This does not fall in the slave Angellica, but in the Angellica who is able to articulate that state, process her pain, and act upon it.

The true Angellica then performs the act of love in this scene: the pointing of the gun and the walking in unison with the "pistol to [Willmore's] breast" (5.1.243). Here, the effects of crystallization are still present, although this crystallization has already begun to be corrupted by reality; Angellica still believes Willmore will be able to give her what she wants. She does not truly wish to kill him; if she did, she would have shot him instead of initiating the syncopated walking and conversation that carries on for four pages of the text. Rather, she is yearning for him to dispel the image of the "faithless man" reality is thrusting upon her and is seeking to become a transformative agent for Willmore (5.1.257). She desires Willmore and the positive affect she experienced while being with him after she had started to expose the elements of her true self by following her emotional desires. She still locates the ability to produce the desired happiness within the man who continually rejecting and traumatizing her, and, through seeking

to traumatize him, tries to change him. Of course, this is largely unsuccessful, as reality becomes too large of a crushing burden and Angellica is forced to retreat into Antonio. However, in that moment and conversation, Angellica shows that she, as her true self, has an intimate desire toward the crystallized Willmore that forces her to take drastic—though not lethal—measures.

****

It is important, and rather disheartening, to clarify that this process is not foolproof. This is a potentiality, not an assured result; simply because something *can* happen doesn't necessarily mean that it *will*. In other words, love only being able to be born out of this process doesn't mean love will necessarily be born out of this process. There are many opportunities for the process to go awry, some of which I will now expound. The first is the turn to substances as a form of coping, and the result of addiction. The weight of trauma may prove too heavy a burden to bear, and one may feel the need to turn to substances to lift what feels like a crushing weight off their chest. This is not working through, but rather a form of avoidance or inability to cope. It is an unfortunate and common response to trauma, and it is a possible sidestep in the process outlined above.

Another possibility is that, after the first trauma, the destruction of the self will take too taxing of a toll on the body, and reconstruction will prove impossible. Alternatively, the reconstruction may present another immediate erection of a false self, as the true self, unable to deal with the period of extended emotional vulnerability, recedes back into the body and attempts to protect itself from further harm.

If the rejection process, in striking through to the consciousness, does not result in an immediate working through process for both traumas, the repetition and resultant fragmentation processes are likely to occur again. The working through must be achieved in some from, or else

the process may never end, and the act of knowing can never come to fruition. We are left instead with a situation "in which the subject… remains inside trauma" (Zurcher 83).

And, finally, this is a very short-term process, as the erection of the false self will inevitably occur again. There are some who maintain that it will happen immediately after; I find this highly unlikely given the process of working through two traumas will leave one mentally drained to the point where this is not feasible. The establishment of the love bond will require the remaining mental resources. Of course, one could also use the remaining mental faculties to construct a false self instead of forming a love bond, but this will not result in love.

I will be the first to admit that the implications of this theory are truly frightening. The idea that one must traumatize themselves twice to be offered a limited window of time to fall in love may promote unhealthy behaviors that I do not condone. Most will find the tiniest excuse to reject the theory because of these reservations. However, to run away from the theory simply because it is frightening is a grave mistake. It may be better to refuse to believe it, and you are more than welcome to take that route. However, given the research I have conducted into trauma and love, this is the only way I can maintain a semblance of belief in the latter.

References

Ahmed, Sarah. "Happy Objects." Chap. 1 in *The Promise of Happiness*. 2010. Durham, NC:

Duke University Press.

Antonucci, Melissa. "Representations of Loss and Recovery in Unca Eliza Winkfield's *The*

Female American" in *Early Modern Trauma: Europe and the Atlantic World:* 177-200,

eds. Erin Peters and Cynthia Richards. 2021. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press.

Aristotle. "Perfect Friendship" in *Eros, Agape, and Philia: Readings in the Philosophy of Love*:

57-70, ed. Alan Soble. 1989. St. Paul, MN: Paragon House.

Bailey, Julius. *Racism, Hypocrisy, and Bad Faith: A Moral Challenge to the America I Love.*

2020. Peterborough, Ontario, Canada: Broadview Press.

Beach, Adam. "Trauma, Psychological Coercion, and Slaves Who Love Their Masters: The Case

of William Okeley" in *Early Modern Trauma: Europe and the Atlantic World:* 227-48,

eds. Erin Peters and Cynthia Richards. 2021. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press.

Behn, Aphra. *The Rover* 2nd ed., ed. Anne Russell. 1999. Peterborough, Ontario, Canada:

Broadview Press.

Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity.* 1990. New York, NY:

Routledge.

Caruth, Cathy. *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History.* 2016. Baltimore, MD:

Johns Hopkins University Press.

Darcy, Eamon. "Stories of Trauma in Early Modern Ireland" in *Early Modern Trauma: Europe*

and the Atlantic World: 203-26, eds. Erin Peters and Cynthia Richards. 2021. Lincoln,

NE: University of Nebraska Press.

de Rougemont, Denis. *Love in the Western World.* 1983. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University

      Press.

Dostoevsky, Fyodor. *The Grand Inquisitor.* Trans. by H.P. Blavatsky. 2009. Auckland, New

      Zealand: The Floating Press.

Freud, Sigmund. *The Ego and the Id.* 2010. Seattle, WA: Pacific Publishing Studio.

Gorer, Geoffrey. "On Falling in Love" in *Eros, Agape, and Philia: Readings in the Philosophy of*

      Love: 6-11, ed. Alan Soble. 1989. St. Paul, MN: Paragon House.

Hamlyn, D.W. "The Phenomena of Love and Hate" in *Eros, Agape, and Philia: Readings in the*

      Philosophy of Love: 218-35, ed. Alan Soble. 1989. St. Paul, MN: Paragon House.

Hegel. *Phenomenology of Spirit.* Trans. by A.V. Miller. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Kosman, L.A. "Platonic Love" in *Eros, Agape, and Philia: Readings in the Philosophy of Love*:

      149-64, ed. Alan Soble. 1989. St. Paul, MN: Paragon House.

Long, Zackariah. "Historicizing Rape Trauma: Identification with the Aggressor in Early

      Modern Humoralism and *The Rape of Lucrece* (1594)" in *Early Modern Trauma: Europe*

      and the Atlantic World: 55-79, eds. Erin Peters and Cynthia Richards. 2021. Lincoln, NE:

      University of Nebraska Press.

Nehamas, Alexander. "Introduction" in Plato's *Symposium*, trans. by. Alexander Nehamas &

      Paul Woodruff. 1989. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company.

Newton-Smith, W. "A Conceptual Investigation of Love" in *Eros, Agape, and Philia: Readings*

      in the Philosophy of Love: 199-217, ed. Alan Soble. 1989. St. Paul, MN: Paragon House.

Nussbaum, Martha. "Inscribing the Face: Shame and Stigma." Chap. 4 in *Hiding from*

      Humanity: Disgust, Shame, and the Law. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Nygrens, Anders. "Eros and Agape" in *Eros, Agape, and Philia: Readings in the Philosophy of Love:* 85-95, ed. Alan Soble. 1989. St. Paul, MN: Paragon House.

Ovid. *Ars Amatoria: Book I.* Trans. by A.S. Kline. 2001. Poetry in Translation. https://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/Latin/ArtofLoveBkI.php#anchor_Toc52104 9268.

Pells, Ismini. "Soliciting Sympathy: The Search for Psychological Trauma in Petitions from Seventeenth-Century Maimed Soldiers" in *Early Modern Trauma: Europe and the Atlantic World*: 129-150, eds. Erin Peters and Cynthia Richards. 2021. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press.

Peters, Erin and Richards, Cynthia. "Reading Historical Trauma: Moving Backward to Move Forward" in *Early Modern Trauma: Europe and the Atlantic World*: 1-28, eds. Erin Peters and Cynthia Richards. 2021. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press.

Plato. *Symposium.* Trans. by Alexander Nehamas & Paul Woodruff. 1989. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company.

Rabb, Melinda. "Afterword: Early Modern Trauma and the Generation of Satire" in *Early Modern Trauma: Europe and the Atlantic World:* 361-75, eds. Erin Peters and Cynthia Richards. 2021. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press.

Stendhal. *On Love.* Trans. by Madeleine Fournier. 2016. Project Gutenberg, Ebook. https://www.gutenberg.org/files/53720/53720-h/53720-h.htm#Footnote_12_236.

Zurcher, Amelia. "The Trauma of Self: Hannah Allen and Seventeenth-Century Women's Spiritual Writing" in *Early Modern Trauma: Europe and the Atlantic World*: 81-104, eds. Erin Peters and Cynthia Richards. 2021. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press.

Appendix A

W. Newton-Smith's LCRs

Soble 204

(1) A knows B (or at least knows something of B).

(2) A cares (is concerned) about B.

   A likes B.

(3) A respects B.

   A is attracted to B.

   A feels affection for B.

(4) A is committed to B.

   A wishes to see B's welfare promoted.

Appendix B

Torquato Tasso's Jerusalem Liberated

Caruth 2—quoting chapter 3 of Freud's Beyond the Pleasure Principle

"[*Jerusalem Liberated*'s] hero, Tancred, unwittingly kills his beloved Clorinda in a duel while she is disguised in the armour of an enemy knight. After her burial he makes his way into a strange magic forest which strikes the Crusaders' army with terror. He slashes with his sword at a tall tree; but blood streams from the cut and the voice of Clorinda, whose soul is imprisoned in the tree, is heard complaining that he has wounded his beloved once again."

Appendix C

Sigmund Freud's dream of the burning child

Caruth 96-7—quoting chapter 7 of Freud's The Interpretation of Dreams

"A father had been watching beside his child's sick-bed for days and nights on end. After the child had died, he went into the next room to lie down, but left the door open so that he could see from his bedroom into the room in which the child's body was laid out, with tall candles standing round it. An old man had been engaged to keep watch over it, and sat beside the body murmuring prayers. After a few hours' sleep, the father had a dream that *his child was standing beside his bed, caught him by the arm and whispered to him reproachfully: 'Father, don't you see I'm burning?'* He woke up, noticed a bright glare of light from the next room, hurried into it and found that the old watchman had dropped off to sleep and that the wrappings and one of the arms of his beloved child's dead body had been burned by a lighted candle that had fallen on them.

The explanation of this moving dream is simple enough… The glare of light shone through the open door into the sleeping man's eyes and led him to the conclusion which he would have arrived at if he had been awake, namely that a candle had fallen over and set something alight in the neighborhood of the body. It is even possible that he had felt some concern when he went to sleep as to whether the old man might not be incompetent to carry out his task.

… the words spoken by the child must have been made up of words which he had actually spoken in his lifetime and which were connected with important events in the father's mind. For instance, '*I'm burning*' may have been spoken during the fever of the child's last

illness, and '*Father, don't you see?*' may have been derived from some other highly emotional situation of which we are in ignorance.

But, having recognized that the dream was a process with a meaning, and that it can be inserted into the chain of the dreamer's psychical experiences, we may still wonder why it was that a dream occurred at all in such circumstances, when the most rapid possible awakening was called for."

Appendix D

Lacan's interpretation of Freud's dream of the burning child

Caruth 101-2—quoting Jacques Lacan's seminar "Tuché and Automaton"

"You will remember the unfortunate father who went to rest in the room next to the one in which his dead child lay—leaving the child in the care, we are told, of another old man—and who is awoken by something. By what? It is not only the reality, the shock, the knocking, a noise made to recall him to the real, but this expresses, in his dream, the quasi-identity of what is happening, the very reality of an overturned candle setting light to the bed in which his child lies.

Such an example hardly seems to confirm Freud's thesis in the *Traumdeutung*—that the dream is the realization of a desire.

What we see emerging here, almost for the first time, in the *Traumdeutung*, is a function of the dream of an apparently secondary kind—in this case, the dream satisfies only the need to prolong sleep. What, then, does Freud mean by placing, at this point, this particular dream, stressing that it is in itself full confirmation of his thesis regarding dreams?

If the function of the dream is to prolong sleep, if the dream, after all, may come so near to the reality that causes it, can we not say that it might correspond to this reality without emerging from sleep? After all, there is such a thing as somnambulistic activity. The question that arises, and which indeed all Freud's previous indications allow us here to produce, is—*What is it that wakes the sleeper*? Is it not, *in* the dream, another reality?—the reality that Freud describes thus—*Dass das Kind an seinem Bette steht,* that the child is near his bed, *ihn am Arme fasst,* takes him by the arm and whispers to him reproachfully, *und ihm, vor-wurfsvoll zuraunt: Vater, siehst du den nicht,* Father, don't you see, *dass ich verbrenne,* that I am burning?

Is there not more reality in this message than in the noise by which the father also

identifies the strange reality of what is happening in the room next door?"

Appendix E

The myth of Tristan and Iseult

de Rougemont 26-30

"Tristan is born in misfortune. His father has just died, and Blanchefleur, his mother, does not survive his birth. Hence his name, the sombre hue of his life, and the lowering stormy sky that hangs over the legend. King Mark of Cornwall, Blanchefleur's brother, takes the orphan into his castle at Tintagel and brings him up there.

Tristan presently performs an early feat of prowess. He vanquishes the Morholt. This Irish giant has come like a Minotaur to exact his tribute of Cornish maidens or youths. Tristan is of an age for knighthood—that is, he has just reached puberty—and he obtains leave to fight him. The Morholt is killed, but not before he has wounded Tristan with a poisoned barb. Having no hope of recovery, Tristan begs to be put on board a boat that is cast adrift with neither sail nor oar. He takes his sword and harp with him.

He lands in Ireland. There is only one remedy that can save him, and, as it happens, the Queen of Ireland is alone in knowing its secret. But the giant Morholt was this queen's brother, and so Tristan is careful not to disclose his name or to explain how he has come by his wound. Iseult, the queen's daughter, nurses him and restores him to health. That is the Prologue,

A few years later a bird has brought to King Mark a golden hair. The king determines to marry the woman from whose head the hair has come. It is Tristan whom he selects to go in quest of her. A storm causes the hero to be cast ashore once again in Ireland. There he fights and kills a dragon that was threatening the capital. (This is the conventional motif of a virgin delivered by a young paladin.) Having been wounded by the dragon, Tristan is again nursed by Iseult. One day she learns that the wounded stranger is no other than the man who killed her

uncle. She seizes Tristan's sword and threatens to transfix him in his bath. It is then that he tells her of the mission on which he has been sent by King Mark. And Iseult spares him, for she would like to be a queen. (According to some of the authors, she spares him also because she then finds him handsome.)

Tristan and the princess set sail for Cornwall. At sea the wind drops and the heat grows oppressive. They are thirsty. Brengain, Iseult's maid, gives them a drink. But by mistake she pours out the 'wine of herbs' which the queen, Iseult's mother, has brewed for King Mark and his bride after they shall have wed. Tristan and Iseult drink it. The effect is to commit them to a fate from 'which they can never escape during the remainder of their lives, *for they have drunk their destruction and death.'* They confess that they are now in love, and fall into one another's arms.

(Let it be noted here that according to the archetypal version, which Béroul alone has followed, the effect of the love-potion is limited to three years. Thomas, a sensitive psychologist and highly suspicious of marvels, which he considers crude, minimizes the importance of the love-potion as far as possible, and depicts the love of Tristan and Iseult as having occurred spontaneously. Its first signs he places as early as the episode of the bath. On the other hand, Eilhart, Gottfried, and most of the others attribute unlimited effect to the magic wine. Nothing could be more significant than these variations, as we shall see.)

Thus the fault is perpetrated. *Yet Tristan is still in duty bound to fulfil the mission with which King Mark has entrusted him.* So, notwithstanding his betrayal of the king, he delivers Iseult to him. On the wedding night Brengain, thanks to a ruse, takes Iseult's place in the royal bed, thus saving her mistress from dishonour and at the same time expiating the irretrievable mistake she made in pouring out the love-potion.

Presently, however, four 'felon' barons of the king's go and tell their sovereign that Tristan and Iseult are lovers. Tristan is banished to Tintagel town. But thanks to another trick— the episode of the pine-tree in the orchard—Mark is convinced of his innocence and allows him to return to the castle. Then Frocin the Dwarf, who is in league with the barons, lays a trap in order to establish the lovers' guilt. In the spear-length between Tristan's bed and the queen's he scatters flour, and persuades Mark to order Tristan to ride to King Arthur at Carduel the next morning at dawn. Tristan is determined to embrace his mistress once more before he rides away. To avoid leaving his foot-marks in the flour he leaps across from his own bed to his queen's. But the effort reopens a wound in his leg inflicted the previous day by a boar. Led by Frocin, the king and the barons burst into the bedchamber. They find the flour blood-stained. Mark is satisfied with this evidence of adultery. Iseult is handed over to a party of a hundred lepers, and Tristan is sentenced to the stake. On the way to execution, however, he is allowed to go into a chantry on the cliff's edge. He forces a window and leaps over the cliff, thus effecting his escape. He rescues Iseult from the lepers, and together they go and hide in the depths of the Forest of Morrois. There for three years they lead a life 'harsh and hard.' It happens one day that Mark comes upon them while they are asleep. But on this occasion Tristan has put between Iseult and himself his drawn sword. Moved by this evidence of innocence, as he supposes it to be, the king spares them. Without waking them, he takes up Tristan's sword and sets his own in its place.

At the end of three years the potency of the love-potion wears off (according to Béroul and the common ancestor of the five versions). It is only then that Tristan repents, and that Iseult wishes she were a queen again. Together they seek out the hermit Ogrin, through whom Tristan offers peace to the king, saying he will surrender Iseult. Mark promises forgiveness. As the royal procession approaches, the lovers part. But before this happens Iseult has besought Tristan to

stay in the neighbourhood till he has made certain that Mark is treating her well. Then, with a final display of feminine wiles, she follows up her advantage in having persuaded Tristan to agree to this, and declares she will join him at the first sign he makes, for nothing shall stop her from doing his will, 'neither tower, nor wall, nor stronghold.'

They have several secret meetings in the hut of Orri the Woodman. But the felon barons are keeping watch and ward over the queen's virtue. She asks and is granted 'a Judgment of God.' Thanks to a subterfuge, the ordeal is a success. Before she grasps the red-hot iron which will not harm one who has spoken the truth, she swears that no man has ever held her in his arms except the king and a poor pilgrim who has just carried her ashore from a boat. And the poor pilgrim is Tristan in disguise.

However, fresh adventures carry Tristan far away from Iseult, and he then comes to suppose that she no longer loves him. So he agrees to marry 'for her beauty and her name' another Iseult, Iseult 'of the White Hand.' And indeed this Iseult remains unstained, for after their marriage Tristan still sighs for 'Iseult the Fair.'

At last, wounded by a poisoned spear and about to die, Tristan sends for the queen from Cornwall, she alone who can save his life. She comes, and as her ship draws near it hoists a white sail as a sign of hope. But Iseult of the White Hand has been on the look-out, and, tormented by jealousy, she runs to Tristan and tells him that the sail is black. Tristan dies. As he does so, Iseult the Fair lands, and on arriving at the castle, she lies down beside her dead lover and clasps him close. Then she dies too."