

Love and Longing: Absolute Desire from Romanticism to Modernism

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The article examines the differences between love and longing. Although both emotions are erotic in character, they differ substantially in that love is directed towards an object, whereas longing is of narcissistic origin and is directed towards the subject itself. The narcissistic subject avoids the apparently desired object because the latter is unconsciously associated with the child's early desire for the mother who is inaccessible: i.e. prohibited by the incest taboo. As the object is avoided, the desire becomes an end in itself and turns into a desire for desire's sake. It will be shown that this kind of desire – referred to as “longing” – is dominant in the works of romantic authors such as Novalis and Nerval and reappears in Baudelaire's pre-modernist poetry and in the modernist novels of Marcel Proust and James Joyce.

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The argument underlying this short inquiry into the *difference between love and longing* can be summed up in a few words. Unlike love, whose desire is directed towards an object (another person), longing is a desire without an object, a desire for desire's sake, an absolute desire. From a psychoanalytic point of view, longing is narcissistic in character. Narcissism is defined by Freud as the libido which has been withdrawn from the objects in order to be invested in the “Ego.” (Freud 42) It can be shown, I believe, that longing in literature – from romanticism to modernism – is of narcissistic origin insofar as the erotic impulse loses its object.

It does so in a social, linguistic and literary situation marked by *anomie* in the sense of the Durkheim school of sociology. One of the effects of anomie is that the male child is no longer able to identify with the values represented by the father, with the values of the “symbolic order” as defined by Lacan, and tries to escape from this order by seeking refuge in the realm of the “imaginary” dominated by the mother. Instead of identifying with the father and the world of his values, the son attempts to become a “phallus for the mother,” i.e. to oust the father as the mother's companion.

However, the social incest taboo does not disappear, and the son discovers that the mother is tabooed and hence inaccessible, out of bounds. The result is a detachment of the desire from the (prohibited, inaccessible) object: a “desire of the desire”, an absolute desire. Moustafa Safouan, a follower of Lacan, describes this process as follows: “The supreme good does not exist, the mother is prohibited.” (Safouan 262) He explains:

In other words, the desire for the mother is sustained by a desire of her desire. Given the fact that this desire is hidden from the subject (it is also hidden from the mother, because it is unconscious), the desire of desire (*désir du désir*) is turned into a desire to be desired (*désir de demande*). (265)

Hence it is a narcissistic longing for the *desire of others*: for their admiration, their permanent demand. It is not surprising therefore that the romantic and modernist writers and their heroes, who tend to detach their desire from particular objects or persons and prefer the imaginary to the real, are also narcissistic individuals whose main goal is *to be desired*: to be in permanent demand as dandies, lovers and writers.

In romantic and modernist literature, the circular desire of desire (as *désir de demande*) has three aspects: it is either an indirect, unconscious desire for the mother or a mother figure, a desire awakened by a fugitive, inaccessible person – i.e. a girl or a woman who is as inaccessible or prohibited as the mother was in childhood – or by an individual who serves as a pretext for the narcissistic enhancement of the ego. In what follows I shall deal with these three aspects, but the second aspect – the inaccessible, unknown or fugitive female figure – will occupy the centre of the scene.

Romantic longing: Novalis and Nerval

In the case of Novalis, the incestuous scene of the prohibited mother described by Safouan is to be found – with the first two aspects – in the fragmentary novel *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* (1799). Heinrich, the hero of the novel, lives in the imaginary world dominated by the mother figure and rejects the world of the father: a world based on the values of the Enlightenment which were anathema to all German romantics of that period.

At the beginning of the novel, we find a situation marked by anomie. Heinrich’s father, who represents the Enlightenment spirit, is a weak character who cannot possibly hope that his son will spontaneously identify with him. In the novel itself, Heinrich is characterised – by Schwane and Sylvester – as superior to his father. “It is thus not surprising,” comments Jochen Hörisch, “that mother and son together leave the father

and that, during their journey, they share a room” (Hörisch 232). This idea that an incestuous desire is involved in Novalis’s case is borne out by some remarks in Florian Roder’s biography of Novalis where Auguste von Hardenberg’s attitude towards her son Friedrich is described as follows: “She cherished the small Friedrich with great tenderness. From the outset she encouraged his poetic talent which was not appreciated by the prosaic and ascetic father.” (Roder 36–37)

In this context, it is hardly surprising that in Novalis’s novel the mother turns out to be the dominant figure. The scene in which Heinrich and Mathilde meet and exchange kisses is only apparently a scene marked by object-oriented passionate love. For it ends abruptly when Heinrich’s mother appears from nowhere and the incestuous desire reasserts itself: “He overwhelmed her with all his tenderness.” (“Er ließ seine ganze Zärtlichkeit an ihr aus.”) (Novalis 210)

It is not by chance that, in the fragmentary novel, Mathilde is a fugitive, dream-like figure and that she dies so early that a realisation of object-oriented love as passion becomes well-nigh inconceivable. Her early death is not to be seen in simple analogy to the early death of Sophie von Kühn (Novalis’s fiancée), but is symptomatic of the objectless desire which is metonymically condensed in the fleeting image of the “blue flower.” The hero’s search for this oneiric flower never comes to an end. In a similar way, his love never finds fulfilment and turns into an endless quest whose object recedes as the quest progresses.

Paradoxically, the second part of the novel carries the title “Fulfilment” (Die Erfüllung), but is entirely set in a dream landscape in which Heinrich appears as a pilgrim and a kind of new Orpheus who travels through the realm of the dead in search of his beloved Mathilde. But all that is left of the fugitive figure is a smile and a gesture both of which disappear as the young hero wakes up from a dream:

Doch war nichts zu hören und betrachtete der Pilger nur mit tiefer Sehnsucht ihre anmutigen Züge und wie sie so freundlich und lächelnd ihm zuwinkte, und die Hand auf ihre linke Brust legte. Der Anblick war unendlich tröstend und erquickend und der Pilger lag noch lang in seliger Entzückung, als die Erscheinung wieder hinweggenommen war. (Novalis 322)

The key word in this passage is probably “Sehnsucht” which, in the context mapped out here, might be translated as “longing.” For this is the actual structure of romantic love as it appears in Novalis’s text: it is a longing whose subject has from the very outset renounced the realisation of his desire. It has renounced the possession of the object, a possession originally prohibited by the incest taboo.

We find a similar situation in the works of the French (late) romantic Gérard de Nerval who can be considered as a link between European romanticism and modernism in the sense that his literary dream world has inspired the modernist Proust as much as André Breton, the leading figure of French surrealism. Very much like Heinrich in Novalis's fragmentary novel, Nerval's narrator is permanently in search of an appearing and disappearing female figure whose inaccessibility perpetuates the romantic desire – which is in fact a longing without a concrete object.

The paradoxical structure of this desire is a priori fixed and never altered: the subject is never able to approach the beloved person, let alone to possess her. Here is a description given by the narrator himself: “Amour, hélas! des formes vagues, des teintes roses et bleues, des fantômes métaphysiques! Vue de près, la femme réelle révoltait notre ingénuité! il fallait qu'elle apparût reine ou déesse, et surtout n'en pas approcher.” (Nerval, *Les Filles du feu*, 122) In other words, the ideal image (“reine ou déesse”) cannot be found in reality and, conversely, the desired figure has to remain inaccessible: “et surtout n'en pas approcher.”

In the end, the narrator finds himself in a situation which is strikingly similar to the last scenes of Novalis's novel. Aurélia, the idealised and longed for girl, dies, thus becoming eternally inaccessible – very much like the mother whose possession is blocked by the incest taboo: “Je ne le sus que plus tard. Aurélia était morte.” (237)

In the following poem, which has a striking resemblance with Baudelaire's “A une passante” (commented on in the next section), it is neither a disappointing reality nor death that prevents the lyrical Subject from approaching the fugitive (i. e. prohibited) object, but old age: the tantalising knowledge that the distance of time separates desire from its fulfilment:

Une allée du Luxembourg

Elle a passé, la jeune fille
Vive et preste comme un oiseau:
A la main une fleur qui brille,
A la bouche un refrain nouveau.

C'est peut-être la seule au monde
Dont le cœur au mien répondrait,
Qui venant dans ma nuit profonde
D'un seul regard l'éclaircirait!

Mais non, – ma jeunesse est finie...
Adieu, doux rayon qui m'as lui, –
Parfum, jeune fille, harmonie...
Le bonheur passait, – il a fui! (Nerval, *Poésies* 30)

The story – for this poem contains a short story – which is set in the Parc du Luxembourg, at the heart of the Quartier Latin, can be divided into three semantic and narrative blocks which coincide with the three stanzas: the first stanza presents the object, the second stanza is marked by the awakening desire and the third by the consciousness of inaccessibility.

On the narrative level, the object appears in the first stanza and is accompanied, on the semantic level, by *speed, light, youth* and *innovation*: “passé,” “preste,” “oiseau,” “fleur,” “brille,” “refrain nouveau.”

In the second stanza, the narrative is projected inward, into the narrator’s consciousness where the desire awakens. It is a potentially narcissistic desire marked by the *similarity* of subject and object, by their *correspondence*. The subject imagines a young girl whose desire (“coeur”) would respond to his: “répondrait.” On the semantic level, the contrast between darkness (“nuit”) and light (“regard,” “éclaircirait”) structures the second half of the stanza and leads to an intensification of the desire.

In the third stanza, the narrative synthesises the inward and the outward movements, and the desire is renounced because of the inaccessibility of the object: “Mais non –.” The lyrical subject realises that the glimpse it caught of passing happiness will not return because of old age: “finie,” “adieu,” “passait,” “fui.” On the semantic level, the third stanza is again marked by “youth” – like the first – but the latter belongs irretrievably to the past as far as the lyrical Subject is concerned, and this separation from the past (from his own youth) is presented as an insurmountable obstacle which blocks the access to the desired object: “finie,” “fui.” Here again, the initial erotic desire of an object is turned into a *longing* without objects.

It will be shown in the next section that Baudelaire’s poem “A une passante” is based on a similar narrative and semantic structure: a female figure appears, arouses the impossible (prohibited) desire and disappears. Along with it disappears the *light* (“éclair”) which could have illuminated or dissipated the *night* (“nuit”).

Nerval’s family situation is comparable to that of Novalis (Friedrich von Hardenberg) in the sense that the French romantic also attempts to escape from the paternal world into the imaginary, literary world dominated by the mother. His father tried – in vain – to make him study medicine: Nerval defied his father’s authority and eventually fled into the world of the *imaginaire* in the sense of Lacan. He sensed that he would be more productive in this maternal world than in the world of science or in that of a bourgeois profession. This contrast between a maternal and a paternal world reappears in some of Baudelaire’s texts.

The case of Baudelaire

We find a similar situation in the case of Baudelaire which is the main model here. His biography is well known: his father died early on and his mother remarried General Aupick whom Baudelaire hated. The situation is sketched in a few words by Jean-Paul Sartre in his book on Baudelaire: “Madame Aupick is certainly the only person for whom Baudelaire ever had tender feelings. For him, she remains indissolubly associated with a happy and carefree childhood.” (Sartre 74)

The love for the inaccessible mother and the hatred of the father is a constellation deeply rooted in the anomie of French society. After the revolution of 1789, the Napoleonic Wars and the uprisings of 1830, French society was shaken and destabilized in many respects. The old elites were partly discredited, and the army – I am thinking of Baudelaire’s stepfather, general Aupick – was no longer what it used to be at the time of the *Ancien régime* and under Napoleon I. In this context, Baudelaire’s well-known critique of the bourgeoisie (its utilitarianism, its hypocrisy and its pettiness) is to be seen as a permanent diatribe against his unbeloved stepfather. His mother dared to impose this stranger upon him instead of accepting him as a substitute for the dead father: as a phallus in the sense of Lacan. Baudelaire’s poem “A une passante” casts some light on this particular problematic.

A une passante

La rue assourdissante autour de moi hurlait.
Longue, mince, en grand deuil, douleur majestueuse,
Une femme passa, d’une main fastueuse
Soulevant, balançant le feston et l’ourlet;

Agile et noble, avec sa jambe de statue.
Moi, je buvais, crispé comme un extravagant,
Dans son œil, ciel livide où germe l’ouragan,
La douceur qui fascine et le plaisir qui tue.

Un éclair... puis la nuit! – Fugitive beauté
Dont le regard m’a fait soudainement renaître,
Ne te verrai-je plus que dans l’éternité?

Ailleurs, bien loin d’ici! trop tard! *jamais* peut-être!
Car j’ignore où tu fuis, tu ne sais où je vais,
O toi que j’eusse aimée, ô toi qui le savais!¹ (Baudelaire 92–93)

The poem I chose from *Les Fleurs du mal* is a synthesis of the social and psychological elements I dealt with in my brief introduction and in my comments on the two romantic writers. The first sentence of the sonnet carries all the connotations linked to the modern metropolis: we can hardly hear our own words, our impressions are mixed up, concentration is difficult. The next connotation is *implied*: nothing in particular is mentioned, neither human beings, nor buildings, nor plants. The noisy street also exhales *anonymity*, a concept adjacent to *anomie*.

The second line introduces the focus of the poem: “Longue, mince en grand deuil, douleur majestueuse, une femme passa ...” From the point of view adopted here, the key words in the second line are: “grand deuil.” For the subject of the poem (who is obviously not Baudelaire) clearly imagines a young woman who is – probably or possibly – mourning her husband. In the third line “passa” seems to be the key word, especially because the *passé simple* indicates an event that belongs to the past: i.e. she will not return or reappear (like the *jeune fille* in Nerval’s poem “Une allée du Luxembourg”).

The first line of the second stanza suggests that the “passante” is a young, agile woman: “agile,” but at the same time difficult to approach: “douleur majestueuse,” “main fastueuse,” “jambe de statue.” The following two lines show an extremely tense observer: “crispé comme un extravagant” who seems to sense an acute danger in the female figure he spotted in the chaos of the busy street. On the one hand, he feels irresistibly attracted to her, on the other, he realises that her ambivalence combines “pleasure” and “death:” “le plaisir qui tue,” because her eye resembles a livid sky in which a hurricane could erupt at any moment.

The third stanza is the crucial turning point of the poem because it expresses the romantic desire which is barred from realisation by the incest taboo. The object of this desire must be inaccessible: “Un éclair... puis la nuit! – Fugitive beauté.” The irresistible beauty must for ever remain a fleeting, fugitive image which appears and immediately disappears – very much like the girl in Nerval’s poem.

The question remains what the slightly enigmatic second line of the third stanza means: “Dont le regard m’a fait soudainement renaître.” At the risk of over-interpretation, I suggest that it refers to the “imaginary” and in particular to the “mirror-stage” of the subject’s (any male subject’s) development: to his desire for the mother’s desire or to the narcissistic desire for demand. The sight of the prohibited, inaccessible figure recalls into the subject’s memory his infantile attempts to attract his mother’s desire, i.e. to become a phallus for his mother by ousting the father – who in this case is conveniently presumed to be dead because of the woman’s mourning.

“Ne te verrai-je plus que dans l'éternité ?” – This sentence evokes the final and eternal postponement of the desire's realisation. It cannot or must not be realised because the original object (the mother) is prohibited. The sentence is also reminiscent of Aurélia's death in the fictional and imaginary world of Gérard de Nerval: death is the final, insurmountable obstacle that stands in the way of the desire's realisation and turns it into an objectless longing. This is *one* of the reasons why “death” as a theme is so important in romanticism and in Baudelaire's poetry.

The last stanza of the poem tends to confirm what has been said so far, but it also adds several new elements. “Ailleurs, bien loin d'ici!” – is one of Baudelaire's most important topics and *topoi*. Before I return to this aspect of the poem, let me say something about the last sentence: “O toi que j'eusse aimée, ô toi qui le savais!” This sentence not only expresses the “desire of the desire” as the central structure of the poem; it also reveals the narcissistic character of this desire. It is a “désir de demande,” desire to be loved, admired, to be generally in demand. How else could the speaking subject exclaim in a self-assured manner: “Ô toi qui le savais!” It simply projects into the heart of the fugitive lady the mother's desire it yearned for as a child.

This desire, which has no object, goes well beyond the erotic realm and reproduces itself in space and time. Its realisation is “Anywhere out of the world” – and this is the title of the prose poem XLVII in Baudelaire's *Le Spleen de Paris*. This is the French subtitle: “N'importe où hors du monde.” It is a dialogue between the poet and his soul. The poet feels that he would always like to be where he is not, would like to move yet again and discusses the destination with his soul: Lisbon, Rotterdam, the Baltic? In spite of persistent questioning, the soul remains stubbornly silent. Finally, it is provoked into an outburst and says the plain truth: the romantic, the modernist, Baudelaire's truth: “Enfin, mon âme fait explosion, et sagement elle me crie: ‘N'importe où! N'importe où! Pourvue que ce soit hors de ce monde!’” (Baudelaire 357)

In other words, the soul rejects the object and turns the desire into an impossible desire, into *longing*. We find this longing right at the beginning of Baudelaire's *Le Spleen de Paris*, in the famous dialogue in which the stranger (the poet) is asked what he likes best: father, mother, sister, brother, friends, fatherland, beauty, God. At last the stranger answers – in analogy to the soul with whom the poet has a lengthy discussion – “J'aime les nuages... les nuages qui passent... là-bas... là-bas... les merveilleux nuages!” (277)

Apart from “aimer,” the two key words of the last sentence of this prose poem are: “passent” and “nuages.” The word “passer” may be read

as referring to the poem “A une passante:” Once more, it is the fugitive and elusive object, the object you cannot ever get hold of, yet that is fervently desired: “les nuages qui passent,” “the passing clouds.”

Proust and Joyce: longing in modernism

It is not by chance that Proust, one of the most important modernist novelists, was an assiduous reader of both Nerval and Baudelaire. In conjunction with Nerval’s *Sylvie* he speaks of “le caractère nostalgique, la couleur de rêve de Sylvie.” (Proust, *Contre Sainte-Beuve* 187) He also admired Baudelaire whom he considered to be “the greatest poet of the 19th century” (Proust, *Chroniques*, 212) because of the nostalgic, oneiric elements in his verse.

Proust’s early prose reads like a revival of the romantic and Baudelaireian desire: especially in *Les Plaisirs et les jours*, where the Subject explicitly renounces the possession of the desired object. At the same time, it explains its withdrawal from reality by pointing out that possession of the object coincides with disappointment: “L’ambition enivre plus que la gloire; le désir fleurit, la possession flétrit toutes choses; il vaut mieux rêver sa vie que la vivre ...” (Proust, *Les Plaisirs* 179)

In this text, desire has the same structure as in the works of Novalis, Nerval and Baudelaire: desire makes everything flourish, possession makes everything wither. Hence it makes more sense to dream one’s life than to live it. By now the reason for this attitude of abnegation is well known: the mother, in whose world of the imaginary Proust spent all of his life, is prohibited, and the internalisation of the incest taboo brings about a situation in which the subject seeks the inaccessible and the fugitive – that which precludes possession from the very outset.

In *Les Plaisirs et les jours*, Proust’s narrator finally compares life to the “petite amie” who will forever remain inaccessible: “La vie est comme la petite amie. Nous la songeons et nous aimons de la songer. Il ne faut pas essayer de la vivre ...” (Proust, *Les Plaisirs* 181) The narrator also explains why: in a few years, we no longer remember, recognize our dreams because they are gradually, imperceptibly usurped by reality, by daily experience, and we live in a one-dimensional world oblivious of our initial hopes and projects.

The whole of Proust’s work, especially *A la recherche du temps perdu*, can be read in the light of this objectless desire as longing. One could go a step further and argue that the whole *Recherche* is a *complex apology of longing* in the sense defined here. Thus the long episode of Albertine, a novel

within a novel, exemplifies the longing for an ever fugitive, ever absent girl whose secret life arouses the narrator's – Marcel's – curiosity and jealousy. His desire for her is time and again dampened, even extinguished, by her presence and rekindled by her departure or by some confessions of hers, which seem to cast light on aspects of her secret life – e.g. her allegedly lesbian friendship with Andrée.

However, the narrator's longing takes on new, apparently non-erotic forms whenever real life causes deceptions which suggest that "reality is elsewhere," as André Breton put it much later. He is fascinated by the beauty of Norman and Breton names such as Vitré, Balbec or Lannion but soon realises that a visit to these towns only causes disappointments because the collision of the desired image and the real place invariably makes the image fall apart. He concludes from this experience that it is more rewarding to read the names of towns and cities in the timetables of railway stations than to embark on a real journey.

Proust's work is not only interesting because it revives romantic longing in a modernist context, but also because it reveals the narcissistic character of the objectless desire. It shows to what extent this desire is a desire for demand ("désir de demande" in the sense of Lacan).

This is amply illustrated by an episode in "A l'ombre des jeunes filles en fleur" (Within a Budding Grove): in Anführungszeichen wie der frz. Titel. Marcel, the narrator, travels with Madame de Villeparisis in a carriage and during a stopover in a small town or village meets a fisher-girl. He wants to impress her in order to make sure that she would remember him and sends her on an errand to a pastry-cook. He mentions – *en passant*, as it were – that there is a carriage waiting for him:

C'était cela que je voulais qu'elle sût pour prendre une grande idée de moi. Mais quand j'eus prononcé les mots 'marquise' et 'deux chevaux', soudain j'éprouvai un grand apaisement. Je sentis que la pêcheuse se souviendrait de moi et se dissiper, avec mon effroi de ne pouvoir la retrouver, une partie de mon désir de la retrouver. Il me semblait que je venais de toucher sa personne avec des lèvres invisibles et que je lui avais plu. (Proust, *Recherche* I 717)

(That was what I wished her to know, so that she should regard me as someone of importance. But when I had uttered the words 'Marquise' and 'carriage and pair', suddenly I had a great sense of calm. I felt that the fisher-girl would remember me, and I felt vanishing, with my fear of not being able to meet her again, part also of my desire to meet her. It seemed to me that I had succeeded in touching her person with invisible lips, and that I had pleased her.) (Proust, *Remembrance* IV 19)

Narcissism has three crucial aspects here. On the one hand, the narrator tries (quite successfully) to build up a grandiose "Ego" in the admiring

eyes of the fisher-girl; on the other hand, his desire turns out to be a “desire for demand.” He wants the fisher-girl not only to have a “grand idea” of him, but to *like* him, to *desire* him. The third aspect is particularly important in that it reveals to what extent the apparently desired person (the fisher-girl) is only a *pretext* of the subject’s desire.

In reality, the subject does not desire the girl but wants *to be desired by her*, and ceases to be interested in her once he has aroused her desire and admiration. (The translation is too weak in this respect: The French original “que je lui avais plu” ought to have been translated: “that she liked me” and not “that I had pleased her.” The point is that the narrator wants to satisfy his own desire and not hers.)

My last examples are taken from the work of the early James Joyce: from *Stephen Hero* (published posthumously) and *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. Once more, we are dealing with a hero – both in the fragmentary *Stephen Hero* and in *A Portrait* – who is estranged from his father and retreats into the maternal world of the “imaginary” (l’imaginaire). Although she is quite discrete, Stephen’s mother makes it clear that she has sided with her son Stephen, the artist *in spe*: “Well, of course, I don’t speak about it but I’m not so indifferent ... Before I married your father I used to read a great deal. I used to take an interest in all kinds of new plays.” (Joyce, *Stephen Hero* 85) In the end, the mother herself opposes father to son, the non-artist to the artist: “Well, you see, Stephen, your father is not like you: he takes no interest in that sort of thing...” (85)

On a sociological level, it may be important to note that, in his biography of Joyce, Richard Ellman describes Joyce’s father as a weak character who could hardly represent the “symbolic order” (Lacan), i.e. the values and norms of society in a convincing way. He speaks of “his father’s irresponsibility.” (Ellman 293) This is how a “Lacanian situation” emerges in which the son competes with his father for his mother’s favours: “His mother must be encouraged to love him more than his father because he was just as errant and much more gifted, so more pitiable and lovable.” (293)

In this situation, Stephen’s potential girlfriend Emma is turned into a *pretext* of Stephen’s narcissistic desire which is – like in Proust’s case – a desire to be desired, to be in demand. For it reproduces the son’s incestuous desire to be desired by his mother.

Stephen suggests to Emma that they should spend one night together and then go their separate ways. Emma refuses and leaves Stephen straight away: “As he watched her walk onward swiftly with her head slightly bowed he seemed to feel her soul and his falling asunder ...” (Joyce, *Stephen Hero*, 199) This is in fact the outcome Stephen envisaged from the

outset. For his proposal to spend one night together and then break up for good meant in reality that he intended to renounce the object of his apparent love in order to turn this love into longing.

There is a comparable scene in Joyce's *A Portrait of the artist as a young man*. Stephen, the hero of the novel, is at the seaside and suddenly notices a girl standing in the water: "She was alone and still, gazing out to sea; and when she felt his presence and the worship of his eyes her eyes turned to him in quiet sufferance of his gaze, without shame or wantonness. Long, long she suffered his gaze ..." (Joyce, *A Portrait* 171–172) Instead of making contact with the admired object, which seems so easily accessible, so open to communication, he turns away abruptly as if the object were inaccessible, prohibited: "He turned away from her suddenly and set off across the strand." (172) Of course, one might argue that Stephen is timid, barred from action by his Catholic education, etc.

However, there is another, competing explanation which links this scene to the scene of separation in *Stephen Hero* and to Nerval's or Baudelaire's poem: Prompted by his unconscious, the narcissistic Subject abandons the object and turns the incipient erotic impulse into longing. This longing is of narcissistic origin and explains the solitude and loneliness – not only of Joyce's hero but of many heroes of modernism and romanticism.

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Ljubezen in hrepenenje: absolutna želja od romantike do modernizma

Ključne besede: literatura in psihoanaliza / ljubezen / hrepenenje / imaginarno / prepoved incesta / romantika / modernizem / narcizem / Novalis / Nerval, Gérard de / Baudelaire, Charles / Proust, Marcel / Joyce, James

Prispevek izhaja iz domneve Sigmunda Freuda in Jacquesa Lacana, da narcistični želji manjka erotični objekt, ker Subjekt libido investira predvsem v subjekt sam. Razlog za to je, da narcistična želja izvira iz imaginarnega in zlasti iz »zrcalnega stadija«, ko moški otrok želi mater in poskuša premagati prepoved incesta tako, da se prikazuje kot alternativa očetu: kot falus za mater. Prepovedi incesta ni mogoče zaobiti (zaradi prisotnosti očeta) in želja izgubi objekt: želja postane sama sebi namen, »*désir du désir*« (Safouan). Prispevek poskuša prikazati, do kakšne mere ta oblika želje prevladuje v določenih besedilih romantike in modernizma: v poeziji in prozi Novalisa, Nerval, Baudelaira, Prousta in Joycea. V romantičnih in modernističnih besedilih to narcistično željo pogosto zbudijo izmuzljive ženske figure, katerih funkcijo erotičnih objektov vedno prekriža vrlina njihove nedosegljivosti. Subjekt želje nezavedno izbira takšne figure, ker reproducira nemogočo željo po materi iz zgodnjega otroštva – in s to željo tudi prepoved incesta, ki ga frustrira. Prispevek prikaže, kako ta želja deluje v Novalisovih, Nervalovih, Baudelairovih, Proustovih in Joyceovih besedilih in kako se spreminja v nostalgično hrepenenje brez objekta.