

TRANSLATING THE DEVIL AND HIS GRANDMOTHER: AN INTRODUCTION TO THE  
LIFE AND WORK OF LOU ANDREAS-SALOMÉ

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis offers an English translation of Lou Andreas-Salomé's closet drama, The Devil and His Grandmother, as well as an introduction to the woman and her work. The goal of this project is to further the recognition of Salomé as an important figure within German cultural and literary history and to re-position her as a subject within a broader academic discourse. In various sections, I give a brief outline of Salomé's biography as well as an overview of her life's work and the spectrum of criticisms, investigations, and analyses tracing the woman and/or her texts. In my analysis of Salomé's writing, I follow the trend of those academics and researchers who have tried to relocate Lou Andreas-Salomé as a significant contributor and formative influence within the beginning theoretical discussions on psychoanalysis. My reading of The Devil and His Grandmother, therefore, relies heavily on Salomé's own philosophies and psychoanalytic theories, but the text lends itself to a myriad of perspectives and interpretations. My hope is that this translation will re-introduce Salomé's authorial voice and help her work regain the status it deserves as both philosophical and literary text.

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## INTRODUCTION

### Getting to Know Lou

My acquaintance with the historical figure of Lou Andreas-Salomé began about a year ago, when I randomly stumbled across her name while researching German women writers of the nineteenth century. Her name did not stand out among the dozens of others, almost none of which seemed even remotely familiar (to my slight discomfort and greater wonder). What struck me, however, was the suggestiveness of some her titles: Die Erotik, for one, and ““Anal” und “Sexual,”” for another, make no attempt at euphemism. I began wondering about this woman writing so openly on such precarious and provocative subjects at the *fin de siècle*. The results of my closer research revealed an independent and unconventional woman writer, who navigated the male-dominated intellectual arena of her time with easy confidence and without compromising or censoring her own philosophies. My slight acquaintance with Lou Andreas-Salomé developed into a fascination with my “discovery” the more I read regarding her.

I soon realized that, far from discovering an “unknown,” Lou Andreas-Salomé has been the subject of numerous studies across various disciplines. However, these studies have predominantly been concerned with certain aspects of the woman’s life that challenged conventional notions of femininity, particularly Salomé’s relationships with men, and for the most part, they give an incomplete or one-dimensional sketch of Salomé’s life. Through the years, Salomé generally has been discussed in light of her “feminine mystique,” while her work seems to have gone largely unnoticed in the field of contemporary literary/cultural studies, despite its celebrated reception at the time it was written. Salomé’s texts have been treated

mainly as a means of better understanding her biography, but as Heidi Gidion points out,<sup>1</sup> not until we comprehend the significance of these texts, will the perception of Lou Andreas-Salomé's life evolve into something more concrete, something beyond the subjective mystification with which it has been viewed.

...This woman [Salomé] still has something to say to us today on the topic of emancipated female life-conceptions – as a woman living her life, as an author and as a scientist... Only once one has grasped the texts of Lou Andreas-Salomé, does the understanding of her biography transform and finally go beyond that which the voyeuristic interest of intimate (biographical) researchers brings forth, which repeatedly stylizes and mystifies her as muse, friend and lover of famous men. (7-8)<sup>2</sup>

The vast majority of Salomé's texts have never been translated into English, despite English speaking scholars' evident interest in her, and I suspect this is one reason why she has not gained a (proper) place within a broader academic discourse of literary criticism, women's literature, or feminist cultural studies. Perturbed by the apparent lack of sustained critical attention to Salomé's work when I began to read, I soon decided to pursue my own study of the writer and to introduce her work to others through both my own critical analysis, but, more importantly to my mind, by making her work available to an English-speaking audience. The decision to offer an English translation of one of Salomé's works led to the dilemma of choosing one text in particular out of the hundreds she wrote.

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<sup>1</sup>In her introduction to the seminar Lou Andreas-Salomé: Vom Gehen mit den eigenen Füßen, presented with Brigitte Rempp and Inge Weber.

<sup>2</sup>My translation of Gidion. (...Zum Thema emanzipatorischer weiblicher Lebens-Entwürfe hat uns diese Frau auch heute noch etwas zu sagen – als ihr Leben lebende Frau, als Schriftstellerin und als Wissenschaftlerin... Erst wenn man die Texte von Lou Andreas Salomé begriffen hat, wandelt sich das Verständnis ihrer Biographie und geht endlich über das hinaus, was das voyeuristische Interesse der Intimforscher hervorbringt, das sie immer wieder als Muse, Freundin und Geliebte berühmter Männer stilisiert und mystifiziert).

After several readings of various short stories and novellas and essays, I favored the text that caught my attention to and curiosity from the outset of my long search: the one play Lou Andreas-Salomé published, the closet drama titled The Devil and His Grandmother. Beyond my own interest in the psychoanalytic and philosophical themes addressed within the play, I have chosen to translate this work, in particular, because more so than many of her other fictional texts, The Devil and His Grandmother resists a biographical interpretation and any analysis would thus preclude the old obsessive critical observations on Salomé's life and personality. The play itself is fascinating – certainly as a cultural artifact, but also as a literary and aesthetic work ripe for analysis.

However, self-doubt accompanied my initial efforts because I feared that my translation could not do Salomé's words justice. The form of the play presented further challenges. Written entirely in blank verse, the form lends itself well to German, but it proved quite difficult, impossible actually, to offer an exact translation within the parameters of iambic pentameter. The translation thus required the confidence on my part to manipulate words and phrases and the ability to follow the original meaning throughout. Part of this work entailed keeping a measure of distance from the individual words themselves because I found that in focusing on the exactness and appropriateness of one word, I would sometimes lose sight of the larger sense of the work. I had to balance the individual words with the unity of the greater work – a struggle for even an experienced translator let alone a novice.

Another concern I faced was the question of how well did I have to know Lou Andreas-Salomé to take on the somewhat presumptuous task of translating her work, because, in a sense, I believe it is also a translation of her person. Would the translation be most faithful if I were to place myself in her position (as much as possible at least)? If so, then clearly, I had to be familiar

with her life and general philosophies in order to “read between the lines” and be aware of underlying meanings or messages of the text. Yet, I also wondered how my translation might be tainted by too much outside research and secondary critical perspectives, by the knowledge I had of her life and possible influences on her and her writing. So I worked to maintain a somewhat objective position towards her and this work during the translation process by avoiding any critical research into her life’s work and philosophies. Only once the translation was completed, did I venture beyond Salomé’s own texts to gain a broader perspective of her and her writing. Overall, I deem a basic understanding of Salomé’s life and work a way of furthering the reader’s insight into the text, but not the only lens through which to view it. Following, therefore, is a brief overview of Salomé’s biography as well as a survey of the ways in which she and her works have been read. After acquainting the reader with Lou Andreas-Salomé, I offer a brief introduction and analysis of perhaps her most unique creative piece, The Devil and His Grandmother.

### Biographical Overview

It seems nearly impossible to disentangle Lou Andreas-Salomé from the names, lives, works, and desires of some of the greatest minds of her lifetime. Her name evokes the venerable men she counted among her friends, most notably Friedrich Nietzsche, Sigmund Freud, and Rainer Maria Rilke, and these connections have garnered her quite a reputation, whether as muse, femme fatale, or follower of genius men. Scholarship on Salomé has thus, until fairly recently, focused on the influence of the men in her life rather than on the independent philosophies and works of the woman these men deeply admired and were inspired by. However, she certainly ought to be recognized as an influential figure in her own right and a thinker/writer

worthy of study. She was actively involved in European intellectual circles at the turn of the nineteenth century, and, though she never appeared to have aspirations of being a renowned author (she claims to have begun publishing works of fiction chiefly as a means of maintaining her independence), her writing, both fiction and non-, was widely published and praised in her time and is a direct reflection of her deep intellectual engagement with various philosophical and psychological issues.

Born Louise von Salomé in St. Petersburg in 1861, she was the youngest of six children (the only daughter) in a German speaking Russian family.<sup>3</sup> Despite, or perhaps because, she enjoyed a liberal education and the advantages of an upbringing in a respected and affluent family, she grappled with problems of religion and social expectation at an early age. Her experience of faith in her own version of God, whom she described as a kindly grandfather, was unusually personal and intense in early childhood, so that her later loss of faith became a crisis in her adolescence. Refusing confirmation at the age of seventeen, she left the conservative Protestant-Reformed church. Without her parents' knowledge or consent, she had, prior to this decision, entreated the unorthodox Protestant pastor Hendrik Gillot<sup>4</sup> to tutor her in the history of religion and philosophy. Salomé actively sought an education beyond the norm for women of her time, and after her father's death in her eighteenth year, she left Russia, accompanied by her mother, and began studying theology and art history at the university in Zurich.

At twenty-one, Salomé traveled to Italy with her mother in hopes that the milder climate would restore her health, which had suffered immensely from her intensive course of study.

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<sup>3</sup> This brief outline of LAS' life is derived from my reading of several biographies, including those by H.F. Peters and Angela Livingstone, as well as Andreas-Salomé's own memoirs.

<sup>4</sup> Gillot fell in love with the young Salomé and wanted to divorce his wife in order to marry her, but Salomé reacted to his advances with extreme shock and disillusionment. Gillot did later confirm Louise von Salomé, at which time he renamed her Lou. Salomé's first novel, Im Kampf um Gott, works through some of these early experiences with Gillot and was published under the pseudonym Henri Lou.

While there, Salomé met and became close friends with the philosophers Paul Rée and Friedrich Nietzsche, and the three discussed plans to live and study together. This plan failed, however, since both men fell in love with and proposed marriage to her. Although Salomé and Rée did live together as friends for a time in Berlin, her association with Rée ended completely when in 1887 she married the professor Friedrich Carl Andreas, with whom she had a celibate marriage that lasted forty-five years despite open affairs with other men. Her closest relationship seems to have been with the poet Rainer Maria Rilke, who was her lover for several years as well as her lifelong friend. She made the acquaintance of and developed a lasting friendship with Sigmund Freud through her study of psychoanalysis, which she practiced from about 1913 until her death in Göttingen, Germany in 1937.

Salomé was a prolific writer throughout her adult life, publishing more than a dozen books, including novels, plays, and memoirs, as well as countless articles, mainly for psychoanalytic journals. All of Salomé's fiction writing addresses humanity's psychology, portraying an inner realm of desire and thought, sometimes to the extent of ignoring the physical world entirely. Most of Salomé's fiction is centered on inner turmoil experienced in youth, especially as it pertains to the psychic and sexual lives of girls and women. These narratives are driven by processes within the characters rather than external circumstances. In her biography, Salomé: Her Life and Work, Angela Livingstone categorizes Salomé's writing into three periods:

While the fiction Lou Andreas-Salomé wrote before 1900 might be described as "fiction of desire," and the narratives of her second period – from about 1901 until her involvement in psychoanalysis – as "fiction of fulfillment," the imaginative works of her third, post-psychoanalysis period differ from all the

earlier ones...they are concerned with probing psychical depths and establishing a final control over them. (216)

Another way of categorizing her work is that her earliest fiction addresses problems of faith, God, and religion; the novellas and stories she wrote from about 1890 to the early 1900s focus on the female subject and diverse women's lives and experiences; and the literature she produced later in life invariably incorporates her psychoanalytic theories, chiefly treating childhood and sexuality.

The best-known of Salomé's works are her books written for and about Nietzsche, Rilke, and Freud, and consequently, her life (and work) has most often been categorized into three periods corresponding to her relationship with each. Undoubtedly her relationships with these men were of consequence to all involved, and while they offer a remarkable study of inter-subjectivity and personal desire, it is also possible that the texts concerning them have been given more attention than her other works because of the established scholarly interest in the men themselves. Her actual friendship with Nietzsche, for example, lasted less than a year,<sup>5</sup> but the connection of her name with his, has made her famous (or infamous) ever since. The reason I point to these relationships and try to offer some insight into them in the brief discussion to follow is that I would like to introduce her among her contemporaries and as the intellectual equal of the men she associated with, men who today are regarded as geniuses and who saw in her their genius reflected.

Though she knew Nietzsche only briefly, she gained a deeply insightful knowledge of him and his ideas, as is evident in her highly regarded book Friedrich Nietzsche in seinen Werken, the first text to treat his life and works. Nietzsche considered Salomé a more than apt

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<sup>5</sup> She met Nietzsche in Rome in April of 1882, and though they spent much time together for days and weeks at a time, they never saw each other again after November of that year.

pupil, a disciple, so to speak, of his philosophy. Yet, while his actions betrayed rather strong romantic feelings for her, she did not indicate that she reciprocated his attachment. She also inspired perhaps his greatest work, Thus Spoke Zarathustra, which was written shortly after they parted ways. It has even been conjectured that Salomé embodied the ideal of the Overman or Superman mentioned in this text, that “in creating the Superman, Nietzsche was merely translating Lou into the masculine” (Livingstone 57).

Rilke certainly was drawn to her as to a being of superior wisdom and insight; he was in awe of her to the point of worship. They met in Munich in 1897, when Salomé was thirty-six and Rilke twenty-one. Before their initial meeting, Rilke had already written Salomé anonymous letters with enclosed poetry in admiration of her work. Their love affair began very soon thereafter. Salomé is the subject of several of his poems, and arguably she was one of the main reasons for his success as a writer. He sought her support and guidance even until his death, many years after they ceased their love affair. Rilke thought that Salomé understood him better than anyone, even himself, which translated into his profound need for and dependency on her. Again, as in Nietzsche’s case, it is safe to assume (based on Salomé’s own accounts and recollections of these relationships) that Rilke was rather more attached to Salomé than she to him. However, the biography she wrote of Rilke after his death in 1926 reveals how intimately their lives were connected and her desire to convey her own image of him to the world at large.

Unlike her well-known and much-discussed relationships with Nietzsche and Rilke, Salomé’s association with Freud was not of a romantic nature on either side, but Freud’s influence on her life and thought is unquestionable. She studied psychoanalysis on her own before writing to Freud in 1912 asking if she might attend his lectures and seminars while in Vienna. Her acceptance into his circle of analysts began her devotion to psychoanalysis and to

Freud himself as a father figure. In the collection of letters between them, one can witness the mutual respect and appreciation each had for the other's insights. Mein Dank an Freud, a lengthy letter to the professor for his seventy-fifth birthday, pays homage to Freud's teachings and to the study and art of psychoanalysis. It is one of her very last works, written in 1931, and expresses not only her immense gratitude to Freud but also her deep and comprehensive understanding of his work and how it enabled and supported her own theories on the nature of men and women and human interaction, which she had already explored in her earlier writing.

### Literary Perspectives

The theme of personal choice in conflict with cultural authority and/or expectation underlies much of Salomé's literature and defines how she lived her own life. Perhaps not surprisingly then, most writing about Lou Andreas-Salomé focuses on her unusual and independent lifestyle and the intriguing and often contradictory persona it reflected. Her ability to not only think but to live outside of any conventions of gender or of social morality, her unfaltering belief in herself, and an optimistic faith in the universal order of things all made/make her fascinating (even to those who did/do not particularly like her).<sup>6</sup>

Numerous biographers have analyzed her life's unconventional course and attempted to define and divulge just what the nature and extent of her relations was to her friends of historical importance. However, critics' fascination with her life story, and particularly how it implicates various noteworthy men, tends to overshadow her achievements as a writer. The great majority of Salomé's writing is dismissed as trivial outside of any autobiographical context. Salomé's fiction, in particular, has most often been discussed only peripherally, if at all, in her biographies,

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<sup>6</sup> I am thinking here specifically of Nietzsche's sister Elisabeth, who publicly denounced and undermined LAS during her lifetime, and Rudolph Binion, whose biography, Frau Lou: Nietzsche's Wayward Disciple, is openly antagonistic, even misogynistic, in its criticisms of her.

or it has been treated as veiled accounts of her personal experiences, only of interest in relation to her very interesting “true” life story. The sheer volume of biographical accounts as opposed to literary criticisms and/or analyses proves how Salomé’s personality has typically been privileged over her works.

Some scholarship has tried to rescue Salomé from the obscurity to which her own ideas and writing have fallen by analyzing them in terms of the women’s movement(s) of her day and trying to place her life and works in a proto-feminist niche. Carolyn A. Martin’s 1985 dissertation, The Death of “God,” the Limits of “Man,” and the Meanings of “Woman”: The Work and Legends of Lou Andreas-Salomé, presents one of the earliest feminist investigations of Salomé in her writing and private life. In 1996 Caroline Kreide tries to define Salomé’s standpoint towards or within the women’s movement in her book, Lou Andreas-Salomé: Feministin oder Antifeministin? Eine Standortbestimmung zur Wilhelminischen Frauenbewegung. Although these two works thoroughly examine Salomé’s views on woman and femininity, as presented mainly in her essays and/or her personal encounters, there is relatively little discussion of her fictional writing, and as such, they do not contribute significantly to the discussion of Salomé as a literary writer. Martin and Kreide are concerned with saving Salomé as a subject for women’s studies by contextualizing her life and works within and for a women’s movement.

However, I believe that Salomé’s writing offers a more general interrogation of human subjectivity and desire that defies the simple categorization recently used to discuss it. Since depictions of women and femininity vary from one of Salomé’s texts to another, it is difficult (albeit fascinating) to examine her exclusively as either a feminist or anti-feminist, a failure to pigeonhole she would have appreciated, since she never aligned herself with any movement

other than the school of psychoanalysis. And while she may have used some of her own experiences as inspiration or points of reflection for her fiction, it is unnecessary, and certainly reductive, to simply analyze these texts as part of her overall biography.

Muriel Cormican's (1999) dissertation, Sex, Sexuality and Gender: Cultural Critique in the Fictional Works of Lou Andreas-Salomé, is more interested in Lou Andreas-Salomé's literary works per se, and "the manner in which Andreas-Salomé engages with, examines, undermines, reinforces, rejects, and embraces aspects of the understanding of woman in the contemporary cultural imagination" (10). Cormican analyzes the various and very different female characters presented in Eine Auschweifung, Das Haus, Jutta, and Ma, all of which were written during the last decade of the nineteenth and first decade of the twentieth century and focus on the experiences of women psychologically, socially, and sexually. In her analyses of Salomé's texts, Cormican attempts to "consciously work against [the biographical and cultural contingencies of Lou Andreas-Salomé's life], in order to reclaim the texts themselves" (18). She investigates the complex and contradictory position Salomé held towards the women's movement of this period, but ultimately argues for the literary and artistic value of these works beyond their relevance to the author's personal views.

Cormican's dissertation is a reaction against the resistance within academia to women's writing in general, and against the resistance to Lou Andreas-Salomé's writing in particular. Even relatively recent scholarship of the 1980s and 90s, the ostensible motive of which seems to be a more objective and/or feminist critique of Salomé in order to cast her in a more positive light, still abounds with reassurances to the reader that her work is not considered great literature. An example is Angela Livingstone's Salomé: Her Life and Work (1985), which makes sure to note in the introduction to the biography that as literary texts the fictional works written by Lou

Andreas-Salomé have little to offer us now. For the most part, a discussion of the “work” Livingstone refers to in the title is relegated to an appendix. Exceptions, of course, include Salomé’s critical non-fiction works, since they treat the philosophies and writings of men already recognized as important.

Far more than being simply a receptacle or vessel for the inspired ideas of men, however, she used them as her own inspiration while maintaining a strong sense of her personal beliefs. She was not satisfied with being the empty sign for others to instill with meaning, as seems to be, unfortunately, the case with her name today. Through her writing, she asserted her intellectual autonomy, and the books she wrote about Nietzsche, Freud, and Rilke, show both the importance of the impressions they made on her and her need to express and thus exert control over these experiences. She also implicitly claims an insight into the minds of these men and the ability to contribute to the conversations they began.

In her essay “Die Muse als Autorin: Zur Karriere von Lou Andreas-Salomé,” Elke-Maria Clauss defines Salomé’s authorship as a reversal of the role as muse, because the writer gained inspiration from conversations and dialogues with the people whom she is said to have inspired. Clauss claims this is also why Salomé made it a point to meet people of intellectual interest to her wherever she went and why she kept all old writings, including journals and letters, whether by or addressed to her (50). Most evident of her “reversal of the muse-function” are Salomé’s books on Nietzsche, Rilke, and Freud because they are based on personal acquaintance and conversations. Clauss suggests that Salomé used these works in particular to establish and/or affirm her authorial voice because the references made in and through the texts legitimate her status as author. By including private letters addressed to her by the subject in question (in the texts about Nietzsche and Rilke), Salomé shows her engagement and dialogue with the subject.

To Freud she wrote “an open letter,” which, though addressed to “Dear Professor Freud” and signed “Lou,” contains no private messages but indicates the reference he provides to legitimate her writing on psychoanalysis.

It is Clauss’ main contention that, from the outset of her career, Salomé fully intended to write professionally and for publication (55). Although she claimed that writing should not figure centrally to a woman’s life and pretended to no ambitions (as a creative writer or otherwise), Lou Andreas-Salomé unquestionably felt a strong pull to write, to put her psychological observations into words.<sup>7</sup> In fact, in her memoirs she describes her writing as “lebensnotwendig” (necessary for life), and Clauss notes that it was only after meeting Rilke that Salomé expressed the view that she herself was not an artist and her work not intended to be art, which nevertheless did not hinder her narrative production nor its positive reception (54).

Clauss also draws attention to Salomé’s prevalent media presence as an indication of her intention to establish herself primarily as author. It also, of course, indicates just how widely published and read her writing was. Salomé published continuously from 1890 to about 1930, with only occasional pauses in productivity. Besides her seventeen books, she is represented in all of the various sorts of periodicals published in her day.<sup>8</sup> Clauss relates this media presence to Salomé’s “Gesprächspräsenz,” her active involvement in the discourses of her day (59-60). Thus, Clauss effectively saves Salomé from the margins of these discourses, to which she has typically been relegated, by granting her agency in the role of author.

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<sup>7</sup> Salomé’s views on woman/femininity, in general, and how she relates these concepts to art, are explicitly stated in her essay “Der Mensch als Weib” and in Ketzereien Gegen die Moderne Frau. Reflections of how she felt about her own writing can be found in her memoirs.

<sup>8</sup>Clauss notes that there were seven types of journals/magazines in German speaking regions at the time.

## Psychoanalytic Perspectives

Lou Andreas-Salomé's forés for independent thought expanded with her immersion into psychoanalytic discourse. Psychoanalysis represents not only a turning point in Salomé's life; it illuminates and perhaps defines her entire life's work as well. Freud found in Salomé corroboration and a confidante for his controversial theories of human psychology. She, in turn, found in him the mentor she had been wanting since childhood. According to Livingstone, psychoanalysis gave Salomé a home, "a house, for the family of ideas she had already borne and brought up" (13). All her life, she had been preoccupied with the psychological, with the reality of things unseen and unspoken. As a child, she had populated her fantasy world with imaginary people and lives, so intricately and incessantly plotted, that she felt a terrible burden of responsibility for their existence. She had to be "rescued" by pastor Gillot from her "tireless inward inventing and working away at herself." As he helped her find answers to the questions of faith and God and the human need for both, he also forced her into "intellectual reality" (25). However, the nature of fantasy and daydream remained integral to all her theories on life and the human condition and is clearly evident in her writing.

In fact, her fiction writing can be seen as a continuation of her childhood fantasizing. Freud would likely agree with this perception of her writing process, since he clearly explains the relationship between the creative writer and his or her fantasies in the essay "The Creative Writer and Daydreaming." He relates the act of creative writing to play, "the child's favorite and most intense occupation":

We may perhaps say that every child at play behaves like a writer, by creating a world of his own or, to put it more correctly, by imposing a more pleasing order on the things that make up his world... The creative writer acts no differently from

the child at play: he creates a fantasy world, which he takes very seriously...while marking it off sharply from reality. (25-26)

Salomé's writing had always been of utmost importance to her as it offered a way in childhood (and possibly beyond) of unburdening her own psyche from her imaginative world<sup>9</sup> as well as a means of appropriating the external world and her experiences within it. As such, her literary endeavors seem to have been a precursor and a natural transition to her later psychoanalytic work, which seems itself a form of literary engagement. The prose of her theoretical essays, densely metaphorical and highly abstract, still reads like her literature.

The link between psychoanalysis and literature is made apparent in Freud's own writing, in which he often makes literary and mythological references. Quite often in his case histories he relates the patient's personal narrative to literature, remembering scenes and characters of myths, fairy tales, and various works by individual authors. It seems that literary texts help to open up the text of the analysand, which naturally tends to resist interpretation. In fact, the Freudian psychotherapist Adam Phillips acknowledges that "the writer and the text are typically presented as the analyst's accomplices" because the literary text has nothing to resist with (Phillips 13).

Freud certainly saw Salomé as an accomplice of sorts, not only in her engagement with and support of his ideas, but also in situations of conflict with other analysts who strayed from the Freudian school of thought. He considered her an "'understander' par excellence" of his theories. In one of his earlier letters to her he writes, "I cannot believe there is any danger of your misunderstanding any of our arguments....your commentary is an amplification and improvement on the original. I am always particularly impressed when I read what you have to say on one of my papers" (Letters 45). Freud seemed to admire Salomé's intuitive understanding

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<sup>9</sup> In recollections of her childhood, Salomé relates how she turned to writing after her loss of God, writing down all the details of imagined people and lives rather than recounting them to Him.

of psychoanalytic concepts that he had formulated through science and research. Her rather unique position as artist and scientist also enabled her to embrace the contradictions within psychoanalytic thought and as evidenced in human nature/psychology, in general.<sup>10</sup>

Some scholars have recognized the importance of psychoanalysis to Salomé's life and work but still tend to analyze the woman rather than her texts, disregarding the possible importance that Salomé and her own ideas had for psychoanalysis. Anne Joelle, for instance, offers an intriguing study that examines Salomé's life through the psychoanalytic concept of desire, analyzing her as a feminine subject complicated by her own needs, desires, and demands. Joelle's stated objective is to show how "...she [Salomé] strived to generate and maintain a subjective meaning of experience," to become a desiring subject by transforming concrete into metaphorical experience (5). The very nature of this study, however, places Salomé once again into the role of desired object. By describing her as the woman who identified with important men in her life as a result of her "avoidance of stepping forward to become a subject and find a voice of her own," Joelle denies Salomé that voice which she apparently struggled to claim (7).

Because of Salomé's obvious interest in the human psychological experience, as displayed in all of her writing and in the line of study/work she chose for herself later in life, I tend to read her works through a psychoanalytic lens, though not strictly from the Freudian perspective and without any (conscious) motive to make Salomé herself the subject of my analyses. It is certainly tempting to analyze the writer as subject rather than focusing on the texts themselves, and this holds true, in particular, for Lou Andreas-Salomé, whose life and lifestyle has been the source of so much conjecture and scrutiny. However, such a psycho-biographical view of Salomé and her work is not giving her writing the status it deserves to stand on its own

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<sup>10</sup> Of course, Freud himself may be guilty of a little projection here, if not transference.

as a philosophical discussion on the nature of human desire but privileges it as simply an expression of sublimated personal desire.

In my analysis of Salomé's writing, I follow the trend of those academics and researchers who have tried to relocate her as a significant contributor and formative influence within the beginning discussions of psychoanalytic theory. German psychoanalyst Brigitte Rempp, for one, considers the possibility that Freud wanted and appreciated a female perspective of his psychoanalysis, that he, in fact, expressly asked for Salomé's views on men and women so that the female standpoint might inform the emerging psychoanalytic discussion on woman/femininity, what Freud considered the "dark continent." Rempp thus places Salomé in a rank of importance within the foundations of psychoanalysis alongside Freud.

Rose Maria-Groppe<sup>11</sup> clearly outlines where the texts of Lou Andreas-Salomé coincide with the Freudian school of thought, hinting at the "borders" between literature and psychoanalysis and the former's importance to the latter, while offering some analysis of the woman herself. Groppe's intention is to direct the interested gaze of Salomé researchers to her seldom regarded theories, while attempting to discern their significance to the understanding of psychoanalysis in its development. In order to do so, Groppe finds and examines discussions of larger psychoanalytic concepts in Salomé's writing, mainly referring to her theoretical essays but also pointing to two of her fictional texts.<sup>12</sup> Most interesting in Groppe's study is how she shows where Salomé (in her writing) strays from or goes beyond Freud's concepts. In her discussion of "The Subject" in the first chapter, Groppe indicates how Salomé's ideas seem to anticipate the articulations of another analyst of the Freudian school, Jacques Lacan.

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<sup>11</sup> In her book Lou Andreas-Salomé mit Sigmund Freud: Grenzgaenge zwischen Literatur und Psychoanalyse.

<sup>12</sup> The novel Ruth and a collection of stories titled Die Stunde ohne Gott und andere Kindergeschichten.

...in her musings the unconscious is, already before her initiation into psychoanalysis, anchored as “that part of the concrete discourse, in so far as it is transindividual, that it is not at the disposal of the subject in re-establishing the continuity of his conscious discourse.”<sup>13</sup>

Salomé’s texts and Lacan’s theories are preoccupied with many of the same psychoanalytic concerns, particularly in the relation of experience in early childhood and infancy to the formation of the individual I and unconscious rooted in gender and sexuality. One of Salomé’s chief theoretical interests, and her major contribution to psychoanalysis, according to Joelle, concerns the concept of narcissism. As Stanley A. Leavey states in his introduction to The Freud Journal, “[h]er writings about narcissism emphasize the side of it that interested her most – the primary state of the as yet undifferentiated self – and she came back often in her later work to the image of the mother and child, the unborn or newly born child” (qtd in Joelle 14). In a similar vein, in his ideas on the mirror stage of infancy, Lacan also describes the “undifferentiated” state of the infant before its induction into language, and he sees the mother as an integral figure in the child’s development of an awareness of self and other.<sup>14</sup>

However, where Salomé and Lacan approach each other most closely is in the concept of the differentiated or individuated subject. Both Salomé and Lacan see lack as the driving force in human consciousness and interaction and as essential to one’s sense of self. Before the concept

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<sup>13</sup> My translation of Groppe (34), who is quoting Lacan in “Function and Field of Speech and Language” (49). (In ihren Überlegungen ist das Unbewusste so, bereits vor ihrer Initiation in die Psychoanalyse, verankert als “der Teil des konkreten Diskurses als eines über individuellen, der dem Subjekt bei der Wiederherstellung der Kontinuität seines bewussten Diskurses nicht zur Verfügung steht”).

<sup>14</sup> According to Lacan, there are three dimensions of the psyche. The Real is a pre-lingual order of primal experience that is lost once it can be represented by a system of signs. The Imaginary describes the relation between the self and its image. It originates in a human fascination with form and exists outside of language, and in order to enter the Imaginary, the infant must first be able to distinguish between itself and an other (the mother), to recognize its own image (as reflected by another, as in a mirror). Finally, the Symbolic order is adopted when language is learned, and represents the dimension of articulation and mediation. Language, originating in and continually affirming the split between imaginary and symbolic, articulates self-estrangement, the shattering of the ideal-I perceived in the mirror stage of the Imaginary.

of an unconscious was ever clearly articulated by Freud, Salomé's writing had hinted at a nebulous primeval origin within the human psyche. Later, she also went beyond Freud's explicit theories in her ideas regarding individuation and the notion that the human subject is irrevocably split from birth. In Mein Dank an Freud, she explains, "Breaking out of the unconscious, the soul's trunk grows...split in two: both secondary expressions of that which, in the depths beyond all appearances, is still united" (38).<sup>15</sup> She describes life as an unending attempt, in the death drive, to overcome the feeling of lack caused by the ego's desire for this original union and a return to an imaginary completeness of self. To show how Salomé actively engaged literature and psychoanalysis, and to further Groppe's connections between Salomé and Lacan, I examine these ideas in The Devil and His Grandmother.

Language, Literature, and Psychoanalysis: "The 'Original Sin' of Individuation"<sup>16</sup> in The Devil and His Grandmother

Lou Andreas-Salomé wrote The Devil and His Grandmother in 1915, after having studied with Freud and towards the beginning of her successful career as psychoanalyst. Published in 1922, this play, one of three Salomé wrote around this time but the only one published, is a "half-expressionist, half-classical drama about the Devil" (Livingstone 216), which includes six acts and an epilogue. H.F. Peters touts it as her "most successful work" in his biography My Sister, My Spouse (287), and I would certainly agree that it is one of the most interesting and philosophically complex of her fictional works, as it not only successfully integrates and

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<sup>15</sup> My translation. (Aus dem Unbewussten brechend wächst der Seelenstamm...zweigeteilt: beides sekundärer Ausdruck des hinter dem Augenschein in der Tiefe noch Geeinten).

<sup>16</sup> As LAS refers to it in Mein Dank an Freud.

addresses the thematic issues from all periods of her literary career but does so in a form and style altogether new for her.

In the following analysis, I offer my reading of The Devil and His Grandmother based on what I perceive as the Saloméan concept of subjectivity and desire articulated therein, to show how Salomé's ideas both coincide with and digress from other (more widely read and used) psychoanalytic theories and to open up her fictional texts to and through other ways of reading. Salomé's psychoanalytic theories, though adhering closely to Freud's, also incorporate much of her philosophical background; and her views on religion, sex (in both senses of the word), and art in their relation to the human psyche, as revealed in The Devil and His Grandmother, are anything but derivative. They reflect her distinctive ability to operate between apparently contradictory positions (i.e. art and science, religion and sexuality), synthesizing them to generate new meanings.

The title of the play already points to such a rethinking in its connotations of both myth and modernity. The Devil and His Grandmother recalls the fairy tale of the same name as well as the German idiom, which refers to "everyone and his brother."<sup>17</sup> Thus, the author seems to be referring to people in a collective sense, indicating that everyone is implicated in the text's cultural allusions. By appropriating this title and adapting an already established cultural narrative, Salomé suggests that her work is a retelling and perhaps a questioning of cultural assumptions and myths. Her version of The Devil and His Grandmother is an allegorical play

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<sup>17</sup> One of the fairy-tales collected and popularized by the brothers Grimm, "The Devil and His Grandmother" recounts the fate of three soldiers who sell their souls to the Devil in exchange for freedom from the poverty of military service and a whip that creates money whenever cracked. The Devil offers them a way out of their pact if, when he comes to collect them in seven years' time, they can correctly answer a riddle. On the advice of an old woman, one of the soldiers manages to find the Devil's grandmother, who agrees to help him and tricks the Devil into giving her the answer to the riddle. With this knowledge, the soldier saves himself and his friends.

about the Devil's own psychological conflicts and his search for meaning and identity through an other.<sup>18</sup>

Salomé's Devil is bored in hell and resentful of humans, who have life and creative ability on Earth, as well as of the angels and God in heaven, who he feels are hypocritical for shunning him. When another little soul arrives in hell, he decides to amuse himself with it, first turning it into a child and then into his bride. In their marriage scene, which takes place onscreen in a scene from a silent film,<sup>19</sup> the Devil rapes and dismembers his bride. After this brutal violation, however, he seems to regret his actions, and, in order to revive the Poor Little Soul, the Devil visits his Grandmother, who embodies the entire universe and is the source of all being. The Devil's Grandmother returns the soul to life, and the Devil is redeemed, when he sacrifices his own existence for the sake of humanity by killing himself.

In her characterization of the Devil and various others, Salomé develops her ideas on the split subject and its lifelong drive to return to an (imagined) unified state. She relates the feeling of lack caused by individuation to the experience of desire, specifically to erotic desire, which she sees as an expression of the wish to return, through the other/lover, to the undivided state within the mother's womb. Salomé correlates the wish for this primal experience with the death drive, and thus, every attempt to regain the imaginary *j'ideal*, whether through artistic, religious, or erotic creation, is also an expression of this unconscious drive.

The first act of The Devil introduces the play's dissatisfied anti-hero as the embodiment of lack and the eternal other. He is merely a fire-dotted outline, relegated to the imaginary realm of hell, where nothing real or living resides. The Devil's void is all-encompassing, however.

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<sup>18</sup> I use the term of the "other" in the Lacanian sense, as he defines it in his essay "The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience."

<sup>19</sup> Interestingly, Clauss has indicated that The Devil and His Grandmother was originally conceptualized as a screenplay.

Wherever among things

The fiery vessel of my being stands,

Each becomes a part inside of me:

Itself gives up, eagerly fills me out.

Looks pass through me uninhibited

But beyond my circle never go, --

For unencumbered only means: possession. (26-32)

His “possession,” that is what he possesses, amounts to what others unburden onto him, what they freely give up. This possession of and by the Devil corresponds to his experience of desire, since, as Lacan writes in “Function and Field of Speech and Language,” “... desire finds its meaning in the desire of the other, not so much because the other holds the key to the object desired, as because the first object of desire is to be recognized by the other” (59). The Devil desires the soul because he sees himself reflected and idealized in her: “That you find me pleasing, I can well believe!/ Just look at me!” is his satisfied reaction to her gaze (Act One, 25-6).

However, another way of interpreting this speech by the Devil is that to take possession of oneself is to be free or “unencumbered” by the constraints of the Devil’s illusion, his circle. The dazed Poor Little Soul, to whom this speech is addressed, has just arrived in hell and is told that the little fire burning before her is her own, but she recoils from it in horror. The fire that she has cast from herself, is, in fact, a reflection of herself, that self which she rejected in “fearful sin” (though apparently too late, since she is already in hell). Were she to accept it rather than expel it, he suggests, she would be free/light. The dilemma of the Poor Little Soul represents the phenomena of the *Ich-Spaltung*, the splitting of the ego into conscious and unconscious. The fire

is her “life-blood,” now coursing through the Devil because of her repression of it, something essential to life. The Devil admits to being “nothing but the space in which you flame,/ Nothing but the void in which you’re filled” (180-1). As such, he represents what Salomé terms the “erotic illusion” which attempts to constitute an idealized view of the other/lover, by which the subject wishes to satisfy his own desire for an ideal, that is, complete and unified, self.

The Devil simultaneously wants to have and to be everything. As such he exemplifies what Salomé explains as the fundamental egotism of the subject. According to Salomé in “Gedanken ueber das Liebesproblem” (thoughts on the problem of love), there are, in fact, two branches (or reactions) of our natural egotism: either it feels compelled to expand, to feel into another as if into the self; or something motivates it to retract within the self, to reject, attack, or threaten the outside world with its individual will. Thus she classifies “so-called selflessness” (47) along with clearly selfish motivations as derivatives of egoism. The point at which these impulses meet is where Salomé locates the erotic, the ground of human desire.

In her discussion of the erotic (“Die Erotik”), Salomé contends that the lover displays both these characteristics of the egotist. The lover is extremely self-interested in the demands he makes of the loved other; yet this strong will only seeks to conquer the object of love in order to elevate it, to “raise it onto a throne and carry it on a pedestal” (51).<sup>20</sup> The Devil, unexpectedly perhaps, performs this role of the lover, since all love rests on the ability to empathize with the other, to experience it within oneself, which the Devil certainly does in relation to the Poor Little Soul. In making the soul his own, first as a child and then as his bride, the Devil is also acting on his desire to create an idealized self through the erotic illusion.

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<sup>20</sup> My translation. (...ihn auf den Thron zu heben und auf Haenden zu tragen).

In relation to the Poor Little Soul, the Devil might also function like the Unconscious itself – onto which the ego is unburdened after the *Ich-Spaltung*.<sup>21</sup> The rift between conscious and unconscious develops with the formation of the subject through the relationship to and exchange (via language) with an other. The Devil is “the space” between these exchanges, the space of lack – lack of meaning, lack of unity, the deferral of desire because something is always given up or missing from the exchange. He is what remains unspoken and unseen, the repressed. Paradoxically, hell, then, we are told is a realm of silence. It exists outside of language and of God’s gaze. In Lacan’s terms, God represents the law of the father, the master of the Symbolic order regulating society, a systematic prohibition creating a world of repression, alienation, and desire.

According to Salomé, the existence of this symbolic world is not merely responsible for the restrictions and codes that govern society; the desire such a system creates is responsible for all cultural creation. In Act Three, “The Devil and His Accomplices,” the Devil requires the assistance of the earthly “creators,” a rather ambiguous term, since it is not clear whether this means artists or men, in general, or if there is any distinction between them at all. He asks the favor of their “creative powers” for his wedding night, which really signifies their “power” to procreate. The text creates a direct correlation between sex/the erotic and art, suggesting that each is a form of the other, and each stands as metonymic substitute for the union with the Other. In fact, even religion has its basis in the erotic, as lack, and therefore love and the erotic illusion, constitute the worship of an other.

Lacanian theory posits that the division between self and other (initially the mother) results in the eternal desire for wholeness, the lack which, as Salomé argues in this play, all

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<sup>21</sup> Either occurring at birth (Salomé) or during the mirror phase and the ego’s induction into the Symbolic world of the other (Lacan).

human expression (i.e. art, religion, language, etc) seeks to fill. Because the Devil has only an imaginary connection to what Lacan would define as the Real, he also has no real connection to the primordial or the sexual, but, embodying lack, he feels desire just the same. His desire for an other is the desire to be like or simply to be the other. He loves the Poor Little Soul because he thinks he can (re)create her in his image. He turns her into a child – his child – becoming both father and mother (or God and Grand/mother) to her and instilling her with his own ideals, symbolic of an attempt to re-create and re-educate mankind by rewriting the story of original sin. His redemption of human animality and sexuality speaks to the loss of the primal experience, the Real, the return to which the Poor Little Soul longs for.

It reminds me of

Many lovely animals. Of goats, horses, --

Of my faithful dog, who jumped about me, --

I again can smell tree and field and meadow –

O, this earthliness! Give it back to me!

And were it only big as a mousehole, out of which I must run

As a little mouse, frightened and hunted, -- what are

Heaven, angels, God in comparison! (Act Two, 373-80)

The Devil, existing only in the Imaginary, communicates through fantasy and images, exposing those things/visions which resist articulation: “After all, everyone’s deepest dream stands there -- / Perfect in every way, -- before his senses” (Act Three, 661-2). He instructs and reveals “truths” about heaven and earthly existence through moving pictures shown to the Child in act two, and in the fourth act he performs his wedding to the Child/Poor Little Soul in a silent film depicting childish theories and fantasies of human sexuality.

However, of all human creation, the Devil singles out the poet, the writer, as coming closest to something approaching the truth of the human condition and its mediated experience of reality. Instead of merely watching his performance, the writers in the audience see the effect of the illusion on those watching him on film: “my intention was this,” the Devil tells them, “to set/ before you as an audience – the audience./ How they’re misled: that would be your text” (Act Three, 695-8). They are able to see/write through the illusion of the Devil because he is their source of inspiration, “[t]he spirit...invoked at the abyss/ For hellish strength” (706-7). They give symbolic expression to experiences otherwise confined to one’s psyche, and as such have a closer connection to the unconscious other. The Devil asserts that they know the truth concealed in all of art, which comes not from God but from himself.

It shines from me, who holds the mirror for God.

As with all things, I graciously gave space

For God as well in my selflessly

Pure position: In this way he mingles

Through me the earthly to a work of art.

Like a dark mirror, I have erected

Myself against God, in which he becomes one

With Satan as it was in the beginning. (715-22)

Not only does this mean that God is himself reflected in the Devil, and vice versa, but also that in art, and in writing in particular, God and the Devil become unified and whole, as they were in the *Urgrund*, literally the primordial ground, or the beginning and source of life as it is in the Lacanian idea of the Real.

The ideal, the Real or primordial, experience of being in this play is equated with the feminine or, as Lacan (or Freud for that matter) would have said, *feminine sexuality*. The text disagrees with the idea set forth by Lacan's theory that woman's sexuality is supplementary rather than complementary to a man's because she sees the female as whole and complete within herself and not in need of the male to define her. While she starts out from the notion of a biological predetermination, with the original *Urgrund* as the source of differentiation between the sexes, she posits woman as standard, as the primal or primary sex, and the man as derivative, as other. Man thus stands in metonymic relation to woman; she is the whole of which he is a part.

The Devil's Grandmother encompasses the entire world, all of existence, both conscious and not. All of creation sprang from her womb. God and heaven are in her head, while the Devil and hell exist in her bottom. So everything, all creation and life, dwells within the realm of the female body, which is why the Devil desires a return to the mother's womb. Both the Devil and the Poor Little Soul desire a return to the womb and to nature, both representative of the Grandmother in her role as bearer and nurturer of life. She is the only character not divided from herself because she loves and accepts her physicality, even her anality, as natural and part of the whole. The feminine is the home in which the other finds rest, to which the other, more differentiated element must return, and in which it must envelop itself to remain alive. Woman is thus the symbol of that from which man has torn himself and which he can no longer attain.

The Devil brings the body of his dismembered bride to her in order to restore to life what he has destroyed; yet the return to the Grandmother, the womb from which he came, amounts to a death wish, the end of all desire, on his part. In his final act of destruction, he kills himself by the light of his Grandmother's eyes (stars). The soul, however, is revived, because she carries

her home (the feminine element) within herself. She finds her desire within herself, and so is more whole within herself. She essentially still exists in that imaginary state that connects her with all of life, and so is not driven to ceaselessly move from object to object (or from signifier to signifier) in order to satisfy her desire.

In her essay “The Human Being As Woman,” Salomé suggests that the artistic man, like woman, is more unified in nature, more influenced by “that which darkly proceeds beneath all thoughts and will-impulses” (Salomé qtd in Livingstone 137). In The Devil and His Grandmother, however, the paradox is that the Symbolic order is both upheld and undermined by the same system of symbols. The writers construct an imaginary realm that exists outside of immediate corporal experience and supports the illusion that the Symbolic is, in fact, the Real and natural order of things. However, they also transgress the Symbolic order by mentioning the unmentionable, by showing what hides behind the mirror, and by giving voice to the “silent scream” of hell.

This apparent contradiction within the text mirrors Salomé’s contradictory views and attitudes toward her own writing and women’s writing and artistic endeavors in general. Before she entered the realm of psychoanalysis, Salomé wrote an astonishing volume of fictional texts. However, she undermined the value of this writing by declaring that she did not deem it important or of literary/artistic value. She believed that all art arises from lack, and since her view of woman/femininity was one of an undifferentiated whole, complete in and of itself, woman’s devotion to artistic pursuits would endanger this concept of femininity and its entailing unmediated relationship to life and experience. Yet, Salomé admired the male artist as the ideal of masculinity. The artist is, in a sense, the closest male approximation to the undifferentiated female. Yet, he is split off and confined to a realm of insufficiency and must forever search for

unity through metaphors or seek completion in the female, of which he is in metonymic relation. Perhaps, Salomé felt that admitting any real psychological investment in her work undermined her own completeness in femininity, or perhaps she knew all too well that her writing would be read as a direct reflection of her own sublimated desires and merely wanted to complicate such a reading.

In any case, Salomé text reveals the significance of the role she believed language and writing play in shaping and informing human culture and consciousness. In the “Agency of the Letter in the Unconscious,” Lacan clearly states that “what psychoanalytic experience discovers in the unconscious is the whole structure of language” (147). Salomé certainly seems to have realized the importance of language both in disguising and relating to the unconscious, especially since she had a privileged relationship to both language and the workings of the unconscious mind in her role as a psychoanalyst and as a creative writer. In fact, as The Devil and His Grandmother indicates, all our experience of life is written by (the language of) our unconscious.

Human life – ah! Life at all – is poetry. Unconscious of ourselves *we* live it, day for day and piece by piece, -- in its inviolable wholeness, though, it lives, it composes *us*. Far, far removed from the old phrase of “making-one’s-life-a-work-of-art”; we are not our own artwork.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> My translation of Salomé in Mein Dank an Freud (14). (Menschleben – ach! Leben überhaupt – ist Dichtung. Uns selber unbewusst leben *wir* es, Tag um Tag wie Stück um Stück – in seiner unantastbaren Ganzheit aber lebt es, dichtet es *uns*. Weit weitab von der alten Phrase vom “Sich-das-Leben-zum-Kunstwerk-machen”; wir sind nicht unser Kunstwerk).

THE DEVIL AND HIS GRANDMOTHER

Act One: The Devil and the Poor Little Soul

Devil (yawns) – Boredom, -- boring, boring, all the time,

So this will be: my pleasure for eternity.

Greedily inspecting the freshly dead,

Yet scarcely are they in hell's murky pit,

Scarce they see their fire blaze before them:

I know already how it darts and licks,

And how frightfully they'll twist and turn.

A rabble of souls! What a miserable lot!

Impossible to amuse oneself with such. –

Another poor little soul emerges there;

In long hair and girlish shift. The dung

Nearly blinds its little shadow face.

(stops) – Yet – does it stretch its hands to me --?

Poor Little Soul (perceiving glowing embers from the fire-dotted devil's outline, longingly lifting her hands towards them).

Stars --!

Devil. That's what I call a healthy confidence,

Believing stars to shine above hell's pit!

You seem to have arrived here quite alive.

Poor Little Soul (bemused). – Suppose I am not really  
dead --?

Devil (instructive). Hell's punishment

Should be felt and suffered after all.

Therefore, life survives itself a little.

But only just enough to witness it,

Whereas your eye did remain for beauty.

(Conceitedly wagging his tail)

That you find me pleasing, I can well believe!

Just look at me! Wherever among things

The fiery vessel of my being stands,

Each becomes a part inside of me:

Itself gives up, eagerly fills me out.

Looks pass through me uninhibited

But beyond my circle never go, --

For: unencumbered simply means: possession.

As opposed to you! To whom shape remains

Merely to devolve into a shadow.

How very wretched you are compared to me.

Poor Little Soul (contemplative). In waters down there I must have been  
-- unaware.

Did I not lie in death-like sleep, as I

Once slept in fluid being of my mother?

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Deeply buried I must have been somewhere 40  
 But Earth is truly good; still every drop  
 That in her lap does fall, she dispatches  
 Clarified, purified, onwards home to life.  
 Only as I was torn from primal ground  
 -- ah, all too easy he must found me! --  
 Only then did all the damp turn dark.  
 It became filth and slime and mire, 'til finally,  
 Overpowered by disgust, I pushed through, so as  
 Not to choke on the smell of pestilence.

Devil (inviting). Now warm yourself, and dry yourself out 50  
 At the fire rising now before you,  
 As your very own soul's pasture it burns.

Poor Little Soul (next to whom a flame begins to burn high, throws herself backwards, without,  
 however, freeing herself from the surrounding dung. Mouth and eyes torn wide in terror, she  
 remains wordless and motionless)

Devil (sympathetic). It seems your screams are sticking in your throat?  
 That's because you see yourself reflected.  
 What should scream out of you, since you cast out  
 Your fire from within in fearful sin?  
 For 'tis the effect of this hellish acoustic, that  
 Keeps those in accord without a voice.

Poor Little Soul (with both hands pulling herself madly back into the muck)  
 -- Back -- : down! Just not into the hellfire  
 Kindled dreadfully by our iniquities! 60

Devil (calming). Don't be afraid; just go ahead and test it!  
 Does the fire burn? Not even enough  
 To ignite a single fuse by its flame.  
 It is merely the shadow souls' fancy.

Poor Little Soul (frightened blinking into the endlessness).  
 -- The shadow souls --? Am I not alone --?  
 Nothing illuminates around me for all the fire.

Devil. Because nothing in nothing can be brightened,  
 But look right through me: you will see how bluey  
 It seems to shine around the shadow people.  
 Hell is most poetic: as the heavens, 70  
 When nightly the gaze is lost therein and  
 Steadily new stars are wont to dawn  
 -- Those stars, which you've nicely likened to me --

Poor Little Soul (tremblingly interrupting him).  
 This eerie stillness! -- It sounds to me like screams.  
 Voiceless screams struck back into the mouth  
 To nevermore, -- never again, lament out loud:  
 "Why -- why are we not dead -- dead -- dead!"  
 (Again shrinking back before the snaking flame)  
 -- Ghostly fire in the midst of water!

Devil. Don't make such a fuss! You never learned  
 That refuse glows? Its cold light blinks at us  
 Even from the glowworm's excrement. 80  
 And did you never see lights on the moors?  
 Human legend whispers: the murdered lie  
 Sunken there in rest. And science proclaims:  
 That phosphorous ignites this will o' the wisp.  
 Brain matter: that much at least is true,  
 Because no one comes to hell without it.  
 I'm strict in this! Mind as admission ticket!  
 Therefore: the society you'll find in here  
 Is very select. And even without knowing you, 90  
 I can assume you are an intellectual.

Poor Little Soul (sniffing with disgust and suspicion).  
 -- This is no moor -- --

Devil. O intuitive angel,  
 So disdainful! Then I shall no longer  
 Chatter on of stars and eerie lights,  
 Because it's only an ass against which you now sit.  
 Grandmother's behind is what you chose for yourself.  
 No amount of airing out will help:  
 Every breeze just makes the smell more fragrant.  
 Who doesn't like it would be better off 100  
 Making his home in the lap of Abraham.

Poor Little Soul (overpowered by despair).  
 O help me! Dear God in heaven, please help me!

Devil (reproachful).  
 To speak the name of God in vain is sure  
 To anger the Lord. And it's of no use.  
 The only place he does not look, you see,  
 The otherwise omnipresent, is here.  
 That is the unique quality of hell,  
 The complete achievement of godlessness.  
 So long without an ass himself, God's more  
 Prude regarding toilets than even man. 110  
 Only once weakened by strong purgatives,  
 Nearly de-assed, does he admit the blessed.

Poor Little Soul (while shuddering and struggling anew to free herself from the muck). My feet  
 are like roots clawing in the soil  
 And on top it moves like so many worms –

Devil. Those are only roundworms. Grandmother's roundworms.

Poor Little Soul (in wild repentance).  
 Alas, if only I'd heeded the warnings of  
 Seduction and deception by the Devil.

Devil (confident). Well! A seducer I am, to be sure!  
 My passion and career. Full of zeal

Only to lead you from your self-deception, -- 120  
 Out of cowardice, conflict, fears, regret!  
 Once satanized, you finally enjoy yourselves fully:  
 Give yourself to me – and you’ve given yourself to you.

Poor Little Soul (doubtful, hesitant).  
 O say! Is there any way to save me  
 From my self-denial, my desperation,  
 From hell’s water and fire --?

Devil (smiling). Please believe it.  
 For truly: I find almost nothing impossible.

Poor Little Soul (staring at the devil’s fire-spotted outline).  
 -- How he smiles! Not a devilish grin, --  
 Delightfully he smiles, -- as if the sparks 130  
 Of fire furtively played about his mouth  
 And kissed his lips. He gleams almost as if  
 One could cast off all one’s shadows near him  
 If one found oneself to be exposed.

Devil. Inwardly, you’ve already made your choice  
 You’re being coy, as if still undecided!  
 You should know: As you with both eyes see  
 Through me, your gaze inhibited by nothing,  
 So do I see through your soul entirely.  
 Even God himself could do no better. 140

Poor Little Soul (staring as if spellbound).  
 What is he saying --?! he knows my resolve?!  
 Knows it before me? I cannot change my mind?  
 He says it not as threat, -- he only smiles –  
 Oh would he but threaten!! His smile means he has won.  
 (Poor Little Soul’s wet and limply hanging hair stands on end in horror; it begins, hair by  
 hair, the entire length, to raise itself stick straight around her head).

Devil (laid back). Look at that! An imitation halo!  
 Magically lit up by your own flame,  
 Hair for hair a rigid hemisphere.  
 Be certain: even the genuine gloriolas,  
 Made of only heaven’s best material,  
 Do not arise without radiant fear. 150  
 -- Satan’s saint! I consecrate you!  
 (He nears the poor little soul gesturing to incantations, as he stretches his forefinger  
 towards the flame, which he leers at lustfully. The flame vanishes)

Poor Little Soul (expectantly, quaking)  
 -- What fate awaits me --!

Devil (proclaiming, grandiose). Eris sicut Deus!

Poor Little Soul (bends and sways searchingly, held fast like a plant at her foot’s stem; absent-  
 minded, distraught).  
 -- Am I still --? Is all shadow – without light --?  
 The flame went out --? – No!!

(Aware as within the Devil's cavity her flame begins to surge as a dully glowing stream of blood)

It was the Devil's.

Was to him, what once was mine: Blood.

(In a delayed effort to get closer to the blood-flame, watching the Devil stand momentarily motionless, furtively to the flame)

-- It's you, isn't it? -- yes! It's you: my fire!

Oh, we may have misunderstood each other

But in secret we stand for each other.

160

So listen to me! The Devil will not notice

Frozen and mesmerized as he is,

Why give yourself to him --? Forsaking me?

To become the filler for his empty beggary?

He's nothing but a hollow space, -- a hole!

I know -- alas -- You are so easily tempted, --

But flee from him!

(Sliding along the slippery ground, arm stretched out before her with fingers crooked, even more furtively, almost whispering)

Watch! Above his hoof,

So horrid, I'll scratch a tiny little crack:

Out of this you'll flow -- leave him -- become me!

170

Devil (awaking from his enchantment).

Who tears me from the most blissful intoxication?

-- "She will sting me in the heel, but

I will crush her head underfoot," --

So goes the saying. That silly head from which

Her fire did drain to heat up my desire!

-- You, my heart's flames, don't rush away!

We will not let our lust be interrupted.

Where else would you enjoy devil's heat?

What else is there as selfless as devil's love?

I am nothing but the space in which you flame,

180

Nothing but the void in which you're filled,

Nothing but the pleasure of a night of love.

With my border of thousands and thousands of sparks,

I move around as illumination,

To celebrate you. Now but a bare monogram,

I shut you up inside me with seal of red,

For feasts of hellish delight without compare.

Poor Little Soul (still sprawled on the ground with arms propped up, stares listening attentively).

Does a Devil speak like this --? A lover

Spoke this, -- such as no mortal ever was.

Does he plot a cunning trick, treachery, destruction --?

190

Only love, love, love he ponders,

But of me, whom he ordained, he never thinks,

Forgot me. How it burns and sucks and hurts!

There's no need for the flame to do so any longer, --  
The unfaithful flame that did betray me to him.  
Do I not steam already from the burns?  
Do not all the worms lay bare, like  
Disgusting veins, creeping in my shirt,  
Nesting in my armpits as if in refuge --?  
Could my body only tear itself free, 200  
Could I only tear myself in two,  
And drive into the heart, -- to me, me, me  
The Devil would come -- -- --  
(Jumping to her feet with all her force, her hands stretched towards the Devil).

Unfaithful! Unfaithful! Unfaithful!

The fire running through you! Do not trust it!  
I know it! You too will be betrayed by it!  
(In the same moment the blood-fire burns against the Devil's ears, which deliver the  
insult, and shoots out of them in a rage).

Devil (just barely catching hold of the two fire snakes and wrapping them placatingly around his  
neck).

Stop! Ladies! There'll be no fighting here!  
Keep calm, ladies! A poor little soul  
That reviles her fire so, defames herself. 210  
But you, my two red and bloody missiles  
Inflamed in anger, -- you know that an affront,  
From heaven down to hell, turns over itself  
In somersault fashion, so that it reaches us  
As term of honor, in the highest form.  
Even to man, the meaning of "unfaithful"  
Swings 'tween heaven's deceit and hell's truth.  
And what is more, are not all things to us  
In spirit and in truth one holy thing?  
But God requires that at heaven's gate,  
Through torturous interrogation, officials 220  
Make certain that only the suitable come near him.  
Therefore, he constantly lets something fall  
Until – from the midst of those who've fallen,  
My cherished flame of life did fall to me.

Poor Little Soul (jealously observing how the Devil, his horned head cocked to one side,  
lovingly caresses left and right the little fire snakes around his neck).

As if drunk he sinks back into his play,  
And my blood rolls redder through his veins.  
It courses round and round in Devil's blackness,  
Like first, very first conception of life.  
It circles strangely, engendering from nothing,  
Releases him from nothing: instead of suffering 230  
-- which makes him so sensitive – to artfully  
Inoculate with every corrosive drop.

Devil (to his little snakes around his neck, tenderly rubbing his chin against them).

Just watch: the poor little soul has bettered herself!  
She'd rather make others suffer, than suffer herself.  
Eventually she'll be so well-behaved.  
Already in love: she'll soon worship me.  
For love's despair teaches proper prayer.

Poor Little Soul (folding her hands pleadingly).

Two snakes he carries needlessly around his neck:  
If only he would give just one to me!  
That it would pour into me the dear blood! 240  
Like the poorest person in winter's cold  
I would warm myself by meager leftovers –  
(Falling to the Devil's feet)  
Yours is the kingdom. The power. The glory. Forever:  
Devil, take me unto yourself.

Devil (only now turning to face the poor little soul).

Of course,

I will take you up quite literally.  
As little child I set you on my arm.  
I merely called you silly out of anger.  
But you are childish: whereas your fire flowed  
In me gently, of its own accord, 250  
I must still persuade your little head.  
I gladly take upon myself the trouble.  
I am, after all, the kind-hearted Devil.  
And to be wed – I'm sure you understand, --  
To your flame, of which you were so fearful,  
But which you now lust after in equal measure, --  
This is only possible within the Devil:  
Within the Devil's breast will be your tryst.

Act Two: The Devil with the Child

Devil (raises Poor Little Soul from the muck, so that the ground gurgles, and sets her as a child upon his arm).

The Child (looking down at herself well-pleased). My shirt immaculately clean! The little  
Legs so cute and tummy gently rounded. 260  
Good morning, little feet, you poor things,  
Stuck fast in the refuse even all this time.

Devil. Madonna and Child in black. There is, after all,  
A proper replacement for everything here. And just  
As the baby Jesus was not a newborn brat, --  
Already the lord of the world, -- so are you  
At once child and full of old maturity:  
A human child that entered into Death,  
As Christ entered into life to die.  
But no tormenting wood awaits you now, 270  
Only boundless heaven of fulfillment.  
Your throne will be my arm: from its height  
Command hell.

The Child (blasé). Oh, this old hell!  
What does it mean to me! I spit on it.  
Heaven itself is what I want of course.

Devil. --Heaven --?! Dearest, darling poppet, --heaven?!  
There's so much here --

The Child (stubbornly kicking her legs at him).  
I want only heaven!  
You see: at the first wish, already let down. 280

Devil. You gloating little vulture! too quickly bedeviled.  
Just wait, you'll get it. -- Stand upon my knees.  
(He sits down on the dungpile, coiling his long tail together under him to make a dry  
stool, and turns the child on his knees to face him)  
You're tall enough to reach my horns when standing.  
Just look through them as through a magic portal,  
And behind my back, heaven will open to you.

The Child (eagerly peering through, clapping her hands).  
-- O --!! They carry palm fronds in their arms!  
And how charming are the heavenly robes!  
And endless in number they are -- They love each other!  
Their faces shine with humility. Clearly

One sees just how they love: as one, faithful –

290

Devil (grinning). Too weakly stated: “as one.” Is it not -- -- one?

The Child (nonplussed, takes a closer look).

How do you mean --? – There are not many of them?  
At once it seems the same – but multiplied  
As if between countless mirrors – Does she  
Love herself with all this lust --?

Devil.

She does.

Man, after all, has only his likeness in God.  
That it reflects himself he calls: “piousness.”  
The heated humility before the mirror’s image  
Is called heaven. Whether you see a great number  
Or a single one, never matters.  
For it was always just the one.

300

The Child (shaking the horns so that the Devil’s head wags back and forth). Hell’s lies!  
You’re making a fool of me!

Devil.

My sweet child:

It’s heaven that lies. But that is only apparent  
To him, who glances through two devil’s horns.  
Cheating is truly the most brilliant of heaven’s talents.

The Child. No! I myself have seen on Earth

Many a one who never loved himself,  
Who tried most fervently to forget himself.  
His image of God was never like his own.  
He practiced only self-denial and  
Sacrifice, -- Oh! I was not so.  
That’s why I sit with the Devil as nothing but  
A bare-bummed little child. But he who is,  
Becomes an angel, he gets to have white wings --,  
Here with you, all the angels are wingless.

310

Devil (keen). Straight away, my angel, I show you wings.

I’ve nothing against angels. They are among  
My closest kinship and worthy of respect.  
He who loves not himself, wins angel’s rank:  
Who self-castrated, took the swindle seriously;  
Who, transfigured already into th’ethereal,  
Disowned his own humanity, kicked it away;  
Who damns it and sends it into exile beneath him --.  
Yes: above the waist – real angels exist.

320

The Child (looking through again in suspense).  
-- Now I see wings -- --; angels in vast numbers --.  
But please don't show me only halves of angels.

Devil. Even the swan remains beautiful only as long 330  
As the lake invisibly conceals his wriggling,  
Betraying nothing of his feet's paddling.  
The bottom discreetly mirrors what's above.

The Child (impatiently stamping its feet).  
Away with mere surface reflection – away!!  
-- -- O no --! – Goat's feet, -- repulsive hooves--!

Devil (consoling). That's why  
One paints such flowing garments after all  
About the angels' legs. And they themselves  
Aren't all too fond of looking down at them.

The Child (very ill-tempered). 340  
The fact that *you* display it makes everything ugly.

Devil. You little dummy! It's simply too high for you.  
You grasp nothing of these "heavenly centaurs"  
Otherwise known as angels. Don't notice how  
In them heaven and hell are closely touching.  
Because every angel always lives double:  
For without a goat's foot, there would be no wing.  
Only in the sublimity of his disfigurement  
Does the secret of God reveal itself.

The Child (jumps for joy on the Devil's knees).  
"God!" That's right! "God!" We forgot about him!  
Surely the sight most worth seeing of everything! 350  
Hurry up! Quickly! I'm quite familiar with him,  
You can't fool me there, I know him better,  
Simply call him, "Dear God" and "you."

Devil. Lord God: He's a secretive one. Does not  
Dare to show himself as plainly as I,  
Who puts everything on display: "Come see and buy!"  
He gladly leaves everything invisible, --  
Which means: one should buy the cat in the bag.  
Such have been his tricks since time immemorial.

The Child (morosely picking its nose). 360  
Shut up already. I should have guessed it sooner.



Make it go away! – It's like a ghost --.

Devil (laughing scornfully). Hey, prude goose! I suppose it reminds you of something  
You'd like to do (only from human to human).  
The difference lies not, I dare say in the pleasure 400  
However: You're all only here by favor of mating:  
Therefore, the end justifies the means for you.

The Child (hesitantly looking through, satisfied)  
– They're finally sinking –. An animal foreign to me  
Rises up largely, - huge and pale and arching --

Devil. That's a mother's belly.

The Child. It rises towards me.  
And it's cramping frightfully. Blood spews its opening.  
(Instinctively jerking back).  
-- It's almost like a slough! Bespraying  
My little shirt with all the dirt and slime.

Devil. You vain little brat! Just turn around. Anyhow,  
As a picture of hellish slough it is the last.  
(In delighted self-praise) See: That is art! No one can do it better! 410  
Not even the greatest artist: that that, which is image  
Smells and sprays so alive.

The Child (without listening, overcome by what is seen). A little worm lies there  
Red as a lobster, -- no, it's paler already.  
But instead of the belly-animal, a breast rises up,  
Full to bursting, -- and at the brown nipple a little  
Mouth attaches itself—

Devil (surprised, worried). What's happening there?!  
(commanding) Curtain! Change the picture! Infant disappear!

The Child (in extreme excitement). No! it's not over yet! Just wait a minute: 420  
The little worm's already in a shirt, --  
The sweet—sweet child—! by God: it lives!  
I'm alone no more: someone lives for me!  
(Shouting joyfully and grabbing between the horns).

Devil (in a vain effort to jump up, frightened).  
Scoundrel—! Quiet!— — Something paralyzes me!

The Child (spellbound). O isn't it as if it hears me shouting—?  
Its little blue eyes turn in my direction—

Devil (raging, helpless). Is something broken in the machinery—? Is it  
This damned life blood that betrays me to deadly contacts— —

The Child (sunk in happiness). Tiny little finger! All warm with skin—!  
Are you reaching for my thumb—? You my beloved! 430

Devil (shaking with fear). Grandmother, don't punish me! It's not my fault!  
It fell out of you, of its own volition,  
Alive and undigested it still is.

The Child (majestically from above). Sit nice and quiet on your curly tail!  
And do not bother us,— us two. — Sweetest!  
It's smiling—! Lovely child, play with me—

Devil (pulling himself together, hypocritical). Listen: the infant I'll give you in your lap.  
A milk-filled breast shall grow for you as well,  
If you quickly turn around: or else  
All of it will fade at once — 440  
(As soon as the child has turned around expectantly, triumphantly jumping up)  
Finally!!

The Child (screaming for the rapidly sinking infant).  
— Come here! To me—! my little sister in hell!—  
Father God, heaven, hell, Devil: Help!!

Devil (bouncing the child up and down on his arm, swinging it high in wild triumph).  
My little doll, bouncy-bouncy baby  
My favorite, my very dearest little doll!

The Child (snorting with fury). Give me my baby,—give me! Right now—right now!  
I'll piss on you, so it sizzles up your leg!  
(Empties herself without reserve on the Devil, his legs of little sparks steaming)

Devil (persuasive). Be reasonable will you: no infant has admission  
And no sculpture has a life in hell.  
That would be Grandmother's exit from the front 450  
Divided by high dam from hell's gate.  
An unfathomable occurrence occurred—

The Child (bawls until blue in the face, strikes out around herself)  
Nothing more I want to hear and see!  
Dead I want to be if my darling's dead!

Devil (insistently). Consider: you are dead: can't get deader.

The Child. If I can't get any deader, I'll play dead!

In your swindle of hell, it's all the same.

Forever I'll be seeming dead: While you

Run off the eternities with my corpse.

Monstrous misbegotten Satan: adieu.

460

(Throws herself at full length stiff as a board, head backwards, fists clenched, and remains, no matter how much the Devil shakes, pounds, and blows, dead as a doornail).

Devil (dismayed). Was ever such a monster seen in hell?

She's chosen for herself just what I feared.

By me, who tortures shadows after all

Only to look at something living. What now?

The same old situation: Poor Little Soul's flame?

Then I lose the inner flame myself—,

And just as I have realized what it's worth!

Would it were mine, instead of leftover life

To be flung away from me as an enemy.

(Stands brooding, then determined)

Well now! it is a rare occurrence when

470

Even the Devil is in need of accomplices.

I'll be away from my little doll but briefly.

Meanwhile she may sleep in her own flame,

Till Devil-Siegfried's kiss awakes Brunhild.

(He lets the blood-fire spurt from his fingertips to a high and upright blaze; thinking as he does so)

The muck of hell in which Poor Little Soul

Sat fast, is no longer fitting; one doesn't

Go from a Devil's arm to sitting with

Shadows of third class, but gains the right

To private pit filled by one's own ass.

(while carefully setting the child down in the middle of the flame, he shoves a golden bed pan under her)

See: there she sits! And unless

480

I am mistaken, she already begins

To produce into the golden pot.

(melodramatic) For indeed, has the last semblance of hope faded,

Then the very first, the earliest thing,

Wherein one placed one's pride and one's pleasure,

Still entices and seduces. See here

The little child zealously engrossed

In her great work: becoming a symbol for that

Whereby man shines with the radiance of the highest

Self-love and dignity that defines the Creator.

490

(He lets out a piercing laugh, and taking up his long tail, he moves hurriedly hopping upwards)

Act Three: The Devil and His Accomplices

Devil (Ever more slowly, gasping his way up an enormous mountain ridge).  
— Grandmother's endlessly long backbone upwards,—  
Always upwards—. Steepness is not my pleasure!  
My old asthma— — Bare, bare, bare is all,  
The only thing discernible: it climbs and climbs.  
But nonetheless it leads to the so-called Creators:  
The masters of all fullness—much revered.  
I'd like to play a prank on these creators.  
But—without them I'd the last thing lose  
Which alone I still find stimulating:  
I feel myself embarrassed and in love 500  
And torn by envy around her. Even though  
I feel it breathlessly only as if  
A few small shooting stars slid from my fiery  
Edge, instead of the deception, over  
In a flash—yet still a world event.  
(He climbs to a height; meadows, treetops, hills. Breathlessly)  
Am I at my destination? In the land  
Of crooked plains, the homeland whereupon  
Grandmother bears them all, the supercilious—  
As if she had neglected to pick off  
The little lice—that crawling on her shoulders, 510  
Haughtily imagine that they reach  
Very high, look out very far.  
(Glancing around) Of every sphere of the creator's arts  
Several rest again at the edge  
Of the abyss, gazing greedily downwards,  
Sensing the depth—. I know you all too well!  
The stench of hell, diluted by the distance,  
Rises pleasantly to your nose a scent  
For which it opens like a woman her lap.  
But neither do the others heed me, who 520  
Instead of blinking towards the abyss, gladly  
Copulate with God from a height,—  
They notice nothing in their cloudy frenzy  
For clouds are what they call it: Grandmother's hairdo,  
Her frizzy little neck hairs, which whitely flutter  
In the light and wind high up above  
And, densely clouded, bar what towers higher:  
Th'eternally unclimbable:— the head.  
(Becoming aware of several others, assiduously at their work and business)  
The majority though seems to be at work.  
So industrious, that they would likely, without 530  
looking, simply misappropriate

My little sparks, if a little spark  
Were just what was required for their work,  
And yet I know them to be over-frail,  
Those bold ones! As soon as they are not working, they are  
Burdened as if by the guilt of crimes concealed  
And not merely those of humanity: but God's as well.

Individual Voices. "It darkens all of a sudden."

"Is it a storm?"

"See, how bizarrely the lightning snakes."

540

"It almost

Circumscribes the lines of a human figure."

Devil (embarrassed). It's very discomfiting to me that I can only

Attain visibility this way, venerable masters.

Therefore, pardon the suddenly extinguished light.

But it would always be an inopportune

Moment to enlighten the Creators,

I impose myself upon you only hesitantly!

You shall be the first to learn about it—

And thus not first from the family tree,—

550

That I do plan to be married in the near future.

May I take the liberty to invite

You all to attend as my wedding guests?

But it is not this private matter alone

For which I came: it is the eve of the wedding,

Masters, that does scream for your assistance.

Individual Voices (while groups of people gather around the Devil and inspect his fiery outline).

"Is there still help for such renowned company?"

"That has incorporated the Devil himself—?"

Devil (jovially). Haha! Quite right! Very funny! Yes: the Devil,

But not, however: life, my highly esteemed—

560

—If I may say so: Colleagues,—you alone

Can truly create. The only rivals of God

The lord, of the doyen of all the creators (whom  
I dislike to invite because of the relation).

Only your creation is, what his

Was (six days long!) in the making,—

And yet always what his only was

On that one Sunday (on the seventh day!)

"Very good"— (according to your judgment!)

What am I, in my simplicity,

570

Compared with such magical ability!

Not even in a position to outdo

The most mundane of Lord God's maneuvers.  
(The adolescent fancies of my bride:  
Although, mind you: my little bride only raves so  
For the Lord God's works, he is not  
Considered a rival—)

Individual Voices. "Well then: what's the task—?"  
"This brings to mind accursed earthly bonds."  
"A Devil should rather deliver one there from."

580

Devil (eagerly). It's the delivery, literally, that matters to me!  
No task: for my own personal use this time  
You lend your genius trustingly to me,  
So that you all are really free at last.

Individual Voices. "Just throw this guy, this windbag, out already!"  
"The fiery Musjeh wants to castrate us!"  
"What he's suggesting would mean: impotence."

Devil (delighted). Very nice!— very funny!— hits the nail of logic  
Directly on the head: for "production"  
Means in its fullest sense: letting go;  
The highest of acts then means: inactivity.  
I propose such a means of delivery.  
In the most comfortable chairs, of best seat,  
—almost like post-partum resting place,—  
Free of charge and effortlessly you'll watch  
Your work, my work: most primal secret visions,  
Which no occupation ever mastered,  
Stand finished within a framework of all arts.  
No, not through me! what am I compared with you?  
Only through your gift would Devil's wedding  
(—An occasion, after all, dear gentlemen,  
Irreproducible, not even in eons!— )  
Become a revelation of fantastic  
Kind of godly-devilish-earthly forces.  
(Among the groups, silence, but uneasiness)

590

600

Devil (modestly). All this mute for and against me, I feel it,  
And want to grant it space; already tiresome,  
I have, for far too long, been keeping you:  
Please allow me to remove myself.  
One step into the void,—and I'd vanish!  
Meanwhile advise yourselves uninfluenced:  
Your decision will then announce itself to me.

610

(It begins to lighten, the fire-dotted Devil outline pales; at the same time the Devil's voice  
sounds, as if from far away, but more openly inviting, more intimate in tone)

Devil. In the case that you bestow upon me  
Such a gift, it is understood  
That, all art aside, everyone  
Has one dearest wish good from me;  
He need only think it secretly,—  
And were it ever so shunned or forbidden a wish,  
One never dared, never known to oneself,—  
As heinous as it may be: it will be fulfilled. 620  
(The unrest and motion in the groups intensifies, some already look as if they might  
approach the Devil and inform him of their decision in agreement, as it turns light as day  
and the Devil thereby invisible)

Devil (stretching himself contentedly, whereby he gradually stretches out his border to such an  
extent that he envelopes everything around him).  
How good to stretch out after such constraint!  
For me that means: out from masses of people.  
But for them it means: my absence. No one suspects  
That I've set up camp above their lands,  
Along the entire length: a puzzle picture  
Within which they are drawn and entrapped.  
(Settles himself over the hills, yawning):  
This visibility has tired me!  
It's almost like: walking under God's eyes.  
Even for myself it's no enjoyment  
To eye the constant changing of humanity. 630  
All in all, it usually suffices for me,  
What I use of it for my own purposes.  
But, luckily, that is the same with all  
(Looking down upon the people who move about within his outline as if fenced in,  
advising one another) The lonely ones are driven to one another!  
Like hens before a line a chalk: just so  
My outline holds them unavoidably spellbound.  
In it, they must become like a herd.  
And not even shepherdless: where two, three  
Have congregated together in my name,  
I am there in their midst. Amen. 640  
(observing in amusement) Look—look! Even though I drove them  
Together, these peaceful people are loaded with rancor,  
Since they are no longer engrossed in themselves.  
Their day recedes, soon it will darken naturally;  
A good thing really, that my presence does  
So simplify the complicated souls,  
How my outline inhibits their free stride.  
What they can still feel: greed of the senses,  
Envy, pride, timidity, lethargy, vanity,  
Quite suffice; they hate and then they love, 650  
First rancor, then harmony: my calculation's correct,

(He raises himself up slowly, closing up the widely stretched spark-lines of his limbs, amid yawning and sighing) But oh! What's correct is not always exciting.

No sooner do I enter the mix—already

Even creative soul dissolves to boredom.

Well now, nevertheless: the deal is made.

So onwards! For I assume my little doll

Has made hers also, in the golden pot.

(Quickly falling dusk, that only indistinctly reveals how in place of the abyss a high smooth wall pushes up; in place of bush, rock, trees, comfortable armchairs line up in rows, and on them, more and more people take place in anxious anticipation. The wall's surface lights up; in quick succession, animated pictures glide across it. Music sounds)

Devil. Heard I the disappointed cry: Cinema?

Yet followed by a trembling with pleasure: "Ah!"

I believe it without seeing: you'll enjoy this!

660

Everyone's deepest dream stands there after all—

Perfect in every way—before his senses.

Bringing forth even the still unborn.

(spitefully) Just burn your gazes faster into the film-screen!

For all too quickly it pulls past into the void.

Just as the sounds to nevermore be heard.

An act of death this is, the act of living.

What in you has not yet been, has been here.

A hellish film unfolded in heavenly beauty

For you the grinning decay of your fertile power.

670

(He stands up, pulled together to human proportion, before the audience)

It almost seems time now, that I direct your gaze,

You stubborn egotists, from your own

To your neighbor's work, which also decays.

Scornful comparison does work like a miracle cure,

And sweet malicious gloating soothes one's pain.

Never more common impulse made you brothers!

You, who mistakenly thought: God alone

Has admission through your solitudes; alliance

With humans is your only bond with God,

Rabble! Without qualms I can leave you,

680

I have become the master of all your powers!

My bride: up from the pot, on to the wedding!

(worried) What's this I see?! an entire lump of people

Is forming to one side behind the audience—?

(He steps up to one group, that stands around indifferently behind the armchairs)

— With pleasure do I note, dear gentlemen,

— Poets doubtless? Who else would it be? —

That to all this cheap enthusiasm — keenness

Comparable to the spittle of self-praise,— Only you

Have not yet succumbed.

Individual voices from the group. “No, not we!” 690  
“May others’ arts sun themselves by triumphs:  
Ours would have no reason to do so.”  
“Maybe it’s an honor to write out text?!”  
“For another’s work the movie commentary?!”

Devil. You are right. That would be simply shameful.  
Which is why my intention was this: to set  
Before you as an audience—the audience.  
How they’re misled: that would be your text.

Individual voices from the group.  
“Sounds flattering!”  
“Meanwhile: we are invited 700  
As far as I can tell, to our own work.”

Devil. Certainly! Of course! Just not within the frame  
Of those so fobbed, I hope? That part of the work,  
Which comes from you, rolls not into the void,  
And is no spook of film—for it is the spirit!  
The spirit you often invoked at the abyss  
For hellish strength—

Individual voices from the group (hurried).  
“But not we alone!”  
“The others did peer down more often still.”

Devil. I beg you: please do not misunderstand me! 710  
The spirit means: awareness of the humbug,  
(Which leads ignorance to feel godly),  
Knowing of all the arts’ concealed truth,  
That it in no way radiates from God—  
It shines from me, who holds the mirror to God.  
As with all things, I graciously gave space  
For God as well in my selflessly  
Pure position: In this way he mingles  
Through me the earthly to a work of art.  
Like a dark mirror, I have erected 720  
Myself against God, in which he becomes one  
With Satan as it was in the beginning.  
(Taking his leave, with scraping foot)  
— Unfortunately, I must leave. (Even if  
It applies to my own wedding, I say: “unfortunately”).  
For I will be appearing in the next film-scene.  
Not as a picture of something that has occurred,  
No: as incarnate occurrence in the film.

— You're astonished? Everything enters there as likeness,  
Only I, myself reflection and pretence,  
I am my essential being only there.  
(Likewise is my bride, through marriage to me).  
The film will show, what has not come to pass;  
That it happens now: that is for you to compose.  
You have the word: for all of hell is mute.  
So you alone direct my fate, and I  
Commend myself herewith: — — to my creators.

730

## Act Four: The Scream

The Devil appears in the film image: transformed, but for his tail and horns, to human-like bridegroom; dress coat, myrtle in the button-hole; arm in arm with him Poor Little Soul in bridal dress, myrtle wreath and veil.

Moving past them, to corresponding music, artful creations from all disciplines, now joining together for a unified effect, now separately presented in growing and shrinking magnification of the parts.

All the while, the Devil's mien remains the same: inviting, giving; unnecessarily emphasized by the redly lit line of text:

“All this is yours, if you belong only to me!”

— the Devil avows. His bride most visibly shows her delight, gratitude and overwhelmed-ness, yet hesitates modestly to accept so much:

“I am rewarded enough, if you give me life!”

— the bride assures. The Devil grimaces:

“The disgusting habit of life is not to be  
Indulged by the Devil's wife! Instead she rules  
The dead and the living for all eternity.”

740

— the Devil instructs her. In vain, the bride resorts to pleading with most charming looks and gestures; he remains unyielding. Wanting to content herself with the slightest sign of life, she bends down towards the lawn, before which they now stand, and strives to pick a little plant out of the grass:

“This little flower give to me alive  
So that its roots grab hold and blooms for me  
If it does not wilt, I too will thrive.”

— the bride says. The Devil violently grabs the plucking hand: but too late. Already a film hole gapes in the ground, at the spot where the little plant sat, brightly flashing through as happens with well-used reels.

“You swindler! This is all your deception!”  
The fires of hell flash out from within!”

— screams the bride and wrings her hands. Laughing spitefully, the Devil gazes upon her, his posture emphasizing his power.

“Know this, that you have fallen slave to me!  
I will take by force what you deny me!”

— the Devil warns. But with all the signs of fear and horror, the bride rips herself free from his arm, rips wreath and veil down and flees.

As she races away, the film moves further and further from the scene; obstacle after obstacle blocks her path, but despite everything, the bride rushes on, — followed at a calm pace by the Devil, who looks excited.

Finally, a wall as high as a house bars any remote attempt at escape. As the bride in her despair throws herself against it, the stonework opens up to become a grandiose, bright crimson canopied bed, onto which the bride collapses unconscious.

The Devil stretches her out on the bed, whereupon he carefully and intricately (or with elaborate meticulousness) undresses her to complete nakedness. This forms a spectacle in itself, as the film brings before the audience's eyes each respective body part in intrusive close-up.

After that, the Devil calls the unconscious/insensible woman back into awareness/consciousness. In a persuasive manner he seems to clarify the situation for her again:

“The Devil's marriage or the torments of hell:  
You only have between the two to choose!”

750

— the Devil explains. Nevertheless, the bride persists in her resistance and turns, furiously stretching her hands against him, away in rejection.

“So then, you choose rape instead of power!  
And instead of marriage bond—dishonor!”

— decides the Devil. Now he pulls out his long tail from behind his coat, grips its outermost end between the tufts of hair, and sharpens it with his pocket-knife to a point, whereupon it begins to gleam redly. Then he thrusts it into the navel of her resting on her back, from there drawing cuts in the shape of a star. Hereafter, he does the same starting at each of her nipples; then from her mouth; finally, he carves her arms and legs as well.

(Meanwhile, the note of text in the foreground constantly reassures)

“The bride screams loud and frightfully withal,  
Yet, by no means does she voice a retraction!”

(As the last little piece is also thoroughly carved, the Devil stands for a moment as if embarrassed about the progress of the drama. Then he pulls his tail back with careless grace, bows, and turns – without text note – as film figure in a direct speech towards the audience. He raises his hands, pointing out their clean empty palms, similar to an illusionist who has made something disappear)

Devil. Now tell me: who found reason to feel dread  
As if before the most terrible human slaughter?  
Observe please, if you will, how it happened –  
For in this field I am a specialist, –  
How eye-refreshing without blood and wounds!  
How clean and exact in the preparation!  
As miracle mosaic of life and death,

760

In forms as well as colors still intact.

(He refers to the crimson-glowing canopied bed with the finely carved bride, resplendent in undiminished beauty)

Now tell me: who found cause to blush before  
Devil's bridal bed? Without a qualm,  
Every noble daughter – every noblest –  
Can watch the Devil's intercourse, innocent,  
- Observe everything – and learn nothing at all.  
Are not children just the ones, who think  
That the navel is a secret door  
To one's innermost being? Did we not,  
At one time, indeed, through it alone  
Become conjoined together with all of life?  
Memory! Childhood! still so strong that it  
Does bind the Devil's manhood. Preserves the purity  
Of this misjudged, despite his ill repute.  
Could we return home from whence we sprang,  
Who would not, and rather become child  
-- -- than Devil.

770

(Turning to face the bed again)

Therefore, I'd like to end this play  
With the most childlike of all my games, –  
At once also the most amusing of magic.  
I request, therefore, of your gracious  
presence's patience but a few minutes more.

780

(He quickly climbs on the bed, sits down above the carved up bride, and gathers the mosaic of her components to a heap beneath himself).

Now I'll bring it forth piece by piece  
From under me, as in the puzzle games of children,  
Arranging patterns, which I myself invented.  
They are not human beings but something similar,  
Now more ghastly, now more ridiculous.  
A blowing sound from beneath me whirls  
The phantom structures into the heights and lets  
Them sink down together within themselves.  
Growing on the film-screen, larger than life,  
It briefly unfolds before you once again.  
As if suddenly animated by the urge to exist.  
Here you see: a finger joint, – blown  
To errant place; here nipples of a breast;  
Eyeballs, – lidless: from which gazes upon you  
Still splendidly distinct despair without hope, –  
The mourning for the irretrievably dead.

790

(The more eagerly and urgently he continues his conjuring, the more fixedly and corpse-like the audience watches his beginnings).

“But a few more minutes,” – I had said,

800

Were I to request your presence still, – but  
I could conjure on like this forever  
And boredom would remain out of the question:  
Never would the combinations end, –  
As you must finally run out of works,  
If only because you pass away yourselves  
And fall apart like specters. And what is to you  
Decay and dismemberment, becomes for me  
A plaything more than ever, – in the way  
That children often prefer things most unseemly  
Since play is uninhibited creative genius.  
So I call every ending a free beginning,  
And only for you does the end mean: over – over – over!

810

(With these last words, he throws several of the pieces towards the audience, with a scornful motion, as if throwing it in their faces. The pieces pause, mid-air, where the box of text had sprung forth, begin to glow redly and quickly come together to form a word, which, swelling enormously, remains floating above the audience like threat and proclamation)

Over!

(Complete silence. Then from the group of poets behind the rows of chairs)  
Individual Voices. “Like the dead they rest upon their seats.”

“They do not even dare to look away.”

“Only keep watching: their own devilish business.

“Only new works will make it better again.

“But not another, that sprouted without doubt,  
That with it he does associate with Satan.”

“Only he who had nothing of his soul to betray,  
Was likely spared of this hellish tribute.”

820

“And we – who did know it – without knowing it – ?”

Was this our dream then: the Devil’s ending, this “over”!

Of glory -- -- of another?”

“He must fall!”

“We the poets demand another ending!”

(They attack the film-screen with the Devil’s bed on it, as if against an enemy; it, however, recedes before their steps, so that chairs and auditorium remain further and further behind them, and their surroundings imperceptibly turn again into bush, meadow, and hill, until suddenly the former abyss, from which the film-screen had risen, also gapes wide before them)

Individual Voices. “Here it goes quite obviously into hell.”

“Doesn’t it already smell of something hellish?”

“Of that, after which we sadly(!) often sniffed.

“Therefore the complicity! The responsibility!”

830

“Therefore the abyss: hell awaits our kind.”

“Yet – if it is so: then courage! – come downwards!”  
(Several of them plunge into the depths. Coming to before hell’s gate)  
“How gently we sank down – !”

“Onwards! Only  
Inside we’ll see, what kind of men we are.”  
“We are not sinners, that the Devil fetched.”  
“We step inside his house accusingly.”  
With the power of words, to us conferred,  
And to which even the horror of hell still bows.”

(They open the gate of hell, already setting themselves up for their word and clearing their throats, as a heart- and ear-deafening scream irrupts upon them and receives them with such force, that like a bracing storm-wind, it obstructs their advance and closes off everything behind it)

Individual Voices. “Is this scream a space? Is it hell? 840

“Is hell – mouth? A scream of all eternity?”  
“But strange: it all seems silent.”

“There are flames:  
Don’t they stand as if made of red glazed paper?”  
“Around them stand shadows: as soundless as the flames.”  
“And as if they are paralyzed in some kind of cramp.”  
“Did Satan not say to us: hell is silent?”  
“Then the scream fell upon it as it did us?”

(Looking at each other in dawning comprehension)  
“Oh, it’s that scream, expelled by one who was dying,  
And which drove down below, so deep, since it 850  
Did glide past mutely in the tongue-less film!”

“It’s that scream, that echoes endlessly  
From the wall of hell’s infinity.”  
“An outcry it was, for the rape of holy life,  
Which did not revoke itself, which broke  
the spell, - it did break the silence of hell.”  
“Came down like a miracle to the mute,  
So all do listen: someone speaks for them.”  
“For the first time – the last! – hell resounds!”

“For the last time – for it sinks thereby 860  
Into nothing, so overwhelmed was it:  
Since it, the eternally unchanged  
Had learned of what had never been.”

“Landslides: -  
So thunderingly rush the premonitions  
Of never suspected, never surmounted torments  
Through the soul.”

“What does “hell” mean further?!  
Confusion, detour, deception, a trick of the eyes!”

“For through the scream in its unmeasured-ness  
Also screams the unmeasured of what’s been lost,  
Singing praise of happiness unheard-of  
And unheard, ‘til Satan touched upon it.”  
(The poets bend at the knees)  
“As if from mouths of minors, God has made  
Praise for himself – even from the mouth  
Of hell, laud and praise go to him.”  
“The very last of hells became disclosed  
And thereby the highest of all heavens as well.”  
The miracle of hell’s the truth of heaven.  
“The scream screams of Satan – and sings of God.”  
“We, who did perceive it, will proclaim it.”  
“To pen the word was not enough: first  
It must be silenced by the scream of hell.”

870

880

Act Five: The Devil's Visit with His Grandmother

Devil (still sitting on the film-bed by his heap of pieces; bitterly).

To have to dismember, where others do engender!  
And were I to make my bride whole once more: eternally  
The same it would remain. Nowhere a change.  
After all, I only seduce out of boredom,  
Reliant on the suggestions of others.  
Therefore, even if the little doll  
Had succumbed to me: what would it help?  
She then would simply not have been a life-line. 890  
(gloomily brooding) The infant brat alone was nouveauté,  
The little rascal that she won through love.  
Against all natural order he appeared!  
Did one escape Grandmother undigested  
Into the excrement -? However, if that  
Occurred, the opposite could also happen,  
That what she has already digested revives.

(He jumps up, rummages excitedly and impatiently among the pieces scattered about,  
sweeps with his tail under the bed, catching smallest parts, which he brings close before  
his eyes, blows on, rubs, smells, tastes).

Have I got hold of that which stays alive  
Even in the deadest for hell's sufferings?  
This one - ? That one - ? Here this touching tiny one? 900  
Elementally small but heavy! If I bed it  
In my hand, it pulls me to the ground  
As the stronger of us. Truly the greatest  
Secret of this life is full of weight.  
(Peeling off his coat-tails, the Devil changes into his former fire-dotted transparency.  
Turning his head backwards) What itches from behind?

It seems, two helpers,

So pleasing, as I never once had dreamed  
Emerge from me – wings at the sparks of my shoulders!  
Little glowworms form my precious wings.  
Awfully small these are as well, -- yet glowing 910  
As during times of the most intimate  
Midsummer night of love. My back is sweating  
From the little worms, as is my hand  
From the itsy-bitsy little bride.

(He rises waveringly into the air by the miniature wings; trying very hard to gain his  
balance; jeering at himself) This is how Satan sails through the air: behind  
The little worms to steer him, - in front his hand  
Closed as if upon a holy monstrance,  
On which hangs his gaze, ecstatically rapturous.  
-- From here at least it does not go upwards steeply,

Only bend around this corner now. 920  
I'm stretching – the megalomania stretches me out!  
Will my little wings burst - ? Already I see  
The face of the world. – But does it see me I wonder?  
As tremendously as I might grow? From high high up  
Grandmother, starry do your eyes shine down.

(Stretched out larger than life, the Devil stops in the midst of giant mountain formations that fall off into gentle meadows further on. A landslide of laughter reverberates through the night and rolls off into the dark mountains)

Laughing Voice in the Night. You're turning into quite the cupid, aren't you?!  
Only you don't seem to me quite fully fledged.  
You look quite comical, my boy. Tell me,  
What desire finally leads you to me.

Devil (with clumsy tongue, like someone speaking against the wind). 930  
– Grandmother, no! Not merely a desire,  
But also affection! Not to take from you,  
I come bringing for you: see, in my hand  
This little seed, – so tiny – from torments of hell  
I saved it myself! Tell me: can it be true  
That with you it could recover existence?

Laughing Voice in the Night. Is this what you consider a devil's request?!  
I suppose the prettiest of maidens should grow from it,  
So that you may have your fun with it and she  
Will have her hell ahead of time on Earth?

Devil (enthusiastically). Exactly – exactly! It was such a maiden, 940  
And she was supposed to become my wife,  
But sadly her only fancy was for “existence”:  
So I did her the love –

Laughing Voice in the Night. Good for you!  
How very moral you've become –. Give it!  
And though my womb is withered: for one human  
The artful feat will work –

Devil (subdued) only for one -?  
Grandmother, you forget: creation has been 950  
Always in pairs, you know – since time immemorial.

Laughing Voice in the Night. Where then, you arch villain, do you have the second  
Seedling?

This is not a matter of theater, though it counts  
As a little art of life. To outwit  
My venerable womb is what you seem to want?  
Devil (Embarrassedly pinching in his tail, meekly)  
Why outwit -- ? I listen reverentially.  
For you need only open your lips, and it's as if  
The mountains opened themselves to encircle the world,

Full of forests, lands, cities. Like air  
 Of sunglittering oceans' coasts. Your strong breath touches me. 960  
 When you impart a thing, all the powers  
 Of the universe do impart themselves,  
 – to me – omnipotence is almost mine.  
 Omnipotent one!! - For that is you - - nearly.

Voice (raging through the night).  
 All power exists through God the Lord alone.  
 From whom you were torn by disobedience and pride, --  
 And therefore from life. For all eternity.

Devil (rebellingly, roaring loudly)  
 Pride tore me from Father, – only from my father!  
 But more than he are you, you who bore him!  
 (Silence. The Devil listens. Perceives something wordless)

Devil. – As gaze falls from stars, the answer sounds: silent. 970  
 Earthbound only, and yet with secret strength  
 It resounds as from a thousand giant harps.  
 (He has his horned head leaned to one side, intently listening; his tail stands straight as a  
 stick, like an animal in heat)  
 -- The topic: coitus. – very risqué. That would  
 Have been quite fitting music for the film –.  
 And – oh! – how it follows the old lady still –  
 (The wordlessness grows silent. The Devil breaking out in triumphant howling)  
 Grandmother! I understood it! -- -- song without words!  
 You sing of God, who, before you bore him,  
 Impregnated you himself (-- in parenthesis:  
 Quite the godly little maneuver that.)

Voice (ringing hymn-like through the night).  
 I am because he saw me: then I was countenance. 980  
 Was face before him. Were he to look away,  
 So I would be naught. I am – because in me  
 He shines back to himself. I am – only him  
 Reflected. Semblance and soil of his conception.

Devil (grumblingly perplexed).  
 - Are merely semblance - ? Reflection - ? But that is what I am!  
 You're getting it confused. It must be old age.  
 It's me, don't you see, Grandmother! – or – tell me:  
 Have I inherited all this stuff from you?  
 Then woe is me, that I am a grandson!  
 In all innocence, without misdeed, guilty. 990

Voice (Resounding from the mountains that stand closest to the Devil).  
 You poor rascal, – you're not at fault, – not you!  
 You simply misread your own role, and, therefore,  
 Spoke out against God, whom you too closely resembled.  
 So for sin there was the matter: lascivious –  
 That which is yet motherhood, conception,

And is both all and nothing –  
Devil (trembling with fury and sweeping his tail so that a wide circumference of trees shed their leaves). So that was it,  
- that's what was behind the most famous of scandals!  
What could be found in father God's own body,  
His own, as your son, he unloaded 1000  
Alone onto me, so as not to keep it?!  
All the degeneration of the family  
Was raised up to the specialty of a devil.

Voice (Resounding from the mountains).  
For the sake of his people he had to do it.  
Human weakness needs God pure and loving,  
In order to completely trust him, in order  
To dare approach him. So he let you go.  
Allowed this "Devil's Apostasy" to fall from him.  
One has much disquietude with humans.  
For, thereafter, they too cleaned themselves 1010  
And devised a hell for their own refuse,  
Saw themselves through it anew removed  
From a God all-too pure, and demanded redemption.  
And God once more gave away a son;  
He sacrificed the youngest, your own brother,  
To humanize himself on the cross,  
As he deifies himself for people through you.

Devil (full of inward wrath). That bit of cross! – ha, don't make me laugh!  
Three days more of being a houseguest in hell,  
Then resurrection's to-do directly following. 1020  
Meanwhile I must yawn away my eternity  
With the waste and refuse of humanity.

Voice (resounding from the mountains).  
You do not have to. God has long since grown just.  
And what man devised, when he strayed  
From God, has also long sufficed for hell.  
There's no longer a need for this devilish persona.  
Only - : you enjoyed yourself splendidly in the role.

Devil (bursting with scorn). Because the pure lord God created me thus!  
To afterwards lament: "What a shame."  
How vain is my eldest, how black! Only too good 1030  
That he keeps his distance from –

Voice (resounding from the mountains). Satan!  
Your God speaks differently, - says: "Enter me!"

Devil (despairing). I was seducer: me you want to seduce?  
Me, who himself serves with your lies?  
Entering God means: death, decay, rotting.

Voice (resounding from the mountains).  
You only know the death that you have played,

The death of hell among those who've fallen out,  
 Who themselves divided and dismembered.  
 Entering God means: becoming total wholeness, 1040  
 No longer in pieces: limitless. Not dead: God.  
 It would be an easy task, to save you as well:  
 If only I unveil my moon, my nightly  
 Light, extinguishes your little sparks,  
 Extinguishes in you, what separated  
 And held you deceptively from the fullness of being.  
 Mere pale moonshine, even borrowed light,  
 Not just the sun, already deletes your pretense.  
 Devil (deeply depressed). You speak of it, as if it were the vainest.  
 Voice (resounding from the mountains).  
 You would not be in vain: as destroyer godlike, 1050  
 If you, destroyer, were to destroy yourself.  
 Devil (listening attentively, hesitant).  
 -- Like God I'd become? If once more, -- completely  
 I'd become what I was: protest, denial?  
 To eliminate the mistakes, of which you are  
 Ashamed in secret -- which I pay for you --?  
 Well then! How about if I do it, Grandmother?!  
 (Puffs himself up) Destroyer and -- completer!  
 - On to the test!  
 Bring it out, that old heavenly body,  
 -- stars I mean. This thing must be made fun of 1060  
 It does not sense, what powerful thing it does.  
 Father God himself does not suspect it  
 On his throne, which I alone supported  
 For thousands of years so that it does not wobble.  
 Father has business, must follow his people, so that  
 Their incense rises sweetly to his nose.  
 What does he suspect of the ambition  
 Of such an heroic deed, that without glory,  
 Without the applause of others even still  
 Takes foreign guilt upon itself to outshine -- 1070  
 Even God.  
 (Behind the tips of the mountains, the moon rises. The Devil, with grand gesture, his  
 horned head back, his tail a little raised, steps on the moon's border as if up to a podium.  
 With emphasis) Father! If it is possible,  
 Then may I not be spared the dregs of this bitter  
 Cup, - since you will certainly not drink it.  
 You mountains! Watch me: watch, Satan dies!  
 Father God's eldest, of highest nobility -- nearly  
 Still more than God: his most secret and most  
 Intimate, which God anxiously renounces.  
 The Father stands in shame before his Son:

“Leave that, dear Father,” says the son to him,  
“If you have blackened me, then I do more:  
I judge myself – that you will not be judged!

1080

Act Six: Devil's Death

I

Devil (cautiously stepping away from the moon-border, seizes the end of his tail and holds it into the moonlight).

-- First to test it --. Au! Grandmother, au!  
It hurts terribly! It burns holes! What just  
Was still a little part of me – is gone!  
My glorious tuft of tail is gone!  
(Lashing out incautiously with his tail due to the pain)

Grandmother,  
Would you stop for a moment with that damned light!  
I did not set out for this -- -- that it eats my tail!  
You dear tail, you my cheerfulness 1090  
With which I wag, wrath, with which I whip, –  
Still more: you my most discreet replacement  
For that most irreplaceable! – barely time  
To mourn my tuft, and already my tail is gone.  
It was like an ominous repentance,  
That I tormented others; – from now on  
I'd do it no more, – if it would not happen to me.  
(Full of despair, bucking his horns against the moonlight: in fury as well as in the will to  
expose himself to it)

-- Already one horn gone -- . My devil's head  
Soon smooth as if for Grandmother's cap. – What is  
Even the most dreadful wound, by which 1100  
One does but doubly feel oneself existent.  
But I dissolve into a bunch of holes!  
Must pull myself tightly together before them, –  
Just look how small, Grandmother – au! Look – au!

(While he, to the extent that he is becoming full of holes, pulls himself ever smaller  
together, tiny little sparks flicker from his shoulder-wings)

Devil (anxiously observing his back).

Already the sparks withdraw from me themselves?  
Similar to rats on a sinking ship? – no!  
They're little glowworms, floating away into  
The bushes in order to copulate; -- I was but  
The means of transport to the mating scene.  
But I, I must pass. – Passing is ghastly – 1110  
Grandmother, dear – listen: it's no reproach –  
But hang about your light – just very thinly –  
A veil of cloth, that it does not hurt me so!



Were she visible: it would be no shadow either,  
 In which she appeared: it would appear as love. 1150  
 (breathing a sigh of relief) The deathly fear falls away. The voice  
 Lulls like a cradle-song into forgetting.  
 (He lets himself sink back into the crevice, his slight-grown boy-figure contentedly  
 nestling into it)  
 -- It's long ago --. Just long -- ? No: that was,  
 Ere eternity began, in the course of time;  
 I lay there as a child falling asleep  
 And was secretly very afraid in the dark  
 As children are – who secretly do wrong;  
 And wailed as I do now. But then appeared  
 To me – heavenly – heavenly! the face of a woman.  
 She bent down to me, in her hands 1160  
 The light, from which the darkness fled, -- from which  
 All secret wrong-doing flew as well, for in  
 The countenance of beaming light she wore  
 The loving gaze that calls one home –  
 Voice of a Woman (who in grayly flowing, veiled gown, a torch in hand, leans towards the  
 dreaming Devil). Back then  
 You played still at my feet. And already  
 You cruelly enjoyed destroying your toys full of  
 Burning curiosity, of what might lie behind.  
 And everything should belong to you alone.  
 Around you lies childhood, that never fully gave way – . 1170  
 So dream it then in your feverish fears,  
 And experience it in your dying night!  
 Then rise up, delivered of yourself  
 Take up your bed, and turn: home to God.  
 Devil (happily snuggled into himself, shudders together at those last words, slowly raises  
 himself, sleep-drunkenly rubbing his eyes).  
 -- The moon stands high -- . Glaringly white and merciless.  
 What has happened – ?! Were not you with me?  
 (Suddenly jumping up, then shrinking back before the invading light, he stands tightly  
 pressed to the rock-wall, his arms, seeking refuge, spread across its length. Shivering)  
 So small already and in unmendable scraps.  
 Pressed against the stone in anxious fear,  
 My arms spread out as if crucified: nonetheless,  
 From impending death scarcely spared – . 1180  
 How high you do tower – ! how removed anew!  
 Far away, in peaceful heavenly idyll.  
 Where my light of death glows as a lamp,  
 For your comfort at the dinner table,  
 There you are even closer to – my brother.  
 Voice (whispering from the treetops around the rock crevice).  
 For him too I was once afraid,

He as well was once in need of my closeness.  
I did lay him down to bed in the stable  
With animals who are friend to us. Mother  
Of God I was to this son for the second time,  
And guided him until his death on the cross.  
But this youngest, who said to me: “Woman!  
What have I to do with you!” – said it,  
Because I – am only earthly. – As opposed to you,  
To whose share fell something all-too earthly,  
Who dies now in terror, cowardice, and fear –  
(The voice falters)

1190

Devil (listening intently; disbelieving, quiet).

-- -- Grandmother – are you crying – ? Is it the wind  
That sounds so plaintive and hurt as if it were  
Suddenly becoming autumn all around?  
Tell me: was it my tail that stripped the trees –?  
Just tell me this: could it be for me  
For my sake that it now turns autumn – ?Grandmother –  
Do you cry?

1200

Wailing Voice.           How should I not cry for my child?  
That is not grandson from foreign womb,  
My child, which I bore, visited by God  
You, my son – you, who I love –

Devil (Letting go of the protective wall, throws himself with a joyful cry out into the moonlight).  
Mother!!

## II

The resurrected Poor Little Soul (awakening).

-- Nestled in a lap, against a breast -- .

Just don't open your eyes, don't wake up -- . 1210

O please, don't let the light that penetrated

My lids like crimson dream already vanish!

(Stirs, raises her head, beholds the dusk)

-- Because night was around me. -- Good, -- Good night.

Early familiar to us. From which we all came.

(Raises herself completely, stands still, her hands groping through the dark in amazement).

That was no lap -- no brightly flowered dress,

Wherein I stretched and breathed in fragrant air?

Those were meadows - ? And a summer breeze

Not a hand caressed me so gently? As secure

As against a mother's breast, I rested in the

Safety of the curved swell of mountain? 1220

And what murmurs there, what cradles me,

Is a spring - ? That was what refreshed me?

The shine of the sun was to me a gaze of love,

Sent down to me from depths of blue above -?

(Shouting, thankfully) Around me stood world and was a mother to me:

Received me back into it, so that I may live!

(Climbs slowly down towards a hollow with a mountain lake, situated in front of the meadows) Was this not already known to me

As a child? Was world not already mother?

Nowhere ending, embracing even the strangest,

Wherein one treads, - and all the scent of the earth 1230

And every soft tenderness of the air?

Even into the dark a mother reaches

So that through her it becomes warm and fruitful.

And high into the light she reaches, like heaven's

Vault -- just as her body covered us once.

(Glimpses the rising moon)

It was not completely night. But a different

Light presents to me the native land,

And things make themselves felt differently,

As if they, having clothed themselves in shadow,

Run between light and dark from themselves. 1240

(freezing) -- And it was cold about me. -- -- Am not I too

Merely such a shadow, that no night swallowed

And no day awakened to new existence?

As if a blanket were merely ripped away,

That warmly had enveloped me, so do I fear.

How hard the ground beneath my feet! "Go!"

It roughly says, and is nothing more than path.  
How silent the distance! Withholding everything;  
It says not: "Come!" – remains uninvolved.

The more I look, learn to differentiate  
The more I find also differs from me.

1250

(In an effort to comfort herself, divert herself)  
The moon climbed over the sea. The cloth of fog  
Slipped its dark waters from its face  
And silver shines out wonderfully from them.  
Soon morning-sun will soon raise its glow over it.

(Leans a little towards the water's surface; recoiling, lets out a loud scream; pauses  
motionless. In its whole breadth, the sea mirrors the picture of a woman holding her dead  
son on her knees)

Poor Little Soul (fearful). - It happened here - . Death. Shudder of cold.

It went from here. -- -- Lifted up by the sea - ?  
Was the surface one last depth?

Perhaps it is merely a play of shadows itself,  
Misleading to the eyes? – Or: Reflection

1260

Within which, visibly, invisibly  
Commences what came to pass inconceivable  
To us humans? A secret turned image, which  
The everyday things helplessly misunderstood?

(She climbs a bit higher above the lake's edge, to overlook the water's surface fully;  
changes this vantage point as well, upwards and downwards, taking in the image from  
ever-changing angles)

- It is, – it remains! – whatever this now may be:  
Death goes through the world at such an hour.  
How then should I not feel all alone?

So suddenly removed from mother's hands?  
Isolated, – withdrawn, – mortal! And  
As mortal woman only the sister of all.

1270

I imagine I may wander- here, there –  
Free to lose my way: but not return  
Home. For this woman with her dark son  
Now holds his memorial. And all things  
Join together in the mother's sorrow.

(Leans against a tree; thoughtfully)  
Do I not learn of living and of dying  
First through him – the son upon her knees - ?

Of life, I thought as if it were a mother,  
Who is encircled only by the living  
As her children; thanked her, that me too

1280

She called back again into this circle.  
Her motherhood goes further than I knew:  
Only now I know, that she embraces  
Death motherly as one of her children,

- As her dark son -

(Goes towards the lake once more, plucking up her courage)

Is it not as such,

That all is merely image? Image of faith!

Even what cares for us with motherly love,

Often eludes the gaze on existence: wants faith.

But death as well, – he, who with such power

1290

Impresses himself on all creation, impossible

To overlook, not to be understood:

Is he not too, in our last sense, mere image?

Only semblance and nightly reflection of that

Which transfigures God's son, on his mother's

Knees for us to the Resurrected - ?

(Turns to the east, where a path runs from the lake through the mountains; comforted) So

I will await the morning-sun.

It shall open for me all ways anew,

That they may guide me. Even if they led me

Endlessly to the farthest reaches

1300

They go nowhere, nowhere away from home.

## Epilogue

(A house on a mountain lake; in front sits a simple old woman, at whose feet a girl crouches, head and arms laid in the old woman's lap)

Girl (looks up, smooths her hand over her forehead).  
Nurse, how long must I have been asleep.  
And in broad daylight and so heavily –  
So deeply I did dream –

Old Woman. Dreams will do that:  
Much evil is driven out at the same time  
And the waking becomes the purer for it.

Girl. You know: all the fatigue during the day  
The dreams – this is only because he left us.

Old Woman. Not only because he left. But because 1310  
He went in anger. His father's house abandoned  
In full rebellion and presumptuousness!  
One might think: he would prefer to sit  
Himself in his father's place as master.

Girl. It plays out terribly. And yet it is forgivable,  
If since then the foreign, far-off lures him,  
Where no one orders and nothing hinders him.  
No one is smart and strong as he, after all.

Old Woman (smiling). So speaks love – of a loving little goose. 1320  
I know him too after all. Was in the house  
Long enough. And when one's this old and experienced,  
One no longer comforts herself with fancies.

Girl. (eager) But you forget: he left not just the house,  
Not just the father's firmly ruling hand –  
He left his inheritance – prosperity  
and pampered life; he traded exile for property.

Old Woman (reproachful). Don't defend him so: think of the father  
Who is but goodness itself, and to whom  
He would have been son and heir of his spirit,  
If instead of adventure – 1330

Girl (interrupting her). You call it such.  
To him it's just an urge to see the world.  
Becoming lord of even the most unwilling;  
And never satisfied with the last achieved.

Old Woman (shaking her head). Believe me, life's lessons will be hard for him!  
If not possibly – in need and death and deception -- --  
Many a one has had a change of heart—

Girl (raising herself halfway). –In need and death –. If death should overcome him --?  
Only now it's coming back to me -- --  
As if, in the lake, in this mountain lake, 1340  
Nurse -- -- : I saw him dead and dreaming.

Old woman (caresses her). Be quiet, child. These dreams are only expressions  
 For you about yourself. And it's not death  
 That so completely divides you, as if he were dead.  
 That you have roots here – whereas he tore himself loose!  
 That you are here, like those trees over there,  
 That nothing urges to wander, that at the water,  
 At which they stand, and which nourishes them,  
 Bloom, wilt, and carry fruits anew.  
 (With quiet reproach) Therefore: he who's grown tightly rooted as you 1350  
 Ought to preserve the existing state of being!  
 He ought to be an enemy to that which endangers it,  
 Or he becomes, rather than preserving,  
 Self-destructive.

Girl (mischievously to the reproach). But nurse, somewhere sometime,  
 The dangerous did grow from these same roots,  
 And he who wants to preserve, must go down there!  
 When I hear you like this, I think from time to time:  
 You are young and I am very old.  
 More ancient even than lake and trees. I bend 1360  
 My face over the water, and it seems  
 As if I lifted myself from primordial ground.  
 As if the primal image only remained  
 Unrecognizable therein because  
 Waves of shivering wind play upon it.  
 As if behind me lay already – deeply,  
 What tore him loose – what drives him searchingly.  
 Only further it drives him than it drove me.

Old Woman. Dear little idiot – still so little suspecting  
 Of sin and of the past and of guilt, 1370  
 She stands upon it as if on holy ground.

Girl. Whether it is sinful or is holy:  
 I know not. It is my reason and my grounding.  
 And therefore prepared to submit itself to him  
 Who left us, even if he did return  
 Out of groundlessness.

Old Woman (thoughtfully). No one returns  
 From there, from the groundless. But if he came,  
 It simply would not be him, whom you knew.  
 More dissimilar than your face in the water, 1380  
 He would have to become to himself:  
 An obedient son, and one with his father.

Girl. But even so: this newly risen son,  
 The prodigal son, for whom one prepares a feast –  
 Would he not still bring with him – invisibly –  
 The other, who could not accept obedience?  
 Would he not come as well – as through locked door –

To his home – just as the deceased do haunt -?  
Old Woman (amused). What you do babble! Who would realize it then?  
Nothing more would prove him. No one would know him. 1390  
Girl. – I, Nurse, – Nurse: I would recognize him.  
Old Woman. Well, he would be of no importance. Little  
Ghost bared of his living and his shelter!  
May he have passed. God have mercy on him!  
Would a future nowhere be saved for him  
That would help him once more into life.  
Girl. -- Nurse – Nurse: not even within me -- ?

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