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## OF HATRED AND SOLITUDE IN THE WORKS OF MARY SHELLEY AND E. M. CIORAN

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ȘTEFAN BOLEA\*

**Abstract** Despite the fact that Mary Shelley and E. M. Cioran have never been previously analyzed in the same context (they belong not only to different ages but also to divergent genres), we will find that they share at least two similar themes. The motif of solitude, common among Romantic poets (Coleridge, Byron, Poe), finds a deep expression in Shelley's *Frankenstein* and in Cioran's early oeuvre. A more thorough investigation of the British novelist and the Romanian-French self-described "anti-philosopher" discloses that hatred (a theme that is not frequently researched from a philosophical point of view) might be another of their obsessions. The concept of the *nihilistic not-man* becomes useful when we will follow the tripartite shape of hatred (of others, of myself and of God) not only in literature or philosophy but also in pop culture.

**Keywords** Romantic solitude, radical alterity, self-hatred, nihilism, life-in-death, not-man, the dissolution of the pattern of likeness

### Romanticism and Nihilism: Mary Shelley and E. M. Cioran

Cioran's early work contains many post-Romantic features: the fierce (almost extreme) individualism (a trait shared with Kierkegaard and Stirner, among philosophers, but also present in the works of poets such as Jean Paul and Byron), the antihumanism and obvious misanthropy of his diatribes (in the 19<sup>th</sup> century tradition of Schopenhauer, Nietzsche and Mainländer), his focus on the "night soul", on the dark side of being (a process similar to the Romantic discovery of the unconscious, anticipating the discoveries of psychoanalysis), his anti-intellectualism and criticism of the decadence of Western civilization (influenced by theoreticians such as Feuerbach, Nietzsche, Weininger, and Spengler), his reactionary radicalism and dismissal of the values of Enlightenment (we might remember here that Romanticism is considered a counter-Enlightenment by D. J. Moores). Moreover, his entire

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work can be described as a meditation on the “continuous ending” of European culture, of what Kierkegaard called in another context “agony” or “deathless death”. This theme, which became preeminent in the *fin de siècle* literature, connects Cioran with the Romantics through the necessary link of Symbolist theoreticians such as Charles Baudelaire, Lautréamont, Walter Pater and Oscar Wilde.

The feeling of ontic isolation (and the related themes of misanthropy and antihumanism) which connects Cioran to Mary Shelley and to the rest of the British Romantics (such as Coleridge, Byron, P. B. Shelley, Keats or William Cowper), is one of Mary Shelley’s trademarks in both *Frankenstein* and *The Last Man*. One has the feeling that Cioran is “the last man,” when reading *On the Heights of Despair* or *The Twilight of Thoughts*. Cioran’s break from mankind, his hyperbolic separation from the “everyday” “commonsensical” reality reminds us of Mary Shelley’s unnamed monster, of Byron’s Cain and Manfred, of Lermontov’s demon or of Lautréamont’s anti-hero. His excesses make us feel that we are in the presence of a radical alterity of humanity, and that our normalcy is a symptom of mediocrity (as both Cioran and Shestov argue). Of course, Cioran’s modern nihilism from the works of the 1930s and 1940s is more multifaceted than the nascent nihilism of his Romantic predecessors (because it includes elements from German expressionism, Italian futurism and surrealism). However, the post-Romantic dimension of his work is stronger: individualism and isolation, antihumanism and hatred for mankind are in fact Romantic innovations (and also Cioran’s style from his Romanian books is reminiscent to German Romanticism). Moreover, the “classical” Romantic heroes (Manfred, Werther or Hyperion) situate themselves in a pre-Cioranian position when rethinking the relationship between the I and the others, the I and God, and also the division between I and I (a theme Jean Paul borrowed from Fichte). Cioran’s auctorial ego from *The Heights of Despair* breaks free from the Heideggerian *In-der-Welt-Sein*, becoming a shattered mirror of the self, reflecting only the *not-man* (a reference to Baudelaire’s “looking glass of the shrew” and to Maupassant’s “empty mirror”). Moreover, we can connect this auctorial ego with Mary Shelley’s Luciferian reflections of the unnamed monsters through the hermeneutic link of Nietzsche’s dissociated journal from *Ecce homo*. However, there are many other links, as we shall see: Goethe’s definition of madness as solitude, Schopenhauer’s conception of life as negativity, Poe’s conception of loneliness, the Freudian constellation of paternal complexes, and so on.

If it is obvious that Cioran’s (post-)Romanticism is a stronger feature than his attachment to avant-garde, we can also argue that Mary Shelley is a nihilist. Formed in the intellectual circle of British Romanticism (Byron, P. B. Shelley, and Keats), Mary Shelley’s heroes share this ambivalent position between ego, alterity, and divinity. Most of her characters are intrinsically divided (and their hatred of God and others is, as we shall see, a symptom of self-loathing). The monster from *Frankenstein*, like Milton’s Lucifer, fights against himself just as much as he combats God: one might claim that the rebellion against divinity is a revolt against the self, because human beings share – in Augustinian fashion – a divine core. M. Shelley’s monstrous *not-man* (a concept we shall further elaborate) breaks from the pattern of “likeness,” becoming, like Cioran’s narrator, a version of the radical alterity of mankind. It is also clear that her antihumanism is a consequence of her “war with transcendence”: that the

death of God (a concept anticipated by Hegel and Jean Paul) leads to the “death of man”, to the demise of a certain type of human being (and the arrival of the “new gods”, of the not-men). The journey of her hero to the “North pole of being” (the geographic ontology of absolute negation) is also symptomatic to her nihilism understood as dissociation and breaking from the shackles of normalcy: first we abandon the others, then we abandon divinity, and in the end we understand that we are running away from ourselves.

### Romantic Disconnectedness

The theme of solitude, of “isolism” (Sade), of the exceptional Romantic subject (separated from the Heideggerian existential *In-der-Welt-Sein*) is cardinal in Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*. Among others, Coleridge, Byron and Poe develop this topic in their poems. The following quote from Coleridge’s *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* is one of Mary Shelley’s favourite fragments and she had it copied in her journal.

Alone, alone, all, all alone,  
Alone on a wide wide sea!  
And never a saint took pity on  
My soul in agony.<sup>1</sup>

These stanzas give the feeling of a fundamental ontic isolation, a subject familiar to the author of the *The Last Man*. The sea is seen as a vast prison or an existential desert where the subject is separated from the inherent structures of intersubjectivity, becoming a split personality. “It was the will of Providence that I should pursue my pilgrimage *alone*”, Coleridge wrote. This issue is further mirrored in Mary Shelley’s journal: “Loneliness has been the curse of my life.”<sup>2</sup> Lord Byron’s Faustian character, Manfred, also gives an interesting account of isolism:

From my youth upwards  
My Spirit walk’d not with the souls of men  
Nor look’d upon the earth with human eyes;  
The thirst of their ambition was not mine,  
The aim of their existence was not mine;  
My joys, my grief, my passions, and my powers,  
Made me a stranger; though I wore the form,

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<sup>1</sup> Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, ed. Millicent Rose (New York: Dover Publications, 1970), 32.

<sup>2</sup> Coleridge and M. Shelley quoted in Beth Lau, “Romantic Ambivalence in *Frankenstein* and *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*,” in Beth Lau, ed., *Fellow Romantics: Male and Female British Writers, 1790–1835*, (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), 81.

I had no sympathy with breathing flesh ...<sup>3</sup>

If Coleridge's text was an expression of the Romantic melancholy, akin to what is nowadays diagnosed as clinical depression,<sup>4</sup> Byron's tone is rather manic, suggesting the state of mind of a hero, who is not only different from the human species, but also much superior to it. If we agree to the Adlerian thesis which states that a certain feeling of inferiority derives from a just evaluation of reality and our incapacity to control it,<sup>5</sup> Manfred's inflation (not unlike Zarathustra's) takes us into a sort of psychopathological territory. The pattern of likeness (Gen. 1.27) doesn't work for Manfred while he considers himself to be radically different. "The thirst of their ambition was not mine,/ The aim of their existence was not mine." Manfred veers into the transcendent category of the not-man,<sup>6</sup> toward the North Pole of being, a zone also cherished by Frankenstein's monster: "I shall quit your vessel on the ice-raft which brought me thither, and shall seek the most northern extremity of the globe..."<sup>7</sup>

Moreover, "my joys – my griefs – my passions – my powers, / Made me a stranger". The Byronian hero understands himself as a Romantic version of the Gnostic "stranger", a term that anticipates the existential nihilism of Camus' character, Meursault. Therefore, the concept of nihilism seems useful for the description of not only Manfred and Cain, but also Frankenstein's monster. A nihilist will direct abhorrence against human beings (which, from a psychological perspective, leads to self-destruction) and against God (which sets nihilism "on fire" and distinguishes it from the neutrality of atheism<sup>8</sup>). In *Frankenstein* the unnamed creature synthesizes these principles in an almost Lautréamontian fashion: "[F]rom that moment I declared everlasting war against the species, and, more than all, against him who had formed me, and sent me forth to this insupportable misery".<sup>9</sup> From *Manfred* to Edgar Allan Poe's "demon" there is only a slight step:

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<sup>3</sup> George Gordon Byron: *The Major Works*, ed. Jerome J. McGann (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 290–1.

<sup>4</sup> *The Nature of Melancholy. From Aristotle to Kristeva*, ed. Jennifer Radden (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), VII–XI.

<sup>5</sup> Alfred Adler, *Undressing Life. An Introduction*, ed. Colin Brett (Oxford: Oneworld, 2009), 43–4.

<sup>6</sup> For the first contemporary discussion of this term, see Ștefan Bolea, "The Nihilist as a Not-Man. An Analysis of Psychological Inhumanity," in *Philobiblon. Transylvanian Journal of Multidisciplinary Research in Humanities*, XX (1), 2015, 33–44. For the origin of this notion, see Emil Cioran, *On the Heights of Despair*, trans. Ilinca Zarifopol-Johnston (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 68–9.

<sup>7</sup> Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein, or the Modern Prometheus* (London: Penguin Books, 1994), 214.

<sup>8</sup> For the essential difference between nihilism and atheism, see Mădălina Diaconu, *Pe marginea abisului. Sören Kierkegaard și nihilismul secolului al XIX-lea (On the Brink of the Abyss. Sören Kierkegaard and the Nihilism of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century)*, foreword by Ion Ianoși (Bucharest: Editura Științifică, 1996), 40: "[Nihilism] can be defined through the category of despair, and [atheism] through that of doubt ... The atheist is not necessarily a nihilist, because for him, although there is no God, the world doesn't lose its value, while nihilism is an atheism which extends from the stage of the intellect into the entire subjectivity."

<sup>9</sup> Shelley, *Frankenstein*, 131.

From childhood's hour I have not been  
 As others were—I have not seen  
 As others saw—I could not bring  
 My passions from a common spring—  
 From the same source I have not taken  
 My sorrow—I could not awaken  
 My heart to joy at the same tone—  
 And all I lov'd—I lov'd alone ...<sup>10</sup>

The Romantic feeling of distinction presupposes a spiritual transgression of mankind. Both Poe's and Byron's heroes consider themselves human only from a biological point of view. The metaphor of the "systemic anomaly" from *The Matrix Reloaded*<sup>11</sup> sets them apart in a category of their own from a sociological point of view. Nihilists such as Manfred or Poe's "demonic" hero will either kill themselves or descend into madness, because the world pushes them towards a spiritual North Pole. Romantic heroes refuse both the "likeness" of mankind and the face of God. Their rebellion alternates between demonism ("Many times I considered Satan as the fitter emblem of my condition"<sup>12</sup>) and nihilism, a deeper conception than demonism,<sup>13</sup> because it rejects both the "prime mover" and the "adversary", taking us *beyond God and devil*, a new territory of human subjectivity:

"*Lucifer*: He who bows not to him has bowed to me.  
*Cain*: But I will bend to neither."<sup>14</sup>

In *Frankenstein*, there is an analogy between Victor's "deep, dark, deathlike solitude,"<sup>15</sup> combining melancholy and mourning in an almost Freudian fashion and the monster's feeling of radical isolation: "I had never yet seen a being resembling me, or who claimed any intercourse with me ... I am alone, and miserable; man will not associate with

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<sup>10</sup> Edgar Allan Poe, *Poetry and Tales*, ed. Patrick F. Quinn (New York: Library of America, 1984), 60.

<sup>11</sup> "... the otherwise contradictory systemic anomaly, that if left unchecked might threaten the system itself ..." (Andy Wachowski, Larry Wachowski (directors), *The Matrix Reloaded*, 2003).

<sup>12</sup> Shelley, *Frankenstein*, 125.

<sup>13</sup> The connections between demonism and nihilism haven't been so far thoroughly researched. From a philosophical point of view, both doctrines have a common feature: their inherent misotheism, a tradition emphasized in modern times by Goethe's "Prometheus", Byron's *Cain* or Mihai Eminescu's "Memento mori". From a theological point of view, nihilism has a strong demonic feature deriving from its substantial attack of the notion of God. From a logical point of view, nihilism is demonism + "x", where "x" rejects the devil as well, not only God. The affirmation of nihilism is post-Nietzschean: "God is dead, I am God", a perspective shared by many nihilists such as Lautréamont, Mihai Eminescu and the young Emil Cioran.

<sup>14</sup> Byron, *The Major Works*, 893.

<sup>15</sup> Shelley, *Frankenstein*, 86.

me”.<sup>16</sup> This touch of isolism makes it clear that without alterity and the “world” (without *Mit-Sein* and *In-der-Welt-Sein*), there can be no sense of selfhood. The subject will experience dissociation, because a human being cannot survive without inner alterity (we are originally open towards the other). But when this human being is rejected and sentenced in the desert of the Orwellian “minority of one”, he will turn to psychopathology:

I was benevolent; my soul glowed with love and humanity: but am I not alone, miserably alone? ... When I run over the frightful catalogue of my sins, I cannot believe that I am the same creature whose thoughts were once filled with sublime and transcendent visions of the beauty and the majesty of goodness. But it is even so; the fallen angel becomes a malignant devil. Yet even that enemy of God and man had friends and associates in his desolation; I am alone.<sup>17</sup>

This sense of deep loneliness can be seen as a metaphor of psychosis, as Vardoulakis<sup>18</sup> argues, analyzing the works of Jean-Paul and Goethe. If the subject can no longer relate to his neighbour, a feeling of ontic disconnectedness arises. “I see nothing before me, and nothing behind me ... nothing but the endless night of loneliness in which I find myself”, writes a character from Goethe’s *Wilhelm Meister*. “I, totally alone, nowhere a pulse-beat, no life; nothing around me and without me nothing other than nothing,”<sup>19</sup> Jean Paul observes. The analogy between insanity and solitude can be inferred from the double meaning of the word “alienation”: both estrangement and mental illness.

The theme of solitude is protuberant in Cioran’s work, especially in his early Romanian writings from the 1930s, *On the Heights of Despair* and *The Twilight of Thoughts*. There are at least three levels of E. M. Cioran’s discussion of “solitude”. First, there is a sense of “isolism” already experienced in our treatment of the theme at Coleridge and M. Shelley. “Solitude doesn’t teach you that you are alone, it shows that you are the only one.”<sup>20</sup> In other words, the ontic separateness of loneliness singularizes the subjects and cuts him off from mankind. “I renounce my humanity even though I may find myself alone,”<sup>21</sup> notes the then 23-year-old philosopher. A sense of Byronic pride makes its presence felt here. Like Manfred, Cioran’s auctorial subject has a distinct cyclothymic feature. He also writes of “disjunction from the world”<sup>22</sup> and of individuation as a result of an “orgy of solitude.”<sup>23</sup> Up to a point, solitude is

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 117, 139.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 96, 213.

<sup>18</sup> Dimitris Vardoulakis, *The Doppelgänger. Literature’s Philosophy* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010), 13–8.

<sup>19</sup> Goethe and Jean Paul quoted in Vardoulakis, *The Doppelgänger*, 13–8.

<sup>20</sup> Emil Cioran, *Amurgul gândurilor* (The Twilight of Thoughts) (Bucharest: Editura Humanitas, 1991), 7 (translation mine).

<sup>21</sup> Cioran, *On the Heights of Despair*, 43.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 109.

<sup>23</sup> Cioran, *Amurgul gândurilor*, 109 (trans. mine).

necessary for our individual growth but, taken to the extreme, this singularization removes us from the world and becomes symptomatic of neurosis and/or psychosis.

This leads to the second motif, one we have just discussed at Goethe and Jean Paul, solitude understood as “the proper milieu of madness.”<sup>24</sup> The solipsistic feeling of being “alone in the world”, of being “disjointed” from the *In-der-Welt-Sein*, transforms one in a sort of monster, a being without contemporaries, removed from society. If such a being indeed exists, Milton’s expression “Myself am Hell”<sup>25</sup> would be his fitting portrayal. Problematic is not only the separation from the world (painful, but achievable, as many Christian ascetics prove it); more dilemmatic is the separation from one’s self, from one’s inner alterity and one’s inner structures of subjectivity. This kind of disconnectedness is also experienced by Maupassant’s diarist from the short horror story “Horla”, who fails to see himself in the mirror, suggesting that self-reflection disappears when self-consciousness breaks down.<sup>26</sup> However, Cioran’s solitude, reaching the bowling point of insane “disjunction”, only finds comfort in the solitude of a God in whom he does not believe. “Separated from neighbours through the insular faith of the heart, you cling to God, hoping that the seas of madness wouldn’t flow over your solitude.”<sup>27</sup> Cioran associates loneliness with a sort of “living death”, which is the logical result of the abandonment of the world and mankind. This feeling of not being alive is certainly discouraging for a post-Nietzschean anti-Platonist who no longer believes in the possibility of a *second life*. Cioran’s libido is removed from the world, suggesting he lived through a Schreberian “personal apocalypse”, where life “as we know it” has ended. If life is death, and death is nothingness, the prospects of existential nihilism are grim: “We are so lonely in life that we must ask ourselves if the loneliness of dying is not a symbol of our human existence.”<sup>28</sup>

### “The Looking Glass of the Shrew” and the Sorrows of Hate

There are three versions of the theme of hatred at Shelley and Cioran.

#### *Hating the Other*

Frankenstein’s creature’s hatred of alterity derives from his inability to adjust to the human society because of his hideous shape. Here we can make two observations. First, as we know, hate is the result of a repressed love: love and hate are twin concepts. “I was benevolent; my soul glowed with love and humanity,”<sup>29</sup> writes Frankenstein’s creature. Moreover, the other “greet” my hate with his hate: hate is more contagious than kindness,

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<sup>24</sup> Cioran, *On the Heights of Despair*, 36.

<sup>25</sup> John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, ed. Philip Pullman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 107.

<sup>26</sup> Guy de Maupassant, “Horla,” in *A Day in the Country and Other Stories*, trans. David Coward (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 299.

<sup>27</sup> Emil Cioran, *Amurgul gândurilor*, 188 (trans. mine).

<sup>28</sup> Cioran, *On the Heights of Despair*, 6.

<sup>29</sup> Shelley, *Frankenstein*, 96.



because the last one can be faked, while the shadow of hate is unequivocal. The meeting between *hate* and *hate* can be satisfying for a species which cannot communicate otherwise. “A raving hyena, I anticipated making myself hateful to every creature, forcing them to league together against me, crushing them or being crushed by them,”<sup>30</sup> writes the Romanian philosopher. Cioran echoes here Lautréamont’s courageous dictum “I alone against mankind.”<sup>31</sup> Moreover, it is certain that nihilists can also experience a sort of rebellious *jouissance* in declaring war to the whole world. However, hating the other can also have a strategic value. Just like a predator, “the enemy” lures her victim into a trap, hoping to destroy him completely. Like Lady Macbeth, she develops a deceptive persona, disguising herself while she prepares the critical hit. Hatred results from and in hatred (a phenomenon described by Jungian therapists as the reciprocal projection of shadows) at all levels (either inter- or transpersonal).

### *Hating Myself*

Insight makes us accept the fact that hating the other is a form of self-hatred. Instead of dehumanizing the other and projecting our shadow onto him, we should admit to our own inferiority. Moving on from the psychoanalytical interpretation of hatred, we must understand that there is a pure and infernal version of self-hatred, consubstantial with nihilism: “You hate me; but your abhorrence cannot equal that with which I regard myself,”<sup>32</sup> claims in a pre-Cioranian fashion the monster from *Frankenstein*. From a logical point of view, if hatred is the prelude of murder, self-hatred can only “create” suicide or madness.<sup>33</sup> Moreover, if hatred of others is a transformation of self-hatred, then any murder is in fact a suicide – through which the murderer excludes himself from humanity. In its essence, hate is dissociative, even more than solitude: the incapacity to acknowledge the others joins with the incapacity to take responsibility for myself. The passion of hate can only be ambivalent, a term identified by E. Bleuler in the constitution of schizophrenia.

But am I not a false accord  
 Within the holy symphony,  
 Thanks to voracious Irony  
 Who gnaws on me shakes me hard?

She’s in my voice, in all I do!  
 Her poison flows in all my veins!  
 I am the looking-glass of pain

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<sup>30</sup> E. M. Cioran, *The Temptation to Exist*, trans. Richard Howard, ed. Eugene Thacker (New York: Arcade Publishing, 2013), 124.

<sup>31</sup> Lautréamont, *Maldoror and Poems*, trans. Paul Knight (London: Penguin Books, 1988), 48.

<sup>32</sup> Shelley, *Frankenstein*, 214.

<sup>33</sup> Diaconu, *Pe marginea abisului*, 159.

Where she regards herself, the shrew!

I am the wound, and rapier!  
I am the cheek, I am the slap!  
I am the limbs, I am the rack,  
The prisoner, the torturer!<sup>34</sup>

Baudelaire speaks of this inner split, of this un-identification with one's self ("I am ... the prisoner, the torturer"). The "false accord" from the "holy symphony" refers to the ones who exclude themselves from humanity, who are unable to countersign the declaration of human rights. Such a declaration should be conceived for nihilist not-men. The problem of posthumanity is very timely but it is mostly ill-conceived in technological and biological terms (we will all be cyborgs with certain digital improvements), or ideological and political ones (we no longer accept the humanist tradition which must be amended after Auschwitz and Dachau<sup>35</sup>). However, I'd like to touch the psychological nuance of personal *inhumanity*. What do we become when, just like Baudelaire's lyrical subject, we see ourselves as "false accord", "a looking-glass of the shrew", "cheek and slap"? How does one categorize a *schizophrenic beyond schizophrenia*, a symbolic dissociative subject who refuses the harmony and security of humanity? Mostly the un-identification with the "looking-glass of the shrew" signals the self awareness of the demonical, reminding of Iago's parody of Genesis's demiurge: "I am not what I am."<sup>36</sup> It speaks of a shattered glass, a portal to (inner) Hell and a metaphor of the splitting of the identity. Baudelaire's subject can no longer identify with *himself*: to him, not only the world is dead but also an essential aspect of himself.

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<sup>34</sup> Charles Baudelaire, *The Flowers of Evil*, trans. James McGowan, ed. Jonathan Culler (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 157.

<sup>35</sup> A certain type of human subject has been destroyed at Auschwitz and Dachau. Humanism must be redefined after the murderous exclusion of its alterity. There can be no "we" after the dissociation between "I" and "other" and the destruction of the "other". See Jonathan Drucker, *Primo Levi and Humanism after Auschwitz. Posthumanist Reflections*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 61, 34: "If the totalitarian 'we' is intact in the wake of Auschwitz, the 'we' of community and solidarity is forever ruptured ... '[A]fter Auschwitz,' there is no basis to assert that humanity is one or that 'the human condition' is a truly universal experience ... Auschwitz calls this faith in Man into question. To be sure, Levi uses reason as a tool of resistance against Nazism's attempt to reduce him to an unthinking 'non-man.'" (61, 34) See also Emmanuel Levinas, *Nine Talmudic Readings*, trans. Annette Aronowicz (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 98: "It is not the concept of 'man' which is at the basis of this humanism, it is the other man". See also Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, trans. E. B. Ashton (New York: Continuum, 1973), 362–3: "Perennial suffering has as much right to expression as a tortured man has to scream; hence it may have been wrong to say that after Auschwitz you could no longer write poems. But it is not wrong to raise the less cultural question whether after Auschwitz you can go on living..."

<sup>36</sup> William Shakespeare, *Othello*, (Ware: Wordsworth, 1992), 5.

If we move the problem of the *inhuman* from psychology to philosophy, we reach the shores of nihilism, an indefensible philosophical movement, avoided by most authors because of its hopelessness and morbid agenda (with the notable exceptions of Nietzsche, Cioran and Baudrillard). What Cioran says of Nietzsche (“His diagnosis of nihilism is irrefutable: because he himself is a nihilist”<sup>37</sup>) can certainly be applied to him as well. The nihilistic not-man, the type of post-Nietzschean-Cioranian subject, makes his presence felt in pop culture. Detective Rust Cohle (brilliantly portrayed by Matthew McConaughey) from Nic Pizzolatto’s tv series *True Detective*, is certainly a *not-man*.

I think human consciousness, is a tragic misstep in evolution. We became too self-aware, nature created an aspect of nature separate from itself, we are creatures that should not exist by natural law. We are things that labor under the illusion of having a self; an accretion of sensory, experience and feeling, programmed with total assurance that we are each somebody, when in fact everybody is nobody. Maybe the honorable thing for our species to do is deny our programming, stop reproducing, walk hand in hand into extinction, one last midnight – brothers and sisters opting out of a raw deal.<sup>38</sup>

From “consciousness as destiny” [*Bewusstsein als Verhängnis*], Cioran’s thesis derived from Alfred Seidel, that shows the toxic and potentially hazardous trait of self-awareness, to the Freudian distinction between nature and culture, from the Buddhist idea of the inexistence of the self to the Heideggerian treatment of *das Man als Niemand*, we are led to the Schopenhauerian tableau of the voluntary self-destruction of species. Swinburne, in “The Garden of Proserpine”, Byron, in “Darkness” and other poets such as Leopardi, Lautréamont and M. Eminescu have explored this collective explosion of the *death instinct*. This so-called purity of self-hatred can be found in M. Shelley’s self-destructive monster and also in many Cioranian fragments:

“I am inebriated by hate and by myself.”<sup>39</sup>

“I love my own self-hatred ...”<sup>40</sup>

“I hate myself: I am absolutely a man.”<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Emil Cioran, *All Gall Is Divided. Gnomes and Apothegms*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Arcade Publishing, 1999), 37.

<sup>38</sup> Nic Pizzolatto (creator), *True Detective*, Season 1, 2014.

<sup>39</sup> Cioran, *Amurgul gândurilor*, 207 (trans. mine).

<sup>40</sup> Emil Cioran, *Îndreptar pătimăș (The Passionate Handbook)* (Bucharest: Editura Humanitas, 1991), 108 (trans. mine).

<sup>41</sup> Cioran, *The Temptation to Exist*, 192.

*Hating God*

In a similar manner to the Frankensteinian monster, who is a descendant of Milton's Lucifer, Cioran proves himself to be an heir of Manfred, Cain and Maldoror, a group of characters who all constellate a father complex.

How do we move from self-hatred to hatred of the divine? First, we can blame divinity for a "traumatic birth", to use Otto Rank's words in a different context. Because we have not created ourselves, we cannot be held responsible for our projection into existence. Nihilists have always appreciated the wisdom of Silenus, for whom non-existence is preferable to existence.<sup>42</sup> Therefore, the shock of moving from nothingness to being (in blunter terms, from non-being to the *sufferance of existence*) cannot be left unpunished. If the well-known Sartrean formulations emphasize either the responsible freedom or the preeminence of choice, those who have been transported into this world, to experience illness, pain, lack, estrangement and final extinction, did not choose to be born, therefore declining their responsibility for their "adventure" to their maker(s).

It's that the world is basically a forced labor camp from which the workers—perfectly innocent—are led forth by lottery, a few each day, to be executed. I don't think that this is just the way I see it. I think it's the way it is. Are there alternate views? Of course. Will any of them withstand scrutiny? No.<sup>43</sup>

From a logical point of view, the passing from non-existence to being is akin to the transition from "zero" to "minus". If the world were a forced labour camp, then, according to Nietzsche, Cioran or Camus, it would be our duty to rebel against our guardian. This familiar theory of spiritual disobedience derives from the father complex, transforming nihilism in a preliminary step towards anarchism.<sup>44</sup> However, the new aspect of this fight between nihilism and God is that the traditional transcendent divinity "greet" the nihilist with his own hate, "communicating" with the human subject. This total interpersonal war is orchestrated by Cioran:

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<sup>42</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy And Other Writings*, ed. Raymond Geuss and Ronald Speirs, trans. Ronald Speirs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 23.

<sup>43</sup> Tommy Lee Jones (director), *The Sunset Limited*, 2011.

<sup>44</sup> For the distinction between nihilism and anarchism, see Ștefan Bolea, "Between Nihilism and Anarchism (A Philosophical Poem by Gherasim Luca)," in *Studia Universitatis Babeș-Bolyai*, 60 (1), 2015, 66: "[T]he principle of anarchism asserted the call to arms against a superior opponent (or the creation of a war machine that must harass the hegemonic power) ... We could probably say that through anarchism nihilism becomes *pre-anti-nihilism*, nihilism becoming a propaedeutics for its own destruction."

Solitude of hatred ... sensation of a god turned toward destruction, treading the spheres Underfoot, slobbering on the blue of heaven and its constellations ... of a frenzied, filthy, unhealthy god; the demiurge ejecting, through space, paradise, and latrines; cosmogony of delirium tremens; convulsive apotheosis in which gall consummates the elements.<sup>45</sup>

The nihilist not-man is a version of the human being who could benefit from the transcendent capital of the Nietzschean over-man. However, the not-man is a sort of a shadow of the *Übermensch*. When one contemplates through the lenses of Nietzscheanism, he could almost be perceived as a *subman*. The not-man is no child of the demiurge from Genesis and he fails to recognize himself in the pattern of likeness. If the declaration of the freedom for the *Übermensch* is “God is dead”, the not-man arduously declares: “Man is dead”. If the not-man is somewhat akin to the over-man and to Camus’s *l’homme révolté*, this is only a recoil of two millennia of Christianity: the shadow of God<sup>46</sup> cannot fade away quietly. Moreover, the Big Crunch of the death of God is only a recent event and it takes time to get used to it.

A *Dasein* with Cioran’s soul and Nietzsche’s mind, with Baudelaire’s expressivity and Lautréamont’s “innocent perversion”, at the same time an aristocrat and an “underground” man, a poet in epileptic tremor, a gnostic priest like Philip K. Dick, an active member of Project Mayhem, a cannibal aesthete like Hannibal, a schizo teenager like Donnie Darko, a decadent poet who can no longer see “eternity in a daffodil” like Caliban from *Penny Dreadful*, a hacker of the psyche like Mr. Robot – here are some versions of the nihilist not-man.

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<sup>45</sup> E. M. Cioran, *A Short History of Decay*, trans. Richard Howard, ed. Eugene Thacker (New York: Arcade Publishing, 2012), 128–9.

<sup>46</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, ed. Bernard Williams, trans. Josefine Nauckhoff and Adrain del Caro (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 109.