

Gal Ventura

*The Dead Mother, the Uncanny, and the Holy Ghost*

Several years ago, I went to the movies with my little daughter. Knowing what was about to happen, I leaned into her just as the lights were dimming, and compassionately informed her of the drama about to occur on screen: the protagonist's mother was destined to die. To my surprise, my daughter responded with confidence: 'But that's obvious, the mother always dies!' I had, until then, naively assumed that it was patricide that stands at the root of civilization and that determines the identity of the father's descendents/exterminators. But here I was faced with the realization that – despite the veracity of this statement – it is actually matricide that is at the heart of innumerable legends and fairy tales, old and new alike. As I was, at that time, engaged in research on visual representations of maternal breast-feeding in nineteenth century French art, I was stunned to discover that images of maternal nourishment disappeared circa the years 1800 to 1850, to be replaced with recurrent depictions of dead mothers, whose babies unsuccessfully attempt to feed on their exposed breasts (see figures 1, 4-6). Not only that, but the mother's homicide in the visual arts coincided with her premature death in the fairy tales recorded in Germany by the Brothers Grimm, which were also collected in the first half of the nineteenth century,<sup>1</sup> as well as with the preoccupation with orphanhood in both French and English literature composed at that time, inspired, among other sources, by the German tales.<sup>2</sup>

Due to the preponderance of such portrayals, I started contemplating the significance of the mother's death; does it express the child's anxiety of losing his or her first object of affection, as suggested by Bruno Bettelheim with regards to absent mothers in fairy tales?<sup>3</sup> While this explanation may shed light on children's enchantment with the consistent matricide in cinema, it is difficult to attribute to it the cause for their killing in folktales, which, despite their childish charm, were not, by any means, designated for toddlers.<sup>4</sup> Would it, then, be possible to explain this homicide, executed in the said period by male artists, in terms of the resurfacing of a repressed childhood anxiety? Does this anxiety arise from an unconscious envy of the power of female parturition, as claimed by psychoanalyst Karen Horney as early as 1926, followed by other thinkers, such as Erich Neumann, Dorothy Dinnerstein, and Nancy Chodorow?<sup>5</sup> Does it represent a stage in one's personal development

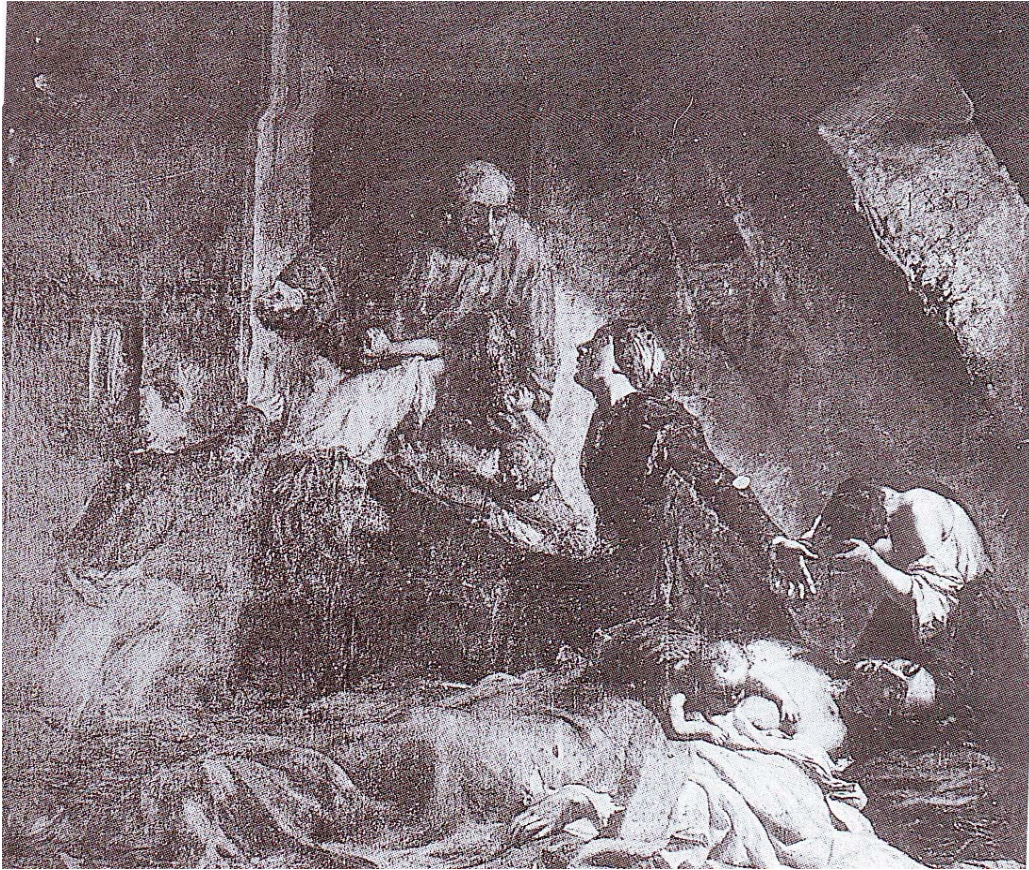
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associated with a particular mother, or perhaps with the universal archetype of a Great collective and symbolic Mother, who induces anxiety through her death, while facilitating maturation and independence? One may argue that her disappearance simply reflects reality, since death at childbirth was, until the beginning of the twentieth century, the leading cause of death for women at the age of fertility (15-45), regardless of their social status.<sup>6</sup> And yet, the prevalence of this image specifically in the first half of the nineteenth century, in art and literature alike, demands an additional explanation, since its very repetition produces an uncanny atmosphere, or in Freud's own words: 'forces upon us the idea of something fateful and inescapable when otherwise we should have spoken only of "chance"'.<sup>7</sup>

In this essay, I will examine representations of the dead mother in French art of the first half of the nineteenth century, as a manifestation of the 'Uncanny' (das Unheimliche, i.e. 'unhomely' in its literal translation from the German), based on the premise that the accuracy of theories is judged by the works that preceded their formulation. Since they were not yet affected by Freud's wide spread theories, that undeniably influenced art and artists after the second half of the twentieth century, nineteenth century art works can reinforce the correctness of theories published long after they were executed. Due to the great number of paintings dealing with this subject,<sup>8</sup> I will focus on one of the final paintings produced during that period depicting the dead mother: the French Realist Jules Breton's (1827-1906) painting *The Hunger* of 1850, which was destroyed in the Second World War and is known today only from photograph (figure 1).



**Figure 1.** Jules Adolphe Aimé Louis Breton, *The Hunger (La Faim)*, 1850 (Salon 1850-1851), oil on canvas. Destroyed, formerly Musée des Beaux Arts, Arras.

Despite the fact that this work undoubtedly gave expression to the artist's own repressed anxieties, I will not discuss the unconscious *of* Jules Breton. I will, rather – like Hubert Damisch in his book on Piero della Francesca – explore the unconscious created *by* Breton, ‘the emphasis being less on the possessive relation than on the agent’,<sup>9</sup> thus examining the psycho-historical component of the image as a mirror of the general mind-set of society in the given period.

This postulation has been thoroughly discussed in social psychology dealing with the ‘co-unconscious’ defined by Jacob Moreno as a common collective unconscious of a group;<sup>10</sup> the ‘group mentality’ that according to Wilfred Bion is occupied by the group's most ‘primitive anxieties’,<sup>11</sup> or the ‘social unconscious’, which was defined by Erich Fromm as ‘areas of repression which are common to most members of society; the commonly repressed elements [...] which a given society cannot permit its members to be aware of if the society [...] is to operate successfully’.<sup>12</sup> The main argument in this approach tended to view a group as more than the sum of its members, or ‘*sui generis*’, to use Durkheim's famous

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terminology.<sup>13</sup> Maurice Halbwachs's sociological theory of memory reveals a variant approach, claiming that 'the memory of the group realizes and manifests itself in individual memories'.<sup>14</sup>

Halbwachs describes a socio-cultural difference between individual, autobiographical memory, based on the individual's personal life, in contrast with collective memory, versus collective memory that evokes impersonal historical remembrances. The latter term alludes to society's innate ability to implement or intertwine impersonal historical events with our personal memories.<sup>15</sup> While analyzing the social construction of memory designed, among other mechanisms, by visual art,<sup>16</sup> Halbwachs believed that collective memory is always group-based, intended to consolidate the group and preserve its solidarity:

the collective framework of memory [...] [is] the result, or sum, or combination of individual recollections of many members of the same society. [...] Collective frameworks are [...] the instruments used by the collective memory to reconstruct an image of the past which is in accord, in each epoch, with the predominant thoughts of the society.<sup>17</sup>

While allegedly inclined towards individualism, it essentially leaves individuals with a fleeting sense of free choice, while building their social essence by reconstructing their memories following society's selective tradition.<sup>18</sup>

Based on these theories, in this article I will connect the death of the mother to the Uncanny, highlighting the undissolvable link between the formalization of the 'homely' in the late eighteenth century and the dread that it evoked in the early nineteenth century, as two sides of the same coin. I will also attempt to relate the dead mother's appearance to the experience of 'nothingness', as elaborated by André Green, while tying it to the inherent conflictuality of modernity.

### **The Metamorphoses of the Uncanny: From Jentsch to Freud**

In August 1906, the German neuropsychiatrist Ernst Jentsch published a short essay entitled 'On the Psychology of the Uncanny', dealing with the uniqueness of the anxiety aroused in a person who 'is not quite at home or at ease' and feels a 'lack of orientation'.<sup>19</sup> We often experience this sensation when we encounter something new that evokes in us 'mistrust, unease and even hostility', as a consequence of the human difficulty to integrate novelty into our system of existing knowledge. And yet, at times, such anxiety also surfaces following an encounter with the familiar, which has not yet become the 'straightforwardly self-evident' and

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may all of a sudden lose its clarity, inducing ‘intellectual uncertainty’, disorientation, and confusion in the viewer. Such phenomena primarily occur in situations of diminished alertness, in moments of slumber or in the dark, when the senses do not function at full capacity.<sup>20</sup> ‘Among all the psychical uncertainties that can become an original cause of the uncanny feeling, there is one in particular that is able to develop a fairly regular, powerful and very general effect’, added Jentsch, ‘namely, doubt as to whether an apparently living being is animate and, conversely, doubt as to whether a lifeless object may not in fact be animate’.<sup>21</sup> The encounter with the hybrid – which fuses together two seemingly opposed conditions, such as animate and inanimate, human and animal, or human and technological – is a cause of anxiety, ‘until these doubts are resolved’ and the object of scrutiny reverts to its familiar, controllable state.<sup>22</sup>

Over a decade later, in his 1919 essay ‘The Uncanny’, Sigmund Freud examined the feeling of estrangement and anxiety embodied by the intimate itself, ‘that class of the frightening which leads back to what is known of old and long familiar’, combining two opposites: ‘what is familiar and agreeable, and on the other [hand], what is concealed and kept out of sight’.<sup>23</sup> In his essay, Freud listed a number of factors that turn the anxiety-inducing into the uncanny: ‘animism, magic and sorcery, the omnipotence of thoughts, man’s attitude to death, involuntary repetition and the castration complex’.<sup>24</sup> Though, like Jentsch, he believed that the sense of the uncanny is intensified ‘when there is intellectual uncertainty whether an object is alive or not’,<sup>25</sup> he maintained that that did not suffice, and that two different states of being lie at the core of this horrifying experience: psychic reality and concrete-material reality. The first includes repressed childhood complexes associated with the anxiety of castration, as well as with a pre-Oedipal anxiety of the mother’s womb: ‘This unheimlich place, however, is the entrance to the former Heim [home] of all human beings, to the place where each one of us lived once upon a time and in the beginning’, wrote Freud on the subject of female genitalia: ‘In this case too, then, the unheimlich is what was once heimisch, familiar; the prefix ‘un’ is the token of repression’.<sup>26</sup>

Corporeal reality, on the other hand, includes primeval animist beliefs that were supposedly surrendered in the modern era, though they continue to resurface in the confrontation with unexplained motifs, which ostensibly reaffirm them.<sup>27</sup> And yet, Freud maintained that the boundaries between these two realities are indefinite, and that both express anxiety induced by the return of the repressed: ‘for this uncanny is in reality nothing

new or alien, but something which is familiar and old-established in the mind and which has become alienated from it only through the process of repression'.<sup>28</sup> This repression is especially apparent in all that concerns death, perceived by most people as uncanny and most horrifying of all, since 'our biology has not yet been able to decide whether death is the inevitable fate of every living being or whether it is only a regular but yet perhaps avoidable event in life'.<sup>29</sup>

Nonetheless, alongside the general anxiety of the finality of death, in his essay Freud associated the fear of death with anxiety over the mother's genitalia:

To some people the idea of being buried alive by mistake is the most uncanny thing of all. And yet psycho-analysis has taught us that this terrifying phantasy is only a transformation of another phantasy which had originally nothing terrifying about it at all, but was qualified by a certain lasciviousness — the phantasy, I mean, of intra-uterine existence.<sup>30</sup>

### **Jules Breton's Dead Mother: The Homely that Has Become Unhomely**

The connection between the maternal body and the fear of death appears to be manifest in the corpse of the dead mother, sprawled across the bottom edge of the frame of Jules Breton's painting *The Hunger* of 1850 (figure 1). At the center of the canvas, a man enters a dismal house with an excruciating expression on his face; his four forlorn children stand at the entrance, as a kneeling girl at the right dramatically gesticulates at that which has befallen in his absence. A young mother lies lifeless on the ground, while a naked baby climbs onto her emaciated chest in a vain attempt to feed on her exposed breast.

Yet, her death alone does not elucidate the painting's uncanny atmosphere, since 'death is not the worst that can happen to men',<sup>31</sup> as Plato argued, as it liberates the soul from the earthly constraints of the body, thus generating 'a wonderful gain'.<sup>32</sup> Indeed, since death is predestined, most demises do not evoke an uncanny impression, as clearly manifested through the numerous nineteenth century commemoration portrayals of the deceased in sculpture, painting and photography.<sup>33</sup> Yet, unlike an old person who died peacefully in his bed,<sup>34</sup> Breton's *Hunger* produces an uncanny atmosphere through the combination of the cause of death, the deceased's age, gender and family status, as well as the location of the dead body in the spatial setting of the painting. Hence, instead of depicting death as a predictable, expected event, the young mother's death becomes a sudden, chaotic, uncanny incident, that undermines the social order instead of representing it.

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The lack of evidence of injury on the corpse, raising questions regarding the circumstances of her demise, amplifies the uncanny atmosphere suffusing the painting; the maternal body, a symbol of vitality and nourishment, becomes a horrifying symbol of a double death. The parallel between the female body and sustenance,<sup>35</sup> which derived from the indispensability of mothers' milk for the survival of infants until the late nineteenth century, magnifies the anxiety induced by the image of the dead mother in the era preceding the discoveries of Louis Pasteur. Depleted and dysfunctional, her exposed breasts indicate the forthcoming death of her baby, who depends on maternal milk for his own survival.

Despite the fact that in 1849, just one year before this work was painted, a cholera epidemic broke out in Paris claiming the lives of many impoverished people,<sup>36</sup> Breton chose to emphasize hunger as the cause of death in the very title of the painting, as an illustration of their dire financial situation. Indeed, in the late 1840s, many French citizens of the lower classes suffered a series of events that exacerbated their hard-pressed financial situation. As a consequence of a number of cold waves in the years 1846 and 1847, many agricultural crops failed; the production of grains and potatoes significantly decreased, the cost of food increased, and many peasants, who subsisted mainly on bread, were famished.<sup>37</sup> Breton himself, who would eventually become one of the most distinguished artists of the French Academy, also suffered extreme financial hardship after losing his father – the mayor of the town of Courrières in northern France, his city of birth – in May 1848. Following his father's death, all family assets that had been invested in unprofitable business endeavors were lost, and the artist, along with his three brothers, was rendered destitute. Deep in mourning, Breton remained in his hometown for several months, but sought a new place of residence and new ways of earning a living after he was forced to sell his few possessions.<sup>38</sup> During those years, he painted a number of paintings that illustrated his difficult condition, among them *The Hunger*, which exemplified the veritable and symbolic loss of his parents' home through the image of the dead mother.

And yet, the fear of death embodied by the empty breast – which instead of representing life suggests their end – is only one of five mechanisms at work in this painting that contribute to its uncanny atmosphere. It is supplemented by notions associated with the domestic sphere where the tragedy has occurred; the tension between religiosity and secularization; the troubling recurrence of representations of the mother's death; and inherent conflictuality, which touches upon all of these aspects.

## **The Formalization of Homeliness and the Institution of Motherhood: The Revealing of the Concealed**

At first sight, the narrative underlying Breton's work appears to be marked by overwhelming banality: a man returns to his home and loved ones at the end of the workday. And behold, the opening of the door linking the external world to the intimate domain of the family reveals that a tragedy has struck in his absence: his familiar realm has suddenly been shaken. The death of the mother inside the family's home amplifies the anxiety evoked by the painting, entailing intrinsic ambivalence as 'the German word "unheimlich" is obviously the opposite of "Heimlich"'.<sup>39</sup> That is the moment when the homely 'is identical with its opposite', according to Freud, when the 'heimlich thus comes to be Unheimlich', in spite of the fact that 'without being contradictory, [they] are yet very different: on the one hand it means what is familiar and agreeable, and on the other, what is concealed and kept out of sight'.<sup>40</sup> It appears that, prior to the opening of the door, the catastrophe – like the Heimlich itself – was 'concealed, kept from sight, so that others do not get to know of or about it'.<sup>41</sup> The opening of the door exposes the concealed and reveals its secrets, thus producing an uncanny moment, characterized by the exposure of 'everything that ought to have remained secret and hidden but has come to light'.<sup>42</sup> Like Pandora's Box, the instant at which the door is opened marks a foundational moment, tightly bound to the maternal body lying there inanimate. That is the moment when the mother metamorphoses in her horrified husband's eyes from woman to corpse, a menacing remnant of the body that epitomizes the concept of the abject, coined by Julia Kristeva as an offshoot of the uncanny.<sup>43</sup> The hidden facet concealed in the Heimlich, equivalent, according to Freud's essay, to 'parts of the human body, pudenda',<sup>44</sup> sharpens the connection between the womb and the tomb, thus harshly reminding viewers of their transience in this world, while undermining social order.

And yet, alongside its psycho-sexual dimensions, the dreadful combination of Eros and Thanatos also embodies psycho-historical aspects reflecting the transformations undergone by the bourgeois home and its tight bonds with the rise of the institution of the nuclear family at the beginning of the modern era. The formalization of the term 'homeliness' in France in the eighteenth century, which reached its peak in the nineteenth century, offered an alternative and an answer to the spurred growth of European cities and to the increased distinction between the private domain and the public sphere. The modification of the conception of the home reflected social, cultural, and economic values, which demonstrated



the rise of the concepts of privacy, intimacy, and comfortable domesticity. Meanwhile, these aspects paradoxically created – besides familial warmth – the threat of its loss, to the extent that the homely seems to have predicted its own demise from its very inception.

Until the seventeenth century, private rooms were scarce and large families – including children, grandparents, servants, guests, and livestock – crowded together into an overloaded multipurpose space used for work, cooking, eating, and sleeping. The design of the home was gradually modified following the establishment of the bourgeois Dutch Republic at the beginning of the seventeenth century, after thirty years of rebellion against Spain; it is there that the concept of the ‘homely’ was engendered and the importance of the nuclear family came to the forefront. The changing parent-child relationship was manifested in the division between the bedroom and the living room, and in the separation between work – which moved away from the home – and domesticity.<sup>45</sup>

These characteristics became pronounced in eighteenth century France, as a consequence of the growing concern with local demographics. Along with a longing for domestic tranquility in an era of capitalist competitiveness, the attitude toward marriage, childhood, and family life changed, as did the structure of the bourgeois family; many parents chose to bear fewer children and to devote themselves to the prosperity of the nuclear family.<sup>46</sup> The best-known philosopher on the subject of the structuralization of the new model nuclear family was the French Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who considered child rearing to be a foundational element in the advancement of society, which comprised a major component in the intellectual discourse of the period.

Enlightenment philosophy infused eighteenth century Europe with the belief in the possibility of individual happiness; in this context, Rousseau emphasized the importance of heeding the needs of the child and the great significance of parents raising children by themselves. In a time of high child mortality, mothers were called upon to give up their social amusements and to find happiness in childcare, and fathers, too, were advised to participate in child rearing. ‘Let women once again become mothers’, wrote Rousseau in his 1762 essay *Émile: or On Education*, and ‘men will soon become fathers and husbands again’.<sup>47</sup>

The consolidation of the concepts of the family and of the individual manifested itself in the changes applied to the configuration of the home, which became a bastion of privacy. The term ‘comfort’ was coined at that time, finding its source in the Latin word ‘*confortare*’ (meaning to console, support, or encourage); hence referring in the eighteenth century to the

serenity and delight offered by the domestic sphere.<sup>48</sup> The consolidation of this novel value became even more apparent in the design of bourgeois homes in both France and England, where the distinction between private, intimate spaces and spaces intended to host the entire family was magnified. This division also exemplified views about gender roles: the domestic sphere was the realm of the housewife, her children, and servants, while the public, economic, and political spheres were reserved chiefly for men. Yet, as opposed to the work carried out by men, the feminine tasks were not perceived as labor, but as a manifestation of women's character; they were supposedly intended, by virtue of their nature, to care for others. Thus, homeliness was perceived as a feminine accomplishment directly related to the concept of comfort: the home became a tranquil, intimate refuge, a sanctuary offering respite to both body and soul. Besides household work, good bourgeois wives were also required to care for their children, love them, grant them attention, educate them, and prepare them for their future integration into society. Even though, by the nature of things, women have given birth from the dawn of civilization, they were now expected to find happiness and fulfillment in what was actually imposed upon them by the patriarchal bourgeois ideology.<sup>49</sup>

The intimacy formed between mother and child as a result of these changes transformed the family beyond recognition and had direct impact on the conception of the bourgeois mother as a figure who devotes herself entirely to her children. 'If you wish your family to resist the foreign influence which dissolves it', wrote the renowned French historian Jules Michelet in his 1845 book *Priests, Women, and Families*, 'keep the child at home as much as possible. Let the mother bring it up under the father's direction, till the moment when it is claimed for public instruction by its great mother, its native land [...] The real idea of a family will here be realized, which is for the child to be initiated by the mother, and the wife by the husband'.<sup>50</sup>

As the status of the home as a social institution rose in the nineteenth century – the century of the nuclear family and of parental and romantic love – its dark side was also unveiled, manifest, among others, in the form of domestic violence, as illustrated by the Grimm Brothers; in the rise of Gothic literature that depicted the home as a crime scene; and also, to my belief, in the recurrent visual representations of the dead mother. This romantic, sensual, and chaotic facet negated the concept of the home while simultaneously containing it, indicating the sense of unease aroused by the home: at once familiar and strange, containing and menacing, homely and unhomely.

This dichotomy is clearly illustrated by Breton's bare-breasted dead mother. The very depiction of the symbol of nourishment following her death as a result of hunger represents the collapse of the value system and the demise of the world order that occur when the source of nourishment itself goes hungry. This is demonstrated by the intentional accentuation of the mother's bare breasts, as a symbol of motherhood and motherliness, 'a metonym of sorts that serves as a metaphor for the object', according to André Green's definition.<sup>51</sup> Indeed, over the course of the eighteenth century, one of the greatest demands from newlywed women was for maternal breast-feeding. Rousseau had already proclaimed in his book *Émile* in 1762 that in a home in which the mother refuses to nourish her offspring, the father should refuse to take upon himself the role of educating his children. Not only that, but he went so far as to attribute the cultural demise of France to the refusal to breast-feed, writing:

not satisfied with having given up nursing their children, women give up wanting to have them. The result is natural [...] This practice, added to the other causes of depopulation, presages the impending fate of Europe. The sciences, the arts, the philosophy, and the morals that this practice engenders will not be long in making a desert of it. It will be peopled with ferocious beasts.<sup>52</sup>

The absolute necessity for breast-feeding was stressed in numerous books composed by thinkers and moralists, philosophers, physicians and midwives, all of whom insisted that mothers avoid hiring wet nurses and suckle their children themselves, regardless of their social status.<sup>53</sup> In this spirit, Michelet also emphasized the importance of 'intellectual nourishment' ('*allaitement intellectuelle*'), which comprises both physical and spiritual nourishment. 'Intellectual nourishment, like physical food, ought in the beginning to be administered to the child under the form, as it were, of milk, fluid, tepid, mild, and full of life. Woman alone can so give it'.<sup>54</sup>

However, the hindrance to breast-feeding alone is not the most threatening element in Breton's painting, whose importance he denoted by means of its absence. The identification of the visual source that inspired Breton as he painted the dead mother's pose enhances the threat, as it turns out that he relied on images of mothers who had died in the plague. This iconography, appearing in several artworks produced in the mid-seventeenth century, includes a bare-breasted dead mother lying on her back, while an elderly man covers his face in dread of the disease and prevents her famished baby from suckling on the poisonous, deadly milk (see, for example, figure 2).



**Figure 2.** Marcantonio Raimondi (after Raphael), *The Plague of the Phrygians*, c. 1514-1515, engraving, 19.4 x 25 cm. London, Wellcome Institute and Library for the History of Medicine © Wellcome Library, London

This dimension deepens the uncanniness of the work for two reasons: the first has to do with the nature of the epidemic, while the second is related to its outcome. On the one hand, beyond the opposition between the source of life and death, the association with the plague introduces the deadly black milk, which curtails life instead of granting it. Thus a twofold model of the dead mother is generated: at once nourishing and killing, protective but dangerous, present and absent, homely and unhomely. This duality expresses Freud's own view. When describing the great goddesses of the past, he stressed their dual nature: bearing children and annihilating them, goddesses of life and fertility, but simultaneously 'the silent Goddess[es] of Death'.<sup>55</sup> He suggested that this complexity characterizes the gradual transformation of the mother over the course of the child's life: 'the mother who bears him, the woman who is his mate and the woman who destroys him [...] the Mother Earth who receives him once more'.<sup>56</sup>

Though Breton was indeed influenced by the general iconography of the posture of death as a result of the plague, I believe that he appropriated the entirety of the composition of Jacob van Oost's 1673 painting *Saint Macarius of Ghent Tending to the Plague Victims*, which he likely saw at the Louvre (figure 3).

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**Figure 3:** Jacob Van Oost the Younger, *Saint Macaire of Ghent Tending the Plague Stricken*, 1673, oil on canvas, 257 x 350 cm. Paris, Musée du Louvre © Photo RMN-Grand Palais

The dead mother is portrayed in an identical pose, with her left breast exposed and her head tilted to the left. Yet, despite the evident resemblance, Breton inserted a number of significant changes, which shape the uncanniness of the work. The figure of the bereaved man from the earlier painting was replaced with the weeping girl at the right, while the figure of the believer with clasped hands at the left, looking adoringly at the Saint, has turned into the girl bitterly calling out to her father. The Saint – portrayed at the center of van Oost’s work as he administers the Last Rite of anointment to the dying – was replaced by Breton with the hunched-over man who returns empty-handed to his meager home. The substitution of the Saint, who ensures the spiritual future of the sick in the world to come, with the ill-fated father of the family, attests to the profound difference between van Oost’s religious work, which focused on salvation, and Breton’s, which depicts its absence.

Indeed, even though the work was accepted by the Salon, it was hung high up on the wall, partially obstructed from view, and earned harsh criticism.<sup>57</sup> The art critic Étienne-Jean Delécluze wondered who would want to purchase such an ugly painting, and where would the buyer hang it. He claimed that a wealthy patron of the arts would not want to see a depiction of death and misery in his living room, and that ‘the idea of presenting such a

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painting as *Hunger* without reference to charity or religion would prohibit its placement in a church'.<sup>58</sup> This critique testifies to the fundamental, conscious disparity between Breton's painting and van Oost's religious work, which infused hope into the observer through allusions to the salvation offered by the Christian faith. In contradistinction, Breton eschewed the divine and depicted death with stark realism devoid of all religious or aesthetic splendor.

### **Castration, Patricide, and Secularization: From Good Death to Bad Death**

Besides the above-mentioned pre-Oedipal characteristics of the uncanny, one may perceive the eschewing of salvation in *The Hunger* as a post-Oedipal manifestation of the castration complex, referred to in Freud's essay as one of the main causes of the uncanny experience. Accordingly, the tension between veiling and unveiling exemplified by the opening of the door does not only represent the dread of the discovery of female sexuality, but also the attitude toward divinity, or in Freud's own words: 'to veil the divine, to surround it with a certain Unheimlichkeit'.<sup>59</sup>

In this painting, however, Breton not only camouflages the divine, but chooses to suppress it altogether. The substitution of the figure of the saint, who promises salvation, with the devastated father expresses a loss of faith, thus representing the father's defeat.<sup>60</sup> Meanwhile, it is also indicative of depression and helplessness in the face of the banality and inevitability of death. This disillusionment is further conveyed through the conversion of the 'good death' from the former religious work into the horrifying uncanniness of the 'bad death'.

Though every death may be perceived as bad, the attitude toward the nature of death is society and time dependent. In his treatise 'Death as a Good' (*De bono mortis*), Saint Ambrose (340-397) claimed that death is not bad in its essence, and that there is a fundamental difference between the bad death brought about by sin and the good death, which is unrelated to sin and brings one closer to God. He argued that the good death relieves the deceased by delivering him from his agonizing earthly existence, citing a verse from the Epistle of Paul to the Philippians in support of his position: 'For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain' (1: 21). This verse deals with the hardship inherent in life and the gain inherent in death, bringing the believer closer to Jesus while distancing his soul from the bonds of the physical body. Furthermore, Saint Ambrose alludes to another passage from the Second Epistle to the Corinthians: 'Therefore we are always confident and know that as long

as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord [...] We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord' (5: 6-8). Death, according to Christian theology, not only constitutes punishment for sin, but offers a renewed connection with Jesus and with God; accordingly, 'death as a good'.<sup>61</sup>

In this light, we may assert that the foregrounding of the Christian sacrament in van Oost's work clearly represents the 'good death', as it symbolizes immortality in the world to come. It thus gives visual form to Freud's claim that 'religions continue to dispute the importance of the undeniable fact of individual death and to postulate a life after death'.<sup>62</sup> The negation of death and the belief in God's existence create a mechanism that enables the believer to 'feel at home in the uncanny'<sup>63</sup>, since these religions are convinced that 'they cannot maintain moral order among the living if they do not uphold the prospect of a better life hereafter as a recompense for mundane existence'.<sup>64</sup>

Such vague assurances of immortality or resurrection are entirely lacking from Breton's painting, which depicts with stark realism the hideousness of death, devoid of all potential for revival. By excluding every possible source of salvation, Breton focused on the 'bad death', which is sudden, chaotic, violent, uncanny, and disrupts social order by presenting a sharp contrast to normative life. Like Kristeva's definition of the abject, the bad death is 'what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules'.<sup>65</sup> But Breton was not alone. He was preceded by numerous French artists, who obsessively portrayed the dead mother from 1800 to the mid-nineteenth century.

### **Troubling Death and Cultural Trauma: The Dead Mother in French Art of the First Half of the Nineteenth Century**

All the evils of the present come from two causes: the people who have passed through 1793 and 1814 nurse wounds in their hearts. That which was, is no more; what will be, is not yet. Do not seek elsewhere the cause of our malady. Here is a man whose house falls in ruins; he has torn it down in order to build another. The rubbish encumbers the spot, and he waits for new materials for his new home [...] While standing pick in hand with sleeves rolled up, he is informed that there is no more stone, and is advised to whiten the old material and make the best possible use of that [...] And in the meantime he has lost his old house, and has not yet built the new; he does not know where to protect himself from the rain, or how to prepare his evening meal, nor where to work, nor where to sleep, nor where to die; and his children are newly born.<sup>66</sup>

One of the elements that induces a sense of the uncanny is a troubling repetitiveness, which, according to Freud, compels us to think that there must be some significance in multiplicity.<sup>67</sup> This aspect adds to the anxiety embodied by Breton's dead mother, as the work encapsulates five decades of representations of bare-breasted dead mothers in French art. Since the anxiety of the mother's death is both universal and perpetual, the abundance of images demands a psycho-historical explanation to elucidate the frequent recurrence of this subject matter in this particular period.

With this aim in mind, we shall return to the uncanny. Just as the anxiety of domesticity arose directly from the very structuralization of the modern concept of the 'home', so too did the death of the mother constitute a visual response to the consolidation of the motherly imago in the late eighteenth century. But we must ponder the question of what brought about the mother's death in these works: are we dealing with an act of killing or perhaps with premeditated murder?

Indeed, the formalization of maternity into the institute of 'Motherhood' regimented femininity, confining women to the boundaries of home. The exaltation of breast-feeding contributed to this trend, by celebrating the mother as the only source of happiness and fulfillment on behalf of her baby, the sole warrantor of its physical and emotional survival. At the same time, alongside their powerlessness in the masculine public domain, the new homeliness offered mothers unprecedented, almost menacing, power in the private sphere. It is for this reason that, despite the fact that the glorification of maternal breast-feeding actually served to constrain the abject secretion of the body to the confines of the home, one may perceive the death of the bare-breasted mother as premeditated murder intended to punish her by leaving her breasts – those same uncontrollable, dichotomic organs that conflate motherhood and sexuality – exposed to the observer's gaze as a symbol of her humiliation and weakness. In this light, the symbolic killing of the mother may be regarded as a visual, cathartic representation of the fear of motherhood. In Kristeva's own words:

Fear of the archaic mother turns out to be essentially fear of her generative power. It is this power, a dreaded one, that patrilineal filiation has the burden of subduing. It is thus not surprising to see pollution rituals proliferating in societies where patrilineal power is poorly secured, as if the latter sought, by means of purification, a support against excessive matrilineality.<sup>68</sup>

And yet, like the dialectic nature of the uncanny, so too is the dead mother comprised of two opposites. In addition to the symbolic punishment inflicted upon her – by means of

murder – for her substantial power, we may also read the multitude of representations of the dead mother as a manifestation of pre-Oedipal existential anxieties that surfaced in France in the first half of the century, under the persisting shadow of war. In this sense, the recurrence of images of maternal death may represent a cultural trauma, which takes place, according to Jeffrey Alexander, when members of the collective feel that they have been exposed to a horrible event that has left an indelible mark on the group's consciousness; an event that has had an eternal impact on their memories, fundamentally transforming their future identity.<sup>69</sup>

From the late eighteenth century, France underwent significant political, social, and economic changes, which gave rise to collective anxieties about the end of civilization, as they knew it. Such anxieties found their source, to a large degree, in the disruption of social order by the French Revolution and the Terror that followed; the numerous wars and political upheavals responsible for the death of hundreds of thousands of French citizens; and significant political fluctuations in the first half of the nineteenth century. These horrifying events turned from an individual confrontation with death to a collective social experience. This attitude is clearly exemplified by Alfred de Musset's 1836 book *The Confession of a Child of the Century* quoted above, which describes the dread of the recurrent loss of the home in wars undertaken by France in the first decades of the nineteenth century. It is even more apparent in the preface written by Michelet to his book *Le Peuple* in 1846, nearly fifty years after the conclusion of the Revolution: 'In the eyes of all of Europe [...] France will have an unforgivable name, which is her real name forever: 'The Revolution'.<sup>70</sup>

During the Reign of Terror that followed the Revolution, all those who were considered a threat to the Republic – whether by action, speech, or ideology – were sentenced to death. For this reason, some half million people were incarcerated in makeshift prisons throughout the country between 1792 and 1794. Fierce internal wars raged in France in the 1790s, including bloody battles against the monarchists, on the one hand, and against the Jacobins, on the other, who continued to undermine the rule of the bourgeoisie. Moreover, France also fought against feudal states throughout Europe, and hundreds of thousands of French citizens were killed by the time Napoleon was deposed. In this sense, the decade of 1789 to 1799 was of utmost importance, and is, to this very day, considered a formative moment imprinted on the collective memory of the Western world, in general, and of France, in particular.<sup>71</sup> It is true that the Revolution attenuated after the year 1800, following Napoleon's self-appointment as First Consul on December 15, 1799 and his proclamation

that the Revolution had come to an end; but it was impossible to forget. It penetrated the collective memory as a past event that every generation must grapple with<sup>72</sup>. In 1987, a French literary critic surveyed the texts composed over the years on the subject of the Revolution, claiming that it was undoubtedly the most crucial socio-historical watershed since the birth of Christianity: ‘1789 is not the past, but rather the present’, he declared.<sup>73</sup> Even after Napoleon’s final demise and exile in 1815 and the restoration of the Bourbon monarchy, the internal wars in France did not cease, and the revolutions of 1830 and 1848 also left their toll on French society.

Over the course of those ill-fated years, the dead mother reappeared in dozens of paintings, which may be divided into two main categories: religious art commissioned to adorn urban churches, and secular art. Representations of the dead mother belonging to the first group consistently emphasized the ‘good death’, which we have already seen in van Oost’s work (figure 3).<sup>74</sup> Though it is known that, when commissioning paintings for churches, the French Ministry of Interior – mandated to issue such commissions – selected appropriate subject matters, the authorities did not intervene in their execution.<sup>75</sup> Therefore, it is unlikely that it was the State that demanded that these artists integrate the figure of the dead or dying mother into their works; hence, it is evident that they did so of their own accord. And yet, despite the morbidity of the subject, the consistent emphasis on miraculous salvation or on the sacrament infused the observer with a sense of hope, in its promise of resurrection – whether corporeal or spiritual – after death.

This kind of salvation did not appear in the recurrent representations of the dead mother in the secular art of the period. Such images may be classified, both chronologically and thematically, according to three different types: death in a natural disaster, death in remote wars in foreign countries, and death at home. The gradual transformation of these representations forms a fascinating psycho-historical pattern, which reinforces the sense of orphanhood and the uncanny atmosphere at the foundation of the mother’s death in the art of the period. Moreover, they demonstrate astonishing correspondence to the usual stages of coping with social trauma, which, like personal grief, includes these regular steps: shock; repression and denial of the death, combined with the idealization of the deceased; remonstrance and anger alongside feelings of despair and guilt; involuntary recollection of the traumatic event; and, finally, acceptance of the death and reorganization of one’s own life.<sup>76</sup>



The works produced in the first decade of the nineteenth century, which featured natural disasters, ranged from the denial of the disaster to shock and idealization of the deceased. Thus, in the work of Henri-Pierre Danloux (1753-1809) entitled *Scene from the Flood*, painted toward the end of the year 1800, the dead mother is held in the arms of her husband, weeping to the heavens (figure 4).



**Figure 4.** Pierre Henry Danloux, *Scene From the Flood (Épisode du déluge)*, 1800 (Salon 1802), oil on canvas, 174 x 202 cm. © Saint-Germain-en-Laye, Musée Municipal.

Cast on the ground, her miniscule baby licks his own hand in a fruitless search for food, hinting at his approaching death. The real and metaphoric flood, represented by the stormy waves in the background, threatens the survival of the nuclear family and, hence, the stability of society as a whole. Nonetheless, Danloux softened the drama of the depiction by means of the mother's pose, the cause of her death, and her identity. The pose of the dead mother is based on the Pietà, which represents the Virgin Mary's mourning over her dead son.<sup>77</sup> Her

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resemblance to Christ, magnified by the idealization and aestheticization of her figure, suggests salvation and rebirth. The ambiguous circumstances surrounding her death, rooted in natural disaster, attenuate the threat posed by the mother's death, as we are not facing a manmade disaster that could have been prevented. Furthermore, as opposed to the menacing death occurring in the intimacy of the home, her death in the wilderness transforms the woman from a particular mother appealing for compassion, to a feminine archetype, a symbol or an allegory, which naturally yields emotional distance.<sup>78</sup>

Allusions to the possibility of salvation are entirely missing from the second type of depiction of the dead mother, painted in the 1820s and 1830s, which focused on death in remote wars. Among the best-known works in this category, depicting a dramatic incident from the war between the Greeks and the Turks, is Eugène Delacroix's *The Massacre at Chios: Greek Families Awaiting Death or Slavery* from 1824 (figure 5).<sup>79</sup>



**Figure 5.** Eugène Delacroix, *The Massacre at Scio* (*Scène des massacres de Scio: familles grecques attendant la mort ou l'esclavage*), 1824 (Salon 1824), oil canvas, 354 x 419 cm. Paris, Musée du Louvre © Photo RMN-Grand Palais

On the right, next to a group of desperate Greek refugees, lies a lifeless young mother, as a naked toddler crawls over her bosom in an attempt to suckle on her shriveled exposed breast.

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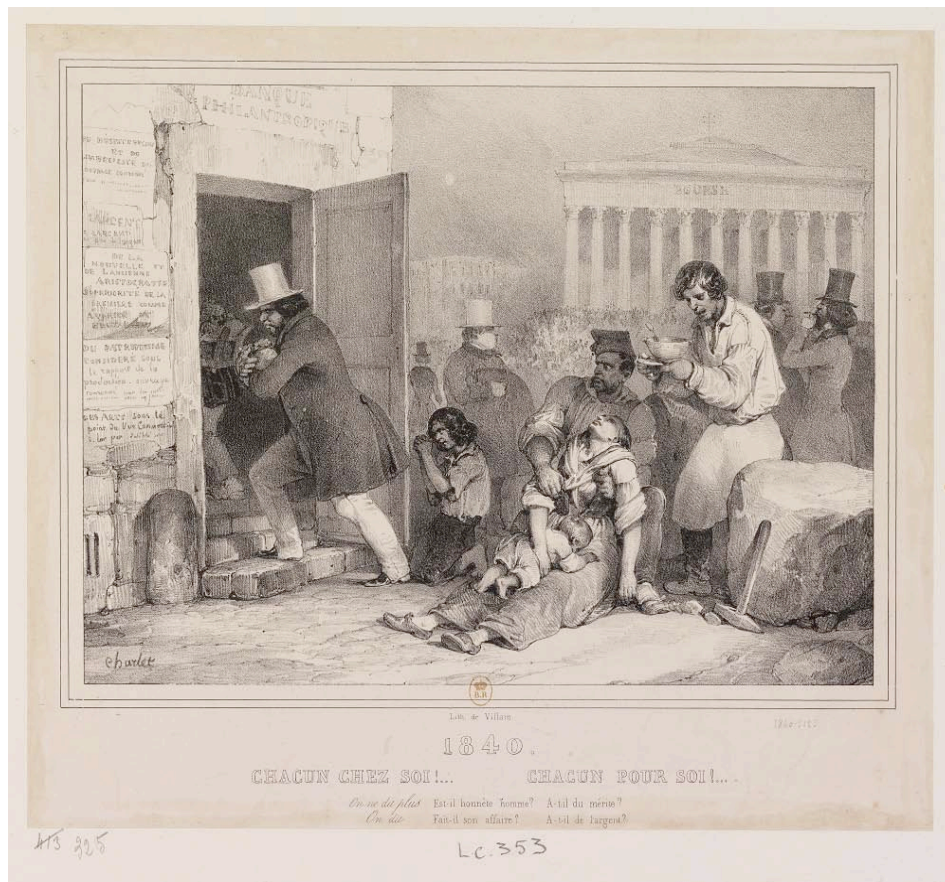
Gal Ventura, *The Dead Mother, The Uncanny, and the Holy Ghost*

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As opposed to the apocalyptic death in a natural disaster, the contemporary political context magnifies the tragedy of the maternal death. Furthermore, though as in Danloux's painting there is no indication of the cause of the mother's death, Delacroix portrayed her with ruthless realism devoid of all idealization, as a distinct visual representation of the abject 'bad death', which breaches the boundaries of social order.<sup>80</sup> Nevertheless, in this work, too, the artist has subdued the dread of death. By setting the mother's corpse in the faraway Greece, Delacroix has produced an emotional and geographic distance between the viewer and the dramatic occurrence, diminishing its dreadfulness. Transposing the source of pain from the artist's own world to remote lands yielded an 'emotional Orientalism' of sorts, easing the viewer's ability to cope with the tragedy.

And yet, even this removal vanished from the third type of depiction, produced in the 1840s, portraying, without embellishment of any kind, the French mother who dies of hunger in the intimacy of her own home (figure 1). Unlike the mechanisms of repression employed in the first decades of the century, Breton depicted the mother's death cloakless and hopeless, pointing an accusing finger at King Louis Philippe, who reigned in France from 1830 until his violent deposition by the people in the revolution of 1848. The commercial endeavors of the affluent bourgeoisie flourished under his liberal rule; it was they who supported him and formed the majority of his government. It was at that time that the Minister of Foreign Affairs, François Guizot, coined the phrase 'French people, enrich yourselves!' ('Français, enrichissez-vous'), convinced that those who would like to partake of political power must first prove themselves economically, either through labor or savings. Meanwhile, proletarian protests were violently suppressed, exacerbating their social and economic distress; these issues contributed to the strengthening of liberal and socialist factions that emphasized equality in place of competitiveness and individualism, the values championed by Louis-Philippe.<sup>81</sup> In response, many Republican artists associated with the Realist movement, such as Breton, depicted the simpleton's poverty and affliction, in order to raise public awareness of these social disorders (see, for example figure 6).<sup>82</sup>





**Figure 6.** Nicolas Toussaint Charlet, 1840 *Every Man at Home!... Every Man for Himself!* (1840 *Chacun chez soi!... Chacun pour soi!*), 1840, lithograph. © Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale.

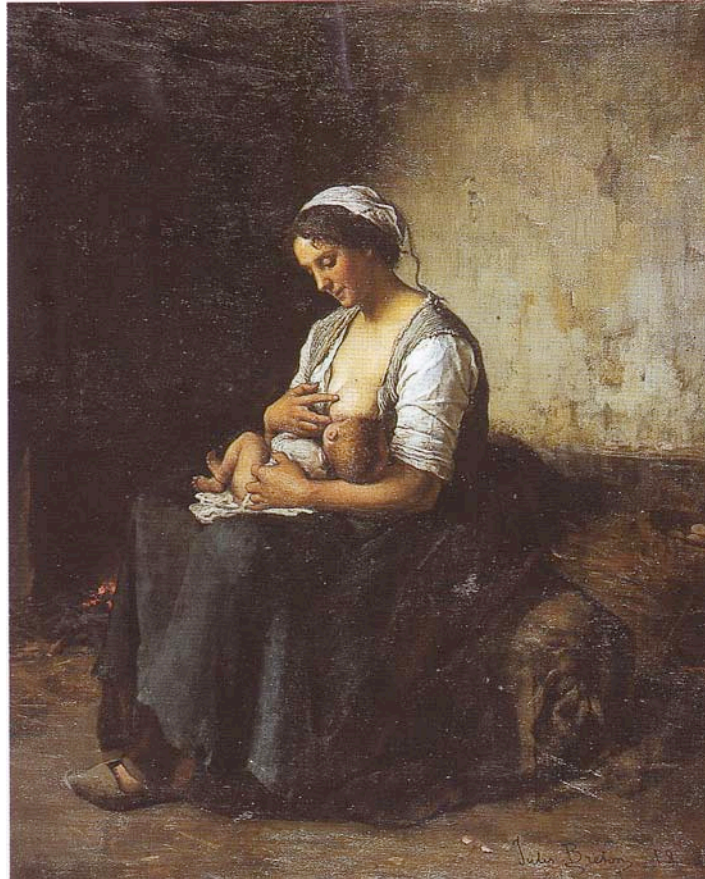
Through the depiction of the mother's death as a result of hunger, the artist protested against Louis Philippe's regime, demonstrating the responsibility of his economic policy for the calamity. Her death in the midst of the home amplified the critique, giving expression to the existential anxiety of the uncanny in the fullness of its magnitude, through the failure of the home in preserving the liveliness of its tenants. *The Hunger* does not only portray a broken father and orphans, but also a shattered home; a home widowed of its owners.

In the summer of 1850, Breton wrote to his uncle that he was considering spending the next few months in an affordable village, painting the landscapes, the sun, and the villagers in the open air. He explained that these new subject matters would allow him to avoid the horrible issues generated by the current political reality, and may perhaps also enable him to make a living<sup>83</sup>. Indeed, in 1863 Breton revisited the theme of motherhood, this time featuring a rural mother lovingly nursing her baby in the shelter of her simple, dim dwelling (figure 7).

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**Figure 7.** Jules Breton, *Mère allaitant son enfant*, 1863, oil on canvas, 55.2 x 45.1 cm. Bretagne, Private collection.

As opposed to his earlier political works that offered blatant criticism of the condition of the lower classes who did not earn institutional recognition, starting in the late 1850s he focused on depictions of the lives of peasants in his childhood landscapes, placing special emphasis on the traditional values of family, fecundity, labor, and repose, which earned him fame and popular acclaim. There is no doubt that his new style, which may be labeled as ‘romantic realism’, stemmed from the novel approach promoted by the Second Empire regime, which favored aesthetic works that embellished reality over realistic, miserable depictions.<sup>84</sup> But he simultaneously portrayed the culmination of the process of reconciliation with the trauma of the Revolution and with the destruction of the home, through the restructuralization of the homely and its rehabilitation, as well as by replacing the troubling memory with blessed forgetfulness.



## The Paradox of Forgetfulness and the Return of the Repressed: Mourning and Melancholy

In his 1882 book, *What Is a Nation?*, the French writer Ernest Renan claimed that nations are largely based not on shared memories, but on collective amnesia. In his own words: ‘Forgetfulness, and I would even say historical error, are essential in the creation of a nation’, as their formalization necessarily includes violence and terror as instruments in the creation of social unity.<sup>85</sup> In his view, a nation does not arise from a shared language, religion, race, or geographical location, but as a result of a collective spiritual doctrine rooted in a common past – fraught with sacrifice, suffering, and loss; yet, it is simultaneously based on the present and the striving for the future.<sup>86</sup> The dialectical tension between forgetfulness and remembrance is stressed throughout the text. ‘The essence of a nation’, he wrote, ‘is that all individuals have many things in common, and also that they have forgotten many things [...] every French citizen has to have forgotten the massacre of Saint Bartholomew, or the massacres that took place in the Midi in the thirteenth century’.<sup>87</sup>

Over a century later, Benedict Anderson pointed to the contradiction inherent in Renan’s position, speaking of collective amnesia while presuming that every Frenchman clearly remembers the massacres – first of the Huguenots and then of the Cathars – committed hundreds of years previously under the auspices of the Catholic Church. In his book *Imagined Communities*, Anderson claimed, and justifiably so, that traumatic events from the past tend not to be forgotten, and that the majority of them – such as those mentioned by Renan – are even commemorated by the regime through the education system as part of the historical heritage, with the aim of establishing a national identity and encouraging fraternity among citizens.<sup>88</sup>

One may claim that the very use of the term ‘making forget’ (‘faire oublier’), as defined by Renan, is paradoxical. Although it is possible to ‘remind’, ‘making forget’ is self-defeating, as it tends to reinforce whatever it is that it is trying to obliterate from memory. The visual arts were among the most powerful instruments that contributed to the enterprise of this ‘reminding/making forget’ mechanism; in Renan’s days, the field of public commemorative art gained leverage, as a heroic alternative to the defeat suffered in the Franco-Prussian War of 1871.<sup>89</sup> Still, I believe that Renan was well-aware of this paradox, which incisively illustrated the spirit of the time. Moreover, this kind of national ‘making forget’ is also relevant to my own stance, both in terms of the definition of the uncanny and

of the troubling metaphor of the dead mother, who represents a collective loss and the 'nothingness' arising from vain attempts at 'making forget'.

In his book *The Dead Mother*, the French psychoanalyst André Green focused on present/absent mothers, who are perceived by their children as psychically dead, as a result of their depression. This absence casts a heavy shadow on the child, who responds to the mother's symbolic death with existential depression: at times the child identifies with her and allows himself to die, while at times he develops a profound sense of loss of meaning.<sup>90</sup> In contradistinction to the anxiety of castration, characterized, according to Green, by a blood-red color, the lamentation for the absence of the present mother is a 'white mourning': the absence becomes the essence of the self. Though the subject believes that he has banished the dead mother, he, in fact, 'remains prisoner to her economy of survival [...] she only leaves him in peace in the measure that she herself is left in peace'.<sup>91</sup> The troubling reappearance of the mother, whom the subject attempts to revive, returns his loss to him time and again, thus engendering a feeling of emptiness, depression, and a double death, that of both mother and child. 'The mother's blank mourning induces blank mourning in the infant, burying a part of his ego in the maternal necropolis'.<sup>92</sup>

There are intriguing commonalities between the syndrome of the dead mother and Freud's definition of melancholy. Though, like mourning, melancholy is also a reaction to the loss of one's object of affection, the matter at hand is not one of an actual death, but of a kind of abandonment. 'The patient is aware of the loss which has given rise to his melancholia', explains Freud, 'but only in the sense that he knows whom he has lost but not what he has lost in him'.<sup>93</sup> Contrary to normative mourning, which comes to an end once it has been processed, melancholy, which may persist to no end, contains many unconscious levels and an inherent duality in relation to the object, who is simultaneously beloved and despised. This ambivalence is transferred as a struggle that culminates with the emergence of a conflicting self-perception and a loss of self-esteem.<sup>94</sup> Like Green's syndrome of the dead mother, neither is melancholy time bound, thus sentencing the subject to a cureless, ongoing mourning over the loss of the liminal, uncanny object of affection that refuses to die.

Brought on by the dead/living mother's troublesomeness, melancholy appears well-suited to the obsessive representations of the dead mother in nineteenth century French art. A visual-uncanny evidence of sorts for the existence of what Bracha L. Ettinger would term as 'cracks in the repression and fractures in the denial, scintillations of remembrance of those

things that are supposed to remain behind membranes of forgetfulness'.<sup>95</sup> As soon as homeliness became an ideal, it left its imprint on the psycho-social sphere, as a present/absent Great Mother who refuses to let go. 'Each and every one of us has had a dead mother', asserted Green in an interview in which he related his personal childhood experiences, 'but I remained unaware of it'.<sup>96</sup> As a mechanism of sublimation, art has attempted to grapple with the trauma of the loss of the comforting fantasy of homeliness, by means of the depiction of the terror of maternal death. As 'an intermediate area of experience', in the words of Donald Winnicott, art attempted to connect the conflicted subject's inner reality to his troubling external reality.<sup>97</sup> But this confrontation is destined to failure, as the syndrome of the dead mother has left behind a worldview of 'nothingness', a 'lack' that functions as a 'substance', an incurable blank depression. Akin to the dead Jesus, the idealized mother continues to roam the artistic sphere as a white transparent ghost, infusing a sense of emptiness and depression into her baby – who is destined to drink from her poisonous milk and share her deadly fate.

After years of a relative absence from research, matricide has been discussed in the last decades in feminist psychoanalytic theory from two different perspectives. Some, such as Kristeva, argued that matricide is 'a biological and psychic necessity, the first step on the way to becoming autonomous'.<sup>98</sup> Other theoreticians, however, negated the necessity of matricide, despite – or perhaps because – they acknowledged its importance in Western culture.<sup>99</sup> While adopting a socio-symbolic approach, Luce Irigaray comprehended matricide as an expression of the patriarchal eradication of the mother from social and symbolic order. 'The social order, our culture, psychoanalysis itself, want it this way', she argued; 'the mother must remain forbidden, excluded. The father forbids the bodily encounter with the mother'.<sup>100</sup> She believed that we should give our mothers a new life instead of sacrificing them to the law of the father.<sup>101</sup>

Her insights have been challenged by Amber Jacobs, who contradicted the notion of matricide as a common expression of the mother's non-status under the current patriarchal organization. By adopting a post-Lacanian theory, Jacobs argued that 'there is a lack of symmetry between patricide and matricide. While patricide was interpreted as the Name-of-the-Father, allowing for filiation, symbolic loss and genealogy', matricide was not perceived as a significant cultural event, but rather as the object of infantile fantasy.<sup>102</sup> Therefore, she suggested a parallel theory to the Oedipal-patricide model, by focusing on the experience of

the loss of the mother, thus enabling a generative loss, while locating the mother as a central module in the symbolic order of cultural organization. Through the myth of Metis, Athena's absent mother who had been swallowed by Zeus during her pregnancy, Jacobs tried to overcome the subordination and marginalization of the mother in Western discourse, while developing a new 'law of the mother' in the patriarchal socio-symbolic order. Furthermore, she claims that Metis' disappearance is the reason why Athena – not having a mother – acquitted Orestes for the murder of his mother Clytemnestra. Jacobs argues that comprehending the 'Metis law' illustrates the repression of the maternal law by erasing the mother from the classical myth. Thus, through the resurrection of the mother out of the imaginary pre-symbolic realm, she places her within the social arena of language, representation and history.<sup>103</sup>

The negation of matricide and its conversion with an alternative model of mercy instead of sacrifice is thoroughly discussed by Bracha Ettinger, who considered matricide and 'the dead mother' as phallic phantasies.<sup>104</sup> Ettinger challenged the assumption that subjectivity requires matricide, replacing division and absence between mother and child with presence and connection.<sup>105</sup> Through the term *Matrixial*, she defined a new non-Oedipal dimension of subjectivity, which exists alongside the phallic order, and does not need to displace the other in order to be.<sup>106</sup> Ettinger argued that the feminine processes of separation from the mother cannot work through cuts and splits (castration) but through differentiation and differentiation-in-jointness and attunement of distance-in-proximity. In her view, psychoanalysis must bring into account the maternal shocks rather than matricide, and must recognize the three primary mother-phantasies of abandonment, devouring and not-enoughness.<sup>107</sup> 'While castration phantasy is frightening in the point of the emergence of the original experience before its repression', claims Ettinger, 'the matrixial phantasy [...] becomes frightening when the experience is repressed'.<sup>108</sup>

Undoubtedly, the development of a post-Lacanian theory that incorporates the mother in the symbolic order is needed if we believe that the repression of the relationship with the maternal intensified cultural fears of women as a whole. Consequently, today, at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we must strive towards the establishment of a different social formation, which will convert the contemporary inclination towards independence, self-sufficiency and autonomy, with an aspiration towards communality and interdependence, that will enable the conversion of symbolic parental homicide with a new model of 'jointness and

distance-in-proximity', as suggested by Ettinger. Yet, in a less utopian society than contemporary Western culture has proved to be, where the main values have been (and still are) sovereignty, incompatibility, individualism and non-dependency, I believe, as argued by Kristeva, that matricide is a vital necessity. Yet, this matricide does not testify to the mother's insignificance; on the contrary: her comprehensive power requires her symbolic homicide, which will strengthen the relations with her instead of undermining them, thus creating – in Winnicott words – a separation 'that is not a separation but a form of a union'.<sup>109</sup> I believe that Metis' myth demonstrates this statement, since her marginalization created a fictitious death, a dead/alive ghost reminiscent of Green's un-dead mother, which led to a white mourning that disabled Athena from internalizing her mother as a subject. In order to cope with the dead/alive mother that refuses to die, matricide is obligatory in order to enable anticipated mourning, thus establishing a new connection between the two subjects and conveying the mother into the symbolic realm.

Based on these arguments, I believe that the gradual transformation of the ideal mother into an uncanny corpse not only reflected the trauma of the dissolution of the concept of homeliness; more importantly, it gave expression to a subversive processing mechanism, which sought to bring about the final death of the mother-who-refuses-to-die, based on the understanding that her murder alone will enable the uncanny, ghostlike blank mourning to turn into a black mourning, which may then be processed and annihilated. This morbid solution is found in Breton's painting, which represents the conversion of melancholy into normative, finite grief (figure 1). Without allusions to salvation, without idealization, hope, and repression, the mother lies dead in the intimacy of the home. The members of her family lament over her, not realizing that her disappearance constitutes the only mechanism that enables the transformation of melancholy into mourning, facilitating the consolidation of new life.

### **Janus-Faced: Conflictuality and Intellectual Uncertainty**

Bracha L. Ettinger views Freud's Uncanny – that Freud himself articulated as neutral – as phallic and corresponding to male developmental needs. In her view the Uncanny informed by female sexuality will open different accesses to womb phantasies, through processes of 'metamorphosis' and the affects of compassion and awe that she sees as primary.<sup>110</sup>



There is, however, one dimension in Jentsch's definition of the uncanny that does not reveal gender bias: the concept of 'intellectual uncertainty'. Despite his reservations about the term, Freud himself referred to it three times throughout the text: 'are we after all justified in entirely ignoring intellectual uncertainty as a factor, seeing that we have admitted its importance in relation to death?'.<sup>111</sup> Indeed, despite the points of contiguity between the two thinkers, it appears that one of the main differences between them regarding the uncanny has to do with the applicability of the term to both sexes. While Freud's approach formulates the uncanny on the basis of the heterosexual male experience, regarding the feminine itself as a clear manifestation of the uncanny, as indicated by Ettinger's assertions, Jentsch conceives it as an ambiguous, liminal term that may be experienced – or formed – by both men and women. Moreover, its inherent conflictuality, befitting the dead/living mother, broadens the uncanny as a term that expresses, in my view, the spirit of modernity in the best way possible. In Oscar Wilde's own words, 'Everybody one meets is a paradox nowadays. It is a great bore. It makes society so obvious'.<sup>112</sup>

The dead mother may be regarded as one such modern paradox, which combines within it the 'naturalness' of motherhood and its transformation into a social institution, as well as its absolute deconstruction. This Jentschian uncanniness arises from the very representation of her death in the visual arts, since a portrayal of the dead mother constitutes, in fact, a symbolization of the death of the mother. As such, it demands the internalization of her figure in order to make her into a symbol, which therefore contains her as well as her disappearance. This conflictuality stands at the core of Green's doctrine, which describes 'nothingness' as the self-determination of a melancholic society suffering the persistent troublesomeness of the mother-who-refuses-to-die, until it is forced to murder her. My thoughts bring me to join the direction of the importance of psychic matricide. Like patricide, which, according to numerous theoreticians has operated from the dawn of human history, so too matricide became imperative in nineteenth century, in an era of great socio-economic, religious, and cultural change. This alone permitted the termination of the process of socio-historical mourning for the loss of community and domesticity, in a period of social mobility and the subversion of traditional hierarchies.

In his apologetic essay analyzing the place of psychoanalysis today, Peter Homans claims that psychoanalysis is in itself one of the outcomes of this grief, and that all modern individuals, including Freud himself, are engaged in symbolic mourning, which stands at the

core of the introspective and reflexive characteristics of contemporary Western culture.<sup>113</sup> But, contrary to melancholy, ‘it never occurs to us to regard it [mourning] as a pathological condition and to refer it to medical treatment’, wrote Freud. ‘We rely on its being overcome after a certain lapse of time, and we look upon any interference with it as useless or even harmful’.<sup>114</sup>

In this sense, Breton’s dead mother may be regarded as a visual representation of the birth pangs of the modern individual, who, through the murder of both parents, converts the white mourning of melancholy into black mourning. Though his orphanhood may be accompanied by anguish, it alone allows him to consolidate his life – necessarily marked by uncanniness and laden with internal contradictions – anew. That is the conflictual spirit of modernity; the only way to contend with it is to come to terms with its existence.

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<sup>1</sup> It is important to note that though many of the fairy tales (collected from 1812 to 1857), like *Cinderella*, were originally structured around the death of the mother, in the first edition of the collection, published in 1812, several of the abusive stepmothers – such as Snow White’s or Hansel and Gretel’s – were actually the protagonists’ biological mothers. Their gradual death in subsequent editions and their transformation into stepmothers, alongside the foregrounding of the intimate character of the domestic sphere, came in response to the critics who denounced the violence of the original tales. See Alfred David and Mary Elizabeth David, ‘A Literary Approach to the Brothers Grimm’, *Journal of the Folklore Institute*, 1 (3), (December 1964), pp. 192-194; Linda Dégh, ‘Grimm’s “Household Tales” and Its Place in the Household: The Social Relevance of a Controversial Classic’, *Western Folklore*, 38 (2), (April 1979), pp. 91-93.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Honoré de Balzac’s *The Vendetta* (1830) or Charles Dickens’s *Oliver Twist* (1838). For more information on the great impact of the Brothers Grimm on books published in Germany and France in those years, see David and David, ‘A Literary Approach to the Brothers Grimm’, p. 196.

<sup>3</sup> Bettelheim B., *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales* (New York: Knopf, 1976).

<sup>4</sup> David and David, ‘A Literary Approach to the Brothers Grimm’, p. 181.

<sup>5</sup> Karen Horney, ‘The Flight from Womanhood’, *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 7 (1926), pp. 324-339; Erich Neumann, *The Great Mother: An Analysis of the Archetype*, trans. Ralph Manheim, (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1963); Dorothy Dinnerstein, *The Rocking of the Cradle and the Ruling of the World* (London: Women’s Press, 1987); Nancy Chodorow, *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender* [1978] (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

<sup>6</sup> A report issued in 1788 shows that in the second half of the eighteenth-century, seven to ten percent of women died in childbirth, whereas by the first half of the nineteenth century, the rate had dropped to an average of five percent, as a result of increased awareness of the dangers inherent in childbirth and the improvement of birthing conditions in urban hospitals: Françoise Loux, ‘Rituels de vie, rituels de mort: La Gal Ventura, The Dead Mother, The Uncanny, and the Holy Ghost

- Naissance dans la société française préindustrielle’, in *L’Heureux événement: Une histoire de l’accouchement*, exhibition catalogue (Paris: Musée de l’Assistance Publique, Hôpitaux de Paris, 1995), p. 56; Emile Papiernik, ‘Histoire de l’accouchement: Approche d’une analyse critique’, in *L’Heureux événement*, p. 142; Jean-Louis Flandrin, *Familles, parenté, maison, sexualité dans l’ancienne société* (Paris, 1976), p. 217.
- <sup>7</sup> Sigmund Freud, ‘The “Uncanny”’ [1919], *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud (SE)*, vol. XVII: *An Infantile Neurosis and Other Works*, trans. and ed. James Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1955), p. 237.
- <sup>8</sup> For a comprehensive chronological discussion of depictions of the death of the mother, in both secular and religious art, produced in France from 1810 to 1850, see Gal Ventura, *Crying Over Spilt Milk: Breastfeeding and its Substitutes in 19<sup>th</sup>-Century French Art* (Jerusalem: The Hebrew University Magnes Press, 2013), 2<sup>nd</sup> chapter: ‘Breastfeeding and Death’, pp. 54-94 (in Hebrew).
- <sup>9</sup> Hubert Damisch, *A Childhood Memory by Piero della Francesca*, trans. John Goodman (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), p. 1.
- <sup>10</sup> Jacob L. Moreno, *Who Shall Survive? A New Approach to the Problem of Human Interrelations* (New York: Beacon House, 1953), p. 1.
- <sup>11</sup> Wilfred Ruprecht Bion, *Experiences in Groups and Other Papers* (London: Tavistock, 1961), p. 189.
- <sup>12</sup> Erich Fromm, *Beyond the Chains of Illusion, My Encounter with Marx and Freud* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1962), p. 88. For further discussion see Peter Felix Kellermann, *Sociodrama and Collective Trauma* (London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2007), pp. 58-59; *The Social Unconscious in persons, Groups, and Societies*, ed. By Earl Hopper and Haim Weinberg (London: Kranac Books, 2011).
- <sup>13</sup> Richard Hilbert, *The Classical Roots of Ethnomethodology: Durkheim, Weber and Garfinkel*. (The Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), p. 28.
- <sup>14</sup> Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, ed. and trans. Lewis A. Coser (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), p. 40. A similar method was also discussed in Art History dealing with collective memory by Aby Warburg. For further discussion see: Jan Assmann and John Czaplicka, ‘Collective Memory and Cultural Identity’, *New German Critique*, 65 (Spring - Summer 1995), pp. 125-133; Kurt W. Forster, ‘Aby Warburg’s History of Art: Collective Memory and the Social Mediation of Images’, *Daedalus*, 105 (1) (Winter 1976), pp. 169-176. Another important interpreter of collective memory was Walter Benjamin, as demonstrated in his *Arcade Project* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1999).
- <sup>15</sup> Maurice Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory*, intro. Mary Douglas, Chapter 2: ‘Historical Memory and Collective Memory’ (New York: Harper & Row, 1980), pp. 50-53.
- <sup>16</sup> Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory*, p. 67.
- <sup>17</sup> Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, pp. 39-40.
- <sup>18</sup> Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, pp. 50-51.
- <sup>19</sup> Ernst Jentsch, ‘On the Psychology of the Uncanny’ [1906], trans. Roy Sellars, *Angelaki*, 2 (1), *Home and Family* special issue, ed. Sarah Wood, 1995, p. 8.
- <sup>20</sup> Jentsch, ‘On the Psychology of the Uncanny’, pp. 8-9.
- <sup>21</sup> Jentsch, ‘On the Psychology of the Uncanny’, p. 11.

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- <sup>22</sup> Jentsch, 'On the Psychology of the Uncanny', p. 11.
- <sup>23</sup> Freud, 'The "Uncanny"', pp. 220, 224-225.
- <sup>24</sup> Freud, 'The "Uncanny"', p. 243.
- <sup>25</sup> Freud, 'The "Uncanny"', p. 233.
- <sup>26</sup> Freud, 'The "Uncanny"', p. 245. Freud based his discussion of the anxiety of castration on, among other sources, the desperate pining of Nathanael, protagonist of the story *The Sandman* by the Romantic writer E. T. A. Hoffmann (1776-1882), for Olympia, the mechanical doll that arouses his passion and blinds him to the threat she embodies, turning him into a controlled object, devoid of will power or an independent gaze (see Freud, 'The "Uncanny"', pp. 227, 230).
- <sup>27</sup> Freud, 'The "Uncanny"', p. 248-249.
- <sup>28</sup> Freud, 'The "Uncanny"', p. 241.
- <sup>29</sup> Freud, 'The "Uncanny"', p. 242.
- <sup>30</sup> Freud, 'The "Uncanny"', p. 244. Despite the fact that Freud emphasized the anxiety of castration as a central contributor to the uncanny atmosphere, the repeated reference to the womb brings the Oedipal theory together with the pre-Oedipal stage in his definition of the uncanny (Diane Jonte-Pace, *Speaking the Unspeakable: Religion, Misogyny, and the Uncanny Mother in Freud's Cultural Texts* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001], p. 70).
- <sup>31</sup> *Dialogues of Plato*, 881, trans. Benjamin Jowett (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 392.
- <sup>32</sup> *Works of Plato: The Apology of Socrates*, trans. Henry Cary (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1868), p. 28.
- <sup>33</sup> See, for example: Aimé-Jules Dalou, *Victor Hugo sur son lit de mort*, plaster mask, h: 26 cm, May 23, 1885, Paris, musée d'Orsay; *Le duc d'Anmale sur son lit de mort*, photograph, 19.8 x 25.8 cm, May 7, 1897, Chantilly, musée Condé; Ary Scheffer, *La Fayette sur son lit de mort*, 1834, oil on canvas, h: 64.2 cm, Blérancourt, musée franco-américain du château de Blérancourt.
- <sup>34</sup> See, for example, Félix Nadar, *Victor Hugo sur son lit de mort*, photograph, 16.5 x 12.5 cm, May 23, 1885, Paris, musée d'Orsay.
- <sup>35</sup> For a discussion of the connection between the female body and food, see Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), p. 270.
- <sup>36</sup> *L'Aventure de l'art au XIXe siècle*, ed. By Jean-Louis Ferrier (Paris: Chêne-Hachette, 1991), p. 131.
- <sup>37</sup> Paul Harold Beik, *Louis-Philippe and the July Monarch* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965), p. 96; André Jardin and André-Jean Tudesq, *Restoration and Reaction: 1815-1848*, trans. Elborg Forster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 192-195; Linda Nochlin, *Realism* (London: Penguin, 1990), p. 122.
- <sup>38</sup> Anette Bourrut Lacouture, *Jules Breton, La chanson des blés*, exhibition catalogue (Abbaye Saint-Vaast: Musée des Beaux-Arts d'Arras, 2002), pp. 59-64.
- <sup>39</sup> Freud, 'The "Uncanny"', p. 220.
- <sup>40</sup> Freud, 'The "Uncanny"', pp. 224-225.
- <sup>41</sup> Freud, 'The "Uncanny"', pp. 223-224.
- <sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 223-224.

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- <sup>43</sup> Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, trans. Leon Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), pp. 1-5. For a discussion of the connection between the abject and the uncanny, see Jonte-Pace, *Speaking the Unspeakable*, pp. 107-114.
- <sup>44</sup> Freud, "The "Uncanny"", p. 225.
- <sup>45</sup> For an elaborate discussion of these issues, see Mary Frances Durantini, *The Child in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Painting* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1983); Wayne Franits, *Paragons of Virtue: Women and Domesticity in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).
- <sup>46</sup> Carol Duncan, 'Happy Mothers and Other New Ideas in Eighteenth-Century French Art', in *Feminism and Art History: Questioning the Litany*, ed. by Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard (New York: Harper & Row, 1982), pp. 201-220; Priscilla Robertson, 'Home as a Nest: Middle Class Childhood in Nineteenth-Century Europe', in *The History of Childhood*, ed. By Lloyd DeMause (New York: Psychohistory Press, 1974), p. 407.
- <sup>47</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Émile: or On Education*, trans. Allan Bloom (New York: Basic Books, 1979), p. 46. His ideas had an extensive influence on the art world, which hastened to depict the joy of motherhood in a number of artworks presented at the Salon. See, for example: Jean Baptiste Greuze, *La Mère bien-aimée*, 1769, oil on canvas, 99 x 131 cm, Laborde collection, Madrid.
- <sup>48</sup> Thomas Maldonado, 'The Idea of Comfort', *Designs Issues*, 8 (1) (Autumn 1991), p. 35; Jonny Grey, 'Social Role of the Kitchen: A Visual History', *The Art of Kitchen Design* (London: Cassel and Co., 2002), pp. 20-24.
- <sup>49</sup> Randolph Trumbach, *The Rise of the Egalitarian Family: Aristocratic Kinship and Domestic Relations in Eighteenth-Century England* (New York: Academic Press, 1978); Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex, and Marriage in England, 1500-1800* (London: Harper & Row, 1977); Robertson, 'Home as a Nest', pp. 407-431; James McMillan, *Housewife or Harlot: The Place of Women in French Society, 1870-1914* (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1981), p. 10; Ingeborg Weber Kellermann, 'A Cultural History of the Children's Room', in *Kid Size: The Material World of Childhood*, exhibition catalogue (Milan: Vitra Design Museum, 1997), pp. 25-39; Philippe Perrot, 'The Family Triumphant', in *A History of Private Life: From the Fires of Revolution to the Great War*, 4, ed. By Philippe Ariès and Georges Duby, trans. Arthur Goldhammer, vol. 4 (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press, 1989), pp. 99-113; Mark Poster, *Critical Theory of the Family* (New York: Seabury Press, 1978); Tamar Garb, 'Renoir and the Natural Woman', in *The Expanding Discourse – Feminism and Art History*, ed. By Norma Broude and Mary Garrard (New York: HarperCollins, 1992), pp. 295-311.
- <sup>50</sup> Jules Michelet, *Du prêtre, de la femme, de la famille* (Paris: Hachette, 1845), pp. 302-303. The English translation is drawn from the 3<sup>rd</sup> edition: Jules Michelet, *Priests, Women, and Families*, trans. C. Cocks (London: Longman, 1845), part III, chapter 3, pp. 245-246.
- <sup>51</sup> André Green, 'The Dead Mother', *On Private Madness* (London: Kranac, 1997), p. 148.
- <sup>52</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Émile*, pp. 44-45.
- <sup>53</sup> For a partial list of French books addressing the cruciality of maternal nursing from the late eighteenth-century to the 1840s, see Marie-Angélique Rebourts, *Avis aux mères qui veulent nourrir leurs enfants* (Paris, 1799); Jean-François Verdier-Heurtin (M.D.), *Discours et essai aphoristiques sur l'allaitement et l'éducation physique des enfants* (Lyon: Ballanche, 1804); Jérôme Lasserre, *Manuel du père de famille, ou Nouvelles méthodes de l'allaitement artificiel, et de faire prendre aux enfants, et même aux adultes, les liquides dans certains cas* (Paris: Prosper Noubel Imprimeur

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- Libraire, 1822); Armande Jeanne d'Humières Gacon-Dufour, *Manuel complet de la maîtresse de maison et de la parfaite ménagère, ou guide pratique pour la gestion d'une maison à la ville et à la campagne* (Paris: Roret, 1826); Alfred Donné (M.D.), *Conseils aux mères sur la manière d'élever les enfants nouveau-nés, ou de l'éducation physique des enfants du premier âge* (Paris: J. B. Baillière et fils, 1842).
- <sup>54</sup> Michelet, *Priests, Women, and Families*, p. 246.
- <sup>55</sup> Sigmund Freud, 'The Theme of Three Caskets' [1913], *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud (SE)*, vol. XII: *The Case of Schreber, Papers on Technique and Other Works*, trans. and ed. James Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1958), p. 301.
- <sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 301.
- <sup>57</sup> Lacouture, *Jules Breton*, p. 68.
- <sup>58</sup> Étienne-Jean Delécluze, *Exposition des artistes vivants, 1850* (Paris: Comon, 1851), pp. 56-57, cited in Lacouture, *Jules Breton*, p. 69.
- <sup>59</sup> Freud, 'The "Uncanny"', p. 224.
- <sup>60</sup> For an elaboration on the connection between religion, patricide, and the castration complex, see Sigmund Freud, *Totem and Taboo: Some Points of Agreement between the Mental Lives of Savages and Neurotics* [1913, trans. Paul Kegan (London: Routledge, 2001), pp. 162-170.
- <sup>61</sup> Saint Ambrose, 'Death as a Good', *Seven Exegetical Works*, trans. Michael P. McHugh (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1985), pp. 70-77.
- <sup>62</sup> Freud, 'The "Uncanny"', p. 242.
- <sup>63</sup> Jonte-Pace, *Speaking the Unspeakable*, p. 69.
- <sup>64</sup> Freud, 'The "Uncanny"', p. 242.
- <sup>65</sup> Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, p. 4.
- <sup>66</sup> Alfred de Musset, *Confession of a Child of the Century* [1836] (Marina del Rey: Aegypan Books, 2008), part 1, pp. 8-9, 24.
- <sup>67</sup> Freud, 'The "Uncanny"', p. 237.
- <sup>68</sup> Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, p. 77.
- <sup>69</sup> Jeffrey C. Alexander, 'Toward a Theory of Cultural Trauma', in *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*, ed. By Jeffrey C. Alexander et al. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), p. 1.
- <sup>70</sup> Jules Michelet, *Le Peuple* (Paris: Comptoir des Imprimeurs-Unis, 1846), p. 43.
- <sup>71</sup> Linda S. Frey and Marsha L. Frey, *The French Revolution* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2004), pp. 27-35; Donald Greer, *The Incidence of the Terror during the French Revolution* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1935), pp. 19, 24-37; Emmet Kennedy, *A Cultural History of the French Revolution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), pp. xxi-xxviii; William Doyle, *Origins of the French Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 8-16.
- <sup>72</sup> Kennedy, *A Cultural History of the French Revolution*, pp. xxi-xxviii; William Doyle, *The Oxford History of the French Revolution* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), p. 423.
- <sup>73</sup> Doyle, *Origins of the French Revolution*, pp. 120-121.

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- <sup>74</sup> See, for instance: Nicolas André Monsiau, *Dévouement de Mgr. Belzunce, évêque de Marseille, durant la peste qui désola cette ville en 1720*, 1819 (Salon 1819), oil on canvas, 130 x 160 cm, Paris, Musée du Louvre; Abel de Pujol, *Saint Roch guérissant les pestiférés dans un hôpital de Rome*, 1822 (Salon 1822), mural, Paris, Église Saint-Sulpice; Jean Victor Schnetz, *Sainte Geneviève distribuant des vivres pendant le siège de Paris*, 1822 (Salon 1822), mural, Paris, Église Notre Dame de Bonne Nouvelle.
- <sup>75</sup> Bruno Foucart, *Le Renouveau de la peinture religieuse en France: 1800–1860* (Paris: Arthéna, 1987), p. 81.
- <sup>76</sup> Eliezer Witztum and Ruth Malkinson, 'Bereavement and Perpetuation: The Double Face of the National Myth'(in Hebrew), in *Loss and Bereavement*, ed. By Ruth Malkinson, Simon Shimshon Rubin and Eliezer Witztum (Jerusalem: 1993), pp. 237, 254; Tamir Gilam, 'Adjustment through Time of Bereaved Parents in Israel' (in Hebrew), in *Loss and Bereavement*, p. 225. These steps are largely based on Freud's approach to the subject of trauma, which developed at the end of the nineteenth century and demonstrated that, even when it comes to personal trauma, general patterns may be identified (Neil J. Smelser, 'Psychological Trauma and Cultural Trauma', in *Cultural Trauma*, pp. 32-35, 44-55.) In the second half of the nineteenth century, following the production of dozens of works depicting the dead mother, many artists, including Breton himself, started portraying the nursing mother once again, after years of absence. For an elaboration on this subject, see Ventura, *Crying Over Spilt Milk*, pp. 229-240, figs. 86-88, 90.
- <sup>77</sup> See, for example: Annibale Carracci, *Pietà with Saint Francis and Maria Magdalena*, ca. 1602-1607, 277 x 186 cm, Paris, Musée du Louvre.
- <sup>78</sup> In fact, the dead mother may be read as an allegorical representation of France itself, portrayed by the exiled monarchist French artist as a symbol of the horrors committed by the Revolutionaries, who forsook their homeland and condemned it to annihilation. For a detailed discussion of the biographical elements that contributed to the depiction of the dead mother in this work, see Ventura, *Crying Over Spilt Milk*, pp. 57-65. For a discussion of the life of the artist, see Roger Portalis, *Henri-Pierre Danloux, peintre de portraits et son journal pendant l'émigration, 1753-1809* (Paris: E. Rahir, 1910), pp. 50–51, 430–434.
- <sup>79</sup> This work focuses on the massacre that took place on the island of Chios in April 1822, when the Turks murdered some 20,000 of the island's Greek residents and sold the remaining women and children into slavery (Lee Johnson, *The Paintings of Eugène Delacroix, A Critical Catalogue, 1816-1831*, vol. 1 [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981], p. 87.)
- <sup>80</sup> The art world hastened to renounce the ugliness of this painting. 'This is the slaughter of painting', asserted the eminent painter Baron Antoine-Jean Gros, who was himself known for his dramatic depictions of death (Charles Blanc, 'Eugène Delacroix' *Gazette des beaux-arts*, 16 [January-June 1864], p. 15.) 'Not only is the arrangement of the scene appalling', wrote the art critic Étienne-Jean Delécluze (1781-1863), 'but it seems that [Delacroix] took it in hand to make it more hideous still, by the cadaverous tint that envelops the whole picture' (cited in Barthélemy Jobert, *Delacroix* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998], p. 77). For an elaboration on this subject, see Ventura, *Crying Over Spilt Milk*, pp. 79-88.
- <sup>81</sup> Paul Harold Beik, *Louis Philippe and the July Monarchy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965), pp. 60-61, 70-74; André Jardin and André-Jean Tudesq, *Restoration and Reaction 1815-1848*, trans. Elborg Forster (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 129, 176-182.

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- <sup>82</sup> Gabriel P. Weisberg, *The Realist Tradition, French Painting and Drawing 1830-1900*, exhibition catalogue (Cleveland: Cleveland Museum of Art, 1980), pp. 10-13; Gabriel P. Weisberg, 'Jules Breton in Context', in H. Sturges, *Jules Breton and the French Rural Tradition*, exhibition catalogue (Omaha: Joslyn Art Museum, 1982), pp. 37-40. For a citation of the letters written by Breton to his family members from Paris in the years 1848-1849, in which he puts forth his social and political stance, see Lacouture, *Jules Breton*, pp. 59-64.
- <sup>83</sup> Weisberg, 'Jules Breton in Context', pp. 69-70.
- <sup>84</sup> Weisberg quotes Minister Achille Fould's public address (1853), stressing the need for aesthetics and beauty as alternatives to the bold realism of the period (Weisberg, 'Jules Breton in Context', p. 40).
- <sup>85</sup> Ernest Renan, 'What is a Nation?', trans. Martin Thom, in *Nation and Narration*, ed. By Homi K. Bhabha (London: Routledge, 1990), p. 10.
- <sup>86</sup> Renan, 'What is a Nation?', pp. 13-22.
- <sup>87</sup> Renan, 'What is a Nation?', p. 11.
- <sup>88</sup> Benedict R. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991), pp. 199-201.
- <sup>89</sup> Antoinette Le Normand-Romain, 'En hommage aux opposants politiques, monument funéraire ou public?', *Revue de l'art*, 94 (1991), pp. 74-80.
- <sup>90</sup> Green, 'The Dead Mother', pp. 148-153. In his own words: 'an imago which has been constituted in the child's mind, following maternal depression, brutally transforming a living object, which was a source of vitality for the child, into a distant figure, toneless, practically inanimate' (Ibid., p. 142).
- <sup>91</sup> Green, 'The Dead Mother', p. 156.
- <sup>92</sup> Green, 'The Dead Mother', p. 167.
- <sup>93</sup> Sigmund Freud, 'Mourning and Melancholia' [1915], *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud (SE)*, vol. XIV: *On the History of the Psycho-Analytic Movement, Papers on Metapsychology and Other Works*, trans. and ed. James Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1957), p. 245.
- <sup>94</sup> Freud, 'Mourning and Melancholia', pp. 243-245.
- <sup>95</sup> Bracha L. Ettinger, 'Matrixial "Uncanny", Scintillations of Co/in-habit(u)ation and the Home-affect' (in Hebrew), *Protocols: E-Journal*, History and Theory, Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design, 27: *The Uncanny*, March 2013, <http://bezalel.secured.co.il/zope/home/he/1363957903/1363958674> (retrieved May 2014)
- <sup>96</sup> *Une théorie vivante: L'œuvre d'André Green*, ed. by François Duparc, Florence Quartier-Frings, and Henri Vermorel (Paris: Delachaux et Niestlé, 1995), p. 104.
- <sup>97</sup> Donald Winnicott, 'Transitional Objects and Transitional Phenomena', *Playing and Reality* (London: Routledge, 2005), p. 18.
- <sup>98</sup> Julia Kristeva, *Black Sun*, trans. L. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), pp. 27-28.
- <sup>99</sup> Luce Irigaray, 'The Bodily Encounter with the Mother', in *The Irigaray Reader*, ed. By Margaret Whitford (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), pp. 34-46.
- <sup>100</sup> Luce Irigaray, 'Equal or Different?', *The Irigaray Reader*, p. 30.

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- <sup>101</sup> For further discussion, see also: Miglena Nikolchina, *Matricide in Language: Writing Theory in Kristeva and Woolf* (New York: Other Press, 2004), pp. 1-3; Christina Wieland, *The Undead Mother: Psychoanalytic Explorations of Masculinity, Femininity and Matricide* (London: Kranac, 2000), p. 13.
- <sup>102</sup> Amber Jacobs, *On Matricide: Myth, Psychoanalysis and the Law of the Mother* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), pp. 19-23.
- <sup>103</sup> Jacobs, *On Matricide*, pp. 62-71.
- <sup>104</sup> Bracha L. Ettinger, 'Gaze-and-touching the Not Enough Mother', in *Eva Hesse Drawing*, ed. By Catherine M. de Zegher (New York: The Drawing Center & New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), pp. 183–213.
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- <sup>111</sup> Freud, 'The "Uncanny"', p. 247.
- <sup>112</sup> Oscar Wilde, *An Ideal Husband* [1895], Third Act, Project Gutenberg #885, retrieved May 2014. <http://archive.org/stream/anidealhusband00885gut/ihsbn10.txt>
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