

Alice Lombardo Maher's Concept of the Transformational Reversal of Conflict Situations

Some Illustrations and Comparisons

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I. Introduction to the Concept of Transformational Reversal which is common to both the Core Phenomenon and its Analogues

Alice Maher is a New York psychoanalyst who has discovered a process for addressing group and organisational conflict whose implications are still being unravelled. Her book, entitled '*Catalysis: A Recipe to Slow Down or Abort Humankind's Leap to War*', is currently in press.

This essay is an attempt to articulate her concept in my own way, and to link it to other analogous concepts which are more (though not overly, nowadays) familiar. As a way in to the illustrations of Alice Maher's concept, I am taking a key passage and episode – indeed the final one (it is both dreadfully poignant, - and yet hopeful in its self-transformation) – from JD Vance's moving book about the Scottish/Ulster Irish immigrants to the US, inhabitants of Greater Appalachia, *Hillbilly Elegy*. This is a book which gives an inside track to the cultural world from which Trump's support emerges, but which also profoundly both defends and makes sense of, - and critiques, - that world. But that is not why it is relevant.

This passage is more accessible than to go straight to the Core Phenomenon, since it both shows the influence of modern psychotherapy, and also of the nineteenth century novel, and both of these represent processes which have some familiarity to us. In such a passage, we are discovering *truth about persons*, which is an essentially historical-consciousness ('historicity') based phenomenon, with an intrinsic appeal, as JS Mill emphatically and comprehensively pointed out in his essay on Bentham, to imaginative empathy, but conceived of as a means to 'historical truth', in the broadest sense:

"The Imagination which [Bentham] had not, was that to which the name is generally appropriated by the best writers of the present day; that which enables us, by a voluntary effort, to conceive the absent as if it were present, the imaginary as if it were real, and to clothe it in the feelings which, if it were indeed real, it would bring along with it. This is the power by which one human being enters into the mind and circumstances of another. This power constitutes the poet, in so far as he does anything but melodiously utter his own actual feelings. It constitutes the dramatist entirely. It is one of the constituents of the historian; by it we understand other times; by it Guizot interprets to us the Middle Ages; Nisard in his beautiful *Studies on the later Latin poets*, places us in the Rome of the Caesars; Michelet disengages

the the distinctive characters of the different races and generations of mankind from the facts of history. Without it nobody even knows his own nature, further than circumstances have actually tried it and called it out; nor the nature of his fellow-creatures, beyond such generalisations as he may have been enabled to make from his observation of their outward conduct.”

But Vance’s passage also demonstrates, in an intrapsychic context, the kind of radical reversal, and ‘inversion of the same’ (the echo of Nietzsche is not an accident), with which we are concerned. Before this passage, Vance has been talking to and about a cousin who is, in his mind, a younger version of himself (the theme of doubling and mimetic identification will also recur). In the background of the dream, his grandmother (Mamaw) and his sister Lindsay were his mainstays and his heavily addictive mother/’Mom’ was a profound source of destabilisation and fear. Usha is his beloved, and eventual wife.

He goes on:

“I wanted to ask Brian whether, like me, he had bad dreams. For nearly two decades, I suffered from a terrible recurring nightmare. The first time it came to me, I was seven, fast asleep in my great Mamaw Blanton’s bed. In the dream I’m trapped in a large conference room in a large tree house – as if the Keebler elves had just finished a massive picnic and their tree house were still adorned with dozens of tables and chairs. I’m there alone with Lindsay and Mamaw, when all of a sudden Mom charges through the room, tossing tables and chairs as she goes. She screams, but her voice is robotic and distorted, as if filtered through radio static. Mamaw and Lindsay run for a hole in the floor – presumably the exit ladder from the tree house. I fall behind, and by the time I reach the exit, Mom is just behind me. I wake up, right as she’s about to grab me, when I realize not just that the monster has caught me, but that Mamaw and Lindsay have abandoned me.

In different versions, the antagonist changes form. It has been a Marine Corps drill instructor, a barking dog, a movie villain, and a mean teacher. Mamaw and Lindsay always make an appearance, and they always make it to the exit just ahead of me. Without fail, the dream provokes pure terror. The first time I had it, I woke up and ran to Mamaw, who was up late watching television. I explained the dream and begged her never to leave me. She promised that she wouldn’t and stroked my hair until I fell asleep again.

My subconscious had spared me for years, when, out of nowhere, I had the dream again a few weeks after I graduated from law school. There was a crucial difference. The subject of the monster’s ire wasn’t me but my dog Caspar, with whom I’d lost my temper earlier in the night. There was no Lindsay and no Mamaw. And *I* was the monster.

I chased my poor dog around the tree house, hoping to catch him and throttle him. But I felt Caspar’s terror, and I felt my shame at having lost my temper. I finally caught up to him, but I did not wake up. Instead, Caspar turned and looked at me with those sad, heart-piercing eyes that only dogs possess. So I didn’t throttle him; I gave him a hug. And the last emotion I felt before waking was relief at having controlled my temper.

I got out of bed for a glass of cold water, and when I returned, Caspar was staring at me, wondering what on earth his human was doing awake at such an odd hour. It was two o’clock in the morning – probably about the same time it was when I first work from the terrifying dream over twenty years earlier. There was no Mamaw to comfort me. But there were my two dogs on the floor, and there was the love of my

life lying in bed. Tomorrow I would go to work, take the dogs to the park, buy groceries with Usha, and make a nice dinner. It was everything I ever wanted. So I patted Caspar's head and went back to sleep."

It is clearly a 'rite of passage', a 'coming of age', and transformational, dream. Waking, he strokes his dog's head as Mamaw had stroked his. *It is a symbolic as well as an affective reversal.* He claims back his own terrified projections and defences, releases himself, and takes existential ownership. But this is not without re-entering the world of terror, as it was and is, but yet it is reversed in the outcome. This pattern of *reversal of the very same thing* is at the heart of what we are concerned with, and is possibly the common core of all the phenomena we shall consider. At the very least it is one of the connecting features.

The central phenomenon with which Alice Maher is concerned is a new realisation of how this reversal process transfers to human group, institutional, and political situations. The very same forces which are maintaining enmity are turned round 180% to become forces of connection, and there is, as in the film *The Journey* (below), often an element of eros of bonding or friendship, as also in *Scent of a Woman*.

In intra-psychic transformation one has to learn to trust *oneself*. In the group phenomenon, and process, of *Transformational Reversals of Conflict Situations*, we have to learn to trust the very people who are, actually or potentially, our mortal enemies. This is to happen within all the uncertainty and dangerous unpredictability of a group process, and by its nature, every group being a potential lynch mob, this does nothing to mitigate the savagery of conflict.

It involves a partial suspension of belief, or rather a rising from 'local' belief, to a meta-level organisation of belief and perception, as is very powerfully realised in the instance in the next section. This does not abolish truth; it gives us a wider meta-level understanding of the conception of belief. It is precisely a *wider imaginative understanding of the whole wider context, reflexively including the beliefs of those within it, which is the 'truth driver' of the whole deep process.* As such, it is certainly a non-linear conception of truth, and aligned with postmodern contextualism, but it is not relativistic or an annulment of the concept of truth....

To take a modern example, this concept is either very different from, - or at least a radical transformation of, - a familiar modern paradigm, Martin Buber's 'I-Thou'. To be sure, it may well be that, in practice, through the powerful paradigm of the 'I-Thou' concept itself, 'I-Thou' facilitation has sometimes actually brought about Transformational Reversals of Conflict Situations. But they will not have been recognised as such.

This is because, conceptually, in Buber, the I-Thou is simply *contrasted with* what opposes it (indeed, it is even contrasted with the I-It), and **therefore does not embody the doubling, the reciprocal but oppositional identification, and the radical self-reversal of Transformational Reversals of Conflict Situations.** Transformational Reversals of Conflict Situations aim to be opposed to all forms of ideology which simply say, 'this one is the best, and everyone else needs to be guided by it'. The transformational reversal concept is therefore more

congruent with the dialectical (oppositional) traditions in philosophy, literature and psychotherapy, - one of the analogue phenomena to which we shall come.

II. **The Core Phenomenon: Transformational Reversals of Conflict Situations: Radical Belief confrontations, with ensuing Transformational Reversals**

Provisional Definition:

“A Confrontation between diametrically opposed belief, policy, and group purpose, positions, oppositions which are overcome in the transformational reversal. The oppositions are overcome by recognition of common interests, hidden in plain view, and mutually mirrored in the polarisation - whose hidden (mimetic, but also ‘higher level’) identity makes possible the reversal. This may also be enhanced by the eros of latent personal friendship, or understanding, overcoming difference.”

As we go onwards, the boundaries between the categories may become blurred, and we may be faced with a complexity which is opposed to any systematic analysis at all. However, *prima facie*, there seem to be some fundamental pathways and traditions of insight here, with which the Core Phenomenon may be aligned, and we can pursue this, at least as a hypothesis. So let us proceed! One problem is the Cognitive Dissonance arising from Ego investment in the status quo, and the necessary relinquishment of pride which is entailed.

Factors hindering the possibility in the wider sphere are Rigidity, Concreteness of thinking, and Lack of Reflexivity, Ill Will, Institutional Investments, and many others. This dimension, in relation to the previous one, has hardly been explored. This leads on to a question: Is it necessary for *everyone* to come to understand this process, or is recognition by an articulate and creative minority (of facilitators) enough? And how much does that rest on demographics? This is one of the basic questions in how this might be set in motion.

Example:

There are very few actual examples, that I know of, of what I think of as *the full-fledged phenomenon*, as opposed to the analogues I am presenting.

This, if it is a fact, *is a fact* which strongly suggests **it is indeed something new, both a new discovery, and something made possible in evolving historicity**, by the Zeitgeist, something ‘in the wind’, as it were.

One remarkable exception, which may well have been indirectly influenced by Lord John Alderdice, who was one of the key people who ‘seeded’ the Northern Ireland Peace Process

<http://www.hmc.ox.ac.uk/people/lord-alderdice/>

is the recent semi-fictionalised film about that process, *The Journey*.

https://www.amazon.com/Journey-Timothy-Spall/dp/B0774YX3XF/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1524669879&sr=8-1&keywords=The+Journey+%2B+Film+Timothy+Spall

Whilst the drama in this film unfolds primarily in terms of individual, one-to-one, personal confrontation, the protagonists are representatives, and their

'constituencies' are invisibly present with them. In that sense it is an encounter of collective with collective. In this fictionalised account of a journey taken by Revd Ian Paisley, Leader of the Democratic Unionist Party and the Free Presbyterian Church of Ulster, in Northern Ireland, and Martin McGuinness, Deputy Leader of Sinn Fein, the political wing of the IRA, the two protagonists are journeying together, for reasons explained in the film, to catch a plane to Belfast from Edinburgh, where Ian Paisley is to celebrate the 50th anniversary of his marriage. Ian Paisley has not spoken to any member of Sinn Fein for 30 years. There is an unobtrusive 'facilitator' of the process, in the young British driver of the car, who passes himself off as much more naïve and innocent than he actually is. There is much more, which I will not spoil.

The film suggests an inner journey in which a gradual rapprochement follows upon an intense and radical exposure of their deepest differences, and the savagery of their respective engagements in the activities of their respective 'tribes'. This is connected with the fact that, personally, they share a sense of humour, and click emotionally with each other, indeed, the power of it is arguably, in part, an evocation of two men falling in love, in the way of friendship, and with the Platonic eros of friendship, comparable to the building relationship between Frank Slade and Charlie Simms in *Scent of a Woman*. So there is definitely an element of 'eros' in Alice Maher's concept, which deepens its connection with the analogue tradition I am exploring. This apparent paradox is reflected in their pivotal exchanges.

An important preparatory moment is when the car has had to stop for a while, because it collided with a deer that ran out, which results in the two men walking through a wood, where they find a deserted church dedicated to the Protestant Martyrs of Ian Paisley's Calvinist faith, and thereby have to encounter the ghosts of their respective pasts. Paisley having said, "I am not here to entertain the likes of ye", McGuinness asks, "What *are* you here for?" and leads on to answering his own question, by saying, "You are being asked to betray your tribe; I am being asked to betray mine. That's all."

As their connection grows, and the hostility wanes, they have a moment of laughter (which later informs the key moment), when, the driver having asked them why the Irish always end a sentence with something like 'so it is', or 'so I do', or 'so I will' etc, and McGuinness says it is because they feel no one will believe them. Then Paisley imagines, what if the great speech lines of the world had been delivered by Ulstermen, "This is a small step for a man – so it is", and Churchill, and Martin Luther King, - and they both find it hilarious....

At the climax of the film, when they have reached the airport, the driver gives them a final minute to connect. Paisley says he accepts that the bold step, which his martyrs would have taken if alive today, would be to build a shared future based on lasting foundations, as McGuinness had argued, but he wants Martin to apologise for all the bloodshed first:

McGuinness: "We had a civil war, and this is the only opportunity for both sides to walk away with heads held high, to build something that will last, at least for our lifetimes..... So I apologise for nothing."

Paisley: "A true politician: never apologise." (breaks into a smile)

Paisley: "I despise everything you have done – so I do."

He reaches out his hand, breaks into a smile ... McGuinness grasps it and squeezes it firmly, and says:

McGuinness: "I despise everything you stand for – so I do", grins broadly. They both break into laughter; it is extremely touching, and it is followed, on the plane, by them both laughing at Paisley's repeating with the hostess the joke with which he had wooed his wife, which he had recounted earlier in their journey.)

https://www.amazon.com/Journey-Timothy-Spall/dp/B0774YX3XF/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1524669879&sr=8-1&keywords=The+Journey+%2B+Film+Timothy+Spall

Analogous phenomena

III. Self-Knowledge/Psychotherapeutic/Reversals Provisional Definition:

"A Confrontation within the self between split or alienated aspects of self, and the experienced self or ego, which is overcome in the transformational reversal. The oppositions are overcome by existentially taking ownership and autonomous responsibility, which is what becomes manifest in the reversal. This may be made possible by love, therapy, literary or aesthetic insight, spiritual practice and many other things. In contrast to the Core Phenomenon, not *simultaneous*, but *the story-space liminal relationship of the holding together of the narrative in our minds* is tantamount to simultaneity, often accompanied by simultaneity phenomena."

First Example: Final Section of *Hillbilly Elegy*

I have already presented this one, by way of introduction above. In the light of the previous discussion of the Core Phenomenon, and of the film *The Journey* as illustration of the paradigm, we can see that the diametrically opposed dissonance and ambiguity between the verbal message of absolute conflict – 'I despise everything you have done....', etc – and the non-verbal performative, (taking ownership), of the handshake which coincides with it, is, in Vance's narrative, *paralleled* by the reversal in which, in the latest edition of the recurring nightmare, he takes ownership of the projections, and replaces the persecution with love, with the hug, mediated by the dog's love.

It is, in this instance, not *simultaneous*, but *the story-space liminal relationship of the holding together of the narrative in our minds* is tantamount to simultaneity. Holding a liminal space is also essential to working with this kind of process. Something very similar to this, as we shall see, is found in poetry also.....

Second Example: Emma's realisation of whom she really loves, in Jane Austen's *Emma*

Another paradigm instance of the kind of realisation and reversal, with ownership and self-knowledge, is the culminating moment of Jane Austen's novel *Emma*, the novel about the heroine of the same name.

In this novel, Emma Woodhouse is, while not yet 21, the most distinguished woman in the fictional Highbury village society Austen evokes, who carries herself in a lofty, yet amused, stance of *noblesse oblige* to her social inferiors, and accordingly, ostensibly to alleviate boredom and the burden of her valetudinarian father's dependence on her, engages in a projective process of matchmaking. Jane Austen's masterly and wonderfully coy (ambiguous in a profoundly modern-consciousness,

historicity, sense) opening sentence hints *pianissimo* at the trouble to come: “Emma Woodhouse, handsome, clever, and rich, with a comfortable home and happy disposition, seemed to unite some of the best blessings of existence; and had lived nearly twenty-one years in the world with very little to distress or vex her.”

She uses as her protégé a very pleasant and pretty local young woman, uneducated and initially naïve, Harriet Smith, to whom Emma has been introduced early in the novel, and whom she ‘takes up’. In a major respect, however, Harriet is wiser than Emma, for she makes no reserves, within the (literary) conventions of the time, about her sexual attraction to men, and Emma taps into this in her matchmaking, which also gets deeply tangled up with the class issue in Jane Austen.

The inadvertent consequence of Emma’s efforts is to gradually raise Harriet in her own self-esteem, and to create the crescendo of an ever greater mimetic parallel between them, until, as a result of a mutual misunderstanding between her and Emma, she believes Emma has given her sanction to pursue Mr Knightley himself, the local landowner-farmer and estate man, and senior man in the community, and equal friend of the Woodhouse family.

<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/158/158-h/158-h.htm#link2HCH0047>

Here is what follows:

“Harriet was standing at one of the windows. Emma turned round to look at her in consternation, and hastily said,

“Have you any idea of Mr. Knightley's returning your affection?”

“Yes,” replied Harriet modestly, but not fearfully—“I must say that I have.”

Emma's eyes were instantly withdrawn; and she sat silently meditating, in a fixed attitude, for a few minutes. A few minutes were sufficient for making her acquainted with her own heart. A mind like hers, once opening to suspicion, made rapid progress. She touched—she admitted—she acknowledged the whole truth. Why was it so much worse that Harriet should be in love with Mr. Knightley, than with Frank Churchill? Why was the evil so dreadfully increased by Harriet's having some hope of a return? It darted through her, with the speed of an arrow, that Mr. Knightley must marry no one but herself! ”

Her reflections now go on to clear away the mass of her self-deceptions. Despite the many Freudian nuances in the novel, Jane Austen is not *quite* modern enough to articulate the recognition that Harriet has, in fact, been the midwife of Emma’s gaining access to and ownership of her own sexuality; but it is implicit in the parallelisms (always parallelisms):

“The rest of the day, the following night, were hardly enough for her thoughts.— She was bewildered amidst the confusion of all that had rushed on her within the last few hours. Every moment had brought a fresh surprize; and every surprize must be matter of humiliation to her.—How to understand it all! How to understand the deceptions she had been thus practising on herself, and living under!—The blunders, the blindness of her own head and heart!—she sat still, she walked about, she tried her own room, she tried the shrubbery—in every place, every posture, she perceived that she had acted most weakly; that she had been imposed on by others in a most mortifying degree; that she had been imposing on herself in a degree yet more

mortifying; that she was wretched, and should probably find this day but the beginning of wretchedness.

To understand, thoroughly understand her own heart, was the first endeavour. To that point went every leisure moment which her father's claims on her allowed, and every moment of involuntary absence of mind.

How long had Mr. Knightley been so dear to her, as every feeling declared him now to be? When had his influence, such influence begun?— When had he succeeded to that place in her affection, which Frank Churchill had once, for a short period, occupied?—She looked back; she compared the two—compared them, as they had always stood in her estimation, from the time of the latter's becoming known to her—and as they must at any time have been compared by her, had it—oh! had it, by any blessed felicity, occurred to her, to institute the comparison.—She saw that there never had been a time when she did not consider Mr. Knightley as infinitely the superior, or when his regard for her had not been infinitely the most dear. She saw, that in persuading herself, in fancying, in acting to the contrary, she had been entirely under a delusion, totally ignorant of her own heart—and, in short, that she had never really cared for Frank Churchill at all!

This was the conclusion of the first series of reflection. This was the knowledge of herself, on the first question of inquiry, which she reached; and without being long in reaching it.—She was most sorrowfully indignant; ashamed of every sensation but the one revealed to her—her affection for Mr. Knightley.—Every other part of her mind was disgusting.

With insufferable vanity had she believed herself in the secret of every body's feelings; with unpardonable arrogance proposed to arrange every body's destiny. She was proved to have been universally mistaken; and she had not quite done nothing—for she had done mischief. She had brought evil on Harriet, on herself, and she too much feared, on Mr. Knightley.—Were this most unequal of all connexions to take place, on her must rest all the reproach of having given it a beginning; for his attachment, she must believe to be produced only by a consciousness of Harriet's;—and even were this not the case, he would never have known Harriet at all but for her folly.”

And so, when a little later she realises with astonishment that Mr Knightley in reality loves her, and no one else, her being is clear and de-confused, and is totally open to to accept his love, in an extraordinarily moving passage:

“My dearest Emma,” said he, “for dearest you will always be, whatever the event of this hour's conversation, my dearest, most beloved Emma—tell me at once. Say 'No,' if it is to be said.”—She could really say nothing.—“You are silent,” he cried, with great animation; “absolutely silent! at present I ask no more.”

“Emma was almost ready to sink under the agitation of this moment. The dread of being awakened from the happiest dream, was perhaps the most prominent feeling. “I cannot make speeches, Emma:” he soon resumed; and in a tone of such sincere, decided, intelligible tenderness as was tolerably convincing.—“If I loved you less, I might be able to talk about it more. But you know what I am.—You hear nothing but truth from me.—I have blamed you, and lectured you, and you have borne it as no other woman in England would have borne it.—Bear with the truths I would tell you now, dearest Emma, as well as you have borne with them. The manner, perhaps, may have as little to recommend them. God knows, I have been a very indifferent lover.—

But you understand me.—Yes, you see, you understand my feelings—and will return them if you can. At present, I ask only to hear, once to hear your voice.”

While he spoke, Emma's mind was most busy, and, with all the wonderful velocity of thought, had been able—and yet without losing a word—to catch and comprehend the exact truth of the whole; to see that Harriet's hopes had been entirely groundless, a mistake, a delusion, as complete a delusion as any of her own—that Harriet was nothing; that she was every thing herself; that what she had been saying relative to Harriet had been all taken as the language of her own feelings; and that her agitation, her doubts, her reluctance, her discouragement, had been all received as discouragement from herself.—And not only was there time for these convictions, with all their glow of attendant happiness; there was time also to rejoice that Harriet's secret had not escaped her, and to resolve that it need not, and should not.—It was all the service she could now render her poor friend; for as to any of that heroism of sentiment which might have prompted her to entreat him to transfer his affection from herself to Harriet, as infinitely the most worthy of the two—or even the more simple sublimity of resolving to refuse him at once and for ever, without vouchsafing any motive, because he could not marry them both, Emma had it not. She felt for Harriet, with pain and with contrition; but no flight of generosity run mad, opposing all that could be probable or reasonable, entered her brain. She had led her friend astray, and it would be a reproach to her for ever; but her judgment was as strong as her feelings, and as strong as it had ever been before, in reprobating any such alliance for him, as most unequal and degrading. Her way was clear, though not quite smooth.—She spoke then, on being so entreated.—What did she say?—Just what she ought, of course. A lady always does.—She said enough to shew there need not be despair—and to invite him to say more himself. He *had* despaired at one period; he had received such an injunction to caution and silence, as for the time crushed every hope;—she had begun by refusing to hear him.—The change had perhaps been somewhat sudden;—her proposal of taking another turn, her renewing the conversation which she had just put an end to, might be a little extraordinary!—She felt its inconsistency; but Mr. Knightley was so obliging as to put up with it, and seek no farther explanation.

Seldom, very seldom, does complete truth belong to any human disclosure; seldom can it happen that something is not a little disguised, or a little mistaken; but where, as in this case, though the conduct is mistaken, the feelings are not, it may not be very material.—Mr. Knightley could not impute to Emma a more relenting heart than she possessed, or a heart more disposed to accept of his.

He had, in fact, been wholly unsuspecting of his own influence. He had followed her into the shrubbery with no idea of trying it. He had come, in his anxiety to see how she bore Frank Churchill's engagement, with no selfish view, no view at all, but of endeavouring, if she allowed him an opening, to soothe or to counsel her.—The rest had been the work of the moment, the immediate effect of what he heard, on his feelings. The delightful assurance of her total indifference towards Frank Churchill, of her having a heart completely disengaged from him, had given birth to the hope, that, in time, he might gain her affection himself;—but it had been no present hope—he had only, in the momentary conquest of eagerness over judgment, aspired to be told that she did not forbid his attempt to attach her.—The superior hopes which gradually opened were so much the more enchanting.—The affection, which he had been asking to be allowed to create, if he could, was already his!—Within half an hour, he had passed from a thoroughly distressed state of mind, to something so like perfect happiness, that it could bear no other name.

Her change was equal.—This one half-hour had given to each the same precious certainty of being beloved, had cleared from each the same degree of ignorance, jealousy, or distrust.—On his side, there had been a long-standing jealousy, old as the arrival, or even the expectation, of Frank Churchill.—He had been in love with Emma, and jealous of Frank Churchill, from about the same period, one sentiment having probably enlightened him as to the other. It was his jealousy of Frank Churchill that had taken him from the country.—The Box Hill party had decided him on going away. He would save himself from witnessing again such permitted, encouraged attentions.—He had gone to learn to be indifferent.—But he had gone to a wrong place. There was too much domestic happiness in his brother's house; woman wore too amiable a form in it; Isabella was too much like Emma—differing only in those striking inferiorities, which always brought the other in brilliancy before him, for much to have been done, even had his time been longer.—He had stayed on, however, vigorously, day after day—till this very morning's post had conveyed the history of Jane Fairfax.—Then, with the gladness which must be felt, nay, which he did not scruple to feel, having never believed Frank Churchill to be at all deserving Emma, was there so much fond solicitude, so much keen anxiety for her, that he could stay no longer. He had ridden home through the rain; and had walked up directly after dinner, to see how this sweetest and best of all creatures, faultless in spite of all her faults, bore the discovery.

He had found her agitated and low.—Frank Churchill was a villain.— He heard her declare that she had never loved him. Frank Churchill's character was not desperate.—She was his own Emma, by hand and word, when they returned into the house; and if he could have thought of Frank Churchill then, he might have deemed him a very good sort of fellow.”

In the following already quoted passage, and in the light of the earlier discussions, **we have the classic expression of the 180 degree reversal with which we are becoming familiar** (though in linear sequence once more, not simultaneity, but within the musical counterpoint of the novel):

“The affection, which he had been asking to be allowed to create, if he could, was already his!—Within half an hour, he had passed from a thoroughly distressed state of mind, to something so like perfect happiness, that it could bear no other name.

Her change was equal.—This one half-hour had given to each the same precious certainty of being beloved, had cleared from each the same degree of ignorance, jealousy, or distrust.”

And the version of it, in comedic vein ending the chapter, but nevertheless pointedly relevant, is:

“He had found her agitated and low.—Frank Churchill was a villain.— He heard her declare that she had never loved him. Frank Churchill's character was not desperate.—She was his own Emma, by hand and word, when they returned into the house; and if he could have thought of Frank Churchill then, he might have deemed him a very good sort of fellow.”

One of the implications, expressed purely casually here in Jane Austen, of Alice Maher's insight is that, sometimes, *change can be astonishingly*

rapid, the dawning or the realisation, - for good and for ill.

IV. Incognito Encounters as Reversals

The first example is from Luke's Gospel. I shall let it speak for itself, and then it will become clearer in the light of the full discussion of most of a chapter from Conrad's novel, *Nostramo*.

Luke 24:13-35 King James Version (KJV)

¹³ And, behold, two of them went that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem about threescore furlongs.

¹⁴ And they talked together of all these things which had happened.

¹⁵ And it came to pass, that, while they communed together and reasoned, Jesus himself drew near, and went with them.

¹⁶ But their eyes were holden that they should not know him.

¹⁷ And he said unto them, What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad?

¹⁸ And the one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answering said unto him, Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days?

¹⁹ And he said unto them, What things? And they said unto him, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people:

²⁰ And how the chief priests and our rulers delivered him to be condemned to death, and have crucified him.

²¹ But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, to day is the third day since these things were done.

²² Yea, and certain women also of our company made us astonished, which were early at the sepulchre;

²³ And when they found not his body, they came, saying, that they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that he was alive.

²⁴ And certain of them which were with us went to the sepulchre, and found it even so as the women had said: but him they saw not.

²⁵ Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken:

²⁶ Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?

²⁷ And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.

²⁸ And they drew nigh unto the village, whither they went: and he made as though he would have gone further.

²⁹ But they constrained him, saying, Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And he went in to tarry with them.

30 And it came to pass, as he sat at meat with them, he took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them.

31 And their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight.

32 And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?

33 And they rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them,

34 Saying, The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon.

35 And they told what things were done in the way, and how he was known of them in breaking of bread.

Nostramo , a great political novel, and one of the candidates for greatest novel in English in the 20th century

<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/2021/2021-h/2021-h.htm>

is a highly complex story, which I cannot summarise, but which centres round the formation of a South American state which comes into existence, when the larger Republic it is part of, is threatened by a military revolution. Central to this endeavour is the silver mine run by Charles Gould, married to Donna Emilia Gould, first woman of the province, which is ensuring the prosperity of the province. A vital part is played by the man after whom the novel is named, Nostromo, the Capataz des Cargadores, the stevedores of the shipping line which runs the Harbour. Dr Monygham, a survivor of torture, is the doctor for the mine.

In the face of the militarist attack, Nostromo has undertaken to make away with the extant consignment of the silver from the Gould Concession Silver Mine, to take it to a steamship of the Ocean Navigation Shipping Company, in the company of the creole journalist, Decoud, also at risk from the militarist takeover, who, when the lighter collides with Sotillo's steamer, has to be left on the greater Isabel Island with the silver. Nostromo has managed to get the lighter into the middle of the bay outside the harbour and sink it and then to swim ashore. From then on in he is the only free person who knows the treasure has not been sunk, and Decoud commits suicide on the Island. While the military takeover is still happening, Nostromo has now become incognito, unknown. There is a man, Senor Hirsch, involved in the loss of the lighter, who is found tortured and having been shot, by Nostromo and Dr Monygham, and who becomes a core presence and symbol. And now the true incognito encounter begins, an encounter which, as they normally do, as in our earlier shorter example from Luke's gospel, marks a culminating moment in the drama.

Instances of the Incognito Encounter, as well as Nostromo and the encounter on the Road to Emmaus, are:

Joseph and his brothers in Genesis ch. 37ff;

Oedipus and Laius at the crossroads at Thebes in *Oedipos Tyrannos (Oedipus Rex)*;

Wotan and Siegfried in Act 3 of *Siegfried*;

King Lear and the blind Gloucester on the heath in *King Lear*;

Pip and Magwitch in Dickens's *Great Expectations*

Markers of the Incognito Encounter are:

It is archetypal, an ancient almost pre-urban situation

There is always an element of the uncanny woven in with the archaic

There is often an element of trickster intervention (Joseph and Wotan, for instance)

Those involved are in a life and death struggle for their identity, they are metaphorically 'at the crossroads'; they emerge with an utterly transformed sense of themselves

They are deeply interconnected, and share a fate, more than they know

One at least does not know he/she is meeting the other

There is a strong element of doubling and parallelism in these stories

Violence is in the background and often directly involved

In relation to the Core Phenomenon, Transformational Reversals of Conflict Situations, we can say the latter has elements of the Incognito Encounter, as illustrated by the film already spoken of, *The Journey*. They start by refusing each other's identity but eventually realise that what bonds them is deeper than what divides them.

I shall mark evidences of how the incognito encounter works, I hope not too intrusively, in *Nostromo* in [square brackets and in italics]

"Less than five minutes after entering the place [the Custom House building on the shore of the Harbour] the Capataz began his retreat. He got away down the stairs with perfect success, gave one upward look over his shoulder at the light on the landing, and ran stealthily across the hall. But at the very moment he was turning out of the great door, with his mind fixed upon escaping the notice of the man upstairs, somebody he had not heard coming briskly along the front ran full into him. Both muttered a stifled exclamation of surprise, and leaped back and stood still, each indistinct to the other. Nostromo was silent. The other man spoke first, in an amazed and deadened tone.

"Who are you?" [*the fundamental question, including 'Who am I?' in the Incognito Encounter*]

Already Nostromo had seemed to recognize Dr. Monygham. He had no doubt now. He hesitated the space of a second. The idea of bolting without a word presented itself to his mind. No use! An inexplicable repugnance to pronounce the name by which he was known kept him silent a little longer. [*wishes to keep the incognito a moment longer*] At last he said in a low voice—

"A Cargador."

He walked up to the other. Dr. Monygham had received a shock. He flung his arms up and cried out his wonder aloud, forgetting himself before the marvel of this meeting. [*stunned by the recognition of the assumed dead, now incognito, Nostromo*] Nostromo angrily warned him to moderate his voice. The Custom House was not so deserted as it looked. There was somebody in the lighted room above.

There is no more evanescent quality in an accomplished fact than its wonderfulness. Solicited incessantly by the considerations affecting its fears and desires, the human mind turns naturally away from the marvellous side of events.

And it was in the most natural way possible that the doctor asked this man whom only two minutes before he believed to have been drowned in the gulf—

“You have seen somebody up there? Have you?”

“No, I have not seen him.”

“Then how do you know?”

“I was running away from his shadow when we met.” [*the ‘shadow’ of Senor Hirsch will increasingly dominate Nostromo*]

“His shadow?”

“Yes. His shadow in the lighted room,” said Nostromo, in a contemptuous tone. Leaning back with folded arms at the foot of the immense building, he dropped his head, biting his lips slightly, and not looking at the doctor. “Now,” he thought to himself, “he will begin asking me about the treasure.” [*profoundly alienated from each other, in different worlds*]

But the doctor’s thoughts were concerned with an event not as marvellous as Nostromo’s appearance, but in itself much less clear. Why had Sotillo taken himself off with his whole command with this suddenness and secrecy? What did this move portend? However, it dawned upon the doctor that the man upstairs was one of the officers left behind by the disappointed colonel to communicate with him.

“I believe he is waiting for me,” he said.

“It is possible.”

“I must see. Do not go away yet, Capataz.”

“Go away where?” muttered Nostromo.

Already the doctor had left him. He remained leaning against the wall, staring at the dark water of the harbour; the shrilling of cicalas filled his ears. An invincible vagueness coming over his thoughts took from them all power to determine his will.

“Capataz! Capataz!” the doctor’s voice called urgently from above.

The sense of betrayal and ruin floated upon his sombre indifference as upon a sluggish sea of pitch. But he stepped out from under the wall, and, looking up, saw Dr. Monygham leaning out of a lighted window.

“Come up and see what Sotillo has done. You need not fear the man up here.”

He answered by a slight, bitter laugh. Fear a man! The Capataz of the Sulaco Cargadores fear a man! It angered him that anybody should suggest such a thing. It angered him to be disarmed and skulking and in danger because of the accursed treasure, which was of so little account to the people who had tied it round his neck. He could not shake off the worry of it. To Nostromo the doctor represented all these people. . . . And he had never even asked after it. Not a word of inquiry about the most desperate undertaking of his life.

Thinking these thoughts, Nostromo passed again through the cavernous hall, where the smoke was considerably thinned, and went up the stairs, not so warm to his feet now, towards the streak of light at the top. The doctor appeared in it for a moment, agitated and impatient.

“Come up! Come up!”

At the moment of crossing the doorway the Capataz experienced a shock of surprise. The man had not moved. He saw his shadow in the same place. He started, then stepped in with a feeling of being about to solve a mystery.

It was very simple. For an infinitesimal fraction of a second, against the light of two flaring and guttering candles, through a blue, pungent, thin haze which made his eyes smart, he saw the man standing, as he had imagined him, with his back to the door, casting an enormous and distorted shadow upon the wall. Swifter than a flash of lightning followed the impression of his constrained, toppling attitude—the shoulders projecting forward, the head sunk low upon the breast. Then he distinguished the arms behind his back, and wrenched so terribly that the two clenched fists, lashed together, had been forced up higher than the shoulder-blades. From there his eyes traced in one instantaneous glance the hide rope going upwards from the tied wrists over a heavy beam and down to a staple in the wall. He did not want to look at the rigid legs, at the feet hanging down nervelessly, with their bare toes some six inches above the floor, to know that the man had been given the estrapade till he had swooned. His first impulse was to dash forward and sever the rope at one blow. He felt for his knife. He had no knife—not even a knife. He stood quivering, and the doctor, perched on the edge of the table, facing thoughtfully the cruel and lamentable sight, his chin in his hand, uttered, without stirring—

“Tortured—and shot dead through the breast—getting cold.”

This information calmed the Capataz. One of the candles flickering in the socket went out. “Who did this?” he asked.

“Sotillo, I tell you. Who else? Tortured—of course. But why shot?” The doctor looked fixedly at Nostromo, who shrugged his shoulders slightly. “And mark, shot suddenly, on impulse. It is evident. I wish I had his secret.”

Nostromo had advanced, and stooped slightly to look. “I seem to have seen that face somewhere,” he muttered. “Who is he?”

The doctor turned his eyes upon him again. “I may yet come to envying his fate. What do you think of that, Capataz, eh?”

But Nostromo did not even hear these words. Seizing the remaining light, he thrust it under the drooping head. The doctor sat oblivious, with a lost gaze. Then the heavy iron candlestick, as if struck out of Nostromo’s hand, clattered on the floor.

“Hullo!” exclaimed the doctor, looking up with a start. He could hear the Capataz stagger against the table and gasp. In the sudden extinction of the light within, the dead blackness sealing the window-frames became alive with stars to his sight.

“Of course, of course,” the doctor muttered to himself in English. “Enough to make him jump out of his skin.”

Nostromo’s heart seemed to force itself into his throat. His head swam. Hirsch! The man was Hirsch! He held on tight to the edge of the table. [*Hirsch, who was on the lighter with him and Decoud, and was swept up to Sotillo’s steamer, dominates Nostromo from this point onwards, and plays on both of their souls*]

“But he was hiding in the lighter,” he almost shouted. His voice fell. “In the lighter, and—and—”

“And Sotillo brought him in,” said the doctor. “He is no more startling to you than you were to me. What I want to know is how he induced some compassionate soul to shoot him.”

“So Sotillo knows—” began Nostromo, in a more equable voice.

“Everything!” interrupted the doctor.

The Capataz was heard striking the table with his fist. “Everything? What are you saying, there? Everything? Know everything? It is impossible! Everything?”

“Of course. What do you mean by impossible? I tell you I have heard this Hirsch questioned last night, here, in this very room. He knew your name, Decoud’s name, and all about the loading of the silver. . . . The lighter was cut in two. He was grovelling in abject terror before Sotillo, but he remembered that much. What do you want more? He knew least about himself. They found him clinging to their anchor. He must have caught at it just as the lighter went to the bottom.”

“Went to the bottom?” repeated Nostromo, slowly. “Sotillo believes that? Bueno!”

The doctor, a little impatiently, was unable to imagine what else could anybody believe. Yes, Sotillo believed that the lighter was sunk, and the Capataz de Cargadores, together with Martin Decoud and perhaps one or two other political fugitives, had been drowned.

“I told you well, senor doctor,” remarked Nostromo at that point, “that Sotillo did not know everything.”

“Eh? What do you mean?”

“He did not know I was not dead.”

“Neither did we.”

“And you did not care—none of you caballeros on the wharf—once you got off a man of flesh and blood like yourselves on a fool’s business that could not end well.”

“You forget, Capataz, I was not on the wharf. And I did not think well of the business. So you need not taunt me. I tell you what, man, we had but little leisure to think of the dead. Death stands near behind us all. You were gone.”

“I went, indeed!” broke in Nostromo. “And for the sake of what—tell me?”

“Ah! that is your own affair,” the doctor said, roughly. “Do not ask me.”

Their flowing murmurs paused in the dark. Perched on the edge of the table with slightly averted faces, they felt their shoulders touch, and their eyes remained directed towards an upright shape nearly lost in the obscurity of the inner part of the room, that with projecting head and shoulders, in ghastly immobility, seemed intent on catching every word.

“Muy bien!” Nostromo muttered at last. “So be it. Teresa was right. It is my own affair.”

“Teresa is dead,” remarked the doctor, absently, while his mind followed a new line of thought suggested by what might have been called Nostromo’s return to life. “She died, the poor woman.”

“Without a priest?” the Capataz asked, anxiously. [*the mother woman Nostromo feels guilty towards, as Dr Monygham solicitous for Emilia Gould, whom he secretly loves*]

“What a question! Who could have got a priest for her last night?”

“May God keep her soul!” ejaculated Nostromo, with a gloomy and hopeless fervour which had no time to surprise Dr. Monygham, before, reverting to their previous conversation, he continued in a sinister tone, “Si, senor doctor. As you were saying, it is my own affair. A very desperate affair.”

“There are no two men in this part of the world that could have saved themselves by swimming as you have done,” the doctor said, admiringly.

And again there was silence between those two men. They were both reflecting, and the diversity of their natures made their thoughts born from their meeting swing afar from each other. [*mutual alienation*] The doctor, impelled to risky action by his loyalty to the Goulds, wondered with thankfulness at the chain of accident which had

brought that man back where he would be of the greatest use in the work of saving the San Tome mine. The doctor was loyal to the mine. It presented itself to his fifty-years' old eyes in the shape of a little woman [Mrs Emilia Gould] in a soft dress with a long train, with a head attractively overweighted by a great mass of fair hair and the delicate preciousness of her inner worth, partaking of a gem and a flower, revealed in every attitude of her person. As the dangers thickened round the San Tome mine this illusion acquired force, permanency, and authority. It claimed him at last! This claim, exalted by a spiritual detachment from the usual sanctions of hope and reward, made Dr. Monygham's thinking, acting, individuality extremely dangerous to himself and to others, all his scruples vanishing in the proud feeling that his devotion was the only thing that stood between an admirable woman and a frightful disaster.

It was a sort of intoxication which made him utterly indifferent to Decoud's fate, but left his wits perfectly clear for the appreciation of Decoud's political idea. It was a good idea—and Barrios was the only instrument of its realization. The doctor's soul, withered and shrunk by the shame of a moral disgrace, became implacable in the expansion of its tenderness. Nostromo's return was providential. He did not think of him humanely, as of a fellow-creature just escaped from the jaws of death. The Capataz for him was the only possible messenger to Cayta. The very man. The doctor's misanthropic mistrust of mankind (the bitterer because based on personal failure) did not lift him sufficiently above common weaknesses. He was under the spell of an established reputation. Trumpeted by Captain Mitchell, grown in repetition, and fixed in general assent, Nostromo's faithfulness had never been questioned by Dr. Monygham as a fact. It was not likely to be questioned now he stood in desperate need of it himself. Dr. Monygham was human; he accepted the popular conception of the Capataz's incorruptibility simply because no word or fact had ever contradicted a mere affirmation. It seemed to be a part of the man, like his whiskers or his teeth. It was impossible to conceive him otherwise. The question was whether he would consent to go on such a dangerous and desperate errand. The doctor was observant enough to have become aware from the first of something peculiar in the man's temper. [*as Dr Monygham anchors in his identity commitment he becomes free to be more aware of Nostromo*] He was no doubt sore about the loss of the silver.

"It will be necessary to take him into my fullest confidence," he said to himself, with a certain acuteness of insight into the nature he had to deal with.

On Nostromo's side the silence had been full of black irresolution, anger, and mistrust. He was the first to break it, however.

"The swimming was no great matter," he said. "It is what went before—and what comes after that—"

He did not quite finish what he meant to say, breaking off short, as though his thought had butted against a solid obstacle. The doctor's mind pursued its own schemes with Machiavellian subtlety. He said as sympathetically as he was able—

"It is unfortunate, Capataz. But no one would think of blaming you. Very unfortunate. To begin with, the treasure ought never to have left the mountain. But it was Decoud who—however, he is dead. There is no need to talk of him."

"No," assented Nostromo, as the doctor paused, "there is no need to talk of dead men. But I am not dead yet."

"You are all right. Only a man of your intrepidity could have saved himself."

In this Dr. Monygham was sincere. He esteemed highly the intrepidity of that man, whom he valued but little, being disillusioned as to mankind in general, because of

the particular instance in which his own manhood had failed. Having had to encounter singlehanded during his period of eclipse many physical dangers, he was well aware of the most dangerous element common to them all: of the crushing, paralyzing sense of human littleness, which is what really defeats a man struggling with natural forces, alone, far from the eyes of his fellows. He was eminently fit to appreciate the mental image he made for himself of the Capataz, after hours of tension and anxiety, precipitated suddenly into an abyss of waters and darkness, without earth or sky, and confronting it not only with an undismayed mind, but with sensible success. Of course, the man was an incomparable swimmer, that was known, but the doctor judged that this instance testified to a still greater intrepidity of spirit. It was pleasing to him; he augured well from it for the success of the arduous mission with which he meant to entrust the Capataz so marvellously restored to usefulness. And in a tone vaguely gratified, he observed—

“It must have been terribly dark!”

“It was the worst darkness of the Golfo,” the Capataz assented, briefly. He was mollified by what seemed a sign of some faint interest in such things as had befallen him, and dropped a few descriptive phrases with an affected and curt nonchalance. At that moment he felt communicative. He expected the continuance of that interest which, whether accepted or rejected, would have restored to him his personality—the only thing lost in that desperate affair. But the doctor, engrossed by a desperate adventure of his own, was terrible in the pursuit of his idea. He let an exclamation of regret escape him.

“I could almost wish you had shouted and shown a light.”

This unexpected utterance astounded the Capataz by its character of cold-blooded atrocity. It was as much as to say, “I wish you had shown yourself a coward; I wish you had had your throat cut for your pains.” Naturally he referred it to himself, whereas it related only to the silver, being uttered simply and with many mental reservations. Surprise and rage rendered him speechless, and the doctor pursued, practically unheard by Nostromo, whose stirred blood was beating violently in his ears.

“For I am convinced Sotillo in possession of the silver would have turned short round and made for some small port abroad. Economically it would have been wasteful, but still less wasteful than having it sunk. It was the next best thing to having it at hand in some safe place, and using part of it to buy up Sotillo. But I doubt whether Don Carlos would have ever made up his mind to it. He is not fit for Costaguana, and that is a fact, Capataz.”

The Capataz had mastered the fury that was like a tempest in his ears in time to hear the name of Don Carlos. He seemed to have come out of it a changed man—a man who spoke thoughtfully in a soft and even voice.

“And would Don Carlos have been content if I had surrendered this treasure?”

“I should not wonder if they were all of that way of thinking now,” the doctor said, grimly. “I was never consulted. Decoud had it his own way. Their eyes are opened by this time, I should think. I for one know that if that silver turned up this moment miraculously ashore I would give it to Sotillo. And, as things stand, I would be approved.”

“Turned up miraculously,” repeated the Capataz very low; then raised his voice. “That, senor, would be a greater miracle than any saint could perform.”

“I believe you, Capataz,” said the doctor, drily.

He went on to develop his view of Sotillo's dangerous influence upon the situation. And the Capataz, listening as if in a dream, felt himself of as little account as the indistinct, motionless shape of the dead man whom he saw upright under the beam, with his air of listening also, disregarded, forgotten, like a terrible example of neglect. [*Nostromo's identification with Hirsch deepens*]

"Was it for an unconsidered and foolish whim that they came to me, then?" he interrupted suddenly. "Had I not done enough for them to be of some account, por Dios? Is it that the hombres finos—the gentlemen—need not think as long as there is a man of the people ready to risk his body and soul? Or, perhaps, we have no souls—like dogs?"

"There was Decoud, too, with his plan," the doctor reminded him again.

"Si! And the rich man in San Francisco who had something to do with that treasure, too—what do I know? No! I have heard too many things. It seems to me that everything is permitted to the rich."

"I understand, Capataz," the doctor began.

"What Capataz?" broke in Nostromo, in a forcible but even voice. "The Capataz is undone, destroyed. There is no Capataz. Oh, no! You will find the Capataz no more."

"Come, this is childish!" remonstrated the doctor; and the other calmed down suddenly.

"I have been indeed like a little child," he muttered.

And as his eyes met again the shape of the murdered man suspended in his awful immobility, which seemed the uncomplaining immobility of attention, he asked, wondering gently—

"Why did Sotillo give the estrapade to this pitiful wretch? Do you know? No torture could have been worse than his fear. Killing I can understand. His anguish was intolerable to behold. But why should he torment him like this? He could tell no more."

"No; he could tell nothing more. Any sane man would have seen that. He had told him everything. But I tell you what it is, Capataz. Sotillo would not believe what he was told. Not everything."

"What is it he would not believe? I cannot understand."

"I can, because I have seen the man. He refuses to believe that the treasure is lost."

"What?" the Capataz cried out in a discomposed tone.

"That startles you—eh?"

"Am I to understand, senior," Nostromo went on in a deliberate and, as it were, watchful tone, "that Sotillo thinks the treasure has been saved by some means?"

"No! no! That would be impossible," said the doctor, with conviction; and Nostromo emitted a grunt in the dark. "That would be impossible. He thinks that the silver was no longer in the lighter when she was sunk. He has convinced himself that the whole show of getting it away to sea is a mere sham got up to deceive Gamacho and his Nationals, Pedrito Montero, Senor Fuentes, our new Gefe Politico, and himself, too. Only, he says, he is no such fool."

"But he is devoid of sense. He is the greatest imbecile that ever called himself a colonel in this country of evil," growled Nostromo. [*Nostromo is now protecting 'his' treasure, and this goes on deepening*]

"He is no more unreasonable than many sensible men," said the doctor. "He has convinced himself that the treasure can be found because he desires passionately to

possess himself of it. And he is also afraid of his officers turning upon him and going over to Pedrito, whom he has not the courage either to fight or trust. Do you see that, Capataz? He need fear no desertion as long as some hope remains of that enormous plunder turning up. I have made it my business to keep this very hope up.”

“You have?” the Capataz de Cargadores repeated cautiously. “Well, that is wonderful. And how long do you think you are going to keep it up?”

“As long as I can.”

“What does that mean?”

“I can tell you exactly. As long as I live,” the doctor retorted in a stubborn voice. Then, in a few words, he described the story of his arrest and the circumstances of his release. “I was going back to that silly scoundrel when we met,” he concluded.

Nostromo had listened with profound attention. “You have made up your mind, then, to a speedy death,” he muttered through his clenched teeth.

“Perhaps, my illustrious Capataz,” the doctor said, testily. “You are not the only one here who can look an ugly death in the face.”

“No doubt,” mumbled Nostromo, loud enough to be overheard. “There may be even more than two fools in this place. Who knows?” [*the fool and the trickster are archetypal presences in the Incognito Encounter*]

“And that is my affair,” said the doctor, curtly.

“As taking out the accursed silver to sea was my affair,” retorted Nostromo. “I see. Bueno! Each of us has his reasons. But you were the last man I conversed with before I started, and you talked to me as if I were a fool.”

Nostromo had a great distaste for the doctor’s sardonic treatment of his great reputation. Decoud’s faintly ironic recognition used to make him uneasy; but the familiarity of a man like Don Martin was flattering, whereas the doctor was a nobody. He could remember him a penniless outcast, slinking about the streets of Sulaco, without a single friend or acquaintance, till Don Carlos Gould took him into the service of the mine.

“You may be very wise,” he went on, thoughtfully, staring into the obscurity of the room, pervaded by the gruesome enigma of the tortured and murdered Hirsch. “But I am not such a fool as when I started. I have learned one thing since, and that is that you are a dangerous man.”

Dr. Monygham was too startled to do more than exclaim—

“What is it you say?”

“If he could speak he would say the same thing,” pursued Nostromo, with a nod of his shadowy head silhouetted against the starlit window.

“I do not understand you,” said Dr. Monygham, faintly.

“No? Perhaps, if you had not confirmed Sotillo in his madness, he would have been in no haste to give the estrapade to that miserable Hirsch.”

The doctor started at the suggestion. But his devotion, absorbing all his sensibilities, had left his heart steeled against remorse and pity. Still, for complete relief, he felt the necessity of repelling it loudly and contemptuously.

“Bah! You dare to tell me that, with a man like Sotillo. I confess I did not give a thought to Hirsch. If I had it would have been useless. Anybody can see that the luckless wretch was doomed from the moment he caught hold of the anchor. He was doomed, I tell you! Just as I myself am doomed—most probably.”

This is what Dr. Monygham said in answer to Nostromo's remark, which was plausible enough to prick his conscience. He was not a callous man. But the necessity, the magnitude, the importance of the task he had taken upon himself dwarfed all merely humane considerations. He had undertaken it in a fanatical spirit. He did not like it. To lie, to deceive, to circumvent even the basest of mankind was odious to him. It was odious to him by training, instinct, and tradition. To do these things in the character of a traitor was abhorrent to his nature and terrible to his feelings. He had made that sacrifice in a spirit of abasement. He had said to himself bitterly, "I am the only one fit for that dirty work." And he believed this. He was not subtle. His simplicity was such that, though he had no sort of heroic idea of seeking death, the risk, deadly enough, to which he exposed himself, had a sustaining and comforting effect. To that spiritual state the fate of Hirsch presented itself as part of the general atrocity of things. He considered that episode practically. What did it mean? Was it a sign of some dangerous change in Sotillo's delusion? That the man should have been killed like this was what the doctor could not understand.

"Yes. But why shot?" he murmured to himself.

Nostromo kept very still."

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The background to why all this happened is now inserted, then the narrative returns
.....

"Below, the troops fell in silently and moved off by companies without drum or trumpet. The old scarecrow major commanded the rearguard; but the party he left behind with orders to fire the Custom House (and "burn the carcass of the treacherous Jew where it hung") failed somehow in their haste to set the staircase properly alight. The body of the late Senor Hirsch dwelt alone for a time in the dismal solitude of the unfinished building, resounding weirdly with sudden slams and clicks of doors and latches, with rustling scurries of torn papers, and the tremulous sighs that at each gust of wind passed under the high roof. The light of the two candles burning before the perpendicular and breathless immobility of the late Senor Hirsch threw a gleam afar over land and water, like a signal in the night. He remained to startle Nostromo by his presence, and to puzzle Dr. Monygham by the mystery of his atrocious end.

"But why shot?" the doctor again asked himself, audibly. This time he was answered by a dry laugh from Nostromo.

"You seem much concerned at a very natural thing, senor doctor. I wonder why? It is very likely that before long we shall all get shot one after another, if not by Sotillo, then by Pedrito, or Fuentes, or Gamacho. And we may even get the estrapade, too, or worse—quien sabe?—with your pretty tale of the silver you put into Sotillo's head."

"It was in his head already," the doctor protested. "I only—"

"Yes. And you only nailed it there so that the devil himself—"

"That is precisely what I meant to do," caught up the doctor.

"That is what you meant to do. Bueno. It is as I say. You are a dangerous man."

Their voices, which without rising had been growing quarrelsome, ceased suddenly. The late Senor Hirsch, erect and shadowy against the stars, seemed to be waiting attentive, in impartial silence.

But Dr. Monygham had no mind to quarrel with Nostromo. At this supremely critical point of Sulaco's fortunes it was borne upon him at last that this man was really indispensable, more indispensable than ever the infatuation of Captain

Mitchell, his proud discoverer, could conceive; far beyond what Decoud's best dry raillery about "my illustrious friend, the unique Capataz de Cargadores," had ever intended. The fellow was unique. He was not "one in a thousand." He was absolutely the only one. The doctor surrendered. There was something in the genius of that Genoese seaman which dominated the destinies of great enterprises and of many people, the fortunes of Charles Gould, the fate of an admirable woman. At this last thought the doctor had to clear his throat before he could speak. [*the numinous archetype of the hero, conferred on Nostromo, takes over the Doctor here*]

In a completely changed tone he pointed out to the Capataz that, to begin with, he personally ran no great risk. As far as everybody knew he was dead. It was an enormous advantage. He had only to keep out of sight in the Casa Viola, where the old Garibaldino was known to be alone—with his dead wife. The servants had all run away. No one would think of searching for him there, or anywhere else on earth, for that matter.

"That would be very true," Nostromo spoke up, bitterly, "if I had not met you."

For a time the doctor kept silent. "Do you mean to say that you think I may give you away?" he asked in an unsteady voice. "Why? Why should I do that?"

"What do I know? Why not? To gain a day perhaps. It would take Sotillo a day to give me the estrapade, and try some other things perhaps, before he puts a bullet through my heart—as he did to that poor wretch here. Why not?"

The doctor swallowed with difficulty. His throat had gone dry in a moment. It was not from indignation. The doctor, pathetically enough, believed that he had forfeited the right to be indignant with any one—for anything. It was simple dread. Had the fellow heard his story by some chance? If so, there was an end of his usefulness in that direction. The indispensable man escaped his influence, because of that indelible blot which made him fit for dirty work. A feeling as of sickness came upon the doctor. He would have given anything to know, but he dared not clear up the point. The fanaticism of his devotion, fed on the sense of his abasement, hardened his heart in sadness and scorn.

"Why not, indeed?" he reechoed, sardonically. "Then the safe thing for you is to kill me on the spot. I would defend myself. But you may just as well know I am going about unarmed."

"Por Dios!" said the Capataz, passionately. "You fine people are all alike. All dangerous. All betrayers of the poor who are your dogs."

"You do not understand," began the doctor, slowly.

"I understand you all!" cried the other with a violent movement, as shadowy to the doctor's eyes as the persistent immobility of the late Senor Hirsch. "A poor man amongst you has got to look after himself. I say that you do not care for those that serve you. Look at me! After all these years, suddenly, here I find myself like one of these curs that bark outside the walls—without a kennel or a dry bone for my teeth. *Caramba!*" But he relented with a contemptuous fairness. "Of course," he went on, quietly, "I do not suppose that you would hasten to give me up to Sotillo, for example. It is not that. It is that I am nothing! Suddenly—" He swung his arm downwards. "Nothing to any one," he repeated.

The doctor breathed freely. "Listen, Capataz," he said, stretching out his arm almost affectionately towards Nostromo's shoulder. "I am going to tell you a very simple thing. You are safe because you are needed. I would not give you away for any conceivable reason, because I want you."

In the dark Nostromo bit his lip. He had heard enough of that. He knew what that meant. No more of that for him. But he had to look after himself now, he thought. And he thought, too, that it would not be prudent to part in anger from his companion. The doctor, admitted to be a great healer, had, amongst the populace of Sulaco, the reputation of being an evil sort of man. It was based solidly on his personal appearance, which was strange, and on his rough ironic manner—proofs visible, sensible, and incontrovertible of the doctor's malevolent disposition. And Nostromo was of the people. So he only grunted incredulously.

"You, to speak plainly, are the only man," the doctor pursued. "It is in your power to save this town and . . . everybody from the destructive rapacity of men who—"

"No, señor," said Nostromo, sullenly. "It is not in my power to get the treasure back for you to give up to Sotillo, or Pedrito, or Gamacho. What do I know?"

"Nobody expects the impossible," was the answer.

"You have said it yourself—nobody," muttered Nostromo, in a gloomy, threatening tone.

But Dr. Monygham, full of hope, disregarded the enigmatic words and the threatening tone. To their eyes, accustomed to obscurity, the late Senor Hirsch, growing more distinct, seemed to have come nearer. And the doctor lowered his voice in exposing his scheme as though afraid of being overheard.

He was taking the indispensable man into his fullest confidence. Its implied flattery and suggestion of great risks came with a familiar sound to the Capataz. His mind, floating in irresolution and discontent, recognized it with bitterness. He understood well that the doctor was anxious to save the San Tome mine from annihilation. He would be nothing without it. It was his interest. Just as it had been the interest of Senor Decoud, of the Blancos, and of the Europeans to get his Cargadores on their side. His thought became arrested upon Decoud. What would happen to him?

Nostromo's prolonged silence made the doctor uneasy. He pointed out, quite unnecessarily, that though for the present he was safe, he could not live concealed for ever. The choice was between accepting the mission to Barrios, with all its dangers and difficulties, and leaving Sulaco by stealth, ingloriously, in poverty.

"None of your friends could reward you and protect you just now, Capataz. Not even Don Carlos himself."

"I would have none of your protection and none of your rewards. I only wish I could trust your courage and your sense. When I return in triumph, as you say, with Barrios, I may find you all destroyed. You have the knife at your throat now."

It was the doctor's turn to remain silent in the contemplation of horrible contingencies.

"Well, we would trust your courage and your sense. And you, too, have a knife at your throat."

"Ah! And whom am I to thank for that? What are your politics and your mines to me—your silver and your constitutions—your Don Carlos this, and Don Jose that—"

"I don't know," burst out the exasperated doctor. "There are innocent people in danger whose little finger is worth more than you or I and all the Ribierists together. I don't know. You should have asked yourself before you allowed Decoud to lead you into all this. It was your place to think like a man; but if you did not think then, try to act like a man now. Did you imagine Decoud cared very much for what would happen to you?"

“No more than you care for what will happen to me,” muttered the other.

“No; I care for what will happen to you as little as I care for what will happen to myself.”

“And all this because you are such a devoted Ribierist?” Nostromo said in an incredulous tone.

“All this because I am such a devoted Ribierist,” repeated Dr. Monygham, grimly.

Again Nostromo, gazing abstractedly at the body of the late Senor Hirsch, remained silent, thinking that the doctor was a dangerous person in more than one sense. It was impossible to trust him.

“Do you speak in the name of Don Carlos?” he asked at last.

“Yes. I do,” the doctor said, loudly, without hesitation. “He must come forward now. He must,” he added in a mutter, which Nostromo did not catch.

“What did you say, senor?”

The doctor started. “I say that you must be true to yourself, Capataz. It would be worse than folly to fail now.”

“True to myself,” repeated Nostromo. “How do you know that I would not be true to myself if I told you to go to the devil with your propositions?”

“I do not know. Maybe you would,” the doctor said, with a roughness of tone intended to hide the sinking of his heart and the faltering of his voice. “All I know is, that you had better get away from here. Some of Sotillo’s men may turn up here looking for me.”

He slipped off the table, listening intently. The Capataz, too, stood up.

“Suppose I went to Cayta, what would you do meantime?” he asked.

“I would go to Sotillo directly you had left—in the way I am thinking of.”

“A very good way—if only that engineer-in-chief consents. Remind him, senor, that I looked after the old rich Englishman who pays for the railway, and that I saved the lives of some of his people that time when a gang of thieves came from the south to wreck one of his pay-trains. It was I who discovered it all at the risk of my life, by pretending to enter into their plans. Just as you are doing with Sotillo.”

“Yes. Yes, of course. But I can offer him better arguments,” the doctor said, hastily. “Leave it to me.”

“Ah, yes! True. I am nothing.”

“Not at all. You are everything.”

They moved a few paces towards the door. Behind them the late Senor Hirsch preserved the immobility of a disregarded man.

“That will be all right. I know what to say to the engineer,” pursued the doctor, in a low tone. “My difficulty will be with Sotillo.” [*the next part is what crystallises Nostromo’s decision, which is dominated by his secret identification with the treasure he alone knows exists, and which is the great symbol of the poetic drama of the novel*]

And Dr. Monygham stopped short in the doorway as if intimidated by the difficulty. He had made the sacrifice of his life. He considered this a fitting opportunity. But he did not want to throw his life away too soon. In his quality of betrayer of Don Carlos’ confidence, he would have ultimately to indicate the hiding-place of the treasure. That would be the end of his deception, and the end of himself as well, at the hands of the infuriated colonel. He wanted to delay him to the very last

moment; and he had been racking his brains to invent some place of concealment at once plausible and difficult of access.

He imparted his trouble to Nostromo, and concluded—

“Do you know what, Capataz? I think that when the time comes and some information must be given, I shall indicate the Great Isabel. That is the best place I can think of. What is the matter?”

A low exclamation had escaped Nostromo. The doctor waited, surprised, and after a moment of profound silence, heard a thick voice stammer out, “Utter folly,” and stop with a gasp.

“Why folly?”

“Ah! You do not see it,” began Nostromo, scathingly, gathering scorn as he went on. “Three men in half an hour would see that no ground had been disturbed anywhere on that island. Do you think that such a treasure can be buried without leaving traces of the work—eh! senior doctor? Why! you would not gain half a day more before having your throat cut by Sotillo. The Isabel! What stupidity! What miserable invention! Ah! you are all alike, you fine men of intelligence. All you are fit for is to betray men of the people into undertaking deadly risks for objects that you are not even sure about. If it comes off you get the benefit. If not, then it does not matter. He is only a dog. Ah! Madre de Dios, I would—” He shook his fists above his head.

The doctor was overwhelmed at first by this fierce, hissing vehemence.

“Well! It seems to me on your own showing that the men of the people are no mean fools, too,” he said, sullenly. “No, but come. You are so clever. Have you a better place?”

Nostromo had calmed down as quickly as he had flared up.

“I am clever enough for that,” he said, quietly, almost with indifference. “You want to tell him of a hiding-place big enough to take days in ransacking—a place where a treasure of silver ingots can be buried without leaving a sign on the surface.”

“And close at hand,” the doctor put in.

“Just so, senior. Tell him it is sunk.”

“This has the merit of being the truth,” the doctor said, contemptuously. “He will not believe it.”

“You tell him that it is sunk where he may hope to lay his hands on it, and he will believe you quick enough. Tell him it has been sunk in the harbour in order to be recovered afterwards by divers. Tell him you found out that I had orders from Don Carlos Gould to lower the cases quietly overboard somewhere in a line between the end of the jetty and the entrance. The depth is not too great there. He has no divers, but he has a ship, boats, ropes, chains, sailors—of a sort. Let him fish for the silver. Let him set his fools to drag backwards and forwards and crossways while he sits and watches till his eyes drop out of his head.”

“Really, this is an admirable idea,” muttered the doctor.

“Si. You tell him that, and see whether he will not believe you! He will spend days in rage and torment—and still he will believe. He will have no thought for anything else. He will not give up till he is driven off—why, he may even forget to kill you. He will neither eat nor sleep. He—”

“The very thing! The very thing!” the doctor repeated in an excited whisper. “Capataz, I begin to believe that you are a great genius in your way.” [*the numinous*]

and mimetic identification with Nostromo's sense of the uncanniness of the treasure deepens here]

Nostromo had paused; then began again in a changed tone, sombre, speaking to himself as though he had forgotten the doctor's existence.

"There is something in a treasure that fastens upon a man's mind. He will pray and blaspheme and still persevere, and will curse the day he ever heard of it, and will let his last hour come upon him unawares, still believing that he missed it only by a foot. He will see it every time he closes his eyes. He will never forget it till he is dead—and even then—Doctor, did you ever hear of the miserable gringos on Azuera, that cannot die? Ha! ha! Sailors like myself. There is no getting away from a treasure that once fastens upon your mind."

"You are a devil of a man, Capataz. It is the most plausible thing."

Nostromo pressed his arm.

"It will be worse for him than thirst at sea or hunger in a town full of people. Do you know what that is? He shall suffer greater torments than he inflicted upon that terrified wretch who had no invention. None! none! Not like me. I could have told Sotillo a deadly tale for very little pain."

He laughed wildly and turned in the doorway towards the body of the late Senor Hirsch, an opaque long blotch in the semi-transparent obscurity of the room between the two tall parallelograms of the windows full of stars.

"You man of fear!" he cried. "You shall be avenged by me—Nostromo. Out of my way, doctor! Stand aside—or, by the suffering soul of a woman dead without confession, I will strangle you with my two hands." [*the identification with Hirsch and the treasure crystallises his new, deeply fractured, identity*]

He bounded downwards into the black, smoky hall. With a grunt of astonishment, Dr. Monygham threw himself recklessly into the pursuit. At the bottom of the charred stairs he had a fall, pitching forward on his face with a force that would have stunned a spirit less intent upon a task of love and devotion. He was up in a moment, jarred, shaken, with a queer impression of the terrestrial globe having been flung at his head in the dark. But it wanted more than that to stop Dr. Monygham's body, possessed by the exaltation of self-sacrifice; a reasonable exaltation, determined not to lose whatever advantage chance put into its way. He ran with headlong, tottering swiftness, his arms going like a windmill in his effort to keep his balance on his crippled feet. He lost his hat; the tails of his open gaberdine flew behind him. He had no mind to lose sight of the indispensable man. But it was a long time, and a long way from the Custom House, before he managed to seize his arm from behind, roughly, out of breath.

"Stop! Are you mad?"

Already Nostromo was walking slowly, his head dropping, as if checked in his pace by the weariness of irresolution.

"What is that to you? Ah! I forgot you want me for something. Always. Siempre Nostromo."

"What do you mean by talking of strangling me?" panted the doctor.

"What do I mean? I mean that the king of the devils himself has sent you out of this town of cowards and talkers to meet me to-night of all the nights of my life." [*the element of doubling and of the uncanny again*]

Under the starry sky the Albergo d'Italia Una emerged, black and low, breaking the dark level of the plain. Nostromo stopped altogether.

“The priests say he is a tempter, do they not?” he added, through his clenched teeth.

“My good man, you drivel. The devil has nothing to do with this. Neither has the town, which you may call by what name you please. But Don Carlos Gould is neither a coward nor an empty talker. You will admit that?” He waited. “Well?”

“Could I see Don Carlos?”

“Great heavens! No! Why? What for?” exclaimed the doctor in agitation. “I tell you it is madness. I will not let you go into the town for anything.”

“I must.”

“You must not!” hissed the doctor, fiercely, almost beside himself with the fear of the man doing away with his usefulness for an imbecile whim of some sort. “I tell you you shall not. I would rather—”

He stopped at loss for words, feeling fagged out, powerless, holding on to Nostromo’s sleeve, absolutely for support after his run.

“I am betrayed!” muttered the Capataz to himself; and the doctor, who overheard the last word, made an effort to speak calmly.

“That is exactly what would happen to you. You would be betrayed.”

He thought with a sickening dread that the man was so well known that he could not escape recognition. The house of the Senor Administrador was beset by spies, no doubt. And even the very servants of the casa were not to be trusted. “Reflect, Capataz,” he said, impressively. . . . “What are you laughing at?”

“I am laughing to think that if somebody that did not approve of my presence in town, for instance—you understand, senor doctor—if somebody were to give me up to Pedrito, it would not be beyond my power to make friends even with him. It is true. What do you think of that?”

“You are a man of infinite resource, Capataz,” said Dr. Monygham, dismally. “I recognize that. But the town is full of talk about you; and those few Cargadores that are not in hiding with the railway people have been shouting ‘Viva Montero’ on the Plaza all day.”

“My poor Cargadores!” muttered Nostromo. “Betrayed! Betrayed!”

“I understand that on the wharf you were pretty free in laying about you with a stick amongst your poor Cargadores,” the doctor said in a grim tone, which showed that he was recovering from his exertions. “Make no mistake. Pedrito is furious at Senor Ribiera’s rescue, and at having lost the pleasure of shooting Decoud. Already there are rumours in the town of the treasure having been spirited away. To have missed that does not please Pedrito either; but let me tell you that if you had all that silver in your hand for ransom it would not save you.”

Turning swiftly, and catching the doctor by the shoulders, Nostromo thrust his face close to his.

“Maladetta! You follow me speaking of the treasure. You have sworn my ruin. You were the last man who looked upon me before I went out with it. And Sidoni the engine-driver says you have an evil eye.”

“He ought to know. I saved his broken leg for him last year,” the doctor said, stoically. He felt on his shoulders the weight of these hands famed amongst the populace for snapping thick ropes and bending horseshoes. “And to you I offer the best means of saving yourself—let me go—and of retrieving your great reputation. You boasted of making the Capataz de Cargadores famous from one end of America

to the other about this wretched silver. But I bring you a better opportunity—let me go, hombre!”

Nostromo released him abruptly, and the doctor feared that the indispensable man would run off again. But he did not. He walked on slowly. The doctor hobbled by his side till, within a stone’s throw from the Casa Viola, Nostromo stopped again.

Silent in inhospitable darkness, the Casa Viola seemed to have changed its nature; his home appeared to repel him with an air of hopeless and inimical mystery. The doctor said—

“You will be safe there. Go in, Capataz.”

“How can I go in?” Nostromo seemed to ask himself in a low, inward tone. “She cannot unsay what she said, and I cannot undo what I have done.”

“I tell you it is all right. Viola is all alone in there. I looked in as I came out of the town. You will be perfectly safe in that house till you leave it to make your name famous on the Campo. I am going now to arrange for your departure with the engineer-in-chief, and I shall bring you news here long before daybreak.”

Dr. Monygham, disregarding, or perhaps fearing to penetrate the meaning of Nostromo’s silence, clapped him lightly on the shoulder, and starting off with his smart, lame walk, vanished utterly at the third or fourth hop in the direction of the railway track. Arrested between the two wooden posts for people to fasten their horses to, Nostromo did not move, as if he, too, had been planted solidly in the ground. At the end of half an hour he lifted his head to the deep baying of the dogs at the railway yards, which had burst out suddenly, tumultuous and deadened as if coming from under the plain. That lame doctor with the evil eye had got there pretty fast.”

So here we have the Incognito Encounter in all its archetypal and immemorial mode, in a fully modern realistic novel, which is at the same time a symbolic-poetic drama, the dimension which includes the archetypal Incognito Encounter. The connection or overlap with the Core Phenomenon, Transformational Reversals of Conflict Situations, as illustrated by *The Journey*, is fairly obvious.

V. Countertransference identifications and reversals

In the work of psychotherapy, being attuned to clients’ transmittings of their extremest core life control attitudes is central to the work, and if one can loosen that position the reversal with which we are becoming familiar may occur. What follows is an example of this enacted in my work with a very brilliant client.

<http://hewardwilkinson.co.uk/docs/Commentary-on-The-Muse-as-Therapist.pdf>
p. 186ff

This client, like me, regards Dostoevsky as the *ne plus ultra* of novelists, and as perhaps the single human being who has most endured the sight and feeling of the terribleness and sheer brutal horror of human existence. My client does idealise him, and idealises me, and his tendency to idealisation is linked to his predicament. This is the background to what transpired. In the course of conversation which had touched upon creativity and dramatic art and experience, including Shakespeare, we reached Dostoevsky, and he remarked, very earnestly and shyly, with a pause in the middle, as if whispering a secret: “But I have realised that in Dostoevsky – there are some cracks...” I chuckled and paused, and then said, “But, - you know, - no one’s

perfect.” We both fell about laughing. What was the joke? Very hard to explain! Something about the reversal implicit in the extreme contrast between Dostoevsky’s supreme greatness and the hyperbolic perfectionism that would find fault even with him – and, in a sense, thus, even with life itself! (This was the attitude communicated in the countertransference.) Such a moment is impossible to capture (even for myself in retrospect), virtually impossible to explain, because it depends on the ramifications and idiosyncrasy of persons, and context, depends on enactivity. In its accessing universal themes, and in its participation in language, in iterability, the enactment transcends the moment, as a poem transcends the moment. But this embraces also ‘real life enactivity’, as, for instance, Boswell’s dramatic evocations of Johnson’s actual real-time conversations transcend the moment (Boswell, 1791/1998, Wilkinson, 2005).

VI. Enactment and Metaphoric Identifications and reversals (Poetry for example)

(Example: Keats: *On First Looking into Chapman’s Homer*, a discussion in part of a review paper written for *Psychodynamic Practice*)

<http://hewardwilkinson.co.uk/sites/default/files/Ulysses%20still%20journeying%20a%20creative%20struggle%20with%20the%20two%20cultures%20in%20psychotherapy%20and%20literature.pdf>

“Perhaps the present reviewer is also clutching his epistemology for anyone who would listen, and I certainly have not begun to fully discuss the institutional barriers and obstacles to embracing a ‘language first - science second’ epistemology. However, I shall end with a brief allusion to a use of literature of my own. I was working with a client who was glimpsing a breakthrough but hesitated to accept her own emerging capacity for a new kind of creativity. So I told her the story of how Keats, at the beginning of his poetic career, when he had written nothing that had more than the glimmerings of promise, was introduced by his friend Charles Cowden Clark, in October 1816, when Keats was just short of 21 years old, to George Chapman’s very robust and non-Pope-like, non-eighteenth century Elizabethan-Jacobean translation of Homer, which they read aloud for several hours into the night – and then Keats walked home, and, summoned as it were, by the genius of Homer, entered into his own poetic genius.

His poem is not only about discovery, the discovery of the genius of Homer which is compared, in incomparable language, to other discoveries, but it also actually is and enacts the thing it is about; it is pure enactment because at this moment Keats is embracing his own genius. It is pure creation, pure congruence with emerging life, both testimony to what he grasped, but likewise, at the second level, what was actually being enacted in him. He wrote nothing as good again for over a year of development afterwards, his accelerated development under the shadow of tuberculosis and early death. But the enactment had been made. His new poem was delivered in manuscript to Cowden Clark by 1000 am, that following morning! I read this out to my client, myself responding to the prompting of a spontaneous impulse, and it fell on fertile ground with my client, who felt and was delighted, not intimidated, by the arresting ‘call’ embodied in the poem, and who of course ‘got’ the fact that we too, belatedly, were participating in the on-going enactment implicit both in the poem and in the process of psychotherapy.

On First Looking into Chapman’s Homer

“Much have I travelled in the realms of gold
And many goodly states and kingdoms seen;
Round many western islands have I been
Which bards in fealty to Apollo hold.
Oft of one wide expanse had I been told
That deep-brow’d Homer ruled as his demesne;
Yet did I never breathe its pure serene
Till I heard Chapman speak out loud and bold:
Then felt I like some watcher of the skies
When a new planet swims into his ken;
Or like stout Cortez when with eagle eyes
He star’d at the Pacific—and all his men
Look’d at each other with a wild surmise—
Silent, upon a peak in Darien.”

Superficially, here, in this fragment of creative dialogue, we still have, in variant form, the ancient tension and argument in the narrative psychotherapies between insight and action. But, I believe, that in the force of the responsive upsurge Holmes’ work has called from me, we have something we would both recognise, and which dissolves that antithesis.”

There is, superficially, no *reversal* here. But the actual reversal consists in the move to the meta-level in the poem, so that it itself enacts what it is writing about. The second example is Proust’s famous account of the retrieval of emotional and affective memory in *A la recherche du temps perdu*. Here the switch, via an association derived from scent and taste, enables retrieval of a whole world of remembering which had been estranged, which is the 180% reversal in yet another form.

(Example: The recall of the Petit Madeleine in *A La Recherche du Temps Perdu*)

“I must own that I could have assured any questioner that Combray did include other scenes and did exist at other hours than these. But since the facts which I should then have recalled would have been prompted only by an exercise of the will, by my intellectual memory, and since the pictures which that kind of memory shews us of the past preserve nothing of the past itself, I should never have had any wish to ponder over this residue of Combray. To me it was in reality all dead.

Permanently dead? Very possibly.

There is a large element of hazard in these matters, and a second hazard, that of our own death, often prevents us from awaiting for any length of time the favours of the first.

I feel that there is much to be said for the Celtic belief that the souls of those whom we have lost are held captive in some inferior being, in an animal, in a plant, in some inanimate object, and so effectively lost to us until the day (which to many never comes) when we happen to pass by the tree or to obtain possession of the object which forms their prison. Then they start and tremble, they call us by our name, and as soon as we have recognised their voice the spell is broken. We have delivered them: they have overcome death and return to share our life.

And so it is with our own past. It is a labour in vain to attempt to recapture it: all the efforts of our intellect must prove futile. The past is hidden somewhere outside the realm, beyond the reach of intellect, in some material object (in the sensation which that material object will give us) which we do not suspect. And as for that

object, it depends on chance whether we come upon it or not before we ourselves must die.

Many years had elapsed during which nothing of Combray, save what was comprised in the theatre and the drama of my going to bed there, had any existence for me, when one day in winter, as I came home, my mother, seeing that I was cold, offered me some tea, a thing I did not ordinarily take. I declined at first, and then, for no particular reason, changed my mind. She sent out for one of those short, plump little cakes called 'petites madeleines,' which look as though they had been moulded in the fluted scallop of a pilgrim's shell. And soon, mechanically, weary after a dull day with the prospect of a depressing morrow, I raised to my lips a spoonful of the tea in which I had soaked a morsel of the cake. No sooner had the warm liquid, and the crumbs with it, touched my palate than a shudder ran through my whole body, and I stopped, intent upon the extraordinary changes that were taking place. An exquisite pleasure had invaded my senses, but individual, detached, with no suggestion of its origin. And at once the vicissitudes of life had become indifferent to me, its disasters innocuous, its brevity illusory—this new sensation having had on me the effect which love has of filling me with a precious essence; or rather this essence was not in me, it was myself. I had ceased now to feel mediocre, accidental, mortal. Whence could it have come to me, this all-powerful joy? I was conscious that it was connected with the taste of tea and cake, but that it infinitely transcended those savours, could not, indeed, be of the same nature as theirs. Whence did it come? What did it signify? How could I seize upon and define it?

I drink a second mouthful, in which I find nothing more than in the first, a third, which gives me rather less than the second. It is time to stop; the potion is losing its magic. It is plain that the object of my quest, the truth, lies not in the cup but in myself. The tea has called up in me, but does not itself understand, and can only repeat indefinitely with a gradual loss of strength, the same testimony; which I, too, cannot interpret, though I hope at least to be able to call upon the tea for it again and to find it there presently, intact and at my disposal, for my final enlightenment. I put down my cup and examine my own mind. It is for it to discover the truth. But how? What an abyss of uncertainty whenever the mind feels that some part of it has strayed beyond its own borders; when it, the seeker, is at once the dark region through which it must go seeking, where all its equipment will avail it nothing. Seek? More than that: create. It is face to face with something which does not so far exist, to which it alone can give reality and substance, which it alone can bring into the light of day.

And I begin again to ask myself what it could have been, this unremembered state which brought with it no logical proof of its existence, but only the sense that it was a happy, that it was a real state in whose presence other states of consciousness melted and vanished. I decide to attempt to make it reappear. I retrace my thoughts to the moment at which I drank the first spoonful of tea. I find again the same state, illumined by no fresh light. I compel my mind to make one further effort, to follow and recapture once again the fleeting sensation. And that nothing may interrupt it in its course I shut out every obstacle, every extraneous idea, I stop my ears and inhibit all attention to the sounds which come from the next room. And then, feeling that my mind is growing fatigued without having any success to report, I compel it for a change to enjoy that distraction which I have just denied it, to think of other things, to rest and refresh itself before the supreme attempt. And then for the second time I clear an empty space in front of it. I place in position before my mind's eye the still recent taste of that first mouthful, and I feel something start within me, something

that leaves its resting-place and attempts to rise, something that has been embedded like an anchor at a great depth; I do not know yet what it is, but I can feel it mounting slowly; I can measure the resistance, I can hear the echo of great spaces traversed.

Undoubtedly what is thus palpitating in the depths of my being must be the image, the visual memory which, being linked to that taste, has tried to follow it into my conscious mind. But its struggles are too far off, too much confused; scarcely can I perceive the colourless reflection in which are blended the uncapturable whirling medley of radiant hues, and I cannot distinguish its form, cannot invite it, as the one possible interpreter, to translate to me the evidence of its contemporary, its inseparable paramour, the taste of cake soaked in tea; cannot ask it to inform me what special circumstance is in question, of what period in my past life.

Will it ultimately reach the clear surface of my consciousness, this memory, this old, dead moment which the magnetism of an identical moment has travelled so far to importune, to disturb, to raise up out of the very depths of my being? I cannot tell. Now that I feel nothing, it has stopped, has perhaps gone down again into its darkness, from which who can say whether it will ever rise? Ten times over I must essay the task, must lean down over the abyss. And each time the natural laziness which deters us from every difficult enterprise, every work of importance, has urged me to leave the thing alone, to drink my tea and to think merely of the worries of to-day and of my hopes for to-morrow, which let themselves be pondered over without effort or distress of mind.

And suddenly the memory returns. The taste was that of the little crumb of madeleine which on Sunday mornings at Combray (because on those mornings I did not go out before church-time), when I went to say good day to her in her bedroom, my aunt Léonie used to give me, dipping it first in her own cup of real or of lime-flower tea. The sight of the little madeleine had recalled nothing to my mind before I tasted it; perhaps because I had so often seen such things in the interval, without tasting them, on the trays in pastry-cooks' windows, that their image had dissociated itself from those Combray days to take its place among others more recent; perhaps because of those memories, so long abandoned and put out of mind, nothing now survived, everything was scattered; the forms of things, including that of the little scallop-shell of pastry, so richly sensual under its severe, religious folds, were either obliterated or had been so long dormant as to have lost the power of expansion which would have allowed them to resume their place in my consciousness. But when from a long-distant past nothing subsists, after the people are dead, after the things are broken and scattered, still, alone, more fragile, but with more vitality, more unsubstantial, more persistent, more faithful, the smell and taste of things remain poised a long time, like souls, ready to remind us, waiting and hoping for their moment, amid the ruins of all the rest; and bear unfaltering, in the tiny and almost impalpable drop of their essence, the vast structure of recollection.

And once I had recognized the taste of the crumb of madeleine soaked in her decoction of lime-flowers which my aunt used to give me (although I did not yet know and must long postpone the discovery of why this memory made me so happy) immediately the old grey house upon the street, where her room was, rose up like the scenery of a theatre to attach itself to the little pavilion, opening on to the garden, which had been built out behind it for my parents (the isolated panel which until that moment had been all that I could see); and with the house the town, from morning to night and in all weathers, the Square where I was sent before luncheon, the streets along which I used to run errands, the country roads we took when it was fine. And just as the Japanese amuse themselves by filling a porcelain bowl with water and

steeping in it little crumbs of paper which until then are without character or form, but, the moment they become wet, stretch themselves and bend, take on colour and distinctive shape, become flowers or houses or people, permanent and recognisable, so in that moment all the flowers in our garden and in M. Swann's park, and the water-lilies on the Vivonne and the good folk of the village and their little dwellings and the parish church and the whole of Combray and of its surroundings, taking their proper shapes and growing solid, sprang into being, town and gardens alike, from my cup of tea."

VII. Scientific Discoveries as Reversals and their Metaphors

Examples: Newton's Apple, Albert Wegener's seeing the Earth's Globe as a Torn Across Map (not recognised by science for 50 years); Freud's recognition of 'Psychic Reality', THE great psychoanalytic the foundational psychoanalytic discovery, transference is just an application, and which is based upon his capacity to see what was hidden in plain sight; instead of rejecting something as fantasy because it was untrue, he opened the way to seeing it as *a method of enquiry*, by suspending belief and disbelief. This did not abolish the concept of truth, but made it more complex.

VIII. Historic Cusp Moments as Reversals

Much of history we would not wish to remember, but of course interesting moments in history are not pleasant to those present in them. Cusp moments in history are when those 'interesting' moments coincide with radical change in an epoch, because, for instance, the endless carnage of the Thirty Years War is not, in its detail, immensely significant, though, as a whole, it prepared the way for the Enlightenment. But sometimes a particular battle or process is indeed pivotal. In those instances, we are dealing with historical transformations. The fictionalised process expressed in *The Journey*, as we have already seen, is such a moment in a progress to peace, but had indeed been preceded by an immense amount of war. And, although the main event is a matter of force, in those cases of battles, the force has a meaning, because it changes the consciousness of history. Churchill both wrote about, and participated in (to which I shall come in a moment) such moments.

Churchill is fully aware of this in his powerful account, - with its extraordinary sense of the dramatic which is an awareness of meaning, - of his ancestor's (the first Duke of Marlborough's) pivotal role in breaking single power domination of Europe, in the Battle of Blenheim:

"The Count of Merode Westerloo, a Flemish officer of distinction who commanded a Belgian contingent in the service of Spain forming part of Marshall Tallard's army, has left us sprightly memoirs of this and other campaigns. He dined that night in Blenheim village with the generals and colonels of his division. Never was he in better spirits, when, having eaten and drunk excellently, he returned to his quarters. These were in a grange which overlooked the Nebel. His retinue had carpeted the floor and set up his bed. 'Never I believe have I slept more sound and tranquil than this night.' He was still sleeping profoundly at six o'clock in the morning when his trusty valet, all out of breath, entered the barn. 'Milord the enemy are there!' 'Where?' said the count, mocking him, 'there?' 'Yes there, there!' reiterated the servant, and, throwing open the door of the barn and the curtain of his master's bed, he revealed a brilliant and astounding spectacle. The wide plain, bathed in the morning sunlight, was covered in hostile squadrons and battalions, already close at hand, and steadily marching on. But behind this magnificent array, if the count could

have discerned them. were the shapes of great causes and the destinies of many powerful nations. Europe protested against the military domination of a single power. The Holy Roman Empire pleaded for another century of life. The ancient rights of the Papacy against Gallicanism, and the ascendancy of a Universal over a National Church despite the mistaken partisanship of the reigning Pope, were in fact fatefully at stake. The Dutch Republic sought to preserve its independence and Prussia its kingdom rank, And from across the seas in England, the Protestant Succession, Parliamentary Government, and the future of the British Empire advanced with confident tread. All these had now brought their case before the dread tribunal now set up in this Danube plain.”

Example: John Lukacs argues that Churchill saved Europe by rejecting any peace with Hitler in May 1940 (*Five Days in London in May 1940*), This is the main source of the dramatization in *Darkest Hour*.

IX. Philosophical Reversals and Dialectic

I shall just give a final example, from Nietzsche, of the reversal with which we are concerned; this one is so graphic that it is stunning. But there are analogous switches in Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, albeit more elusive ones, particularly the whole discussion of transference.

Gay Science

§341 *The Heaviest Burden*. What if a demon crept after you into your loneliest loneliness some day or night, and said to you: "This life, as you live it at present, and have lived it, you must live it once more, and also innumerable times; and there will be nothing new in it, but every pain and every joy and every thought and every sigh, and all the unspeakably small and great in thy life must come to you again, and all in the same series and sequence - and similarly this spider and this moonlight among the trees, and similarly this moment, and I myself. The eternal sand-glass of existence will ever be turned once more, and you with it, you speck of dust!" - Would you not throw yourself down and gnash your teeth, and curse the demon that so spoke? Or have you once experienced a tremendous moment in which you would answer him: "You are a God, and never did I hear anything so divine!" If that thought acquired power over you as you are, it would transform you, and perhaps crush you; the question with regard to all and everything: "Do you want this once more, and also for innumerable times?" would lie as the heaviest burden upon your activity! Or, how would you have to become favourably inclined to yourself and to life, so as to long for nothing more ardently than for this last eternal sanctioning and sealing?

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**‘Catalysis: A Recipe to Slow Down or Abort Humankind’s
Leap to War’**

Alice Lombardo Maher, M.D.

In press