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Ramadan's Leaves Through Dali's Mirror of Narcissus
By

Zoha Abdulsater

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Thesis Approval Form

Student Name: Zoha Abdulsater

I.D. #: 200700764

Thesis Title: Ramadan's Leaves Through Dalí's Mirror of Narcissus

Program: Master of Arts in Comparative Literature

Department: Humanities

School: **School of Arts and Sciences**

Approved by:

Thesis Advisor: Dr. Najla Hamadeh

Signature:

Member: Dr. Vahid Behmardi

Signature:

Member: Dr. Cheryl Toman

Signature:

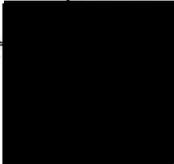
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To my loving parents...

To my love, Ahmad....

Ramadan's Leaves Through Dalí's Mirror of Narcissus

Zoha Abdulsater

Abstract

This research carries out an interdisciplinary approach to comparative analysis which not only transcends historical, linguistic, and cultural boundaries, but also explores distinct art forms—namely Salvador Dalí's painting "The Metamorphosis of Narcissus" and Sumaya Ramadan's novel *Leaves of Narcissus*.

In a significant manner, Dalí's painting is an intertext within Ramadan's novel which mirrors a core concept in the novel that has been overlooked by critics and scholars-- the concept of pathological narcissism. Dalí's painting is employed as a lens through which the text of Ramadan can be viewed alternatively and innovatively.

Through theories of psychoanalysis, especially Jacques Lacan's psychoanalytical insights, this thesis argues that the painting of Dalí functions as the mirror that reflects to Kimi, the novel's narrator/protagonist, her pathology caused by her failure to attain the *social I* and to ascend from imaginary fragmentation to symbolic unity, which was normally, if not successfully, achieved in Dalí's "The Metamorphosis of Narcissus."

This study compares theoretically and structurally Sumaya Ramadan's novel with Dalí's painting. The core of the thematic aspect is representation of pathological narcissism and that of the structural model refers to Lacan's account of "the mirror stage" and of the repercussions, on personality development, of the inability to successfully steer through it. The structural analysis draws on the form of the image and its priority developmentally and, perhaps, as a form of expression.

Keywords: Psychoanalysis, Intertextuality, Imaginary Order, Symbolic Order, Narcissism, Painting/Image and Literature/Language.

Table of Contents

- Chapter One	1-5
<i>Introduction</i>	
- Chapter Two	6-25
<i>Lacanian Theory and Narcissism</i>	
- Chapter Three	26-38
<i>Dalí: The Metamorphosis of Narcissus into the Symbolic Order</i>	
- Chapter Four	39-68
<i>Dalí's Metamorphosed Mirror in Ramadan's Leaves</i>	
- Chapter Five	69-71
<i>Conclusion</i>	
- References	72-81

Chapter One

Introduction

Even though Sumaya Ramadan's Arabic novel, *Awrāk Al Narjis (Leaves of Narcissus)*, is gravid with intertexts, from Greco/Roman myths to European novels to traditional childhood stories, one intertext dominates and lingers throughout the novel. Careful analysis of this last intertext proves it to be like a mirror image reflected in Ramadan's text, exposing the reality of the novel's narrator/protagonist's¹ psychopathological identity. Not surprisingly, Ramadan names her novel *Leaves of Narcissus* to parallel this intertext "Metamorphosis of Narcissus," a painting by Salvador Dalí.

The two works of art, Ramadan's novel and Dalí's painting along with the long poem that accompanies the latter², will be comparatively studied in this thesis. It will be argued that the painting of Salvador Dalí portrays the psychological process of transformation from a pathological state of narcissism to a healthy state that internalizes social rules and laws properly, letting go of the narcissistic pathology, along with the intense and disturbing dreams that accompany it. This transformation cannot occur without

¹ *Narrator/protagonist* is used to describe the case when the character referred to is both, the main character of the novel (protagonist), and the one who relates the story (narrator) as well.

² Dalí accompanies the painting with a long poem holding the same title, "The Metamorphosis of Narcissus." See bibliography

achieving an adequate resolution of the mirror stage, overcoming the childhood experience of fragmentation, to achieve a psychical unity (Gestalt) and a subjectivity that permits the acquisition of language. It brings about, as Lacan says, the “deflection of the specular I into the social I” (Lacan 1977, 5), where the *Order of the Symbolic* takes over. This metamorphosis is represented by Dali in the form of a struggle to break away from the state of an asocial and narcissistic identity into a socialized one.

This painting of Dalí’s is critically present within Ramadan’s novel in the form of an intertext. We say *critically present* since the intertextual reference to Dalí’s painting is striking, as though the author intends to call the reader’s attention to such an association between the novel and the painting of Dali, central to both of which is the concept of narcissism. Ramadan entitles a chapter “the mirror,” yet within this chapter, she does not talk about any mirror at all. She rather talks about the painting of Salvador Dali and the narcissus flower. On the other hand, she entitles another chapter “The Narcissus Exemplar,” and yet does not talk about the narcissus flower at all, but about the reflection of herself in the mirror. The author seems to intentionally try to draw the reader’s attention to the association between the concepts of mirroring, narcissism, and Dalí’s painting. It will, in fact, be demonstrated that the painting of Dalí functions as the mirror that reflects to Kimi, the narrator/protagonist, her true pathology that she always attempts to deny, and reflects as well her inability to achieve her *social I* according to the psychical healthy process of maturation which was normally, or successfully, achieved in Dalí’s “The Metamorphosis of Narcissus.”

In order to investigate the interconnection between the two works of art, Ramadan's novel and Dalí's painting, this thesis will draw on the Lacanian psychoanalytical theories, focusing on his *mirror stage* theory and the process of transformation into the Order of the Symbolic, delving into its function and direct relation to the establishment of a pathological narcissistic identity in some individuals. The Freudian theories will be greatly needed, as well, to track the notion of narcissism, along with all the psychological conditions connected to it, which Freud sets forth in his article "On Narcissism: an introduction." According to these theories of psychoanalysis, it can be argued that Dalí's painting reflects a healthy psychological transformation into the Symbolic Order and mirrors to Kimi her failure to achieve such a healthy transformation or maturation.

According to Lacanian mirror-stage theory, it is only through the reflected image (self in mirror or mother image) that one comes to recognize the self. Hence, image plays a crucial role in the establishment of an identity. For this reason, we find in Ramadan's novel, a painting in particular, i.e., an image form, which reflects for Kimi the truth of her subject/self. Thus, the encounter that occurs between Kimi and Dalí's painting parallels the encounter of the child with his mirror image paradigm, according to Lacanian theory, breaking or destroying the false or imaginary perception the child possesses in prior to the mirror phase.

This increases our interest in Dalí's painting intertext, which is the only image intertext referred to within *Awṛāk Al Narjis*, while all other intertexts are in the written or linguistic form, not in visual or image form. Even though Dalí accompanies the painting with a long poem, yet the presence of Dalí's work within the novel is restricted to the

picture hung on the wall of Kimi's room in Ireland, where she was pursuing her higher education. Nevertheless, the poem will be abundantly used in analyzing the painting in itself, apart from its function within the novel, for Dalí provides, in this poem, a critical description of the pictorial elements he draws in the picture.

Structurally, the two works of art will be comparatively developed through the lens comparison method, where one text will function as the lens through which the other focal text will be sought. Dalí's painting is in fact the agent that draws attention into the psychological notion of pathological narcissism within Ramadan's text that this thesis aims at developing. Through Dalí's lens intertext "The Metamorphosis of Narcissus," we will spot the focal text of Ramadan's, *Leaves of Narcissus*.

Chapter one introduces the main theoretical framework of psychoanalysis through which this comparative study is approached. It begins drawing on the association between literature/art and theories of psychoanalysis. Then, Lacanian psychoanalytical theories, especially his theory of the mirror-stage, are discussed through their connection to the notion of narcissism, relying on the Freudian psychoanalytical foundations on the development of a psychologically disordered personality. These theories, which examine the exclusive role that the parents (mother, father or a primary caregiver) play in the establishment of their child's solid or disordered personality structure, will help us analyze, comparatively, Dalí's and Ramadan's creative works.

Chapter two investigates Salvador Dalí's painting "The Metamorphosis of Narcissus," along with the poem that accompanies it. This painting and poem of Dalí's

have attracted much interest. Several articles and books have been written on this masterpiece in which Dalí fully inaugurates his notion of the “paranoid-critical method,” as will be discussed later. Even though some critics, such as Haim Finkelstein who translated most of Dalí’s works, have already approached this painting through Lacanian psychoanalysis as well, yet the analysis provided in this study, besides its new comparative association to an Arabic novel, gives a different reading of the Lacanian mirror-stage theory within this painting. Thus, this study provides a distinct and expanded interpretation of Dalí’s “The Metamorphosis of Narcissus,” where the structural and thematic reading of the work grow in parallel progression, proving that Dalí exposes in this piece the metamorphosis from the paranoid narcissistic condition of desire into its critical and social condition; in other words, from nature into culture.

Chapter three explores Sumaya Ramadan’s novel *Awrāk Al Narjis*. Ramadan’s text has had various published articles analyzing different notions that this rich novel comprises. Themes as “writing and existence” or “writing and madness” have been tracked out in Ramadan’s work by Arab scholars like Mohammad Barairi and Hala Kamal. Muhammad Barairi presents a reading of Ramadan’s *Awrāk Al Narjis* in which he analyses notions like existence, nihilism, the nation, society and identity. Hala Kamal reads the novel dwelling on the concept of madness and writing. However, none of the works dwelled on the notion of pathological narcissism, which this thesis sees as the novel’s quiddity. The claim will be substantiated in the forthcoming analysis which makes critical use of Dalí’s painting.

Chapter Two

Lacanian Theory and Narcissism

Literature, art and psychoanalysis, though separate fields of work, are significantly intertwined and complementary of each other. Literature and art function as a mode of “testimony” to psychoanalysis, as a “testimony to reality,” (Felman, 5) and psychoanalysis employs the literary testimonies in order to come up with theoretical assumptions about the workings of the human psyche. Many writers and creative artists reflect upon and dramatize neurotic and psychotic tendencies. Further, art production, specifically literature, is often appraised with reference to theories of psychology, including those of psychoanalysis. Psychologists also frequently name their theories after myths and famous plays as in “narcissism” and the “Oedipus Complex.”

Freud’s inspective journey into the human mind, including the artist’s, led him to believe that all artists “are not far removed from neurosis” (Freud 1977, 307). Freud directly links creativity to pathology in describing the tendency among artists to repeat, in their artistic production, past unpleasurable experiences as the core of their respective pathology. For Freud, as well as for other psychology scholars, any artistic creation hides in its depth a psychopathological condition to the extent that psychopathology is observed as a precondition for artistic development. Carl Jung analyses the artist’s creative urge as a

process originating from ‘inside,’ situated behind consciousness [from] the unconscious psyche” (Jung, 135). In *Narcissism and the Literary Libido*, Alcorn Jr. describes in the artistic need as, fundamentally, a “narcissistic need” (Alcorn Jr., 214). Artists reenact, in their works, their neurotic or psychopathological experiences out of which the psychological condition eventuates as a basic incentive behind creative inventions.

On the basis of the assumption of the interconnection between art/literature and psychology, this comparative study proposes to delve into the narcissistic psychopathological disorders conveyed in Ramadan’s novel *Awrāk Al Narjis (Leaves of Narcissus*³) and in Dalí’s painting “Metamorphosis of Narcissus,” which appears as an intertext within Ramadan’s novel. As aforementioned, the method to be adopted for carrying out the comparison is Jacque Lacan’s psychoanalytical theories of the self, particularly his theory of the mirror stage.

The “mirror stage” or the “looking-glass phase” does not merely represent an ending or passing phase in human life; it is rather a perpetual force that structures and bears a consequential effect on the individual in later stages in life. This stage, which occurs between the span of six to eighteen months, builds up the psychological development of the whole identity of the individual over the course of his entire life. Any conflict that occurs during the mirror phase can ensue pre mirror-stage regression, namely psychopathological disorders.

³ *Leaves of Narcissus* is the translated version of the novel into the English language by Marilyn Booth.

Being unable to move, walk, or talk, the child is born weak and premature, captivated in a state of motor incapacity, turbulent movements, and sense of fragmentation; something which Lacan identifies as “real specific prematurity of birth in man” (Lacan 1977, 4). Prior to the mirror phase interval, the child does not recognize him/herself as a complete coherent entity, and his/her *I* is still not established. The child’s perception of his/her image is as parts and fragments, “in bits and pieces” (Lacan 1977, 3). He/she understands his/her body, for example, as separate disjoined parts: as a hand, a leg, an eye, a nose ...etc. and not as one unified body figure. Not only is the child unaware of the unity of his/her body image, but is also ignorant of his/her relation or connection to the outside world. Before to the mirror stage, the child understands the outside world and the other as integrated within the self and is completely unmindful of the distinctive lines that separate him/her as an individual entity from “the other,” mistaking the self as the other and vice versa. The child’s lack of usage of first personal pronoun before the mirror phase and emphasis on third personal pronouns goes back to such misidentification; a phenomenon Lacan calls “transitivism.” For this reason the child becomes trapped in the illusory image of the mirror: the image is him/her, and yet outside him/her, “an image that alienates him from himself,” (Lacan 1977, 19). Whatever feelings, movements, or incidents occur to this estranged image will, in turn, occur to the child. In his 1948 essay, “Aggressivity in Psychoanalysis,” Lacan explains that:

During the whole of this period [mirror-stage period] one will record the emotional reactions and the articulated evidences of a normal transitivism. The child who strikes another says that he has been struck; the child who

sees another fall, cries. Similarly it is by mean of identification of the other that he sees the whole gamut of reactions of bearing and display, whose structural ambivalence is clearly revealed in his behavior, the slave being identified with the despot, the actor with the spectator, the seduced with the seducer. (Lacan 1977, 19)

The resolution of the mirror stage puts an end to the experience of fragmentation and starts the formation of the child's *I*; the child as subject. Through seeing his/her self-reflection in the mirror paradigm or in the unified/complete body of the mother or the primary caregiver, the child, for the first time, recognizes his/her image as a 'gestalt,' and the precedent total fragmentation becomes replaced by total unity. This mirror paradigm functions as the "form that in-forms the subject and guides its development" (Muller and Richardson, 29). The mirror exemplar, with which the child identifies, is, therefore, the establisher of the subject and the director of its progression. For this reason, the mirror phase affects the development of the human personality in its entirety, whereby any imminent neurotic or psychotic complications can lead to mirror stage regression.

Jacques Lacan claims to have been first inspired in formulating his theory of the mirror sate by an experiment and examples from biology. Female pigeons have been found to become sexually mature only if other members of their species are around. If the female pigeon was isolated, it cannot reach sexual maturity. However, "the maturation of the female gonad of the [isolated] pigeon," (Lacan 1977, 3) does occur if a mirror is placed in its cage. Likewise, the locust cannot step from one stage of development into another without seeing other locusts undergoing this developmental transition. This phenomenon is

termed by Lacan “heteromorphic identification.” Lacan parallels the animal and mirror identification to the child’s personality development and encounter with his psychical mirror which ascertains his/her subjectivity, forming a relation between the inward and outward reality in alienating as well as identifying modes.

Jacques Lacan posits that the ego is based on “*méconnaissance*” (misrecognition). As the child recognizes his/her ego in the mirror reflection, he/she misrecognizes it at the same time. In other words, what the self recognizes as “itself” is basically a misrecognition. *Méconnaissance* exists for two basic reasons: First, the ego is basically established through a reflected illusory figure alienated from the self. The child understands its image through an external foreign one; he recognizes and misrecognizes the image. His/her ego is actually formed in an inverted manner, a matter which frustrates the child, at a certain level generating the feeling of being trapped in the image. This feeling results from the fact that whatever the child does, the mirror image does also: if the child cries, the image cries. If he/she smiles, the mirror smiles too. If he/she is hit, the image feels pain as well... etc. Hence, he/she is something which he/she is not. Lacan names this condition a “paranoiac alienation”.

The second reason behind the ego’s enrootment in *méconnaissance* according to the mirror-stage principle is that the reflected image which appears to the child as perfect and complete is in fact not so at all. The image appears thus only in the child’s imagination, whereas, in reality, the image is the child himself/herself, i.e., the fragmented distorted incapable being. The ego is built on an “illusory image of wholesomeness and mastery”

(Homer, 25). The reflection is only a deceptive projection of autonomy and power in an attempt toward “refusing to accept the truth of fragmentation and alienation” (Ibid).

Encountering his/her *misrecognized* reflection as a “perfect complete” figure, the child experiences two contradictory emotions at the same time: extreme jubilation and extreme fear. The “perfection” of the image gives the child a jubilant feeling of triumph resulting from the child’s assumption that he/she has achieved control or triumph over the previous state of disintegration. Lacan says that “the child’s joy is due to his imaginary triumph in anticipating a degree of muscular co-ordination which he has not yet actually achieved” (Lacan 1977, 15).

Even though the perfection of the image gives the child an utmost relief and jubilation, this same wholesomeness threatens, at the same time, to take the child back to the former state of disintegration, giving rise to an aggressive tension between the subject and the image. “This illusion of unity, in which the human being is always looking forward to self-mastery, entails a constant danger of sliding back again into the chaos from which he started” (Lacan 1977, 6). Thus, the mirror stage involves reversed reactions: love and hate, eroticism and aggression, termed by Lacan “erotic aggression.”

For Jacques Lacan the function of the *imago* is to set up “a relation between the organism and its reality ...the *Innenwelt* and the *Umwelt*” (Ibid, 3). Prior to the mirror stage, the child lives in a world of his/her own. He/she does not apprehend the social rules and laws, and the highest inner fancy the child assumes is that he/she possesses the mother. Unfortunately, this fancy is let down during the mirror stage, and the child encounters the

greatest woe: the mother is an entity detached from him/her and belongs to the Father, i.e., to law; to the big “Other.” It is this disillusion that the child has to overcome during the mirror phase in order to proceed in life as an autonomous individual by accepting the breach from the mother and, resultantly, submitting to the orders and rules and entering into the social and linguistic realms, the Symbolic Order.

For the child to become a subject, therefore, he/she has to be introduced into the Symbolic Order, in which the Father appears as owning the phallus and inhibits the child’s fancy of possessing the mother. The Law of the Father outlaws the child’s desire of identification with the mother, and, eventually, transforms the child into an independent subject separate from her.

The father shows up here nonetheless as a nuisance. He is not only cumbersome because of his size; he is in the position of trouble maker because of what he prohibits. [...] First he forbids the satisfaction of impulse...

What else does the father prohibit? [...] Since the mother belongs to him, she does not belong to the child [...] The father well and truly frustrates the child where the mother is concerned. (Lacan, 1957-1958)

The Symbolic Order, represented in the father, through frustrating the child’s incestuous desire, controls, too, the entire social patterns of kinship and marriage bonds, familiarizing the child with the social rules and laws after the imaginary symbiotic unity between it and the mother is thwarted.

Upon renunciation of the incestuous desire for union with the mother, the child experiences the feeling of castration anxiety, as he/she encounters its lack of phallus. Freud, in his “Oedipus Complex” theory, relates the castration feeling to the child’s lack of the biological organ of the penis. Lacan uses the term phallus, instead, to refer to the symbolic representations of the penis, not merely as a power to own the mother, but also social power in general.

The child becomes silent about his/her desire and speaks only according to the “Law of the Father” or *nom du père*. For this reason, speech is full of silence. Speaking about matters means remaining silent about other different matters. Lacan explains the nature of speech as “presence made absence” (Lacan 1977, 65). He alludes to Freud’s example of his grandson’s game of the “Fort Da.”⁴ Lacan sees that the child’s articulation of “o-o-o-o” and “Da,” meaning “gone” and “here,” while throwing the reel and bringing it back to him as a game-means of accepting the breach from the mother, acknowledging his lack of phallus which belongs to the father. Lacan finds that as the child articulates the “o-o-o-o” and “da,” he is trying to make the mother presence through her absence. Through articulating the unconscious desire or the *Thing*⁵ in language, desire submits to the rules and grammar of language and, subsequently becomes arranged. Therefore, through articulation, the child is introduced into the “world of meaning of particular language in which the world of things will come to be arranged” (Ibid).

⁴ See P. 12 in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*.

⁵ See P. 55 in Jacques, Lacan. *The Seminar. Book VII. The Ethics of Psychoanalysis, 1959-60*. Trans. Dennis, Porter, Notes by Dennis Porter, London: Routledge, 1992.

Freud's example of the child's reel game in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* extends his theory of life and death instincts, Eros and Thanatos. Freud sees in the child's repetitive behavior of throwing the reel and bringing it back a tendency driven by a force essential to human nature, a force toward death. This compulsion to repeat the painful separation experience is related, according to Freud, to a basic instinct in human nature toward destruction: "the goal of all life is death" (Freud 1922, 47). Such disadvantageous reenactments are not only manifested in the games of children, but also in several other facets, such as post-traumatic dreams, the artists' tendency to reproduce their miseries in their works of art, or the masochists' desire for pain... etc.

Lacan analyses the child's game as an experience in which "desire becomes human [and] also that in which the child is born into language" (Lacan 1973, 76). Saying certain words implies killing certain taboo desires by repressing them. The *Fort! Da!* experience transforms the child's desire from animal-like into human-like desire because "up to the *Fort! Da!* experience, when absence becomes present through language, the infant's so-called desire is not different from the appetition of an animal seeking the satisfaction of its bodily needs" (Richardson and Muller, 21). The child's desire, upon its articulation, is no longer savage (incestuous relation with the mother); it is human-linguistic emanating from a subject (I- self-autonomy) asking for recognition as an autonomous entity, a human being.

For this reason, the Symbolic Order is associated with life and death, for it tames desire commuting it from savage into human desire through the Law of the Father and, at the same time, draws on death through the unpleasing repetition of pain and displeasure. The Symbolic is "the realm of the Law which regulates desire in the Oedipus complex ...

the symbolic order is also the realm of DEATH, of ABSENCE and of LACK. The symbolic is both the PLEASURE PRINCIPLE which regulates the distance from the Thing and the DEATH DRIVE which goes ‘beyond the pleasure principle’ by means of repetition” (Muller and Richardson, 202).

Ever since Freud posited the concept of “repetition compulsion,” debates were launched on whether the death drive performs in a destructive or constructive manner. Some arguments see Thanatos as a destructive drive for flight and “escape, or liberation, from limitations typical of human life, providing an opportunity for flight in the face of situations that are hard to steer through,” (Hamadeh, 52) and other arguments find in the death instinct a drive to “fight and conquer problems deploying a force geared to adjusting to the world and to mastering life’s challenges” (Ibid). However, Freud, in his example of his grandson’s *Fort! Da!* experience, argues that through this pain causing repetition, the child is in fact mastering the mother’s painful absence through repeating, by his own will the incident of her absence. Thus, even though the death drive acts destructively in one aspect, yet its ultimate aim is a constructive one “towards mastery and towards taking hold of reality” (Ibid)

The aforementioned touches on the tendency common among artists to re-present their neurotic experiences in their work. It is a tendency towards mastering and getting rid of such harmful occurrences for the sake of “the fulfillment of a wish, a correction of unsatisfying reality” (Freud 1908, 2). Art, thus, helps the artist defeat his illness. Freud, furthermore, says that the only domain able to satisfy narcissistic fancies of omnipotence is the domain of art:

In only a single field of our civilization has the omnipotence of thoughts been retained, and that is in the field of art. Only in art does it still happen that a man who is consumed by desires performs something resembling the accomplishment of those desires and that what he does in play produces emotional effects—thanks to artistic illusion—just as though it were something real. (Freud 1950, 105)

Since art provides form of fulfillment of such fantasies, artistic enactments of former destructive incidents, whether in literary or any other form of artistic expression, have an ulterior constructive purpose behind them. It is through their works of art that artists indeed fulfill their narcissistic yearnings:

Literature can be a highly rhetorical mode of discourse because it drives readers to make sense of and master unfinished business; it prompts us to resolve conflict in overly simple resolutions. This need to master conflict is not simply intellectual entertainment; it is a fundamental need of the self. It is a narcissistic need. (Alcorn Jr., 214)

Jacques Lacan's inclusion of language into the notion of desire infers that desire is able to be healed not just revealed as Freud believes. Since desire passes through "the defiles of the signifiers, [it is then] depicted as one that educates and humanizes by means of the death drive" (Hamadeh, 52). Therefore, desire for Lacan is not savage since it operates within language and is mediated through the symbolic order. Words or other symbols are dead accordingly. For Lacan, the order of the symbolic is a "principle of sacrifice," (Lacan 1977, 244) where words and signifiers are to serve sublimated purposes.

There is a law that governs language and governs along with it whatever passes through language, such as desire: “Since using language involves the observance of the laws inherent in language (like the rules of grammar), desire that has passed through the defiles of the signifier is a desire that has integrated the law into itself” (Hamadeh, 60). Thus this signified desire leads to mastery over the self which complies with Lacan’s notion of mastering desire though the death drive.

Derivatively, since painting, sculpture, music, as well as literature and any other form of artistic re-presentation, the psychopathological factor emerges as a basic incentive behind creative inventions. Freud compares the artists to a narcissistic person who is:

oppressed by excessively powerful instinctual needs. He desires to win honour, power, wealth, fame and the love of women; but he lacks the means for achieving these satisfactions. Consequently, like any other unsatisfied man, he turns away from reality and transfers all his interest, and his libido too, to the wishful constructions of his life of phantasy. (Freud 1963, 307)

Thus Freud finds narcissistic desires to be the basic motive behind artistic composition, where the act of art composition is, in itself, a narcissistic act into which the artists withdraw, diverting their interest from the outside world into the world of their own art. Artists, thus, substitute for the narcissistic desires through their world of art, where they can build a satisfactory realm in which they are perfectly satisfied: wealthy, famous, powerful... etc. Art, thus, forms a kind of substitution for the narcissistic craves, however, without renunciation of the cravings: “What appears to be a renunciation [of narcissistic

desires through art] is really the formation of a substitute or surrogate” (Freud 1908, 2). But what is precisely a narcissistic need, and how are we to label a person or a work of art as “Narcissistic?”

Narcissism derives from Ovid’s famous tale *Echo and Narcissus*. The term was later employed by psychologists to identify a pathological disorder common among human beings caused by excessive self-love and sometimes malignant self-love. Narcissus in the Greek myth was the fruit of the rape which the river god Cephisus inflicted on Liriope. Upon Narcissus’ birth, the fruit of this ravish, the mother took her son to the blind Tiresias to foretell his future. Tiresias’ prophesied that Narcissus will live till old age “if he never knows himself” (Ovid, 68). Narcissus grows as a very attractive man who enchanted whoever saw him among women as well as men. Sadly, however, Narcissus grows to be a total introvert soaked in his own world refusing any of his admirer’s approaches, until one very fascinated lady named echo falls deeply in love with him. Echo used to be a very talkative nymph who was punished by the goddess Juno for deceiving her by telling artful stories in order to occupy her while her husband Jove flirted with other nymphs. Juno cursed Echo for her misdeed transforming her voice into meaningless sound which echoes the last words of whatever she hears: “The tongue that made a fool of me will shortly have shorter use, the voice be brief hereafter” (Ibid). Hence, while echo follows narcissus, she cannot but repeat his words in vain. As she hugs narcissus to express her love, Narcissus is outraged and shouts: “Keep your hands off [...] and do not touch me! I would die before I give you a chance at me,” while all that Echo can echo is “give you a chance at me” (Ibid, 69). Echo’s attempts keep resulting in denial until she dejectedly goes to the woods

moaning. There, her body, out of grief, melts into air and her bones turn into stone, and only her worthless voice remains. Narcissus's cruelty continues until one of the rejected nymph's prays that he faces the same pain he has been inflicting on them and that he never possesses the thing he loves: "May Narcissus love one day so himself, and not win over the creature whom he loves" (Ibid, 70). The nymph's plea is favorably answered by the gods, and one day while narcissus leans over the river to drink, he becomes astonished by the figure he sees in the water to the extent that he falls in love with it. Alas, the figure narcissus sees is his mere reflection, one that he cannot ever get hold of. Narcissus suffers and cries in order to be united with the figure in the water, but this is impossible. Narcissus talks to the beautiful figure smiles to it, yet it only smiles and talks back mimicking him. He cries:

The truth at last. He is myself! I feel it,
I know my image now. I burn with love
Of my own self; I start the fire I suffer
What shall I do? Shall I give or take the askings?
What shall I ask for? What I want is with me,
My riches make me poor. If I could only
Escape from my own body! If I could only. (Ibid, 72)

Narcissus remains gazing at his reflection in the river until his body dies and transforms into a beautiful flower which was named after him: Narcissus.

Ovid's myth of Narcissus has been analyzed and critiqued widely by philosophers and psychologists, and the psychoanalytic notion of narcissism, as a disorder, is called after it. Freud was the first to theorize on narcissist psychopathology in his article "On Narcissism: An Introduction." The article begins as follows:

The term narcissism is derived from clinical description and was chosen by Paul Nacke in 1899 to denote the attitude of a person who treats his own body in the same way in which the body of a sexual object is ordinarily treated- who looks at it, that is to say, strokes it and fondles with it till he obtains complete satisfaction through these activities. (Freud 1914-1916, 73)

Narcissism is therefore the impossibility of forming object-love, while being totally submerged in subject-love, love of the self, just like Narcissus in the Ovidian myth. The word "Object," in this case, refers to anything other than the self. It may be a human being, a thing, or an idea.

Freud defines narcissism as "autoeroticism" which is the state in which the child becomes infatuated with himself/herself. Freud writes in *Instincts and Their Vicissitudes* that "Originally, at the very beginning of mental life, the ego is cathected with instincts and is to some extent capable of satisfying them on itself. We call this condition 'narcissism' and this way of obtaining satisfaction 'auto-erotic,'" (Freud 1914-1916, 134). During early childhood stages, being over-indulged in self-love is not necessarily a disorder; this is called normal narcissism. However, at later stages, this self-love must be exteriorized into a peripheral object-love, or else it will transfer into a disorder causing *megalomania*. The

first object-love for the child is the “mother,” represented particularly in her breast while breastfeeding. The child must, however, separate from this object-love knowing that it belongs to the Father, a matter that originates the feeling of *castration anxiety*, as mentioned before. If the child fails to accomplish such a detachment, pathological narcissism arises, where he/she remains self-absorbed, unable to form object relations, and “lost in his maternal and deathly imago” (Rabaté, 30).

Freud’s theorization on narcissism is mostly supported by Lacan, precisely by his mirror stage theory. In the *Cambridge Companion to Lacan*, Rabaté describes how Lacan, turning to the Freudian theory on narcissism, reinforces the concept of narcissism while elaborating widely what Freud had started. Rabaté refers to Merleau Ponty whom he believes that he:

showed that Lacan had a much firmer grasp of the essential Narcissus myth, beyond what Freud said of it, thus opening the way to a more phenomenological approach to the problem: ‘Lacan revises and enriches the myth of Narcissus, so passionately in love with his image [...] Freud saw the sexual element of the myth first and foremost, the libido directed towards the subject’s own body. Lacan makes full use of the legend and incorporates its other components. (Ibid, 30-1)

Lacan’s mirror stage gives an answer to a notion that Freud opens in “On Narcissism: An Introduction” without giving it a satisfactory complete portrayal or explanation. Freud writes in “On Narcissism: An Introduction” that for the ego to be

constituted, “new psychological action” has to happen, however, he does not define what this new action might be:

“a unity comparable to the ego cannot exist in the individual from the start; the ego has to be developed. The auto-erotic instincts, however, are there from the very first; so there must be something added to autoerotism- a new psychological action- in order to bring about narcissism. (Freud 1914-1916, 76)

Lacan comes to answer that the *mirror stage* is this new psychological action for the formation of the ego. For the ego to be established, a new unit has to be formed in parallel with the establishment of a bodily paradigm:

The imaginary function is that which Freud formulated to govern the investment of the object as narcissistic object. It was to this point that I turned myself when I showed that the specular image is the channel taken by the transference of the body’s libido towards the object. (Lacan 1977, 319)

In Ovid’s myth, Tiresias’ prophecy of Narcissus lasting till old age if he does not understand (recognize) himself mirrors the case of the child’s unrecognized ego, as per Lacan’s theory that the ego is based on *méconnaissance*. Narcissus, being completely soaked into the self, fails to achieve detachment from the m(other), and therefore fails to achieve his individuality, his I. The outcome is destructive: Narcissus’ death.

In the same manner, the child, during the mirror stage, needs to recognize his I through admitting the presence of an alienated reflection in order to move into the Symbolic Order and enter the social realm, connecting with the other. Lacan explains that the narcissistic mechanism of identification takes place when the self identifies with the reflected or alienated image seen in the mirror paradigm which determines the structure of

the ego. “It is in this erotic relation, in which the human individual fixes upon himself an image that alienates him from himself, that are to be found the energy and form on which this organization of the passions that we call his ego is based” (Ibid, 19).

Narcissus is stuck in the mirror image and does not achieve transformation into the Symbolic Order. He endlessly gazes at his reflection in the river until he is metamorphosed into the flower, remaining fixated in his own self. This river onto which Narcissus stares is the place where the mother Liriope was raped by the river god Cephisus. As if Narcissus refuses to detach from this scene which shows him that the mother is neither his nor can she be fixated into a definite object. But Narcissus is unable to accept the greater anguish of castration caused by this scene. He, thus, dies, failing to establish an ego of his own and failing to arrive at socialization. He, “on the contrary [...] regresses to primary narcissism [...] lost in a maternal and deathly imago” (Rabaté, 30).

Even though narcissism is mainly perceived in the form of total self-love, there are, however, narcissistic disorders manifested in the form of self-hate. In many cases, narcissistic individuals exhibit extreme self-hatred rather than self-love. Many people, suffering from narcissistic personality disorders, look at themselves as ugly, inferior and worthless. In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud explains that the lack of love given to a person harms his self-regard leading to the feeling of inferiority and valuelessness: “Loss and failure in the sphere of the affections left behind on the ego-feeling marks of injury comparable to a narcissistic scar, which [...] yields the most important contribution to the 'inferiority complex' common among neurotics” (Freud 1922, 21-2).

The reason behind such inferiority complexes common among narcissistic individuals, besides the Freudian “lack-of-love” justification, is associated as well with the

Lacanian notion that the ego is built on misrecognition. Narcissists encounter “unrealistic demand[s] imposed by an archaic grandiose self, hungering for perfection and omnipotence” (Berman, 11). These rooted demands are in fact imaginary fantasies which do not exist in the Order of the Symbolic. Per contra, perfection exists only in the imagination of the human throughout the reflection of the supposedly perfect *gestalt* image seen in the mirror, or in the “unattainable ideal image” (Chiesa, 19). Unfortunately, this image is not as flawless as it appears to be; it is only a misrecognized completeness as previously explained as “méconnaissance.” Mario Jacoby explains, in his turn, the reasons behind narcissists’ sense of self-hate:

[Narcissists] often seem to be precisely the opposite [of self-lovers], involving more or less serious disturbances in self-evaluation and an overwhelming self-hatred. People with narcissistic disorders often suffer from *not* being the ‘fairest of them all’ [Snow White’s mirror statement], and look at themselves as nothing but ugly and inferior. But behind the frequently paralyzing inferiority complexes of narcissistically disturbed individuals is an unconscious insistence on ‘perfect beauty’ in the broadest sense, for example, total intelligence, absolute power, brilliant genius. Since such massive demands cannot be fulfilled, the self-love is indeed disturbed and the individual suffers from narcissistic disorders. (Jacoby, 4)

In the following chapters, Lacan’s theories, banking on Freud’s basic psychoanalytical foundations, are going to be integrated in the comparative analysis of Sumaya Ramadan’s novel, *Awrāk Al Narjis*, and Dalí’s painting “The Metamorphosis of Narcissus,” which is be strikingly prominent in the setting of the novel. The theoretical

notions discussed in this chapter will be pursued practically in the analysis of the two works of art. An attempt will be made to disclose the profound association between the novel and the painting, where Sumaya Ramadan creatively employs the painting to deliver a message she might have not been able to convey except by means of an image, specifically the painting of Salvador Dalí.

Chapter Three

Dalí: The Metamorphosis of Narcissus into the Symbolic Order

In his masterpiece, “The Metamorphosis of Narcissus,” Salvador Dalí illustrates the Ovidian Greek myth *Narcissus and Echo* teeming with his surrealist representation of the human mind in its endless clash between the rationality of rules and irrationality of desires, where the boundaries between the conscious and the subconscious are obliterated. Dalí finds that “the birth of the new Surrealist images should be considered, above all, as the birth of images of demoralization” (Dalí- Finkelstein 1998, 214). In the surrealist manifesto, Andre Breton wanted to “sever the Surrealist world from traditional concepts of reality” (Breton, 37). Thus, the form of surrealist painting is not fixed or ordered. It is rather filled with chaotic and disordered representations of reality. Surrealism dictates “thought in the absence of all control exercised by reason, outside of all aesthetic and moral preoccupation” (Ibid). Surrealists paint the dystopia of the universe whose utopia failed to satisfy their artistic passion.

Surrealism arose at the same time when the Freudian spirit was spread in the air in the beginnings of the 20th century. They became totally attracted to the Freudian theory of dreams as distorted images of the social repressions of desires. Thus the Freudian psychological theories served Dalí’s surrealist spirit with a feast to satiate his creativity and artistic lust.

It was only after the writings of Freud revealed to [Dalí] the symbolic world of the unconscious as a buried reality did he give full rein to his bent for dark inexplicable fantasy... He came to regard the dark wonder world of dreams and hallucinations as the only subject matter worthy of artistic treatment. (Powel 1992, 273)

Surrealists introduced into their art theory the concept of “automatism⁶” that calls for abandoning conscious restrictions, creating images that break the boundaries of consciousness and of realism. Automatism, therefore, is an automatic or spontaneous creation of art, free from the conscious control that the artist exercises while producing an image. The artist’s consciousness within this surrealist concept is passive, and activity remains only that of unconscious representations.

Despite Dalí’s involvement in the surrealist notion of automatism, amply portrayed in his paintings, he was not, however, fully satisfied with this concept. He did not appreciate its excessive passivity that discounts the active involvement of the artist in his own work. Such dissatisfaction, together with Dalí’s strong urge for “asserting his artistic independence,” (Finkelstein 1927-1914, 182) drove him to divert from automatism, creating a new path he called the “paranoiac critical method.” As the term indicates, the paranoia-critical process is of double facets: It illustrates the paranoid status of the human mind, on the one hand, and the critical control over paranoiac disorder, on the other. Dalí defines this method as “form of mental illness in which reality is organized in such a

⁶ Britannica Encyclopedia: Method of painting or drawing in which conscious control over the movement of the hand is suppressed so that the subconscious mind may take over. The Surrealists, having once achieved an interesting image or form by automatic or chance means, exploited the technique with fully conscious purpose.

manner so as to be served through the control of an imaginative construction” (Dalí-Finkelstein 1996, 214). This paranoid process that “systemize[s] confusion” became the ultimate aim of Dalí’s:

My whole ambition in the pictorial domain is to materialize the images of my concrete irrationality with the most imperialist fury of precision... paranoiac-critical activity organizes and objectifies in an exclusivist manner the limitless and unknown possibilities of the systematic association of subjective and objective “significance” in the irrational. (Ibid, 321)

On a closer examination of Dalí’s accounts of the paranoid-critical method, the concept appears to talk about the struggle between the subject’s pleasurable desires and the outside rules imposed on these desires, i.e., between the instinctual pleasures and social restrictions. In his paranoiac-critical art pieces, Dalí manifests this struggle between the paranoid desires and the critical regulations that accompany it. “Dalí’s version of paranoia addresses itself, from the outset, to the struggle between the reality principle and the pleasure principle,” (Ibid, 185).

The artistic work of Dalí that we are dealing with in this study is created according to the paranoiac-critical method. About it, the artists says that “The Metamorphosis of Narcissus” painting and poem holding the same title are the “first poem and the first painting obtained entirely through the integral application of the paranoid-critical method” (Ibid, 324). Choosing to draw from a myth (Ovid’s *Narcissus and Echo*) in particular falls in with the notion of the paranoiac method since myths are representations of reality. Surrealists claim that their expressions are of reality itself, and not external to it: “the

Surrealists drew heavily on the devices of classical mythology to suggest ... that [surrealism] is perceived through the objects of the real world” (Chadwick, 419). It suffices to mention that the work we are going to analyze is produced in “entire” compliance with the paranoid critical method that reflects the conflict between the pleasure and the reality principles. The paranoiac-critical method will be revealed through the following analysis which deals with the Lacanian theories embodiment within this paranoiac process.

part 1

part 2



The Metamorphosis of Narcissus, 1936- 1937. Oil on Canvas. 20 X 30 13/16 inches. The Tate Gallery, London.

Dalí's painting, "The Metamorphosis of Narcissus," alongside the poem that accompanies it, will be studied structurally and thematically through exploring one of the main themes of psychopathology, namely narcissism. Significantly, the psychopathological notion of narcissism is not only conveyed in the subject matter of Dalí's painting, it is also conveyed in the structural composition of the work of art.

In this piece of art, Dalí seems to set forth a dyadic representation of the myth *Narcissus and Echo*. The first one is provided in the painting and the second in the poem. In this double representation, Dalí does not merely illustrate the myth *Narcissus and Echo* as it is in Ovid, but inflicts further complications on it that signify the paranoid status of the human psyche, namely pathological narcissism. Dalí divides each representation into two further parts as well. Thus, the painting and the poem in turn comprise a sub-dyadic representation. This classification is not adopted in vain, as this paper shows. It, rather, has a very significant implication: the first pictorial and poetic part illustrates Narcissus engulfed in self-love, in the savage state of desire, where libidinal cathexes⁷ are not subjected to any restraints from the ego or superego, whereas, the second pictorial and poetic parts describe the metamorphosis of Narcissus into the symbolic order where the Law-of-the-Father prevails, transforming desire from its savage into a human desire, thus achieving resolution of pathological narcissism. Therefore, the Dalían division will be revealed as echoing the paranoid-critical method that illustrates in part one the paranoid pleasure principle and in part two the critical and socially conscious reality principle.

⁷ Freud: The Dictionary of Psychoanalysis: the words "cathexes" and "to cathect" are used as renderings of the German "Besetzung" and "besetzen." These are the terms with which Freud expresses the idea of physical energy being lodged in or attaching itself to mental structures or processes, somewhat on the analogy of an electric charge. (22)

Beginning with the painting, Dalí structures *The Metamorphosis of Narcissus* into two main divisions, set apart by the group of naked figures, which Dalí calls “hetero-sexual group.” Each part has the figure of Narcissus at its center. What relates part one to part two is Dalí’s ingenious opting to reflect in each part every element of the other. Thus, the whole of part two and its sub elements act as a reflection or a metamorphosis for the whole of part one as well as its sub elements in the second portion of the painting. The stone hand carrying an egg from which sprouts a flower resembles, as a whole, the figure of Narcissus bending on the left side inside the pond. The chess board in part two reflects the heterosexual group in part one. The four-legged animal eating raw meat reflects the stones gathering to the right of Narcissus in part one... etc. Hence, despite the correspondence between parts one and two, the latter reflects a counter transformation of the other. Thus all the reflections in the dyadic parts of the painting are not merely pictorial copies of one another. They are a process of metamorphosis from one status into another. This will be revealed and elaborated afterwards.

In part one, Narcissus appears in the foreground of the painting perching inside the river in which his beautiful reflection is vaguely mirrored with head bending down over his knees sighting away from his water reflection. His hair resembles in its curls a crack in the head which extends backward and mingles with rear figures. In the middle ground of the picture right behind Narcissus stands “the [naked] heterosexual group.” In the background of the picture there is the god of snow who, upon seeing Narcissus, “starts melting with desire.” The reigning colors in this part are the reddish hues.

In the foreground of part two, lies a shape which resembles narcissus. Yet, at a closer glance, it becomes clear that the shape is a hand made of stone. The hand is disjointed and cracked, stamped with footprints of the animal depicted at the bottom right corner, engrossed in a feast of raw flesh. The prints themselves resemble punctures in the hand, indicating the hand's decay and decomposition. The hand holds a cracked egg, which matches a split head of Narcissus from which a flower sprouts. In the middle ground of the painting, behind the stony hand, stands another Narcissus on a pedestal in the middle of a chessboard. The colors of the sky in the background oscillate between white, blue and grey, with whitish as well as bluish hues overwhelming the mood of part two.

The poem "Metamorphosis of Narcissus" is, likewise, divided into two main sections. The first section opens with two fishermen wondering what Narcissus is doing "glaring at himself all day in his looking glass."⁸ One fisherman replies that they can find out the reason for such into-the-self gaze if they look at the bulb in Narcissus' head which, as they say, "corresponds to the psychological notion of 'complex'." The poem goes on to describe how the god of snow who appears in the background of the picture starts "melting with desire" while looking at Narcissus with "his dazzling head bent over the dizzy space of reflections," until the god totally reaches the state of "annihilation." The heterosexual group that gathers behind Narcissus come from different countries around the world. They contemplate Narcissus engulfed by the river/self. They are waiting for a forthcoming libidinal catastrophe: "Already the heterosexual group, in the renowned poses of preliminary expectation, conscientiously ponders over the threatening libidinal cataclysm."

⁸ See Dali's poem cited in the bibliography

Shifting into the second section, the poem experiences a sudden linguistic transition where the pronouns shift from the third personal pronoun (used in part one) to the second personal pronoun. This shift extends all the way till the line before the last of the poem, in which Dalí shifts into the first personal pronoun: “Gala *my* Narcissus.” Thus, the second poetic section begins with a new voice calling out: “Narcissus, you are losing your body.” The new arising voice starts cautioning Narcissus about the egoistic status he lingers in. Then the poem proceeds to picture the body of Narcissus fading away in “the abyss of his reflection.” The voice calls:

“Narcissus, you are losing your body

Carried away and confounded by the millenary

Reflection of your disappearance

Your body stricken dead.”

The portrayal of the loss of Narcissus is prolonged along with the voice continually warning Narcissus, till finally the poem ends by describing the advent of a “great mystery” about to happen, that of metamorphosis: “Now the great mystery draws near, the great metamorphosis is about to occur.” The head of Narcissus “splits” and “slits” to give birth to the new Gala Narcissus, reproduced in a flower. As said before, the last line of the poem is addressed in the first singular personal pronoun, the voice of an I: “Gala, *my* Narcissus.”

On a deeper layer of analysis, this piece of art presents an exemplification of a psychological transformation from the pathological state of narcissistic self-love into a

healthy socialized being, aware of the social rules and laws. In the first part, the psychoanalytical notion of narcissism is alive in its fierce status. We realize in Dali's first parts Narcissus perching inside the river gazing at his own self, which implies the climax of self-love and the inability to achieve object-love. Narcissus is totally soaked in his self, his "looking-glass."

The entire features drawn in part one of *The Metamorphosis of Narcissus* are associated with the id and the instinctual pleasures, where Libidinal desires are brimming over. The represented atmosphere is typical of a numb state of sleep and surrender to desires and whims, to the extent that desire's heat melts the god of snow, as though no divine power can interfere in such moments of lust. Even the god loses his divinity in the presence of all-consuming desires. The heterosexual group bears testimony to the pervasiveness of desire in its utmost lustful state, free of the kinship and marriage ties imposed by the Law of the Father. Eroticism is explicit in the description of the floral spears that "rise erect, tender, and hard," echoing clear phallic implications. The reddish hues that color part one are clearly associated with eroticism and passion, as well: "Red is a bright, warm colour that evokes strong emotions; Red is also considered an intense, or even angry, colour that creates feelings of excitement or intensity" (Wagner, 6). The erotic atmosphere is prolonged in the poem until it reaches its orgasmic level where narcissus loses himself arriving at the peak of pleasure:

"When his white torso folded forward

Fixes itself frozen,

In the silvered and hypnotic curve of his desire,

When the time passes

On the clock of the flowers of the sand of his own flesh

Narcissus loses his being in the cosmic vertigo

In the deepest depths of which

Is singing the cold Dionysian siren of his own image.

The body of Narcissus flows out and loses itself

In the abyss of his reflection,

Like the sand glass that will not be turned again.”

Desire and self-annihilation are quite underlined in this part, where sexual instincts prevail, setting free the “pleasure principle” from all possible restrictions imposed by the superego. Self-annihilation echoes the Freudian reference in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* to the Nirvana concept, where sexual instincts operate against life till it reaches death, annihilation. Freud finds in the Nirvana (self-annihilation) the “strongest motives for believing in the existence of the death instinct” (Freud 1922, 71) Thus, in this first part, Narcissus surrenders to the pleasure principle, remaining totally immersed within instinctual libido, refusing to mute his savage desire for possessing his self/mother. Death of the incestuous desire to own the mother does not occur, and the mother/child union

remains active. Narcissistic desires within this part function vitally according to Eros, where Thanatos does not prevent Narcissus from overcoming the “malignant subject-love.”

The turning-point that “The Metamorphosis of Narcissus” arrives at in the second pictorial and poetic sections is initiated with the arrival of the new voice addressing Narcissus that resonates in a cautioning manner. The voice is like that of the conscience, of the law-of-the-Father that warns Narcissus against the instinctual sin that he commits in the first part: “Narcissus, don’t you understand?” “Narcissus, you are losing your body.” Voices warn him of submitting to desire’s fatal attractions. The voice continues trying to awaken Narcissus from his instinctive sleep: “Narcissus, do you understand? ... Narcissus you are so immobile ... one would think you were asleep.”

With the advent of this voice, desires and instincts become repressed. Narcissism in this part is dead, as the poem says: “your body stricken dead.” The death of the self-soaked Narcissus is pictured in the decay and decomposition of the stone hand which is metamorphosed from the surviving Narcissus in the first part, as previously mentioned. His death in this part implies the death of the brutal instincts and the rise of the Symbolic order.

However, another surviving Narcissus (on the chessboard) exists in this part. This time he survives only according to the rules of the Father that overwhelm the second part. The presence of Narcissus on the chessboard which, as aforementioned, reflects the reflection or metamorphosis of the heterosexual group in the first part implies that he has come out of the eroticism of the first part and has established his place as one entity, independent of the group. Standing on the chessboard, Narcissus fixes himself within the

sphere of culture, where order and rules take over. The chess game, in its extreme order or patterned geometrical composition, signifies rules and laws. The chess board in this part is also portrayed detached from the organic nature that surrounds it, and with Narcissus being part of it, he becomes part of culture as well. Ferdinand de Saussure writes that the rules and laws of language are “just as the game of chess” (Saussure, 107), thus, emphasizing that the presence of Narcissus in this part within the chessboard signifies his birth into language, into the symbolic realm.

This section, therefore, illustrates Narcissus’ submission to the rule and laws of society, in which the Father appears owning the phallus and, thus, empowered to forbid the incestuous relation between child and mother. The Father restrains the instinctual desires, including the narcissistic ones, in order that the birth of social rules and laws take place. Narcissus sadly accepts the severing of unity with the mother through killing his own desire and abandons himself to grieving for his own castrated self, relative to the Father’s possession of the phallus. Savagery and bodily instincts are left for the animal which appears in the right corner of the painting eating raw meat. The white and blue colors that reign in this part are associated with purity and spirituality, rising over the brutality of the red color that prevails in the first part.

The coming of the Father, as well, initiates the birth of the child’s ego, where he starts living the self as an autonomous individual separate from the mother. For this reason, the transformation takes place where Narcissus, in Dalí’s work, moves into the symbolic order. He succeeds in achieving object love breaking out of the cocoon of the self. The object love for him now is the new flower that arises from the split head which slits the

confined shell of subjectivity. Gala is the new object-love, the new Narcissus, invested with a new libido.

When that head slits
when that head splits
when that head bursts,
it will be the flower, the new Narcissus,
Gala - my narcissus.

In this last line, “Gala, my Narcissus,” we find the pronoun *I* for the first time in the poem. The birth of the *I* in the poem corresponds to the birth of the ego that takes place in the end of the second section of Dalí’s work. The metamorphosis that takes place from the imaginary order of autoerotism into the symbolic order of object love paves the way for the formation of the *I* as the subject of language.

This healthy psychological metamorphosis represented in the dual sections that complete Dalí’s “The Metamorphosis of Narcissus,” cannot be accomplished without the child’s proper passage through the *mirror-phase*. Any complications occurring during the mirror stage lead to neurotic or even psychotic regressions, such as narcissism. Sumaya Ramadan’s novel presents us with a complicated mirror stage transformation, where the narrator/protagonist goes through an unhealthy mirror-stage development resulting in psychological disorders. Dalí’s painting’s sound metamorphosis mirrors for the narrator/protagonist the reality of her unhealthful metamorphosis as will be developed in the following chapter.

Chapter Four

Dali's Metamorphosed Mirror in Ramadan's Leaves

Peering into Sumaya Ramadan's *Awrāk Al Narjis*, through the lens of Lacanian psychoanalysis, reveals layers of the narcissistic hang-ups that shackle the personality of Kimi, the main character of the novel. Throughout the analysis, the decisive function of Dali's "The Metamorphosis of Narcissus" will be exposed as the mirror that reflects to Kimi her pathological personality. The encounter with Dali's painting recalls the child's encounter with his/her image in the mirror paradigm of the Lacanian mirror stage, with discrepancies that point out the repercussions of failure of the passage through this critical stage of personality development.

In the opening pages of the novel, we are presented with Kimi, lying in a mental hospital surrounded by family members who are convincing her to swallow an anti-hallucination pill which Kimi calls "the rosy pill"⁹ (الحبة الوردية) that'll allow her to rest and sleep "forever." Kimi portrays the family as conspiring (مؤامرة) against her by means of the pill that will lead to her death. Taking a pill has a different implication for Kimi: as Kimi refuses the pill, she in fact rejects their attempts to stop her world of imagination, wherein she constructs a happy life. Therefore, the pill implies encountering the harsh reality from

⁹ This translation is used by me, while in Booth's translation; Al Habba Al Wardiyya is translated as the pink pill. I find "rosy pill" a better translation for it brings the double meanings the Arabic word carries, the color pink and the rose. My translation brings out the association I make in this study with the narcissus flower.

which she attempts to escape. The encounter with reality is, according to Kimi, an experience of “death”, the reason why she describes the swallowing of the pill as sentencing herself to death.

"هم لا يستطيعون قتلك و إلا صاروا قتلة، هم فقط يريدون التأكد من أنك فقط تنفذين الحكم بنفسك على نفسك. حبة وردية صغيرة و بعدها تنامين إلى الأبد، وينتهي عذابك" ¹⁰ (10-9).

The inauguration of the novel in such a manner immediately draws the reader's attention to a distant and cold relation between Kimi and her family. This lack of affection will be disclosed throughout the analysis as the main cause behind Kimi's pathological personality.

The mother is absent. She is hardly ever with Kimi; and if she is at all in the picture, it is only to inflict additional pain on her daughter's transparently sensitive personality. The mother is an extremely organized and strict person, very obsessed with appearances. She is frequently at the hairdresser; and at home she organizes objects with excessive accuracy and precision, turning a blind eye to the basic care for her child's needs, especially the need for love. The mother's absence and lack of attentiveness are manifested in Kimi's saying:

"بيني وبينها قوام من الزجاج المصقول" ¹¹ (72)، "لماذا تصرّين (للأم) على إلغائي" ¹² (72)، "أكل بسرعة و أقبلها بسرعة، دادة آمنة، و أمّي في الخلفية في مكان ما، عندما أفتح تحضر وتقف حتى يصل الأسنانسير. لا أسمع لأمي صوتاً، لكن آمنة واضحة و قوية" ¹³ (16).

¹⁰ "They cannot kill you for then they will become murderers. They mean only to be assured that you, at your own bidding, will enforce the verdict upon your very own person. 'A tiny [rosy] pill, and then you'll sleep forever and your suffering will end" (Booth, 4).

¹¹ I sit beside her [the mother] on a matching chair watching her closely; when I speak to her, she doesn't answer. Between us stands a partition of polished glass" (Booth, 65)

Her father is also always absent and busy. He always travels to attend to business. Kimi, however, does not describe the meanness of her father. He mostly appears in the novel when asking his daughter about the gifts she would like him to bring her from abroad. There is no mention of the father's cruelty. Yet, in his physical absence, he denies Kimi the affection and care she needs, as does any other child. The father is not even aware of the repetitive answer she gives him when asked about the gift: that all she needs is his safety and return home. Kimi endlessly requests the presence of the father, and not any material gifts like her other sisters:

"عايزة سلامتك، وترجع البيت زيّ عادتك، وتلف عمامتك بإيدك"¹⁴ (24).

The only caring person existing for Kimi is her nanny, Dada Āmna, whom Kimi comes to call "mom" most of the time:

"لماذا قلت لخديجة أن أمك اسمها آمنة"¹⁵ (85)؟

Āmna provides Kimi partially with an alternative mother's love. She reads her stories, feeds her, waits for her arrival from school, talks to her about her joyful and painful childhood experiences, jokes and plays with her:

"عندما يخرج الكبار كانت آمنة هي التي تملأ العالم"¹⁶ (19).

¹² "Why are you [mother] so set on cancelling me out like this" (Booth, 69)?

¹³ I swallow my breakfast and kiss her rapidly, Nana Amna; and my mother is somewhere in the background. When I open the door, Amna appears and stands with me until the elevator arrives. I do not hear a sound from my mother, but Amna is clear and forceful" (Booth, 11).

¹⁴ "I want your good health and cheer! And that you come home safe and sound, and wrap your turban, father dear" (Booth, 20).

¹⁵ "Why did you tell Khadiga that your mother's name is Amna" (Booth, 82)?

However, a nanny cannot provide a substitute for a mother's love, especially with the physical mother being there and with the child's knowledge of her being the "real mother." Such uncertainty engenders a lot of confusion about the mother figure for Kimi. She knows who her actual mom is but finds her far away; and she knows that Āmna is not her real mother but finds her around most of the times. Kimi's mother is at once present and absent. Such confusion is verbalized by Kimi in the form of "transformation;" she frequently speaks throughout the novel about the mother's customary transformation from one person into another:

"و هي (الأم) قد تكون إحداهما أو الأخرى (الأم أو أمانة) و قد تتحوّل تحولاتها المعهودة¹⁷" (12).

In the first pages of the novel, Kimi describes a struggle developing between her and her mother, an act in which one person must die for the other's birth to take place. The struggle is compared to a battle of separation between the body and the soul, where the two opponents are united, just like the body and soul, and are in need of breaking this unity for a birth to take place.

"طلوع الجسد من الرّوح... لكنّها طبيّة قاسية، فهم أيضاً يعلمون، أنّها قد تقتلني و تحيا هي، أو أنّنا قد نموت سوياً... عالم فقد كلّ انحيازاته، وقف يشاهدنا أنا و هي نتصارع، وهي قد تكون إحداهما أو الأخرى، و قد تتحوّل تحولاتها المعهودة، لتراو غني فتصبح الإثنين في آن. قاتلة أو مقتولة، أمرها:

- داي أنا

- موتي يا أنا

¹⁶ "Whenever the grownups went out, Amna was the one who filled the world and kept it from crumbling" (Booth, 15).

¹⁷ "Her [the mother]: she might be this one of the pair, or perhaps she's the other one. She might transform herself in the familiar ways she does, to dupe me by becoming both at once" (Booth, 7).

- أم تراني أقول:

- موتي يا أمنة¹⁸" (12).

Kimi's account of the struggle asserts two main factors: The first affirms the equivocality of the mother figure for Kimi, as aforementioned. She says that her mother acts in an evasive manner changing from one person into another until she becomes the two in one. The second and major critical angle of the quoted statement is the awareness of oneness that exists between Kimi and the mother. They are both one united entity just like the soul and the body. Kimi compares the mother's departure from her as the body's departure from its soul, and if the two separate, death is the outcome, echoing the traditional notion that upon death, the body leaves the soul. Thus, Kimi does not achieve detachment from the childhood sense of oneness that exists between mother and child, prior to the mirror stage. She is rather dominated by a chaotic mix of perceptions incapable of distinguishing her own self from that of her parents or even from the world around.

The parental absence Kimi suffers from in childhood, whether through the cruelty of her mom or through the absence of her father, causes Kimi to lack emotional stability and the love-engendered sense of security needed for the establishment of a healthy personality. The loss of love she is subjected to in childhood causes the Freudian narcissistic injury or "narcissistic scar" that occurs when the parents deny their child their love and care: "Loss

¹⁸ "Soul's depart from body ... A harsh, hard, cruel benevolence, for they, too, know that she might kill me and live, she might. Or that we might die together ... There is no one here to protect me, no friend, today; only a world that has lost all its preferences and alliances, that stands witnessing us- witnessing me, witnessing her- as we struggle. ... Killer or killed. I command her: Die- ana! Die – I- ana! Or am I saying: Die Amna" (Booth, 7)!

and failure in the sphere of the affections left behind on the ego-feeling marks of injury comparable to a narcissistic scar” (Freud 1922, 20).

In a chapter entitled “The Reckoning Lesson,” Kimi describes the injury that befalls her as her head is banged on a glass table because of a trivial mistake she makes while solving an exercise in arithmetic. Painfully and intricately, Kimi relates how ever since that bang on the head, the glass table cracked, and the crack started to grow bigger and bigger, with no one taking notice or attempting to fix the split. This crack in the glass develops into a symbol of the psychological disorder that Kimi suffers from at later stages. This symbol recurs frequently throughout the novel, as an epitome of the narcissistic injury that was inflicted on Kimi. Both remind us of the split of the head in Dali’s painting to connote the notion of mental illness. Kimi, herself, discloses the fact that this cracked glass remains the “invulnerable proof of the kind of mentality that lives under this brain,” and which due to the carelessness she is treated with, everyone ignores.

"لم يهتم أحد بإصلاح زجاج ترابيزة السفرة المكسور. و ظل هكذا مدة طويلة على مرأى من الجميع، الدليل الدامغ على نوعية الذهن الذي يسكن هذه الدماغ ... عرفت أن الزجاج قد يصنعون منه أجراساً عظيمة"¹⁹ (13).

Kimi expresses huge bewilderment at how her family was unable to realize the split in the head which gradually made her lose sense of outside reality and divert her interest internally:

كيف لم يلاحظوا؟ أم تراهم لاحظوا و كانوا يتكتمون؟ أم أنها في بيتها و بيت الأهل، في لغتها، كانت تلك الأعراض تفسر على نحو مختلف؟ عندما تحمر وجنتها من نشاط داخلي يدوِّخها فلا تكف عن الضحك و

¹⁹ “No one took any interest in repairing the cracked glass on the dining room table. Its web of splinters long remained, visible to everyone, irrefutable evidence of the sort of brain that inhabited that head ... I remained aware that from glass they might craft great, isolating bells” (Booth, 10).

الحركة، وعندما تنهد عزيمتها و تخرس شهراً بأكمله؟ بماذا كانوا يفسرون تسارع خفقان قلبها التي كانت تشعر به يكاد يتوقف من شدة ضرباته، ثم السكوت التام، تليه ردود الأفعال العنيفة الغير مبررة²⁰" (30).

Little by little, this crack of the glass/brain metamorphoses into a sheltering bell that forms around Kimi and into which she retreats in order not to be harmed by the painful reality of the outer world. However, this bell that protects her, on one hand, leads to her dissociation with reality, on another, emphasizing her psychopathology. Within the bell, she protects herself from the bullets of lack of love that "pierced her skin," as she describes:

"تعاملت مع الكلمات على أنها بللورات تتجمع حولي لتصيبني بالصمم. ما الذي جعل كل تلك القسوة الرهيبة الجميلة ... تنسج من نفسها جرساً" عظيماً²¹" (92).

"وكان يتطاير في تلك العملية الكلامية شظى يخزّ جلدي²²" (30).

Kimi might be alluding to the bell motif used by Sylvia Plath in her novel *The Bell Jar*. Plath employs the bell to say that when she becomes mentally ill, she gets trapped under a bell that prevents her from leading a so-called normal life. Kimi says that her friend used to call her "Sylvia" and sometimes "Plath." Kimi furthermore expresses her obsessive fear of committing suicide, as Plath did, by turning on the gas supply in her kitchen till she suffocated:

"أفيقي، أخرجي من تحت هذا الجرس الذي تصرين أن تقبعي تحته. سوف تكون نهايتك مثلها. سوف تدخلين برأسك الى الفرن وتفتحين الغاز و تموتين موتة مفاجئة²³" (38).

²⁰ "How was it that they did not notice? Or was it that at home and among her family, in her own language, these symptoms were rationalized differently, explained away? When her cheeks reddened from an inner vigor that made her dizzy, and she couldn't stop laughing and fidgeting, and when her will was broken and she was mute for a month at a time? How did they explain the rush of her heartbeat- she was sure it must stop from the very force of its throbbing- and then the utter stillness, followed by violent and inexplicable reactions" (Booth, 27).

²¹ "I treated words as little crystal shards mounting and winding around me until they made me deaf. What caused all that beautiful terrible harshness to lose its frightening beauty- and its power to create, as it weaves itself into a massive bell that protects me" (Booth, 89).

²² "And from that verbal operation there flew shards that scattered and pricked my skin" (Booth, 27).

The glass bell, as Kimi states, is constructed “word by word,” through language. Thus language is what built the bell that embodies Kimi’s disturbed psyche. This is reminiscent of Lacan’s notion that the unconscious is structured like a language. All the hurtful words that she receives from her family are perceived by Kimi as glass bullets that start to form a bell around her until she becomes totally isolated inside the comforting beautiful bell. Kimi furthermore, names the whole process of the construction of the bell a “linguistic process.”

"لم ألحظهم و هم يصنعون حولي جرساً كبيراً من الزجاج السميك. لم ألحظ. لأنهم صنعوه صناعة عجيبة، كلمة. كلمة. كل كلمة بللورة كريستالية... وكان يتطاير في تلك العملية الكلامية شظى يخزّ جلدي. ما الذي كان يؤذيهم مني ليعزلوني هكذا؟²⁴ (30)"

This withdrawal into the isolating bell (the self) is actually the establishment of Kimi’s narcissistic personality. She gradually retreats inwardly forming an isolated sphere into which no one enters, keeping her safe from the disappointments of the external world. A narcissist “withdraws his libidinal interest from the outside world and directs it narcissistically to himself. Thus arises the notion of the psychotic as withdrawal from an unbearable world and loss of reality” (Muller 206-7). Kimi’s libidinal investments narcissistically withdraw into the self because of the sad disappointment in the outer reality.

²³ “Wake up! Get out from under this bell beneath which you are so determined to huddle. Your end will be like hers. You’ll stick your head inside the oven, turn on the gas, and die a horrid death” (Booth, 35).

²⁴ I did not notice them as they crafted around me a large bell of thick glass. I did not notice because they worked it in an amazing way: word by word, every word a crystal ... And from that verbal operation there flew shards that scattered and pricked my skin. What did they find so painful in me that they needed to isolate me that way” (Booth, 27)?

This drives her to create a world of her own within the bell where she can control what images, people or words enter her world and satisfy her narcissistic desires.

"لماذا تقودين حياة سعيدة بالخيالات؟"²⁵ (87)

"كلنا نصنع لأنفسنا أجراساً تحمينا و نقبع تحتها الى حين حتى نبدأ في الإختناق فنكسر الجرس، لو كنا محظوظين نلقى من نحبه فيساعدنا فتنسل السيور في سلاله لا نلاحظها"²⁶ (114).

Kimi's narcissism, however, is not manifested in the form of self-love, but rather in the form of self-hate. This is due to the lurking demands within Kimi for the impossible absolute standards and perfections. "The narcissistic hunger may manifest itself in pervasive feelings of emptiness, depression, or dehumanization. The self is depleted because of the unrealistic demands imposed by an archaic grandiose self, hungering for perfection and omnipotence" (Berman, 11). Kimi announces that all her goal in life is to attain excellence. She yearns to own the whole world, and says that if she cannot get hold of the whole world, she wants nothing.

"كنت أتوق لشيء ليس له كنه، و لا أدري كيف أعرفه. العالم بأسره ربّما. إما العالم بأسره و إما لا. كيف يتوق انسان الى أن يكون الوجود ذاته؟ يتوق الناس الى كثير من المستحيلات. نعم ولهذا كنت أدرب نفسي. و هذا هو ما أعاقني كل ذلك الوقت ... التدريب من أجل الإمتياز"²⁷ (108).

²⁵ Why are you leading a life delighted with imagination? (My translation) The reason I use my translation here is because in Booth's text, the sentence is mistakenly translated as "Why are you letting your fancies destroy an agreeable life" (Booth, 84)?

²⁶ "All of us craft for ourselves those bells that protect us, and we huddle beneath them for a spell until we begin to suffocate- and then we shatter the bell. If we are lucky, we'll meet someone we can love, someone who will help us, and so the bonds are unraveled gently, and we do not notice" (Booth, 108).

²⁷ "I was yearning for something that has no core, no essence, and I haven't known how to recognize it. The whole world that might be. Either the whole world or nothing. How can a person long for existence itself? People long for many things that are impossible. Yes and that is what I was training myself for ... Training for the sake of excelling" (Booth, 102).

Kimi's desire to meet this unattainable perfection leaves her frequently disappointed. Thus whatever good deeds she does or good qualities she acquires, she always feels inferior with respect to the perfect standards she strives to accomplish. She looks at herself as ugly, ignorant, useless, loathsome, cowardly ...etc.

"كل الأحكام التي تحكمها الذات على نفسها و تقتص: موتي يا أنا، كاذبة أنت، منافقة، متعاطمة، مغرورة، خائنة، مهمله، غيبه، قبيحه، ساذجه، شريره، مستهتره، لا تحسنين عملا، نرجسية، لا تحركك آلام الآخرين، لا تمدي يد العون، سفيهه، هازئه، لا رجي منك و لا غفران. وحدك السبب في كل شرور العالم و بلاويه، وحدك مسؤولة، وأيضاً تخافين، جبانة لا تقوين²⁸. (106)"

The isolation that wraps up Kimi is the outcome of the critical harm caused by the parents' maltreatment which starts in earliest stages through her relation with the mother. According to the mirror phase theory of normal childhood development, Kimi is supposed to see herself in the mirror of the mother's body in order to build her autonomous identity. However, the mother's insensitivity and "usual transformations" deny Kimi of the gestalt figure she is supposed to encounter in the mirror phase to allow her to break up the imaginary sense of fragmentation. The father's absence, in turn, plays a crucial role in Kimi's inability to effect dissociation from the mother. His absence aborts the structural role he is supposed to play whereby he helps his child to internalize the social rules and laws he epitomizes as the big Father.

²⁸ "All the judgments that the self passes on itself and punishes: my death, mine, *ya ana*, liar you are, hypocrite! Arrogant, conceited, treacherous, neglectful, stupid, ugly, naïve, evil, reckless! You aren't good at anything, you're a Narcissus, you're not moved by other's wounds. You never extend a helping hand. Insolent, scornful- there's no hope to be had from you, and no forgiveness for you! You- only you- are the cause of all the evil in the world, all of its disasters, you alone are responsible, and you're afraid, as well- a coward with no strength at all" (Booth, 100).

Since Kimi does not break the mother/child symbiosis, she remains with fragmented and disintegrated identity as a result of the non-identification with the *gestalt* image that marks the recognition of the self as an “I” and the non-self as an “other.” Thus she remains incapable of realizing the distinguishing lines drawn between the world of the self and the world of the other.

The previously mentioned fight description depicts the active reinforcement of detaching mother/child dyad. Kimi struggles to break this union; she wants to identify each one’s identity, eventually identify her social *I*: Which is the mother? And which is she? One of them must die for identification to take place, for her to break out of the cocoon of narcissism. She orders: “Die Āmna”... “Die Ana (me)...” Alas, nothing happens. Kimi admits that the bell “protected her from metamorphosis and blocked the natural law of maturity.” Kimi’s statement touches directly on her failure during the mirror stage to evolve into a mature person with an individual *I*.

"جرساً عظيماً يحميني من التحول، و يعوق قانون النضج الطبيعي²⁹. (92)"

Kimi’s fragmented identity is revealed in several aspects as well, as in the way she refers to herself as another, recalling the Lacanian phenomenon of “transitivism.” Failing to accomplish the distinguishing lines between “*Innenwelt* and the *Umwelt*,” (Lacan 1977, 4) Kimi refers to herself mixing between the third and the first personal pronouns. She is incapable of referring to the self and other as separate beings. Kimi begins describing an

²⁹ “ A massive bell that protects me from change and blocks the natural law of growth to maturity” (Booth, 89).

incident or a feeling using the first personal pronoun (I) and shifts immediately to describe the same incident or feeling using the third personal pronoun (she). The statement below is representative of this trend in the novel's structure:

"رفعتُ يدي أتحمّس شعري. لا أشعر بأدنى ألم. كأن رأسي قد ذهب لينام. الإنكار هو الحلّ الوحيد لإنقاذ الكبرياء. كان ردّ فعل تلقائيًا و لم يكن طبيعيًا أنا تبكي صغيرة بالكاد عمرها عشر سنوات في مثل ذلك المشهد. الفتاة ليست متأكّدة من ذنبها. و التهمة من الصّعب درنها، فهي بالفعل لا تفهم الحساب³⁰. (13)"

The self and other amalgamation in Kimi's personality is also clearly manifested by several other instances. Kimi describes her fractured and all enveloping personality:

"ليست لي حدود تفصل بين ألمي و ألم الآخرين. أنا آمنة و أنا حكاياتها³¹" (23).

"أنا هم و لست هم، أنا نحن و أنا، أنا فقط³²" (47).

When Kimi's teacher asks her to repeat after him saying "I," she says "you:"

"قولي أنا و كرري!" "أنت³³" (39).

Such perplexity is, furthermore, expressed by way of the names Kimi confuses while referring to herself, to her mother and to *Āmna*. In the Arabic language she calls her

³⁰ "I raised my hand to touch my hair. I didn't feel the slightest pain. My head had simply withdrawn, absented itself, gone to sleep. Denial is the only way to rescue pride. For a little person of hardly ten years to keep herself from crying, in such a scenario, is a spontaneous reaction, though perhaps not seemingly a natural one. The girl is not certain of the nature of her sin. And the accusation is difficult to parry, for she truly does not understand how to reckon these sums" (Booth, 9).

³¹ "And I have no edges, no borders, to separate my aches from the pains of others. I am *Amna*, and I am her tale" (Booth 19-9).

³² "I am them, and I'm not them. I am that 'we' and I'm also 'I' - just 'I'" (Booth, 45).

³³ " - Say I and repeat it! Say *ana*. - You" (Booth, 36).

mom “أمي,” herself “أنا,” and her nanny “أمينة.” If we are to break apart the constituting letters of the word *Āmna* (أ م ن ا) we find that the word is constituted of the mother’s and Kimi’s names: (أنا) + (أم) = (أمينة).

The imaginary isolation that results in Kimi’s loss of attachment to the outside world, builds for her an illusory and fugitive sense of satisfaction. This satisfaction, however, remains vulnerable to reality’s intervention, at any moment. The bell is made of glass too, connoting the psyche’s susceptible borders that separate Kimi’s inner imaginary realm and outer “realistic” one. In other words, the world that Kimi invents to hide within is an unprotected world, just like the reality that she withdraws from. This imaginary perception of the inner world can be shaken once reality pops up mirroring the insecurity of illusory imagination, a fact that takes place when Kimi faces Dali’s painting.

As Kimi encounters “The Metamorphosis of Narcissus,” hanging on the wall of her room in Ireland, she experiences a tremendous fear, and her heart beats fast as though she has discovered a frightening fact. The painting in which Dali illustrates the pathological notion of narcissism mirrors for Kimi her narcissistic pathology that she struggles not to acknowledge.

Kimi’s fear recalls the Lacanian description of the frustration the child experiences while seeing his/her reflection in the mirror, fear of “sliding back again into the chaos from which he started” (Lacan 1977, 6). As the image shows Kimi a gestalt figure, which has properly evolved into socialization, she is encountered with the fact that she has not evolved according to this law of transformation. This reflection triggers in Kimi the lurking

fear of fragmentation, of disintegrated and narcissistic identity which she refuses to encounter, and yet, which she cannot deny anymore. Kimi says that it was up till the moment of encounter with the painting that the glasses of the bell broke and were not able to protect her anymore or allow her to experience jubilation.

"و حتى تلك اللحظة لم تكن قد لاحظت الزهرة: زهرة النرجس. هوى قلبها و كأنها قد اكتشفت شئاً مزعجاً يمشي على الحائط. وكانت تلك اللحظة التي بدأت فيها السيور البلورية الدقيقة التي صنعت الجرس الزجاجي الكبير تنسل. حتى تلك اللحظة كان الجرس يحميها وتقدر على الضحك من حين الى آخر³⁴. (38)"

The painting of Dalí plays the role of a mirror which reflects for her the proper law of transformation that takes place during the mirror stage, as has been developed in the second chapter. It reflects, therefore, that she has not been growing or living according to the “natural law of transformation” as she admits. A huge fear arises in Kimi as she encounters her imperfection and lack of wholeness which she contrasts to the perfection in Dali’s painting, where Narcissus in part two of the painting mutes the savage and narcissistic desires, allowing the birth of an identity capable of being socialized, as in succumbing to the taboos of incest.

The anxiety that Dali’s painting arouses is furthermore accompanied by the feeling of double castration or “penis envy” that Kimi experiences. When Kimi sees the perfection of Dali’s painting, she encounters the phallus that she, like any other female child, lacks and which the father possesses. The painting not only reminds Kimi of the failure to resolve

³⁴ “Until that moment she had not noticed the bloom itself: the narcissus flower. Her heart sank as if she has just discovered an annoying creature crawling on the wall. That was just the moment in which the beady streams of crystal flaws that made up the huge glass bell began to spread and creep. Until that moment the bell had been protecting her: she had been capable of laughing now and then” (Booth, 35).

the mirror-stage, but may also bring to her the further, and in this case the inevitable, failure to achieve the completion that only those in possession of the phallus may aspire to.

Immediately after seeing the narcissus flower, Kimi moves to deny accusations labeling her as a “selfish person” or a narcissist. A voice in Kimi’s brain asks her to mention the word “I,” but she becomes horrified negating that she is selfish: “God forbids the I word” and “No one can charge me of being selfish:”

“أعوذ بالله ... ما أنا بـ ... لا يستطيع أحد اتهامي بالأنانية. انا أبذل نفسي أنا لا أتوانى... أفعل كل ما بوسعي في سبيل الآخرين³⁵” (39).

Negating the fact that she is narcissistic affirms that she is, according to the Freudian analysis of the unconscious meaning of negation. When a patient, for instance, denies that the person she has seen in the dream is her mother, Freud understands that the person *is* the mother. The psychoanalyst “take[s] the liberty of disregarding the negation in the interpretation (*Deutung*) and extract[s] (*herausgreifen*) the pure content of the idea” (Freud 1925, 223)

In another chapter entitled “The Narcissus Exemplar,” Kimi again speaks of reflections in glass. While contemplating the beach through a glass door, she suddenly becomes frightened, and she goes on denying the accusations that she considers herself beautiful. Again, Kimi experiences a tremendous fear upon encountering her reflection in a

³⁵ “I seek refuge in God from egotism ... No one can accuse me of egotism. I go to great lengths for others. Moreover I don’t complain. I do everything that’s in my power for the sake of others, and you know it” (Booth, 36).

mirror and directly denies, just like she does as she sees Dalí's painting, the fact that she is narcissistic:

" الى أن كان يوم نظرت كيمي من وراء الزجاج و بان الهلع في عينيها... عيناى تخدعاني... لا يمكن. هي تهزأ منى.
تعتقد أنى أتصور نفسي جميلة³⁶" (53).

Kimi refuses to face her narcissistic ego, her ill identity. She wants to stay under the bell that hides her from the hostility of the external world. She remains within the imaginary perception of the world, which she was unable to leave during the childhood mirror phase, and in which she leads a world of her own, detached from the other.

The mother and self fusion wards off, as well, Kimi's progression or transference into the Symbolic order. Since Kimi's mirror-stage transference is not healthily accomplished, the symbolic order transference does not occur properly in its turn, and Kimi remains residing in the imaginary universe. The symbolic universe for Kimi is perforated as Lacan says: "This hole in the symbolic order results in the psychotic being imprisoned in the imaginary" (Cited in Evans, 155). As a result, Kimi does not ascend into the world of language and achieve proper understanding and usage of linguistic symbolism. Her language falls back into the realm of the Real. Lacan explains that for meaningfulness to take place, words must not be taken as they are "concretely pronounced" in the discourse, but as a "unity of signification" (Lacan 1977, 129). This "makes it incumbent on us to define this process [of psychosis] by the most radical determinants of the relation of man to

³⁶ "But then there came a day in which Kimi's gaze out of the [glass] was shot with panic ... My eyes are playing tricks on me ... She's mocking me. She believes I fancy myself pretty" (Booth, 49-50).

Note: I use "glass" here instead of "window" as translated by Booth since the Arabic word *Zujāj* means both window and glass, and for reflecting the suitable meaning for the text, glass is a better translation.

the signifier (Lacan 1977, 184).” Thus, for psychopathological individuals, such as Kimi, signification does not take place due to the improper encounter with the Order of the Symbolic, and thus language becomes “concretely” absorbed.

Kimi perceives words as sounds, without being capable of understanding their signification. She stresses amply throughout the novel the way she perceives people’s words as “timbres” “النبرة”. She says:

"التقط كل نبرة، كل الموسيقى في النبرة و أمامي يتحولون من نبرة الى نبرة"³⁷ (9).

Kimi herself discloses the manner in which she used to grasp the tiniest timbre and the “music” of it. She does not filter the words addressed to her. She takes in passively, without executing transference, without understanding the symbolization of language. She takes in and in, to the extent that people around her are transferred into timbres.

If language for Kimi is apprehended in its real concrete order, how does she react to the utterances she hears? How does she interact with stories, for instance, with proverbs and other highly symbolic structures of language? Definitely in such cases, the psyche enters into an endless realm of anarchy and bafflement. In Kimi’s case, she perceives the stories she reads or listens to from Āmna, in an absolutely real manner. She mixes the events of her life with the events of the fictional characters in the stories:

³⁷ “I note the tiniest shift in timbre. Before my very ears, they transform themselves from one tone into another” (Booth, 4).

"سوف تكون نهاينك مثلها (مثل سيلفيا بلاث الكاتبة الإنكليزية). سوف تدخلين برأسك الى الفرن وتفتحين الغاز و توموتين مبيّة مفاجئة"³⁸ (38).

"أنا أمنة و أنا حكاياتها و انا البننت في حكاية الملك الأطلسي"³⁹ (23).

"استلقي على ظهري بالساعات أبلق في السقف و أستعيد بطء الموت الذي ماته مالون على يد سامويل بيكيت"⁴⁰ (74).

The intermingling between the self and other in stories is clearly revealed when Kimi recounts the story of Little Red Riding Hood changing the red dress into a black one, where the girl wearing the black dress turns out to be Kimi. She gives two reasons for changing the color. The first is that Kimi hates red, and the second is her grandma's death requires wearing black for mourning.

"أعيد صناعة الصغيرة ذات الرداء الأحمر، وألبستها ملابس سوداء لأني ام أحب اللون الأحمر، و لأن جدتي كانت قد ماتت"⁴¹ (110-109).

In this same paragraph Kimi replaces her mother's character with Little Red Riding Hood's mother, adding the cruel manner in which she is treated by her actual mother. Kimi's/Little Red Riding Hood's mother in the story is very mean for she always lets down the girl's expectations. When the mother sends her to accomplish a "special" mission at her Grandma's, the girl delightfully accepts without questioning the kind of mission she is sent

³⁸ "Your end will be like hers [Sylvia Plath's suicide]. You'll stick your head inside the oven, turn on the gas, and die a horrid death" (Booth, 35).

³⁹ "I am Amna, and I am her tale, and I am the girl in the legend of the King of the Atlas Mountains" (Booth, 19).

⁴⁰ "I lie on my back for hours at a time, staring at the ceiling and calling to mind the slowness of Malone's death at the hands of Samuel Beckett" (Booth, 71).

⁴¹ "So I spent the night remaking the little girl in the red hood. I dressed her in black clothes because I do not like red, and because my grandmother had died" (Booth, 103).

on. The girl thinks that she is privileged to be sent on such a “special” mission, but the mother frustrates the girl’s expectations telling her “إن كنت اوكلك بها، فليس لأنك تتميزين. فهمت⁴²” (110) The mother’s response shatters the child’s eagerness, reminding her that she must always be submissive and never active:

”أحبط ذلك ذات الرداء الأسود فقد كانت بالفعل تظن أنّ ذهابها الى بيت الجدّة في مهمّة قالت أمها أنّها خاصّة يعني أنّها هي أيضاً خاصّة و أنّ ذلك بالفعل يميّزها. و امتثلت للردع وسكتت تستمع الى بقية الكلام” (110-111).

In a similar vein, Kimi embraces all other fictional stories, whereby all the fears displayed in stories become experienced in her life. The King of Atlantis who in the story comes out of the sink makes Kimi afraid of entering the bathroom in order not to face the same fate:

”لكنّ طلوع الملك الأطلسي من البالوعة، جعل من البالوعات و الحمامات أماكن تسكنها الأشباح و الشياطين⁴⁴” (25).

”و في الليل، تخاف أن تضطر الذهاب الى الحمام فتري الملك الأطلسي و هو يطلع من البالوعة⁴⁵” (36).

She also fears looking in people’s faces in order not to transform them into stones when her sight falls on them, like Medusa⁴⁶.

⁴² “If I charge you with it, it is not because you stand out from others in any way. Understand” (Booth, 104)?

⁴³ “That confused Little Black Riding hood, because she had really believed that to go to her grandmother’s cottage on a mission that her mother said was special meant that she, too, was special, and that this indeed distinguished her. She yielded to this obstacle, chastened, and was quiet, ad listened to the rest of her mother’s words” (Booth, 104).

⁴⁴ “But the King’s attempted ascent through the pipe transformed every drain and pipe and bathtub and bathroom into a spot where specters and devils were bound to live, and made Amna’s counsel on bathrooms sound and extreme, the very essence of common sense” (Booth, 21).

⁴⁵ “And then at night she dreads possibly having to go to the bathroom where she might see the king of the Atlas Mountains as he comes up from the pipe” (Booth, 34).

⁴⁶ Medusa was one of the three Gorgons in Greek Mythology; an ugly and scary woman with hair of snakes, who turned into stone whoever looked her in the eye.

"كان عليّ في مثل تلك الأحوال عندما يكذبون ألا أنظر في عيونهم و إلا تحوّلوا الى حجر"⁴⁷ (101-100).

Kimi's transparency makes her vulnerable to society's potent symbolism where she finds highly symbolic words as lies. When Āmna for example tells her that the perfume she wore in the morning evaporated since it's been on for a long time, Kimi wonders "How can perfume fly?" This is an impossible matter for her, for only birds can fly. Thus, a metaphorical expression like "the odor flew away" is for Kimi impossible, and thus a lie:

- "مش حاطة كولونيا ليه؟"

-حطيت الصبح لازم طارت.

-طارت فين يا أمنة هي الكولونيا بتطير"⁴⁸ (100)؟

Thus Kimi wants to hear everything straight. She gets mad when Āmna insults her on one hand and calls her "lady" on another hand. She thinks there is something "not straight" about such a matter, marveling as well at the idea of being called "lady" while in fact she is only a child:

"يا ليتها لا تقول 'يا ست' . شيء ما لا يستقيم مع هذا الذي تقول الآن وتقطيبتها عندما فتحت لي الباب وأنا عائدة من المدرسة. كيف يتسنى لها أن تتحوّل هكذا... أن تناديني أنا الطفلة 'يا ست'⁴⁹" (20)؟

Kimi's incapability to achieve proper mirror transference into the Order of the Symbolic generates a huge conflict between the id and the superego. Kimi dwells in an

⁴⁷ "Whenever they lied I had to avoid looking them straight in the eye or else they would turn into stone" (Booth, 95).

⁴⁸ "- You didn't use any cologne today, why?"

- I did this morning, it must have flown away.

- Flown away? Flew where Amna? Since when does cologne fly" (Booth, 95)?

⁴⁹ "I wish she had not called me Madame. Why did she choose *Ya Sitt*? And anyway, something about that title doesn't sit comfortably with her words, or with the scowl in her face or the anger in her voice as she opened the door to me then, returning from my day at school. How can it be that Amna is entitled to change so mercurially ... addressing me, a little girl, as *Sitt*" (Booth, 15)?

endless oscillation between the libidinous needs and the moral laws and standards. The non-severance of the mother/child dyad keeps her on one hand dwelling in the savage state of desire, without acquiring transference into “human desire.” On the other hand, the social rules are grasped concretely by Kimi due to her failure to attain the symbolic order, thus falling into the *Real* or concrete meaning of language. When she is, for example, told that lying makes her fall in hell, she comes to feel the burning of the fire flames:

A perfect representation of Kimi’s psychical conflict between desires and the moral principles is found when she describes the childhood incident when she committed a sinful act of drawing on a page she was not allowed to touch. Kimi waited till everyone was asleep and sneaked to the closet, brought the drawing book, and went describing the temptations she felt to commit such a trivial matter, but that which for her is labeled taboo or a “sin” because she is told not to do it. Kimi details the temptation she feels at the moment as being stronger and more intense than the forthcoming reckoning. All orders become shattered in front of the charm of the blank white page and the appealing glows of the copybook pins. She cannot resist even though she knows that if caught, she will be judged as the “animal” Lamyra, a friend of hers known for being filthy, vulgar and disordered, the opposite of Kimi:

"الدقة و النظام و النظافة، الصرامة مع النفس، كلها تبعثرت أمام سحر الورقة البيضاء الكبيرة المستطيلة. فتحت الكراسة من المنتصف و رأيت الدبابيس التي تعوق اكتمال الصفحة وتقسّمها اثنتين عن يمين وعن يسار، و في النصف الدبابيس تلمع، و قلبي يدق بسرعة أعنف. هأنأ على وشك ارتكاب المعصية. لكنّ الإغواء أكبر. و أزهى وأحد

من العاقبة. وخطر الإكتشاف المقيم في المطبخ، في الأنتريه، في الصالون: أيا من كان من الممكن أن يدخل هكذا دون أدنى تحذير. و تكتشفين وتصبحين لمياء الحيوانة في نظرهم إلا أن القلم رغما عني راح يرسم⁵⁰ (21).

Religious creeds, along with all the fear they implant in children on the horrifying reckonings in hell, entail the neurotic cocoon inside which Kimi withers. Whenever she does any unaccepted behavior, reiterates the frequently heard moral admonitions:

"يوم الحساب يمشي الناس على شعرة، فمن كان طيباً وقع في الجنة، ومن كان شريراً وقع في النار. و أصبح كل شغلي ألا أقع. و كان الحساب كل يوم⁵¹ (15).

"أيام كنت أتدرب على عدم الحياد عن الصراط المستقيم، على بلاط الرصيف و أنا عائدة من المدرسة و قلبي يدق. و الحياة تحدث بقوة و لها وقع و نبض. احيانا ينتابني سأم عظيم فأكف، و لا أبارح سريري أيام بطولها⁵² (74).

At later stages in Kimi's life, precisely after her trip to study in Ireland and after her readings in poetry, literature, philosophy and psychoanalysis, she comes to conclude that poetry is a better way of praying than the Quran is. The past magic of Quran prayers, Kimi describes, has become impotent. As this thought comes to Kimi's mind, noises in her head

⁵⁰ "Precision, orderliness, tidiness, and cleanliness, and a sternly disciplined attitude toward oneself: All I had learned was strewn wide now by the magic of pure white paper. I opened the notebook at its precise middle and saw the staples that denied each leaf heartless staples agleam in the middle. My heartbeat, already rapid, thudded even faster. Here I was, on the verge of committing an act of rebellion. Grievous act though it be, the lure of it was stronger, keener, and more vivid than the likely consequences. A solid danger of discovery loomed in the kitchen, in the foyer, in the sitting room: whoever it was could barge in at any moment without the slightest warning. Once discovered, you would be transformed immediately into a feral untamable Lamyaa' in their eyes. In spite of my musings, as if not subject to my will, the pen began to move, leaving lined in its wake" (Booth16-7).

⁵¹ "On the Day of Reckoning, people must walk along a single hair's breadth without losing their balance, and in the end, those who have been good fall in Paradise while the ones who have been evil topple into the fire. I was determined neither to fall one way not to topple the other. And every day became a Day of Reckoning" (Booth, 10).

⁵² "In those long-ago days I trained myself into marching the straight path without swerving. I practiced the straight and narrow path on the pavement as I returned from school, heart pounding, life happening then, with such force, with an audible impact- life with a pulse. Now an overpowering weary disgust with life often pursues me and I come to a halt. For entire days, I don't leave my bed" (Booth, 71).

arise, and they grow louder and louder till she cannot bear them anymore. The voices in Kimi's head are those of the Quran prayers said on the streets of her country which call for obeying God and following the "straight path." Kimi becomes frightened by the calls, fearing not abiding by the "straight path." she starts reciting Quran verses which beg for forgiveness for committing the sin of discrediting the ancient ways of praying. Kimi cannot continue with the thought of a poetic or secular way of praying, and immediately retreats to her childhood fixated dictums:

" لا فارق اليوم في الصلاة بالشعر أو الصلاة بالقرآن... حتى هذه الصلاة التي كانت تدعو الروح الى الجسد المشوش، وتهدىء من حس الفجيرة، تطمئن وتعيد العالم الى رشده بطل سحرها وصارت وسط الصراخ في الشارع والزعيق في الميكروفونات... و في لحظة تخيلت: ربما في الصلاة القديمة قدرة بعث الصلاة في الروح... الصلاة القديمة تحت وطأة الضجيج تبطل الضجيج. فرحت أقرأ القرآن لاهثة و الخطر المعهود يحدق باللحظات، تلسعه سيات الميكروفونات المتوعة بمزيد من الضجيج، فيتسارع قلبي: ربنا لا توأخذنا إن نسينا أخطائنا... ربنا و اعفو عنا... خطأ خطأ... وأعيد الكرة (الآية) ويعلو صوت حارس التكرار: أخطأت. بدلت كلام الله. هذا جرم عقابه لا ليس فيه ولا ريب⁵³ (74-6-7).

A child internalizes his/her parents' commands which form a potent superego. In the case of the obsessional neurotic, the intense superego "develop[s] a sense of guilt of the

⁵³ "There is no difference today between praying through poetry or praying by the Qur'an ... Even this prayer, inviting the spirit to suffuse this deranged body to assuage the sense of doom, to reassure, to return the world to its senses... even the magic of this prayer has been thwarted... There was a moment when I could imagine otherwise: it might be that the ancient prayer harbors a true power, a capacity to propel the magic of prayer into the soul. For iron can be filed down only by iron. The ancient prayer faced with the alternative path. , comforting, numbing repetition in response to that onerous tumult- blocks the noise. So impatiently longing, I began to recite the Qur'an, as the accustomed peril surrounded and enclosed the moments, stung by the lashing of microphones threatening still more noise. My heart beat faster: Lord, condemn us not if we forget or miss the mark, lord lay not on us such a burden as thou didst lay on those who came before us, lord impose not on us that which we have not the strength to bear, pardon us, absolve us, and have mercy on us. Thou, our protector, and give us victory... over ourselves, if we have been unjust to others. Error. Error, I repeat the *Sura*, twice over, panting: Give us victory over ourselves, if we have been unjust to others. And the voice of the guardian of Repetition mounts: You have erred" (Booth, 73-4).

utmost intense degree” (Freud, Totem and Taboo, 80). Such excessive sense of guilt is what stops Kimi from enjoying a balanced life. It, actually, paralyzes her.

Kimi refers to the feeling of guilt as “the reckoning lesson” "درس الحساب," where she blames herself for incidents that she in fact is totally not responsible for, as when she feels guilty for Āmna’s illiteracy:

"درس الحساب يوصمني: هي تبكي لأنك لم تعلميها و يتفرّع الشرخ، يتفرع، يدمي، و يطالب بالثأر"⁵⁴ (29).
"خفق قلبي متوجعاً و عاودني الوخر. أنا السبب. أنا تنكرت لأمنة و لم أعلمها القراءة و الكتابة. هربت من بيت أبي،
لأستمع بحياتي وحدي"⁵⁵ (40).

The paralyzing sense of guilt engulfing Kimi’s life suppresses her speech and her desire to express matters openly in the manner she perceives them. Whenever Kimi has the urge to respond to things daringly, the superego looms to remind her that she is forbidden to speak, to raise her voice in front of elders, or even express herself at all. Thus, Kimi’s daring responses in the novel are only inwardly vocalized; i.e., to the self, and not to the other. In the following statement, Kimi wishes to respond to Āmna’s unbearable orders, but as soon as the words come to the tip of her tongue, the feeling of guilt arises, reminding her to maintain silence:

"ما فيش وراكي غير الهم يا أمنة ما ان تصعد الكلمات الى حافة لسانها حتى يعاودها الشعور الخفي بالذنب"⁵⁶ (19).

⁵⁴ “My lesson in reckoning sums has branded me, disgraced me... She weeps because you did not teach her, the fissure splits into branches, more branches, bleeding, demanding revenge” (Booth, 26).

⁵⁵ “My heart began to thump, and that prickling, tingling sensation returned. I am the cause of it all. I shut out Amna, and I did not teach her to read and write. I fled from my father’s house so I could enjoy my life on my own” (Booth, 37).

⁵⁶ “Don’t you have anything but botheration, Amna? No sooner are the words on the edge of her tongue than the half hidden feelings of guilt surge back into her consciousness” (Booth, 14).

The same thing happens when she wants to defend herself against her mother's words; her tongue "revolts against the air's will to let out the intended letters," and all that comes out is a long strangled and stifled "Ah!" Even her cry of pain comes out throttled:

"فأصرخ فيها، لكن لساني يتمرد على صياغة الهواء حروفاً، فلا تنطلق من جوفي سوى آهة طويلة حانقة مغلوقة، وتبكي أمي⁵⁷" (72).

Writing remains the only route left for Kimi through which she can give voice to her repressed speech and through which she can let out the unpleasant sufferings she undergoes, without the fear of a direct confrontation with others so as not to awaken the torturing sense of guilt. Kimi desires to reenact in the artistic process of writing the maltreatments she is exposed to in order to overcome and master the pain filling her. The Freudian "repetition-compulsion" comes into play in the case of the psychopathic artists who employ their creative production for the sake of mastering their illness.

The creative urge for writing that Kimi feels must satisfy her wish to inscribe the pain inflicted upon her. She writes and writes without anyone reading her writings: "كانت Kimi knows that if she writes down the people on paper, they will die along with the harm they burden her with, and if she does not write them, she will die due to the non-release of the pain:

"لو كتبتهم يموتون، و لو لم أكتبهم، يحكم علي أنا بالموت⁵⁹" (31).

⁵⁷ "I want to shout at her, but my tongue rebels against shaping the air into letters, and all that comes out is a long, resentful wail, and [my mother] cries" (Booth, 69).

⁵⁸ "She was writing. No one read what she wrote" (Booth, 30):

⁵⁹ "If I were to write them they would die, and if I were not to write them I would be condemned to death" (Booth, 28).

Obviously, that Lacanian notion of the symbolic as the “principle of sacrifice” (Lacan 1966, 319) discusses in chapter one comes to play through the above statement of Kimi’s. Saying the thing kills it, but Kimi is afraid of killing, and therefore hesitates to write because she knows that if she writes them, she will be a murderer, and the sense of guilt will kill her again. Kimi is here fluctuating between killing the self or killing the rules and laws that choke her, connoting Lacanian idea of “rather than tell the father that he is dead, I would die” (Lacan 1966, 300).

However, Kimi’s fear and sense of guilt are stronger than her desire to take refuge in writing. As she writes down a word, she feels that she has done an “atrocious” act, an act of a “murderer,” so she immediately retreats in fear of murdering the people who caused her pain, namely her family:

"في اللحظة التي وضعت فيها اسمي في الخانة في أسفل الصفحة، شعرت أنني قمت بعمل لا يدرك فداحته إلا من قتل من قتلت؟⁶⁰" (31).

"وسكنت. وظهرت الفكرة جلية لا لبس فيها لها جاذبية ألف ثقب من ثقوب السماء السوداء: لو كتبتهم يموتون و لو لم أكتبهم يحكم عليّ أنا بالموت. قرار الحكماء لا رجعة عنه. من يتلف هدايا الحكماء يكون مصيره الموت. ولأن الحكماء لا يقتلون، عليك أن تنفذي الحكم بنفسك على نفسك⁶¹" (31).

⁶⁰ "At the very instant I signed my name in the space at the bottom of the page the feeling came over me that I had done something so obsessive that only a murderer would understand it. Who was I killing" (Booth, 28).

⁶¹ "[And I remain silent], and the notion materialized plainly, unambiguously, exerting the gravitational pull of a thousand black holes: If I were to write them they would die, and if I were not to write them I would be condemned to death. And there is no rescinding the ancient rules of the wise. A person who spoils the gifts of the wise surely walks the path to an irrevocable sentence of death. And since the wise do not themselves perform murder, you are the one who has to execute the ruling- you yourself, on yourself" (Booth, 28).

Unfortunately, Kimi fails to triumph over her illness through the world of art, and her narcissistic needs remain unsatisfied. Even if Kimi proceeds in the act of writing, the tormenting sense of guilt continually interrupts to blame her for being a murderer. Whenever she writes, she shreds the papers thinking she had killed them. "كتبتهم ثم مزقتهم"⁶² (30) In the end, she retreats and remains "silent," sentencing, as she says, herself unto death.

Within such confusion, Kimi keeps rising and falling between the desire to kill and the guilt of committing murder. Yet, her fear of murdering all the people she loves as she writes them, drives her to murder herself in the end, giving up writing to the sense of guilt haunting her. This is perfectly stated by Kimi when she describes how she ends her life through resorting to the act of writing, which she describes as *cowardly plea*:

" نعم قتلت الناس جميعاً. من يتلف هدايا الحكماء كمن قتل الناس جميعاً، وعليه أن يرضخ للعقاب. أخرست أمانة... وقبل هذه وتلك، قطعت كيمي أربعة عشر قتعة، و رميتها في سلة المهملات. كان جدير بي أن أرق، ولكن كان أجدر من طلب العون الجبان (الكتابة) أن أنهى حياتي. ربما أنهيت حياتي بطلب العون"⁶³ (48).

Sumaya Ramadan provides through her novel's main character, Kimi, a perfect critical presentation of the pathological status of a narcissist who fails to metamorphose the mirror stage properly, who withdraws her interest from the hostility of the external world internally into the comforting, yet susceptible, world of the self. Through Ramadan's Kimi,

⁶² "I wrote them and I tore them into shreds" (Booth, 27).

⁶³ "Yes, I killed people, many of them, all of them. A person who ruins the gifts of the wise is kike unto a man who has killed all people- and that person must submit to punishment. I silenced Amna [...] after I had given her a voice. I stifled and strangled her ... and before that I cut Kimi into fourteen equivalent parts and threw her limbs into the waste bin. No wonder I was exhausted- it was a fitting response to be exhausted. But rather than making a cowardly plea for help, it would have been more becoming to end my life. It might be that I ended my life by asking for help" (Booth, 45).

we see how narcissism can be manifested in the form of extreme self-hate due to a latent desire for an unobtainable perfection, and how the death instinct operates in a truly destructive manner due to the incapability of a narcissist, dominated by the sense of guilt, to commit the killing act through putting his agony in dead words.

Chapter Five

Conclusion

Whether intentional or spontaneous, the author of *Awrāk Al Narjis*, Sumaya Ramadan seems to favor the utilization of a painting over any other form of artistic expression for conveying the psychopathological notion of narcissism. While it is true that Lacan and structuralism emphasize the significance of language in structuring human subjectivity, Lacan's mirror-stage theory posits, nonetheless, that the basic originator of subjectivity is the *imago* rather than the word. As we have seen, image plays the primary role in the development of an identity and in the outset of narcissism, for it is only when the child gazes at his/her reflection in the mirror image that his/her integrated identity sets off. Ramadan appears to agree with Lacan on considering the image to have the most crucial power for grounding subjectivity and giving birth to a unified ego. He says that it is only through the specular imago that the *I* transforms into a "social *I*" (Lacan 1966, 5). And this is precisely what happens in *Awrāk Al Narjis*. When the narrator/protagonist, Kimi, looks at Dalí's painting, "The Metamorphosis of Narcissus," hung on the wall of her room, she, for the first time, encounters her narcissistic personality which she has always refused to acknowledge. The author chooses one image in particular to suitably mirror the core identity of the novel's narrator/protagonist—an identification established visually, as per the Lacanian psycho-philosophical interpretation.

Thus Dali's painting, as an intertext, or, better said perhaps, as an 'interpainting'⁶⁴, plays a radical role in the comparative analysis employed in this study, for it meets Ramadan's novel's quiddity both thematically and structurally. Thematically speaking, the painting revolves around the psychological notion of narcissism which is as well the main concept of Ramadan's novel. The two works of art address the theme of narcissism and the psychological outcomes resulting from it. Structurally speaking, the concept of narcissism and its association with the mirror stage is an image-related concept. Thus, the best way to formulate the concept would be through an image, rather than through written reflection.

This research begets fundamental literary and critical questions that emerge from within the depths of one written and one pictorial works of art, each of which belongs to completely different cultures and traditions. We are driven to question the extent to which an image form is able to penetrate the written text. In other words, what are the potentials that an image possesses which enable it to measure up to the literary written text? Can an image form, for instance, interfere to deconstruct or to build up a written text? The novel tackles such questions where Dali's painting is shown to be instrumental in revealing the narrator/protagonist's plight and personality type.

This analysis of the image within literary expression reveals an important factor for future works in comparative study. Unlike analogies between novels or other works of literature, image analogy delves into the before-symbolic level. From a psychoanalytic viewpoint, such comparison is privileged over comparisons dealing with expression at the

⁶⁴ A term that the work at hand impels me to propose to add to the language.

symbolic level since it is capable of tackling problems at the level of the imaginary, a level that language can express only indirectly. The Order of the Symbolic is, as Lacan says, a lack. Our speech is full of silences. The real is the thing that we do not say in our speech, yet that which the image does not lack.

Perhaps, it is for that reason one finds in Ramadan's novel an image by Dalí, which complements the novel by expressing what the text could not avow being subject to the Symbolic Order; to language. For this reason, investigating a parallelism between a picture and a work of literature may pry open new vistas and yield insights and discrepancies that transcend what may be achieved by comparing works of literary, or linguistic expressions.

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The Metamorphosis of Narcissus, 1936-7. Oil on Canvas. 20 X 30 13/16 inches. The Tate Gallery, London.

The Metamorphosis of Narcissus

FIRST PORT-LLIGAT FISHERMAN - What's wrong with that chap, glaring at himself all day in his looking-glass?

SECOND FISHERMAN - If you really want to know (lowering his voice) he has a bulb in his head.

“A bulb in the head”, in catalan, corresponds exactly with the psychoanalytic notion of “complex”.

If a man has a bulb in his head, it might break into flower at any moment, Narcissus!

Finally, there is the poem itself:

Under the split in the retreating black cloud
the invisible scale of Spring
is oscillating
in the fresh April sky.
On the highest mountain,
the god of the snow,
his dazzling head bent over the dizzy space of reflections,
starts melting with desire
in the vertical cataracts of the thaw
annihilating himself loudly among the excremental cries of minerals,
or
between the silences of mosses
towards the distant mirror of the lake
in which,
the veils of winter having disappeared,
he has newly discovered
the lightning flash
of his faithful image.
It seems that with the loss of his divinity the whole high plateau
pours itself out,
crashes and crumbles
among the solitude and the incurable silence of iron oxides
while its dead weight
raises the entire swarming and apotheotic
plateau from the plain
from which already thrust towards the sky
the artesian fountains of grass
and from which rise,
erect,
tender,
and hard,
the innumerable floral spears
of the deafening armies of the germination of the narcissi.

Already the heterosexual group, in the renowned poses of preliminary expectation,
conscientiously ponders over the threatening libidinous cataclysm, the carnivorous
blooming of its latent morphological atavisms.

In the heterosexual group,
in that kind date of the year
(but not excessively beloved or mild),
there are

the Hindou
tart, oily, sugared
like an August date,
the Catalan with his grave back
well planted
in a sun-tide,
a whitsuntide of flesh inside his brain,

the blond flesh-eating German,
the brown mists
of mathematics
in the dimples
of his cloudy knees,
there is the English woman,
the Russian,
the Swedish women,
the American
and the tall darkling Andalusian,
hardy with glands and olive with anguish.

Far from the heterosexual group, the shadows of the advanced afternoon draw out across the countryside, and cold lays hold of the adolescent's nakedness as he lingers at the water's edge.

When the clear and divine body of Narcissus
leans
down to the obscure mirror of the lake,
when his white torso folded forward
fixes itself, frozen,
in the silvered and hypnotic curve of his desire,
when the time passes
on the clock of the flowers of the sand of his own flesh,
Narcissus loses his being in the cosmic vertigo
in the deepest depths of which
is singing
the cold and dyonisiac siren of his own image.
The body of Narcissus flows out and loses itself
in the abyss of his reflection,
like the sand glass that will not be turned again.

Narcissus, you are losing your body,
carried away and confounded by the millenary reflection of your
disappearance
your body stricken dead
falls to the topaz precipice with yellow wreckage of love,

your white body, swallowed up,
follows the slope of the savagely mineral torrent
of the black precious stones with pungent perfumes,
your body...
down to the unglazed mouths of the night
on the edge of which
there sparkles already
all the red silverware
of dawns with veins broken in "the wharves of blood".

Narcissus,
do you understand?
Symmetry, divine hypnosis of the mind's geometry, already fills up your
head,
with that incurable sleep, vegetable, atavistic, slow
Which withers up the brain
in the parchment substance
of the kernel of your nearing metamorphosis.

The seed of your head has just fallen into the water.

Man returns to the vegetable state
by fatigue-laden sleep
and the gods
by the transparent hypnosis of their passions.
Narcissus, you are so immobile
one would think you were asleep.
If it were question of Hercules rough and brown,
one would say: he sleeps like a bole
in the posture
of an herculean oak.
But you, Narcissus,
made of perfumed bloomings of transparent adolescence,
you sleep like a water flower.

Now the great mystery draws near,
the great metamorphosis is about to occur.

Narcissus, in his immobility, absorbed by his reflection with the digestive slowness of
carnivorous plants, becomes invisible.

There remains of him only
the hallucinatingly white oval of his head,
his head again more tender,

his head, chrysalis of hidden biological designs,
his head held up by the tips of the water's fingers,
at the tips of the fingers
of the insensate hand,
of the terrible hand,
of the excrement-eating hand,
of the mortal hand
of his own reflection.