

## THE STRATEGY OF READING - READING STRATEGIES

Perhaps this ordeal points us toward what we are seeking. The writer's solitude, that condition which is the risk he runs, seems to come from his belonging, in the work, to what always precedes the work. Through him, the work comes into being; it constitutes the resolute solidity of a beginning. But he himself belongs to a time ruled by the indecisiveness inherent in beginning over again. The obsession which ties him to a privileged theme, which obliges him to say over again what he has already said – sometimes with the strength of an enriched talent, but sometimes with the prolixity of an extraordinarily impoverishing repetitiveness, with ever less force, more monotony – illustrates the necessity, which apparently determines his efforts, that he always come back to the same point, pass again over the same paths, persevere in starting over what for him never starts, and that he belong to the shadow of events, not their reality, to the image, not the object, to what allows words themselves to become images, appearances – not signs, values, the power of truth.

Blanchot, *The Space Of Literature*

### Others as the Constitutive Element of the Subject

The provocative impulse to write this part of the book came straight from the story. The story is entitled "Svetislav Basara Interviews Samuel Beckett for the Third Programme of Radio Belgrade."<sup>82</sup> I will single out, for analysis, three fragments of this story and quote them according to the original, highlighting some points that will be important for later exposition:

<sup>82</sup> Cf. David Albahari, "Svetislav Basara intervjuje Semjuela Beketa za Treći program Radio Beograda," *Fras u šupi* (Beograd: Rad, 1984), 68-69.

1)

S.B.: Have you ever seen *the rain*?

S.B.: Excuse me?

S.B.: Have you ever seen the rain?

*(Pause)*

S.B.: I did not expect such difficult questions.

2)

S.B. : [...] and I knew what it should look like, in the form of a *monologue*, even when it seems to be a *dialogue*, always between *silence* and *darkness*, darkness and silence, until not a single *unvisited place* remains in my memory, until I am all my work.

3)

S.B.: I am *emptiness*.

Samuel Beckett once stated in a conversation that it seems to him that literature before him was mainly interested in power and knowledge, and that he was interested in impotence and ignorance.<sup>83</sup> The question that arises is: how to shape helplessness and ignorance in a way that would interest the reader? The protagonist of Beckett's novel *Molloy* is not someone who knows nothing, despite the fact that his entire inner monologue is a challenge to knowledge, even a mockery of knowledge. Each sentence of his monologue begins with a refutation of the previous one, every statement is followed by a *but*; the knowledge that is ignored here is the kind of ignorance that is established in relation to prior knowledge. The reception of such a discourse also requires knowledge that would lead to ignorance, and such a strategy is not exhausted only in the refutation of knowledge. Some of the methods of establishing this learned ignorance are, for example, Molloy's mention of his *dabbling* in anthropology, theology, magic and the like, and especially interesting is his *scientific* method of establishing the order of sucking pebbles, which is considered the most successful example of permutation as a postmodernist literary practice.<sup>84</sup> The novel *Molloy* consists of two long internal monologues, one of which belongs to Molloy and the other to Moran, his pursuer, but there is some conflation,

<sup>83</sup> Cf. Milivoj Solar, *Nakon smrti Sancha Panze: eseji i predavanja o postmodernizmu* (Zagreb: Naklada Ljevak, 2009), 157.

<sup>84</sup> Cf. David Lodge, *The Modes of Modern Writing* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), pp. 230-231.

so it is not entirely clear whether there is a single person or more. Beckett's novel is composed of sequences that gradually arouse curiosity in the reader, but the sequence in question does not possess the coherence of the story; the fundamental impression it leaves is the impression of gradual destruction. The traditional experience of the novel includes a hero – an individual conditioned by history, in conflict with the world, who regularly loses this battle either by dying, where death confirms him and his choice, or by accepting some fictitious existence ironically. The process being described is a process of cognition – both the protagonist and the reader eventually know something they did not know at the beginning; the end of the novel makes sense of its beginning. There may be something like the paradox of human existence, but the paradox is solved in terms of literary technique by the reader realizing that some kind of destiny made the story possible. In Beckett's novel, nothing enables a story – the story is not realized in this way because even the ironic understanding of destiny is doubly contested: Molloy and Moran are not even subjects, as they do not differ in principle, due to conflation, and the end of the novel does not make sense of the beginning as the series could continue with new characters. Molloy stops at the end because he cannot go any further, and Moran listens to a voice commanding him to compile a report (perhaps just the one that makes up the novel).

The corpus of texts by S.B. that I want to introduce into dialogue with S.B.'s novel *Molloy* comprises three books: *Vanishing Tales*, *Chinese Letter*, and *Peking by Night*. Among these works there are differences in the choice of form and the degree of emphasis of individual elements, but in certain variations and nuances each carries within itself an existential spasm of the subject facing emptiness. Basara's fiction entertains intertextual relations in almost all of its aspects. However, when all the topics are (already) spent, in the text that is thoroughly relativised, what remains is I and Nothing. The narrator plays with the way the text is performed by way of irony, abandoning it and returning to it, thus keeping it on the verge of self-abolition. His text vibrates between disappearing and emergence. In this context, Basara's character is not looking for a solution or a point, but for his own name, because naming confirms existence. That name is mutable and elusive. The difficulties with the name are a sign of the subject's disintegration – the character is just the remainder. In the deeper layers

of meaning, Basara's texts represent the striving of consciousness for a realised state that does not exist where consciousness is, but somewhere far away, outside the everyday world. Hence the archetype of a distant place in Basara's fiction, which has the function of expressing a critical attitude towards the environment, but also insecurity, instability, wandering. I come to the inevitable question: what is the relationship between S.B. and S.B.? In order to resolve this relation, I will reach for another relation, established in the novel by one of the S.B.'s. Molloy and Moran wander in the ruined space of S.B.'s novel. They are not heroes in the true sense of the word, but they are not antiheroes either – no ethical features can be attributed to them. They are not even characters (they do not have permanent psychological features according to which we could distinguish them from each other). They change without motivation, moving in space and time prompted by vague urges – one by an opaque desire, the other by a commandment that is mysterious. They are not the instigators of events in the story, because there is no story. In a few scenes, they seem to be characters. That is all. Still, we could say that they differ from each other, but only when Moran appears, because he is the persecutor, and Molloy becomes the persecuted. However, Molloy has no idea that someone is persecuting him, and Moran gives up the persecution and returns home (not because of what happened to Molloy, but because his son left him). Thus the relationship between the persecutor and the persecuted explains nothing, and in the last scene it would seem that Moran becomes Molloy, so the story of the persecutor could precede the story of the persecution. The two characters merge and intertwine in a senseless wandering that ends with Moran's decision to sit down and write down the final (or perhaps initial) sentences of their adventure: "It is midnight. The rain is beating on the windows. It was not midnight. It was not raining."<sup>85</sup> Moran, like Molloy, had a break in communication, and this break was the result of his inability to leave the frame of the present (Solar 2009: 49-57).<sup>86</sup> Physical time gradually destroys the physical side of the person and psychological time cannot overcome it because it cannot transcend the present. Molloy and Moran both lack time and space in which they could make sense of

<sup>85</sup> *Three Novels by Samuel Beckett* (New York: Grove, 1965), p. 176.

<sup>86</sup> Cf. Solar, *Nakon smrti Sancha Panze*, pp. 49-57.

life. When Moran was given paper and pencil, he could only write down a series of statements whose contradictions can be understood as a game that replaces the search for meaning and significance by enumerating all potential combinations. The reader does not know whether Molloy was actually Moran who returned home, or whether he was Moran before he discovered the language of birds. The reason for this opacity is in that the roles are interchangeable – the differences are nullified. The persecutor is also persecuted; a voice commands him to follow the one who is persecuted by an unknown inner urge. They separate only in moments that are unrelated in time. The stages of their journey are like pebbles that Molloy sucks to replace real hunger, and the time span in which they could be arranged does not exist. Solar concludes that Molloy and Moran must be described just like that, because they are precisely characters who have lost their destiny and can “wander the space of a would-be novel in which they lost their personality and have to play a game that has rules, but is impossible to win due to an excess of possible combinations.” Before discovering the language of birds, Moran is an investigator – his role is to solve a riddle and therefore he must try all possible combinations. A Moran who understands the language of birds plays with pebbles-words that lose touch with reality, their meanings distorted at will. The development of these characters leads to a key unifying trait: they are losers. In that sense, Solar’s thesis can be accepted that the characters who wander through the devastated space of the so-called artistic prose are no longer characters, but become functions in a text that encompasses life not in real time but in the moment of the present, in a game that reduces time and space to a fictional playground where the “master of the game” tries out all possible permutations. Solar radicalizes this thesis: the place of survival of the characters, as well as the way to understand them, should be sought elsewhere (not in the novel!), in a space where time has only one dimension, and that can be the screen, as well as a story fragment.

So I go back to the fragment of Albahari’s story and the question of S.B.’s relationship with S.B. If I replace the names *Molloy* and *Moran* with the initials *S.B.*, the term *persecutor* with the term *interrogator* and the term *persecuted* with the term *interrogated*, the result is as follows:

- S.B. and S.B. are neither heroes, antiheroes, nor characters;
- they are not the instigators of events in the story – there is no story;
- they differ from each other only when one of them acts as an examiner;
- the relationship between the interrogator and the interrogated is unclear;
- they intertwine and merge;
- they experience a break in communication;
- their roles are interchangeable;
- they do not have the status of characters, but become functions in a text that encompasses the moment of the present;
- in this sense, the text is structured as a space for testing possible permutations.

Albahari's story thus proves to be the bridge between the two S.B.s. However, things are less problematic with the S. B.s than with their real-life counterparts, the authors whose names appear in the title of Albahari's story. Since the title ostensibly refers to reality and the possible intertextual and poetic relations, it is important to point out that Basara's narrator does not hide his connections with Beckett's narrator, as evidenced at the level of narrative procedures, in the shaping of the *self-abolishing hero*, in the ample use of the rhetorical potential of paradox, and in other language games that functionally underline the worldview to be mediated (a devastated world without support and meaning; language as a world-creating act that loses touch with reality; the subject facing emptiness; doubt in logic) – but also at the level of intentional coincidence that causes humorous effects, so in the pages of Basara's fiction Beckett rides a bicycle, and one of the characters has a stolen copy of the translation of the novel *Molloy*.<sup>87</sup> Yet, despite these connections, it cannot be said that Basara is a follower of Beckett, because, unlike Basara's, Beckett's narrator does not *narrate* his poetics. To go back to the story again: in Albahari's story one of the S.B.s argues that speech is *formlessness*, that nothing can be done to make one word differ from another, but that if there is a *framework*, everything fits easily into it. By these statements the first

<sup>87</sup> Basara, *Peking by Night*, pp. 25, 93.

S.B. legitimizes himself at the beginning, and at the end concludes: *I am emptiness*. What is the relationship between the framework and emptiness? *Frame* is a term that Derrida introduced to literary theory,<sup>88</sup> tracing his interest in the boundary zones of the text, such as spaces, titles, genre clauses, epigraphs, signatures, notes. Derrida questions the relationship of centre and margin, internal and external, as the relationship of the first and the second in which the second does not come after the first, but allows the first the quality of primacy. The framework exists only because there is an internal indeterminacy of that which is framed. In other words, contextualization is necessary, but there is no final context. The frame is constantly moving and multiplying infinitely.

Emptiness, on the other hand, according to Iser, has a meaning similar to *instances of indeterminacy* (Ingarden), due to which the reader must in various senses supplement what is being presented in a literary work.<sup>89</sup> In one of these senses, Svetislav Basara is a *reader* of Samuel Beckett.

## “Searching”

*The author, as subject of enunciation, is first of all a spirit: sometimes he identifies with his characters or makes us identify with them, or with the idea which they represent; sometimes, on the other hand, he introduces a distance which allows him and us to observe, to criticise, to prolong. But this is no good. The author creates a world, but there is no world which awaits us to be created. Neither identification nor distance, neither proximity nor remoteness, for in all these cases, one is led to speak for, in the place of... One must, on the contrary, speak with, write with. With the world, with a part of the world, with people. Not a talk at all, but a conspiracy, a collision of love or hatred.*

Deleuze and Parnet, *Dialogues*

The story I have chosen to analyse – “Searching” – was included in Basara’s short story collection published under the (English-language)

<sup>88</sup> Cf. Biti, *Pojmovnik suvremene književne i kulturne teorije*, p. 342.

<sup>89</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

title *Peking by Night* in 1985. This book was exceptionally well-received amongst the Serbian literary public as one of the best representatives of Young Fiction of the 1980s. Critics noted the attempt at creating narrative forms in disregard of the procedures standard in mainstream literary works, as well as the tendency to return to “simple forms” of storytelling, such as sketches, adages, very short stories, parodic fragments, and the like. Parallel to the dissolution of dominant types and extant forms, a renewed interest in bathos was evident; the protagonists in this book repeatedly question the purpose of existence and disappearance, and their hypertrophied emotionality is established only to be abolished, and abolished to be established. The narrator “mimics the simulation of stereotypical emotions in order to better express his doubts before the pitfalls of disappearance.”<sup>90</sup> It is noted that the content of Basara’s fiction stands in opposition to the narrative structure interrogating the established conceptual framework – the purpose is examined and criticised through the infantilization of narrative material.

I shall cite the story in its entirety because it is brief but also because of the type of analysis to follow:

## Searching

It seems a long time ago, or far away, when I was last awake. It was last night. I fell asleep early, tired of being scattered, dejected, my soul diffuse, unable to resist the abysses of nothingness that pressed what little *me* there was, threatening to pop it like a soap bubble. My dream seems closer and more real than the reality before it, perhaps because a long while has passed. I’ve grown old in my sleep. My dead friends have died again, the living have gone with *their* smiles on their faces. I joined them wordlessly. (Only the dead speak in dreams.) We continued on, I don’t know where to, I thought they knew the destination, they probably thought I knew it, because it was *my dream*, if a dream can have an owner. We walked along a corridor without any visible end. There were doors at both ends, in a row, I knocked on all of them, opened them and asked:

<sup>90</sup> Станојевић, *Форма или не о љубави*, p. 206.



*am I here*, continued on, numb, without hope I would ever find what I was looking for.

My friends had moved farther down the dream: the dead more and more desperately alive, the living ever closer to death. I feared I would wake up in the midst of my dream, that I would go back up there, into the world they taught me was real, to the form they dressed me in by mistake, out of which – for the *n*th time – I had set off in search of a stranger. So I fell even deeper asleep, if one can say so. Even more tired. It was comforting to know that at least there were no policemen there to stop lonely night strollers. And everything looked somehow more real to me: the horizon turned upside down and the corridor with no end. My friends had moved far off. They no longer turned back to look at me. I knocked on the next door, asked *am I here*, my eyelids heavy, because I don't sleep even when I dream. What else can I do but continue on, open each door one by one, until I finally enter a familiar room and see *him* in the corner – and I know the sentence word for word – typing out the final line of *my* story and turning around to see who has come in...<sup>91</sup>

The story begins with a formula announcing fiction: *It seems a long time ago, or far away, when I was last awake. It was last night.* According to the “contract” concluded by accepting the convention of *it seems*, the reader agrees to read a story told from the position of *today*, or rather *now*. This *now* is generated from the position of a dream, because the narrator of this story, according to its initial statement, was last awake *a long time ago / far away / last night*. If the time of narration is *now*, the place from which narration is generated can only be a dream, or the act of dreaming – the way the beginning of the story is organised excludes wakefulness.

According to Kordić, Basara's stories attain their fictional character when structured as phantasms or dreams.<sup>92</sup> For example, “The Wonderful World of Agatha Christie,” “The Perfect Crime,” and “Lost in the Supermarket”<sup>93</sup> are stories in which dreams perform the framing function and are a means of motivation, as well as of creation, which the narrator places in another narrative register – a story about creating a story. The structur-

<sup>91</sup> Basara, *Peking by Night*, 102-103.

<sup>92</sup> Kordić, “Dekonstrukcija pripovedanja”.

<sup>93</sup> English translations of the latter two stories are included in the collection *Fata Morgana*, pp. 125-133 and 187-202.

al perspective of dreams and phantasms makes an alternative truth about the world and the subject possible; this kind of truth in Basara's fiction is affirmed by figuring the subject and the world as grammatical subject and object. This perspective enables a discourse through which the narrator doubles his speech. The speaking subject in the story "Searching" is defined by the concepts *dispersion* and *diffuseness*: *I fell asleep early, tired of being scattered, dejected, my soul diffuse, unable to resist the abysses of nothingness...* while his *I* appears in the story under the labels of *that*, *he*, and *stranger*. In the first case, *that* in place of *I* appears in an object position, as a *remnant* of the whole *I*: *that pressed what little me there was, threatening to pop it like a soap bubble*. In the second case, *I* appears as a *stranger*: after the "episode" of opening a series of doors and asking *am I here*, the object of the search is named as a stranger: *out of which – for the nth time – I had set off in search of a stranger*. In the third case, *I* is *he*, once again in the object position (*and see him in the corner*). The distribution of these three designations is implemented with rhythmic regularity: *that* comes at the beginning of the story, the *stranger* in the middle, and *he* at the end. The organisation of the search has a logical internal dramaturgy. *That* at the beginning places the reader in the context from which the search should be read – the context of diffuseness and dispersion; the *stranger* enhances the effect of being lost and the subject's lack of support and security indicated initially, while *he* at the end of the story underlines the basic idea, which will be revealed through my analysis of its central section. The key concept there, but also of the story as a whole, is death. It is tied to the concepts of dreams, dreaming, narration, and time. In this sense, the statement *Only the dead speak in dreams* is especially interesting. In his brief piece "The Idea of Death," Giorgio Agamben claims that the angel of death – that is to say, the harbinger of death – is language itself, and what makes it difficult for us to die is this *announcement*. Only "those who understand the innocence of language likewise grasp the true sense of the announcement, and may, in the event, learn to die," concludes Agamben.<sup>94</sup> On the other hand, Derrida claims that learning to live is impossible for anyone who is alive:

<sup>94</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *Idea of Prose*, translated by Michael Sullivan and Sam Whitsitt (New York: SUNY, 1995), p. 129.

To live, by definition, is not something one learns. Not from oneself, it is not learned from life, taught by life. Only from the other and by death. In any case from the other at the edge of life. At the internal border or the external border, it is a heterodidactics between life and death. [...] If it – learning to live – remains to be done, it can happen only between life and death. Neither in life nor in death *alone*. What happens between two, and between all the “two’s” one likes, such as between life and death, can only *maintain* itself with some ghost...<sup>95</sup>

I shall return to the claim *Only the dead speak in dreams* and read it with Agamben’s analysis. The initial question is how a living being can possess language, or rather what the ability to speak can mean to a living being. Speaking is a paradoxical act that simultaneously contains subjectification and desubjectification, and in which language appropriates the individual only in complete dispossession. The existential status of the speaking living being is thus a certain ontological glossolalia, “an absolutely insubstantial chatter in which the living being and the speaking being, subjectification and desubjectification, can never coincide.”<sup>96</sup> Agamben concludes that this is why Western metaphysics and thought on language sought a connection between the living and speaking being, attempting to provide consistency to the subject’s *dreamt substance* – an unintelligible glossolalia. There is no moment in which language would inscribe itself into a living voice, nor is there a place where a living being could make logical sense of itself, save theology (where word has become flesh). In this non-place of connectedness, deconstruction leaves its *mark* and *difference* in which voice and written word, as well as meaning and presence, differ endlessly. However, Agamben claims that it is the impossibility of a connection between living beings and language that enables testimony. It is possible if *I* is suspended in a yawn; the place of testimony is “the intimacy that betrays our non-coincidence with ourselves.”<sup>97</sup> The non-place of connectedness proves to be a place of testimony. An especially important question in the context of Basara’s fiction is the one Ag-

<sup>95</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: the State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International*, translated by Peggy Kamuf (London: Routledge, 2006), p. xvii.

<sup>96</sup> Agamben, *Idea of Prose*, 129.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 130.

amben asks, keeping to the intersection between Foucault's *Archaeology of Knowledge* (1969) and Benveniste's theory of utterance: *how can the subject testify to its own collapse?* In other words – what does it mean to be the subject of desubjectification?

Allow me to return to “Searching.” The statement *Only the dead speak in dreams* can be linked with the implied statement regarding the narration that *he* – the other – *is generating*: the search for self ends with entering *a familiar room* in which *he* is typing the final line of *my story*, with the note that *I know the sentence word for word*. It is also interesting to note the semantic attachment of the concept of possession (*my story*) to the aforementioned set of concepts (especially death, narration, and time). The only reliable thing owned by the narrator is the story, not narration. Narration requires a mediator (*he*, the other). Let us examine the status of the concept of time in the story. The marker of time appears already in the opening sentence (following the “contractual” phrase *it seems*) – *a long time ago*. However, a potential alternative – spatial – designation is added immediately thereafter: *or far away*. These determinants are related to the narrator's wakefulness. Everything that follows is in the domain of dreams. *My dream seems closer and more real than the reality before it, perhaps because a long while has passed*. The narrator ages in his sleep, and his friends die again, while their smiles are appropriated by the living; he joins them *wordlessly* because *only the dead speak in dreams*. The interesting question then asked is that of ownership. Can a dream belong to anyone? The narrator claims that he does not know his destination, but he assumes that his companions do, and that they likely in turn believe him to possess that particular piece of information, as it is his dream. However, he immediately calls into question the possibility of owning a dream. As the dream continues, time speeds up: *My friends had moved farther down the dream: the dead more and more desperately alive, the living ever closer to death*. Fear of awakening then appears for the first time, and what is especially problematic about wakefulness is accepting the conventions of reality: *I feared I would wake up in the midst of my dream, that I would go back up there, into the world they taught me was real, to the form they dressed me in by mistake, out of which – for the nth time – I had set off in search of a stranger*. Two points are noteworthy here: on the one hand, refusing the offered convention about what is *real*, as well as the *form* that affirms the “contract” as

to what is real, and on the other hand, the motif of repetition (*for the nth time*) tied to the possibility of finding alternative forms of reality/fiction. The search for the stranger at the end of the story results in narration itself. It is also interesting to note how the storyteller organises the “respite” or delay in a final solution: *So I fell even deeper asleep, if one can say so*. The fear of awakening is replaced with a feeling of comfort engendered by the dreamer’s knowledge that it was *comforting to know that at least there were no policemen there to stop lonely night strollers*. This kind of assertion is typical of Basara’s early fiction: the oneiric construction is *struck* by the sudden insertion of a detail that has a political or ideological component, while its associative significance, read in the context within which it appears, usually results in comic effects due to the “impact” of irreconcilable elements. Basara’s early fiction is rife with such “insertions,” which are highly functional as they operate as parasites on a backdrop which allows them to stand out and produce significant effects. After the statement on the absence of policemen, everything begins to appear *somehow more real to me: the horizon turned upside down and the corridor with no end*. The testimonial subject *seems to rise to the surface of reality*. He knocks on the following door, asking again *am I here*, and adds that his eyelids are heavy *because I don’t sleep even when I dream*. This procedure leads to the conclusion: the opening of a door to a familiar room in which the *other* finishes typing (not writing, typing!) his story:

There is, thus, no absolute beginning. Every narrative solution proves to be a variant of an original that does not exist. Something can be told only if it has already been articulated. The perseverance of the already articulated is not invalidated even by symbolic death. This is what makes the relationship between the narrator and the protagonist the topic of Basara’s story, even a sign of the individuality of literature, its truth, which refers to nothing outside of itself.<sup>98</sup>

The reading strategy for Basara’s “Searching,” which begins with the acceptance of its initial contractual formula *it seems*, introduces a narrative strategy from the position of *now*, which is indicated/denounced as a state of sleep and dreaming. The organisation of the opening of the story

<sup>98</sup> Kordiĉ, “Dekonstrukcija pripovedanja”.

negates the possibility that the narrator is awake. The story gains its fictive character through the structuring of the phantasm/dream. The dream performs the framing function and is a means of motivation, as well as of creation, which the narrator places in another narrative register – a story about creating a story.

The structural perspective of dreams and phantasms makes an alternative truth about the world and the subject possible; this kind of truth in Basara's fiction is affirmed by figuring the subject and the world as grammatical subject and object. This perspective enables a discourse through which the narrator doubles his speech. The speaking subject of "Searching" is scattered among the signs *that*, *he*, and the *stranger*: *that* appears in the object position in place of *I*, as a remnant of the whole *I*; the *stranger* is the object of the search for the indicated (diffuse) *I*, while *he* is again in an object position, this time the object of observation and the place out of which the story is generated. The foundational concepts of the story are those of death, dreams, narration, and time. This analysis has established their relationship, beginning from the statement *Only the dead speak in dreams*. What is of particular interest in this context is the question of how the subject gains the ability to testify to its own collapse. The statement *Only the dead speak in dreams* is joined by the implied statement regarding the narration *he* – the other – is generating. Narrating requires a mediator; only the narrator is in possession of the story. This reading strategy requires the introduction of the (genitive) phrase *my story*, which indicates the problem of ownership of the story and narration, and immediately thereafter, over the very dream from which the story is being told. Moving the story and speeding up narrative time results in two complex problems: the first is that of refusing conventions of the *real* and forms that might affirm the contract about reality, while the second is tied to the possibility of locating alternative forms of reality/fiction. The speaking subject seems to rise to the surface of reality, while the search for the stranger results in narration itself.