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The Other, the Irrevocability of Death and the *Aporia* of Mourning: A Hermeneutic Approach

Abstract. The aim of this article is to analyze the irrevocable character of death, the relation between the bereaved, wounded self and the dead Other, melancholia and the impossibility of mourning. The death of the Other constitutes a devastating experience for the self and entails the truth about the self's own death, opening a path for a recognition of the irrevocable nature of death. Heidegger interprets death as the impossibility which makes *being* possible. Reflecting on death, Derrida dubs "Dying awaiting (one another at) the 'limits of truth'." Levinas is mostly preoccupied with the death of the Other; he underlines the relation between the self and the Other. For him the one who survives in the face of death feels blameworthy. Freud analyzes the relation between death and melancholia, differentiating between healthy and unhealthy mourning. All these propositions account for a vision of death as a phenomenon inasmuch inevitable as escaping any conceptualization. I substantiate the philosophical and psychological reflections with a hermeneutic interpretation of bereavement, melancholia and mourning encrypted in the fictional imagining of Rudyard Kipling's "The Gardener."

Keywords: the Other; death; *aporia* of mourning; hermeneutics.

Heidegger sees the dread of death as the most fundamental trait of Nothing. The fear of nothingness remains a pervasive mark of human existence. Our being-there, *Dasein* is constantly and unavoidably molded by death (Heidegger 1962: 27–32). The death of the Other constitutes

a destructive experience for the self and entails the truth about the self's own death, opening a path for a recognition of the irrevocable nature of death. The foreboding character of death is augmented by the *aporia* of mourning. The persistent pastness of the past, the idealized and desired past become inimitable constituents of mourning and melancholia. However, the idealized past disarms the self to mourn the dead Other. Does recurring to the symbolic produce a possibility of mourning? The aim of this article is to analyze the irrevocable character of death, the relation between the bereaved, wounded self and the dead Other, melancholia and the impossibility of mourning. I focus on the philosophical reflection of Martin Heidegger, Jacques Derrida's *aporia* of mourning, and Emmanuel Levinas' and Sigmund Freud's illuminations of mourning and bereavement.

Heidegger's Interpretation of Death—the Impossibility which Makes *Being* Possible

Heidegger's elucidation of death in *Being and Time* centers on the impossibility of death as something which possibilizes being—dubbed by Heidegger as *Dasein*. Heidegger argues that the impossibility of death actually comes to be constitutive of the possibility of being. Our being-there is inimitably constrained by death. Heidegger's conception of death relies on the notion of *problem*; this is applied and viewed as something which comes to unveil the query of how the prioritized impossibility of death makes the possibility of *Dasein* possible. Contrasting Heidegger's and Derrida's reflections on death, Paul Nadal stresses Heidegger's sense of a border as a central category which propels his philosophical meditation:

> Death is conceived here as that which is, on the one hand, projected as a border-limit, and on the other, that which possibilizes Da-sein's self-constitution in its protection of its possibility of being free for its ownmost potentiality of being. . . . Being-toward-death is for Heidegger that from which one constructs one's life as a project, that is, *thrown projection*: Da-sein approaches and encounters death as a border that serves as a constituting, possibilizing limit. Heidegger poses death as border or threshold in order to base his understanding of Da-sein's recursive self-constitution in terms of a thrown, or better yet, projected possibility. (Nadal 2012: 1)

Nadal stresses that Heidegger's focus on the border-limit yields significant results as for the reckoning of death. An explication of his

viewing of death as a problem needs to be analyzed as having its footing in the very meaning of the word—*problem*, the Greek *problema* (Derrida in Nadal 2012: 2). Nadal further notes that the signifying force of the word encompasses two senses: *projection* and *protection*. The first bespeaks that which is ahead—a project, something still to be completed, the other betokens some kind of barrier whose role is to protect. In that regard, Heidegger's reflection on death goes in the direction of an analysis of the phenomenon within the circumscriptions of pre-supposition. Heidegger presents his formulation of death as something which is prior, more primordial than any other discourses of death. For him it is something which goes beyond the theological, the metaphysical, or the anthropological, psychological or even biological studies. His analysis of death involves two constituents: the distance of an existential reckoning from the ontic, as well as the projection of it as having the rudimentary status of pre-supposition. Heidegger speaks of the absolute fundamentality of the ontological priority (Nadal 2012: 2). Reflecting upon Heidegger's pre-supposition-like character of the discourse of death, Derrida summarily comments that Heidegger's "Ontology of *Da-sein*" means that it is "legitimately and logically prior to an ontology of life" (Derrida in Nadal 2012: 2). Heidegger's notion of death as "the possibility of being able not to be there" can be narrowed down to the paradoxical "most proper possibility that is at the same the possibility of impossibility" (Nadal 2012: 2).

Significantly, Heidegger's formulation of death contains the concomitant closeness/distance which conveys the aporetic character of death as that which is closest to *Da-sein* and simultaneously the most distant. Heidegger's remark regarding death, which illustrates the paradox of the furthest and the closest, both testifies to and underscores his insistence on the idea of a threshold disconnecting *Dasein* and death. Death as a borderline is an inexorably portentous aspect of existence. For Heidegger one cannot speak of an experience of death as long as *Dasein* exists; if it dies, though, then we speak of "no-longer there." What is essential for Heidegger is the seizure of the Being of *Dasein* in its whole. Here he differentiates between the authentic and inauthentic way of being. If in existential terms *Dasein* is to be understood as a possibility, in its totality then *Dasein's* authentic Being is "Being towards death." Crucially, when confronted with death, *Dasein* comes to an understanding of what *being* is. In other words, facing death authenticates life; the heart of being lies in a recognition of being towards death.

One can speak of a distinction between one's own death and the death of the Other. Heidegger is concerned with the death which is my own death

and this is for him radically different from the death of the Other, as it is impossible to face my own death before it actually comes. This state is the origin of the dread. I fear my own death and cannot grasp it, whereas I can experience the death of the Other (Heidegger 1962: 27–28). The fear of the death of the Other and the actuality of the death of the Other amplify my own anxiety; this, however, cannot be equated with the fear of my own death and an experience of my own dying. For Heidegger, the dread (*Angst*) of death is constitutive of the authenticity of life in the sense that it is only by means of this particular disposition of mind that the self is capable of transcending an inauthentic existence and living one which can be dubbed an authentic one. Heidegger's phenomenology of death draws attention not only to our sense of an ending in theoretical terms, or even as an empiricist occurrence, but much more as an irrevocable phenomenon. Our sense of finitude is thus neared to us as that which has a portentous influence on our lives. According to Heidegger, the dread of death necessitates *Dasein* to comprehend the fullness of its potentiality.

Derrida—"Dying—Awaiting (One Another at) the 'Limits of Truth'"

The aporetic nature of death—the possibility of impossibility, which is implicit in Heidegger's ontology constitutes the point of departure for Derrida. However, he does not only take up where Heidegger leaves but generates a critique of his proposition. He problematizes the idea of "limit-line." To put it very succinctly, Derrida argues that if one talks about *Dasein*'s existential embodiment of its possibility and if death embodies the possibility of an impossibility, embodying the possibility of an impossibility would also mean embodying an impossibility. He says: "If death, the most proper possibility of *Dasein,* is the possibility of its impossibility, death becomes the most improper possibility and the most expropriating, the most inauthenticating one" (Derrida 2008: 77). As a matter of fact, Derrida's criticism can be seen as a deconstructive invariant of Heidegger's ontological stance. It seems more crucial, though, to see that Derrida's deconstructive position begins with a set of questions which bespeak the very impossibility of death: "Is my death possible? Can we understand this question? Can I myself pose it? Am I allowed to talk about my death? What does the syntagm 'my death' mean? And why this expression 'the syntagm of "my death"'?" (Derrida 1993: 21). In a quest of an answer to these queries, Derrida makes first a detour to the imminent character of death as expressed by Seneca before

Heidegger's expression of the dread of death as the most fundamental mark of Nothingness. He writes: "Seneca describes the imminence, the absolute imminence of death at every instant. The imminence of a disappearance that is by essence premature seals the union of the possible and the impossible, of fear and desire, of mortality and immortality, in-being-to-death" (Derrida 1993: 4).

Derrida precedes his seminal *Aporias* with an epigram: "Dying—awaiting (one another at) the 'limits of truth'." He expands on Heidegger's sense "of running ahead or of *Dasein* which stands before itself as the awaiting for each other and the completely other" (Nadal 2012: 3). Nadal stresses that Derrida uses the term of *arrivant* to demonstrate an impossible, but inevitable waiting. The horrendous atypical nature of the *arrivant* lies in that it is not an entity possessing identity or name. The *arrivant* betokens our waiting for an entity we neither know nor can expect. The waiting for the *arrivant* involves hospitality whose very nature is that of unconditioned welcoming (Nadal 2012: 3). Waiting for the *arrivant* is Derrida's fashion of re-naming the impossible. By contrast to Heidegger's determinateness—the being-toward-death, Derrida introduces the sense of an unstipulated limit or end of a human being. Waiting for the *arrivant*, the subject experiences the totality of its vulnerability and a radical openness to that which is deemed the wholly Other (Nadal 2012: 3). In his meditation on the *arrivant* Derrida underscores its ethical dimension, which extends to the mourning of those who have died and those not born yet: here he touches upon the *aporia* of mourning; the possibility of mourning for Derrida "lies in the impossible waiting for and responding to the *arrivant*—the completely other—among whom include the already dead, those with or without a name, and the not yet born" (Nadal 2012: 3). The crux of the difference in Heidegger's and Derrida's explications of death is rendered by Paul Nadal in the following way:

> Where Heidegger's defense of possibility pivots around the ontological structure of Dasein's not yet, whose being toward death discloses Dasein's being as pure being-possible, Derrida affirms possibility on the side of and with respect to the impossible. To live, finally, is thus a being toward death's aporetic limits—a death which I cannot simply call my own only, but always the 'impossible possible" death of the other in me (2012: 4).

Levinas—the Death of the Other

Crucially, for Emmanuel Levinas death is the death of the Other. It is the death of the Other that determines how we understand time. He attempts to get free from the totalizing way of viewing time. Levinas focuses on the ethical dimension of death; the import and the irreducible nature of the relation between the self and the Other; the responsibility for the Other is for him extended to the phenomenon of death. Levinas writes:

> The other who expresses himself is entrusted to me (and there is no debt in regard to the other, for what is due is unpayable: one is never free of it). The other individuates me in the responsibility I have for him. The death of the other who dies affects me in my very identity as a responsible "me" [*moi*]; it affects me in my non-substantial identity, which is not the simple coherence of various acts of identification, but is made up of an ineffable responsibility. My being affected by the death of the other is precisely that, my relation with his death. It is in my relation, my deference to someone who no longer responds, already a culpability—the culpability of the survivor. (2000: 12)

For Levinas, the innermost relation of the self with the Other is what enters the differentiating phase—my "self" in the face of the Other who is dead is a culpable self. This acute feeling of blameworthiness does not arise from a sense of real guilt in the moral sense, but is constitutive of the genuine nature of my response to the Other, my engagement which reaches the ultimate point of the unreachable, that is, if death is an impossibility, thus the bereavement felt after the death of the Other is not a bereavement which means a concentration on the self, but much more profoundly it bespeaks the totality of the position of the self as no longer worthy of being. In the confrontation with the death of the Other, my "self" ceases to exist in the sense it had existed earlier—the liability of the response to the Other is both resilient to death and enduring death. The endurance, however, is marred with the most unendurable sensation of my "self" as not capable of a proper response, of any kind of an adequate response to the Other who can no longer respond to me.

The irrevocability of death is something which permeates Levinas' entire meditation on death. He names death a ". . . departure without return, a question without givens, a pure interrogation mark" (Levinas 2000: 14). Unlike Heidegger and Derrida, he does not concentrate on the

impossibility of possibility imbued in death, but on the inexpressible nature of an appropriate response in the face of death. Death as an inscrutable phenomenon poses a question with no answer; this query which produces no real deliverance is a disquieting, discomfiting perspective which ceaselessly, relentlessly re-opens the questioning of the unquestionable. In that most rudimentary aspect, Levinas' reflection on death, which is wholly inscribed in his philosophy of dialogue, reaches the hermeneutic perspective; the quest for an understanding generates new, discomposing vistas. The need for understanding more, for understanding better, for going further afield, shatters the seeming stability and an apparent closure. Death as the unquestionable concomitantly calls for an understanding and resists any viable questioning, or any productive interpretation. Levinas expresses the primordiality of death and its situatedness in time in the following way:

> The relation with death, more ancient than any experience, is not the vision of being or nothingness. Intentionality is not the secret of the human. The human *esse*, or existing, is not a *conatus* but disinterestedness and *adieu*. Death: a mortality as demanded by the duration of time. (2000: 15)

Intersections Between the Philosophical and Psychoanalytic Perspectives

The philosophical perspective of interpreting death interlaces with the psychoanalytic insight into the phenomenon of death and yields significant results as for an unveiling of the psychology of the self. I restrict an analysis of the psychological perspective to Sigmund Freud's reflection on death. Freud probes deeply into the phenomenon of death in a variety of contexts. He is interested in an ambivalent attitude to the death of the beloved, in the perception of one's own death, the fear of death, the death of the Other and suicide as a termination of life, to name the most important facets of his analysis. According to Freud, in the case of death of the beloved one, the "self" experiences often an ambivalent attitude. The perception of the death of the beloved rests on two divergent sensations: the feeling of possession of the Other as the inner possession—the dead Other in me, and the feeling towards the dead Other as a stranger or enemy. The ambivalence of feelings is examined by Freud as a factor which may be the origin of neurosis (Freud 1957: 239–244). Freud centers on cases of an ungrounded self-rebuke in the

face of death of the beloved, and on cases of the so called unhealthy mourning which also cause neurosis.

In a variety of respects, Freud's analysis coalesces with philosophical reflection. He focuses on the intricacies of death in relation to our sense of immortality, the impossibility of fear, various reactions to the death of the Other. Crucially, we seem to be immortal in our own eyes, as it is absolutely impossible to imagine our own death; we are more spectators than participants. According to Freud, "in the unconscious every one of us is convinced of his own immortality" (Freud 1953: 305). In the unconscious it is our innermost belief which says that death is not something which we will experience. It is interesting to search for the rationale behind Freud's statement. It appears to be very true that the origin of the sensation of being merely a spectator is and might be interrelated with a similar kind of emotion experienced in the face of the death of the beloved Other. More than often the experience of the bereaved one is that of a spectator. One cannot genuinely believe in the death of the Other; it surmounts the possibility of understanding.

Astoundingly, Freud holds that because one has never gone through the experience of death before and because death does not exist in our unconscious, one cannot fear death. If there is fear of death for Freud it is equated with the sense of abandonment, castration, or can also signify various conflicting and unresolved situations (Freud 1953: 304–305). He also sees death as a result of a sense of guilt. Contradictorily to the mainstream of his thinking, Freud also points to the phenomenon of the fear of death which becomes a dominant factor overwhelming our psyche more often than we expect it. Thus the existential aspect of death and the phenomenology of death extend beyond the physical death, the biological termination of life. One can speak of the death as of the self's inability to survive some startling events which actually seem to annihilate the belief in good, or poignantly undercut the innermost convictions or the most intimate liaisons between people. Death might mean the demise of the deeply rooted sense of belonging in case of being relocated from the fatherland or a place one identifies himself/herself with. Another facet of death pointed to by Freud is some commonly experienced awkwardness and reductionism in speaking about death. An impasse in expressing how we feel about the death of the people we knew well, or even the people who were not close to us, comes when we realize in the weirdest fashion that we may be heard by the dead ones. The emotional reaction of ours seems not proper enough, or not adequate at all. With ambivalent emotions we find ourselves on the verge of some peculiar hurting of the dead Other. No longer hearing the voice of the Other, being left in the void of no-communication, one may find oneself as more prone to

denigrate oneself. We consider ourselves blameworthy, too reserved or too cold. Mostly eerily, according to Freud, we can even view death in terms of some accomplishment which bespeaks the most bizarre admiration for those who have already passed the threshold between life and death (Freud 1957: 240–243). The reverence adjoining an uncanny sense of admiration for the dead ones may even surpass our positive attitude to the living ones.

The Hermeneutic Interpretation of Rudyard Kipling's "The Gardener"

Viewing death and mourning through the prism of the above mentioned philosophies brings forth significant insights as for the manifold explications of death which account for the ontological premises, as well as psychological complexities of an experience of death. In the light of these reflections, I propose a hermeneutic analysis of Rudyard Kipling's "The Gardener," the text which offers an intricate rendition of death, mourning and melancholy. It is the story of an acute sense of loss and bereavement caused by the death of a child. The narrative features Helen Turrell, a young single woman who raises an allegedly illegitimate son of her brother. As the story line progresses the initial doubts concerning the identity of the child's mother are dispelled and it seems clear that Helen is the mother of the child. Whether the child is the fruit of an illicit liaison between Helen and her brother, or whether there was another lover is never revealed. When the First World War breaks out, Michael, Helen's grown-up son joins the Army, is sent to the front, gets killed and is reported missing in action. After the Armistice, Helen is informed that her son is buried at the Hagenzeele cemetery. The central part of the narrative is Helen's trip to the grave and the enigmatic encounter with the gardener at the cemetery. As a matter of fact, the narrative proposes two most excruciating encounters. On her way to the grave Helen becomes involved in a conversation with a stranger in a train compartment—a woman who like her goes to visit her son's grave. Kipling deploys here the mirror effect. Helen keeps to herself the truth about being a mother and constrains her feelings in an uttermost way. Oddly enough, her feelings surface when confronted with the feelings of the stranger who becomes Helen's *alter ego*. The depth of her mourning which cannot find its expression otherwise gets catalyzed and is given vent in the feelings of the Other.

Death is *die Sache* which bizarrely joins the two women. The other woman discloses her heart to Helen, confessing that she has lied for many years and that the dead soldier was someone closest to her heart. The devastating power

of Helen's secret returns to her. She is capable of projecting her feelings on the stranger and thus undergoes a conversion which the conversation involves. The Other provides the most sinister feedback. The conversation between the two strangers is a hermeneutic conversation in its profoundest form; it happens not on the surface of the uttered words, but on the level of things which are only hinted upon, or which are unarticulated. This is a hermeneutic conversation which involves the irrevocability of *metanoia*. It makes the moment of silence speak loud. The half pronouncements or eclipses are constitutive of a substantial plane for the rendition of perfectly corresponding feelings. The conversation resembles the psychoanalytic relation between the analyst and the analyzed. The question arises whether Helen's subconscious surfaces now and if mourning becomes a viable possibility, even if on the conscious level she still attempts to constrain her emotions. The genuine surfacing seems untenable. The young Michael warns Helen that he will punish her by dying earlier than her, the prospect of which is of course most tormenting for the mother. Michael's anticipatory conviction gains on a spectral quality; he promises to haunt Helen.

The expectancy of Michael's death is linked to Helen's oddest encounter of the gardener at the cemetery. The reader is left in the void as for the figure of the gardener—is he a real man or a phantasm? Helen asks the cemetery gardener about the grave of Michael, her nephew. Shockingly, in an answer she hears: "I will show you where your son lies" (Kipling 9). Kipling becomes a master of ambiguity here. The quagmire seems unresolvable. How could the gardener know the truth about Helen's motherhood? The narrative doubles the query: who is the gardener? The manifold voices of critics render him to be Jesus, or a Jesus-like figure as the scene resembles that of Mary meeting the Master after His resurrection. The interpretative possibilities come galore. It is possible to view the gardener as the true father of Michael: "The man lifted his eyes and looked at her with infinite compassion before he turned from the fresh-sown grass toward the naked black crosses" (Kipling 9). Is the compassionate gesture merely evocative of the emphatic personality of the man, or perhaps it has some deeper footing? These and other questions remain unresolved. Kipling purposefully chooses to convince us that the gardener is *just* a gardener: "A man knelt behind a line of headstones—evidently a gardener, for he was firming a young plant in the soft earth" (Kipling 8). By all means, the word "evidently" generates a wholly contradictory effect. In light of the enigmatic nature of Helen's motherhood and the eerie conversation between her and the purportedly evident figure of the gardener, the reader is more likely to dwell on the potentiality of some ghostly presence. On the one hand, the gardener is shown as a seemingly

convincing human creature; on the other hand, though, his image bespeaks some transgressional quality and one may assume that he is an apparition rather than a human creature.

The narrative of the story masterfully delineates the aporetic nature of mourning which is aggrandized by Helen's psychological state of duplicity that causes an unbearable entrapment for her. She does not get exonerated in a genuine possibility of mourning. She dwells in the state of in-betweenness; her absolution does not come and she cannot internalize the dead Other. According to Freud, mourning is a conscious response to the death of the Other which can be viewed in terms of a loss that is physically experienced. Whereas in mourning the sufferer eventually succumbs to the reality that the object is no longer existent, the world is empty but the narcissistic ego eventually severs its attachment to the dead, in melancholia the emptiness is felt as the void which touches the ego itself and not the world (Freud 1957: 255). The abolishment of the attachment to the dead never happens for Helen, she displays the symptoms characteristic for melancholia—the withdrawal into the ego and the uncompromising identification with the dead. The creeping feeling of the dead Other haunting the female character is intertwined with the feeling of guilt, the totality of abandonment, as well as the blockage of expression. Not only does she experience an impasse in withholding her feelings, but concurrently she also suffers from an impossibility of expression in the face of death. Speaking appears reductive and inadequate.

Facing the death of the Other, Helen faces a possibility of an authentic life. The possibility echoes the Heideggerian notion of an authentic life, even though for the heroine it is not the apprehension of her own death which builds a possibility of authenticity. Authenticity arises for her from an abandonment of the need to use lies and stratagems, as well as a realization of death's irrevocability. However, Helen's subconscious cannot be "cured," which manifests itself in an abundantly constricted manner of expression. Her mourning in Freudian terms cannot be accomplished, or perhaps she has not entered the mourning phase yet. In "Mourning and Melancholia" (1917), Freud delineates similarities between the two differing responses to the loss of the Other, the two divergent poles of mourning and melancholia which entail "profoundly painful dejection, cessation of interest in the outside world, loss of the capacity to love, [and] inhibition of all activity" (Freud 1957, 244). The Austrian neurologist discusses mourning in terms of a conscious reaction to the loss of the loved one, he speaks of the denigrating world because of the loss. In identifying melancholia, he talks about the debasing of the ego itself (Freud 1957: 244-246). He locates the state of mourning

as the healthy one, since when confronted with the death of the beloved, in time the self under the force of the narcissistic satisfaction that it is still alive is enabled to detach itself from the dead and lead a regular life, do the daily business, work or remarry. This healthy detachment does not occur in melancholia.

Helen is an emblem of grief, she has no interest in the outside world apart from the beloved dead. An acute feeling of guilt, self-blame and self-hatred permeate her conduct. Helen, the survivor in the Levinasian sense, is unhappy about her prolonged, senseless existence. She cancels a possibility of mourning as she feels one with the dead Other. As a mother of the dead son she feels it is her own death and not his that should have a grip on her. She cannot accept the death of her son; she cannot accept being the survivor. There is no recurrence to the symbolic and she is not able to hold to any possibility of healthy mourning and a relief of pain. The repressed lingers and the irreconcilable persists. Mourning is something in which she cannot find an outlet for her damaged life and the devastating feeling of bereavement. Healthy mourning in unfeasible for Helen; she does not undergo the process of the many stages that mourning involves. Her experience of grief is not a process of working through the troublesome time of losing the beloved son, the process during which she could renounce her emotional ties to the lost child. Freud's theory of the elegiac ego proves to undermine the wish for the self that is not hampered by the claims of the dead Other (Freud 1957: 255). Kipling's heroine is burdened by the infamous past and the continuous grievance, and does not succumb to any affirmative aspects of mourning.

Assuredly, listening to a life narrative of the stranger—the woman who has a similar story—produces a unique chance of mourning. This, however, does not constitute a true deliverance. Most significantly, it is the Other who speaks the mind of the heroine, and thus weirdly the subconscious is brought to the surface. Helen herself, however, does not go through the stage when the destructive forces triggered by the loss of her child are contained, and in which the imaginary positive inner relationship with the son is reestablished. Not having admitted that she was Michael's true mother, Helen also deprives herself of the genuine bondage with the son. She symbolically annihilates the son, by not confirming her motherhood. Interestingly, Kipling draws attention to the two-fold character of death, the physical death and the death which happens on a symbolical and spiritual level, by Helen's negation of herself as a parent. To go further afield, figuratively she "puts to death" both her son and herself as a mother. The acute and aberrant denial of motherhood is the source of misunderstanding and misfortune,

and even more profoundly, the cause of the demise of the "natural" human existence. In Kipling's story, the surface, literal level of death takes on some novel and deeply intriguing overtones, possibly more tragic than the physical death of the son. Much in the same manner, as the stranger, the eponymous character of the gardener conveys the feelings hidden in Helen's heart. Odd as it is, the ghost-like figure of the gardener appears to share her bereavement. The role of the gardener seems to be that of making it possible for the hidden feelings to come to light. Similarly to the stranger on the train, he serves the role of the catalyst to the inner world of Helen. The alleged psychological distance and the seeming formality of the gardener conceal the presence of the most profound emotions inscribed in Helen's and the gardener's hearts. The unnamable, gloomy, nostalgic, languid mode enters their inner world, and the superfluous is no longer present. They seem to express a disbelief in the sinister truth of death and their attitude appears to testify to a Derridean sense of an impossibility of death. For Helen the death of the Other is an impossible possibility, she cannot come to terms with. The death of the beloved son has a two-fold quality—it is something squarely impossible in the Derridean sense, and at the same time something irresistibly obvious in the Heideggerian sense. The impossibility of death and its irresistible certitude converge in the fundamental premises around which the story revolves—Helen's renouncement of her motherhood. The lie which equals death may be viewed as the cause of the spiritual death and also in a distant, but not improbable way, the physical death. One can immediately think of the intertextual echo found in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness,* where lying for Marlowe is as destructive as death itself, thus it means death. The most enigmatic figure of the gardener establishing instantaneously the law of truth by the blunt unveiling of the truth of Helen's being a mother, reaffirms the law of life. In this light one can easily follow the interpretation given by various critics of the gardener as a Jesus-like figure. The law of truth fighting against the law of lie is clearly understood here as the law of life. Lie equals death, truth equals life. In a split second, for the first time in her adult, responsible life, Helen is brought back to life. The way to life, to a renewed life, or the return to life leads through the resurrecting of the truth about her life. The sharpness of the crude truth restores her to life. However, the truth is not just important in all its bareness, but in making it possible for Helen to genuinely mourn the son. That is the moment of the revived law of mourning which could not have been executed earlier.

Viewing the narrative through the prism of Derrida's assertion that dying is awaiting one another at the "limits of truth" heightens the possibility of seeing the relationship between truth and death as its central issue. Helen

becomes a genuine mourner once the truth about her past is revealed. Is it not feasible then to maintain that the limit of truth encountered in that very moment is at the same time the moment of its greatest condensation, the moment of the final and ultimate revelation, thus clearly, the redemption of the soul which is not to die but is being born to a new life? Such elucidation of Derrida's contention infiltrating the narrative can be seen as a grounded one, bearing in mind the entirety of the story's philosophical and religious background signaled even before the story proper opens. "The Gardener" is preceded with a fragment of cardinal Newman's poem about angels, which at the story's outset draws attention to the Christian theology reverberating through its lines. The battling ground of the heroine's heart confronting death escapes any simplistic or banal ways of defining. The story ends up abruptly on a nostalgic note. The indeterminacy of the heroine's mental composure and the highly ambiguous scene of an encounter at the cemetery open a space for the hermeneutic interpretation in which none of the possible options prevails or dominates over the other, proving thus the richness of the hermeneutic interpretative process.

Conclusion

Summing up, it must be stressed that the backdrop of the philosophical musings on death and mourning interlaced with the precepts of the psychoanalytic analysis was deployed in this article to shed light on the phenomenon of death, its irrevocability, the relation between the self and the dead Other. I accentuated the main ideas of the reflections on death by Heidegger, Derrida, Levinas and Freud. For Heidegger, death is an inexorable threat and trait of being, and in that it institutes the paradigm of the possibility of the impossible. The German philosopher sees the impossibility of death as constituting the possibility of being. Derrida holds that death is the most improper possibility and dying is awaiting one another at the "limits of truth." Levinas underscores the relation between the self and the Other. The one who survives in the face of death feels blameworthy. Freud analyzes the relation between death and melancholia, the healthy and unhealthy mourning. All the approaches account for a vision of death as a phenomenon inasmuch inevitable as escaping any conceptualization or compartmentalization. The hermeneutic interpretation of Rudyard Kipling's "The Gardener" provides an illustration of the various facets of the aforementioned meditations on death, mourning, the penetration, and astoundingly, also a union between this world and

the unworldly. Kipling's story is a meaningful example of the narrative which, when perceived from a variety of perspectives, proves the richness of the hermeneutic approach. It becomes the point of convergence of the literary illustration of the many philosophical traits: Heidegger's insistence on the inescapability of death, Derrida's contention of its impossibility, Levinas' stress on the priority of the ethics of the surviving party, and Freud's depiction of mourning as the healthy reaction to the death of the Other, standing in opposition to melancholy. "The Gardener" features a multifaceted protagonist, subscribing to the Heideggerian notion of the inevitability of death's powerful claim on the human being. Paradoxically, the heroine can also be viewed as the Derridean "disbeliever" in the reality of death. Meaningfully, she is the Levinasian "survivor." Her suffering and her reaction to death bespeaks an enduring melancholia in Freudian terms. The story's characterization illustrates the sumptuousness and the complexity of the philosophical approaches to the problem of death. Finally and not less importantly, it demonstrates the fertility and ineptitude of language in rendering the agency of some power beyond the ordinary, as well as the crossing of the boundaries between worlds, the portentously unusual encounters.

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