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JOURNEY TO THE END OF IDEOLOGY

Ideology and Jouissance in Céline's Journey to the End of the Night

The sensational publication of L.F. Céline's novel, *Journey to the End of the Night*,¹ in 1932 was accompanied by a vigorous dispute regarding the "political leaning" "ideology" or "worldview" of the novel and its author. Some critics, including Jean-Paul Sartre, identified socialist and communist elements in the novel; some, such as Léon Daudet, regarded it as tending towards right-wing, whereas others pointed out the dreadful tone and the dehumanization, specifically of the proletariat in the novel.² This dispute was not renounced, even with the publications of Céline's pamphlets, beginning with *Mea Culpa* (1936), which disappointed some of the critical evaluations and hopes for a new socialist writer, and continuing with the atrocious lyric of his subsequent pamphlets,³ which, for some critics (Godard; Murray; Butler)⁴, stained the reading of Céline's first novels: are there fascist or anti-Semitic elements in *Journey*? Can, or should, one discern between the anti-Semitic author and his literary text? From the mid-nineties of the twentieth century, studies on Céline tend to concentrate on his intrinsic anti-Semitism and racism and connect between the political ambiance in France in the twenties and thirties and Céline's personal life, political pamphlets and literary texts.⁵ A recent study by Sandrine Sanos anchors Céline's racism and anti-Semitism in a new configuration of French virility which, claims Sanos, Céline constructs in his writings.⁶

Conversely, in the eighties and nineties, some critics tried to go beyond the political reproaches against Céline, as well as the attempts to gentrify and defend the author and his literary texts in the name of what they termed an "anti-idealistic" and anti-ideological approach allegedly found in Céline's texts. As one critic asserts:

The overall theme of Céline's early novels, *Journey to the end of the Night* and *Death on the Installment Plan*, is that the struggle of human life to realize itself reveals the deadly, dominating nature of the idealistic claims of society, culture, and civilization. In their common forms, these claims assert that human life must be directed by abstract values as expressed in moral, intellectual, political, economic and community standards; that such values

are necessary for the proper organization of society and, subsequently, for the full realization of human life. All these claims for the necessity, rationality and desirability of social domination, Céline's novels undercut. What is exposed is not only the fact of human domination and its full meaning in terms of the individual human being, but equally all the domination's claims to legitimacy.⁷

Céline himself denigrated ideas as false and misleading and ideologies as deceitful formations, useful and lethal tools for realizing the sovereign interests and whims. As he declared, "I have no ideas, myself! Not a one! There's nothing more vulgar, more common, more disgusting than ideas!"⁸

This essay differs from both approaches—the "ideological" approach, which focuses on Céline's infamous ideas to be found in his writings, and the "anti-ideological" approach, which claims to an apparent anti-idealism in Céline—in that it deals with the way ideology structures Céline's *Journey*, not as a manifest content of particular ideas and beliefs, but as an unconscious formation that produces speech-acts, acts and practices. What this essay looks for is the way in which ideology structures and functions in Céline's *Journey*, in spite of the claims against the legitimacy of ideologies as domineering and oppressive structures, and before focusing on the author's racism and anti-Semitism. Moreover, the recent researches on Céline's political views in the context of his contemporaries may benefit from an analysis of the form of the ideological fantasy which supports reality in Céline's texts and the way his protagonists retain this fantasy. A relation between the interwar period in Germany, National Socialism and cynical reason had already been established by Peter Sloterdijk.⁹

As to the "anti-idealistic" approach, it refers to a specific definition of ideology, one that, following Žižek, I will criticize hereafter, while proposing a more updated and steadfast definition. The "anti-idealistic" approach regards ideology as a set of ideas and beliefs that underlie a social structure, a set which may be endorsed, opposed or denied. Yet this approach fails to acknowledge, while at the same time testifies to the way that ideology unconsciously structures the social reality, that "in ideology 'all is not ideology (that is, ideological meaning)', but it is this very surplus which is the last support of ideology."¹⁰ That is, what the anti-ideological critiques of Céline and, even more significantly, Céline's disgust with "ideas" deny and at the same time attest, this is the way this denial itself, this misrecognition of ideology, is what constitutes ideology.

By ideology I mean, following Althusser, Lacan and Žižek, an unconscious formation attached to the fundamental fantasy of the subject and to the way this fundamental fantasy organizes the enjoyment (*jouissance*) of the subject. The subject disavows the fantasy that organizes enjoyment, and this disavowal of the fantasy and enjoyment enables the functioning of ideology and, at the same time, protects and sustains the fantasy and enjoyment.¹¹ This mechanism of disavowal enables subjects to uphold certain ideological theoretical claims, while, in practice, maintain their

disavowed beliefs. The acts and practices of subjects in ideology attest to their adherence to ideology as an unconscious fantasmatic formation, without which they will be engulfed by the ghastly and senseless Real.¹²

I propose to view *Journey* as a case study of the connection between ideology and (surplus) enjoyment, and to consider Bardamu, the hero-narrator, as the epitome of this connection, that is, an embodiment of ideological *jouissance*. I will analyze the way ideology and enjoyment maintain each other in the novel, so that enjoyment is the last support of ideology and ideology functions as both a protection against enjoyment and a source of it. In addition, I will examine the way Bardamu is formed as a cynical figure and outline the connection between Bardamu's cynical reason and perversion as a clinical structure, according to Lacan. This essay will hopefully shed some light on the way ideology functions in Céline's *Journey*, against the background of Céline's critique, in which the discussion of ideology in the novel was discarded or, alternatively, dealt with from a specific conceptual standpoint.¹³

I will begin with the analysis of Bardamu as a cynical / kynic subject, according to Žižek's definitions of cynicism and kynicism, which are based on Sloterdijk's work, *Critique of Cynical Reason* (1983). Žižek defines the kynic as a subject who consciously undermines the apparatuses of the dominant ideology, in order to expose the corrupt interests that lie behind the ideological statements. Conversely, the cynical subject is well aware of the particular interests that underlie the ideological truisms, and yet, practically, he sustains and reproduces the ideological apparatuses, as if unaware of their deceitful meaning. I will claim that Bardamu holds these two contradictory approaches simultaneously and raise the questions, (1) of the possibility of a subject retaining cynical and kynical reason at the same time, and (2) what brings the cynical subject to maintain the very same ideological practices that he dismisses in his statements and conversations?

Subsequent to my attempt to settle the contradiction in (1), I will rely on Žižek's answer to (2) and try to extend his explanation with Lacan's and his followers' definition of the perverse structure. Thus I will discuss ideology in the novel as both a defense and a source of surplus enjoyment, and Bardamu as a cynical and perverse subject of ideology.

The first chapter of Céline's book, which is a microcosm of the text as a whole, delineates Bardamu's journey to the heart of the bourgeois ideology. This journey exposes the dreadful shame of the bourgeois ideology. The belief in progress, in rationality and science, nationalism and patriotism, the family, capitalism and the distribution of work—this is revealed as a collection of mad human inventions whose single aim is to reinforce the position of the rich and strong, beef up the full, and abuse unto death the resources of the poor.

And yet the disclosure of the contrasts of ideology does not mean a way out of it, and Bardamu's rejection of the dominant orders does not lead to a replacement of ideology with a new order. Conversely, every disclosure and rejection of ideology

leads Bardamu into the darkest heart of ideology. The journey to the end of the night is a journey to the heart of the night.

Bardamu is, on the one hand, what Žižek calls the kynical subject, that is, the subject who undermines the dominant ideology, reveals its apparatuses and suspends or rejects them. While, as a cynical subject, Bardamu is caught in the net of the dominant ideology and its practices—as a soldier, an agent of French colonialism, a worker at “Ford” (an agent of Capitalism), an extra in the Capitalist entertainment industry (in the Tarapout cinema) and finally, as a doctor, an agent of the modern institutions of mental health—as a kynical subject—Bardamu acts according to the ideological apparatuses only in order to “go and find out if that’s what it’s like!” (*Journey* 4). That is, Bardamu acts as a subject of the ruling ideology so as to undermine the ideological apparatuses and neutralize their power from within.

How is it possible that Bardamu is simultaneously a cynical subject who is not aware, as Žižek writes, of the ideological fantasy that lies in the heart of his everyday practices, and a kynical, rational subject who is aware of the falsehood of ideology? As Žižek explains, the gap between the kynic and the cynic resides in the place of fantasy and in an interpretation of the concept of ideology.

Following Žižek, we can think of the kynic as a figure who lives in the ideological world, sometime between the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries, with the sprouting of capitalism and the growth of rationalism as a dominant philosophy. Marx defined ideology as “false consciousness,” naïve misrecognition of the presuppositions which construct social reality. Some of Marx’s followers (for example, The Frankfurt School) added that this false consciousness is indispensable; reality itself is structured and reproduced as “ideological”: “The mask is not simply hiding the real state of things; the ideological distortion is written into its very essence” (Žižek, *Sublime* 28). In any event, these two conceptions refer to ideology as knowledge which one can discard and convert, or as a symptom, the awareness of which may dissolve.¹⁴ The kynic mocks and satirizes the ruling ideology, and thus exposes “the egotistical interests, the violence, the brutal claims to power” (29). He acts as an enlightened consciousness which is aware of the ideological mystification. As I will show hereinafter, Bardamu uses kynic practices—irony and sardonic sarcasm—in his conversation with Arthur Ganate in the first chapter and throughout the novel.

In contrast to that, the cynic lives in a “post-ideological” era. As Žižek explains, our time is not an indication of the end of ideologies, but a desperate disavowal of them. That is the time of the cynical reason. The cynic is well aware of the ideological lie, but acts as if he believes in ideology. As Žižek writes:

Cynical reason is no longer naïve, but is a paradox of an enlightened false consciousness: one knows the falsehood very well, one is well aware of a particular interest hidden behind an ideological universality, but still one does not renounce it. (29)

And he later adds:

It is clear, therefore, that confronted with such cynical reason, the traditional critique of ideology no longer works. We can no longer subject the ideological text to ‘symptomatic reading’, confronting it with its blank spots, with what it must repress to organize itself, to preserve its consistency—cynical reason takes this distance into account in advance. (30)

Consequently, we can no longer interpret ideology as a symptomatic formation, but turn to the level of ideological fantasy, that is, the way in which ideology structures the social reality itself. In this respect, ideology is no longer conceived as knowledge that can be transferred or demystified, but as “actions inserted into practices,” as Althusser put it.¹⁵ Ideology is an unconscious fantasy, inscribed in the very daily material practices of the subject. This unconscious fantasy is in fact what is termed by Lacan *le phantasme* (the phantasm or fundamental fantasy), that is, the scene that stages an unconscious desire and in which the subject finds its idiosyncratic way to relate to the big Other. The big Other, the representative of symbolic order—parent, priest, president, or any other position to which the subject himself has given the mandate to function as an authoritative agent of ideology¹⁶—is the support of the subject’s reality, without which the consistency of the subject would not be possible. Ideology as an unconscious fantasy is what enables the cynical subject to retain his ironical distance from ideology, while in practice acting according to it. Without this reality-supporting fantasy the cynic would have to confront reality in its ghastly disintegration, as the impossible-Real. In the light of this, I will analyze Bardamu as a cynical and kynical figure.

Bardamu as a Cynical and Kynical Subject

At the beginning of the first chapter of the novel Bardamu is interpellated by his friend, Arthur Ganate: “It all began just like that. I hadn’t said anything. I hadn’t said a word. It was Arthur Ganate who started me off. [...]. He seemed to want to talk to me. So I listened” (*Journey* 1). But the Other who compels Bardamu to speak does not interpellate him into the dominant ideology, but provokes Bardamu to resist it. On first reading Bardamu seems to be portrayed as a kind of secular leftist anarchist who scorns the grandiloquence of the right wing-nationalistic-conservative ruling ideology, while Arthur appears as a naïve patriot who supports the existing order. Bardamu appears to be Arthur’s kynical rival:

‘Now there’s a really great paper for you [*le Temps*]!’ said Arthur, trying to get a rise out of me. ‘There isn’t another paper like it for defending the interests of the French race.’

‘And I suppose the French race needs it, seeing that it doesn’t exist!’ said I promptly, to show that I knew what I was talking about.

But of course it exists! And a very splendid one it is too!' he insisted. 'It's the finest race in the world, and don't you believe any fool who tells you it isn't!' He had started in to harangue me for all he was worth. I held my ground, of course.

[...].

'You're right, Arthur, you're right there. Venomous yet docile, outraged, robbed,

Without guts and without spirit, they [our fathers] were as good as us all right. You certainly said it! Nothing really changes. Habits—ideas—opinions, we change them not at all, or if we do, we change them so late that it's no longer worthwhile. We are born loyal, and we die of it. Soldiers for nothing, heroes to all the world, monkeys with a gift of speech, a gift which brings us suffering, we are its minions. We belong to suffering; when we misbehave it tightens its hold on us.

[...].

'Talk about yourself ; you are nothing but an anarchist !' Always the little devil, you see, and just about as advanced as possible.

'You said it, fathead! I *am* an anarchist! And to prove it here's a sort of social prayer for vengeance I've written.

[...].

'That little piece of yours doesn't make sense in actual life. Personally I'm for the established order of things and I'm not fond of politics. Moreover, if the day should come when my country needs me, I certainly shan't hang back; it will find me ready to lay down my life for it. So there.' That was his answer to me. (1-3)

There are, nevertheless, clues that the conversation between the two is no more than an intellectual game, well aware of the political *Zeitgeist*. These clues lead to Bardamu's acting out of volunteering for the army marching off to war, while his patriot friend remains seated in the café.

In the beginning, before the argument between Arthur and Bardamu starts, Arthur pronounces an "opinion" later conveyed by his rival during the argument. It describes how "nothing has really changed" (1); how the French people remain the same, despite the widespread view of the industrial revolution turning society on its head. Acknowledging that these phrases are themselves common truisms, borrowed from the current ideological reserve, Bardamu says, "very proud at having come to these important conclusions ["ces vérités utiles" (*Voyage* 7)], we sat back feeling pleased with life and watched the ladies of the café" (*Journey* 1). Subsequently, Arthur incites Bardamu to negate him, in what turns out to be false piety for the sake of the ruling ideology, proving ironically that nothing really changes: Arthur "trying to get a rise out of [Bardamu]," and Bardamu answers him "to show

that I knew what I was talking about.” Then, when Arthur accuses Bardamu of anarchism, the latter remarks, referring to Arthur, “always a little devil, you see, and just about as advanced as possible.”

These phrases indicate that Bardamu and Arthur are aware, not only of the function of the bourgeois ideology apparatuses, but primarily of the discourse which applies to them and uncovers them. Bardamu knows well that his “opinions” prove nothing other than he is well informed, (“documenté” [*Voyage* 8]), familiar with the discourse that uncovers ideology, and Arthur is “a little devil” with the most advanced opinions. This theoretical game of uncovering ideology leads Bardamu to the heart of the ideological practices –recruitment to the army, the colonial apparatus, the capitalist industry and the medical establishment. In other words, Bardamu (and Arthur) know well that their arguments are not their own, but commonly held “opinions,” part of the prevailing public discourse; they also know well that they are, as Bardamu says, “singes parlants” (*Voyage* 8)¹⁷ who do not change either their masters or their opinions, and yet, they all but stick to their unconscious beliefs: The “patriot” Arthur adheres to his chair, and the “subversive” Bardamu joins the regiment that marches to war. That is why the ineffective argument finally tires out both of them, so that “I made it up with Arthur so as to put a stop to all this nonsense, once and for all. We agreed about almost everything, really” (*Journey* 3). Bardamu seals the argument with the slave ship parable. It vividly portrays the class struggle in the French society and the manner in which the ideological presuppositions and fabrications are “poured into [the] ears” of those located in the bottom of the social food chain (3). Likewise, it satirically describes the puerile yet effective techniques of martial interpellation summoning the masses to war:

“They have you up on deck. Then they put on their top-hats and let fly at you as follows: ‘See here, you set of sods!’ they say. ‘War’s declared. You’re going to board the bastards on *Country No.2* yonder and you’re going to smash them to bits! Now get on with it. There’s all the stuff you’ll need aboard. All together now. Let’s have it—as loud as you can make it! ‘God save *Country No. 1!*’ You’ve got to make them here you a long way off. There’s a medal and a cough-drop for the man who shouts the loudest! God in Heaven! And if there’s any of you who don’t want to die at sea, why, of course, you can go and die on land, where it takes even less time than it does here.”

‘You’ve just about hit it,’ agreed Arthur, who’d certainly become very easy to convince.

Whereupon, damn me if a regiment of soldiers didn’t come marching past the café where we were sitting, with the Colonel in front of his horse and all, looking simply fine and as smart as you make them. I gave just one great leap of enthusiasm.

‘I’ll go and find out if that’s what it’s like!’ I cried to Arthur, and off I went to join up, as fast as my legs would carry me. (4)

How is one to understand Bardamu's act of enlisting in the regiment? From one aspect, the proclamation, "I'll go and found out if that's what it's like!" is part of Bardamu's cynical reason, an attempt to put his slave galley speech into practice, to expose the opportunism and crude interest lying behind the nationalistic slogans. But at the same time, and from another angle, this phrase reveals Bardamu's ideological fantasy. That is to say, Bardamu knows well what he is doing; that enlisting will put him in the third class of the galley and wreck his life, and yet, off he goes and straight away.

There is, however, a third aspect. Bardamu's enlisting turns about to be a whim, an acting out directed to the big Other (personified in Arthur). The meaning of this acting out is that there is something Arthur *qua* Other missed, "deaf" to Bardamu's discourse, and on account of which Bardamu sends his non-verbal message to Arthur, while being himself unconscious of the meaning of that message. We can assess that the message encrypted in the acting out was that Bardamu was not exactly what he claimed to be, that he is not necessarily an anti-nationalist anarchist. Yet, later on, Bardamu realizes that he made a mistake when enlisting and does not stand behind his acting out. What, then, is Bardamu's belief? Apparently, Bardamu does not know what he believes and the *Journey*, from its beginning to its end, appears to be a quest for an inalienable belief, for a signifier that will be the subject's own:

And yet I hadn't gone as far in life as Robinson had... I hadn't made a success of it, that much was certain; I hadn't acquired one single good solid idea like the one he'd had, to get himself bumped off like that. An idea as large as my own clumsy great head, greater than all the fear that was in it, a beautiful idea, some splendid, some really comfortable idea to die with... [...]. It was all no good. My own idea, the ideas I had, roamed loose in my mind with plenty of gaps in between them; they were like little tapers, flickering and feeble, shuddering all through life in the midst of a truly appalling, awful world. (538-39)

For the (both neurotic and perverse) cynic, there are always "others" who believe, while the pervert cynic himself "knows" (the neurotic is not usually sure that he knows, and he casts doubt). As I have pointed out, Bardamu and Arthur "know" the widespread popular opinions and can, therefore, play with them without, allegedly, being tricked into them, whereas "others" actually believe in these opinions. Žižek writes about:

[T]he tension of knowledge versus the disavowed belief embodied in external ritual—the situation often described in the terms of cynical reason whose formula, the reverse of Marx's, was proposed decades ago by Peter Sloterdijk: I know what I am doing; nonetheless, I am doing it...." This formula, however, is not as unambiguous as it may appear—it should be supplemented with: "...because I don't know what I believe."¹⁸

As we shall see, Bardamu's ambiguity regarding the war persists as our non-duped narrator is captured in his own trick / acting out.

When the festive parade of the regiment subsides and the cheers become silent, Bardamu comes back to his senses and says, "It's not such fun, after all. I doubt if it's worth it" and is about to leave (*Journey* 5). But unfortunately, it is too late. "They'd shut the gate behind us, quietly; the civilians had. We were caught, like rats in a trap" (5). Later on, throughout the whole section on the war, Bardamu continues to express his repugnance towards the war and what it represents: inherent hatred, violence and cruelty of men toward their fellow beings; self-interest and self-preservation; mad competitiveness and conceit. He describes the war as the arena where, in Freud's language, the death drive and the pleasure principle take part in a jumble.¹⁹ He emphasizes his will to escape, to evaporate from this madness and repeats incessantly his "cowardice" as the only sign of sanity in a furnace of lunacy. As the war advances, Bardamu's reactions of physical, as well as moral and psychic repulsion increase and he finally collapses and is admitted to observation (*Journey* 58-59), suffers from what seems to be post-traumatic stress and is hospitalized (60), and, later on, is dismissed from the army (114).

Nevertheless, the war yields in Bardamu mixed feelings of repulsion and attraction. These affects call to mind Kristeva's concept of abjection, the vertigo of hovering borders and collapsed meanings. The abject points at what were cast away from the body as a secretion, yet it keeps alluring and repelling. It undermines identities, systems and orders, and transgresses borders and laws.

At first glance, it seems that Bardamu's reaction to the war, as well as other later occasions, for example, examining his patients, has to do with abjection, the feeling of loathing and fascination. According to Kristeva, the symbolic agency in Céline's oeuvre is "a fleeting, derisory, and even idiotic illusion, which is yet upheld."²⁰ Instead of the symbolic father, there is an imaginary clownish, ridiculous one. Auguste, the father in Céline's second novel, *Death on the Installment Plan*, is an absurdly mad figure.²¹ This flaccidity of the symbolic may pertain to the disavowal mechanism of the pervert, in which the subject knows well the law of the father, and yet does not act according to it. In contrast to the psychotic, whose foreclosure rejects the law completely, the pervert acknowledges the existence of the law, but denies his own submission to it, or, according to Fink's version, the pervert endeavors to bring the law into being in order to delimit *jouissance*.²²

Yet, Kristeva's analysis cannot be integrated with this study for at least two reasons. Firstly, Kristeva does not necessarily locate Céline in the perverse structure. Rather, her analysis of Céline's hallucinatory language and his "delirium" suggests the latter is a borderline more than a pervert. Although abjection is related to perversion—the abject distorts the law, uses it in order to deny it,²³ the phenomenon of abjection, according to Kristeva, appears essentially in borderline, that is, psychotic rather than perverse, subjects. Kristeva describes abjection as an intersection of phobia, obsession and perversion. The symbolic authority is not met with denial or

disavowal, but with a hallucination which makes it both ideal and dreadful (Kristeva 44-51). Consequently, the Other is not the borderline's object, but his abject, clownish, fallen and repulsive, and the borderline cannot be constituted as a subject: "No subject, no object: petrification on one side, falsehood on the other" (47).

This leads to the second reason for the inadequacy of relating abjection to this study of *Journey*, ideology and *jouissance*. The term abjection indicates Kristeva's distancing from Lacan, while upholding a Lacanian vocabulary, and her turning to the theory of object relations: the abject replaces the object, who, for Kristeva, personifies the Other. Conversely, for Lacan, the Other is not an object, but the locus of speech. The Other may be only represented by another person in so far as the latter occupies the function of the symbolic order for the subject.²⁴ Contrary to Kristeva's analysis, I will prove that Bardamu is clinically and structurally perverse, since, at least in *Journey*, he is using the Other as an instrument of *jouissance*, or, put alternatively by Lacan, he "makes himself the instrument of the Other's *jouissance*."²⁵

Back to the war in *Journey*, the feelings of (self) repulsion and disenchantment with the latest object of *jouissance* increase and Bardamu's only wish becomes to get away and quit the battlefield (7). What the cynic (and the pervert) most despise is being taken in.²⁶ Bardamu feels deceived: "I couldn't make it out. I was a cuckold in everything—in women, in money, in ideas. I was being deceived and I was unhappy" (*Journey* 76). Being deceived is unbearable for the pervert. As Fink and Mannoni explain, the pervert's schemes and manipulations produce a scene where he has the upper hand, and where he initiates and controls the *jouissance* of the Other.²⁷ Since he disavows the Law of the big Other, he stages a scene where an other (o lower case) plays the role of the Other who coerces the Law, or where the pervert himself plays the role of the Father instead of the disavowed signifier *Nom-du-Père*. But when the pervert encounters what he interprets as the Law itself, his whole plot collapses. Instead of being the master of the situation, he becomes the fool, the deceiver deceived, the non-duped who has erred.²⁸ This collapse means a fall from the status of the subject, extreme destitution, where a Real hole gapes in the pervert's structured reality. This hole may be filled only by the restoration of the fetish or the role of the plotter.

As will be clarified later on, for Bardamu, the "knowledge" of life is the fetish which fills the hole. Knowledge is gained by living and / as suffering, picking one's wounds or the wounds of others. That is, knowledge is equivalent to the infinite, unlimited *jouissance*:

This is how I had figured it out: I'll discover, by way of experiment, just how much of a flare-up you can start with yourself if you try. But the thing is you're never through with an excitement and to-do, you never know quite how far you'll have to go if you start being really outspoken. Or what people are still hiding from you... Or what they'll show you yet... if you live long enough, if you look far enough into their sillinesses. It all had to be begun all over again. (*Journey* 289)

Along with the detestable duty to fight, it is the war that enables Bardamu to “*entrer dans le fond de la vie*” (240),²⁹ to experience and know “Life, the one and only mistress of all men” (245). Getting into the thick of Life, into its bone marrow and blood capillaries is not only Bardamu’s safety valve against the lack in the Other, that is, his fetish, or as he puts it, “this confounded fate of mine,” “my *raison d’être*” (243). In this darkness of life, where the ugly truth about people, apparatuses and beliefs is revealed, Bardamu finds his aspiration, satisfaction and *jouissance*:

Truly everything that is really interesting goes on in the dark. One knows nothing of the inner history of people (63).

Studying changes you, it makes a man proud. Before one was only hovering round life. You think you’re a free man, but you get nowhere. Too much of your time spent dreaming. You slither along on words. That’s not the real thing at all. Only intentions and appearances. You need something else. With my medicine, though I wasn’t very good at it, I had come into closer contact with men, beasts and creation. Now it was a question of pushing right ahead, foursquare, into the gist of things. Death comes chasing along after you, you’ve got to get a move on, and you have to find something to eat too, while you’re searching, and dodge war as well. That makes an awful lot of things to do. It isn’t easy. (254)

It’s nice to touch the precise moment when matter becomes life. You soar out to the infinite plains, which stretch out before mankind. ‘Ooo!’ you say, and ‘Ooo!’ As much as you can, you enjoy riding that moment, and it’s like great, wide desert sands... (508)

Ideology as a Sublime Object

Being fascinated by the exposed ugliness of the dark heart of Life and human beings becomes Bardamu’s pattern, his own private Law, a sublime object, a fetish. Why? Here I will draw on Mannoni’s distinction between neurotic and perverse disavowal and his explanation of the difference between faith and belief (Mannoni).³⁰ Belief belongs to the imaginary register, for example, belief in gods, spirits, a specific ideology, etc. Conversely, faith is related to the symbolic register, the commitment to the big Other and the pact between the subject and the big Other. The neurotic may disavow his belief in the imaginary level, yet he puts faith in the symbolic, whereas the pervert disavows that he believes in the imaginary level and cannot have faith in the symbolic. The neurotic represses the castration or the Name-of-the-Father, yet accepts them unconsciously, due to the “compensation” he receives by entering the symbolic order and acquiring the status of a subject (son, parent, citizen, etc.). The neurotic has faith in ideology as an indispensable symbolic and social order, and although he does not believe in a particular ideology, he has (an unconscious) faith in “ideology in general,” as Althusser put it, that is, ideology as an unconscious eternal formation (Althusser 120-22).

On the contrary, the pervert, as Mannoni points out, is not ready to be deceived. He is not capable, structurally, of “playing the game,” participating in the symbolic pact. What the pervert disavows is the lack of the mother, the lack which enables (the mother’s and the infant’s) desire. As Fink clarifies, it is not the mother’s demand of the child to be the object that fills her lack which produces the perverse structure, but the failure and insufficiency of the paternal function. In the perverse structure, the paternal function exists as a prohibition of incest—*le Non du Père*, but it is disavowed as the Law which inscribes the prohibition, names the lack and opens up the way for desire—*le Nom du Père*. Thus the pervert knows well that mother does not have a phallus, and yet he acts as if she has one (by conferring an object, a shoe or a piece of cloth, the status of the phallus—this pattern holds specifically in fetishism). In relation to ideology or the symbolic order, the pervert may provide the same ambivalent statement as the neurotic, but his unconscious reason for adhering to ideology will be different from that of the neurotic. Ideology is (unconsciously) conceived by the pervert not as a dimension of the symbolic Law, but as another Law, which replaces the impotent Law of the Father. The pervert’s ideology is not ideology in general, but a particular ideology, elevated to the level of ideology in general, attempting incessantly to replace it. The pervert will hold on to his ideology because it is the last frontier that covers the traumatic lack, the same lack which is unbearable for the pervert, and which, at the same time, he is eager to ascribe to the Other, enjoying the latter’s lack / wound. The pervert will treat ideology as a sublime object, an object raised “to the dignity of the Thing,”³¹ that is, a fetish, with its entire eroticized rituality. Ideology is thus conceived as *objet petit a*, an element of *jouissance* and the object which blocks and, at the same time, sustains the lack in the Other.

In light of this, Bardamu enlists in the army and goes to war because war, as a practice of the dominant militaristic and nationalistic ideology, signifies, on the one hand, the lack, impotence and insufficiency of the Other, a lack which the pervert believes that he himself is not subject to. On the other hand, war provides *jouissance* which conceals and seals the lack in the Other. In any event, the pervert insists on the Other’s *jouissance*, and ideology in *Journey* turns out to be a resource of *jouissance*.

This may also explain why Bardamu is not a revolutionary, as Trotsky pointed out.³² In certain conditions, for example, the end of the analytic treatment, the neurotic can replace the current dominant order and “change the coordinates of the constellation,” as Žižek puts it, that is, affect the symbolic.³³ This is due to the symbolic being the instance of the obligatory Law, the exception which enables the exchange of different signifiers or particular ideologies. According to Freud’s myth of *Totem and Taboo*, the murder of the primal obscene father who enjoyed all the women of the horde, constituted the law of castration, which established the primal father as the prohibited exception and allowed the exchange of permitted spouses. For the pervert, conversely, the symbolic is not obligatory and its vacancy is filled with a representation of the primal obscene father. That is, the pervert’s world is filled

with *jouissance* and not with desire and with a futile Law which does not enable the exchange of signifiers and ideologies. The pervert is enslaved to another Law (and not to the Law of the Other), to an ersatz ideology that endeavors to replace the ideology-in-general and without which the pervert would have to confront the impossible Real. Bardamu eventually (mis)recognizes the dominant exploitative capitalist, colonialist, chauvinist and nationalistic ideology as the ultimate prototypical ideology, thus becoming an impostor entangled in his own trick.

A Pattern of Jouissance

The proceedings that bring Bardamu to enlist in the regiment delineate a recurrent pattern to be found before any new adventure in the novel. Firstly, there is a process of expectations and hopes regarding the forthcoming adventure, fantasized by Bardamu and encouraged by an ideological propaganda. Bardamu apparently neither believes in nor relies on the ideological promises, and yet typically anticipates them with excitement. Then, when the expectations and promises are not fulfilled, disenchantment and disappointment follow, sometimes accompanied with the symptomatic phrases, “C’est tout à recommencer!” (*Voyage* 10),³⁴ “It all had to be begun all over again” (*Journey* 289), “Tout était à recommencer” (*Voyage* 470).³⁵ Bardamu expresses his disappointment: He has been deluded again; he knew that his hopes and fantasies would be smashed and he nevertheless went eagerly for them. Then the world of the pervert temporarily collapses, before returning to its original state. As Mannoni writes regarding Casanova’s entrapment by the big Other (embodied in the forces of nature of the storm and thunder), “[W]e rather frequently encounter similar moments of panic among perverts in analysis; they do not necessarily have a therapeutic effect. Once the panic subsides, there is a return to the status quo.” And this is due to disavowal being “a system of protection” against castration (Mannoni 87).

The recurrence of the discussed structural pattern is significant, since it unfolds the meaning of the contradiction “I know well, but all the same.” Bardamu does not draw any pleasure or satisfaction from the discouraging adventures, but the recurrence implies that he extracts *jouissance* from them. His enjoyment is combined with pain, abjection and terror. He rejoices in suffering. For example, when he sails to Africa, after his release from the army:

‘I’ll go to Africa,’ I said to myself. ‘The further away I go the better.’ [...].

They put me on this boat then, for me to go and try to make a new man of myself in the Colonies. They wished me well and were determined that I should make my fortune. Personally I only wanted to get away, but as one only ought always to look useful if one isn’t rich [...], it couldn’t very well last. [...]. So ‘Africa has it’ I said and I let myself be bounded towards the tropics, where I was told you only had not to drink too much and to behave fairly well to make your way at once.

[...]

For a packet of Pilett blades they were going to barter fine, long pieces of ivory with me, and birds of bright plumage and slaves under age. That's what I'd been promised. I was going to really live, so they told me. (*Journey* 114-15)

Bardamu is sent to Africa with ex-military men and colonial officers in an old rickety boat named *Admiral Bragueton*. At first their cruise is peaceful, but later on the weather changes, becoming sultry and disquieting. The heat and humidity are followed by disintegration and melting of objects and passengers alike. Bardamu, the only passenger who paid for his ticket, is harassed by crazy and enraged colonials and army officers, and turned into the scapegoat of the ship, "infamous unworthy wretch" (118). Bardamu overcomes their hatred and intended violence by again becoming an impostor: he shams a spectacle of patriotism, praises the "heroic officers" and tops it off by listening to and recounting fabricated tales of bravery from the war. But this deceptive way of self defense causes Bardamu to be filled with self-hatred. The deception here is intended to cover the terror and disintegration Bardamu undergoes when facing the enraged passengers. In contrast to other occasions, he does not have the upper hand in this situation:

Bit by bit, while this humiliating trial lasted, I felt my self-respect, which was about to leave me anyway, slipping still further from me, then going completely and at last definitely gone, as if officially removed. Say what you like, it's a very pleasant sensation. After this incident I've always infinitely free and light; morally, I mean, of course. (125)

When night falls, Bardamu takes the opportunity to flee into the darkness to his next adventure.

The same pattern occurs again, with Bardamu's arrival to New York, and later on, with his return to France. Murray notes too the recurrent pattern of enthusiastic expectations for spectacular adventures and the disenchantment in the novel, but he identifies it as a facet of ideological subversion in the satirical genre to which the novel belongs (Murray 158, 160). He claims that the depiction of the events on the ship and, subsequently, on land, where Bardamu is degraded and turned by the representatives of imperialism into an "unworthy wretch" are meant to undermine the imperial enterprise.

Yet, Murray's survey does not provide a complete explanation of Bardamu's course of action. A Lacanian perspective brings up the question of the subject's *jouissance*—what does Bardamu enjoy when he enters with all his might an adventure from which he will narrowly escape? I claim that, more than the uncovering of the ideological discourse, Bardamu enjoys the unveiling of the crude interests that lie behind the ideological claims. Bardamu enjoys, additionally and particularly, his becoming an "unworthy wretch," the sublime object of enjoyment which ideology feeds on, the plug in the hole of the big Other. It is this *jouissance* which Bardamu's adventures at the heart of darkness of ideology provide, and which crosses his

cynical reason: he knows well that the passengers of the *Admiral-Bragueton* will victimize him, and yet he chooses to play the role of the victim, while carefully plotting a position that will finally save his life. As a pervert, Bardamu wishes to control the *jouissance* of Others. He does not want that *jouissance* to control him so as to endanger his life, but rather, to put Others in a state of enjoyment / suffering. In their tortured enjoyment he finds his *jouissance*. Bardamu posits himself as *objet petit a*, the object-cause of desire, the object which incites the others' violent and sexual drives, and is not only caught up in the network of the relationships on the ship, but also provides the others with the mandate to treat him as *objet petit a*, the remainder.³⁶ Although it seems that Bardamu does not have the upper hand in the orgiastic events of the ship, this is Bardamu, the (anti) hero and narrator, who is plotting his role as object *a*, the object of the Other's *jouissance*. Inscripting himself as the victim of the Other's *jouissance*, he ignites a masochistic orgy, where the Other becomes a spectacle of enjoyment: "A general moral rejoicing [*réjouissance*] was imminent aboard the *Admiral Bragueton*. This time the evil-eyed one wasn't going to get away with it. And that meant me" (*Journey* 118).

[T]here was one young governess who led the feminine element of the cabal. [...]. She was hardly ever separated from the Colonial officers, resplendent in their gorgeous tunics and armed with the oath they had sworn that they would annihilate me. [...]. In fact, I was a source of entertainment. This young lady spurred them on, invoked the wrath of Heaven on my head, wouldn't rest until I had been picked up in pieces, until I'd paid the penalty for my imaginary offence in full, been punished indeed for existing and, thoroughly beaten, bruised and bleeding, had begged for mercy under a rain of blows and kicks from the fine fellows whose pluck and muscular development she was aching to admire. Deep down in her wasted insides she was stirred at the thought of some magnificently blood-bespattered scene. The idea was as exciting to her as being raped by a gorilla. [...]. I was the victim. The whole ship clamored for my blood, seemed to tremble from kneeling in expectation. (121-22)³⁷

And after Bardamu reconciles the enraged group of soldiers with his cajolery discussion, he says:

By Gad, I was the fellow to make a party go! They slapped their thighs in approbation. No one else could make life so enjoyable in spite of the moist horror of these latitudes. The point is that I was listening beautifully. (128)

As a cynical pervert, Bardamu knows well what the Other(s) desire is, and he hastens to fulfill that alleged desire and to become the *objet a*. He is interested in the *jouissance* of Others, and thus portrays so well the sexual-violent vibrations and frissons of the ship and its passengers who are excited to see his downfall. After he manages to escape his lot, Bardamu functions as *objet a*, the object of enjoyment, for the officers who recount their tales of bravery.

Bardamu describes a similar ecstatic violent-sexual experience when he works at “Ford.” Here, as on the *Admiral- Bragueton* though in a different material reality, everything solid melts into one piece of steel, men and machines become one, and in this catastrophic copulation Bardamu (as well as the other workers) serves as object *a*, plugging the Real of the capitalist Other and becoming its object of *jouissance*:

The whole building shook, and one’s self from one’s soles to one’s ears was possessed by this shaking, which vibrated from the ground, the glass panes and all this metal, a series of shocks from floor to ceiling. One was forced to become a machine oneself, the whole of one’s carcass quivering in this vast frenzy of noise, which filled you within, and all round the inside of your skull and lower down rattled your bowels and climbed to your eyes in infinite unending strokes. (238)

Jouissance as the Capitalist Injunction

The will of surplus enjoyment and obtaining *objet petit a*, the object that fills the lack in the Other, urges Bardamu to taste repeatedly “a desire for fresh adventures and new worlds to conquer” (201),³⁸ even when it costs him his love (Molly) and well-being. In addition, every adventure merges with a mode of production and ideology that characterizes the epoch: the First World War, the Colonial enterprise, mass production and industrialization, the constitution of the establishments of science and medicine. Bardamu draws his *jouissance* from getting into the thick of things and wallowing in the dust and blood of life, and his unstoppable will-to-enjoy (*volonté-de-jouissance*) is supported, encouraged and induced by the different ideologies and modes of production which structure modern life.

Bardamu’s last major adventure is the medical escapade, the exploration of the sick and dying body, of flesh and blood, both supported and constituted by the medical establishment. I will conclude with this experience, and show how the ends of *jouissance*, the perverse structure and the capitalist ideology meet.

As a doctor, Bardamu mostly watches his patients passively, witnessing their suffering and decay. He faces their torments helplessly, unable neither to better their condition nor save them. He is intrigued and amazed by their pain and dying. Instead of being the Other, the authoritative doctor who conducts the session, Bardamu carefully observes every moment of their deterioration, and participates in the patients’ and their relatives’ *jouissance*. The enjoyment of Others astounds, overwhelms and paralyzes him, and he cannot react against it and restrict it. For example, in the case of the pregnant young woman and her horrific mother, the latter is ashamed of the conduct of her reckless daughter and refuses to hospitalize her, playing “the leading part as intermediary between her daughter and myself. She didn’t give a damn what happened to the play, she was all set, and having a wonderful time” (*Journey* 275-76).

Bardamu, weary and depressed by the mother's boisterous scene, silently listens to the girl's drops of blood fall onto the floor:

Too great a humiliation, too much trouble leads to absolute inertia. The world is too heavy a burden for you to lift. You give up. All the same I did ask, timidly, whether the placenta had come away entirely yet. The girl's pale hands, bluish at the tips, hung down loose on each side of the bed. My question was answered by the mother with a further flood of awful lamentations. But to pull myself together was really more than I could do.

I had been so long overcome by depression myself, I'd been sleeping so badly, that in this chaos I was no longer in the least interested as to whether any one thing happened before anything else. I only reflected that it was easier listening to this mother's wailings sitting down than standing up. (276)

Sitting down passively also enables Bardamu to reflect and compare the mother's and daughter's bygone sexual qualities and build a "psychological" profile of the mother (276-77). This scene as a whole may serve as a paradigm of a perverse social relation. Bardamu, knows well what he has to do, and yet betrays his vocation—the doctors' oath, playing again the part of the victim, watches the daughter dying and the mother exclaiming her moralistic vows. The mother, ignoring her daughter's condition, enjoys the scene she has made for the doctor at the expense of her daughter. And, finally, the daughter is enjoyed by the two living persons who will do nothing to help her.

How is this scene related to the dominant capitalist ideology? Bardamu's occupation is attached to the scientific and medical establishment. It is, thus, part of the discourse of the university, which according to Žižek, is the characteristic discourse of capitalism. The scientific discourse and the discourse of capitalism share the structure of the university discourse:

$$\frac{S_2}{S_1} \rightarrow \frac{a}{\mathcal{S}}$$

Fig.1 The discourse of the university

In the discourse of the university S_2 , that is, knowledge or the chain of signifiers, is in the dominant position, that of the speaking agent. This knowledge claims to be factual and scientific, although it hides its foundation in a Master (S_1) which is in the position of truth. Bardamu's scientific knowledge is not (only) impartial, but draws its authority from the scientific establishment, which is full of contradictory interests and power struggles, as described lengthily by the narrator (*Journey* 294-301). Turning to the discourse of capitalism, this means that "The facts... are not integrated into comprehensive symbolic arrangement; instead they are the ever-conflicting guidelines and opinions of myriad experts" (Dean 98). As Parapine,

Bardamu's teacher and colleague, asserts, when the latter asks him for an advice on the treatment of the dying boy, Bébért: "Amid so many unstable theories, so much contradictory data, the reasonable thing, when it comes down to it, is to make no definite choice. Do the best you can, my friend!" (*Journey* 300). The decline of symbolic efficiency is one of the features that Žižek finds in nowadays capitalist ideology (Dean 98-99). It pertains to the subject's perplexity regarding any ideology and "truths," and his cynical reason and deficiency of belief.

Back to the university discourse, S2, knowledge, addresses *a*, who is in the position of the Other. In the scientific discourse the subject is considered an object of investigation. Recall Bardamu's statements about his insatiable "curiosity" regarding the human body and mind, quoted here previously. In Capitalism the subject is addressed as an object of excess, a kernel of enjoyment (Dean 98). He is referred to as a capricious and unstable set of needs, desires and drives, that is, as the object of *jouissance*. Žižek defines the second characteristic of capitalism as an injunction to enjoy that addresses the subject by the obscene dark shadow of the symbolic order—the superego. The injunction to enjoy is contradictory, inconsistent and impossible to fulfill, and thereby defines enjoyment. For example, the encouragement to consume fatty and salty food, and at the same time to maintain strict diet and fitness, is conflicting. In *Journey* the superego's injunction to enjoy may be seen, for example, in Bardamu's experience at "Ford," when the doctor who examines the candidates for the job says to Bardamu:

'Your studies won't be any use to you here, my lad. You haven't come here to think, but to go through the motions that you'll be told to make... We've no use for intellectuals in this outfit. What we want is chimpanzees. Let me give you a word of advice: never say a word to us about being intelligent. We will think for you, my friend. Don't forget it.' (*Journey* 237)

Soon after, Bardamu merges with the other workers and machines in the factory into one vibrating piece of *jouissance*.

The pervert, Bardamu, may be considered as capitalism's ultimate consumer and distributor—an ideal counterpart to the university and scientific discourses of capitalism. That is why he is thrown from one capitalist enterprise to another. He fits into a society whose symbolic mandate is inefficient, where the Name-of-the-Father is not taken seriously. In this society, equipped with scientific knowledge and authority, he can position himself in the place of the symbolic shadow, the superego, enjoining Others to enjoy, and participating in their enjoyment. Bardamu's mission of exploring the human body and soul strays away from the mere curiosity and the benefitting of humanity that may characterize the doctor or the scientist. Rather, as a representative of the scientific establishment, the medical profession serves as an axe for Bardamu to grind, a vocation behind which he can hide his particular interest: to be present at the Other's *jouissance* and be the object of *jouissance*, which fills the lack in the Other.

Notes

1. Louis-Ferdinand Céline, *Journey to the End of the Night*, trans. John Marks (London : Chatto and Windus, 1934). *Voyage au bout de la Nuit*. 1932, Dossier par Phillip Destruel (Paris: Gallimard, 1996). Henceforth cited in the text as *Journey* or *Voyage*.
2. Jack Murray, *The Landscapes of Alienation: Ideological Subversion in Kafka, Céline and Onetti* (California: Stanford UP, 1991), 128-130.
3. *Bagatelles pour un massacre* (1937), *L'École des cadavres* (1938), *Les beaux draps* (1941).
4. Henri Godard, *Poétique de Céline* (Paris: Bibliothèque des idées, éditions Gallimard, 1985). Butler, Gerald J., "Three Contributions to the Reading of Céline" in James Flynn ed. *Understanding Céline* (Seattle: Genitron P, 1984) 133-186. See, for example: "[F]or how could those two novels [*Voyage au bout de la Nuit* and *Mort à Crédit*] so full of compassion (as they are often described now) be written by—an anti-Semite?" 157.
5. David Carroll, *French Literary Fascism: Nationalism, Anti-Semitism, and the Ideology of Culture* (New Jersey: Princeton UP, 1995). Scullion, Rosemary and Solomon Philip H. (eds.), *Céline and the Politics of Difference* (New Hampshire: UP of New England, 1995). Roussin, Philippe, *Misère de la Littérature, Terreur de l'Histoire : Céline et la Littérature Contemporaine* (Paris : Gallimard, 2005).
6. Sandrine Sanos, *The Aesthetics of Hate: Far-Right Intellectuals, Anti-Semitism, and Gender in 1930s France* (California: Stanford, 2012).
7. James Flynn, ed, *Understanding Céline* (Seattle: Genitron P, 1984) 5.
8. Louis-Ferdinand Céline, *Conversations with Professor Y*, trans. Stanford Luce (Champaign : Dalkey Archive Press, 2006) 13.
9. Peter Sloterdijk, *Critique of Cynical Reason*. 1983, trans. Michael Eldred (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1987). Specifically in the last part of his book, 384-533.
10. Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (London: Verso, 1989) 124.
11. Jodi Dean, *Žižek's Politics* (NY and London: Routledge, 2006) 190.
12. Žižek, *Sublime* 28-33.
13. Nevertheless, there are few exceptions to this corpus of particular ideological / anti-ideological criticism: Jack Murray concentrates on the ideological subversive and satirical effect of Céline's novel. His account of ideology is based on Fredric Jameson's, who saw ideology as a constant (and unconscious) production of "symbolic acts," constitutive meanings and ideas, and emphasized the subversive political effect of literary products (Murray 2-3). Yet what Jameson and Murray's accounts lack is the way the ruling ideology persists, in spite of subversive and satirical effects in literary texts, as well as other cultural products, and the way in which ideology structures the social reality and is indispensable. Another study that takes into account the question of ideology as an unconscious structure is Andreas Bjørnerud's doctoral dissertation, *Beckett, Céline, Lacan: The Death of 'Man'*. Bjørnerud's work can be considered a major contribution to the study of bourgeois consciousness in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and especially between the two world wars. Bjørnerud points out the transformation of bourgeois ideology "from liberal to monopoly capitalism" during the interwar period, when the enlightened autonomic subject enslaves himself willingly, "masochistically," as Bjørnerud writes, to the ruling ideology although he knows that it will eliminate him. Nevertheless, this submissive subject believes himself to be free.

Although Bjørnerud does not develop this idea according to the Lacanian-Žižekian analysis of enjoyment as the surplus of ideology, he does describe here, without articulating it, the cynical reason of the late capitalism. See Bjørnerud, Andreas, *Beckett, Céline, Lacan : The Death of 'Man'*, Diss. Oxford U (Bodleian), 1992 (Oxford: Oxford U, 1993) 25-26.

14. “‘Ideological’ is not the ‘false consciousness’ of a (social) being but this being itself in so far as it is supported by ‘false consciousness’. Thus we have finally reached the dimension of the symptom, because one of its possible definitions would also be ‘a formation whose very consistency implies a certain non-knowledge on the part of the subject’: the subject can ‘enjoy his symptom’ only in so far as its logic escapes him—the measure of the success of its interpretation is precisely its dissolution.” (Žižek, *Sublime* 21). Italics in original.
15. Louis Althusser, “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes towards an Investigation)” in Slavoj Žižek ed., *Mapping Ideology* (London: Verso, 1994) 127.
16. “I am only what I am for the others, yet simultaneously I am the one who self-determines myself, i.e., who determines which network of relations to others will determine me. In other words, I am determined by the network of (symbolic) relations precisely and only insofar as I, qua void of self-relating, self-determine myself this way.” (Žižek, *Tarrying with the Negative: Kant, Hegel, and the Critique of Ideology* [Durham: Duke UP, 1993] 131-32).
17. “Monkeys with a gift of speech” (*Journey* 2).
18. Slavoj Žižek, *The Puppet and the Dwarf: The Perverse Core of Christianity* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT P, 2003) 5.
19. Sigmund Freud, “Beyond the Pleasure Principle,” in James Strachey et al. eds., *The Standard Edition of the Complete Works of Sigmund Freud*. Vol. 18. (London: Hogarth and the Institute of Psychoanalysis, 1953-1974) 7-64.
20. Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (New York: Columbia UP, 1982) 135.
21. Kristeva *Powers* 170-73.
22. Bruce Fink, “Perversion,” in Molly Ann Rothenberg, Dennis Foster and Slavoj Žižek eds., *Perversion and the Social Relation* (Durham and London: Duke UP, 2003) 38, 43-44.
23. Kristeva *Powers* 15-16.
24. Evans, Dylan, *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis* (London: Routledge, 1996) 135-6.
25. Jacques Lacan, “The Subversion of the Subject and the Dialectic of Desire in the Freudian Unconscious,” trans. Bruce Fink, Héloïse Fink and Russell Grigg, in *Écrits: The First Complete Edition in English* (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 2002) 697.
26. Octave Mannoni, “I Know Well, but All the Same...” Trans. G. M. Goshgarian, in Molly Ann Rothenberg, Dennis Foster and Slavoj Žižek eds., *Perversion and the Social Relation* (Durham and London: Duke UP, 2003) 90.
27. Bruce Fink, “Perversion,” in Molly Ann Rothenberg, Dennis Foster and Slavoj Žižek eds., *Perversion and the Social Relation* (Durham and London: Duke UP, 2003) 38-67.
28. Based on Lacan’s pun, Le Nom-du-Père/Les non-dupes errent.
29. Meaning “to enter into the bottom of life” (my translation). This phrase is missing from Marks’s translation. See *Journey* 254.

30. See also: Žižek, *On Belief* (London: Routledge, 2001) 109-10.
31. Jacques Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis (seminar VII)*, trans. Dennis Porter (New York: W. W. Norton, 1992) 112.
32. Leon Trotsky, "Céline and Poincaré: Novelist and Politician" in Paul N. Siegel ed., *Art and Revolution: Writings on Literature, Politics, and Culture* (New York: Pathfinder P, 1970) 191-203.
33. Žižek, *The Parallax View* (Cambridge, MA: MIT P, 2006) 342.
34. In Marks's translation: "I doubt if it's worth it" (*Journey* 5).
35. In Marks's translation: "It hadn't been any good" (*Journey* 504).
36. The definition of *objet petit a* depends on the development of Lacan's teaching. I will not follow here its definition throughout all the stages of Lacan's teaching, but only mention the elaborations relevant to this essay. In 1957 Lacan presents the matheme of fantasy ($\$ \diamond a$) where *a* represents the object of desire. This is an imaginary partial object, which is imagined to be separated from the rest of the body. There are four part-objects: breast, excrement, voice and gaze. In a later elaboration *objet a* is a Real remainder that falls during the constitution of the subject as a speaking being. In Seminar VIII, on transference (1960-61) Lacan connects the *objet petit a* with the Greek term *agalma*, a precious object imagined to be found in the Other. This unattainable object is an object of lack, and as an object of lack it renders the Other desirable. In Seminar X, on anxiety (1962-63), *objet a* becomes connected with the Real, and it is the object which causes the anxiety. From 1963 onwards *objet a* becomes the object-cause of desire, that is, an unattainable object that incites the desire of the subject, and not the object toward which the desire aims. In *Seminar XX* (1969-70), *objet a* is defined as a remainder, the remains that has been left in the process of symbolization. *Objet a* is grasped as a surplus meaning and surplus-enjoyment. In addition, *objet a* plays the part of the analyst in the analytic treatment, when the analyst places himself as the object-cause of desire of the analysand. See Evans 128-29; Glowinski et al. 122-29.
37. The sexual connotation of the scene is also maintained in the name of the Captain who leads the confrontation with Bardamu: Captain Frémizon. *Frémir* means to shake and shudder, usually in sexual exaltation or disgust.
38. "Le goût de l'aventure et des nouvelles imprudences" (*Voyage* 190).