

THE AUTOMATON: A FIGURE OF PASSION*

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ABSTRACT: In this article, we pursue a critic presentation of the tale *Sandman*, by E.T.A. Hoffmann, inserted on the psychoanalytic universe by Freud, in 1919, in *Das Unheimliche*. In a first moment, this study presents that literary material, verifying the narrative complexity and the richness of the elements that composes it. After, examining it under the angle of passion, precisely, as a narrative regarding the experience of a passion folly that culminates in a tragicity of that nature. We propose to conceive the psychic mechanism of alienation as intrinsic to the automatism phenomenon, distinctive of a passionate condition. It is possible to establish such process, both in the discursive text modulations, as in the constitution of the characters, more specifically in Natanael and Olympia. From this perspective, it becomes clear the automaton as a figure of passion.

Keywords: automaton; *Das Unheimliche*; passion folly; alienation; narrative.

RESUMO: O autômato: uma figura da paixão. Neste artigo, propõe-se realizar uma apresentação crítica do conto, *O homem da areia*, de E.T.A. Hoffman, inserido no universo psicanalítico por Freud, em 1919, em *Das Unheimliche*. Este estudo apresentará aquele material literário, verificando a complexidade narrativa e a riqueza de elementos que o compõem. Em seguida, examiná-lo sob o ângulo da paixão, precisamente, como uma narrativa acerca da experiência de uma loucura passional que culmina numa tragicidade daquela natureza. Propõe-se conceber o mecanismo psíquico da alienação como intrínseco ao fenômeno do automatismo, próprio de um estado passional. É possível estabelecer tal processo, tanto nas modulações discursivas do texto, como na constituição dos personagens, mais propriamente em Natanael e Olímpia. A partir desta perspectiva, evidencia-se o autômato como uma figura da paixão.

Palavras-chave: autômato; *Das Unheimliche*; loucura passional; alienação; narrativa.

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Der Moment, in der Mensch one fällt, ist der this,
 In dem sich sein wahrhaftes Ich aufrichtet.
 The instant in which a man suffers a fall is the first one
 when his true self arises.
 (E.T.A. Hoffmann)

1. "THE SANDMAN" A SHORT STORY BY E.T.A. HOFFMANN

The context of the psychoanalytic universe in which the tale appears by one of the greatest names in fantastic literature, the German writer Ernst Theodor Amadeus Hoffmann (1776-1822), *The Sandman* [Der Sandmann] (1915/1993), is familiar to the psychoanalytical field. In 1919, Freud wrote *Das Unheimliche*¹ to examine this uncanny feeling when encountering certain familiar situations, "that class of the terrifying which leads back to something long known to us, once very familiar" (1919/2010, p. 331). It is a mental condition characterized by a sense of disturbance faced with a strange familiarity — the return of something familiar in the form of a stranger. Intertwined with this issue, Freud's study focuses on themes precious to psychoanalysis, such as repetition, the gaze, the dual and castration.

In a moment of Freudian thinking, Freud asks: "Why does the Sandman always appear as a disturber of love?" (p. 347). For Freud, it separates the unfortunate student from his fiancée and also from his best friend, it destroys his second object of love, Olympia, leading him to suicide. Freud attributes this to the prospect of castration that is related to the dreaded father figure "at whose hands castration is expected" (p. 349). For Freud, the boy, fixed to the father by the castration complex, becomes incapable of loving the woman. At this point in Freud's production, he had not yet conceived an Oedipal reformulation that the first object of love is the mother. Thus, the following elaborations intend to present another analytical perspective.

For this study, first, we aim to bring the reader into closer contact with the tale, since, as mentioned earlier in this paper, the study of Freud (1919/2010) does not include elements of the narrative structure of this text, presenting it in a synthetic form when, due to its richness, the text is interwoven with the possibilities of both literary and psychoanalytical research². We seek to highlight

¹ Souza (2010), in the edition of the Company of Letters, translates the term *Das Unheimliche* as uncanny. However, he himself alludes to the difficulties of translating the term: "For reasons that are evident in the text itself, it is unnecessary to draw the attention of the reader to the inadequacy of the translation of the term, which is also the title of the essay".

² Regarding the condensed form as Freud presents Hoffman's short story, Kon (2003) refers to an article by Cixous, "La fiction et ses fantômes" (In: *Poétique*, No. 10, Paris: Seuil, 1972). According to this author, Freud moves "to a linear, logical history of Nathaniel, strongly

the importance of the recovery of this literary material at its source, precisely due to the possibility of presenting it from the perspective of lustful madness. In this work perspective, this study is also part of an attempt to find a moment of the Freudian work in which the meeting of the material on the subject of passionate madness is plausible.

At this time, there is no intention to perform a study regarding the relationship between the author, E.T.A. Hoffman, and his work, although this aspect is of relevance in literary criticism and is an important aspect for the study proposal that seeks to bring psychoanalysis and literature together; however, this is not exactly the focus of this study. However, some observations regarding the genre and narrative structure will be considered. It should be mentioned that Hoffman endowed his main character, Nathaniel, with the characteristics of the clinical conditions described in Pinel thesis on madness, which he encountered in the *Medico-Philosophical Treatise on Mental Alienation*, 1801 (Cesarotto, 1996). Hoffman is recognized as one of the representatives of German Romanticism and a master of magical realism.

Regarding the relationships between psychoanalysis and fantastic literature, the important study of Kon (2003) showed the intrinsic relationship between these fields by verifying the temporal and thematic proximity that exists between them, such as the role that fantasy literature occupied in the formation of psychoanalysis. There is the meeting of topics, such as madness, duality, sexuality, etc., as well as, through the concept of psychic reality, an overcoming of the existing dualism between fantasy and reality. "If the fantastic literature seeks to question the mystery imported and transformed into the wonderful miracle, it seems that with psychoanalysis the wonderful will be incorporated into being. The wonderful is not a result of the action of supernatural beings, but rather is supplied and fermented by a force that dwells within us" (Ibid, p. 273).

2. NOTES ON THE NARRATIVE STRUCTURE

The Sandman is composed by different narrators, allowing more than one point of view. This modifies the narrative, introducing a complexity to the literary structure. Initially, the story presents three letters and, in the final part, a third-person narrative, in the omnipresent and omniscient voice of a narrator addressing a reader.

articulated in the way of a "case", with the memories of childhood, delirium, to the tragic end. Throughout the text, Freud interferes differently: on one hand, to bring the fantastic to the rational (from the *Unheimlich* to the *Heimlich*); on the other, to explicitly establish links which are not given as such by the text" (Cixous as cited in Kon, 2003, 203).

The first letter was sent from Nathaniel to Lothar, the brother of Clara, his fiancée. The second, Clara sent back to him, and the final one, was again from Nathaniel, the young student, to Lothar. At first, they refer to memories, narrated in the first person, as Nathaniel is addressing his words to Lothar. In the final part, a narrator, who was entrusted with the letters, tells the story in the third person. Here another character emerges, the reader. The narrator appeals to the reader's testimony. At the same time, the narrator, as the guardian of these correspondences, is a narrator-witness who, in turn, demands other witnesses, among them, the reader.

A complex narrative structure is observed, not only because it is of the genre of magic realism, in the style of a memoir, but mainly due to this configuration of narrative plans. As observed by Carvalho (1989), the tale is "initially constructed in epistolary form — then suddenly interrupted by the external and anonymous voice of a narrator — the tale is obviously a process of insanity, but one that will be sustained at the end, in the ambiguity of fiction as real" (p. 15).

It is interesting that Freud chose a piece of fantastic literature, as well as the work of one of the representatives of German Romanticism, to address the theme of the uncanny. Perhaps this is due to the fact that, when presenting a differentiation between the uncanny of fiction and that of the experiences, the former is seen to be much broader, covering other conditions beyond disturbances produced by experiences. He believed that it is in fiction that one finds a greater impact of the uncanny, because it presents "more opportunities for creating uncanny feelings than are possible in real life" (Freud, 1919/2010, p. 374), since there is freedom of the writer to choose at will the world that he represents, which can match what is familiar or what is, in some way, distant.

The issue of gender and narrative structure can be noted, since this complexity is not dissociated from the issue addressed, namely the uncanny. As seen in the wealth of literary complexity of this tale by an "unrivaled master of the uncanny in literature" (Ibid, p. 350), as Freud conceived Hoffmann.

3. FIRST LETTER: BABY BLUES AND CONSTITUTION OF A BELIEF

The first letter, which opens the *The Sandman* tale, is written by Nathaniel and addressed to Clara's brother Lothar. In it the character describes the establishment of the childhood belief in the Sandman figure. In this letter, having spent a long time without making contact and been in a "distracted state of mind" (Hoffmann, 1993, p. 113), the young student told Lothar details of his childhood, more precisely how the Sandman figure originated, initially mentioned by his mother. Later Nathaniel describes his meeting with a seller of barometers. The construction of the Sandman figure came initially from the descriptions of his

mother and a nursemaid and later, through his own images, he tried to construct a representation of the monster, leading to the belief in its existence, with Copellius as its embodiment. This process resulted from the imagination, with the belief in the embodiment of the Sandman's existence, after attempting to picture it. This path is circumscribed by the maternal presence, also registered by the insignias of sadness, precisely when Copellius enters the story.

When Nathaniel gets his first description of the Sandman from his sister's nursemaid, the first impressions of this figure appear. Prior to this he had asked his mother, however, the response that she gave him was unsatisfactory. It is possible to infer that the description of the nursemaid emerged in the place of a failure of the maternal discourse regarding the Sandman. Thus, the nursemaid provided the description, from which Nathaniel felt terrified, forming a horrible impression of the Sandman.

Don't you know that yet? He is a wicked man, who comes to children when they won't go to bed, and throws a handful of sand into their eyes, so that they start out bleeding from their heads. He puts their eyes in a bag and carries them to the crescent moon to feed his own children, who sit in the nest up there. They have crooked beaks like owls so that they can pick up the eyes of naughty human children. (Ibid, p. 115).

From this description, the Sandman began to make an evening appearance. At this point, it presented itself as nothing more than the "sinister sound of footsteps on a staircase" (Ibid, p.115). Given these impressions without form, the only thing he was left with was horrified screams. Years passed and, guided by stories of goblins, witches and elves, but, above all, by the Sandman, the boy would draw him with chalk or charcoal, trying to give him shape.

The figure was first followed as a form of impression and only later would it take the form of an image with certain delineations, however, Nathaniel was not satisfied with just the description given by the maid and decided to verify the appearance of the ghost. Only at a second time, faced with the figure of Copellius the lawyer, Nathaniel gave form to the description, a framework to the impression and of which he became bewitched. Thus the representation of the figure of the Sandman emerged, which was configured in a belief in its existence.

Coppelius always appeared in an ashen-gray coat, cut in old fashioned style, with waistcoat and breeches of the same color, while his stockings were black, and his shoes adorned with agate buckles. His little peruke scarcely reached farther than the crown of his head, his curls stood high above his large red ears, and a broad

hair-bag projected stiffly from his neck, so that the silver clasp which fastened his folded cravat might be plainly seen. (Ibid, p. 117)

At this moment, Nathaniel gave form to the ghostly impressions, configuring designs to the noises, stating: “When I now saw this Coppelius, the frightful and terrific thought took possession of my soul, that indeed no one but he could be the Sandman (...).he was a hideous, spectral monster, who brought with him grief, misery and destruction” (Ibid, p. 118).

When this man visited the house of Nathaniel’s parents, the boy would listen to everything peeping out from behind the curtain. It was also in this position that Nathaniel first encountered Olympia. This point will be taken up in the commentary of the third letter.

An important issue highlights the concerns about the creation of the Sandman belief being intertwined with the way the maternal place is presented to Nathaniel. This undergoes a modulation when the figure appeared, that is, it assumed aspects of the insignia of sadness. At first, while the father and his children, after dinner, are involved in a pleasant scene of reading stories, the mother was desolate. In her desolation, she interrupted the pleasant scene of the children with their father, sending them to bed with the threat of the Sandman. At another point in the narrative, as already represented as the belief in the figure of Coppelius, the evidence that he was coming to the family home was his father’s silence and his mother’s sadness. The lawyer’s presence had a power to change his mother’s mood, “her liveliness, her open and cheerful nature, were changed for a gloomy solemnity” (Ibid, p. 117).

These observations allow us to infer some deductions. First, the Sandman figure was constructed in a way that goes from impressions (noises and smells) to the representation and belief in its existence. This construction was built about the maternal presence, more precisely, in a modulation of state of spirit that culminated in maternal sadness. Second, this element of belief is repeated in the meeting with Olympia, the automaton. Nothing causes any doubt that it is a woman, although what is referred to is an automaton.

4. SECOND LETTER: RATIONALIST SPIRIT IN CLARA’S VOICE

This correspondence, written by Clara is the shortest of the three. In it we find a rationalist discourse ruling in the spirit of a woman. Initially, there is desolation and almost no acceptance that Nathaniel wrote the first letter to his brother and not to her. Clara opened the envelope, even though it was not addressed to her, and was deeply shocked, especially with the description of Coppelius: “I could scarcely breathe, the light danced before my eyes” (Ibid, p 122.). This figure also

begins to disturb her, such is the force of Nathaniel's narrative. However, Clara, in turn, tries to undo this figure of imagination through a rationalist discourse, which has no effect on the imaginary excesses of her beloved. "I must honestly confess that, in my opinion, all the terrible things of which you speak occurred merely in your own mind, and had little to do with the actual external world" (Ibid, p. 123).

She recognizes the existence of these "dark powers"; however, tries to translate them in the form of a rationalist discourse, asking Nathaniel to forget the gruesome lawyer and barometer seller. "Be convinced that these strange fears have no power over you, and that it is only a belief in their hostile influence that can make them hostile in reality" (Ibid, p. 124). One has the impression that her words try to forcibly transpose the universe of the stranger into the strictly familiar plan. In the following letter, written by Nathaniel to Lothar, the young student starts by commenting about Clara's rationalist position, including the suggestion that she had been receiving logical lectures. "She has written me a very profound philosophical epistle" he says. She even asks him, Nathaniel, to renounce his beliefs.

Clara represents one of the versions of the feminine that make up the story, that is the rational connotation. Clara recalls that Nathaniel gave her such an attribute. "Although you have often, in your childish teasing mood, charged me with having such a quiet, womanish, steady disposition, that, even if the house were about to fall in, I should smooth down a wrong fold in the window curtain in a most ladylike manner before I ran away" (Ibid, p. 122).

Governed by a rational mind, Clara tries to warn her beloved that the Sandman is nothing more than a belief originated in his childhood life and that his father's death was due to carelessness in the dangerous circumstances of alchemical practices; also, that his mother's distress was related to these dangers. Mainly, she insists on the idea that the ghosts in the Sandman figure, as well as the lawyer and the barometer seller, are constructions of the inner world, arising from childhood beliefs. As stated above, despite the rationalist discourse of this woman, whose name is a symbolic allusion to a bright character, nothing changed the beliefs of the young student. In this letter, the manifestation of a version of the female form in the rationalist is noticeable. During the story, this position and that of Olympia will establish a love duel in the life of Nathaniel.

According to Cesarotto (1996), the place of the women appears as an unattainable object: the closer it is, the more it becomes impossible, the incidence of distress that crushes any pleasure. "Concerning Nathaniel, both girls project and unfold themselves. Clara, his original passion, similar to a sister, is the repository of his love, almost like him. Whereas, Olympia, a machine, is the alienated personification of his narcissism and the mirror of his eyes, which

crystallizes his illusion of completeness” (Cesarotto, 1996, p. 132). This argument suggests that the young student finds a certain return to his automaton condition in Olympia. This can be proposed, as Nathaniel is dominated by passion in the strict sense of the term: he is driven by his pathos, passion and suffering, in a condition of alienation. On this issue, part of this work will focus on thinking about the automaton as a figure of passion. That is, the automaton as a form of representation of passion; in this sense, the figure of the passion is a language resource established as a representation attempt, since passion does not have its own representability. For example, Roland Gori, in “The Logic of the Passions”, conceives the figure of the dead child to think about the passions.

5. THIRD LETTER: MEETING WITH OLYMPIA AND THE TRAGIC PASSION

In this letter, Nathaniel talks about his meeting with the doll Olympia³. Initially, it is interesting to highlight the structure of the scene, as in this elements converge close to those of which he, as a child, knew Coppelius, the moment in which the first impressions of the Sandman figure were constituted. As mentioned earlier, when Coppelius came to the house of his parents, he used to hide behind the curtain. Bewitched, poking his head out, the boy listened to the conversations between his father and “a hideous, spectral monster, who brought with him grief, misery and destruction — temporal and eternal” (Ibid, p. 118). Nathaniel knew that he was in danger of being discovered and punished.

Now, as a young student of the famous professor of physics, Spalanzani, and based in G., he describes meeting Olympia: “I lately went up his stairs, and perceived that the curtain, which was generally drawn completely over a glass door, left a little opening on one side. I know not what curiosity impelled me to look through” (Ibid, p. 126). Here a similar position to that of the initial character is repeated: through the curtain, these objects are presented with a strange familiarity. Thus, he describes it:

[...]A very tall and slender lady, extremely well-proportioned and most splendidly attired, sat in the room by a little table on which she had laid her arms, her hands being folded together. She sat opposite the door, so that I could see the whole of her angelic countenance. She did not appear to see me, and indeed there was something

³ It is possible to conceive this meeting as the third moment of the constitution of the *unheimliche*. In it, the young student finds, under the simulacrum of a woman’s body, represented by an automaton, both the impressions of a first moment — produced by the nursemaid’s narrative — and the plasticity of the ruined monster’s delineations — under the figure of Coppelius. It is suggested, therefore, that, in this third moment, elements of previous times are added together. With this, Nathaniel’s passionate madness and its unfolding tragic passion follow.

fixed about her eyes as if, I might almost say, she had no power of sight. It seemed to me that she was sleeping with her eyes open. (Ibid, p. 126).

In this first meeting, the eyes can be perceived as an element in which there is a return of the Sandman's presence. Also, in these, which *did not appear to see*, there is a representation of a certain somber aspect of the maternal condition of Nathaniel. In these elements, together with the position of the child — peering through a curtain — a composition of the return of childhood elements is noted in this scene.

Shortly after the narrative of this meeting, there is a modulation in the form of address in the writing of Nathaniel. He goes back to Lothar and recalls his relationship with Clara. It ends, evoking: "A thousand greetings, etc.". Here another narrative perspective emerges: the tale passes to the omniscient and omnipresent voice of the narrator in the third person, the narrator-witness who was entrusted with these letters. This narrator is Lothar's colleague Sigismund, who addresses a reader-witness with the words, "dear reader", "gracious reader."

It can be observed that after the story of the meeting between Nathaniel and Olympia the voice of the young student disappears from the text. Thus, with the unfolding of the plot, other narratives about the meetings between them are conducted in the voice of the narrator in the third person, a young student and friend who is the guardian of the letters and a witness to his passion. This narrative form is used in the majority of the story. Thus, it is possible to suggest that the narrative capacity of the young man in love succumbed to the passion. It is possible, from that, to observe one of the fundamental traits of a passionate madness: an impoverishment of narrative or near impossibility of representation. Also, in the form of this silence of the mute character, it is possible to infer a similar position to that of his mother. Before the meeting with the object of the passion⁴, Nathaniel is also faced with some aspects of the maternal ghost.

Initially, this narrator provides a description of Clara and also of the meeting between her and Nathaniel, more precisely, of the clash between the rational spirit of the girl and the mystic spirit of the student. Regarding Clara there are several attributes, such as: "the vivid fancy of a cheerful, unembarrassed child; a deep, tender, feminine disposition; an acute, clever understanding" The fact of being recognized as childish, prosaic and having a cold and insensitive spirit are predominant.

If, in Olympia, the young man becomes inebriated before a fixed stare, which sees nothing, in Clara, in turn, Nathaniel faces a "clear look". But why do these

⁴ As already pointed out, instead of the polarization of places, subject and object of passion, it is preferable to refer to an object complicity in which the object of passion is not passion, but the support in which an inordinate passion is aggregated and sustained.

petrified or limpid eyes (such as the maternal position) make it impossible to occupy a place in the loving dimension? It can be suggested that in that empty gaze of the Other, represented by these women, and inscribed in the life of Nathaniel by the maternal condition, there is no demand, there is no place for desire, except that of death.

The young man, with a premonition that Coppelius would upset his loving happiness, wrote a poem about the meeting with the barometer seller. However Clara does nothing more than sit knitting and tells him to throw away the writings. At that moment, enraged, he pushes her away, calling her an “inanimate, accursed automaton!” (Ibid, p. 132). However, after a fight between them, they were reconciled, vowing eternal love and fidelity.

Returning to the city where he was undertaking his studies, he found his lodging completely burned down. After this incident, he moves to another house where he did not find it remarkable that he could see, through the window, the room where Olympia was.

Olympia often sat alone, so that he could plainly recognize her figure, although the features of her face were indistinct and confused. At last it struck him that Olympia often remained for hours in that attitude in which he had once seen her through the glass door, sitting at a little table without any occupation, and that she was plainly enough looking over at him with an unvarying gaze. He was forced to confess that he had never seen a more lovely form but, with Clara in his heart, the stiff Olympia was perfectly indifferent to him. Occasionally, to be sure, he gave a transient look over his textbook at the beautiful statue, but that was all (Ibid, p. 133-134).

There is the encounter with a beautiful woman, virtuous, reclusive, a prisoner, paralyzed. This, precisely, produced profound disturbances in the tormented and romantic young man. He encounters a condensation of the woman-doll: splendidly dressed with an angelic face. From this moment, the consequences of a passionate madness start to unfold, which culminates in a tragic passion. Initially, there was a conflict between the love for Clara and the blossoming passion for Olympia. So much so that buying his binoculars, in order to watch Olympia, is interleaved with writing a letter to Clara.

Through the binoculars, bought from the Italian optician, the *via-crucis* of the passion definitively started: “Never in his life had he met a glass which brought objects so clearly and sharply before his eyes ... For the first time he could see the wondrous beauty in the shape of her face. Only her eyes seemed to him singularly still and dead...” (Ibid, p. 135). He was fascinated by the wax face of the wooden doll.

When he did not see her for more than three days, he started a process of hallucinations. “In utter despair, filled with a longing and a burning desire, he ran out of the town-gate. Olympia’s form floated before him in the air, stepped forth from the bushes, and peeped at him with large beaming eyes from the clear brook Nathaniel” (Ibid, p. 136).

From then on, the young student was possessed by a passionate madness. Even the icy body of Olympia did not discomfort him as he was dedicated to his passion. Burning with passion, for him, she was a splendid woman “Ray from the promised land of love — deep soul in whom all my being is reflected “ (Ibid, p. 138). In his madness to have found true love, however, he does not even suspect that Olympia was not made of flesh and blood, but was a mechanical device that takes the form of a woman with no voice, that could only sigh: “Ah, ah!”. And, paradoxically, he believes that he has never encountered such a charming listener.

At this point, a new character appears, Sigismund, a fellow student. He is the one who can interrupt the fascinated gaze of Nathaniel for Olympia, when he purchased the binoculars and saw the doll. At another point, calling him brother, Sigismund asks him how he could “lose your head over that wax face, over that wooden doll”. Faced with the answers, he concludes that “that in love-affairs there was no disputing about the object”. Thus, the young man, mad with passion, says these words to his friend:

Olympia may appear uncanny to you, cold, prosaic man. Only the poetical mind is sensitive to its like in others. To me alone was the love in her glances revealed, and it has pierced my mind and all my thought; only in the love of Olympia do I discover my real self. It may not suit you that she does not indulge in idle chit-chat like other shallow minds. She utters few words, it is true, but these few words appear as genuine hieroglyphics of the inner world, full of love and deep knowledge of the spiritual life, and contemplation of the eternal beyond. But you have no sense for all this, and my words are wasted on you (Ibid, p. 140).

Consumed by passion, Nathaniel forgets everything and everyone. Fascinated, words lose any value of significance. The glance of Olympia “speaks more than any language” Then he decides to ask her to marry him. He goes to look for a ring his mother had given him to offer Olympia as a sign of his love. When he arrives at the home of his beloved, he finds Spalanzani and the terrible Coppola in a struggle for possession of Olympia, who tear the doll’s body apart and throw her eyes at the young lover.

And now Nathaniel saw that a pair of eyes lay upon the ground, staring at him; these Spalanzani caught up, with his unwounded hand, and flung into his bosom.

Then madness seized Nathaniel in its burning claws, and clutched his very soul, destroying his every sense and thought (Ibid, p. 142).

Crazed, he is admitted to a mental hospital, while Spalanzani is forced to leave the University and run away, as is Coppola. However, the story of the automata generated a distrust of human figures, particularly in the love life. “Many lovers, to be quite convinced that they were not enamoured of wooden dolls, would request their mistresses to sing and dance a little out of time, to embroider and knit, and play with their lapdogs, while listening to reading, etc.” (Ibid, p. 144). Some amorous unions became stronger, while others undid themselves. Above all, the story of Nathaniel’s passion for an automaton began to produce uncertainty in the love life of the people.

In the outcome of the plot the scene of the tragic passion is described. Nathaniel, after being discharged, returns to his hometown and, under the care of his mother, Clara and friends, he recovers. Immersed in a bucolic happiness, he and his bride-to-be, Clara, wander around the city. Accepting Clara’s invitation, he goes up to a tower and admires the mountains. She shows him a bush, and the young man holds Coppola’s binoculars to look. Looking at Clara, his tragic madness begins. Her eyes turn into orbits and spew streams of fire. Howling and leaping high in the air laughing and shouting he says: “Spin round, wooden doll! — spin round!”. At this point, he tries to throw her from the tower. Yelling for help, she holds the railing until her brother saves her. The crazed Nathaniel shouts “Circle of fire, spin round! spin round!”. At this point, Coppelius appears again among the people watching the scene, and when Nathaniel sees him, he throws himself from the tower, committing suicide, as the lawyer disappears into the crowd.

After the narrative of this tragic scene, the story ends with the description of an idyllic romantic scene. Many years later, Clara is married, the mother of two boys, wrapped in domestic happiness “which the morbid Nathaniel would never have given her”. Thus, the end of the story occurs with these two contrasting scenes: one of passionate madness, culminating in a passionate tragedy, and the other, of romantic domestic happiness.

6. THE AUTOMATON: A FIGURE OF PASSION

Perhaps, dear reader, you will then believe that nothing is stranger and madder than actual life; which the poet can only catch in the form of a dull reflection in a dimly polished mirror.

(E.T.A. Hoffmann)

Lacanian postulates (1949/1998, 1953-1954/1983, 1964/1988) proposed conceiving the psychic mechanism of alienation as intrinsic to the phenomenon of automatism, as a characteristic of a passionate state. It is possible to establish such a process, both in the discursive modulations of the text, *The Sandman*, and in the constitution of the characters, more precisely, in Nathaniel and Olympia.

Along with the elaboration of the Mirror Stage, there are other formulations in the work of Lacan related to an approach to alienation that places the automaton as a figure of passion. Of these, two of Lacan's classes, given during the Seminar "The four fundamental concepts of psychoanalysis" (1964/1988), are important. These are: "The Subject and the Other (I): alienation" and "The Subject and the Other (II): aphanisis".

Lacan resorts to the logic of sets — of the meeting and of the intersection — to demonstrate the operations of alienation and separation as fundamental mechanisms in the constitution of the subject. As far as alienation is concerned, it is exemplified through the meeting, while the operation of intersection correlates with separation.

In alienation, there is "one element that, whatever the choice operating may be, has as its consequence a neither one, nor the other. The choice, then is a matter of knowing whether one wishes to preserve one of the parts, the other disappearing in any case" (Ibid., p. 200).

From two sets: that of the being (subject) and the Other (sense), one realizes that if the subject chooses not to alienate himself in the field of the Other, he does not constitute himself. If he chooses meaning, he accepts the alienation of himself to the Other's desire, becoming like the subject. However, in choosing the meaning, there is the loss of the being, that is why the \$ appears as the lacking-to-be, effect of the signifier.

In this lesson, to demonstrate this, he used what he called *vel*. He suggested that "Alienation consists in this *vel*, which — if you do not object to the word condemned, I will use it — condemns the subject to appearing only in that division which, it seem to me, I have just articulated sufficiently by saying that if it appears on one side as meaning, produced by the signifier, it appears on the other as aphanisis» (Ibid., p. 199) Therefore, there is a face of disappearance of the subject in the process of constitution in the relationship with the Other.

The mechanism of separation is governed by the logic of intersection, where the lack is correlative in the two sets, of the subject and of the Other. A lack, represented by object *a*, object cause of desire belonging to the two sets. "A lack is encountered by the subject in the Other, in the very intimation that the Other makes to him by his discourse" (Ibid., 203). Here is the child's question: «He tells me this, but what is it that he wants?" There is a formulation of the Other's desire, in which the answer arises from fantasy.

An important conception for this study is that of aphanisis. This is a Greek term introduced in psychoanalysis by Ernest Jones. The term aphanisis comes from Phanos, which means luminous, Phania means intensity of light and Aphanisis, disappearance (referring to the shining of a star). In his research into female sexuality, Jones introduced the concept of aphanisis as the disappearance of sexual desire, the subject of a more fundamental fear than the fear of castration (Laplanche & Pontalis, 2001).

Lacan reused this term, presenting the statute in the dimension of the existence of the subject, that is, in the process of constitution of a subject, in its division, there is a face of disappearance. He qualified this movement as lethal, calling it the fading of the subject: “when the subject appears somewhere as meaning, he is manifested elsewhere as ‘fading’, as disappearance” (Ibid., p. 207)

Thus, in the process of the constitution of the subject in the field of the Other, whose alienation is structural, there is always this face of disappearance, of what Lacan calls a lethal factor. The subject becomes subsumed into the Other, since it is indispensable to the perspective of the automaton as a figure of passion.

This issue is evidenced in the narrative context of the story, as already mentioned, after the encounter between Nathaniel and Olympia the voice of the young student disappears from the text. Thus, the other narratives about the encounters between them, as well as the unfolding of the plot, are conducted in the voice of a narrator in the third person, a friend of the young student, who is the guardian of the letters and a witness to his passion. This narrative form is used in the majority of the tale. The narrative capacity of the young man in love succumbs given his consideration for the automaton doll.

Furthermore, with this, it is possible to establish one of the fundamental aspects that constitute a passionate madness: an impoverishment of narrative or an impossibility of representing the experience⁵. This muting is also verified by Aulagnier when she refers to the state of alienation as an unnamable experience, not perceivable by the one who experiences it (1985, p.35).

Regarding the plan of the constitution of the characters, especially in the case of Nathaniel, the specular relation is presented on one hand, while on the other there is the death of thought and therefore of the word. The automaton is thus indicated as that which, absorbed by the Other and without the possibility of thought, loses its voice and all movements relative to a subjective position

⁵ Regarding this state of emptiness during a passionate state and the need for distancing to produce a significance of the experienced, one of Freud's favorite stories, Stefan Zweig's *24-hours in the life of a woman* (1927/2007) is exemplary. It is a narrative about a passionate state in which a woman confesses about the most important 24 hours of her life: a day that occurred decades ago when she met a man who was captivated by the passion for gambling. At the time the character was in a state of melancholy, after the death of her husband, which established a passionate condition in her life.

of desiring exercise. In this way, there is the aspect of the aphanisis in which there is a deletion of the subject of the enunciation, being subsumed into the Other. This is combined with the state of anguish, as already mentioned in the previous item, as that which produces an enunciative impossibility.

The young student is completely captured by the image of Olympia, instituting a specular alienation: he gazes and is gazed at in this scene. This gaze, however, is not in the same dimension as vision. This difference is demonstrated by Lacan in the class on *The Eye and the Gaze* (1964/1990). The awareness of perception is not equivalent to the gaze, it depends on the desiring position of the beholder. It is the signifier that determines where the subject ascertains his gaze.

Both Freudian analysis and that of other authors, such as Cesarotto (1996) and Pereira (2004), who present important works from the Freud-Lacanian perspective on Hoffmann's tale, highlight the theme of the eyes and the gaze in this narrative. Cesarotto considers that a consistent reading of the author's work must take into account the meanders of the scopic drive, "the leitmotif of all tales" (1996, 134). Pereira observes that the game of gazes is the thread of the text: «eyes that are coveted, that jump, burn, change places, mapping all the narrative and distribution of places of the characters" (2004, 33). However, none of these studies enunciate considerations about the gaze of Nathaniel's mother, who may be considered indispensable to the development of the narrative plot.

Nathaniel will reencounter precisely that maternal gaze, opaque, in Olympia, which, as already mentioned, leads him to a state of absolute command of the Other, unleashing his muting and death. This trait of the maternal Other returns incarnate in the form of a double — the trait assumes the aspect of the whole — hence the consideration.

Thus, the automaton is not only on the side of Olympia: Nathaniel is its own alienated specularity. From this point on, the poles of subject and object become more complex, so that it is possible to transpose these places to that of an alienating bond in which places of subjections operate, in objectal complicity. As Lacan observed, love, as a specular mirage, has the essence of cheating. "It is situated in the field established at the level of the pleasure reference, of that sole signifier necessary to introduce a perspective centered on the Ideal point, capital I, placed somewhere in the Other, from which the Other sees me, in the form I like to be seen" (Lacan, 1964/1990, p. 253).

This passage may not refer to love itself, but to a passionate situation in which a relationship of imaginary speculation occurs, in an object offering and surrender to the Other. In the case of the tale, the image of Nathaniel is confused with that of Olympia: he is like machinery, in his inverted structure, in which he becomes referenced and functioning. The assumption of his body occurs through the opaque gaze of the doll — an anticipatory speculative experience of

Nathaniel's own image. However, it is a gaze that cannot see it in the direction of an Other with its own body, a gaze that inscribes lack and desire. It is the encounter with the double, hence the emergence of strangeness and the emergence of the dimension of anguish, because the mechanical device is nothing more than the passion that affects them.

Also in the tragic saga of Nathaniel, the automaton appears under the postulate of rationality. This can be seen in the young student's thoughts on Clara's letter, a piece of writing that he considers "quite serious and philosophical". Faced with the rationalistic considerations of his bride-to-be on the persecutory fantasies of the Sandman, he calls her an "inanimate, accursed automaton". The rational way of the girl, trying to separate what is of the imaginary from what is of reality, however, does not serve to lull or introduce a desiring perspective in the torments of the protagonist. For Nathaniel, the automaton presents itself as a discourse that radically opposes his passionate position, preventing him from sizing up the impact of the events on his subjectivity. Clara's discourse, therefore, is an inanimate and robotic discourse.

Through the focus of these alienating perspectives, present in the narrative, we have tried to demonstrate how they are constituents of a passionate automata functioning. A passionality commanded by movements of image, thought and words that come from the Other. Thus, the automaton can be conceived as a figure of passion, since it is radically subjected to the Other, although it is an inanimate object. There is a devastation of the place of the subject, in a total eclipse of its place by the Other.

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