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World Lit: Uncanny 013

Final Paper

April 25th, 2022

The Theme of Disconnection in *The Invention of Morel*

“But my happiness, like everything human, is insecure” (Casares 100) is how the narrator feels upon inserting himself into the holographic timeline that the rest of the characters reside in. His thought process is that of which he is unsure if his actions will truly make him happy forever. To be forever disconnected from his love, Faustine, causes a rift in his consciousness. This rift explains how he is insecure and is disconnected from normality. The theme of disconnection creates an environment for the narrator’s problems to persist. Disconnection from society is the first problem the reader comes across in the novel. The narrator has been removed from society and lives on his own with nobody to interact with. The disconnection leaves him longing for connection which the reader can see when he meets Faustine. The only issue is that Faustine makes the longing worse. She has her own disconnection that creates a boundary between the narrator and herself. All of the inhabitants are not bonded with their physical selves and are merely holograms of their consciousness. The theme of disconnection drives the story into a deep awakening.

In the beginning of the novel, the character explains his situation: “There are so many things to do on this lonely island!” (Casares 10). He is cast away on an island by himself, therefore disconnecting himself from society on the mainland. Due to his inability to create

actions based on others around him, he is alone and forces himself to find interactions among himself. He is lonely and experiencing detachment. He is desperately trying to escape his disengagement by writing a book and keeping himself busy. Because he is disconnected from other sources of life, he fails to learn how to interact with others. The narrator is almost like a newborn in which he cannot interact or distinguish between self and other: “The infantile ego does not distinguish corporeal boundaries or separation between itself and the object world” (Snook 2). The relationship between ego and disconnection differs from that of ego and connection due to the loss of development. Being without contact from other beings lowers the ability to differentiate self and other. So he is already lacking in the developmental area due to being a refugee on an abandoned island.

Eventually, residents of the island appear. The narrator does not know how to interact with them and he is scared. This is due to his lack of development from being alone so long. His disconnection from society causes anxiety for him and he tries his best to stay away, causing more issues for the plot to continue: “from my description the attentive reader can abstain a list of more or less startling objects, situations, facts; the most startling of all of course, is the sudden arrival of the people who are up on the hill as I write” (Casares 19). But curiosity keeps his thoughts in check. He continues to stalk the newcomers and gains intel about their whereabouts. He uses this information to discover how the new citizens live and survive. But then, he meets a woman.

Faustine is a woman that comes to the island along with other inhabitants. She is an eccentric being with very little consciousness of the narrator. The narrator spends much of his time thinking and planning his interactions with her. It takes greater power for him to think through these actions due to his disconnection. The theme of disconnection shows how much

more effort these characters have to put in in order to have an engagement. This theme causes the narrator's problems to persist because he does not know how to interact with the new woman. He does not respect boundaries and almost stalks her to the point of no return. He uses his lack of knowledge to pursue her interest: “but I'm sure I can make a modest effort, which will be pleasing to her” (Casares 30). His obsession with Faustine is unhealthy as he has not had contact with a real person in years. His poor development leads to concerning relationships: “The nature of the relationships between men and women provides one revealing indication of the text’s concern with psychological boundaries. Representations of attachment, separation, loss, and absence highlight the description of these relationships” (Snook 2). All four of these aspects are present in the relationship, the most prolific being separation.

Faustine has her own fair share of troubles that the narrator does not see at first. She is merely a hologram. She has been separated from her physical body and is only her consciousness. Her separation from her body causes her to be unable to make a connection to the outside world. The narrator shares this persistent issue through an emotional lense: “the way things turned out was natural enough, but unexpectedly merciful. I am lost” (Casares 33). She ignores his calls because she is not in physical form and is disengaged from her real self. The separation between self and other is borderline smudged because she is not really there. The narrator longs for her to notice him but she cannot due to the disconnection. The longing turns the narrator into something he cannot recognize and would do anything for her. He is driven crazy by his disconnection from society. Faustine is rendered useless due to her holographic state, which allows the narrator to make of her what he wants: “she cannot contradict male control or the ‘image’ he has created of her” (Snook 3). Her state of being creates an open

wonder which the narrator can fill with his longing from his disconnection from love and society. Both of their disconnections lead to their own issues which keep the plot of the novel in pace.

Faustine creates a lot of anxiety for the narrator. He is stuck on thinking when her last days will be as she keeps disappearing and reappearing with the tides due to how the machine works. This disconnection between the narrator and Faustine's appearances creates a discourse from which the narrator has to recover. He spends all his time thinking about when Faustine is going to come back and be on the island with him. Snook has an amazing perspective on this stating, "he is so preoccupied with a final disappearance, Faustine's departure from the island, that he dreams of a romantic scene in which they bid farewell amid passionate embraces. The physical union, of course, attempts to deny or negate any subsequent physical separation" (Snook 4). He is so preoccupied with his current state of disconnection from love that he dreams of what will happen with Faustine. The narrator is so perpetuated with this loss of physical connection he loses sense of reality. He involves himself in thoughts about the female gaze of Faustine when in fact, so does the character Morel.

Morel is the next main character that is introduced. He creates a machine that reflects the holograms onto the island. He does this because of his recent detachment to his lover, Faustine. He puts together this machine with the idea to be able to stay with his lover forever. The only issue is that she is angry with him and does not love him back. Morel states, " 'when i finished my invention it occurred to me first as a mere exercise for the imagination, then as an incredible plan, that I could give perpetual reality to my romantic desire' " (Casares 67). He spends his time so involved in Faustine that he loses sense of what reality is. He risks the lives of many others in order to get as close as he can to Faustine, even if it is just in a nonphysical sense. He has no boundaries between self and other because he took away the physical aspect and his ego has

returned to being infantile, similar to the narrator who has been removed from society for too long. He longs for the female gaze and so by taking away Faustine's physical body, he merely took away the boundary between himself and herself. He turned Faustine, similarly to the narrator, into a female gaze. She is now just a woman who he has taken advantage of. Morel is an example of disconnection continuing the plot.

The theme of disconnection drives the plot of the novel. It is valid and important to the continuation. The paradoxes of disengagement from the narrator and Faustine keep the story moving. Boundaries are explained through the narrator's and Morel's ideas of the female gaze. None of the characters in the novel are entire individuals due to their disconnection from society. The machine disintegrates physical self from conscious self, which sets a boundary between self and other. The narrator also has issues with boundaries between self and other because of his bad relation to society. These issues are all caused by disconnection, a major theme in the novel that keeps the plot in motion.

Works Cited:

Casares, Adolfo Bioy, et al. *The Invention of Morel*. New York Review, 2004.

Snook, Margaret L. "Boundaries of the Self: Autonomy versus Dependency in 'La Invención De Morel.'" *Chasqui*, vol. 20, no. 2, 1991, p. 108., <https://doi.org/10.2307/29740383>.