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**The Hyperbolic Project of Cristina: A Derridean Analysis
of Ricci's *Lives of the Saints***

Jacques Derrida's "Cogito and the History of Madness," catapulted him into the centre of the French intellectual world. This essay, a commentary on Michel Foucault's book, *The History of Madness*, is seen as an excellent example of the deconstructionist method at work in relation to metaphysics. What Derrida examines from this rather large tome is a few passages that Foucault writes about Descartes. Foucault's thesis is that Descartes, in his analysis of the Cogito, was the first philosopher to separate reason from non reason, from madness, and that this split was either a cause of, or at least, was representative of, the attitude which resulted in the first internment of mad persons within institutions in human history. That Descartes is responsible for all sorts of divisions, of separations, in the modern Western human psyche, such as that between spirit and matter, between reason and the emotions, is common in philosophical analysis, but Foucault's thesis is unusual in his emphasis upon the reason/madness split. If one then applies Derrida's subsequent insights to Nino Ricci's prize winning novel, *Lives of the Saints*, an understanding of the novel will appear that should not only further illuminate the power of this first novel, and the talents of its author, but also explain to students of literature what I was not able to explain to my own students, not until now, why Cristina, the heroine, had to die in the prime of life when a world of love and of freedom beckoned to her for the first time.

Derrida, who prefaces his remarks with a special tribute to his teacher and mentor, Foucault, claims that in the Cogito of Descartes, in its pure moment before it attempts to reflect, to articulate, this bipolar split never took place, and that the Cogito is valid for both the mad and the sane person. What this Cogito is about is "the hyperbolic project" (52) which is "an unprecedented excess" (52) that "overflows the totality of that which can be thought . . . in the direction of the nondetermined, Nothingness or Infinity" (57), toward non-meaning or toward meaning. This project takes one beyond all limits, all barriers, all contradictions, all opposing opposites.

It is the element of excess that causes Derrida to claim that the Cogito involves madness, derangement (57), since the hyperbolic project seeks to move beyond what the world would refer to as that which reason, logos, can itself attain, but it is not clinical madness, that is, what psychiatrists would consider to be a chemical disorder of the brain. It is the madness of the Cogito which simply refuses the limitations that the world of common sense says are necessary in order to be sane. It is a madness in which doubt is a central element, since it is a state of mind in which all things are possible, in which, in a sense, the figure of Ivan Karamazov looms, shouting his now famous, "everything is permitted." But, for the distraught Ivan, this phrase refers only to the world of morality. For the Cartesian Cogito of Derrida this phrase is more far-reaching, since it is primarily epistemological: all visions of reality, and of one's response to that reality, are possible. Such a state of mind is madness in the most fundamental sense.

Not surprising is the fact that this state of the Cogito, when reason and madness have not been separated, is also an intense moment; consequently, this is simultaneously a state of mind in which reason is at its apex of intensity, as is madness. It is the moment of the full power of reason, and therefore the moment of a mad reason, an ancient, all powerful reason that is very different from the reason of which Foucault speaks in relation to Descartes. The reason of which Derrida speaks is not a truncated, chained and bound reason, but rather, a reason of "mad audacity" (55).

That this project is a movement toward the non-determined means that it cannot be "enclosed in a factual and determined historical structure" (60), cannot be captured within a concrete world that demands clear

delineations, separations, within a history that must move from the past, through the present, toward the future, "for it is the project of exceeding every finite and determined totality" (60), the project of exceeding "all that is real, factual and existent" (56). Consequently, Derrida refers to this project as demonic, probably because it violates the ancient codes of both the Judaeo-Christian and the classical Greek worlds. Both the warnings of eating the apple of the tree of knowledge and that of succumbing to hubris are warnings not to follow the hyperbolic project, not to attempt to grasp with one's mind all that is and all that could be.

But the excessive moment of the hyperbolic project ends when one reflects upon and communicates the Cogito to oneself and then to others. One cannot be mad if one is to communicate this meaning in discourse. It is at this moment, when one breaks the silence, in reflection and in speech, that one safeguards oneself against the epistemological madness of non-distinction among infinite visions of reality, of beyond reality, and of the infinite possibilities of responses to these visions. Now is the basic, fundamental moment of separation of reason from madness, the moment of difference. Speech violently liberates, differs itself from madness and simultaneously imprisons it (60). Only then can finite thought and history reign (61), for finite thought is dependent upon a process that must involve exclusion, as is history, which is dependent upon concrete events, and the exclusive choosing of events in order to make up the story that is history.

This articulation of the hyperbolic project, the "attempt-to-say-the-demonic-hyperbole . . . is the original profundity of the will in general, . . . is a first passion and keeps within itself a trace of violence" (61). That is, the attempt to communicate the intense moment of the hyperbolic project is the human will's passionate attempt to make concrete this project of excess. This moment of intense passion is doomed forever to failure, but its titanic, gargantuan effort founds the world and history (57). No wonder that it carries traces of violence. The actual creation of the physical universe, according to the big bang theory, was certainly violent.

Speech, language, is that which regulates the "relationship between that which exceeds and the exceeded totality" (62). Speech separates the world of the hyperbolic project, the world that exceeds, the world of excess, from the world in which we live, the world that is exceeded by

the hyperbolic project. Speech emerges from the silence and separates us from the pure Cogito, makes a difference between us and its project, and forces us to make choices, to decide. Since we can no longer have the possibility of grasping all possibilities, we must decide what finite possibilities we must choose. We no longer can live in a world of hyperbolic doubt whose condition is that all is possible. We now are thrown into a world of dazzling light where certainty emerges as a safeguard against madness, for communication functions in such a manner that it "inspect(s), master(s), limit(s) hyperbole" (59), since reason knows that the total derangement of the hyperbolic moment "will bring subversion to pure thought" (53).

It is most probably because of the implied suffering in the action of speech that Derrida says that speech operates within a "caesura" (54), a "wound" (54), that "opens up life as historicity" (54). Furthermore, the moment of communication, of speech, is one of crisis for two reasons. Firstly, reason is in grave danger, since in moving from its origin, the pure Cogito of the hyperbolic project, it is in danger of forgetting its origins, of "blanketing them by the rationalist and transcendental unveiling (of) itself" (62). It is then, ironically, that reason is "madder than madness" (62), for reason moves toward oblivion of this origin, and therefore toward non-meaning. Madness is at this moment closer to "the wellspring of sense" (62), and, subsequently, is closer to the rational, however silent it is. Reason is now "separated from itself as madness, is exiled from itself" (62). Thus, the communication of the Cogito is the choosing of reason, an act which divides the reason of meaning from the labyrinth of non-meaning; but the price is the loss of identity with itself and the loss of the possibility of infinite possibility. Secondly, in this moment of crisis, hubris is born of articulation, and although hubris is coincident with creation, its major quality is an excess that must operate within finitude, a quality that the concrete world of history is likely to punish severely.

My thesis is that reading Nino Ricci's *Lives of the Saints* in the light of this particular Derridean essay is essential for the understanding of his character, Cristina, the woman whose presence, through the narration of her young son, Vittorio, dominates the entire novel. She lives in a hill-town in the Italian Appennines with her son and her father, the mayor of the town, who is accused of having sold out to the fascists. Her husband,

absent for four years since he emigrated to Canada, supposedly to create a new life for Cristina and Vittorio, writes monthly letters of wild scribble, but, for Cristina, he is simply absent and for Vittorio, he is simply a shadowy, violent memory. The tension of the novel revolves around a scene, from Vittorio's perspective, which is composed of a stable, a muffled shout (1), followed by a green snake escaping from the stable and a pair of blue eyes that run away toward a car. The combination of these events results in the pregnancy of Cristina, and in the very traditional and superstitious people of the village shunning her.

To establish Cristina as the Cartesian-Derridean Cogito, it is best to begin by analyzing her silence, as it is observed by the narrator, Vittorio. From the perspective of the reader she tells us nothing of what she truly thinks or feels. What happened in the stable? We can only guess, but that is exactly what we must do. Her only comment is to Luciano, one of her friends in Rocca Secca, "Anyway I have my own trouble to worry about. I hope he didn't leave me a little gift—he got very excited when he saw that snake" (66).

After this incident, "a deep silence . . . descended on the house . . . the very walls, the floor, the splintered table, seemed to have grown strangely distant and mute, as if guarding some secret themselves" (57).

Cristina "withdrew into shadowy silence" (74), broken mainly by her "quiet sobbing at night mingling with the sigh of the wind, like something inhuman" (77). "The silence seemed to issue from every nook and cranny of the house" (77). Of his mother's relationship to himself, in particular, Vittorio says, there are "no words now to bridge the silence" (74). There are only "silent meals" (74) and the silence between Cristina and the grandfather, her father, more or less extends until the end of the novel.

A second characteristic that marks Cristina as the embodiment of the Derridean Cogito is the strange non-delineation between reason and madness that surrounds her. In relation to the element of reason, she is one of the best educated women in the village. But most outstanding is her absolute contempt for the superstition of the villagers who seem to have inherited an ancient pagan superstition that intermingles with Catholicism and erupts every year in the procession of the Virgin Mary whose statue is carried throughout the town. All the doors and windows of the houses of the village are open except for those of Cristina. Their

being steadfastly shut makes her a living testimony to rationality itself. But this rationality is strangely interwoven with madness in the snakebite incident. First, at the very beginning of the book, when she is bitten by the snake in the stable, she waits quietly in front of her house for the ride to the hospital. DiLucci, who gives Cristina the ride says to her, "You'd think you were just going to the market" (16). He seems disconcerted by her "unexpected calm" (16). Then, Vittorio says that the tourniquet "sank into her leg . . . but my mother did not wince or grimace" (17). Finally, she slowly succumbs to a trancelike, rigid state which sends her into the deepest possible form of physical silence. She is literally outside of what one would normally refer to as a rational state, but, she never rants, raves or rambles. Instead, she is inhumanly calm. She seems to transcend both fear and pain. Before the onset of the results of the venom she is "rationally silent," telling her father again and again that what she was doing in the barn was feeding the pigs, and when she overcomes the venom and fully returns to her conscious state, she is "bright and alert" (18), again "rational," but silent. It is almost as if the brief period of the rigid trancelike state is simply a deepening of the rational/mad silence that will surround her throughout most of the novel.

The non-delineation of madness/reason on this rather basic level, when examined in the light of other non-delineations, leads to an extremely important aspect of the Derridean hyperbolic project, that of epistemological madness. But the major point at the moment is to look at these other non-delineations in relation to Cristina's being the Derridean Cogito, and to her subsequently being involved with the hyperbolic project. The relationship between Cristina and Vittorio, the most important relationship in the novel, is a good example of Cristina's sense of lack of division, of boundary, and threatens the villager's view of what they perceive as the most fundamental of relationships, that of mother and son. The implication of the villagers who hurl accusations at her in her role as mother is that she behaves toward him more like a sister or friend than a mother since she refuses to send the seven-year-old Vittorio into the fields to do agricultural work at 4:00 a.m., as the other mothers do. The extreme case is Vittorio's only friend, Fabrizio, whose father forces him to remain in the fields so long that he cannot go to school. Instead, Cristina and Vittorio are accused of playing together like children all the time. But this relationship of mother/sister/friend also is, simultaneously,

a mother/lover relationship. At the age of seven an upset Vittorio is told that he can no longer share his mother's bed. His grandfather says, "Next month you'll be seven. That's no age to be sleeping with your mother" (34). Then, when Cristina takes Vittorio to the cave of the underground pool, Vittorio discovers a pair of tinted glasses in the straw, similar to the shattered pair that he found when the man with the eyes of the blue flame ran from the stable. The relationship of mother/lover emerges when Vittorio suddenly sees his naked mother standing above him as she is about to dive into the pool. No sensuous touch ever occurs; the entire scene has a preternatural quality about it. At this moment, through Vittorio's eyes, we see a truly beautiful woman, one, whom he says, bears no resemblance to the other village women, a "smooth and sleek" (33) woman who takes on the qualities of some ancient Greek goddess, such as Calypso or Circe. Like them, she has beauty and power for good and for evil. If Calypso, she has the power to grant men immortality and eternal youth (Homer 58), although she may also deter them from their lawful, faithful wives. If Circe, she has the power to turn men into swine (118-19)—therefore, Cristina's reference to feeding the pigs when she was in the stable—and has the subsequent power to return them to their human form with an unearthly beauty that heretofore they had not possessed. Thus, Cristina is eternal beauty, love, and eternal faithful relationship, as well as ugliness, treachery and unfaithfulness.

This non-delineation, non-difference, non-choice, non-separation is evident also in her relationships with mature men. In being unfaithful to her long absent husband in Canada, she is faithful to her blue-eyed lover, for, in the imagination of the careful reader, the hints and fragmented pieces of Vittorio's memory draw a picture of a youthful love of Cristina for a young German soldier, a love that preceded her marriage to Mario of her own village. The German was her first, and in a sense, her only lover. The dim memory of Mario given to us by Vittorio is anything but that of a lover. He is seen as a violent figure who hurled an object against his mother's face, a memory that is questionable, but, nevertheless, Cristina does have a small scar on her face in the shape of a "disjointed cross" (*Lives* 37). But two other passages give foundation to Vittorio's memory. Cristina says of Mario to Alfredo, "The only way he knows how to talk is with the back of his hand" (95). Then, when Vittorio sees the letter with the "small neat script of bright blue" (158),

he says that this writing is not that of his "father's violent hand" (158). Thus, her infidelity is true faithfulness. Furthermore, if the reader is tempted to see the blue-eyed soldier as a fascist, a member of a military machine ruled by fascist ideology, careful reading indicates that this young man was probably a communist who, somehow, in a way never explained, deserted the army and most likely was involved in some sort of dangerous, heroic undercover, or partisan action against the Nazis. And Cristina, in her silent way, lives for years with secret rendezvous, probably in Rocca Secca, with this lover, while simultaneously living in harmony with her fascist father who is just as traditional in his attitudes as the rest of the villagers. She does not choose. She does not have to because she does not speak.

One can continue to multiply this non-delineation, non-difference way of living by adding that no line exists between desire/love and duty for Cristina, nor between meaning and non-meaning. She lives desire, her love for her lover, for Vittorio, for her father, but she also is a dutiful daughter and mother, and no duty exists for her vis-à-vis her husband since she appears to feel that she has been abandoned. Some men in her family had gone to the New World and returned, but some, like Cristina's paternal grandfather, have disappeared. Her feeling of abandonment is exhibited when she hurls at her father the accusation that her husband has probably been sleeping with every whore in America (154). Furthermore, she appears to live in some beyond world of meaning/non-meaning. The literal reading of the text sees a talented, vibrant woman living the daily life of deathly isolation and suppression of all that she is. This text is that of a meaningless life. But Cristina wishes to grasp the totality, no matter what it means, and it is here that the text of a meaningful life lies. Derrida actually claims that this action is the origin of meaning (*Writing* 57). What she most passionately desires in this project is to grasp the totality of freedom, a freedom that cannot really be thought. It is a freedom that "wants it all": to be a dutiful daughter of a traditional, fascist father, to be a passionate lover of a blue-eyed fugitive communist, to be a respected educated, highly rational citizen of a traditional, uneducated superstition-haunted village, to be a loving, playful mother, yet a mother who never tells her son anything. It is a mad project of excess that can be implied by these few words, but not completely

thought, for Cristina is grasping for that which goes beyond words and thoughts.

This mad project, best labelled epistemological madness, is the major mark of the hyperbolic project of the Derridean Cogito. The villagers unconsciously understand this quality in Cristina, for they, too have an epistemology, since everyone does, and her behavior and silence are seen by the villagers as a derangement, a displacement, a subversion of their "rationality," their "raison d'être," for her very existence threatens all their beliefs, their epistemology. Cristina's existence not only threatens their view of reality in relation to Catholicism as they live it, but also their ancient superstitions, especially their complex view of the ability of one person to curse another, that is, the power of a person to exercise effectively "the evil eye." But, most important, her existence threatens the villagers' understanding of human relationships, especially of those between men and women, of family relationships in general, of the place of women in society, and of the consequent possibility of their freedom. Thus, Cristina upsets the foundation of meaning for the villagers; her existence threatens the clear certainty of their lives with doubt. That Cristina's threat is as powerful as it is, is derived from its being rooted in the intensity of an ancient mad rationality. She grapples toward all possibilities, the villagers toward none.

Not surprising, because Cristina's very existence is perceived by the villagers to be a threat, the unspoken accusation against her is that she is mad in the sense of the supposed madness of witchcraft. Since they dimly perceive that she attempts to grasp the totality of reality, and that somehow she lives within a forbidden space, she surely must be in touch with the demonic and suffers from a subsequent dangerous madness. One could object to this analysis, saying that the witch-craze existed a few centuries ago, but it must be remembered that these villagers appear to have a completely prescientific mentality.

In the days of the witch craze, at the centre of all the lore surrounding witchcraft, was the belief that the Devil would assume human form and it is then that the woman witch would have sexual intercourse with him (*Malleus Maleficarium* 27). In the earliest days of the witch craze, a phenomenon that some historians believe grew out of the attack upon heretics (Russell 229), many men were accused of witchcraft (279), but many women, especially women from the upper classes, were attracted

to these heretical sects because it was only there that they could enjoy something that resembled equality (282). This factor, plus many other social factors, finally made women the sole victims of the witch craze, and as this phenomenon centred more and more upon women, the accusations moved from those of heresy, toward those of sexual intercourse with the Devil. The link between Cristina's Father's accusatory "comunista" and Alfredo's dire, oblique prediction that Cristina's unborn child will have a serpentine head is reminiscent of the historical link between sexual relations with the devil and heresy, for to the religious, fascist father, the term "comunista" implies the worst kind of heresy of his time. That Vittorio describes the eyes that he saw at the stable as turning magically a luminous blue as they caught the sunlight . . . (and that they were) "bright flames that held me" (*Lives* 12) is not surprising. To him, obviously, the Devil, who must take male human form in order to have sexual relations with a woman, really had "visited" Cristina in the stable. Once again, Cristina lives the logos/madness non-delineation, for although the witch lore follows her everywhere, her reaction to it is that of scoffing rationality. She laughs while saying, "Stupidaggini" (57).

Although the rational reader, too, scoffs at the link that the villagers see between the Devil and Cristina, there are indications in the text that in a profound mythical sense, there is a link between Cristina and the demonic. This point is strengthened by the underground cave scene. The hot spring sulphuric waters of this underground place where Cristina obviously feels very safe and at home have reverberations, as does the river that she and Vittorio must cross, of Hades, and of the river Styx. At this point, let us not forget that Derrida refers to the hyperbolic project as demonic, for it symbolizes the pursuit of excess, of forbidden knowledge. Furthermore, of course, for the pure Cogito which Cristina, at this moment, personifies, there is no division, no boundary, between reason and the labyrinth, between meaning and non-meaning, between God and the Devil.

Cristina is usually so self-contained, so stoical, so powerful in her seeming control of herself. But on two occasions before the climactic leave-taking of the village, she concretely, actively, displays the hyperbolic project's element of mad excess, once in a violent physical fight with one of the village women, and once in the dance at the end of

the festival. One day after school some of the schoolmates of Vittorio beat him. When Cristina hears of the event, surmising that one of the mothers of these boys had provoked the incident because of the rumors of the snake and of her pregnancy, Cristina races through the town and into the woman's house and attacks her. Cristina attempts to strangle her, but the frightened, amazed woman pulls away in time. Later, at the end of the festival, Cristina grabs Vittorio's arm and takes him to the centre of the dancing and begins to dance, to whirl very quickly. Vittorio finds the entire situation mad, wild, dizzying. Dancing/strangling: a strange dual manifestation of this project.

Finally, as she and Vittorio leave the village forever, Cristina articulates what she thinks and feels to the villagers. In a driving rain, standing beside the truck that is going to drive them to the dock in Naples, she stops, and at all the villagers who are watching her from balconies and windows, she hurls these words.

Fools . . . You tried to kill me but you see I'm still alive. And now you came to watch me hang, but I won't be hanged, not by your stupid rules and superstitions. You are the ones who are dead, not me, because not one of you know what it means to be free and to make a choice, and I pray to God that he wipes this town and all its stupidities off the face of the earth! (184)

This is the moment of articulation, of speech, of separation of reason from madness, of her declaring a difference between herself and madness. It is the moment that she publicly articulates decision, her decision to leave her fascist father and his village of narrow superstitious tradition, to cease being a dutiful daughter and village citizen, and to choose to go to her lover, a man who is not her husband, according to law, and to go to a world that is radically different from that in which she has always lived. She no longer attempts to grasp the totality. She knows that definite decisions, choices, must be made, that she must declare that differences exist that cannot be lived simultaneously. The nightly sighs, and sobs of hyperbolic doubt are over, and her taunting, proud shouts at the staring villagers are the shouts of a sudden manifestation of certainty, of a rational certainty that separates her from their superstition. She contemptuously declares, in her own manner, that she is the sane rational one and that they are all mad.

But this moment of ecstatic rationality is also the moment that Cristina dooms herself in the sense of the ancient Greek tragic heroes, for her shouts are from the wound of her Cogito as it opens the village and herself to history and to the subsequent space in which hubris exists. As long as Cristina was silent, and made no separations, no choices, she could live in her world of non-difference. But the moment that she hurls her shouts, she enters a world that marks her with the fatal stigma of hubris and the reader is forewarned that in this world the future, represented by the New World, by Canada, is closed to Cristina, for those who enter it with traces of the hyperbolic project still faintly glowing about them, are treated very harshly. It is now that Giuseppina's words to Cristina, "You're too proud" (5), an accusation that has followed her throughout the book, will have ominous concrete results. Premature death, as in the case of Antigone, another bearer of hubris, awaits her. Cristina's shouts bear strong resemblance to Antigone's casting of bits of earth upon the body of her slain brother. At the moment that Antigone clearly chooses her slain rebellious brother rather than her uncle, the king, she exhibits hubris and her fate is sealed. Thus, the unexpected death from hemorrhage after giving birth to a daughter on the Canada bound ship is a kind of literary necessity. The forces of ancient Greek fate, now operative in the incarnation of the evil eye, a force that for the villagers, "st(an)d outside normal categories of good and evil" (154), of God and the devil, do not take kindly to Cristina's hubris.

But, as Derrida claims, it is this act of articulation that founds the world and its history and although this action leads Cristina to death only a few weeks after she hurls her shouts at the village, she founds a new world for her son, Vittorio, and for her daughter who will never have to endure the kind of persecution that she has had to suffer, for her daughter will be born into a freedom to evolve and change, in other words, into history, rather than into the ahistorical situation of stony non-change and rigidity into which she was born.

On board ship, before the premature birth, Cristina appears to have a serenity that she had never possessed. Vittorio speaks of her "warm radiance" (202). Not only have the sobs disappeared, but so too has the violence that is part of the hyperbolic project of madness and the subsequent violence that must accompany the first articulation of this project (61). Cristina completely leaves her silence behind and creates

warm relationships with several passengers with whom she loves to talk. At the Captain's dinner she appears to talk more than anyone else, and says whatever she thinks. We no longer have to guess her thoughts. The warm serenity that surrounds her seems to be the result of the new freedom, but is also the result of her very recently releasing her reason from its madness. She is now the epitome of Derrida's point that finite thought can only exist through the suppression of madness. For the first time in the novel we see her read. She is studying English. Even her death, which Vittorio witnesses at her side, is full of serenity. All madness has disappeared.

As the book closes with Vittorio reaching Canada, he is in a state of delirium in the hospital where he is recovering from the pneumonia he contracted during a terrible storm while on board ship, the storm (driven by the ancient inhuman forces) that precipitates the premature birth and the consequent death of Cristina. During this delirium Vittorio believes that a pair of eyes of blue flames stands over him, but when he finally fully recovers, it is his mournful father who sits beside him. Was Cristina's first and true love standing above Vittorio, or is this temporary madness of Vittorio an entrance into the Cogito of his mother and her grand hyperbolic project? When he returns to pure reason, he sees before him, not a blue-eyed, demonic angel, but rather a greatly deflated, ordinary, humble human being. His new world has been founded by Cristina, but not exactly as she had chosen, for her choosing was perhaps a bit too close to the madness of the Cogito from which she had separated herself.

Cristina, through her death, in a strangely ironic way, remains true to the hyperbolic project of the Derridean Cogito from which she had distanced herself. To remember that either Nothingness or Infinity are the directions that this project takes is to be confronted with two opposite views of Cristina's fate. From a literal point of view, her direction, because of premature death, is nothingness. But if one sees Cristina through the image of her namesake, Santa Cristina, who emerges as the central figure of la maestra's book, *Lives of the Saints*, that she reads to Vittorio after school, then one's point of view changes. Like Cristina, Santa Cristina also is associated with the demonic since she was thrown into a pit of serpents. Then, like Cristina, whose body is cast into the sea, so, too, was Santa Cristina cast into the sea, but angels descended and she

was taken up to heaven (136). She, like Cristina, had loathed superstition, and because she steadfastly refused to accept what she believed to be the superstitions of the Romans, the Romans sought her execution. In the light of this analogy, one can say that Cristina's project takes her toward infinity. In this reading, the fate of Cristina is closer to that of Oedipus in *Oedipus at Colonus* than to that of Antigone. Antigone meets death by her own hand and a valid reading of her fate is that she has attempted to grasp the totality and to live within a state, her uncle Creon's, while violating his laws in aiding the spirit of her slain beloved brother who had declared war against Creon. Now she is dead and so too is Hymen, her betrothed. Oedipus, in *Oedipus at Colonus*, clearly achieves infinity, for the heavens open for this blind, exile who transcends death, through being taken by the gods, directly into the heavens. Cristina, like Antigone, meets premature death, but her link to Santa Cristina says that she, too, transcends death, and, like Oedipus, is taken to the heavens by the gods. Also, Cristina's lover, her Hymen, appears to the delirious Vittorio. Both Cristina and her blue-eyed lover have somehow attained infinity.

To choose one of these views is to admit that we, ourselves, are separated from the hyperbolic project. But since this entire analysis is one of language, of speech, of discourse, to choose is simply to admit that one is involved in the articulation of the Cogito. It is the rational thing to do, and, the stuff of founding worlds and of creating history.

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