

CSABA ONDER

**INDECENT REMARKS
(CAIN AND ABEL – GENESIS)**

SUMMARY: 1. Apokalünnenoi Logoi; 1.1. William and Adso, the Two Franciscan Detectives; 1.2. Criminal and Etymological Turns; 1.3. Metaphysical Horror; 1.4. Noah’s Wound; 1.5. The Closeness of God; 2. Cain and Abel; 2.1. Speech and Writing; 2.2. Hearing and Keeping Silent; 2.3. The Being a Victim; 2.4. And The Lord Had Respect Unto Abel and to his Offering; 2.5. When There Is Understanding, There Is No Need for Translation; 2.6. No More Chance for Apocalypsis.

1. Apokalünnenoi Logoi

1.1. William and Adso, the Two Franciscan Detectives.

Examining the bathtubs one after the other in the monastery’s balneary, the investigating monks of Eco’s novel finally reach the last one, which, “concealed by a drawn curtain, was full, and next to it lay a garment, in a heap. At first sight, in the beam of our lamp, the surface of the liquid seemed smooth; but as the light struck it we glimpsed on the bottom, lifeless, a naked human body. We pulled it out slowly: Berengar. [...] The body, white and flabby, without hair, seemed a woman’s except for the obscene spectacle of the flaccid pudenda. I blushed, then shuddered.”¹ One of the mysteries of the story is solved in this scene, for the monk they had been looking for is found, more precisely, only his corpse. William and Adso, the two Franciscan *detectives*, following John’s *Revelations*, having interpreted the vision after the third sound of the trumpet, reach the balneary, since this is the only place in the monastery where the images of the

¹ ECO, UMBERTO, *The Name of the Rose*, (Trans. WILLIAM WEAVER), New York, Warner Books 1986, 150.

river and the stream are manifested.² The scene, however, does not end after the application of an apocalyptic pattern, interpreted as a primary trace on the level of the plot, for during the process of proper interpretation, the corpse is not simply found but *is revealed* in a strictly choreographed context. The last tub is separated by a curtain from the other ones that Eco does not make his characters draw, but it remains up to the readers if they recognise the apocalyptic nature of the movement. A written text was leading one up to this point, which, by its genre and the prepared requisites, warned one about this outcome well in advance. Eco leaves us to decide whether we draw the tilt or not, if we engage in the game or we read on.

1.2. *Criminal and Etymological Turns*

The drawing of the thick curtain as *unveiling* offers two simultaneous discoveries for the adventurous detective. The first discovery is the body, the corpse, in which death itself, the ultimate end shows and reveals itself. This is interpreted as the vision of the time of the end from the aspect of life. In the second case, the body does not serve the revelation of something beyond itself but the revelation is referred directly to the body itself. The unveiling here means the exposure of the body and its nakedness. The phrases “I expose,” “I unveil,” “I reveal” correspond to the Hebrew word *gala*, which translates into Greek *apocalypso*.³ Thus, originally, *apocalypsis* used to mean the exposure, unveiling, revelation of something, where that something can be anything that is hidden. *Apocalypsis*, however, can also reveal a secret which otherwise does not manifest itself, and when it does, it has to remain hidden and it has to be kept from being obvious. Such a thing might be the

² Eco maintained that “Medieval interpreters were wrong in taking the world as a univocal text”. (ECO, UMBERTO, “Two Models of Interpretation”, in UMBERTO ECO, *The Limits of Interpretation*. Indiana University Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis 1994, 21.) Eco makes his characters realise precisely this during their investigation. This correction, apart from the successful solution of the mystery, is, at the same time, a passage to modernity, when the idea of the world accommodated to a text (and in which world Jorge, the faithful interpreter could believe without reservations that the random events of the world really followed a pattern in a text) is substituted for an idea of the world created or assembled in a book.

³ For more on this later, see DERRIDA, JACQUES, “Of an Apocalyptic Tone Recently Adopted in Philosophy” (Trans. JOHN P. LEAVEY, JR.), in *Oxford Literary Review* 6. Nr. 2 (1984) 3–37.

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exposure of a hidden part of a body. This body part can be the eye, the ear, or even the nose (or the tongue as a sensory organ with the Aztecs)⁴ but among the body parts there is only one whose revelation, exposure or representation is forbidden: the genitalia, especially the male genitalia.

In the light of the above, Eco's sophisticated scenario becomes clear, where the criminal turn is followed by an etymological one, in which both meanings of *apocalypsis* is at work. By representing the exposed corpse and genitalia of the dead monk together, Eco makes his narrator-protagonist, Adso realise the real reason for the change of meaning, forcing him into asking a question which must not be said aloud but is only appearing on his face. Why is the sight of genitalia forbidden? Why do they not know the original meaning of *apocalypsis* referring to the exposure of genitalia? Why do they recall exclusively the book of John of Zebedee and the terrible images of the catastrophe?

1.3. Metaphysical Horror

To answer the questions, one has to return to the scene before the drawing of the curtain. Anyone who undertakes the unveiling, has to take the dangers of the revealed secret into account, that they cannot avoid the consequences and that they are responsible for others with their deed. Adso, upon glimpsing the corpse and the "flaccid pudenda" of the naked body, blushes and then shudders. The sexual sanctions revealed to Moses name the nature of the offense in "the unveiling that affords seeing."⁵ In connection with this, Derrida remarks that the gesture of laying bare or exposing, that is, the apocalyptic *move* is more sinful and more dangerous than the intercourse itself. That is why Ham gets a serious punishment when he catches sight of the nakedness of his father. Adso's blush is therefore called forth by the moral prohibition that is immediately activated. His shyness upon seeing the "scandalous" pudenda of his brethren can be termed as perfectly justifiable, or even compelling, taking the spirit of the era into account. Adso, however, also "shudders," which cannot be explained by the effect of moral prohibi-

⁴ See CALVINO, ITALO, "A Jaguar-Nap" ["Under the Jaguar Sun"], (Trans. SZÉNÁSI FERENC), *Holmi* 9 (1993) 1228.

⁵ DERRIDA, , "Of an Apocalyptic Tone", 5.

tion or the proximity of death, for he could have prepared himself for all these before drawing the curtain. His shudder, as opposed to his blush, is not a natural reaction; his horror is caused by something one cannot prepare for. This is precisely why his shudder is *metaphysical horror* at the same time.⁶

1.4. Noah's Wound

In connection with the Ham–Noah case cited by Derrida also, Graves remarks that the original version of the myth does not talk about seeing nakedness or *apocalypsis*, but clearly about *castration*.⁷ In the original version, Ham castrates the drunken Noah lying in his tent naked, just like Zeus does his unashamed father, Chronos. While in the Greek myth Zeus, wishing to seize power, obtains the right to rule after the castration, and pushes his powerless brothers, Hades and Poseidon into the background, the Old Testament text does not mention Ham's daring deed before the lines about Noah's waking. In the revised version, Ham's offense lies in only seeing the exposed genitalia of his father. Given the gravity of the punishment, Noah in his drunkenness must have revealed something that should not have been exposed and therefore the witness had to be punished for seeing it. Thus the real point of the sexual sanctions mentioned above, that is, exposing and seeing nakedness, could be explained. The castration appearing in the original version, therefore, might not seem important, because a justifiable element has replaced it, namely, laying bare and exposing the genitalia. Still, it is not clear why seeing the sexual organs is so mysterious and how it related to the gesture of exposing. The answer seems obvious: the exposed or revealed genitalia might lure one into castration – just as Ham took advantage of the situation and cut off his unconscious father's phallus to obtain the power that should have gone to their brothers. The due punishment sets an example to protect the inviolable system of succession. The editor of the Genesis, however, does not find Ham's curse and enslavement deterring enough for it is as if the punishment had lost its original force and aim. He

⁶ In the afterword of his novel, Eco also mentions this metaphysical horror, although in a different context.

⁷ GRAVES, ROBERT – PATAI, RAPHAEL, *Hebrew Myths: The Book of Genesis*, (Ed. ROBERT A. DAVIS), Manchester, Carcanet 2005, 120.

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rectifies the loose ties of the punishment in the simplest and most radical form possible: he erases the sin itself and leaves the fact of castration out of the text.⁸ In deleting the traces of withholding information, the emphasis is shifted to the exposure of nakedness. Since castration must be preceded by the revelation of the phallus, the move itself is laid under a taboo, erasing even the very circumstances of castration. As a last safeguard, even the word, the original meaning of *apocalypsis*, is also covered, thus setting up an obstacle, with the lack, in language to improper intentions; because can we do something for which we do not even have a word? The meaning of *apocalypsis*, that is, the uncovering of the male genitalia, has to be hidden so that Noah's wound could be covered. The first and last chance for this concealment occurred at the time of recording the Genesis, at a time when the habit of reading transformed the *homo sapiens* into the *homo legens*, at a time when the latter was not able to sense everything that their non-reader ancestors could see and hear.⁹ This was the time when the erroneous *Dies irae* interpretation filled the place of the vacant spot of the exposing movement.

1.5. *The Closeness of God*

Still, whose genitalia, whose power was at risk? Who does Noah's wound cover? When YHWH, declares his sexual prohibitions to Moses, his own sexuality is also screened together with the general obscuring of sexuality and prohibiting the sight of it. The taboo of uncovering genitalia is also a self-reflexive gesture that serves to hide the sexuality of deity as well. According to beliefs held to that time, a *sexual act* had created the world. Both biblical creation stories talk about *creation*, shaping and the genitalia of YHWH and Elohim are not mentioned, stay masked and their sexuality does not even arise. Therefore, with the self-protective covering of the genitalia, not only castration is impossible but procreation as well. In order to protect and keep their power, deities had to renounce creation through sexuality for

⁸ GRAVES – PATAI, *Hebrew Myths*, 121. See also: The sacred Hebrew documents from the pre-Biblical times were either lost or consciously destroyed.

⁹ ITALO CALVINO, „Wenn ein Reisender in einer Winternacht. Plädoyer für eine postmoderne Ästhetik“, in HANS ROBERT JAUSS, *Studien zum Epochenwandel der ästhetischen Moderne*, Frankfurt am Main, Shurkamp Verlag 1989, 267–302.

creation through shaping. When YHWH/Elohim ceases to be an engendering entity, that also eradicates the claims for power of the possible successors, securing his absolute and permanent hegemony. The genuine meaning of *apocalypsis* might have been obscured to stop even the possibility of revealing the sexuality and the sexual potential of YHWH and Elohim, which would mean a cosmic threat to the existing world.

All the injustice of YHWH towards humanity bespeaks of the fact that this screen is imperfect. Sometimes the veil is lifted, and perhaps not the secret of cosmic mystery but the halo of the secret becomes visible.¹⁰ Behind the traces, Adso senses the closeness of God and shudders at the thought that in real *apocalypsis*, all obstacle between man and God may disappear, and that one can get to him as close as in the beginning. The uncovering of YHWH's genitalia is also the time of the end as well, and the consequence of its provocation might cause a terrible apocalypse since the secret of the Lord that created the World is an ultimate weapon that might shatter the curiosity of the Creation like an atomic bomb. It is not surprising, therefore, that Adso shudders at the sight uncovered by the curtain.

2. Cain and Abel

2.1. *Speech and Writing*

"But the terrifying and sacred gravity of this apocalyptic uncovering," Derrida claims, "is not any the less, of course, in the case of the arm of YHWH, of his glory, or of ears open to his revelation. And the disclosure not only opens to vision or contemplation, not only affords seeing but also affords hearing/understanding."¹¹ According to Socrates, neither painting, nor writing can substitute for live speech, because the former two "maintain a most majestic silence," if addressed. Neither of them is suitable for dialogue, because "if you ask them anything about what they say, from a desire to be instructed, they go on telling you just the same thing for ever."¹² By recording

¹⁰ Think of the Flood or the Tower of Babel.

¹¹ DERRIDA, , "Of an Apocalyptic Tone", 5.

¹² PLATO, *Phaedrus*, (Trans., intr. and commentary R. HACKFORTH), Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 1997, 158 (275/D).

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the dialogue, the disciple, Plato, seemingly foregoes the explication of *logos* in speech, while “the literary form of the dialogue places language and concept back within the original movement of conversation.”¹³ Gadamer claims that this is why in the Platonic dialogues the alienation of “speech and sense” does not yet take place, but speech is not the sole carrier of *logos* anymore and it has to share the task with writing. The initial balance of this twin role (if we take the Platonic intersection of ascending and descending courses as such) later is totally undermined. Speech, which had carried *logos* exclusively up until then, and understanding after hearing is completely pushed into the background by literacy and making sense by reading. Discourse is replaced by reading, *homo sapiens* by *homo legens* and memory previously stored orally is shifted to the library.¹⁴ The omnipotent text could, however, only *interpret* the *logos* with a language having lost its foundations. Not accidentally, after this turn, the task of hermeneutics became the re-enunciation of speech and sense that had been alienated in a written text.¹⁵

2.2. *Hearing and Keeping Silent*

With writing, then, language has deprived itself from speech, and with the disappearance of speech, not only its psychological aspects have vanished but the faculties of *hearing and keeping silent* as well, connected to discursive speech.¹⁶ The word *gala* means opening the eye, ear and revealing sexuality.¹⁷ The ear is opened to hear something, a secret, a secret speech. But how could we hear some speech? We, who, coping with bringing back

¹³ GADAMER, HANS GEORG, *Truth and Method*, (Second Revised Edition), (Trans. revised by JOEL WEINSHEIMER and DONALD G. MARSHALL), London, Continuum 2006, 155.

¹⁴ “Only the library functions as the memory of mankind. [...] If God exists, then by force of his omnipotence, he can be regarded as a kind of enormous library.” (“A nyitott mútől A Foucault-ingáig – Interjú Umberto Ecóval”, in *Magyar Lettre Internationale* 1993/8. (Trans. HALASI ZOLTÁN). JEAN-JACQUES BROCHIER & MARIO FUSCO, “De l’Oeuvre Ouverte au Pendule de Foucault”, in JEAN-JACQUES (Ed). 1989. UMBERT ECO, *Du semiologue au romancier*, *Special issue of Magazine Littéraire* 262, février, 1989, 18–27.

¹⁵ Cf. GADAMER, *Truth and Method*, 385–406.

¹⁶ HEIDEGGER, MARTIN, *Being and Time*, (Trans. JOHN MACQUARRIE and EDWARD ROBINSON), Oxford, Blackwell 2001, 204.

¹⁷ Cf. HELLER, AGNES, *A Philosophy of History in Fragments*, Oxford, Wiley 1993. “Of an Apocalyptic Tone Recently Adopted in Philosophy.” See DERRIDA, , “Of an Apocalyptic Tone”, 4.

speech alienated in writing, could not even dream about *hearing* the speech beyond writing? Moreover, how could we hear a speech which is so much concealed as someone's genitalia?

If we could resurrect conversation from the written text, if the text could again be invested with the psychological and sociological motives of the spoken word, and added to this, if all the circumstances were available to dramatise the interaction beyond the writing, restoring the dialogic situation, could we get back to the original speech, or should we have to be content with its traces? Would Derrida's scepticism be valid, and would we find that in the path of stories of translation, there is nothing but traces? As followers of the traces of writing, have we completely lost our ears' faculty of hearing? Should we content ourselves with reading lips as spectators, or is there a chance of *apocalypsis*? After seeing the traces, could we open our ears to the divine speech?

2.3. *The Being a Victim*

Let me share a story at this point. It is the story of Cain and Abel. For the sake of simplicity, I will quote the passage.

“And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering: But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell. And the LORD said unto Cain, Why are you angry? and why is your countenance fallen? If you do well, shall you not be accepted? and if you do not well, sin lies at the door. And you shall be its desire, and you must rule over it. And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him. And the LORD said unto Cain, Where is Abel your brother? And he said, I know not: Am I my brother's keeper?”¹⁸

| ¹⁸ Genesis 4:3–10. (King James Version)

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During the story, Abel keeps being concealed. He is concealed by his silence, for neither his words nor his deeds betray him. He follows his brother with his offerings, he is silent and does not move when the Lord looks upon him, and he also follows Cain to the fields without a word. Still, Abel cannot be said to be a passive or indifferent participant in the story. His silence is more and more provocative, and as the story progresses, his consistent silence begins to characterise him. It almost seems that his wordlessness defines him. Is this silence Abel's real face or is it only a mask from behind which quietness is missing? In a passage of *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche writes the following in the entry "Sacrifice" (Section 220): "The sacrificial animal thinks differently about sacrifice than the spectator, but one has never let it have its say."¹⁹ It is unclear if Nietzsche had in mind Abel, too, when he talked about the beginnings and whether he realised Abel's silence; nevertheless, I am summoning Nietzsche to help investigate if this old story is concealing from us anything.

First of all, our knowledge related to the role and language of being a victim has to be clarified. We know that Cain slew his brother Abel, and, therefore, the latter is recognised as the "victim" of the first murderous act. However, a difference must be made between "falling victim to" and "being a victim." I think the former one is widely used and therefore common and understandable, while the latter one is less so. The victim of "victimhood" does not become one as a result of some external event or deed, he or she is not chosen as a sacrifice, but becomes a victim by himself or herself. More precisely, this person does not "become" a victim but is one from the start, a being whose exceptional skill or talent is recognised by the victimisers. It is known that a sacrifice was used in the communication with transcendence because the sacrifice functioned as a medium, a translator, an interpreter, linking heaven and earth, deity and humans.

The other important mediator of God's words is the prophet. Similarly to the victim, they are also interpreters, for if they were not, the transcendent could reveal itself directly. There is still an enormous difference between the "language ability" of the sacrifice and the prophet. Let us think of Noah's, Moses's or Abraham's encounter with God. The Lord addresses the chosen one *himself* and speaks to them *in their own language*. That is to say,

¹⁹ NIETZSCHE, FRIEDRICH WILHELM, *The Gay Science*, (Ed. BERNARD WILLIAMS), Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 2001, 227.

all their communicative contact with God perfectly corresponds to the prescribed pragmatic rules, in which they cannot become addressers since they do not know the suitable language. The be-all and end-all of their being chosen is precisely being addressed by God. Initiating and conducting a conversation with God is absolutely dependent on divine will, in which the prophets and forefathers are passive participants of a closed communication.

The victim, as opposed to the prophet, is active in the direction of God. With their help, a unidirectional process can be reversed and a message can be sent to the Lord. The victim does not only form a common language with deity, which is a necessary prerequisite of understanding, but is also able to transmit the message. They possess a technique of mediation in which the one who sacrifices is not interested; what is important for them is only to get their message sent. If the *signs* are favourable, then their request or message is heard. The victim is passive towards the sacrificers, he or she does not give any verbal message to them but forces them to *read and interpret*. The sacrificers are content with reading the mediated signs pretending that there is nothing more difficult and mysterious in the world than interpretation, while being silent about the real reasons of their deafness. Nietzsche's remark could have referred to the fact that the victims also have the ability to speak and so possess some kind of language, but we, as *spectators*, have never asked them; moreover, have never let them speak from the beginning, with which we have deprived ourselves from hearing what they have to say. By not listening we have actually built a wall between the different speeches, we have closed our ears to the victims' words, and what we cannot hear we never understand. By turning our heads in arrogance, we have deprived ourselves from listening to divine communication, we need interpreters, and I honestly do not know if we can ever reconcile with the fact that interpretation parts us from hearing the divine language forever.²⁰

2.4. And The Lord Had Respect Unto Abel and to his Offering

The Lord, then, looks at Abel. What is betraying is not the reason of turning there but the *action* itself. The way the Lord turns to Abel. When the

| ²⁰ Cf. GADAMER, *Truth and Method*, 385–406.

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Lord turn his gaze upon Abel, he pays attention to the spot where Abel and his offering are. There is no question of choice here because one can only choose between different things, and in this case, the Lord only looks at Abel *and* his offering while neglecting Cain. Is the lamb a more generous gift in the Lord's eyes? This could be some divine whim that could not be explained if it was not clear that favouring Abel's person as opposed to his offering is not accidental. What is the reason of divine attention? What makes Abel the chosen one if not the Lord's calling? On the basis of what is said and what is not said, I must assume that Abel's being chosen and the divine attention must have a common source. Somehow Abel is able to draw the Lord's attention to himself. The way he does it explains his being chosen, and the act accounts for the divine attention. How can Abel, who is silent and fails to act on his own, do this? The only trace that might elucidate this is Abel's silence. So far, I have described Abel, who is left out of the conversation of God and Cain, with different synonyms of non-speaking. At this point, now that we have found this trace, a difference has to be made between the concepts used and the most appropriate one has to be chosen. First of all, it has to be supposed that Abel's silence is not muteness²¹ and does not mean the inability to speak out. His silence, on the other hand, is not the silence before the *logos*²², nor "making one understand."²³ It has to be assumed that behind Abel's quietness there is a *speech* to be heard. Abel is not silent but in fact is speaking just as Cain is, but Abel's words are not heard. For some reason, Abel's speech seems to be silence. For the time being, let us accept that there exists this unheard, unrecorded speech. A speech, even if not written down, necessarily leaves some traces later, in the recorded communicative situation of the conversation. The speaker always

²¹ HEIDEGGER: "But to keep silent does not mean to be dumb." (HEIDEGGER, *Being and Time*, 208.)

²² "The constant incompatibility, almost unconsciously taking place, or more precisely the fracture in the linearity of language is not the choice of the speaker. It is not their choice not to carry on but the compelling force of silencing of the thing unable to be contained by a sign. Or, as Gadamer argues in *Text and Interpretation*: 'Being does not unfold totally in self-manifestation but rather withholds itself'. That is why Heidegger claims that what is before every logic based on *logos* is *sigē*, silence." (BACSÓ BÉLA, "Az ártatlan gondolkodás kívánalma" ["The Need for Innocent Thinking"], *Gond* 2 (1992) 126.)

²³ HEIDEGGER, *Being and Time*, 208.

talks to someone and even if their words are deleted later, the listener's broken answer remains there. If the reply, which is left without sense, is also erased, the magnitude of the gap is astounding, especially if the context of the conversation that took place, the empty situation, is kept. If Abel spoke and if he participated in the conversation of the Lord and Cain, the traces of this *polilogue* have to be there in the text. Therefore, Abel's silences have to be examined in the proximity of the participants of the recorded conversation.

2.5. When There Is Understanding, There Is No Need for Translation

"And Cain talked with Abel his brother" (Genesis 4:8). The text, however, informs us about nothing more but Abel's repeated silences. That is, the other party is not heard. At this point, Abel's speech as an answer to Cain's incomplete words might be imagined, but the possibility of some unstructured conversation is also hidden in the situation. After the offering, Cain keeps questioning Abel wrathfully, in vain, his brother keeps his silence or might give short answers, and is no more willing to co-operate in the conversation.²⁴ What does this "no more" refer to? Perhaps to an earlier dialogue in which Abel was willing to partake, he almost seemed garrulous, he was almost having a chat, and not with Cain. If we suppose some kind of speech behind Abel's silence, then the Lord's action, his looking at Abel becomes meaningful. It is reasonable to suppose that the Lord, when seeing the offering, does not only see, but *hears*, thus does not only pay attention but at the same time – knowing the gesture of non-choice – probably *listens* to Abel. "Only he who already understands can listen,"²⁵ and the one who has, is open to the other because they understand the other. And when there is understanding, there is no need for translation, there is conversation (Gadamer). The Lord has heard Abel's address, and opened his ears to listening. He has turned towards Abel, looked at him and answered.

²⁴ On more of this, see GRICE, H. P., "Logic and Conversation", *Syntax and Semantics*, Vol. 3, *Speech Acts*, (Ed. PETER COLE and JERRY L. MORGAN), New York, Academic Press 1975, 41–58.

²⁵ HEIDEGGER, *Being and Time*, 208.

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What makes the victim an addresser? What is the explanation of the fact that the Lord's calling arrived at Abel *as an answer* already?²⁶ The victim is probably unaware of their own abilities; they may not have abilities at all, but they feel one thing for certain: the unquenchable thirst of redemption. Maybe this unfathomable desire makes them be capable of addressing the Lord. Abel, *the breath*,²⁷ hails the Lord and asks to be lifted. Back where he has been torn out of. The Lord casts his eye on him and calls him. Their conversation seems silent to us like a dumb show where the lips appear to be moving but there is no voice to be heard, only the image and the movements can be seen.

When Cain is humbly approaching the Lord with his gift, he turns his face towards the ground, and he is ready to fulfil God's commandment. His brother's audacity angers him. Their language is familiar to Cain, yet he does not understand their speech. The desire of return does not make sense to him, he only feels that the Lord forgets him unfairly. He becomes wrathful, his countenance falls and *he closes his ears*...

2.6. No More Chance for Apocalypsis

With this concealing gesture, by refusing to listen to the speech of the victim, Cain has sealed our ears forever. The story of Cain and Abel has survived, with all its lessons, but we know nothing about the dialogue of the Lord and Abel anymore. Cain, thus, has not told everything, he silenced Abel to prevent us from hearing – what, exactly? It would be too simple to believe that YHWH's speech and language is just as secretive as his genitalia, and that is why our ears may not be opened. Therefore, Cain would be the eunuch of this secret. It would be nicer to think that Cain, as YHWH's victim, had wanted to withhold Abel's words ringing in his ears from his descendants, to protect us from utter hopelessness, the futility and vanity of our callings. For we cannot make shortcuts, and so it is better not to know about those who can return beyond their existence without suffering divine punishment.

²⁶ See also DERRIDA, , "Of an Apocalyptic Tone", 4.

²⁷ Abel's name is doubly telling: It means a grove, a meadow, lawn, and probably, field, plain – where Cain's deed reaches him. The first meaning of Abel's name, however, is breath, respiration, nothingness, passing, fallibility.

Or maybe Cain has reported about this, but failing to understand the point, he blamed his hearing and thus Abel's language has been silenced. It might also happen that the exactly quoted words did not find a way to his listeners' ears and they did not pass them on to their offspring. It might also have occurred that the story remained faithful to every word, but when recorded, they became utterly meaningless in translations, and what live speech had been capable of, written memory was not able to keep anymore.

The one who translated the text, leaving out foreign words, has still left a trace with the void. This lack is again a veil, the border trace of the language describing the world. We keep eavesdropping behind it in vain, we keep reading it, but there is no more chance for *apocalypsis*.

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