

---

TRICYCLES, BICYCLES, LIFE CYCLES:  
PSYCHOANALYTIC PERSPECTIVES  
ON CHILDHOOD LOSS AND  
TRANSGENERATIONAL PARENTING  
IN SYLVAIN CHÔMET'S *BELLEVILLE*  
*RENDEZ-VOUS*<sup>1</sup>

*Alexander Stein*

---

*Les triplettes de Belleville* (*Belleville Rendez-Vous* or *The Triplets of Belleville*)  
(France, Canada, 2003)  
Director: Sylvain Chômet  
Distributor: Celluloid Dreams

*Belleville Rendez-Vous* (known in the United States as *The Triplets of Belleville*) by Sylvain Chômet (2003) is a work of whimsical originality, and a tour de force of feature-length animated filmmaking. Chômet's cinematic palette interweaves audio-visual and narrative inventiveness with technical bravura. Together, these elements are informed by a wide range of sociohistorical, cultural and aesthetic influences, as various as Betty Boop, Jacques Tati and European comic books, the classic Hanna-Barbera cartoons of Tex Avery and Chuck Jones, the early animation pioneer Winsor McCay, Disney, Czech animator Karel Zeman, Terry Gilliam, Nick Park, as well as musical referents including Mozart, J.S. Bach, Django Reinhardt, the Andrews Sisters, Fred Astaire and Josephine Baker.

Many interpretive avenues are suggested by the phantasmagorical kaleidoscope of sights, sounds, characters and implausible events. This ambiguity is amplified by a lack of dialogue, and the medium of animation itself, which by its nature lends itself to depictions of sur- and hyper-reality. Film in general,

but animation in particular, is uniquely felicitous in visually representing distortions of time, the attendant effects of the ageing process and behavior or actions otherwise physically impossible. *Belleville Rendez-Vous* exaggerates and parodies conventions of masculinity and femininity: in this world, men are presented mostly as simpering, ineffectual fops, who are also either submissive and impotent, or aggressive and domineering louts. Women, conversely, are mostly idealized, larger-than-life, seemingly all-powerful and indomitable. This could be superficially understood on the level of social commentary, addressing caricatures of culture, class, ageism, gender and Franco-American nationalism. As becomes discernible, however, these are distorted and attenuated renderings, core characteristics which have been hyperbolized, as in many dreams, in the service of a wish or some other intrapsychic motive.

It is from the perspective of a dream, where entwining themes unfold and events occur in ways possible only in the unconscious, that the film can be most profitably approached. I will utilize the idea of film-as-dream to shed light on what I view as the primary theme here: the impact of loss and affiliated concerns of mourning and melancholia on developmental processes at varying stages in the life cycle. These are elaborated here in the context of a work of animated cinema and its fictional characterizations, rather than clinical case material.

When considered as multiply condensed, distorted and intersecting overlays of the wishes, fantasies, strivings and conflicts of the main protagonists, a larger mosaic emerges in which component themes of loss, longing, growth, development, decay and reparation emerge. No single voice is dominant – there is a near absence of spoken language and only a few snippets of barely intelligible dialogue. As in fathoming the latent content of any dream, we are not confined to representations of any single personage, gender, time, place or even species. The surreal narrative of the film qua dream work is conveyed by fantastical imagery, symbolic allusion and non-verbal signifiers.

First, a brief synopsis – the manifest material. An orphaned boy named Champion is raised by his grandmother, Madame Souza. Her gift of a tricycle catalyses a passion for cycle-racing that becomes the centerpiece of their life together. Fast-forwarding to early adulthood, and after years of relentless training – throughout which the elderly, astigmatic and club-footed Grandma improbably serves as her grandson's trainer – Champion comes into his name and becomes a world-class bike racer. When he and a pair of other top competitors are abducted by a pair of sinister thugs during the Tour de France, Mme Souza sets off to rescue her beloved grandson with the help of Bruno, their fat old dog. They pursue Champion across the ocean in a rented pedal-boat, and arrive in the corpulently capitalist megalopolis of Belleville. Lost, confused and penniless in the gargantuan city, Grandma and dog are taken in by a trio of decrepit women – the eponymous triplets – a glamorous close-harmony singing act in their youth who now live in poverty and

obscurity. They subsist monotonously on a diet of frogs harvested through acts of wildly overzealous violence, and make infectious music with household appliances. Bruno's keen nose eventually leads them to the hapless Champion, held captive by the Mafia Godfather in a cycle-racing betting parlour. In a balletic Sergio Leone-like final sequence, Mme Souza, Bruno, and the triplets unleash an outlandish scheme to liberate Champion using musical prowess, feminine wile and brute force. Propelled by Champion's thoroughbred quadriceps, they ride off together, disappearing over the horizon and into the silver screen.<sup>2</sup>

Of the cast of main characters – Mme Souza, Champion, Bruno the dog, the triplets and various Mafiosi – all, in my view, are reducible to two: grandmother and boy. Each symbolically condenses antipodal facets of the ageing process. Depending, then, on whom we take as the dreamer, the material presented by each is uniquely interpretable, as will be the potential meaning of any of the other figures and ancillary components.

This allows a stereoscopically complementary interpretation, one view focusing on issues concerning the grandmother and the other on the boy. Within this scheme, I will interweave the issues and interpretations relevant to each, rather than present them separately. I have in mind in adopting this approach Freud's proposal that a dreamer in his relation to his dream-wishes can only be compared to an amalgamation of two separate people who are linked by some important common element (1900: 581, n. 1).

The common element that links the boy and his grandmother here is profound loss; everything extends from the central premise that each suffers developmental deformations occasioned by the absence (which we can reasonably assume as death) of the boy's parents. Whether Mme Souza is the maternal or paternal grandmother is of minor consequence, bearing only on her having lost a son or a daughter (as well as son-in-law or daughter-in-law). Of greater import, given that she is also alone (again, assuming she is a widow), is the dynamic familial disequilibrium created in this vacuum, wherein a young family of husband, wife and child, together with a husband and wife from the prior generation – the grandparents – is tragically reconfigured to just grandmother and grandson. Their respective social roles, psychical positions and developmental trajectories are thrown asunder. For each of them, the common trauma of primary object loss constitutes a serious developmental interference (Nagera 1970), the repercussions of which manifest in responsive asynchronous patterns of mourning, or failure to mourn, and distortions to growth and the achievement of developmental tasks, each in accordance with their phase-particular needs (Bowlby 1963).

In what follows, I elaborate these ideas guided by two central premises. The first is that both Grandma Souza and young Champion are contending with the cardinal features of pathological mourning – the repression of yearning



*Belleville Rendez-Vous*

for the lost objects and the unconscious urge to recover them, displacement of reproaches against them, projective identification and the defensive function of care of a vicarious figure as a composite of aggressive and reparative wishes toward the lost objects. The second, directly following from this, is that each of them is attempting to reorganize reality and reverse or repair their respective developmental interferences through fantasy formations and pathogenic sublimatory enactments.

Considered in this light, Mme Souza can be seen in one regard as a paradigmatic older woman, contending with a welter of issues specific to late adulthood, notably: confrontation with the ageing process and concomitant alterations to psychic organization; self-image; self-identity; sexuality; agency; power; social and family position; as well as recalibrated experience of time sense, with related appraisals of past, present and future. But also implicated, particular to her heartbreaking circumstances, are developmental crises of transgenerational attachment involving herself, as a grandmother, as double parental surrogate, primary generative force and presence, and object for identification and internalization by a grandchild psychologically disfigured by the devastating early loss of his parents; together with the diminution or deprivation of typical end of life and grandparenthood functions.

In the background are many important additional symbols: vehicles (bikes, trains, boats and cars); locations (the house that Grandma, Champion and Bruno share, and its blighted, exurban environs; the triplets' dismal flat; the Mafia lair; and Belleville itself); and landscapes or terrains (the ocean, mountains and cities). Each of these conjures some affect-laden sensation (Mme

Souza's house is as bleak and isolated as a crypt, the ocean is menacing and vast, the mountains simmering, arid and steep, the Mafia fortress is sinister and fetid as an old spittoon, the city-scapes inhospitably vertiginous, the triplets' flat as dilapidated as their old bodies). Innumerable, incessant noises pervade; music is ever present. There are dreams aplenty, with Bruno the dog clearly the dreamer, which feature the recurrent central image of a train.

Perhaps most important are the various representations of time – in motion, travel, the compressed depiction of time's passage, music and sounds, the use of moving pictures (film and television) and in the animated characterizations themselves. Regarding telling a story without spoken dialogue, Chômet indicates: 'that moment when you see the drawings move, that's a really magic moment, and there is no sound to it . . . an animation without the constraints of spoken words is stronger. If you have to fit everything to the words, all the gestural movement revolves around the mouth. Without it, you are much freer to . . . talk through animation itself' (Moins 2003: 28).

Many years elapse from the beginning of the film to its end – in a prologue, the triplets are shown in their youthful prime, but are already elderly once Champion is introduced and the story proper has commenced – and nearly two decades pass documenting Champion's growth from young boy to young man. Despite these reality-based chronological transformations, Mme Souza appears unchanged. From the start, she is an old woman – a woman of a certain age, as is euphemistically said, whose precise age is uncertain. She is manifestly infirm: one leg is shorter than the other and she wears an impressive platform shoe as compensation. Her body is stumpy and solid, her breasts abundant and pendulous; she is unequivocally matronly. Her eyes are greatly magnified by thick glasses which constantly slip down her broad nose and which she is incessantly flicking back in place, an idiosyncratic tic suggestive of her uncomfortable struggle to take her relational world in, see what to do or where to go.

Significantly, Champion as a boy appears more like a portly if unnaturally innocent old man, who, as he ages and physically develops, takes on the characteristic features of a gaunt, malnourished child possessed of disproportionately large legs and an enormous beak of a nose.

This grotesque external reversal and distortion can be understood as reflective of Champion's inner world. His developmental processes have been deformed by the precipitous loss of his parents. Significant life changes typically occur within normative timeframes. When these come off schedule, the transition from one phase to the next along the developmental continuum is more difficult (Robinson 1989). In certain instances, it may be derailed altogether. Among a host of consequent issues, several appear most evidently. As we first observe Champion, he is withdrawn, depressed and psychological inert. He appears not to be thriving and is disinterested in activities and interactions. In short, Champion displays classic symptoms of a child whose



*Belleville Rendez-Vous*

internal milieu has been profoundly disrupted by early separation from his parents, the permanence of which would be incomprehensible for him until much later.

An additional feature in this imagery is the fantasy of reversal of generations. In this, a child becomes in his imagination the parent of his parent, that is, the equivalent of his own grandparent. The influence of grandparents on character formation is significant, whether or not one, some or all of a child's grandparents predecease his birth. As progenitors to the child's parents, whose influence is everything, grandparents represent a backwards telescoping of the gamut of characteristic fantasies, symptoms and values which shape successive generations. Grandparents also serve numerous important intrapsychic and developmental functions, among them a comforting presence that, as Erikson suggests, assures the young that 'in the long run, people turn out okay' (1950, cited in Robinson 1989: 485). This is a handicapped proposition for an orphaned child whose first experience of life ratifies the opposite. It simultaneously encapsulates a false hope for the future as well as generates a grandiose reparative fantasy in which becoming one's own grandparent hopes to avoid the calamity of parental loss to come. Grandma and Champion, then, cling to reciprocal investments in the other as stalwarts against the threat of death. As it is not uncommon for survivors of traumatic loss to assume vacated roles, there will be developmental confusion for boy and grandmother as each attempts to reconcile his or her psychological place within their transgenerational dyad. This presents additional complexities in the light of the typical child's

transformation in fantasy of the grandparent into an infant, a magical notion enhanced both by the elder's physical shrinkage and the universal denial of death (Rappaport 1958).

In all of this, which speaks ineluctably to the issue of time, perhaps the most overdetermined and highly condensed symbolic motif is movement. There are few scenes which are not kinetic. Even when one character is still, another is in motion (e.g. Champion and Mme Souza watching images moving on the television, or Bruno's obsessional preoccupation with passing trains). Throughout, Mme Souza, Champion, or Bruno are on or in some vehicle, in pursuit of someone or watching others travelling. This kineticism firstly and overarchingly signifies the search for the lost object which typifies early phase mourning. The principal dramatic propellant is a hybridization of movements, at first impinged – Champion's kidnapping and imprisonment – then unbridled – the ensuing chase and liberation. This trope of transformative, expansive motion is recurrent: Grandma and Champion start as static objects, listless and withdrawn, only gradually progressing toward animation. It is in this confluence of the meanings of animation – as artistic medium and a literal enlivening – that form and content assume synthesized aesthetic, affective and conceptual resonance.

Perhaps encumbered by her own fractured mourning, an attuned, effective response to young Champion's depressive collapse at first eludes Grandma. We see them sitting together in front of the television, and then drearily playing with a train set; they mope. After a time, she introduces him to an old piano in the hope of arousing his desire to play music – itself representational of her attempt to enable Champion's giving expressive sound and voice to his muzzled grief – but her clumsy and unmelodious pecking – a sonic extension of her own internal world – proves uninspiring. Grandma's inability to use the piano as an instrument for communicating with young Champion is especially interesting in the light of her later musical improvisatory adroitness with the triplets following her separation from Champion. This apparent contradiction – or, in any case, discrepancy – is suggestive of the primarily non-verbal and non-linguistic mode of communication between infants and care-giving adults, and the failures in this family to properly cultivate proto-language into mature discourse. The dearth of language permeates the relational landscape here, calling to mind the possibility that Mme Souza might never have been satisfactorily able to communicate with children – perhaps her own child, Champion's father or mother, included – and is only now in old age, spurred by traumatic circumstances, working to more fully develop her maternal competence. As music ultimately serves as the medium for salvation and working through – the final concert is a highly orchestrated aural sortie designed to facilitate Champion's liberation – these visual images of music and music making can be understood as illustrative of Grandma and Champion's dual, if asynchronous, developmental lines toward the capacity

for symbolization and the communication of previously unspeakable affect states.

Finally, with the introduction of new life – Bruno as a puppy – all of them seem at least temporarily on the road to resuscitation. Once Champion is given the tricycle, he too seems to start to move, although, meaningfully, only in constrained circles in the garden. He is as yet unable to escape the binding gravitational force of grief.

As time passes, Grandma and Champion begin to move in tandem. Eventually, as a late adolescent, Champion's fantasy-based identification with the photograph hanging over his little boy bed of his parents with a bicycle consolidates into a wish-suffused pursuit: cycling becomes the obsessively dominant focus of existence. With this photo in mind, the bicycle can be understood as the nodal hub from which all other spokes of the dreamwork (symbolic instantiations of affect and ideation) derive. We can, firstly, imagine that Champion links the image of bicycle with his missing parents, giving rise to the formulation of a fantasy conjoining them. Grandma's gift of the tricycle could only thus enliven Champion, functioning as the symbolic equivalent of his being reunited with his parents. Cycling must be admired as an elegant device of the dream process, making the primary ideational vehicle an object which in reality only moves forward by which to disguise the unconscious wish to stall or reverse the flow of time. Linguistically, *cycle*, a word referring to the sporting activity and its instrument, incorporates the mental preoccupation with issues regarding the life cycle. Lastly, cycle racing is entirely pre-occupied with time. It is measured in the rhythms of the body, inhalation and



*Belle et Sébastien*



exhalation, muscle twitch, contraction and extension, oxygen and lactic acid burn rates; revolutions and ratios; distances and velocities. It can thus be taken as a developmental allusion to the 'cradle' of time sense (Rappaport 1951, cited in Colarusso 1998), the homeostatic regulatory mechanisms and sensations, and physiological rhythmicity of gratification and frustration in infancy.

There is an important prolonged sequence depicting the ritual of post-training meals and accompanying activities. Manifestly understandable for an athlete in training, it is more representationally overdetermined and conjoins multiple meanings for grandmother and child. The primary signification is orality, in particular, the condensation of necessity and pleasure in feeding which is both a central constituent of the mother-infant bond, and kinesthetic foundation to the establishment of time sense. These ideas are symbolized through images showing Grandma's precise monitoring and management of Champion's weight intake with scales and clocks and her truing his wheel rims with wrenches and tuning forks. Each is a multiply functioning allusion to the balancing and attunement between mother and infant which '[in] the frequent repetition of the hunger-satiation cycle . . . makes feeding the major time-related instinctual experience of early infancy . . . mother becomes the conveyor of time. Through her power to relieve hunger and pain, [mother] gives and controls time' (Colarusso 1998: 114).

Also included here is Bruno's salivating wait for Champion's leftovers. The melding and interweaving of Bruno's and Champion's points of view suggest they are symbolic Janus-faced extensions of each other. Another of Bruno's dreams is produced at this point in which the train, appearing as a peculiar nineteenth-century contraption, part steam-engine, part tuktuk, which is dragged by Champion yoked to it like a work-ox, has Bruno imperiously seated astride the phallus-shaped engine pulling Champion's reins. Coming as it does in a state of hungry dependence, this imagery can be understood as a sadomasochistic fantasy about primary narcissistic needs and desires, involving the interplay of domination and subjugation, and oscillating reversals of oral dependency with anal aggression. This also more generally renders the leit-motif of the train – in all other instances an object conveying others as it passes by, never stopping, never present or accessibly boardable – as an allusion to the absence of a protective masculine figure, and the profound yearning to hold and harness a father to balance the surfeit of women and help pull the family into the larger community.

Pertinently, each appearance of Bruno and train – whether in a dream or not – includes the auditory component of Bruno's barking. Especially when considered in the context of a world largely without spoken words, all sound must be heard as having special semiotic and paralinguistic significance. Here, we may take the barking of a dog as expressions beyond that: signifying utterances in a different language or some quasi-musical register displaced from those whom we expect to be able to use words. Another layer of

understanding of Bruno's constant barking at passing trains, then, would be as an audible signal, akin to crying, meant to loudly enunciate the family's longing, but inability, to integrate and move forward, either within itself or the external world.

During the post-workout massage, involving an egg-beater and vacuum (devices which return later, in Belleville, as musical instruments), we see how Grandma's rhapsodic attention to her grandson's body and bodily needs transcends her role as hyperinvolved coach. Her exquisite ministrations – the worshipful caress of his engorged phallic legs, her conveying his limp, exhausted and satiated body, almost post-prandially, up the rickety stairs to tuck him into bed – evoke simultaneously a mother's devotional care of her infant and a fervent sexuality unavailable for expression in her present reality.

While digesting his food, Champion rides a stationary training bike, which also manually powers a record player. His exertions literally make their own music, suggesting his deeply held psychic position that he alone must bear the work and responsibility for being sung to, an allusion to the lullabies of childhood of which he was originally, and largely still, deprived. This, I believe, points to another facet of his rigorously focused pursuit of athletic excellence, and concerns more than sublimation. One segment is reaction formation, a redirection of hostile and aggressive impulses into their ostensible opposite. Another is the internal conscription of trauma-based longing as the impetus for accomplishment, a transformation of the feelings of loss, worthlessness, rage, guilt and bewilderment into an activity of restitution, control and eminence, in the attempt to master or vanquish the precipitating feelings (Eisendadt *et al.* 1989, reviewed in Singer 1992). Orphans frequently feel abandoned. They are prone to fantasies of reunion with the dead parents and an inability to accept death as final. They often also assume responsibility and feel guilt for the parents' death, since Oedipal triumph reinforces both the conviction of the power of evil thoughts and fears of confrontation with vengeful ghosts (Singer 1992). Attempts to overcome this typically involve an internalization of idealized part objects, and motivate pursuits designed to resurrect, such as through artistic creations, or to achieve, as a posthumous gift.

It is not insignificant that Champion goes nowhere during these rides. This image links back to his boyhood circumnavigations around the garden on his tricycle, and forward to his imprisonment in the Mafia betting parlour where, as nothing more than a magnificent carousel horse, he is pitted against his former Tour de France competitors to ride literally for their lives and others' profit while immobily chasing images of the countryside projected on to a movie screen. In symbolic terms, this frenetic motionlessness can be understood to illustrate the circularity and inescapable limitations of his straight-jacketed Oedipal strivings and his attempts toward individuation. In the sense that Champion is developmentally arrested, he cannot move by himself; motility, to say nothing of separation, has not been achieved. We can imagine

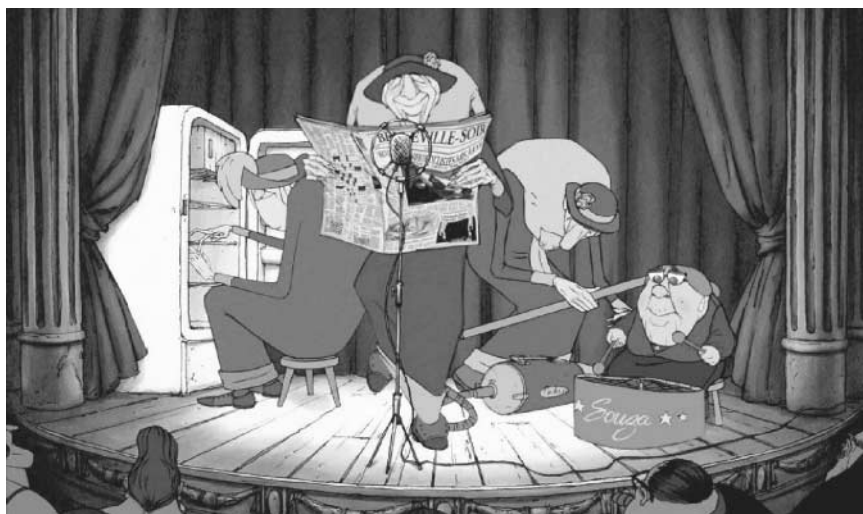
that he rides with his elderly trainer-cum-maternal object's coaching whistle rhythmically shrilling in his mind's ear. His appearance as self-propelled as a professional cyclist would be a projection of his ideal self, a fantasy extension of the image of his father and his father's surrogates, the admired icons and champions of cycle racing whose photos also adorn his bedroom wall. But he is always ferried or carried by others. The Mafia thugs' sweep wagon or his ocean voyage in the bowels of the great steamship are in this view like prams or parents' arms. In children's perceptions, and in the adult's fantastical reconstruction of childhood experiences, the world of adults is enormous and the grown-ups in it omnipotent and infallible. For a bereaved and traumatized child like Champion, it would also be sinister, thus making understandable images which synthesize these qualities in two-dimensional terms: the adults in Champion's world are for him either all good or all bad.

Grandma Souza, by contrast, appears as a veritable superwoman. There seems to be no law of physics or process of physical decline to which she is susceptible. This nature of fantasy is as characteristic of cartoons as of dreams. As the incarnation of an idealized fantasy persona, she would be as much a concoction of the orphaned boy, desperate to encounter in his grandmother an indestructible substitute mother, as of Mme Souza herself, instantiating herself both as an object for idealization and internalization by her grandson-child and, narcissistically, as a figure representing the domination and revocation of the ravages of her own ageing process.

The composite figure of the triplets can be similarly understood, that is, as symbolic condensations of these central preoccupations. The difficulties of the triplets' present-day circumstances notwithstanding, they are endowed with an array of idealized attributes, ranging from their romanticized, sophisticated and successful past, to their life together now, still connected by the bonds of life and love. Complex aspects of the end of life phase include loss of community, the disappearance of linkages to a shared history and consequent feelings of isolation. As depicted in the image of Mme Souza sleeping on the triplets' couch while they laugh together in bed in a separate room while watching old movie reels of their younger selves, we can perceive both Mme Souza's wish to reclaim that sphere of connectedness and vitality as well as her realistic appraisal of solitude.

Of course, beneath the admirable veneer of resourcefulness, perseverance and cohesion – primarily an idealizing construction – they are all trapped in an attenuated repetition compulsion, living a marginalized, lonely and threadbare existence which for all intents and purposes remains fixed in a lost past. It is only by the catalyst of another, present loss – Champion's abduction – that the women are able to disengage themselves from their obsessive ruminating and animate themselves to action.

In the end, as in all fairy-tale dreams with happy endings, Champion is freed and the evildoers get their comeuppance. Toward that goal, Grandma,



*Belleville Rendez-Vous*

the triplets and Bruno form a strategic alliance where each comes to life and can excel independently. Thus do an old woman disguised as a diminutive immigrant mechanic, and a torch-song performance using an empty refrigerator, a vacuum cleaner, an old newspaper and a bicycle wheel give rise to an orgy of violence and destruction in the service of a regenerative fantasy – that the bonds of love and the power of fantasy qua cinema are able to conquer evil, right wrongs, and restore loss. While Champion cannot liberate himself alone, his strengths as a man-cyclist are now brought to bear with potent results. As the stationary racing platform becomes unmoored and crashes through the walls of the Mafia fortress, we are given to understand that, finally, there is forward movement. The characters collaborate and comingle their resources, suggesting the possibility for an integration of part objects, a consolidation of object-relatedness, and a capacity to more healthily reconcile projections of an idealized environment with aspects of a cherished past.

One cycle is broken, another is complete, another begins.

### Notes

- 1 A version of this chapter has been previously published in *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 87(4): 1125–34.
- 2 It is important to underscore that this précis is unavoidably inadequate to the task of conveying the sensorial and aesthetic experience of the film. While a prior viewing of the film is not essential to understanding this chapter, my commentary will necessarily take on greater resonance to the reader who is familiar with the cinematic referents.

### References

- Bowlby, J. (1963) Pathological mourning and childhood mourning, *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association*, 11: 500–41.
- Colarusso, C.A. (1998) A developmental line of time sense: in late adulthood and throughout the life cycle, *Psychoanalytic Study of the Child*, 53: 113–40.
- Freud, S. (1900) *The interpretation of dreams*, part II, in *Standard Edition*, Vol. V. London: Hogarth Press.
- Moins, P. (2003) Sylvain Chômet: Animation is like a manifesto, *Animation World Magazine*, 8: 26–30. Available from [mag.awn.com/index.php?article\\_no=1923](http://mag.awn.com/index.php?article_no=1923).
- Nagera, H. (1970) Children's reactions to the death of important objects – A developmental approach, *Psychoanalytic Study of the Child*, 25: 360–400.
- Rappaport, E.A. (1958) The grandparent syndrome, *Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, 27: 518–38.
- Robinson, L.H. (1989) Grandparenting, *J Am Acad Psychoanal*, 17: 483–91.
- Singer, M. (1992). Eisenstadt, M., Haynal, A., Rentchnick, P., de Senarclens, P. (1989) *Parental Loss and Achievement* (review). *Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, 61: 270–4.

---

THE NEW LIBRARY OF PSYCHOANALYSIS

---

General Editor: Dana Birksted-Breen

# Projected Shadows

Psychoanalytic Reflections on the  
Representation of Loss in European Cinema

Edited by Andrea Sabbadini

 **Routledge**  
Taylor & Francis Group  
LONDON AND NEW YORK

---

## Contents

---

Contributors	xi
Foreword	xv
GLEN O. GABBARD	
Acknowledgements	xxi
Introduction	1
ANDREA SABBADINI	
1 The night of melancholia and the daylight of mourning: Anne Fontaine's <i>Comment j'ai tué mon père</i>	6
T. JEFFERSON KLINE	
2 Quest for a lost mother: Alina Marazzi's <i>Un'ora sola ti vorrei</i>	21
PIETRO ROBERTO GOISIS	
3 Is there light at the end of the tunnel? Keren Yedaya's <i>Or (Mon Tresor)</i>	35
SHIMSHON WIGODER AND EMANUEL BERMAN	
4 The anorexic paradox: Matteo Garrone's <i>First Love</i>	46
MARIA VITTORIA COSTANTINI AND PAOLA GOLINELLI	
5 Reparation and the empathic other: Christian Petzold's <i>Wolfsburg</i>	56
RALF ZWIEBEL	
6 The talking cure from Freud to Almodóvar: <i>Hable con ella</i>	65
ANDREA SABBADINI	

Contents

---

7	Intergenerational transmission: the Holocaust in Central European cinema CATHERINE PORTUGES	73
8	Cut and laced: traumatism and fetishism in Luis Buñuel's <i>Un Chien Andalou</i> ANDREW WEBBER	92
9	Two short films by Jan Svankmajer: <i>Jabberwocky</i> and <i>Punch and Judy</i> HELEN TAYLOR ROBINSON	102
10	Compilation film as 'deferred action': Vincent Monnikendam's <i>Mother Dao, the Turtle-like</i> LAURA MULVEY	109
11	Moving beyond the constraints of the mortal self: universal images of narcissism in Jan Troell's <i>The Flight of the Eagle</i> LISSA WEINSTEIN	119
12	Tricycles, bicycles, life cycles: psychoanalytic perspectives on childhood loss and transgenerational parenting in Sylvain Chômet's <i>Belleville Rendez-Vous</i> ALEXANDER STEIN	132
13	Loss, mourning and desire in midlife: François Ozon's <i>Under the Sand</i> and <i>Swimming Pool</i> DIANA DIAMOND	145
14	Three sisters: sibling knots in Bergman's <i>Cries and Whispers</i> ANDREA SABBADINI	160
15	Time regained: the complex magic of reverse motion IAN CHRISTIE	168
	Films index	183
	Index	185