# Contents

Acknowledgments  ix  
Abbreviations of Kearney’s Works  xi  

Introduction: The Risk of the Wager (Chris Doude van Troostwijk and Matthew Clemente)  1  

## Part I. Conversations After God  

1 Theism, Atheism, Anatheism (James Wood and Richard Kearney)  7  
2 A Conversation after God (Chris Doude van Troostwijk and Richard Kearney)  40  
3 Mysticism and Anatheism: The Case of Teresa (Julia Kristeva and Richard Kearney)  68  
4 An Anatheist Exchange: Returning to the Body after the Flesh (Emmanuel Falique and Richard Kearney)  88  

## Part II. At the Limits of Theology  

5 The Anatheistic Wager: faith after Faith (Brian Treanor)  113  
6 Kin and Stranger: Kearney and Desmond on God (Richard J. Colledge)  125  
7 Is it Possible to Be a Reformed Anatheist? (Helgard Pretorius)  142  
8 Anatheism and Inter-Religious Hospitality: Reflections from a Catholic Comparative Theologian (Marianne Moyaert)  154  
9 Buddhist Anatheism (Joseph S. O’Leary)  168  
10 The Wager That Wasn’t: An Education in Shady Chances (L. Callid Keefe-Perry)  178
3 Mysticism and Anatheism: The Case of Teresa

Julia Kristeva and Richard Kearney

1

RK: Could you begin by saying something about your recent work on Teresa, a mystical believer who clearly fascinates you, Julia Kristeva, a self-confessed atheist? Why Teresa? Why now?

JK: Let me begin by saying how deeply touched I have been by the subtle existence of this wonderful baroque saint, Teresa of Avila. How I came to her is an interesting story—almost an accident, really. I had a student who wrote a doctoral dissertation on the spiritual experiences of Dostoyevsky, Kafka, and Proust. This man became the director of the Catholic press in France, and one day he called me saying they were undertaking a project of small collections—each between fifty and one hundred pages—to be written on one of the more important spiritual figures of Europe, and they were asking some authors to choose a figure. In my case, it would be my choice, and I would be taking the psychoanalytic approach. I was just finishing a book, Murder in Byzantium, and the main personality in this book besides the narrator is a Byzantine princess named Anna Komnene—who is, for me, the first feminine historian because she makes a chronicle of the realm of her father, Alexis the Second. She explains the crusaders, and this is the only narrative about the crusaders from the point of view of somebody who is not a part of the Crusades. And I said this to the director of the publishing house, Frederick Boyer, and he said, “It’s interesting, but she’s not very famous. We don’t have time to discover new spiritual figures; let us think about: somebody else. Why not St. Teresa of Avila?” I didn’t know anything about Teresa besides the Lacan reference to her in Encore. In this book, he was interested not in pleasure, but in what he calls jouissance, and in particular feminine jouissance. The cover of Lacan’s book features an image of Bernini’s Baroque sculpture of Teresa, which is now in the Italian church Santa Maria de la Vitoria. It represents Teresa’s transfixion, a particular stage of her ecstasy that she describes in a startling passage that I quote at the beginning of Teresa My Love, Teresa presents her ecstasy of belonging to God as an enthusiasm that embraces all the senses, and it is through the intermediary of an angel, represented by the figure of a young boy. This angel stabs her entrails with his spear and makes them fly into the heavens. She describes this in a very erotic and masterful way. And, when first approached by Boyer, this was the only thing I knew about the work of Teresa. I told him that I was particularly ignorant of her, and he said it did not matter—read about her. I decided to read her work, and my reading lasted over ten years. I said in my book that St. Teresa is the roommate I lived with for a decade. And I’ve read all the things she has written, but also all the things that have been written on her, including some feminist interpretations from the divinity schools in the United States. Eventually, I decided that I was unable to make a small book for the collection administered by my friend and student, so we altered our contract and I gave him another book instead: This Incredible Need to Believe. I thus vowed to try to write something that corresponds to this extraordinary figure that shakes all of our identities, genres, and disciplines, because it seems to me that it is impossible to bring her in contact with a modern public without giving some biographical details, some historical background, some quotations from her, and also some interpretations from the perspective of someone like me who is in contact with her and tries to represent her. So this is the way that I tried to shake the genres—biography, fiction, theology, memoir, diary, philosophy, history, case history—and to give all of my enthusiasm, a sort of ecstasy, if you want, from my own point of view.

RK: You are a philosopher, a linguist, and a writer, but to what extent would you describe your book as primarily a psychoanalytic study?

JK: Well, I am reluctant to directly impose psychoanalytic concepts on somebody else’s experience, be it the experience of a writer like Marcel Proust or Marguerite Duras, and particularly on such mysterious experiences as those of Teresa. I do not follow people who try to take a concept of psychoanalysis—be it orality, anaity, Oedipus complex, and so forth—and to reduce such rich experiences to these schemas. Indeed, I think it is a betrayal of the psychoanalytic attitude and of the experience. My idea in reading Teresa was to be infiltrated by her experience, to try to adhere, to be in a sort of osmosis with her, as we are when we are hearing the person on the couch, and then to try to see what this means for me and how I can use some notions of psychoanalysis in a creative way—transforming them in order to make a particular discourse that will be not psychoanalytic only, not feminist only, not sociological only,
but also a discourse that is appropriate to Teresa as I read her. So, it is the consequence of a dialectic of onsens and differentiation regarding the object of interpretation. This is why I say that Teresa was my roommate, because it is very much an everyday belonging and distancing, something that is easier to do when you have insomnia in the night and try to understand people through what I call nonthinking. It is better expressed in French by the term "à-pensée," a substantive not a verb, with the a being a privative prefix to indicate a drift from the cognitive rational abstraction processes toward unconscious processes of sensation and affect—so it is thinking that is not thinking but is passing through thinking.

RK: So, what is the image of mysticism that results from this kind of approach, and what kind of psychoanalysis seems to you most convenient to this strange Spanish mystic? Would you be happy describing it as anathetic? Are not most genuine forms of mysticism anathetic in their "letting go" of the established God concepts, as Eckhart says, opening themselves up to new and often unnamable experiences of divinity? This anathetic opening enables mystics to let one kind of God go in order to welcome another. It frees minds from "conceptual idolatry" and creates space for the return of the sacred father (or mother), for further "rebirth," as Eckhart calls it.

JK: I agree. My first impression of Teresa's particular kind of mysticism came from comparing her with my knowledge of other mystics. Everybody knows that they are so different—not only Meister Eckhart and Teresa, for instance, but also Catherine of Siena and Teresa. So, I tried to put together all those things as one came to the view acquired through such cohabitation with Teresa. Three years of reading and research followed by a year of actual writing. I will say that the three aspects of the Christian faith in the mystics struck me. The first is the belief that there exists an ideal father, that God is an ideal father from a psychoanalytic point of view. But also because the accent in mysticism—more than in everyday faith—is that faith is love, it is a love for this father. The first is the insistence on this privileged connection of the mystic with the father. The second is that this idealization is not only ideal in the mystic's experience, but also resexualized—particularly in the case of Teresa, but in different mystics too. This is sensorial and quite disturbing sexually in the sense that some mystics—male mystics, for instance—experience themselves as women being penetrated by God. There are a lot of metaphors that touch on the sexual difference. Nevertheless, it seems to me to be a permanent trait of almost every mystical experience that Teresa epitomizes. The idealization is resexualized. The father is a beaten father who is tortured and crucified, and this experience of suffering is also aggravated in the mystical experience.

This suffering is experienced as pleasure alongside death and vulnerability and the castration of the father. He is ideal, but he is suffering and he is a source of ultimate pleasure and ultimate suffering. The third aspect that struck me is that the mystic identifies with the father through an orality, which is the Eucharist. I love him, I suck him, I am in a very close oral attitude. With Teresa it is very strong—not just an image, but an experience: she envisions the father as having her breast and on her breast, but this orality is only an intermediary level in order to go on to the word, to the word that comes out of the mouth and is not a sensorial, but rather an abstract connection with him. I say abstract, but in the experience of Teresa, this abstraction is engulfed, penetrated by taste, by tactile experience, and by hearing. Everything is a way to self-engender the ego through sensuality. But this self-engendering of the ego through sensuality comes through language; the oral participation with the father is transformed through the Eucharist into a word participation, but the word is not a single abstract word. It is a metaphor, which is a metamorphosis. Charles Baudelaire, who was a very strong Catholic—as you know—said that for him, compared to some weak poets, words are not comparisons; words are metamorphoses. If people say, "I am like a tree," then Baudelaire would say, "I am not like a tree; I become the tree." And something like that occurs in this identification of the mystic with the father, which is oral, which is corporal. But when Teresa, in this case, speaks about him, every word becomes more than metaphorical. Every word becomes a metamorphosis that tries to make us experience physically her faith, her love. So, these aspects of the Teresian experience are, for me, stronger in her experience, though they can be found in other mystics. She pushes them to the extreme. She is a unique anathetic mystic.

II

RK: In your writing and reading of Teresa, you are mixing the discourse of religious mysticism with both literary poetics and psychoanalytic theory. Can you say what specific psychoanalytic approach you find most helpful in approaching Teresa as you are doing this—given that so many psychoanalytic treatments of religion have proved to be reductive and unsympathetic in the past?

JK: When I draw from psychoanalytic theory, I use my own concepts, but I also draw on Winnicott when he calls the early stages of mother-child behavior and some regressive stages of his patients a psyche-soma. This means the psyche is not only verbally expressed, but it is expressed through preverbal signs and through exacerbated sensibility of feelings, hearings, and visions. You know that Teresa speaks about her visions,
but she says they are not visions given to the sight, but to the body. The sight is only one part of this. All the senses participate in these visions and, according to Winnicott, such stages can be observed in patients when they have some traumatic experience. When on the couch, they reach for these traumatisms; they are beneath the level of words, consciousness, communication. They try afterward—when engulfed in the psyche-soma and left only with their bodies—they try to describe these situations with metaphors that are metamorphoses. In these cases, Winnicott would say, "I wonder why people think that consciousness is cerebral. I think that consciousness is somatic." This linkage between the cerebral and the somatic, and between the abstract and the sensorial, is very, very important in Teresa's experience of the love of her father. And here, maybe her own neurological fragility is concerned because she had some very frequent epileptic fits that are described in her memoirs. Teresa describes her ecstasies as traveling to God—going outside of herself to be in exile with him. These are the words she uses to describe experiences that can be very painful—experiences comparable to the epileptic auras described by Dostoyevsky as a blend of bliss and pain. Some French and Spanish neurologists have identified these kinds of mixed experiences, painful and joyful, as epileptic. Teresa claimed that she was able to produce them; they did not only suddenly happen. She could produce them when she was freed from the powers of memory, consciousness, and will. But once liberated from the conscious net of mastering possibilities, she could also go into very deep depressions. Her mystical moods could go either way—between light and darkness. In this sense, her mixed experience could be described as "anatheist" mysticism, as you understand it.

RK: Isn't the psyche-soma open to the imaginary as well as the sensorial? Wouldn't you agree that it was crucial for Teresa to not just experience the divine in her body but also in her fantasies and fictions, in her metaphors and writings?

JK: Yes. This is absolutely crucial, and I think it is useful here to refer to Husserl when he says in Ideas that "fiction constitutes the vital element of phenomenology as it does for all eidetic sciences." Why is Husserl as important a guide for me here as Winnicott or Baudelaire? Because Teresa herself gives us a possibility to get in touch with her experience through her fiction. We have to understand what happens to this woman through what she was able to tell us about it, through her fiction. And she was very conscious about the importance of fiction for her. She writes somewhere, "I give you this fiction in order for you to understand me." She is aware of the fact that she is not a theologian, that she does not have concepts but writes

in a fictional way, a different way of thinking that makes people understand. But she makes a very nice distinction between fiction and understanding. Fiction is one of the ways to make understood something that is not understandable through willing, memory, consciousness, or concepts. So this comprehension of the psychic apparatus as enabling different visions and fictions is very important if we are to appreciate the complexity of this woman who is not only given to the father, but also understands this experience and feels the necessity to share it.

RK: Was it thanks in part to her use of such a strategy that she managed to confound the Inquisition and escape unharmed?

JK: I think so. When the inquisitors wished to burn her, she managed to convince them not to by using this kind of fictional understanding. She managed to survive by seducing her contemporaries and continuing to do so down through the centuries. My attempt in my recent book, Teresa My Love, is to appreciate her fiction by way of living her regressions, her love affair, the importance of love in this human experience, the connection with language. Language is love, and love is language. We have to understand the connection between them. Love is the field of psychoanalysis; language is the field of linguistics, theology, semiology, psychoanalysis, fiction. So I said, let us go through all of these fields in order to apprehend the complexity of the human being. And let me add that I think that without this baroque experience of love, of faith-like love, like tremendous regression and like fiction, without such experience we would not have the Enlightenment. Baroque experience opens the way to the Enlightenment—enlightenment in the sense of Diderot, Sade, and Rousseau. Teresa opens the door to a great freedom for humanity, and because we ignore this "anatheist" experience, because we repress the dangerous aspects of it, we are becoming a type of humanity that is merchandized, that is mercantile, that leads to the market and to a global submission to finances, a type that we experience in the modern crisis. The only way to resist this, I believe, is to rehabilitate Teresian experiences and to see how we can respond to them. But I have to say that our fiction is so feeble and weak in comparison to hers, which covers such a width and depth of territory, theology included.

RK: To pick up on a question put to you by my colleague, Catherine Cornille—is such mystical experience possible without faith? In short, what's God got to do with it?

JK: What is God? What is faith? This is something that I try to answer in a very modest way in This Incredible Need to Believe. I think that different
religions have different scopes of faith. You know this better than I—as you show in *Anatheism*—how faith is different in Judaism, for instance, than in Christianity. But if you explore the complexity of different aspects of faith and see the common ground in them, you find the universal need to believe, which is common to all of these different aspects that were built in the history of humanity—Hinduism, Chinese Taoism, Confucianism, Christianity, Islam, and so forth. Both of us are interested in this question of the singularity and universality of belief. For my part, I identify different explanations and rationalizations of this need to believe in people like Freud and, in a more simplified way, through the knowledge of my teacher of linguistics, Emile Benveniste, who wrote a wonderful book called *Indo-European Language and Society*. The word *faith* is analyzed through the Sanskrit roots of the word. The Sanskrit for *faith* is *cred sraddha* (*sraddha*), which means investment. And what is investment? When you go to this secret and sacred Sanskrit text, it means I give my heart to God, and God gives me recognition and eternal life. This transaction of giving, giving vital force, and the promise for eternity of the vital force is called *cred sraddha*; it is related to joy and suffering and gives in Latin *credo*—credo as a transaction of forces. This allows a human being to perpetuate his life. Freud, as you know, was the staunchest of atheists. But he was very interested in the question of belief. He said that psychoanalysis is an illusion as religion is an illusion, but this illusion will last. People think that he wanted to abolish religion because he wanted to abolish every kind of illusionary approach to the world and subject it to the rigors of science. But that was not what he said. He thought that science would follow every kind of illusionary approach to the world, and he said that, regarding the early stages of human behavior, illusion is necessary. He calls this an investment in the primordial father—the father of primordial history. The German word is *Besetzung*, and the English word that we use to try to understand this investment is *Cathexis*. It is very interesting to see how it works in the triangle between the mother, the child, and the father. It points to a third figure in the biological dyad between child and mother, and this third figure is the father of the human prehistory, who is not the oedipal father, who is not the father of love, but the father who recognizes me and who I recognize. Maybe we can say more about this later. The Jewish notion of election is involved here, and what is important is what Freud calls the need to believe. I have to believe in the father because he believes in me. And this belief is not an investment in an object. I do not like him as an object of pleasure, and he does not like me as an object of pleasure. This is a psychic investment, a psychic recognition. This is the border where the instinctual drive is transformed into a mental representation. It is a shifting between zoe and bios, the biological and the psychical. And the agency of the third person, who is the father in the human family, is the condition of this separation between the child and the mother—the establishing of another relationship that will be psychic representation as a condition of language. When this position of the father as a loving father is established, my babbling—my echolalia, my bababa—become references to a third person, to an external object, and they change from babblings into signs and into words. So the faith, the credo, is the copresence of a third figure that elects me and that I consider as an axis of mental representation, which is a new kind of pleasure. It is not the satisfaction of eating or sucking my mother or having a bottle of milk to satisfy my urge. It is a mental, psychic satisfaction. This kind of need must be satisfied in order to develop other skills, and particularly the desire to know—the desire to problematize every kind of naivety and so on. From a psychoanalytic point of view, we require both the “need to believe” and the “desire to know.” Faith, according to Teresa of Avila, is this movement of belonging of need and desire. And she goes into both of them with great intensity, with all of her body and with all of her senses. So, if you understand faith in this fashion, I would say faith is necessary. And in this sense, I also share her faith.

III

RK: I’d like to link this question of faith and knowing to that of writing. You seem to suggest in your own reading and writing of Teresa that it was writing together with faith that saved her from madness—or at least from destructive illness. But might it have been possible for her to have saved herself from psychosis by other modes of expression, such as music, art, or liturgical prayer? There seems to be something in your rewriting of Teresa’s writing that emphasizes the importance of language over other modes of expression, which operate more at the level of “psycho-soma” and what you call “the sensitive imaginary.” This latter is shared by all of the arts, but you sometimes appear to privilege the therapeutic role of the written word over the nonverbal in the process of conversion and transmutation.

JK: First, I do not think that Teresa was a psychotic. She had a very strong tendency toward hysteria—or something that was very excessive, a paranoid sense of persecution that is also in a sense made real—because she was of Jewish origin on her father’s side, and persecutions existed in Spain. This extravagance of her feelings made her very sensitive and may have induced a sort of hysterical epilepsy, which would be very handicapping without the possibility to quiet this crisis through verbal explanations of what she was experiencing. And that is what her confessors asked her to do.
R.K.: You are thinking of Saint John of the Cross and Gratian, who encouraged her to write and even helped her evade the Inquisition at one point?

J.K.: Yes. The role of self-analysis through confession was central. And she was also able to imagine the role of literature—literary poetics and fiction—because her mother was a great reader. She wanted not only to speak about her senses, her life, her sensorial conflicts to the confessors, but also she wanted to write about them. What I discovered was that in that period, the church invited certain women: who were considered eccentric and at variance with the canon—there were many sects, illuminati, heretics—to write about their lives. There was a particular genre—La Vie—that women excelled in. And there were many publications, like women write novels today. But in that period, the church invited them to write about their lives, and it was considered a sort of therapeutic, natural way to quiet the excitation.

R.K.: So to return to my question—can different arts save us from certain neurotic symptoms and pathologies, especially of a religious or spiritual nature?

J.K.: Of course—in some ways, but not totally. If it were possible through arts, we would not have psychiatric hospitals. There are some difficulties that the aesthetic experience does not settle. But what we need essentially is an addressee, a man or woman who can understand this need to believe, this desire to know, to be that partner of the love affair that we need with the world. And the psychoanalyst is this partner, a fictional one, a substitute; but this remaking of the love experience through the transference and contra-transference is something very important. And, of course, not only the participation of the man or woman, but also the medium of language seems to me to be more powerful than painting or music for the therapeutic process. Of course we enjoy Bach, Giotto, and Raphael more than Céline or Marguerite Duras; but in order to be in touch with the traumas, the narrative that comes with language has more possibilities because this medium that is the word has the possibility of abstraction and of understanding. The desire to know is effected in the word, and it also has the possibility to be close to the psyche-soma. We can make our metaphors into metamorphoses. My book on Collette shows how the style of Collette is a sort of a determination of the words with sensations. And when we read her, we forget what happens but we live with her sensorial experience of the word. So the possibility of the word to maintain the closeness with feelings and the body and, on the other side, to go to the extremes of sophistication in psychoanalysis is something enormous. Catholics often understand this.

R.K.: So who—before the invention of psychoanalysis—would have been the analyst for Teresa? Who would have played this role of the third, the partner, the substitute lover or surrogate father? Is she analyzing herself? Or is she speaking and writing for her confessor, for her imaginary readers (us), or for God (like Augustine in his Confessions)?

J.K.: No, God is not an analyst. At one point, Teresa says, very revealingly, that “water” is her element. God is unrepresentable, but water is an intermediary between her and God—God who makes water exist for her and she is a very dry garden. She distinguishes between four types of prayer, which she describes as “four waters” that cultivate the garden of the person praying. From her writings, I have ascertained that for the cloistered nun, water signifies the link between the soul and the divine: an amorous relation that unites the dry earth of the Teresian garden with Jesus. Springing from the outside or the inside, active and passive, neither one nor the other and without confusing itself with the gardener’s labor, water transcends the earth that I am and makes me into something more: a garden. Myself, earth, I only become a garden through the touch of a vivifying medium: water. I am not water because I am earth; but neither is God water, for he is the creator. In our encounter, water is the fiction, the sensitive representation—it represents the space and time of body-to-body contact; the copresence and copenetration that makes being, living being. For the fiction of water joins me to God without identifying me with him. It maintains the tension between us while filling me with the divine. It spares me the folly of confusing myself with it: water is my living protection, my vital element. Representing the reciprocating contact of God and his creature, water dethrones God of his suprasensitive status and brings him down, if not to the role of gardener, then at least to that of the cosmic element I taste and touch. The element that nourishes me, touches me, quenches my thirst.

R.K.: So water is essential to Teresa as element, as matter, as sensation, as metaphor. But perhaps also as medium (metaxu) in the sense outlined by Aristotle in his analysis of touch in De Anima? How does this relate to the whole psychic-therapeutic work of “psyche-soma”?

J.K.: You are right, Richard. It is so essential, as both metaphor and medium because Teresa herself is also the water. She can heal herself because she is both inside the wound and outside. She has the possibility of psyce-soma and the possibility of the analysand, who makes the analytic interrogation, judgment, and also tries to cleanse the bloody wounds. But she also uses another kind of social actor—the confessor. The confessors were her “psychoanalysts,” and Teresa was very subtle and, at times, vicious in her use of them. She was very critical toward some of them. They couldn't
understand her. They were too rigorous. She was very grateful to others who understood her and guided her. Even when they condemned her, she followed them. So there was a very interesting ballet that she organized with all of those people, and I would be interested to know why theologians do not examine the different confessors that she had, because there is a very long correspondence with them. We might ask why, for example, some Dominicans—who played a very important role in the Inquisition—condemned her, while others protected her. Jesuits also played a pivotal role in the comprehension of her story; and maybe one of the things that brought her close to the Jesuits was the invitation of Loyola to pray through the excitement of the senses. To go with the identification of Christ to what he calls the "loquella," referring to a quasi-infantile nonexistent language that regresses toward and drowns itself in the sensible. Here we find a language that is not language, the dismantling of language itself, the investment of the sensorial body in the identification of the different stages of Christ's crucifixion. So this knowledge of the crossroads between feelings and language as experienced in Loyola's exercises is something quite close to her. Those Jesuits understood her well, and I think it would be interesting to see how scholars who know these methods and documents better than I—following the institutional position in the Church, the Vatican's position toward this—might shed light on how she was so competent to create this experience that seems so important to understanding human beings.

IV

RK: In New Maladies of the Soul, you offer a fascinating study of Didier—a troubled soul who paints, but has no response. There is no credo and even his own mother looks at his paintings and does not judge them. He has a certain "regard de la mère," but it's not enough.

JK: And now he is accepting the coucou to interpret that ...

RK: Yes, so the turning point in the case was when you decided to give your own responses, your own reactions to his painting. Painting or composing was not in itself enough for healing. Didier needed you to respond.

JK: Yes, in this case I allowed the patient to bring in his paintings and also some reproductions that he owned, and I saw them and we began to speak about them. First, he became very aggressive. He said, "You speak like every psychoanalyst. I thought that you, Julia Kristeva, would be much more intelligent. Why do you speak like this about my images?" And then he became more interested in what he had been suffering and described how it happened and how he might go beyond it. And he started to have his own words, a new, more sensorial language than the abstract discourse of before.

RK: This reminds me of the question Jeffrey Bloch raised at the Boston College seminar on your work regarding the different kinds of language Teresa used—some more theological, others more psychological, some more narrative and poetic, others more analytic and abstract. Is there an order of priority or importance here? Especially when it relates back to the question of writing as therapy?

JK: It is true that there are different genres in Teresa's work. There is poetry and there are the self-analytic works—The Life is not the same as the Interior Castle. The deepening of the auto-analysis, the self-analysis is clearer in the later book. The first one is more on the surface of what happened but not in the self. But in the analysis of the psyche and the foundations, it is more historical and political. Yet even there, there are a lot of psychological elements: she speaks, for example, about a different sister with whom she was in connection; she analyses their own traumas, their own failures and relations. There are a lot of different styles. But her poetry is not, I believe, her most powerful mode of expression. In some respects, she is more analytic than poetic. And I think this may have something to do with her reading of Saint John of the Cross: she got the impression that his condensed way of expressing the faith through poetry, through poetic language that is a small condensed narrative, makes the faith experience closer to asceticism. And she was terrified by this when she observed how John of the Cross lived his life. She said about him, "I am horrified by you!" ("Je suis épouvantée par toi"). She was shocked by this, and she wanted to unfold this conversation that brought him such sacrifice. Teresa wanted to take her distance from the excessively severe and at times almost sadomasochistic tendencies of John, whom she also called her "little Seneca" because of his Stoical habits. Teresa herself was quite strict in establishing the decalced (shoeless) Carmelites; but while she discouraged the nuns from going out of the convent enclosure and becoming too worldly, in favor of a demanding spiritual prayer life, she steered clear of masochistic extremes. For her, spiritual discipline was a way of maintaining a permanent contact with the "essence," which allowed also for "exaltation" within the enclosure of the discipline. In other words, Teresa did not want to sacrifice herself but to give herself as a love relationship to God and to human society. The monastic enclosure was strict, severe, rigorous. But this very rigor was a sort of critique of the surrounding world of the decadent capitalist trade market and so on. It was a reaction to the decline of the golden age of the Hispanic invasion of Latin America. The Interior Castle is delivered as a
narrative to the world to show that such inner experience is possible. It is going between the interior and the exterior. I describe this as her being in an external inclusion or internal exclusion vis-à-vis the world. And she believed that what she was experiencing in her particular time and place was also true of the human condition. She was political as well as spiritual in her writing. She moves between the different worlds.

V.

RK: Another important question from the Boston College discussion concerns your analysis of Teresa's love. At some points (as Frances Restuccia notes) you detect elements of sado-masochism; at other points you have the narrator of Teresa My Love, Sylvie Leclerc, declare something to the effect of: "I am out of love with love. Crazy love is a disease." Could you say more about this paradoxical, not to say contradictory, position?

JK: I do believe that Teresa passes through masochistic experiences of faith. In the beginning of her vocation as a nun, she was very unhappy and suffering a lot; she was very sick. When she represents some of her early visions, the vision is of a God with a severe face who condemns her and, close to this severe face she sees a cowl, something that I see as being connected to sex, but in a negative way as a disgusting, repulsive representation of sex. And what happened in that period, as far as we know from the biographies of nuns and monks, is that they were driven between two emotions—on the one hand, the purity of God, and on the other hand, as young ladies they had the right to have visitors, and there were some love affairs. But this excitement, physical excitation was present and refused. So in refusing this, she opted for suffering. There was an exaltation of the masochism in a sense. And this situation changed when she realized through her confession that God is love. God does not prevent her from excitation, but approves her if she can translate this physical attitude into a more sublimated, verbal, transmissible movement. And she began to write about it. This is very interesting as a shift from masochism to the right to have pleasure—with restrictions, of course, but not with condemnation. And I think here Teresa triumphs at the very point where Freud's famous patient, President Schreber, failed. Why? Because Schreber was very excited on different occasions, but he thought that God would condemn him and cut him into pieces. And this notion of the fierce God is something that fuels masochism. Teresa changes this idea of the God that is closer to the Old Testament—the God that condemns us, the God of judgment—into the loving father. This shifting, which reduces without abandoning a certain severity, makes her more at ease with her conception of love. She continued in her life and writing to broaden her comprehension of the love experience—without masochism.

RK: So the temptation to identify with a so-called masochistic, sacrificial Christ was to be overcome?

JK: Yes, it was to be overcome, and in her epileptic fits, she shared also the suffering because when she describes what happens, there is a very interesting representation of hell. For her hell is not as we find it in the pictures—devils with different forms of torture that are very much eroticized in Western pictorial art. She thinks that this is something that is very superficial; this is not hell for her. Hell is the narrow place where the body itself cannot stay. It is the repression or regression of the body—there is no body at all, and there is no possibility to represent it. So the way to bypass hell is to restore the body and the capacity of representation, thus giving the body the possibility to find its language is resurrection, and hell is the impossibility to speak about the body. So we could say that Teresa is really a therapist of herself, but very much helped by this invitation that her confessors gave to her to speak and write.

RK: This raises the big question: are you reducing Teresa to psychoanalysis, or are you raising psychoanalysis to religion? Some commentators, like Dennis Taylor, think you are doing the latter and that this is what gives a singular energy to your work on Catholic mysticism. As Taylor put it in his question after your talk, "Is this something inside Catholicism, is it something outside Catholicism or is it Catholicism?"

JK: I think that psychoanalysis is, for today, the last daughter of Catholicism—because Freud was very attentive to Judaism and to Christianity, and he did what he could to show this heritage but at the same time to distance himself from it. I do not, I repeat, want to reduce Teresa to psychoanalysis. I think only that from the human sciences and the social sciences, the only rational approaches to human beings, psychoanalysis could come closest to her experience and to the experience of faith—particularly to the Christian faith because it is given in language. Teresa's Catholic experience of language, like that of psychoanalysis, witnesses to this coincidence, or this neighborhood, between excitation and verbalization. My problem is not to reduce her experience to what I say or what we can say from the psychoanalytic point of view. I do not think that psychoanalysis can analyze God, but it can analyze the experience of God. So it cannot become a theology; but it can say something about how people live their faith.

RK: I would like to press you again here on the relationship between Teresa and atheism. For me, Teresa is—like certain other mystics from Eckhart
to Hillesean—an anatheist. But I would like to hear your own view of what Teresa can teach us about the intimate rapport between mysticism and the critical faith options of theism, atheism, and anatheism. Derrida notes that mysticism is often accused of being atheistic, as was the case with several condemned heretics and even Leibniz. As you know, I myself prefer the term ana-theist in the sense of critically revisiting a genuine sense of the sacred after the death of God (understood in the metaphysical concept of a Supreme Being or Cause).

JK: I am happy to come back to this point. When Teresa was submitted to the Inquisition, it was not only because she was eccentric and an intrepid businesswoman—she describes herself as a business woman, une femme d’affaires—but also because in the Interior Castle, when you go to the seventh stage, you find Christ as “white light.” Here, there is something that is sensorial but not really visible. It is something invisible, nonvisible yet felt through the body. It is more in the sense of the purity of her Catholic faith, but she finds Christ in herself. So the Inquisition said, God is in you, you are God; this is blasphemy and we can burn you! Someone who understood this very well and transformed it into a philosophical experience, was, as you say, Leibniz. He wrote a letter to a friend saying that in his mathematical thinking about the monads—each subject enclosing the infinite—he discovered that there is no identity without being able to grasp infinity in itself. If you don’t possess infinity, you don’t have identity. You are a sort of a nonspeaking animal, without psychological awareness of what you are. It is a part of being an actor in the world.

Leibnitz said, there was a woman, a nun, who experienced what I am doing in mathematics, because she considered that there is only God and her in this world, and God is in her. I think that this is the Christian notion of incarnation experienced, in a paroxystic way, by Teresa. So is this a denial of Christianity? Is this atheism? Some people from the Inquisition thought it was. I personally think that this is a step toward humanism, a new humanism worthy of its name—something close to what you call anatheism. But are we in a position to practice such a new humanism today if we are losing the notion of the infinite? What is the notion of the infinite? Is it God? We can sustain this in order to explain maybe what we understand by God. But I will say in my agnostic way, it is the infinite chain of human beings who have been before us and will come after us. It is the infinite chain of the human mind, as far as it is able to analyze what is the big bang, what is before the big bang and after the big bang—this capacity of the human being to embrace being. It is a sort of dance around the Heideggerian notion of being that I propose. In the case of Teresa—she found this in herself. This appropriation of the infinite by humanity. In a sense, you can say that this was a sort of atheism, but informed by religion. And let me add this: When I interpret from a psychoanalytic point of view such mystical experiences, I do not seek to justify them or propose them as a model of behavior or of therapy for traumatic experience. Teresa was very eccentric but also very rational and very faithful to certain forms of institutional rules and authorities. She had no wish to disturb in a perverted way the canon of the church in order to demonstrate the extreme aspects of her love for God. She was quite moderate, finally. But even in the case of pathological experiences of psychotic or perverted excess, I think that scientific curiosity must never aband on the hope to understand such experiences, to follow them, and to help. The danger is for certain psychotic visionaries and leaders of sects to exploit such experiences in order to become “masters of the world.”

RK: This raises questions of authentic mysticism as opposed to pseudomythic. And I think this may be a good point to return to the critical relationship between faith and fiction. In the Christian tradition, faith has often been seen as a form of existential consolation—a matter of hope in things to come, as Augustine put it. Ernst Bloch explores this kind of faith as a desire for utopia, an imaginative faith in the dream of the not-yet. Fiction seems to be a way of consoling ourselves in the realm of the imaginary, the virtual, and the oneiric. But surely Teresa believed that her faith was more than a fiction. And surely this mattered to her, and to those who believed in her belief.

JK: Let me try and answer this personally. When I began to write novels, it was, for me, inevitable. It’s something that was a reality that was imposed from without, and that I could not resist. So it was a sort of faith, yes, even a necessity to give words to certain traumatic events and to find a certain consolation by doing so, by the simple fact of addressing the pain in language, expressing what I was feeling by transposing it onto an empty page, voiding it into a form of writing which others might also like to read. This experience of sharing the traumatic experience is something that I cannot do with concepts. It is something other than theoretical writing: it is not only exploitation. It is a sort of delivering, of freeing myself, with the conviction that it will be accepted. Even if it is for a small group of people, that’s enough. There is a specific kind of faith in the writing of fiction—when I write fiction, it is a construction. It is something that I decide to do. If it is not an illusion, it is nevertheless an ephemeral act that can be analyzed. It can have one sense today and another sense tomorrow. I can also give some sense to this. One part of me is in need, entirely, and there
is another part of me that is free of it, that can take some distance from it. I think that in our writings today and other aesthetic experiences, we both for these attitudes: of engulfing ourselves in them and of being withdrawn from them. The second part is even more important sometimes than the first. This is the difference between what happens in the experience of mystical faith with and without writing. In mystical experience, it seems that the mystic liberates him- or herself from the control of the ego and super ego—that is from the critical vigilance of thought, by way of rejoining primary regressive states in a state of complete sensorial abandon. Writing the abandon is never total, and the importance of reasoning along with the rhetorical formulation in concurrence with the literary and aesthetic memory of a civilization, remains constantly present and protects or "saves" the mystical writer, or the artist, from complete abandon. In my book on Teresa, I point out that the experience of the mystics that has survived is one that is written and even reflected on, which leads me to say that many mystics reached a certain distance from the pathological deconstruction of abandon and, like Teresa herself, can be considered as authors of a universal message. I find most of the great mystics have these two movements. Think of the well-known anathema sentence of Meister Eckhart: "I ask God to make me free from God." Teresa has something like this too. She was a great player of chess. She would say to her sister things like, "you know it is forbidden to play in monasteries, but I allow you to play. You can play chess. Why? Because you may checkmate God, our Master, Notre Seigneur. And do not think that I am blasphemying by saying this, because there was someone who already checkmated him, it is our Mother, the Virgin Mary who took a child from him." Teresa has faith and she writes; she makes fiction and humor and she plays with God. She has a distance. It doesn't mean that she abolishes God. This distance is a freedom that I think is most possible in Catholicism.

RK: But not everyone can return to mystical experiences of Teresian Catholicism or medieval faith. How can one hope, if at all, to recuperate such moments of confession and conversion, to rehabilitate that lost sense of ecstasy and incorporation of the infinite? In today's society of consumerism and spectator, which you so trenchantly diagnose in your recent works, what it to be done? My question is a practical one.

JK: Why I try to rehabilitate this through fiction, and not only through Heideggerian reading—we are not obliged to go from Heidegger to St. Teresa, though some people may be attracted by this—is because I have the impression that the world was created in order to end up as a book. Here I cite Mallarmé, to whom I dedicated my doctoral thesis, La Revolución du

**Langage Poétique.** Now, while I am in America—it happens in Europe too, but here it is even stronger—I get the impression that the world has been created in order to end in a market, and the book is condemned. It still exists; it will last in, or be transformed into, the internet. And why not? There are privileged innovations that come with the internet—rapidity, flexibility, the capacity to make linkages between very diverse people on some level. But what happens is that "inner experience" disappears in this rapidity of communication in the market. Market communications, visual communication, the society of spectacle and simulation—all of those modern trends (of which I would not want to deny the advantages) go in the direction of erasing the depth of the human psyche. The return of Augustine into the soul, the unconscious analysis of Freud, and other forms of interiority appear to be increasingly limited to privileged elites, rather than being available to contemporary society at large. I think that it can last for a while and that it is important for those who have access to this inner experience to try to rehabilitate it, because there is no other way to resist the other tendency. The other tendency will continue, and it also represents "progress" in a sense. We cannot deny it or destroy it, but we can still complement it with something else. I think it is not impossible to rebuild this deep, internal life. It may not be possible for everyone. It may be that the democratic utopia—where everyone could have this psychic depth, this capacity to read Plato or Teresa or Joyce—is a utopia. But it is important to maintain this horizon and to try to develop it as far as possible for those who participate in the open, globalized market.

VI

RK: I would like to return finally to the matter of hope—Teresa's hope. This is a question posed to you by William Richardson, the Jesuit philosopher, Heidegger scholar, and psychoanalyst. He argues that your writing on Teresa is richly literary and very profound psychoanalytically, but that it remains at the level of an anthropocentric analysis of a classic mystic. What is there in your understanding of her experience that makes hope necessary? What does her faith hope for? Your description in literary psychoanalytic terms is a description of the *anthropos*, but it remains that. So the question remains, if the mystical experience of God or the Father as you describe it, does not imply something more than that? A transcendence as well as an immanence? In other words, where is the experience of *otherness* in all this, which enables her to have hope, faith, and wonder in the first place?

JK: Thank you for pursuing this and pushing me to be more precise. The *otherness* is in us. The transcendence is within. The speaking being is
the one who has the transcendence in herself, and that is what Teresa finds in the seventh stage of her castle. This otherness is our capacity to love. If you have this desire to love, which is dependent on the need to believe in the other and in the otherness in oneself, it means that you are capable of infinite transcendence of yourself. And this transcendence of the self is what we call in psychoanalysis the subject capable of different creations and links. This is what makes the meaning that is outside of us also something that is fulfilled by us. Teresa’s position, if I can summarize it, is that transcendence is what makes us go beyond our limits and the limits of every social framework. But this transcendence is incarnated in my capacity as a human being to speak and love. This capacity of speaking as loving is transcendence. And this, I believe, is very Christian. It is Christian in the sense of what you say God is. When you say that God is love, I suppose it doesn’t mean that in the sky there is something waiting for me, to love me. It means that the anthropological condition is possible only if we consider that it is inhabited by the emotion of love and the capacity to sublimate it in different ways. That could be science, music, or art, and it could be some kind of generous politics—why not?—but this capacity of infinite loving sublimation is what transcends the biological being, what enables beings to become beings. This is outside of my capacity; it escapes me, but it is rooted in me. This is one of the manifestations of transcendence. So this, I would say, is Teresa’s hope. Hope as the ability to transcend. I consider singularity, the capacity to be unique, and to transcend in a unique way, to be the greatest value of humans. Perhaps I should not use the word value since it is so related to the market, but it is the great particularity of human beings. It means that it is the only hope. It is so tremendous, positive, and encouraging, when you consider that every one of us—be it the genius or the disabled—is capable of this transcendence. This transcendence is not outside; it is here, it is in you and me, and it is on this table. But people have to make an effort to do it, to become transcending subjects rather than reduce themselves to passive and possessive objects. And here I return to the question of the infinite. We are finite beings as Heidegger and Freud remind us, yes, but there is no finitude for the word. There is finitude for the human body, the physical body, for physics, but my words will be sustained forever where human beings exist. The infinite is the word. This is a contradiction of finitude that makes us tragic, but this precisely what pushes us to invest words, to move toward creation, toward the possibility to transcend our limits, into something that will speak to and for others, not only close to me today but in future generations when I will no longer be. The word is the hope and faith in transmission through creation, through the chains of