

Aline Ferreira

Universidade de Aveiro

**The Prison House of Genes:
Cellular Memory and New Scenes of Conception in
Jacques Testart's *Ève ou la Répétition***

In this essay I propose to examine Jacques Testart's *Ève ou la Répétition* (1998), which revolves around a number of crucial themes: the development of a new society ruled by a eugenic drive to genetic stratification and segregation, mother-daughter cloning, incest, the perpetuation of the biological memory in another body and the Frankenstein syndrome, as well as a reflection on immortality. Testart's novel centrally questions what it means to be human when faced with the prospect of biogenetic interventions in the human genome, as well as social exclusion due to specific genetic traits. *Ève ou la Répétition* functions as a cautionary tale alerting us to the dangers attendant upon the hasty and unregulated applications of genetic engineering in our increasingly commercial and consumer-oriented society, with growing eugenic tendencies.

I will also reflect on the role of memory in Testart's novel, focussing in particular on the notion of genetic or cellular memory, a memory that is encoded and deeply embedded in the cells, literally embodied, but I will also consider the part played by repressed memories, especially those that are connected with occluded primal scenes in the Freudian sense.

Jacques Testart is a reputed French geneticist, cocreator of the first French test-tube baby and Research Director at the INSERM – Institut National de la Santé et de la Recherche Médicale).¹ In *Ève ou la Répétition* the narrative takes place in the future, around the middle of the twenty-first century. Society is structured according to genetic traits, assessed by the Committee for Genetic Evaluation of the Citizens (EGC – Évaluation généti-

¹ Jacques Testart's works include *L'Oeuf transparent* (1986) and *Le Désir du gène* (1992).

que des citoyens) and placed in two zones according to those characteristics: the Central Zone, where those with a “superior” genetic profile, including their IQ, live, and the “Others”. For Bertrand de Ross, a staunch defender of genetic determinism, a black man born in the Zone of the “Others” who was converted to the national policy of Progressive Health Restoration, and who is Ève’s employer, “la politique d’Assainissement progressif par sélection des meilleurs enfants potentiels dans chaque famille est bien la solution libérale qu’il nous fallait!” (60), a credo which amounts to state discrimination according to genetic traits, clearly a form of eugenics, carried through by the Genetic Control Brigade (Brigade de contrôle génétique). Those who inhabit the Central Zone sometimes go into the other Zone, that of the Others, to eat exotic spicy food, for instance, but they always return before nightfall for security reasons to the Central Zone, where luxury and order prevail.²

The story revolves around Ève, a journalist and vice President of the Genetic Evaluation Committee who, on the day of her twenty-fifth birthday receives an electronic message from her father who had been dead for many years, explaining that he has a very important revelation to impart to her. However, considering the potentially shocking, traumatic, life-changing nature of this announcement, he considers it best to disclose it to her slowly, in the form of a daily message that will gradually throw light on his secret confession. This revelation takes the form of an extended narrative, which chronicles the love affair of two characters, Filandre and Perle, the fictional counterparts of her parents, François Roussell and Pauline. Like Ève’s father, who was a geneticist working at a lab where test-tube babies were created, Filandre is also a biologist working in the field of reproductive technologies.

Filandre gradually recounts how one stormy afternoon in the countryside, he falls prey to a hallucination and receives the gift of a blue flask which contains the elixir of life, the powder of eternity, as it is called in the novel, and which also carries instructions about how to employ it.³ Filandre then proceeds to use it on himself, cutting the skin of his forearm and sowing the

² The trope of the walled, protected community where those who are genetically enhanced or have greater privileges live, contrasted with those who live outside the walls, is increasingly present in utopian/dystopian fiction, as in Octavia Butler’s *Parable of the Sower* (2000), Eva Hoffman’s *The Secret* (2001), Margaret Atwood’s *Oryx and Crake* (2003).

³ Alchemical associations are also strongly at work here.

powder of life into his own flesh, an action described in agricultural terms of seed being sown in the fertile earth. Filandre is thus feminized, symbolically turned into a pregnant man/woman. Three days later, the graft has visibly grown: “de façon indéniable, le bourgeon était né de la seule chair de Filandre” (95), who starts having food cravings like some pregnant women. After a few days, when his graft, his “plant” (100), as it is described, appears “resplendissante, ferme et fière comme un jeune sexe” (100), Filandre decides to sever the connection between himself and his graft, placing it in a petri-dish, thinking to himself that he has just cut the umbilical cord, thus further emphasizing the symbolic association with male pregnancy, while, on the other hand, the feeling that he was still there, in the petri-dish, since it had his lineage, pursued him. In her book *After Nature* (1995) Marilyn Strathern also writes about “producing human beings by graft”⁴ (42), with reference to new reproductive techniques, an expression that fittingly applies to Filandre’s actions, the scientist becoming a symbolic mother. In “Motherhood According to Giovanni Bellini”, Julia Kristeva similarly uses the term graft, derived from plant breeding, to refer to the process of gestation by which, “within the body, growing as a graft, indomitable, there is another” (237).

Filandre’s next task was to choose a compatible egg in which to implant his clone, a fitting receptacle for his “double” (120): “il souhaitait pour son double une ambiance familiale harmonieuse, comparable à celle qu’il avait lui-même connue. Qui sait quelles perturbations de l’esprit peuvent atteindre un enfant don’t l’origine est mise en doute par son père, ou par lui-même?” (120) He finally settles for Madame Porte/Pedreira, a friend of the caretaker who looks after the building where he lives. To summarize the plot briefly, François Roussel/Filandre’s clone/son turns out to be Robert, with whom Ève played as a child, since he lived in the same building, who grew up to be attracted to her and who has become, as she finds out, her mother’s lover, but who is, in effect, a younger version of Pauline’s husband and of Ève’s

⁴ In *Dissemination*, Jacques Derrida calls attention to “the analogy between the forms of textual grafting and so-called vegetal grafting, or even, more and more commonly today, animal grafting” (202). At the present time, Derrida would probably also include human grafting. In *De Quoi Demain...* (2001), in which he dialogues with Elisabeth Roudinesco, Derrida reflects at length on the concept of human cloning. J. Derrida, *Dissemination*, trans. with Int. and Additional, notes by Barbara Johnson (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1981).

father. Ève herself starts to wonder whether Robert is not “le clone clandestin de son père lui-même” (129).

“*La nostalgie des débuts*” (*Ève ou la Répétition*, 22)

The narrative is structured around questions of memory, of remembering, of digging into the past like a detective or an archaeologist, excavating layer after layer to uncover the secret of Ève’s scene of creation. Indeed, *Ève ou la Répétition* revolves around scenes of origin which involve the solving of a mystery relating to the protagonist’s genetic origins. In Ève’s case, her doubts about her parenthood trigger the appearance of a long forgotten or repressed memory of a quintessential, Freudian primal scene,⁵ which involves Ève’s witnessing her parents’ copulating when, by chance, she goes into her parents’ room, a summer afternoon, long ago, and sees them on the bed in strange positions whose meaning she only understood much later, according to the Freudian principle of *Nachträglichkeit*, or “afterwardsness”, as Jean Laplanche translated it.⁶ This concept makes explicit, as Nicola King explains, “the fact that memory, operating as it does in the present, must inevitably incorporate the awareness of ‘what wasn’t known then’” (*Memory, Narrative, Identity: Remembering the Self*, 12).⁷ The notion of *Nachträglichkeit*, as King further notes, “unsettles the belief that we can recover the past as it was and unproblematically reunite our past and present selves, although the assumption that memory can give us direct access to the preserved or buried past retains a powerful hold on our culture” (12).⁸

⁵ Freud first used the expression “primal scene” in “The Wolf Man” case study (1918).

⁶ In John Fletcher and Martin Stanton, eds., *Jean Laplanche: Seduction, Translation, Drives* (London: Institute of Contemporary Arts, 1992).

⁷ Christopher Bollas called this mental state the “unthought known” and explains: “the child will know something even if this knowledge has not been elaborated through thought proper”. C. Bollas, *The Shadow of the Object: Psychoanalysis of the Unthought Known* (London: Free Association Books, 1987), p. 111.

⁸ As Nicola King observes, in words that shed light on Ève’s narratives, “autobiographical narratives reconstruct the events of a life in the light of ‘what wasn’t known then’, highlighting the events which are now, with hindsight, seen to be significant”. N. King, *Memory, Narrative, Identity: Remembering the Self* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000). p. 22.

Indeed, it is only through *Nachträglichkeit*, or deferred action, that Ève can accede to those memories, necessarily reinterpreted or newly confronted. As Freud himself concedes, witnessing sexual intercourse between one's parents is only "understood and react[ed] to... in retrospect" (*Introductory Lecture in Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, 416-417). According to Linda Ruth Williams "the child sees or hears *something*, but the material is itself only gradually inserted into a narrative or a coherent picture as it is actively reworked in memory" (*Critical Desire: Psychoanalysis and the Literary Subject*, 16). While the reality of the primal scene as actual event may be open to doubt, it is not, as Linda Ruth Williams argues, that the person

makes up the stories of her early life, but that the stories have *made up her*. The subject is the creation of the story. The self comes into being in terms of, and entirely with reference to, the network of relationships which she later tells back to herself... as primal scenes, Oedipal crises, the narrative of early psychic history, stories which change as we change them, as we rework them through our individual histories (17).

Interestingly, as Williams further remarks, these "might actually be what Freud calls in one of the Fliess letters 'scientific fairy tales', narrations of the structures which construct the self, memories which are at root fantasies" (17), a term that seems indeed appropriate to refer to Ève's recounting of her primal scene fantasies. In related vein, Mark Solms and Oliver Turnbull note how

On present knowledge, it seems reasonable to assume that *episodic* early infantile memories can never be recovered in any veridical sense. Our earliest experiences can only be *reconstructed*, through inferences derived from implicit (unconscious) semantic and procedural evidence. The same applies, to a lesser extent, to traumatic memories (*The Brain and the Inner World: An Introduction to the Neuroscience of Subjective Experience*, 169).

Ève has to negotiate precisely this mined, dangerous terrain. She is forced, as it were, to confront this hidden scene of origins which, although repressed, contains a kernel of certainty about her past, the reassurance that she is indeed her parents' daughter, an "originary memory"⁹ informed by

what Laura Mulvey has called the “pre-Oedipal as Golden Age” (“Changes: Thoughts on Myth, Narrative and Historical Experience”, 11), the “oceanic feeling”, mentioned by Freud, of an imaginary plenitude in the pre-Oedipal stage, a conviction that is shaken by her father’s messages.¹⁰ What that “originary memory” encapsulates for Ève is not only a nostalgia for a specific rendition of the past, but also a nostalgia for a certain type of memory, one that would allow an unmediated access to that past, the retrieval of lost, explanatory scenes as well as the reestablishment of missing continuities. However, as Mark Solms and Oliver Turnbull remark, “when psychotherapists speak of unconscious memories of personal events, what they are really referring to is something that the stored memories of the events in question *would be like* if they *could* be reexperienced. Unconscious memories of events... are ‘as-if’ episodic memories. They do not exist *as experiences* until they are reactivated by the *current SELF*” (*The Brain and the Inner World: An Introduction to the Neuroscience of Subjective Experience*, 162; emphasis in the original). Memories, then, are of necessity always already fictions.

Ève’s efforts to try to unravel the mystery of her origins and retrieve secret memories, her attempts to recover a unified, stable sense of self, of identity, decentred and made fragmentary after her father’s gradual revelations, encoded in a fictional narrative, make it doubly problematic for her, for she is surrounded, as it were, by veil after veil of deception, layer after layer of difficult to access memories. Ève’s excavations into what might be called, in Freudian terms, the Minoan-Mycenaean layers of civilization behind the Greek civilization¹¹ could be equated with the psychoanalytic process of disclosing increasingly deeper layers of the repressed contents of the psyche. It is significant in this context that Freud frequently used archaeological

⁹ I am here borrowing Ned Lukacher’s expression in *Primal Scenes: Literature, Philosophy, Psychoanalysis* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1986), p. 11.

¹⁰ Going even further, Teresa Brennan posits a “fleshly memory” of life in the womb, resulting from intra-uterine interaction with the mother. T. Brennan, *The Interpretation of the Flesh: Freud and Femininity* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 171.

¹¹ “Female Sexuality”, 372.

metaphors in his work. In addition, in *Civilization and Its Discontents* Freud compared the past of a city, Rome, with the past of the mind, proposing that we examine Rome, “by a flight of the imagination” not as a “human habitation but a physical entity with a similarly long and copious past – an entity, that is to say, in which nothing that has once come into existence will have passed away and all the earlier phases of development continue to exist alongside the latest one” (257).¹²

Ève, indeed, is inescapably forced to keep looking at her past, impelled by her father’s daily messages. Walter Benjamin also reflects on the working of memory in terms of archaeological metaphors, when he contends that language is

the medium of past experience, as the ground is the medium in which dead cities lie interred. He who seeks to approach his own buried past must conduct himself like a man digging... He must not be afraid to return again and again to the same matter; to scatter it as one scatters earth, to turn it over as one turns over soil. For the matter itself is only a deposit, a stratum, which yields only to the most meticulous examination what constitutes the real treasure hidden within the earth: the images... that stand – like precious fragments or torsos in a collector’s gallery – in the prosaic rooms of our later understanding (“A Berlin Chronicle”, 314).

In another remarkable primal scene of origins, we learn how Filandre implants his own clone in Madame Porte’s womb, thereby becoming the originator of his own rebirth:

Le gynécologue ouvrit un chemin à son spéculum entre les cuisses molles. Quand il se déclara prêt, Filandre prépara le cathéter... Cette fois... était différente, comme si le système optique renvoyait à Filandre l’image de son origine, ou... comme si l’oeuf immobile considérait là-haut, au delà du tube noir, la forme de son devenir. Sans doute une relation s’instaurait-elle à l’instant entre les deux généra-

¹² In *Studies on Hysteria*, in turn, Freud describes the analysis of a patient in terms of “clearing away the pathogenic psychical material layer by layer, and we liked to compare it with the technique of excavating a buried city” (206). For a discussion of Freud’s notions of memory see Nicola King, *Memory, Narrative, Identity: Remembering the Self* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000).

tions du même, l'un capable de décider... de regarder et de juger, l'autre captif, inapte encore à survivre ou seulement à désirer. Le dernier se tenait là, comme une "personne potentielle", aurait dit le Comité d'éthique, face à la personne réelle tirant les ficelles de sa propre marionette (142).

Meaningfully, Filandre describes the implantation of the egg in Mme Porte's uterus in terms of his own re-entry into the womb, seeing himself as being carried inside in the catheter he was introducing into her womb, in a literalization of the male fantasy of a return to the maternal womb, recounted by Freud in "The Uncanny":

Filandre trembla un peu au moment de s'introduire dans le cathéter. Il serra les épaules pour se faire plus étroit, et l'oeuf fut aspiré par la bouche pâle du tube plastique. . . . Filandre . . . fixait seulement au bas du ventre . . . l'énorme touffe noire sous laquelle il venait de disparaître (143).

As Nicola King observes, the "possibility of 'remembering' the experience of 'inter-uterine communication' is the most extreme version of the belief that memory confirms or produces identity" (*Memory, Narrative, Identity: Remembering the Self*, 30). In Filandre, the two fantasies, of a return to the womb and of intra-uterine existence, appear to be inextricably linked and at work in his desire to insert himself, or his twin brother, as he also calls him, into Mme Porte's womb, indeed of growing there.¹³ This primal scene also suggests that Filandre identifies himself with his genetic make-up, with the cell he used to fabricate the embryo. He is literally his own genes.

¹³ In this respect Stephen E. Levick suggests that "individuals choosing to self-clone as their path to parenthood might also be enacting narcissistic transference by doing so. If so, the clone would become the living embodiment of those transferences and the object for behaviour bound to undermine his chance for a normal upbringing and happy life". S. E. Levick, *Clone Being: Exploring the Psychological and Social Dimensions* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2004), p. 94.

Enceinte d'elle-même (159)

In a further twist in this tale of origins and memories, Filandre decides to recreate his wife and make her pregnant with herself, without her knowledge. François Roussel/Filandre's fantasy can be seen as emerging from his deep desire to recreate his lover, Perle.

Il verrait grandir cette perle neuve, se dessiner sa taille juste avant que ne pointât sa poitrine. Il connaîtrait l'enfant qu'elle avait été. Il la contemplerait devenir femme, se construire telle qu'il l'avait connue. . . . Le clone de Perle ne vibrerait qu'à celui de Filandre car cet exceptionnel pouvoir donné au biologiste n'était pas destiné à assurer un fantasme trivial, mais devait servir à pérenniser l'Histoire. Filandre se trouvait investi du plus fabuleux des rôles, celui de rendre possible la répétition de l'amour (144).

Filandre thus sees himself as being able to renew his and Perle's love by literally recreating the two lovers in their clones, a fantasy that hinges on a belief in genetic determinism already hinted at by the epigraph by Jorge Luis Borges at the beginning of the book: "Conseiller ou discuter était inutile, car son inévitable destin était d'être ce que je suis" (9), suggesting the inevitability of fate, a topic often mentioned in the novel. Filandre, however, takes destiny literally into his own hands, assuming the role of creator. *Ève ou la Répétition* thus gives dramatic expression to the male drive, on the part of Filandre, to create new life on his own, an impulse that can be read in terms of womb envy, on the one hand, and a desire to circumvent women in his lonely act of creation.¹⁴

Having finally tentatively grasped her role in her father's narrative, Ève feels disgusted with the idea that she was fabricated by her father with the ultimate objective of being seduced by his clone, Robert, a narcissistic fantasy of incest. Ève muses, trying to make sense of her plight, of her new

¹⁴ In Fay Weldon's *The Cloning of Joanna May* (1989) Carl May similarly clones his wife Joanna May without her knowledge, like François Roussel/Filandre in *Ève ou la Répétition*. In both cases, human cloning could fulfil the masculine fantasy of creating life, procreating without the help of the woman, the dream of a world not of woman born.

situation, of her realisation that she is a clone of her mother: “Je savais avoir reçu une moitié de ma mère, comme tous les enfants. S’il était vrai que j’en reçus deux fois plus qu’il n’est d’usage, pourquoi me plaindrais-je? J’adore Maman, elle n’a pu me donner que du bon!” (154) However, as she later reflects, if the story narrated by her father is true, “l’image transmise dans la chair de l’enfant serait pour la première fois répétée à l’identique, et pour la première fois le but de cette opération mimétique serait la répétition d’une histoire. Comment vivre une telle aliénation? Comment recouvrer la liberté?” (177), a crucial question which Ève endlessly reflects on.

“What humans forget, cells remember”

Jeffrey Eugenides, *Middlesex*, 99

Ève can also be said to be engaged in a search for what might be termed genetic or cellular memory, genetically transmitted, inscribed in her attempt to make sense of her own beginnings and genetic inheritance. The concept of genetic memory has been gradually acquiring credence and constitutes a new, exciting area of research, although still a very recent and controversial issue, as the Quest Institute in the UK describes it.¹⁵ According to the Quest Institute, it has been accepted “since the experiments of Wilder Penfield back in the fifties, that hidden away in each of us is a permanent record of the past. . . . However, most neuroscientists believed and continue to believe that long-term memories are built into the brain by creating and strengthening connections between neighbouring neurons”,¹⁶ known as synapses. On the other hand, many neuroscientists remain puzzled about how long-lasting memories can be stored by such an impermanent medium, since almost all the brain’s molecules are replaced every few weeks. According to biologist Sandra Peña Ortiz, permanent memories are stored in altered genes and the brain is bound to preserve an archival blueprint of each neural network “in order to create the replacement neuron as a structural and functional clone of its predecessor”.¹⁷ Some neuroscientists even more radically suggest that

¹⁵ “Genetic memory: The Scientific Basis for Past Life Regression”. In <http://www.questinstitute.co.uk/dynamic/resources/memory.pdf>, 1.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, par. 4.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*, par. 5.

these memory molecules themselves might be able to store information, that indeed each individual neuron holds memory. As the Quest Institute piece concludes, the “impact of this theory, if true, is that our identity, our self, leaves a permanent mark on our genome”¹⁸ and that it might be feasible to access ancestral memories inscribed in our DNA.

Darold Treffert, in related vein, argues for the existence of a “third kind of memory capacity – ‘ancestral’ or ‘genetic’ memory” (“‘Ancestral’ or ‘Genetic’ Memory: Factory Installed Software”,¹⁹ which he describes as “the genetic transmission of sophisticated knowledge (beyond instincts)” and which, according to Treffert, “must exist along with the cognitive/semantic and procedural/habit memory”.

The Lockean theory of the mind as a blank slate, a *tabula rasa*,²⁰ has, of course, fallen into discredit long ago. As neuroscientist António Damásio states, “neither our brains nor our minds are *tabulae rasae* when we are born. Yet neither are they fully determined genetically. The genetic shadow looms large but is not complete” (*Descartes’ Error: Emotion, Reason and the Human Brain*, 111-112).²¹ In *The Mind’s Past* (1998), a book about how “our mind and brain accomplish the amazing feat of constructing our past and, in so doing, create the illusion of self” (5), Michael S. Gazzaniga, the founder of cognitive neuroscience, summarizes the state of the brain at birth: “The baby does not learn trigonometry, but knows it; does not learn how to distinguish figure from ground, but knows it; does not need to learn, but knows, that when one object with mass hits another, it will move the object” (5). As Gazzaniga further explains:

The vast human cerebral cortex is chock full of specialized systems ready, willing and able to be used for specific tasks. Moreover, the brain is built under tight genetic control. ... As soon as the brain is built, it starts to express what it knows, what it comes with from the factory. And the brain comes loaded. The number of

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, par.10; bold in the original.

¹⁹ http://www.wisconsinmedicalsociety.org/savant/genetic_memory.cfm, 1/4/2005, 1.

²⁰ Locke actually refers to the mind as “white paper void of all characters, without any ideas”. Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1947), book II, chap. 1, p. 26.

²¹ See also Steven Pinker, *The Blank Slate: The Modern Denial of Human Nature* (New York: Viking Penguin, 2002).

special devices that are in place and active is staggering. Everything from perceptual phenomena to intuitive physics to social exchange rules comes with the brain. These things are not learned; they are innately structured. Each device solves a different problem... The multitude of devices we have for doing what we do are factory installed; by the time we know about an action, the devices have already performed it (57).²²

Ève feels the pressing need to draw on this endless and untapped reservoir of cellular inscribed knowledge to come to grips with her own identity. This reservoir of genetic memory, however, is not the only defining source of her being, her sense of self, which is ceaselessly reshaped by her daily experiences. Damásio proposes an explanation to the paradox described by William James, that “the self in our stream of consciousness changes continuously as it moves forward in time, even as we retain a sense that the self remains the same while our existence continues” (*The Feeling of What Happens: Body and Emotion in the Making of Consciousness*, 217).²³ Damásio’s solution to this apparent contradiction revolves around the fact that “the seemingly changing self and the seemingly permanent self, although closely related, are not one entity but two. The ever-changing self identified by James is the sense of core self. It is not so much that it changes but rather that it is transient, ephemeral, that it needs to be remade and reborn continuously” (217). For Damásio, the “sense of self that appears to remain the same is the autobiographical self. Because it is based on a repository of memories for fundamental facts in an individual biography that can be partly reactivated and thus provide continuity and seeming permanence in our lives” (217). Ève, thus, feels that to a certain extent she will have to reassess her own autobiography in the light of her new knowledge, which partially calls into question her vision of herself, of her autobiographical sense in Damásio’s terms. Her discovery of her genetic origin as a

²² For a fascinating and clear account of the workings of the brain see also Mark Solms and Mark and Turnbull, Oliver, *The Brain and the Inner World: An Introduction to the Neuroscience of Subjective Experience*, Foreword by Oliver Sacks (New York: Other Press, 2002).

²³ In this connection see also Suzanne Nalbatian, *Memory in Literature: From Rousseau to Neuroscience* (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2003).

clone of her mother and her need to rethink her life trajectory through a new lens brings into relief the highly fictional nature of one's life narrative, the story we construct about ourselves. As Michael S. Gazzaniga, in this regard, maintains: "Biography is fiction. Autobiography is hopelessly inventive" (*The Mind's Past*, 6). However, if our self and sense of individual identity is hopelessly fictional, the memory traces in our cells may be permanent as well as potentially reachable and visually imaged and decoded at some point in the future. In addition, those records may contain and continue passing on from generation to generation information pertaining to one's predecessors, in terms not just of biogenetic imprints but also memory traces, an inexhaustible spring and life shaping drive that Ève experiences with hindsight as inescapable, almost amounting to a version of genetic determinism she did not choose. Of course people do not have a choice in selecting their parents, but with genetic engineering technologies steadily evolving, progenitors will increasingly be able to decide which traits to select for their offspring. The danger and moral conundrum at stake here is that future generations may very well consider their parents responsible for choices they deem inappropriate and call for some kind of legal compensation for those allegedly unfortunate parental choices. As Jürgen Habermas remarks, the decision to clone oneself "would introduce a previously unknown form of interpersonal relationship between genetic original and genetic copy. The intentional fixing of inherited genetic material means that the clone has been placed under a lifelong judgement imposed by another" ("An Argument Against Human Cloning: Three Replies", 168). In *The Future of Human Nature* (2003) Habermas ponders at great length on these issues, proposing that the perspective of the young person who was cloned or genetically enhanced inevitably "collides with the reifying perspective of a producer or bricoleur. The parents' choice of a genetic program for their child is associated with intentions which later take on the form of expectations addressed to the child, without, however, providing the addressee with a *revisionist* stand" (51; italics in the original).

As Domna Pastourmatzi points out, what permeates Testart's *Ève ou la Répétition* is not a "laudatory tone of scientific excellence but the irrational desire to conquer difference and unpredictability with man-made sameness and to technically manipulate the outcome of the ultimate erotic fantasy: self-replication and the repetitive seduction of the male ego by the idealized image

of the female sex-object with which he hopes to become one” (“Cloning Out of Love: Jacques Testart’s *Ève ou la Répétition*”, 179). Filandre’s attempts to recreate his erotic fantasies in a laboratory environment betray pathological narcissistic drives as well as his profound wish to rule and manipulate the female body of his lover and, by extension, a male fear of supposedly uncontrollable female desires.²⁴ Testart’s novel strongly alerts us against the geneticization of human relationships and the multifold and often unpredictable consequences of such a biopolitics, constituting a fictional reflection on what Stephen E. Levick describes as the “ethics of anticipated consequences” (*Clone Being: Exploring the Psychological and Social Dimensions*, 239).²⁵ Ève clearly voices these preoccupations, forcefully stating that she does not want “des enfants qui ne lui ressemblent pas, qui ne répètent pas le profil moyen établi par le Comité. Elle ne révélera pas son refus de la Procréation Maîtrisée et de tous les tests qui vont avec, malgré les pressions et même les menaces de son entourage” (186).

Conclusion

Ève ou la Répétition is centrally concerned with what could be described as forms of cellular memory or genetic memory, about how to access them, and also, crucially, about their replication and perpetuation. Testart’s novel problematizes questions of memory and remembering, suggesting that the self is always fictional, in process of construction, retrieving memories but also reworking them, in what can be seen as an always provisional becoming. For Linda Grant, “the self isn’t a little person inside the brain, it’s a work-in-

²⁴ As Domna Pastourmatzi further asserts, “cloning becomes a handy tool, because it both perpetuates (at least genetically) the male self and provides the opportunity to refashion the female self in the image of the man’s ideal”. D. Pastourmatzi, “Cloning Out of Love: Jacques Testart’s *Ève ou la Répétition*”, *Biotechnological and Medical Themes in Science Fiction*, ed. Domna Pastourmatzi (Thessaloniki: University Studio Press, 2002), p. 179.

²⁵ For Stephen E. Levick, “just as there is a developmental psychology underlying a mature ethics of the absolute, there is also one underpinning the ethics of anticipated consequences”. S. E. Levick, *Clone Being: Exploring the Psychological and Social Dimensions* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2004), p. 239.

-progress... Memory... is a fabrication, a new reconstruction of the original. And yet out of these unstable foundations we still construct an identity” (*Remind Me Who I Am, Again*, 294-295). Throughout the narrative, Ève ceaselessly attempts to reconstruct her past, to reenvision her primal scene of origins which holds the secret of her creation. With cloning and other reproductive technologies and scenarios, however, primal scenes will be radically refashioned and the memories and connotations accruing around them will be modified and gain different symbolic ramifications, which need to be anticipated and theorized.

These issues, in turn, are directly linked with questions such as responsibility to one’s descendents, their right to an unmanipulated genetic heritage, ethical freedom, the self-understanding of the species as well as exacerbated narcissistic traits in contemporary society, topics that need to be confronted before dystopian, eugenicist-shaped societies become the inescapable future. According to Pierre Bourdieu, the worst scenario would be “if routine bureaucratic practices of genetic intervention slowly imposed the eugenic worldview and a form of scientifically and bureaucratically accredited racism” (viii). It is precisely this view that is dramatized in Testart’s *Ève ou la Répétition*, a cautionary tale about a dystopian future it may still be possible to avoid if the symptomatic, meaningful feelings of nostalgia for a past where human beings were not genetically tinkered with and social taboos remained properly in place are heeded.

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