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## Abstract

In conventional psychoanalytical theory of the subject, the mother and father are given a preeminent position in explaining how the subject comes into being. This approach, stemming from Freud's emphasis on oedipal relations, reinforces the typical family unit and the cultural hierarchy of father, mother and child. Narrative, by contrast, frequently explores the atypical, and in the process provides avenues of subjectivity that resist oedipal interpretations. Intrigued by the expression of fraternal discord in literature, I explore the way brotherhood can both split and establish the character as a subject. To do so, this thesis traces pairs of brothers in three different novels in order to examine possible overlaps and connections between the experience of brotherhood and the conditions of subjectivity. While the brotherhood of *The Brothers Karamazov*, *East of Eden* and *Ender's Game* do not provide a singular narrative of subjective formation, each, in their own way, demonstrate the primacy of the brother as a source of trauma. Understood as a *hostile communion*, this form of brotherhood suggests that neither brother character should be recognised as an individuated subject who is able to think and act unaccompanied by the influence of the his brother.

By drawing on Juliet Mitchell's exploration of siblings and Jacques Lacan's mirror stage, I advance a reading of each text which exposes the delusion of the ego's agency and autonomy. Moreover, as a subject is extricated from the brother bind, I explore how the experience of brotherhood shapes encounters with others outside of the brother pair. This second line of enquiry is underwritten by the work of both Mikhail Bakhtin and Emmanuel Levinas, and suggests that the trope of fraternal discord can operate as a mechanism to allow characters to move from the paralysing familiarity of family to engaging with the strangeness of strangers. As a result, I argue that recognising the hostile communion of brotherhood can significantly impact thematic interpretations attributed to texts.

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