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FIRST IMPRESSIONS WITHIN THE GAZE ENCOUNTER

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Eye contact, as an encounter between two conscious and self-conscious human beings, and in advance of any word being spoken, appears to have the remarkable capacity to accurately (Gladwell, 2005) form the feelings and the meaning-content that structures our interpretation of Others as more or less perfect or different versions of ourselves (e.g. "People find out I'm an actress and I see that 'whore' look flicker across their eyes" [Rachel Weisz]).

With a primary focus on 'the novel' "as an intense experience of prolonged intimacy with another consciousness" (Lodge, 2002), this paper will seek to analyse and discuss the underpinning concepts and philosophical ideas, together with any prevailing psychological assumptions that relate to the content of *The Gaze Encounter*. More precisely, what occurs in that moment between the "before we are and what we were" (Lowell, 1992); in that moment when all kinds of assumptions and inferences, as well as judgements and decisions are made, usually by both characters, about the Other's 'inner truth', sanity, or essential being?

This paper seeks to excavate those base and mainly unconscious physical sensations that form the basis of more or less conscious feelings that, then, generate decisions about The Other; frequently, before a word is spoken.

The Heuristic research methodology (Moustakas, 1990) will be employed throughout. The results will establish a more robust relationship between sensations/feelings/decision-making.

The Conclusions will either support or undermine Rogers' (1957) concept of 'unconditional positive regard'. DRW