

LITERATURE AND PSYCHOANALYSIS



Proceedings of the
Fifteenth International Conference on Literature and Psychoanalysis
St. Petersburg ♦ July ♦ 1998

Edited by Frederico Pereira

Published by Instituto Superior de Psicologia Aplicada, Lisbon

FIFTEENTH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

ON

LITERATURE AND PSYCHOANALYSIS

Edited by FREDERICO PEREIRA

St. Petersburg

July ♦ 1998

Center for the Study of Psychoanalysis and Culture (SUNY-Buffalo, USA)

Institute for the Psychological Study of the Arts (University of Florida, USA)

Instituto Superior de Psicologia Aplicada (Lisbon, Portugal)

Janus Pannonius University (Pécs, Hungary)

Group for Psychoanalytic Studies (University of Massachusetts, USA)

Laboratoire d'Anthropologie Littéraire (Université Paris VII, France)

Published by **Instituto Superior de Psicologia Aplicada**, Lisbon

Cover plate: «Amiens Cathedral» (detail) by Yuri Annekov

Photocomposed by *Instituto Superior de Psicologia Aplicada* – Lisboa

Printed by *Printipo - Indústrias Gráficas, Lda* – Damaia

Depósito Legal n.º 139288/99

ISBN 972-8400-15-2

1999

Contents

Lacan and the signifier	3
Robert Silhol	
On literary appellation: Why are there no meaningless names in literature?	11
Walter Schönau	
Melancholic reading or Reading melancholia. Psychoanalytic criticism and text as score	17
Eva Ekselius	
Doubling, Oedipal Fantasies, and the Postmodern Uncanny: Paul Auster's <i>New York Trilogy</i>	23
Roberta Rubenstein	
Transference: The impossible relation	29
Elizabeth Wright	
A patient-therapist relationship: An unconscious symmetry	35
Max Day	
Liquid assets: Sex, money and subjectivity in classical psychoanalytic theory	43
David Bennett	
Unconscious inference from metaphor: What follows from mothers' being warm and soft	55
Burton A. Melnick	
Matthew Arnold's struggle for a true self	59
Saundra M. Segan	
Con man fictions: Psychoanalytic reflections on a perverse structure	67
Jane Kupersmidt	
«The Symbol of that which constrains us»: David Mamet's <i>Homicide</i>, paranoia, and the ambivalence of cultural identity.....	79
Geoffrey Green	
The phenomenology of upper rooms	87
Sherry Lutz Zivley	
Bathmology: Science or art of the good distance	97
Henk Hillenaar	
<i>Knights of the Heavens</i> in the representation of death	105
Viktor Mazin	
Shakespeare's continuity through the daughter	115
Dianne Hunter	
Ophelia and the (im)possibility of a female subjectivity	125
James N. Brown / Patricia Sant	
Moby-Dick or the Whale by Herman Melville: «jouissance at work»	133
Pierre Met	

Is <i>The Prelude</i> a national epic?	143
Edmond Wright	
Rubek's choice. Psychoanalytical approaches to Henrik Ibsen: <i>When We Dead Awaken</i>	151
Tom Eide	
Illness and the body in Katherine Mansfield's fiction	157
Carole Stone	
«Let's Hope the Red Army isn't Listening in on Us»: A psychoanalytic hearing of the unspoken in <i>The Unbearable Lightness of Being</i>	167
Maureen Turim	
<i>The Kreutzer Sonata</i>: A Kleinian approach to Tolstoy's hatred of sex	177
Daniel Rancour-Laferriere	
Gender, class, and religion in eastern european immigrant fiction	193
Anne M. Wyatt-Brown	
Nineteenth-Century Russian Literature and Modern Southern Writers	201
Bertram Wyatt-Brown	
<i>Urga</i> and the metapsychology of postnational identity	215
Scott Nygren	
The Northern Irish conflict filmed as a freudian fable: Joe Comerford's <i>High Boot Benny</i> (1993)	229
Georgiana M. M. Colvile	
The «Secret at the Bottom of It All»: Freud's Cameo in <i>The Day the Earth Stood Still</i>	235
Marcia Green	
Psychoanalysis and literature, as seen by undergraduates	245
László Halász	

P A P E R S

Lacan and the signifier

ROBERT SILHOL (*)

One notion I find particularly difficult to understand in Lacan's teaching is the one expressed by the word *signifiant*, «signifier», on which he insists so much and so often, as for instance in *Séminaire V, Les Formations de l'inconscient*, which corresponds to the academic year 1957-58. The word, if not the notion, has in any case become a key word for most of his disciples.

Here is the first difficulty then: argue as we may, indeed, a signifier does not make sense, any sense, without some signified; a signifier without signified is nothing but a noise, and it therefore sounds odd to hear someone speak of a signifiant on its own. And this because we have learnt that the Saussurian signifier is only a sound or, rather, the memory, the psychic movement connected, attached, to the production, to the uttering of a sound. The basic unit – even though theory can distinguish two constituents in it, two «components» – is the sign. Yes, the sign is a closed unit, and no part of it can be taken away, or isolated, except, of course, for the sake of explanation and theory.

This is not the way Lacan, in the Fifties, understood Saussurian linguistics. But already, my formulation is wrong, for he was not long in warning us that he was dabbling not in linguistics but in «*linguisterie*», linguistery not linguistics, which was a way of saying, I think, that what he was borrowing from linguistics was metaphorical rather than literal. What he was interested in, in fact, was the structure Saussure had brought to light, much more than any other detail in the demonstration of the linguist. And it is a structure which, curiously, is not without resemblance to the one brought to light by Freud himself. But here again, we must be careful: when I speak of structure, what I have in mind is a model, an abstraction irrespective of contents, the skeleton not the flesh. In this structure, then, we distinguish two «places»: with Freud we have conscious and unconscious, and with Saussure signified and signifier; but of course, the dividing line, *la barre*, which can be seen in both models, *is not of the same nature and does not represent the same thing*. Some critics notwithstanding, never did Lacan confuse the one with the other. Some of his disciples might, and this is one of the points I wish to make, but not Lacan. For it is not too difficult to understand that whereas in psychoanalysis the dividing line, *la barre*, does constitute the main feature of the Freudian model, Cs/Ucs (the bar is a perfect representation of what separates Cs from Ucs, and it is not, in fact, difficult to realize that the creation of the concept of unconscious is a direct consequence of the existence of such a «bar», void or *béance*), with linguistics it is nothing more than a convenient way to mark the difference – the difference in nature and not the opposition – between

(*) Université Paris VII, Centre d'Anthropologie littéraire, 10, rue Charles V, 75004 Paris, France.

signified and signifier. In fact, the Saussurian bar unites rather than divides, the best proof of this being the way linguistics conceive representation, with the world, reality, on one side, and sounds on the other . And to make his point, Saussure even uses a second simile which is even more telling: that of the *sheet of paper* with the signified on one side and the signifier on the other. Quite simply, this sheet of paper is a good representation of the Saussurian dividing, or rather *unifying*, line. (We could, if we had time, try to understand why Saussure thought he had to draw this «bar» – I take it to be an *unconscious* representation of what psychoanalysis has since taught us, but nothing more than a symbolic representation –, but in the end we would still come to the conclusion that the line, in each of the two models, has a different function.)

Why then did Lacan borrow Saussure's model? In the Fifties, of course, linguistics was the new-fangled «human» science and at the time it may have been considered important to see one's psychoanalytical findings corroborated by it. More generally, perhaps, Freud, almost from the beginning, showed an interest in language; it is not too unexpected, therefore, to see one of his followers look in the direction of the linguist. Granted this, there is still room for a complementary hypothesis and I wish to defend the idea that it was not so much the structure of the sign which attracted Lacan – whether he knew it or not –, as another model, namely the structure of representation. We are still dealing with a linguistic model, with linguistic knowledge, but the model is no longer that of the sign with signified and signifier. Let us look now at the structure of representation; the model is quite simple, and it is Saussure's also:



Now, this simple formula can also be used to describe the psychoanalytical model. For with psychoanalysis we first have a void, *la béance* – which is another formulation for *la barre* – and the subject's wish to suppress it, to go, to reach, beyond:



a gap and a desire impossible to fulfill. On one side of the bar the subject, incomplete by definition; and on the other the object, which is always the lost object. Between the two: hallucination, the dream, the slip of the tongue... speech, in short an attempt at regaining, if only in imagination, what we have lost at birth: the world out there, perfect fusion with the mother's body.

This time, we clearly see what similarity unites the linguistic sign and the Freudian formula. Psychoanalysis can now be accepted as a theory of representation, and language, human discourse, can now be given its rightful place.

For Lacan, of course, if «language is the condition of the unconscious» (and not the contrary) it is because he identifies language with the original signifier represented by the «No/Name» of the father which came to separate mother and infant, thus creating for the new human subject the necessity to symbolize, or represent, what it had lost, and this is language, the spoken word. Structurally, then, this «No» can be read as «separation» – as we shall see below – and this is «the bar» of psychoanalysis as I described it above; we are now on true Freudian ground indeed. Furthermore, there is no contradiction between Lacan's formula and the well known fact that the

unconscious, as a concept, refers to what can only be identified because of its manifestations, because of what comes to the «surface» if you like. In this case also – but this is probably not what Lacan had in mind – language, and I think we can simply say *representation*, is the condition of the unconscious. Indeed, both psychoanalysis and Saussurian linguistics depend on the same structure, the structure of representation: an object, a gap, and a sign produced by a desiring subject. But what we must of course bear in mind is that this manifestation – representation – always presents itself under a mask, a disguise, which is another consequence of the bar.

It is perhaps at this point that Lacan fails to read Saussure's formula correctly and here lies, again perhaps, the reason for his strange handling of it. Indeed, looking at the linguist's diagram, he speaks of the dividing line, *la barre*, as a resistance to «signification». (See *Ecrits*, p. 254 and *Séminaire XX*, p. 22.) But the Saussurian sign being a unit, as the circle and the arrows clearly point out, it is difficult to see how any «resistance» could slip within this close unit. Clearly, Lacan gives too much importance to the line in Saussure's formula (or reads it as if it were a psychoanalytic formula), since, let me repeat this once more, signified and signifier can only function together (but not so, of course, for the Lacanian psychoanalyst whose interest is the symbolical dimension of language).

What we must now try to answer is the question: why such a preference for the signifier, *le signifiant*? Why not be satisfied with «sign»? And it is a fact that in Lacan's writing we can, in many instances, replace *signifiant* by *signe*. Is this insistence – «*Il n'y a que du signifiant*» – only a way of bringing the father and his law into the picture? The best thing I can do now is to draw a list of the possible meanings implied by this particular sign: *le signifiant*. We will then find that what I have called a «misreading» of Saussure is only a «linguistic» misreading and makes sense for the psychoanalyst or the philosopher.

Let us try to pay attention, then, to what Lacan is telling us, and see if somehow it does not make sense.

1. THE SIGNIFIER AS THE «MANIFEST FUNCTION» OF LANGUAGE

Latent «thoughts», we have learnt this from Freud, can only be inferred; the only element we have at our disposal is the «manifest» part of language; what is «latent», unconscious, is never directly accessible, and when it makes itself known to us, when it «comes to the surface» as it were, as in the dream or the slip of the tongue, it has no clear signification, its meaning is distorted or disguised. It is therefore possible to borrow Saussure's formula and to speak of the signifier, *S*, from a psychoanalytical point of view, placing it, though, above the line drawn by Saussure between signifier and signified, in order to insist on its «superiority» over the signified. It is impossible to know whether this is what Lacan had in mind when he «subverted», as he said, the linguistic formula, and I rather suspect he had another, different, purpose in view, but, whatever this was, his own conception of the function of the signifier certainly does not contradict the above interpretation and I find it a convenient first reading of the Lacanian signifier.

And indeed, because it does not vary, we have come to realize that the signifier is the only reliable element of discourse, *une cafetière* may be a person or a coffee pot, and *un café* a beverage or a place where one goes to have a drink, but in each case the signifiers *cafetière* or *café* remain unchanged; «*il n'y a que du signifiant*» does indeed begin to make sense.¹ Naturally, we must now object that *cafetière* and *café* cannot be reduced to signifiers; they are signs (the combination of a signified and of a signifier); we simply have four referents, four signified and only two signifiers

¹ On this issue, see: Robert Silhol (1988), «Language and the unconscious». *Prose Studies*, 11 (3), 21-31. London.

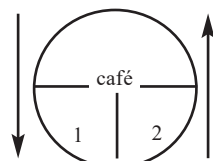
for the four signs, but the point is made: that part of the sign which Saussure called the signifier is the only stable part of the sign, the only one we can trust.

This first simple interpretation is of course that Lacan was warning us about polysemy, about the fact that the relationship between signified and signifier was not stable. This was not new, linguists already knew this, but he may have felt the need to issue his psychoanalytical warning all the same: signifiers are liable to have various signifieds, language, to put it plainly, is ambiguous and, rather than communication, misunderstanding is the rule. This is a way of insisting on the symbolical dimension of language, and another way of saying that psychoanalysis does not deal with language as if it were a «manifest surface» only, where univocity would be the rule. Quite simply, it was a way of implying that the object of psychoanalysis was not that of the linguist. Speaking of «resistance», he may have had Freud's formula in mind, Cs/Ucs, or M/L. Lacan may have contradicted himself many times on this point and imprudently play with a *signifié* and a *signifiant* obviously borrowed from linguistics, but the basic principle remains: when he says, or writes, *signifiant*, he thinks of *something other* than a simple sound or the memory of it, what is lacking in the «Other».

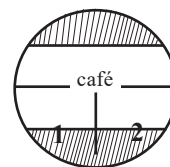
What I am saying, though, is so obvious that it cannot be the explanation we are looking for; also, it seems to be contradicted by the way Lacan discusses Saussure's formula in his own demonstration and especially in «L'instance de la lettre dans l'inconscient» (1957). Let us then simply hope it has at least helped us to understand the idea of «resistance» within the sign a bit better and continue our search. We realize Lacan's aim was complex: he wished to establish the «superiority» of his signifier (which is linguistic nonsense), but his insistence on the symbolical dimension of language was also clearly part of the demonstration: «I am not saying what I am saying, there are always other symbolical meanings, *tout est symbolique*, etc.», as if the «membrane» between signified and signifier – and I am here using Bion's term on purpose² – made the existence of various symbolical meanings possible. This is what is meant by «les glissements du signifié».

2. THE SYMBOLIC FUNCTION OF THE SIGNIFIER

We saw the role held by the signifier in *cafetière* or *café*: it ensured the stability of the sign. But we also realized with the linguist that, deprived of their signified – and here we have two of them each time –, *cafetière* and *café* are nothing but sounds, or noises – as for instance for someone who has no knowledge of Indo-european languages. With the psychoanalyst, on the other hand, we have just seen how the structure of language renders the idea of symbolism possible. We now need two diagrams instead of one:



For the linguist



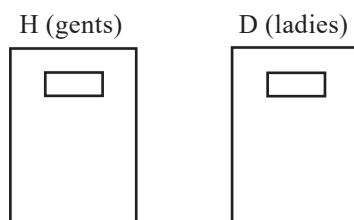
For the psychoanalyst

The resistance mentioned by Lacan only makes sense in the second diagram; it refers to the symbolical function of the *sign*. And because what a sign symbolizes is not the result of a conscious

² See Robert Silhol (1992), «The Golden Arrow: Bion and Lacan». *Literature and Psychoanalysis* (pp. 47-54), Lisbon: ISPA.

decision of a subject, we understand we never really know what we are saying: no one can call himself the master of the signifier («signifier», yes, since Lacan, in the passages where he does not play with the terms of the linguist and is consistent with himself, reduces both signifier and signified to the status of signifier, *signifiant*).

At this point of our quest, however, I would like to do away with a problem which has long worried me. Many of you know the passage where Lacan, discussing his own notion of the signifier, tells the story of the two children in a railway station. It is to be found in «L'instance de la lettre dans l'inconscient» (*Ecrits*, p. 499), and is quoted in many books and articles:



Clearly, here, I cannot follow, and accept, Lacan's demonstration. We may suppose the existence of a referent, real toilets in a railway station, but what we have in the diagram drawn by Lacan has nothing whatsoever to do with Saussure's formula and cannot be accepted as an alternative to it, an alternative where it would be shown that «the signifier enters the signified» (*«comment le signifiant entre en fait dans le signifié»*, *Ecrits*, p. 500.) For what we find in Lacan's diagram cannot be read S/s if only because HOMMES DAMES is not the signifier of the two doors below (that signifier would be «doors» or «toilet doors»), but simply two words which belong to... a signified whose signifier is the sound /toi'léts/, the complete sign being «toilets» of course. If we reason in terms of Saussure's formula, the above diagram simply represents, illustrates, what a signified is: the mental image or concept of toilets in a railway station. Furthermore, what the two children do with what they perceive, «men» or «women», an anecdote in fact and nothing more, cannot help the demonstration that the signifier *is* what first constitutes the signified (*«entre... dans le signifié»*). And yet, however faulty or biased the demonstration, Lacan is right in the end. For it is a fact, as I will show below, that what first constitutes the signified is a signifier.

Let me repeat this: Lacan's drawing (the two words and the «doors») is just an illustration of a given signified; a synecdoche at best, it is certainly not a sign, complete with signified and signifier, and cannot be used in a comparison with Saussure's formula with picture of a tree, bar and word. «HOMMES DAMES» does point to the difference between the sexes – it is difficult not to agree with this – but it is not, as Lacan seems to think, a «linguistic» signifier, with its signified supposedly «below» in the drawing representing the two doors. *Both* elements are here part of the signified; what Lacan has drawn is a representation of a mental image, no more. Now, that in another line of thinking we should accept to consider even the signified as signifier – since as soon as we speak or write we have nothing but signifiers at our disposal, and for example «HOMMES DAMES» –, is an entirely different psychoanalytical story, and has nothing to do with linguistics. (*«Il n'y a que du signifiant»*). The whole passage is a nice little story, granted, but we should do well to stop using it as a demonstration of the way the difference between the sexes helps us to understand what the Lacanian signifier is (even though, as we shall see, this is certainly the best way to understand what is at stake here, namely a reflexion on the difference between the sexes and the original structure of language). In fact, the fable does not even illustrate the way the sign functions, since one essential component (the signifier / toi'léts /) is absent: we only have a signified (the idea of a lavatory, which therefore includes the two words to render the representation quite explicit) and no more. Someone reading USCITA or EXIT and deciding that he or she has reached a town called Uscita or Exit tells us just as much on the way we are liable to misinterpret a

signifier, attributing a wrong signified to it. Clearly, Lacan's story stresses his particular use of *signifiant* and could be taken for a warning about the symbolical dimension of language, something linguists have known for a long time. But what the fable does point out is Lacan's personal way of insisting that the origin of language is to be sought in the difference between the sexes.

Finally, a word must be said about a possible subtle reading of *signifiant*. I am now alluding to the expression, often used by Lacan: «*l'ordre signifiant*» (the signifying order). I take it simply to refer to the contradiction there is between linguistic order and an unconscious symbolic order. Any speaker is confronted with the rules which regulate any language: one cannot choose – except perhaps if one is a poet – one's own grammatical «order», elementary linguistic communication implies a code which must be followed by all, a code which is only transgressed in the slip of the tongue or the ramblings of the mentally disturbed, when the unconscious subject reveals itself (under a mask). To the speaking subjects we are, such a «code» is thus a handy mask which, behind its «screen», enables us to say what we do not know we are saying: this would then be a way of stressing the importance of the symbolic order, its hidden prevalence indeed. This, in the end, would just be another way of telling us that the manifest «surface» of speech expresses unconscious meanings.

3. THE SIGNIFIER AS SEPARATION, «COUPURE»

We know how mother and infant, at first, are said to be in a state of fusion. Then comes a third party, a presence, a voice, which brings this fusion to an end, thus permitting the infant to enter triangulation. Lacan has termed this passage from two to three: «Law of the father» or «No/name of the father». This entry into the triangle is also the entry into the symbolic order: henceforth, the child will be able to «speak», to express, that is, something other than his needs: its unconscious desire. Can it be argued, then, that the order given by the third person in the triangle, the «father», is for the child a signifier? An order – in fact a performative act –, this «no» (in English the pun on *non* and *nom* [name] is not possible), would be a pure signifier for the infant, since it has yet no knowledge of its signified. The argument is tempting: this «order», which separates infant from mother, is given before the child has had access to language and is in fact the condition of this access to language. It is therefore understandable that it should have been termed «signifier» by Lacan (if indeed this was what he meant at the time). But we must straight away object that this first Lacanian signifier is only a signifier for a split second, since it loses its status as soon as it has had an effect: the separation of mother and infant which it initiates. Quite simply, it is this effect which gives it the status of sign, a sign, and nothing more, with signified – separation, *la coupure* – and signifier – the order. It is perhaps because this first «castration» introduces the infant to a new order, the order of language, that it was deemed necessary to proclaim, wrongly, that psychoanalysis had «subverted» Saussure's linguistic formula.

Secretly though, or unconsciously, there may have been another reason: this «no», when pronounced in French, becomes either *non* or *nom*, thus pointing to the child's entrance into a patrilinear order. Can we in this case say that the child is confronted with a signifier for which it has no signified at first? No more, I think, than when we discussed separation: as soon as the name is given, a signified follows.

To speak of the (first) signifier as «*coupure*» is therefore correct; what must be added, though, is that this entrance into the order of language can afterwards no longer dispense with the sign.

4. THE SIGNIFIER AND DIFFERENCE, THE PHALLUS

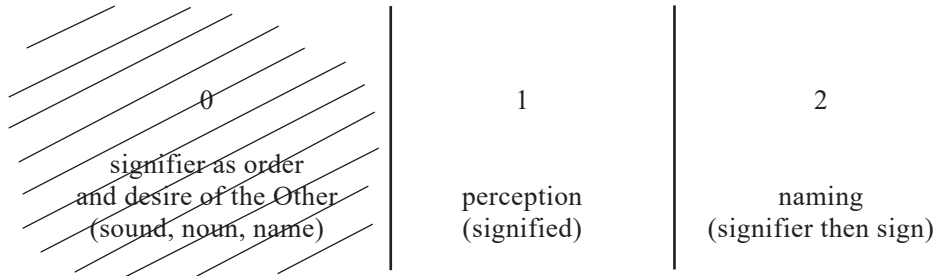
Whether one discusses Saussure's sign or Lacan's signifier (and they have a lot in common as we have just seen) the notion of «difference» is central to both. I am alluding here to Saussure's

concept of «value» (*la valeur du signe*): a sign is only meaningful because of its difference, *a* is only because it is not *b* or *c* or *d*, etc. Cable is not fable is not table, as tear is not bear is not pear, on so on... All this is well known. Now, seeing the original perception of a difference in the difference between the sexes³, the first psychic mould of the concept of difference, Lacan uses the linguistic concept of value in order to speak of the unconscious subject, a subject which is confronted by the task of defining its own sexual identity, male or female. It is my opinion that other factors and determinations are at work in the psychic construction of the concept of difference (in the infant's mind), and for me, the acquisition of the notion of difference cannot be restricted to the discovery of the difference between the sexes, but Lacan's remark is all the same very shrewd. Bearing our dream of fusion in mind, our desire for the ONE – which I call our nostalgia for a lost completeness, *l'être*, no doubt, for philosophers – we have no difficulty in understanding why difference was indeed brought into the picture. For Lacan, «the signifier is above all the signifier of a lack in the other (*signifiant d'un manque dans l'autre*), and this can be read as *phallus*. The paper «Signification of the phallus» (*Ecrits*, p.685) deals with this issue and one of its assumptions at least is correct: there is a difference between the sexes and it is meaningful. We now understand what is meant when we read that «*le signifiant*» refers to sexual identity. This brings to mind a sentence often quoted – and probably rarely understood – about subject and signifier: «A signifier represents a subject for another signifier.» Indeed, what characterizes a subject is that it is lacking what it perceives in the other sex. What will therefore represent a subject will be the signifier which characterizes its place in the division between the sexes.

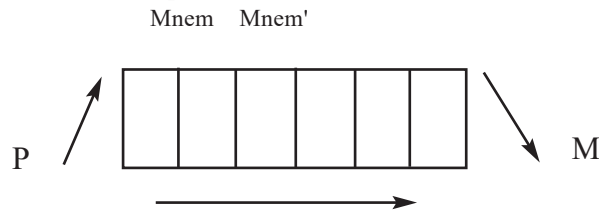
5. THE SIGNIFIER AS DETERMINATION, THE DESIRE OF THE OTHER

Identifying «the Other» as «the other sex» only – a reading many passages in Lacan certainly encourages – our search might come to an end here. Yet, there seems to be room for one more interpretation of the concept of signifier, and it is one I particularly favour. Obviously, it is not a meaning which is to be found in the early Lacan, but, as an interpretation, it seems quite consistent with Lacanian thought, and I should now like to consider the Lacanian signifier as determination. No doubt, the phrase will not come as a surprise to any one since Lacan himself always speaks of «his» signifier as a determinant. The problem, of course, is to understand in what specific manner the Lacanian signifier determines the unconscious subject. Taking my argument where I left it in the third point above – the signifier as separation, as «order» given by the «father» (who does not have to be the actual father of course, but who often is), – we are faced with the following problem: doesn't the infant perceive the world outside, and I mean the mother, the breast, her face, etc., *before* giving it a name? If this were the case, then, we would have 1) perception of the world – and this corresponds to Saussure's signified – *and then*, 2) naming of the world, a nomination which could be a way of saying that the signifier comes after the signified. Once we realize, however, that the infant must have received a sound, a noun, a name, with which to design the world, the object out there, we are not so sure that the chronological order above is correct. Perhaps we understand better now why this idea of chronology is senseless for the linguist; very likely indeed, perception does precede naming, but, as Saussure clearly showed with his sheet of paper, it is the coincidence of perception and naming which produces a sign. But for the psychoanalyst, chronology matters a great deal, as do determinations and causes. In the end, and this might well reconcile the linguist and the psychoanalyst, we have the following time sequence:

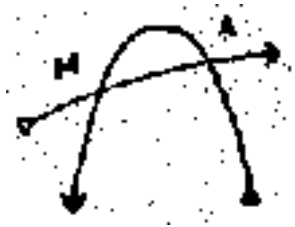
³ This issue is discussed in: Robert Silhol (1995), «On 'The Signification of the phallus'». *Literature and Psychology* (pp. 79-83), Lisbon: ISPA.



A sequence which is not without correspondence with Freud's structure of Perception-Motility:



and even congruent with Lacan's schema of the production of speech:



where 0, which I have added, represents the determination received by the child, thus stressing the relationship between the infant and its immediate environment (parents, generally) at birth or even before (name). These «signs» the infant first received were produced by what I call the desire of the Other and quite corresponds to Lacan's «cause introduced into the subject».

*

Can a «concept» which is liable to receive four, and even five, definitions be still considered a concept? In as much as these definitions not only do not contradict each other but rather form a sequence in which each reading enriches those which have preceded it, I think we can answer by the affirmative.

In the end, Lacan's *signifiant* mainly seems to emphasize the symbolical dimension in man and woman. Whether he had other, personal, reasons for this choice of a «signifier» is a matter for his biographer. And it will be clear, I hope, that whatever the path chosen to arrive at the conclusion that the «signifier» governs our destinies, and whatever his erroneous handling of linguistic notions here and there, Lacan's intuition was correct. It enables us to pursue Freud's task, thus developing the consequences of his revolutionary discovery towards a further understanding of man's psychical world.

On literary appellation: Why are there no meaningless names in literature?

WALTER SCHÖNAU (*)

As is true for most other word classes in language, signification by proper names in everyday usage is arbitrary and conventional. In other words, proper names in reality give no information about the physical appearance, character or person of their bearers, though most first names do indicate whether someone is male or female. Insofar as we still associate any meaning with a proper name (and this can often only be done through etymological or historical references), we are well-aware that such an original meaning is no longer relevant to the current bearer of the name.

These original meanings served, for instance, to indicate a profession, as in names like Baker or Miller, or geographical origins, or lineage, as in the patronymics Johnson or MacDonald. However, these original meanings have largely lost their relevance. Family names have thus retained their identification function, but their proper and original meaning has been lost.

The situation is different with first names, however. As we all know, first names also have an original meaning that is now more or less lost: they often come from the Bible or from Germanic, Greek, or Roman Antiquity, but we are hardly aware of their provenance, and their original meaning seldom plays a part in everyday life. Many people don't know the original meaning of their first name, and those who do, generally don't place any great value on it.

This particular category of nouns, the *nomina propria*, shares, as I said, its arbitrary and conventional nature with most other words in language. There is no compelling or natural relation between a linguistic sign and its meaning. The first one to point out this characteristic of language, l'arbitraire du signe, was of course de Saussure (1916)¹. There is no necessary or natural connection between the signifier 'tree' and what it signifies, the vegetable organism growing in nature. Otherwise, the Germans would not use the sign 'Baum' to signify the same thing, nor would the French use 'arbre'. The exceptions, onomatopoeia such as 'cock-a-doodle-doo' or 'bow-wow' only confirm the rule. Though these onomatopoeia are not arbitrary, they are conventional: A French cock doesn't crow in quite the same way as the English one: he crows 'cocorico' instead of 'cock-a-doodle-doo' and a Dutch cock crows 'kukeluku'.

(*) Rijksuniversiteit Groningen, Faculteit der Letteren, Germanistisch Instituut, Oude Kijk in't Jatstraat 26, P.O. Box 716, 9700 AS Groningen, Netherlands.

¹ Ferdinand de Saussure: *Cours de linguistique générale* (1916). Paris 1972, 100-103.

This linguistic insight jars with our primary intuition, however. It seems we often repress or tend to forget this insight into the nature of language and its semantic laws. Our subconscious experience of the relation between signifier and signified must be different, much closer and much more direct. One fine example of this is the schoolboy who began his essay on the animals of the farmhouse with the striking statement: «The pig is rightfully called pig, because he behaves like a pig.» However, it is not only children who tend to deny the conventional nature of the linguistic sign. Poets like to play with it: «Das Wort *Samt* zum Beispiel, / fühlt es sich nicht wie *Samt* an? / Etwas Weiches, Pelziges / auf der Zunge» wrote Hans Magnus Enzensberger in his poem *Der Lügner* (1991) [«The word velvet for instance, doesn't it feel like velvet? / Something soft, furry / on the tongue»].² And consider for example the great number of jokes that rest on the assumption that names really say something about their bearer!

This uneasiness about the arbitrary and conventional nature of words, this playful rebellion against the rational use of names in every day life, is even stronger when it comes to our own proper names. We react angrily when jokes are made about our name because we feel it is very closely connected to our identity, to the very core of our personality. When the German writer and philosopher Herder was playing around with the possible etymological derivations of the name Goethe («Der von Göttern Du stammst, von Goten oder vom Kote») [«You spring from the Gods, from the Goths or from dirt»], the subject of the joke was rightly hurt, and remarked in his autobiography that it was not very nice of him that he allowed himself to joke about his name:

denn der Eigenname eines Menschen ist nicht etwa wie ein Mantel, der bloß um ihn her hängt und an dem man allenfalls noch zupfen und zerren kann, sondern ein vollkommen passendes Kleid, ja wie die Haut selbst ihm über und über angewachsen, an der man nicht schaben und schinden darf, ohne ihn selbst zu verletzen. (Goethe 1969, 407)³

[«because the proper name of a man is not like a cloak that just hangs around his body and at which you can pull if you want, but rather a perfectly fitting suit, like a second skin that you can't chafe without doing harm».] Goethe was of course absolutely right. While our mind tells us that «that which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet» (Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*), we still feel that our name is a piece of skin rather than a piece of clothing, an inextricable part of our deepest being.

It stands to reason that the speech act of appellation must originally have been more significant than it is now. In early history, people believed in the magical power of names: «Namensgebung ist zugleich Wesensbestimmung» (Max Dessoir, 1931)⁴ [In magic «naming is determination of the essence of the character»]. If someone called his son Leonard (=lionheart) or his daughter Laetitia (=gentleness), he performed a magical act, hoping to influence his children's character and course of life by giving them these particular name: *nomen est omen*. He was in fact indicating a desired or expected positive trait of character. Choosing an existing name associated with saints (Nicholas, Martinus), or Biblical figures (Eve, Jacob) or famous heroes (Alexander, Siegfried) also indicated the direction in which parents hoped their child would develop. In these cases, naming is not guided by original meaning, but by a famous bearer of the name who forever attached certain associations to the name. Remnants of this way of thinking can still be found in the baptism ritual as it is practised in church. It has survived in other ways as well, however. Who would want to call his child Judas or Cain, even if he doesn't believe anymore in the determining power of names? Or to give a more recent example, what citizen of post-war Germany would want to call his son

² Hans Magnus Enzensberger, *Zukunftsmusik*. Frankfurt/Main 1991, 22.

³ Goethe, *Dichtung und Wahrheit*. Hamburg 1969, 407.

⁴ Max Dessoir, *Vom Jenseits der Seele. Die Geheimwissenschaften in kritischer Betrachtung*. 6. Aufl. Stuttgart 1931, 543.

Adolf? These examples point to a belief that is as irrational as it is powerful, namely that there are «good names» and «bad names». Parents have their conscious and unconscious motivations in choosing a name for their children and in psychoanalysis patients often have to realize how they tried to accept or to refuse the secret expectations connected with their name. In this respect names are not arbitrary, but highly meaningful.

In magical times, people believed that the nature of all signs was fundamentally *iconic*, that there was a given connection of resemblance between signifier and signified, and the 'existential efficiency' of appellation was a powerful form of wishful thinking. No wonder that the experience of being happy or unhappy with one's own name is a serious subject of study in psychology. After all, our first names say something about our parents's expectations and wishes – expectations that we may want to live up to, or that we may want to rebel against. A story is being told about Wilhelm Stekel, who when asked to give a lecture in Freud's circle put forth a theory about the hidden influence names have on the lives of people. It was a plausible theory, which he documented casuistically with a number of patient names. When Freud objected that he had violated the physician's oath of discretion, Stekel reassured him by revealing that he had personally made up all the names.⁵ The anecdote proves our ambivalent attitude: logically we have to acknowledge de Saussure's insight, in our primary process thinking we hold on to our magical beliefs.

To summarize then, we can say that our attitude to names still betrays archaic remnants of mythical thinking and magical practice, of which we are seldom aware. The fact that we give names to animals, houses, and sometimes even cars, may serve to indicate the irrational and intuitive nature of appellation. And Now: what about the personal names in literature?

At first glance, literature appears to mirror reality in this respect. Characters in novels and plays also have names, and their attitude towards them doesn't seem all that different from what is common in everyday reality. Is there, then, a fundamental difference between the names of real persons and the names given to fictional characters?

To answer this question, we must first ask ourselves in what functional context the literary names appear. It then becomes clear that fictional names are not only a mimetic reflection of real names and their use, but also functional elements within a literary and aesthetic framework, integral parts of a (literary) work of art, of a fictional construction. Within that fictional world, they have a number of typical functions, which correspond in part to the functions that names have in reality, but which are also partly connected to the literary medium. In his study of names in narrative texts, Dieter Lamping⁶ distinguishes seven functions:

(1) *identification*. The short and efficient indication of a person or character, in much the same way as in extra-literary reality;

(2) *accentuation*. Someone is branded an outsider by his unusual or abnormal name, or an antithesis between characters is indicated through the use of contrasting names such as for example Klöterjahn for a well-to-do bourgeois and Spinell for a nervous, narcissistic aesthete in the story *Tristan* by Thomas Mann. In much the same way, certain correspondences can be suggested by similar names, such as, for example, Zouzou and Zaza (the two girls in Mann's novel *Felix Krull*);

(3) *creating a perspective*. Alternating between different appellations serves to indicate degrees of intimacy. There are, for example, differences in formality between Mr Peacock, Peacock, Reginald or Reg. The main character in Nabokov's eponymous novel is called Lolita, Lo, Lola, Dolly or Dolores, depending on her relation with her environment. In English, there are differences between Ronald/Ron, Robert/Bob, Norman/Norm, Walter/Walt, Diana/Di etc. – they indicate different degrees of intimacy.

⁵ Peter Gay: *Freud. Eine Biographie für unsere Zeit*. Frankfurt/Main 1989, 244.

⁶ Dieter Lamping, *Der Name in der Erzählung. Zur Poetik des Eigennamens*. Bonn 1983.

(4) *aestheticizing*. Creating an aesthetic impression through the use of names. There are names that please the ear, such as Melusine, Orlando, Aurora, but there are also names that sound very ugly to certain ears. Consider for example the names that Dutch author Bordewijk picked out of a telephone directory for some of the characters in his novel *Bint*: Whimpysinger, Kiekertak, Punselie, Bolnikolke, Klotterbooke or Van Den Karbargenbok: indeed, *nomina sunt odiosa*. And some names are hilarious in certain situations. Take for example the Felix Krull's conversation with the director of the Lisbon Museum of Natural History, who interrupts an animated dialogue about the evolution with the remark «Übrigens: Kuckuck!». Felix is somewhat bewildered until he realizes that Professor Kuckuck has actually introduced himself.

These four functions can also be found in the use of names in reality. In that respect, literature is quite true to life. However, the following three functions of appellation reveal that there is also a gap between the use of names in fiction and reality, respectively.

(5) The first one is *creating an illusion*. Names are used to obscure the difference between people of flesh and blood and characters that only exist in the literary imagination as intangible correlates of a number of words and sentences on a printed page. This correspondence with reality is illusory, however, because literary characters embody another way of being, another ontological status than real people. This is even true for names of historical persons, such as for example Bismarck or Napoleon, if they appear in a historical novel.

(6) Then there is *mythologizing*, which brings us to the main difference between literary and real names. The exceptional thing about proper names in literature is that archaic and mythical thinking is not only visible in the form of remnants, as is the case in our reality. It is true for literary names in general that the arbitrary and conventional nature of linguistic signs does not (yet) apply, that name and character are an inseparable unity because the connection between signifier and signified in literary texts is never arbitrary.

This mythical, or, if you like, quasi-mythical characteristic of literary names, the fact that they always, be it however latent or coded, reveal something essential about the bearer of the name, that they are thus always *expressive names*, finds its most specific expression in the last function.

(7) *characterization*. By this we mean that particular characteristic of proper names which most of us find so self-evident that we don't pay much attention to it when we are reading. We often take this characteristic of literary names as a starting point for our interpretation of the text in the sense that we feel the names somehow reveal something essential about their bearer. The most important are the so-called *expressive* names in a strict sense, such as Candide, Clarissa, Felix or Madame Chauchat (= hot cat); then there are the *sounding* names, which convey meaning by sound symbolism rather than through semantics (for example Berend Bonkelaar for a sturdy Dutchman or Adelaide for a beautiful woman). Then are the *prefigured* or «predetermined» names, such as Diotima, Ishmael or Magdalena, names associated with figures in the worlds of myth, religion, history or art whose bearers can in one way or another be considered a repetition or transfiguration, a *redivivus* or *rediviva*.

Juri Tynjanov (1967)⁷ summarized the above succinctly when he wrote that there are no meaningless names in art («Im Kunstwerk gibt es keine nichtssagenden Namen»). We have seen that we can consider this fact a *relict* or *analogon* with pre-scientific thinking, which did not yet make a distinction between signifier and signified, and did not experience the linguistic sign as arbitrary and conventional. Mannerism, the epoch between Renaissance and Baroque, cultivated *onomatoman-tics*, a continuation of Cabala, astrology and occultism which assumed the signifier and signified were «in sympathy». It ascribed a deep and secret meaning to all kinds of operations with letters and words which we would now call word games.⁸ The 'meaning' of the name Jesus for instance

⁷ Juri Tynjanov, *Die literarischen Kunstmittel und die Evolution in der Literatur*. Frankfurt/Main 1967, 34.

⁸ Gustav René Hocke, *Manierismus in der Literatur. Sprach-Alchimie und esoterische Kombinationskunst. Beiträge zur vergleichenden europäischen Literaturgeschichte*. Reinbek 1961, 41.

could be 'explained' in this tradition as 'I ease you'. We can still hear an echo of this kind of linguistic alchemy in, for example, the appellation of characters in the works of Hermann Bahr or Franz Kafka, where many literary names look or sound similar to the author's name. Consider for example also the use of fictional names that share their initials with the author's name⁹: *Harry Haller* (= *Herman Hesse*) or *Tobias Mindernickel* (= *Thomas Mann*). This device serves to indicate hidden identity, and it is a clear instance of iconicity.

Literary names, then, are remnants of myth operating in an aesthetic context that is in essence non-mythical. How can we possibly explain this phenomenon? I would like to venture a hypothesis that might shed some light on this problem.

Ivan and Peter Fonagy (1995)¹⁰ among others have pointed out that there are various indications suggesting that while we have consciously and rationally accepted the arbitrary, conventional and non-iconic nature of the linguistic sign, we unconsciously stick to our conviction of the *analogous* rather than *digital* character of communication through language. This is probably connected to the fact that language developed out of physical gestures, including those involving the speech organs, gestures which have as such retained their conventional nature. It seems as if we do not wish to abandon these origins, and still assume the unity of signifier and signified in various forms of primary process thinking like word games, jokes, dreams, daydreams, art and literature. It almost amounts to a rebellion against disillusionment, against the increasing disenchantment (Max Weber) of our world, against the demythologization, which has apparently failed to touch the use of names in literature. Literature contains other kinds of mythical patterns and elements that have found refuge in the aesthetic world. This is especially true for poetry, but also for the novel. As Clemens Lugowski has pointed out, the remnants of mythical thinking have withdrawn into aesthetic structures.¹¹ Poetry contains the most remnants of the archaic conviction that you can use words to cast a spell, if you can find the magic word. From this perspective, literature has become a kind of nature reserve, where ways of thinking continue to live on unnoticed which have long been abandoned in the sober reality of our everyday lives.

WORKS CITED

- Dessoir, M. (1931). *Vom Jenseits der Seele. Die Geheimwissenschaften in kritischer Betrachtung*. 6. Aufl. Stuttgart: Enke.
- Enzensberger, H. M. (1991). *Zukunftsmusik*. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp.
- Fonagy, Ivan, & Fonagy, P. (1995). Communication with pretend actions in language, literature and psychoanalysis. *Psychoanalysis and Contemporary Thought*, 18 (3), 363-418.
- Gay, P. (1989). *Freud. Eine Biographie für unsere Zeit*. Frankfurt/Main: Fischer.
- Goethe, (1969). *Dichtung und Wahrheit*. Hamburg: Wegner.
- Hocke, G. R. (1961). *Manierismus in der Literatur. Sprach-Alchimie und esoterische Kombinationskunst. Beiträge zur vergleichenden europäischen Literaturgeschichte*. Reinbek: Rowohlt.
- Lamping, D. (1983). *Der Name in der Erzählung. Zur Poetik des Eigennamens*. Bonn: Bouvier.
- Lugowski, C. (1976). *Die Form der Individualität im Roman. Mit einer Einleitung von Heinz Schlaffer*. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp.

⁹ Markus Meir, *Prometheus und Pandora. «Persönlicher Mythos» als Schlüssel zum Werk von Hermann Bahr (1863-1934)*. Würzburg 1997, 228-231: Alchemie der Namen.

¹⁰ Ivan and Peter Fonagy, Communication with Pretend Actions in Language, Literature and Psychoanalysis. *Psychoanalysis and Contemporary Thought* 18 (1995) 3, 363-418.

¹¹ Clemens Lugowski, *Die Form der Individualität im Roman*. Mit einer Einleitung von Heinz Schlaffer. Frankfurt/Main 1976, XIII.

- Meier, M. (1997). *Prometheus und Pandora. «Persönlicher Mythos» als Schlüssel zum Werk von Hermann Bahr (1863-1934)*. Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann.
- Saussure, F. de (1916). *Cours de linguistique générale*. Paris: Payot, 1972.
- Tynjanov, J. (1967). *Die literarischen Kunstmittel und die Evolution in der Literatur*. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp.

Melancholic reading or Reading melancholia. Psychoanalytic criticism and text as score

EVA EKSELIUS (*)

There are, in the work of the Swedish author Per Olov Enquist, a number of emotionally provocative images. One of them describes a man buried in ice: you see his face, frozen but still visible, through the film of ice covering his face.

Hess was lying with his eyes open, staring fixedly at the gray sky. The melting waters had been flowing over his face and then had frozen stiff again, so that his entire face was covered by a thin transparent film of ice. Through it he could see parts of hazy blocks of ice, parts of gray clouds, parts of shadows that could be albatrosses, parts of objects and motions that he felt he could partially recognize: but the icy crust was a bad pane of glass and he could not be sure /.../ When the snow came, he became completely opaque and the details disappeared /.../ The albatross was the last thing he saw. He thought it was a spider, slowly crawling over his face.¹

The image is mysterious, at the same time it has a strange beauty. The remarkable thing about it, however, is the changing of perspectives. The man is seen from the outside, but suddenly he is the one looking out through the ice: «he could see parts of hazy blocks of ice, parts of gray clouds, parts of shadows...»

To me this is a powerful metaphor for deep melancholy. It tells me about a state of being stunned and walled off, of incapability to communicate; it expresses the sense of isolation, loneliness, cold and inner death. But these emotions – do they reveal the inner world of the author? Or is this my own melancholic reading? Are the emotions really implicated in the text?

(*) University of Stockholm, Department of Comparative Literature, Sweden.

¹ Hess, pp. 277-278. The translation of the quotations in this paper are, when there exists no published English version, my own in collaboration with Joanna Bankier. The text is quoted in *En triptyk* (pp. 330-331) in a slightly different manner and recurs in the novel *Nedstörtad ängel* (pp. 10-11).

I choose this as an example of a problem connected with interpretation of literary texts. What is the object of the investigation? The author? Do I get any information about his mental state by listening to the emotions provoked within myself? Who says he didn't steal the image from his auntie's dreams? The purpose of an author's work is after all to recreate the inner world of human beings – all sorts of human beings, not only his own.

As a critic I have to be able to tell the difference between my own projections and what I attribute to the author. Without documents outside the text itself it is not possible to draw any conclusions about the author, I can only put up hypotheses. On the other hand: if I *know* that the author is full of subdued aggression towards women, I can point to illustrations in the text. But no matter how much violence, hate and abuse against women you find in a novel – fiction alone doesn't tell you anything for sure about its author.²

I will argue that the text itself should be the main object of the investigation. This is the place where experiences communicated by the author meet with those of the reader. Some of the feelings, thoughts, associations and images provoked by the text are strictly personal to the reader, just like they were to the author who wrote it. But there is a transitional area where the text implies latent meaning that is general, perhaps even universal. This is the very ground and necessary condition for art to work and to express existential or universal experiences.

André Green has written about the literary text as a no-man's-land. It is a transitional area where the spirit of the author meets the spirit of the reader and a communication takes place – but between two people, both absent. The reader is absent and unknown to the author when he sends his message; the author is absent and inaccessible when the reader meets the text. This mutual absence is the necessary condition both for the creation of the work and for its reception.³

Roman Ingarden, Wolfgang Iser, Hans-Georg Gadamer, Hans Robert Jauss and Norman Holland are theorists that have focused on the reader's reception of the text. Paul Ricoeur suggests a combination of the structuralists' way of analyzing the textual elements with distance, and the hermeneutic empathic reading in depth. The different approaches should be seen as complementary, he says, not as antagonizing. Between the two perspectives will be drawn an «hermeneutic bow». He compares the literary work to a musical score. While reading the reader is performing the work, carrying out its semantic possibilities. The text has become a space of its own, an *espace de signification*, a space where the author and the reader cannot meet, and the meaning is open to interpretation. The reader is free to enter the work and create his own inner performance of it. In this moment the interpretation of the text coincides with that of the self.⁴

When Paul Ricoeur compares the written word to a musical score he points to a specific quality of literature. Like music the words themselves can communicate a message that is preverbal or nonverbal. The words, the rhythm and sounds, the images and sentences are containers that can hold both explicit and hidden meaning. It's a language for both the conscious and the unconscious. Julia Kristeva talks about a «semiotic flow» and about the presence of primary processes in language.

Psychoanalysis can be a very efficient instrument for interpretation of these «unconscious» levels in literature – or in any piece of art. The text can be treated *as if* it were a *subject*, not an object. This doesn't, however, solve the problem that is a part of the psychoanalyst's everyday life – and has to be for a literary critic as well: the problem of transference. How do we find a method

² The problem is discussed by Francis Baudry in «An Essay on Method in Applied Psychoanalysis». *Psychoanalytical Quarterly*, LIII, 1984.

³ André Green, «The Double and the Absent» in *Psychoanalysis, Creativity, and Literature*, ed. Alan Roland, New York 1978, p. 283.

⁴ Paul Ricoeur, «Qu'est-ce qu'un texte? Expliquer et Comprendre», in *Hermeneutik und Dialektik*, ed. R. Bubner, II, Tübingen 1970, pp. 181-200.

to use ourselves as an instrument to open and make perceptible the hidden and latent meaning for readers in general? And without projecting ourselves upon the text?

Psychoanalytic theory and method are designed for the specific situation where two people meet in a form of dialogue. The analyst can continually test his interpretations against the response he gets from his analysand. The text however cannot give any response. The author is absent as well, he is not there to give his response, especially not if he is long dead (Leon Edel, I think, once wrote a critical essay on «Psychoanalysis in a church yard»).

Jean-Pierre Richard is one of the phenomenologically oriented critics that work with psychoanalytically inspired methods of literary criticism. He suggests, in his poetic manner, that the critic should «look for the motives that shape a logic in our fibers» and for the «material forms» that occur with particular frequency in the text. But frequency is not enough, the images must also have a special originality, they have to stand out both against its context and against the prose or poems of others. These «topological» elements will describe the special character of an authorship.

This is a way of empathic listening that is very similar to the way a psychoanalyst is listening to his analysand. It reveals the structure of an imaginary world and lays the foundation for interpretation.

I find the image of the man frozen in ice, in the novel by Enquist, to be such a topologically outstanding image. There are others, close to the same ice theme. You find in his novels and plays a number of suicides, suicide attempts, and fantasies about suicide. In one of the novels there is a description of how the uncle of the young protagonist tries to commit suicide by drowning himself. The details of the story are so painfully cruel that it overturns the whole composition of the novel.

Uncle Aron is found guilty of having sexually violated a young girl, fosterchild in the family. Shame makes him see no other way out than to commit suicide. One night he takes a pickaxe to make a hole in the ice of a nearby lake. He tries to descend into the black waters – but finds the hole too small. With bloody and frozen hands he tries to widen it, but doesn't manage. The axe disappears in the waters. He has to walk back to the farm to get another one. Finally he succeeds in making the hole large enough and with a scream he is taken away by the black underwater streams.

The fury underlying the depiction makes the image of the ice expand to an ontological level. The ice could be seen as the frozen floor that separates this world from the mythic «water of chaos» that – according to archaic religions – is our origin and to which we will all return.⁵

But who am I to tell? There must be methods to confirm the validity of interpretations like this.

The image shows how emotionally charged elements of a literary text often widen themselves to interpretations also on a mythical level. In Per Olov Enquist's texts, as with many others', the intrapsychic and the mythical are closely connected. As in the tradition of romanticism myths and tales are used as analogies for intrapsychic structures. For the interpretation of the intrapsychic level I have made use of psychoanalytic theory, particularly object relations theories. For the mythical and metaphysical levels, I have made use primarily of phenomenological, religion-oriented myth research, mostly by Mircea Eliade, the famous scholar and professor of comparative religion. These theories can, as they are based on clinical or antropological observations, give the validity needed to draw conclusions of a certain generality.

The so called «topological» elements usually form themselves into clusters of images that shape an underlying structure and creates the inner logic of an author's work (*l'oeuvre*), according to Jean-Pierre Richard⁶. There is often a balance to be found, he says, and one can see how the

⁵ According to Mircea Eliade, water is connected with chaos in many of the archaic religions; it is the primordial state of being before the world was created. «Water of chaos» was thought to remain as the state of the underworld, into which openings could be made or found.

⁶ When Jean-Pierre Richard speaks about an author's work (*oeuvre*) he means the authorship as a whole, the entirety of his novels, poems, plays, etcetera.

themes – clusters of images – are formed antithetically or in more complex multiple symmetry systems⁷. Can such clusters and such a logic be found in Enquist's work?

The image of the man caught in the ice is repeated or varied in several of his books. We are reminded of the man in the ice grave from the XXXIII Canto in the *Divine Comedy* where Dante describes melancholy as the mental state in the last circle of hell («For their first tears freeze to a lump of ice / Which like a crystal mask fills all the space / Beneath the brows and plugs the orifice»). The tears, the very expression of sorrow, have frozen so that they form a stiff veil, blocking the feeling of sorrow and tying the sufferer down in his pain («There the mere weeping will not let them weep, / For grief, which finds no outlet at the eyes, / Turns inward to make anguish drive more deep»)⁸.

There are a series of other images that all express this state of isolation and depression. The separating membrane can be made of ice, as here, but it can also be an aquarium, a dirty window pane, an half transparent sheet of plastic or just a callousness of the skin: the skin itself is experienced as the cold and stiff membrane and is associated with «crocodile man». To this cluster of images belongs for example the one of the young protagonist's mother, about to emigrate to Guatemala. She is trying to open the train window in order to «smell the air for the last time».⁹ But the window is stuck. She desperately beats on the window pane, you can see her lips moving but not a word can be heard, and as the train is departing her helpless face is staring out through the dirty window. A similar window pane can be found in several other novels.

The window pane, just like the ice, separates and excludes, and at the same time it encapsulates and imprisons. You can see through it, but not smell, speak, feel or touch. The half transparent plastic bag also belongs to this cluster of images; it walls off and suffocates, makes communication impossible and extinguishes life. But with the image of the face behind the plastic, the experience of isolation and depression is both intensified and turned inward as a self destructive energy. The screening off is intended to be deadly, liberation will come if the lifegiving («poisonous») air is kept out. This is how Mr Bachmann in one of the the short stories («The anxiety of the faithful souls») tries to commit suicide, over and over again.¹⁰

The eyes were staring large, somber and frightened straight through the plastic film, the mouth compressed as if in an emotion of extreme determination. He breathed. He breathed. After each pull for breath the plastic was rhythmically pasted hard to his face, the eyes wildly open, the hands violently pressed towards the pasted opening of the bag /.../ The mouth was now still more violently and painfully opened, the tongue groping, more and more thick and desperate, toward the plastic veil which was bending firmly inwards, the hands were clenched and opened but the opening remained shut, the head backwards and the chest heaved, and so it was over.¹¹

Suicide reoccurs with such frequency in the novels that one could call it an obsession with death. Dying appears to come as a liberation from emotional pain and from the depressive state of frozenness and isolation. When Uncle Aron finally descends into the black waters, his drowning is described in an almost euphoric mode. His scream is «triumphant», as if dying through drowning were a journey to a final homecoming and a new life. In the novel *Captain Nemo's Library* the underwater vessel Nautilus, an armoured container where Johannes keeps his home and his life, is

⁷ The concept theme in French thematic criticism is used in a different manner, *thème* means here the cluster of images that are formed according to an inner coherence.

⁸ Canto XXXIII: 97-99 and 94-96 of *The Inferno* (English translation by Dorothy L. Sayers, London 1949).

⁹ *Musikanternas uttag*, p. 373 (*The March of the Musicians*, translated by Joan Tate, London, Quartet books, 1985, 1993). This incident is developed in further detail earlier in the novel (p. 63).

¹⁰ «De trofasta själarnas oro», short story in the collection *Berättelser från de inställda upprorens tid* (1974; *Stories from the Age of Cancelled Revolutions*), pp. 52-53.

¹¹ *Berättelser från de inställda upprorens tid*, p. 53.

being lowered into the mercurial black water of the volcanic underwater cave. Through its connotations to Jules Verne's *L'île mystérieuse* (The Mysterious Island), the lowering becomes the apocalypse of a personal life: this is how everything – through extinction – will reach its completion.

The ice theme (*thème*) can be followed throughout the work of Enquist. But are there other themes that form themselves antithetically, the way Jean-Pierre Richard claims? In contrast to the images that represent isolation, cold, callousness and control, there is a sphere of images representing warmth, fragility and a sense of community. The title of my dissertation is «Breathe forth my face», a quotation of a sentence often repeated in Enquist's work, expressing the dream that someone, at last, with his (or her) warm breathing will melt the ice and make the face come free.

The ice is a wall or a membrane, that separates an inside from an outside. Like in the human body there can be openings, or orifices that can be plugged, as in the poem of Dante. The human body, on the other side, is often depicted as a fragile vessel, from which contents can seep, leak, well or break out. These contents often have the physically tangible form of bodily fluids and are described as something disgusting, repulsive or revolting. The «contents» can also have a less physical character and be an expression of emotions and moods. A violent anger or perverted hate, sometimes expressed in sadistic violence, stands out against an emotional coldness. A flow of verbal obscenities erupts from the aging women who figure in several novels and plays. Lack and loss of control is associated with aging, weakness and femininity. Anguish is connected with the thought of breaking, bursting or falling apart. It's shameful and deprives you of virility and dignity.

Anger is dangerous, as is any rebellion. When the young protagonist in *The March of the Musicians* in protest leaves his mother – who represents warmth, religious faith, emotions, femininity – to join a (male) political agitator, one of his first experiences is a violent fight with their opponents. During the fight his tongue is cut off: he had his tongue out when he was hit, and the tip of the tongue was lost. Never, ever will he be able to talk like a man. He is thrown back to a preverbal stage, his speech is a childish mumble-jumble, a mish-mash. This is the result of not keeping your mouth shut, not keeping your orifices plugged, not staying silent, frozen and with absolute control. Castration will be the punishment. The event is openly associated with the gelding (castration) of lambs; now he is castrated of his organ of speech.

We now see how two themes are organized antithetically, how they form a structure of conflict that can be interpreted according to psychoanalytic theory. My further investigation has shown how this structure is formed into even more complex symmetry systems, that can be followed to an analogous mythical and metaphysical level. In order to give my conclusions a general validity I have continually compared the interpretations to corresponding observations and interpretations in literature, anthropology and comparative religion.

I claim that this way of *combining* the methods of French thematic criticism with psychoanalytic theory, or other interpretation theories, is an efficient instrument to reveal the latent and hidden meaning of literary texts. But the problems of transference and validity shouldn't be neglected.

NOVELS, SHORT STORIES AND PLAYS BY PER OLOV ENQUIST (TRANSLATIONS)

Kristallögat, Stockholm 1961.

Färdvägen, Stockholm 1963.

Magnetisörens femte vinter, Stockholm 1964. (*The Magnetist's Fifth Winter*, translated by Paul Britten Austin. London Quartet books, 1989. *Le cinquième hiver du magnétiseur*, translated by Marc and Lena de Gouvenain. Paris, Flammarion, 1976).

Hess, Stockholm 1966.

Legionärerna, Stockholm 1968 (*L'Extradition des baltes*, translated by Marc de Gouvenain and Lena Grumbach, Arles, Actes Sud, 1985).

Sekonden, Stockholm 1971 (*Le Sécond*, translated by Marc de Gouvenain and Lena Grumbach, Arles, Actes Sud, 1989. *Der Sekundant*, translated by Hans-Joachim Maass, Frankfurt am Main, Fischer, 1981).

- Berättelser från de inställda upprorens tid*, Stockholm 1974 (*Récits du Temp des révoltes ajournées*, translated by Marc de Gouvenain and Lena Grumbach, Arles, Actes Sud, 1992).
- En triptyk*, Stockholm 1981. Three plays: *Tribadernas natt*, 1975 (*The Nights of the Tribades*, translated by Ross Shideler, New York, Hillard Wang 1977 and 1978, rev. version. *Aus dem Leben der Regenwürmer, ein Familiengemälde von 1856*, translated by Angelika Gundlach, Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp, 1982); *Till Fedra*, 1980 (For Phaedra); *Från regnormarnas liv*, 1981 (Rainsnakes).
- Dramatik: Tribadernas natt. Till Fedra. Från regnormarnas liv. I lodjurets timma*, Stockholm 1991 (*The Hour of the Lynx*, translated by Ross Shideler, London, Forest books, 1990; *L'Heure du Lynx*, translated by Asa Roussel, Arles, Actes Sud, 1990).
- Musikanternas uttåg*, Stockholm 1978 (*The March of the Musicians*, translated by Joan Tate, London, Quartet books, 1985, 1993; *Le départ des musiciens*, translated by Marc de Gouvenain and Lena Grumbach, Paris, Flammarion, 1980. *Auszug der Musikanten*, translated by Wolfgang Butt, Berlin, Volk und Welt Verlag, 1982).
- Nedstörtad ängel*, Stockholm 1985 (*Downfall, a love story*, translated by Anna Paterson, London, Quartet books, 1986; *L'Ange déchu*, un roman d'amour, translated by Marc de Gouvenain and Lena Grumbach, Arles, Actes Sud, 1986. *Gestürzter Engel: ein Liebesroman*, translated by Wolfgang Butt, München, Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1991).
- I lodjurets timma*, Stockholm 1988 (*The Hour of the Lynx*, translated by Ross Shideler, London, Forest books, 1990; *L'Heure du Lynx*, translated by Asa Roussel, Arles, Actes Sud, 1990).
- Kapten Nemos bibliotek*, Stockholm 1991 (*Captain Nemo's Library*, translated by Anna Paterson, London, Quartet books, 1992; *La bibliothèque de capitaine Nemo*, translated by Marc de Gouvenain and Lena Grumbach, Arles, Actes Sud, 1992. *Kapitän Nemos Bibliothek*, translated by Wolfgang Butt, München, Hanser, 1994).
- Tre pjäser*. Magisk cirkel, Tupilak, Maria Stuart, Stockholm 1994.

Doubling, Oedipal Fantasies, and the Postmodern Uncanny: Paul Auster's *New York Trilogy* (*)

ROBERTA RUBENSTEIN (**)

In his celebrated essay, «The Uncanny», Freud writes that the uncanny is «in reality nothing new or alien, but something which is familiar and old-established in the mind and which has become alienated from it only through the process of repression». Freud endorses Schelling's notion that the uncanny is «something which ought to have remained hidden but has come to light» (241). In *The New York Trilogy*, the contemporary novelist Paul Auster tells three versions of a «fantastic» narrative in which uncanny elements are central. Using the framework of the detective story but with a postmodern twist – the search loops back to interrogate the identity not of a murderer but of the detective and irresolution replaces resolution – Auster's trilogy pivots on images and psychodynamic processes central to Freud's formulation of the uncanny, particularly images of eyes and vision, and patterns of repetition and doubling. In each novella, the central character seeks, discovers, swaps places with, or struggles physically with figures who are in fact his doubles.

A portion of Freud's essay focuses on a paradigmatic story that exhibits the uncanny: «The Sandman» by E. T. A. Hoffman; according to Freud, the author «creates a kind of uncertainty in us in the beginning by not letting us know... whether he is taking us into the real world or into a purely fantastic one of his own creation» («Uncanny» 230). The story centers on an emotionally confused young man who, as a result of traumatic childhood experiences, is obsessively preoccupied with eyes and spyglasses - an obsession that Freud attributes to Oedipal anxieties («Uncanny» 231). Auster's Daniel Quinn of *City of Glass* (the first novella of the trilogy) is also obsessed with eyes and vision, while Oedipal issues are also inferred. As a man who evolves from author to detective, Quinn – figuratively, at least – uses a spyglass. Moreover, the term «private eye» functions as a pun that holds «a triple meaning» for Quinn:

(*) An expanded version of this paper appears in LIT, Vol. 9 (Fall 1998), pp. 245-62. Permission to reprint is granted by Gordon and Breach Publishers, Lausanne, Switzerland.

(**) American University, Department of Literature, Washington, D. C. 20016, USA.

Transference: The impossible relation

ELIZABETH WRIGHT (*)

Transference, one might say, is the body's attempt to adjust to society. The emerging subject transfers its primordial love and hatred of authority into the social field. To find out how subjects take upon themselves the mantle of authority, and what of transference there is in the endeavour to inhabit society, the investigation of this phenomenon in the analytic situation is indispensable: since it might reveal the extent to which it might be possible to move from trance to transformation.

Transference is the *sine qua non* and the *bête noir* of the psychoanalytic process, that which is still seen as both motor of and obstacle to the cure. Its theory and practice has undergone many vicissitudes from its initial classical Freudian conception of the analyst as still mirror of the patient's passions and turbulences (more honoured by Freud in the breach than in the observance) to the gradual erosion of such possible or even desirable neutrality on the part of the analyst. Its increasing emphasis on patient power began as early as 1913 with Sandor Ferenczi, the earliest *enfant terrible* of psychoanalysis, and culminated in the Golden Age of countertransference in the fifties, when it was debated and developed on both sides of the Atlantic and elsewhere, among its then most trenchant voices being that of Searles (1948), Heimann (1950), Little (1951), and Racker (1957). The heart of the matter has always been the impossible messiness of trying to separate the real element of unconscious perception from the phantasmatic one of the sticky and tangled relations of participants in the psychoanalytic encounter. The impossibilities of such an undertaking has led to a body of evolving theory and practice inaugurated in the U. S. in the 1970's under the rubric of 'communicative psychoanalysis', in the course of which its chief exponent, Robert Langs, in his efforts to make psychoanalysis into a set of procedures which can be strictly validated, abandoned the concept of transference as, in the view, no longer serving a useful purpose. In as far as he recognizes its tangles as a phenomenon that exists in the analytic situation, he takes it as precipitated by a real interaction between the contestants within what he calls 'the bipersonal field' (Langs, 1976), that all-too-suggestible space – zealously guarded by both through a close monitoring of the setting – where pathological contents put in by both are sifted with the help of the patient's unconscious derivatives. These centre chiefly on the errors of the analyst, diplomatically interpreted by the communicative analyst so that the patient's cure, and not the analyst's, remain the focus of the exercise. Thus one might say that in Langs' theory the unconscious working through of the fantasy of the idealized Other by the analysand, closely observed by the analyst, is what facilitates

(*) Girton College, Cambridge, CB3 0JG, England.

the cure. This fascinating endeavour to make psychoanalysis both into a more rational operation and a more pedagogically transmissible theory carries with it a formidable cognitive kit (Langs, 1978), which goes against any notion of privileging spontaneity and intuition and has therefore made Langs into a controversial force in as far as his work is acknowledged. *Enfants terribles* begin to proliferate: the latest is Mikkel Borch-Jakobsen who has taken another direction in that he regards the patient's involuntary responses in themselves as the critical element in the cure.

In the course of his various critical engagements with the work of Freud and Lacan, Borch-Jakobsen (1988, 1991, 1993) has begun to re-examine the problems of identification within the Oedipal scenario, the re-enactment of which forms the basis of psychoanalytic transference. The Freudian subject is always guilty, because the identification with the father required from both the biological male and female is in the form of a double bind, the enjoiner of the law appearing simultaneously to uphold it and break it. The father's law is actually not rigid because the only way to obey it is also not to do so: 'you ought to be like this', yet 'you may not be like this', or in other words, 'I am offering you desire, but repress it'. The ambivalent feelings arising from such an impossible identification haunt the subject for the rest of her/his life and may drive her/him into analysis in order to repeat them transferentially *ad infinitum*. Initially, however, the problem of identification surfaced in the spectacle of hypnosis. Borch-Jakobsen notes that Freud is puzzled as to why in hypnosis the words of the other have the status of law even though the relation between the patient and the doctor is apparently a non-libidinal and non-erotic one. In hypnosis, strangely, the hypnotized subject automatically accords authority to the hypnotist, submitting to his command with 'somnambulistic spontaneity' (1988, p. 229), but with an odd element of suggestion.

It is this 'riddle of suggestion' (1993, p. 41) which Borch-Jakobsen takes up from Freud. Unaccountably, the hypnotic subject blindly repeats what is typical of all subjects, who come into subjecthood at the behest of an other, without being conscious that they are following an imperative. The docility of the hypnotic patient springs from the repetition of a basic 'emotional tie' (*Gefühlsbindung*) to others (*ibid.*), but precisely because it takes place without the subject realising that the orders come from outside, from an actual other, it fails to establish any relationship taken up in a dialogue, conscious or unconscious, between doctor and patient. This 'rapport *sans rapport*' (*ibid.*, p. 57) is mysterious, for it appears to take place without any dialectical interchange between the two parties. Psychoanalysis abandoned hypnosis precisely because the removal of symptoms, in as much as this was successful, was not accompanied by any insight into the event. The rapport established was 'merely' the result of suggestion.

Borch-Jakobsen is interested, in hypnosis as a kind of mock transference through which psychoanalysis stumbled into the enigma of the analytic relationship. The element of trance is important in the transference because it is here, and not only in the resistance to remembering, that 'the unconscious is exhibited unconsciously' (1993, p. 57). If something in the transference is still like hypnosis in that the hypnotic affect is still the glue of the transference, to what extent is it transference love that factors the cure rather than its resolution via the analysis of the resistances? It is here that Borch-Jakobsen lodges his critique of Lacan, arguing that hypnosis, the rejected origin, may provide a better understanding of the transferential effect and the subsequent 'cure' than the idea of gaining access to the unconscious through free association and analysis of the effects of language. Why is this? Because hypnosis exhibits not only the lure of transference but also the necessity of that lure never being totally disposed of, lingering, as it can, both in the phenomenon of post-hypnotic suggestion and in that of unresolved transference effects.

According to Borch-Jakobsen Lacan does not take into account this archaic tie of 'primary identification' or 'incorporation' which can neither be represented nor remembered, and which (he cites Freud) 'is the original form of emotional tie with an object' (1993, p. 60). This emotional tie he sees as close to the hypnotic tie with the other, since it precedes the ego: 'the ego is born in this devouring identification with the other' (*ibid.*). At this stage is no ego/subject to make a representation; it is in the 'event' itself that the ego emerges. The incorporated 'other' leaves no

trace, never having presented itself to any subject. For Freud 'birth is the primordial affect' and 'I am nothing before this earliest identification' (ibid.). Indeed, it is paradoxical to use the term 'identification' at all, since the ego has not yet emerged. The paradox reappears in the metaphor of 'tie', because this suggests two entities tied together, when it is rather that 'tie' is a merging, a confluence, a sensing of a pre-subjective inchoate being, and not a bond between two already distinct entities. As Borch-Jakobsen has it, there is a reiteration of this original emergence – involving an abandonment of some of one's constructed selfhood – in order to reconstruct from the original base. Hence for Borch-Jakobsen affect, archaic *jouissance*, is at the centre of analysis: he holds that it is as much a part of the 'cure' as speech and that the moment of rebirth thus experienced is as constitutive of a new subjectivity as is speech.

For Borch-Jakobsen the trance-like state that hypnosis induces is a recreation, a second edition, of the 'primary identification' or 'incorporation' of that pre-subjective inchoate being, where the infant cannot distinguish itself from the real of the mother's body, the beginning of the promise of life: in analysis it is the revival of this pre-objectal tie that is as much the motor-force of the cure as the submission to the signifier. The hypnotic effect is a proof of the unconscious, for it produces psychical behaviour without self-reflexivity. The trance of the transference, with its element of suggestion, is the vital affective means which tempts us into a 're-birth' and an important factor in abandoning those somnambulistic acts which mark the refusal to trust the Symbolic. Thus, the cure may reside as much in reviving the archaic *jouissance* as the interpreting away of the transference through its symbolization into speech.

Borch-Jakobsen takes issue with Freud and Lacan for making hypnosis into the repressed of psychoanalysis, because this appears not to give the role of affect its due place in the cure. Lacan has reiterated the abandonment of hypnosis as constitutive of the 'talking cure' that is psychoanalysis: transference is to the Other and is resolved by the refusal of the analyst to engage in the complicities which occur in a purely intersubjective relation. The analysand identifies with an ideal 'I' in the Other, who sees him/her as loveable. Hypnosis is seen as the *n*th degree of this kind of projective identification. The object *a* becomes identical with the ego ideal and the two must be prised apart. In hypnosis the subject fulfils the desire of the Other: in analysis he sees himself as the object the Other lacks, as 'loveable'. But through self-reflection imposed on him by the analytic process he has to recognize that he is nothing, no final self, only a self that can never finally be defined. Yet hypnosis is not the opposite of analysis; our consciousness is a kind of hypnosis because there is so much in it which is determined by what lies beyond what we take to be our own identity. Hypnosis is important because its metaphor de-idealizes any notion that consciousness is wholly self-present, self-reflexive. Hence there can be no radical division between hypnosis and consciousness, because elements of suggestion do enter consciousness. Consciousness is contaminated by unconscious suggestion, because one does not merely learn consciously: suggestion is the way we pick up human influences without realizing it. Hence the process of psychoanalysis will never be pure self-reflection, because the analytic couple learn from each other by suggestion and this feeds into their dialectical interchange.

For Lacan, the aim of analysis is to get the subject to confront the lack in the Other, and in the moment of identifying with it to relieve its sense of and in the moment of alienation. The Other has lack just as I have. It is thus the separation of the Other from the object of desire, the severing of the emotional tie, which does the trick. In contrast, Borch Jakobsen believes, that it is the reconfirming of the emotional tie that restores to the subject a taste for life.

The question is, does Lacan's theory really give no centrality to affect? But what is *jouissance* if not affect? Central to Lacan's theory is that very excess of affect that comes into being with law and language. Hence every symbolic will generate transgression, which is enjoyed in the symptom. The symptom yields surreptitious enjoyment and enables the subject to avoid the real of lack via strictly ordered repetitive behaviour. Thus enjoyment is not spontaneous but always marked with prohibition. 'Enjoying your symptom' (Zizek, 1992) is living out your transgression, allowing the

element of the real into language by surreptitious means: the symptom is the resistance to the Other, the tell-tale sign of the law's implementation.

What psychoanalysis locates as a transgressive element, the 'hypnotic effect' in analysis, might be seen as a suppressed benefit but only if the subject does not give up on the effort of converting *jouissance* into desire: somehow the real, imaginary and symbolic must be knotted into a Borromean structure of transference, so that the emotional tie insinuates itself into the social bond (Braunstein, 1988). In his discourse mathemes Lacan plays out this impossibility: imaginary transference is the imagined match with the beloved (the emotional tie); symbolic transference, is accepting interpretations from the subject-supposed-to-know; real transference is both the detachment from narcissism and the recognition of the impossibility of the symbolic. In every form of transference – compare the four discourse mathemes (Lacan, 1991) – the object *a* is the motor around which analysis turns. It is that which knowledge represses and cannot produce, but it is also that without which there would not be a subject at all. When the subject was lured into language, it hoped for results, and will thus incessantly repeat its failed entry. Hypnosis is a metaphor for the fact that there is a portion of one's purpose which is determined outside consciousness, hence a metaphor for not being perfectly free.

Transference is an impossible relation at every stage, and yet paradoxically the real of *jouissance* must interlock with the imaginary and the symbolic in an illusory way. So where does the subject start? Jacques Alain Miller concedes that there is a 'primary *jouissance*', designated '*das Ding*', it is the mother as primary object of enjoyment, and naming it *das Ding* says that it comes before language, being 'already lost, because at the outset, we are into language'. Hence all we know of *jouissance* is 'that we have lost it because of language'. To illustrate this, Miller 'invent[s] a little myth', where Mephistopheles, wandering across the earth, stops to talk to the fish and asks:

«Do you want to exchange your enjoyment as fishes (which is not much) for language? Would it be more interesting for you, fish, instead of opening and closing your mouth without saying anything, to speak? What marvellous things you could do! You could even have a Plato fish.» And the fish answers: «I can't.» That is why it's a myth. The fish answered Mephistopheles: «I'd rather continue like I am, opening and closing my mouth without saying anything because I enjoy this.» (Miller, 1989, p. 47)

Miller goes on to imagine how Mephistopheles goes the rounds of the species, getting another refusal, this time from the oyster, who will not trade in its pearl for speech. Finally he offers speech to the monkey, whereupon 'this stupid monkey accepts that. And immediately he loses all his hair, or nearly all his hair' and 'cannot relate to his companion of the other sex with immediacy' and 'is obliged to look at what his parents are doing to try to know what to do with his partner'. The point Miller is making is that it doesn't help to speculate what came first, a loss of *jouissance* or language, since the Other is structurally separated from *jouissance*: '*jouissance* is forbidden to one who speaks.' (ibid., p. 48).

For Lacan the analytic cure rests solely upon speech, because only by this means can *jouissance* become desire in language. The loss of the object is where desire starts: the subject is 'nothing', except when transformed through discourse. The symbolic offers its promise. If you ask what promise, the answer is 'use some words and you'll find out'. Find out what? That the subject of desire must be defined in order that the definition must fail. In the never-ending process of such re-definition perhaps the illusory memory of an emotional tie is an incentive to speak anew; perhaps the so-called positive transference should not be theorized away as 'therapeutic alliance'; perhaps the emotional tie is a part of the cure. Borch-Jakobsen has a point. But the phantasmatic core of this libidinal tie must nevertheless be analyzed so that the subject can move out of its 'somniaambulistic' state and accede to 'full' speech, driving its demand into the symbolic by using words and thus taking the risk of the only relation there is: the impossible relation.

WORKS CITED

- Borch-Jacobsen, M. (1988). *The Freudian subject*. Trans. Catherine Porter. London: Macmillan.
- Borch-Jacobsen, M. (1991). *Lacan: The absolute master*. Trans. Douglas Brick. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press.
- Borch-Jacobsen, M. (1993). *The emotional tie: Psychoanalysis, mimesis, and affect*. Trans. Douglas Brick et al.. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press.
- Braunstein, N. A. (1988). The transference in the Four Discourses. *Prose Studies*, 11 (3), 61-83.
- Ferenczi, S. (1949). Confusion of tongues between the adult and the child (The language of tenderness and passion). *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 30, 225-230.
- Heimann, P. (1950). On countertransference. *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 31, 81-84.
- Little, M. (1951). Countertransference and the patient's response to it. *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 32, 33-40.
- Lacan, J. (1991). *Le séminaire, Livre XVII: L'envers de la psychanalyse*. Text established by Jacques-Alain Miller. Paris: Seuil.
- Langs, R. (1976). *The bipersonal field*. New York: Jason Aronson.
- Langs, R. (1978). *The listening process*. New York: Jason Aronson.
- Miller, J.-A. (1989). To interpret the cause: From Freud to Lacan. *Newsletter of the Freudian Field*, 3 (1-2), 30-50.
- Racker, H. (1957). The meanings and uses of countertransference. *The Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, 26, 303-357.
- Searles, H. F. (1948). Concerning transference and countertransference. *International Journal of Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy*, 7, 165-188.

Not only was it the letter 'i', standing for 'investigator,' it was 'I' in the upper case, the tiny life-bud buried in the body of the breathing self. At the same time, it was also the physical eye of the writer, the eye of the man who looks out from himself into the world and demands that the world reveal itself to him. (9-10)

The reader knows virtually nothing about Daniel Quinn other than that his wife and son are dead and that he feels «lost, not only in the city, but within himself...» (4). The author of detective novels under the pseudonym, William Wilson, he also doubles as the private-eye narrator of these stories, Max Work. However, Quinn has come to feel that these separately-named aspects of himself have taken over his personality; they have become more real than he is (10). Both Quinn's pseudonym and his fictional persona are cues to the doubling elements of the narrative: «Max Work» is a pun (Quinn's maximum «working» self) and William Wilson recalls the classic double story by Poe. In that story, William Wilson is for years obsessed and haunted by another man who shares his name. Ultimately, he meets and aggressively attacks the «other» William Wilson, only to discover that the person he has fatally wounded is himself. Auster's Daniel Quinn evolves from the pseudonymous William Wilson, author of detective stories, into a private eye proper when he accepts an assignment from a man named Peter Stillman, Jr., to locate his abusive father (with the obviously doubled name), Peter Stillman, Sr. When he first meets Stillman, Jr., Quinn is «uncannily» (17) struck by the man's resemblance to his own dead son, also named Peter (42).

As part of Auster's intertextual play with doubles, names, and identities, another of Daniel Quinn's personas further complicates the boundaries between author, narrator, and character. As Quinn impersonates a private eye named «Paul Auster» (the reader is obliged to keep in mind the difference between the fictional and actual Auster), he abdicates his inner life, having determined that «to be Paul Auster meant being a man with no interior, a man with no thoughts.... He consequently had to remain solely on his own surface, looking outward for sustenance» (75). Yet Quinn fantasizes swapping places with «Paul Auster», whose son shares Quinn's name, Daniel (which is also the name of Auster's real-life son [*Solitude* 5]). Stressing their identification, Quinn says to the blond-haired boy named Daniel, «I'm you, and you're me» (122).

The person for whom Quinn is a private-eye, Peter Stillman, is an oddly brittle young man who walks and talks like an automaton. The image recalls the «Sandman» story recounted by Freud in his essay on the uncanny - in that tale, the obsessed young man falls in love with a (female) automaton. Like Hoffman's automaton, Stillman is a still-man - «machine-like, fitful, alternating between slow and rapid gestures, rigid and yet expressive, as if the operation were out of control, not quite corresponding to the will that lay behind it.... It was like watching a marionette trying to walk without strings» (17). The image also mirrors Quinn's description of himself as a ventriloquist's «dummy» supported by the ventriloquist William Wilson and «the animated voice that gave purpose to the enterprise» (6), Max Work.

In stilted speech, Peter Stillman describes a tormented childhood during which he was locked in a darkened room for nine years - reduced to an automaton - by a father who cruelly isolated him from all speech and human interaction in order to test his theory of prelapsarian language. Peter Stillman Jr. may represent Daniel Quinn's own «dark» childhood, including the universal phase of infant helplessness before language develops. The automaton image also signifies the son's condition of emotional stasis and woodenness as a defensive response to his father's abuse and later abandonment. When Quinn finally locates the abusive father, he discovers two Peter Stillman Srs. - as if to suggest that everyone is double.

Subsequently, Quinn's efforts to resolve the Stillman «case» become more convoluted than I can summarize here, as all of the principal figures seem to multiply and/or vanish, including both Stillmans (the father, Quinn later learns, by committing suicide). Pertinently, Rosemary Jackson (in her study of the fantastic in literature) observes that «Most versions of the double... terminate with the madness, suicide, or death of the divided subject: 'self' cannot be united with 'other' without ceasing to be» (91). Moreover, the double may represent a character's feelings of acute self-

estrangement as well as «a desire to be re-united with a lost centre of personality» (108). As Quinn becomes increasingly self-estranged, the narrative virtually doubles back on itself. The «glass» of the title image thus suggests not so much a transparent material as a distorting looking-glass, further susceptible to shattering into pieces that duplicate the same images.

As each of Daniel Quinn's doubles vanishes, he also longs to disappear himself. He limits his intake of food and need for sleep and shelter; in effect, he reduces himself to a «still-man» - an automaton like Peter Stillman, Jr. His radical self-estrangement – he even ceases to recognize his image in a mirror – and literal homelessness provide an interesting gloss on Freud's essay: «homelessness», or *Das Unheimlich* (the «unhomelike») is a central trope for the uncanny. Auster, clearly indebted to Freud's essay, writes in «The Book of Memory»,

It would be impossible to say that we are not haunted. Freud has described such experiences as 'uncanny', or *unheimlich* – the opposite of *heimlich*, which means 'familiar,' 'native,' 'belonging to the home.' The implication ... is that we are thrust out from the protective shell of our habitual perceptions, as though we were suddenly outside ourselves, adrift in a world we do not understand. By definition, we are lost in that world.... Unhomeness, therefore, [is] a memory of another, much earlier home of the mind.... (149-50)

* * *

The manifest repetitions of uncanny doubles, automatons, and absent or threatening fathers in *City of Glass* – and throughout *The New York Trilogy* – are representations of Auster's own (admitted) Oedipal preoccupations. He is haunted by what he terms «the curse of the absent father» (*Solitude* 118), not only in this trilogy but in his non-fictional writing as well. Let me digress here to refer to Auster's two essay- meditations on a son's relation to an absent father. In the first essay, «Portrait of an Invisible Man», Auster writes, «If, while [my father] was alive, I kept looking for him, kept trying to find the father who was not there, now that he is dead I still feel as though I must go on looking for him. Death has not changed anything. The only difference is that I have run out of time» (7). In the second essay, «The Book of Memory», Auster writes from his position as a father himself, anguishing over the threat of loss of his son through divorce. Reading the story of Pinocchio to Daniel, he asks himself (as both father and son), «is it true that one must dive to the depths of the sea and save one's father to become a real boy?» (79) The Pinocchio image doubles with that of the automaton Peter Stillman, Jr. in *City of Glass*, who regards himself as «still the puppet boy.... But sometimes I think I will at last grow up and become real» (26).

The image of the absent father is also associated with doubling and the uncanny, as is particularly illustrated in Auster's description of a «trick photograph» he finds of his father,

taken in an Atlantic City studio sometime during the Forties. There are several of him sitting around a table, each image shot from a different angle, so that at first you think it must be a group of several different men, Because of the gloom that surrounds them, because of the utter stillness of their poses, it looks as if they have gathered there to conduct a seance. And then, as you study the picture, you begin to realize that all these men are the same man. The seance becomes a real seance, and it is as if he has come there only to invoke himself, to bring himself back from the dead, as if, by multiplying himself, he had inadvertently made himself disappear. There are five of him there, and yet the nature of the trick photography denies the possibility of eye contact among the various selves. Each one is condemned to go on staring into space, as if under the gaze of the others, but seeing nothing.... (*Solitude* 31)

In *City of Glass*, Quinn's mourning for his dead son prompts him to see his child mirrored in other men's sons – instead, he «becomes» the tormented «still-man» son while the father disappears.

The second novella of *The New York Trilogy* also hints at a disturbed father-son relationship. However, in the pointedly-titled *Ghosts*, the father-son positions are inverted: a significant element of the protagonist's aimlessness is his unresolved mourning for his long-dead father, a detective who died in the line of duty. Like Quinn of *City of Glass*, the central figure, Blue (the characters of *Ghosts* are deliberately cryptic; their «names» are merely color terms), inadvertently becomes a detective (like his father) with a single task – in this instance, to observe a man named Black whose only action appears to be writing in a notebook. Blue recognizes his uncanny connection to the other man, feeling that «he has seen Black before, but he can't remember where. There's something about the eyes...» (181).

Increasingly, as Blue spends hours and days observing Black from the apartment opposite, he realizes that the figure he watches exactly mirrors him: Black, it turns out, is a private detective with an identical assignment – «to watch someone ... and send in a report about him every week» (214). At one point, Blue steals Black's notebook only to discover in its pages his own written reports about Black. As is characteristic in double stories, the protagonist belatedly experiences the disturbing and uncanny recognition that the double is in fact his «other» self. Like Poe's William Wilson, who plunges his sword into the «other» William Wilson only to discover that he has attacked himself, Auster's Blue physically attacks Black. In Poe's story, the double is literally unmasked at the moment of death; in *Ghosts*, Blue, after pummeling Black into unconsciousness, removes the mask from the other's face and cannot discern whether the sound of breath is «coming from Black or himself» (231).

* * *

The final novella of Auster's trilogy, *The Locked Room*, though only marginally concerned with father/son issues, complicates the relationships among the uncanny and doubling, language and authorship. The unnamed narrator's double, Fanshawe, is a childhood friend; he is also a writer who has remained «in hiding» [read «hidden»] and has never published any of his work. The narrator, himself an aspiring but unpublished writer, initially believes that Fanshawe has not only disappeared but died and accepts the role of literary executor of his unpublished oeuvre. Indeed, he becomes not only executor but executioner as well. Maintaining the duplicitous pretense that Fanshawe is dead even after he discovers otherwise, he inserts himself into the man's place in the world at Fanshawe's explicit urging, even marrying the absent man's wife and adopting his young son.

From the beginning, the narrator admits that Fanshawe exists inside him as a ghost of his own past, «a prehistorical figment, a thing that was no longer real» (236). Instructively, Freud proposed that «the quality of uncanniness can only come from the fact of the 'double' being a creation dating back to a very early mental stage, long since surmounted – a stage, incidentally, at which it wore a more friendly aspect» (236). Moreover, the uncanny is «in reality nothing new or alien, but something which is familiar and old-established in the mind and which has become alienated from it only through the process of repression» (241). Auster's own comments on Freud's essay reinforce these parallels: «Freud argues that each stage of our development co-exists with all the others. Even as adults, we have buried within us a memory of the way we perceived the world as children. And not simply a memory of it: the structure itself is intact» (*Solitude* 149).

The more the narrator of *The Locked Room* immerses himself in the particulars of Fanshawe's life and work, the more he «becomes» him. Pointedly, Fanshawe's major piece of work, which the narrator brings to successful publication, is a novel entitled *Neverland*. Like the psychoanalytic analysand who recuperates split-off dimensions of his/her self through articulating his/her story, the narrator attempts to recuperate his estranged/hidden writing persona by telling this fantastic story that keeps doubling back on itself – the narrative that we are reading. Yet the aspiring writer's consuming identification with his more successful double ambiguously both advances and impedes

his psychological integration. In the sense that resistance may impede the work of integration, the narrator initially admits that «a part of me always resisted» Fanshawe (247). There is a core of inaccessible mystery that had both fascinated and puzzled the narrator in the past; «to imitate him was somehow to participate in that mystery, but it was also to understand that you could never really know him» (248).

As in the two preceding novellas, during the course of *The Locked Room*, the identification between narrator and double intensifies as figures multiply, blur, and dissolve into each other. Desperately searching for Fanshawe, the narrator sees him everywhere. Once, spotting a man who has «something familiar about him» – the mark of the uncanny – he labels the man Fanshawe. The other objects, asserting that he is not Fanshawe but, in fact (doubling back to a figure familiar to the reader) Peter Stillman! The two engage in a violent physical confrontation that is characteristic of double stories. However, this time, the narrator himself is pummelled into unconsciousness. Only later does he realize the true significance of that destructive struggle: «Fanshawe himself was not death - but he was like death, and he functioned as a trope for death inside me.... I did not die, but I came close» (355). His comment mirrors Black's assertion when confronted by Blue, «'I turned you into my death. You're the one thing that doesn't change, the one thing that turns everything inside out'» (230).

Instructively, according to Freud, one psychological explanation for manifestations of the uncanny is the almost-universal fear/denial of death («Uncanny» 243-4)¹. Freud also theorized a strong relationship between the uncanny and repetition, proposing that «there must be one class in which the frightening element can be shown to be something repressed which recurs» (241). One might say that repeating patterns of events are recurrences in the temporal mode while doubles are recurrences in the spatial mode. *The New York Trilogy* embodies both modes.

Late in the final novella of Auster's trilogy, the narrator admits that he is the author of all three narratives that comprise *The New York Trilogy* and that they are «finally the same story, but each one represents a different stage in [his] awareness of what it is about» (346). Auster, maintaining that all of his books are indeed «the same book», regards the manifest repetitions in his writing as the

story of my obsessions ... the saga of the things that haunt me.... Writing, in some sense, is an activity that helps me to relieve some of the pressure caused by these buried secrets. Hidden memories, traumas, childhood scars – there's no question that novels emerge from those inaccessible parts of ourselves. (*Hunger* 277)

As these fantastic and self-reflexive narratives suggest, a writer may become so obsessed with his inventions that he is absorbed into them, haunted by the ghosts of his characters, of figures from his «hidden» his past, and of his own fabricated personas or doubles. Through these recurring representations of his haunted, inner life – his overlapping identities as son, father, private-eye, automaton, and author – Auster gives us insight into the relation between at least one writer's convoluted psychic life and the uncanny fictions that spring from it. As he puts it, «each thing leads a double life, at once in the world and in our minds, and ... to deny either one of these lives is to kill the thing in both its lives at once» (*Solitude* 154).²

Although there is no «master key» to *The New York Trilogy* – even at the end, the locked room remains locked – the reader who perseveres comes to understand, as the narrator of final novella expresses it, that «The story is not in the words; it's in the struggle» (346).

¹ Alison Russell proposes that «Since the self in the text must die when the story ends, the rewriting of the detective story in *The New York Trilogy* is also a deferment of death for the author» (80).

² Auster also observes that every person has a kind of double self: «because we think, we're always in two places at the same time.... Our sense of self is formed by the pulse of consciousness within us – the endless monologue, the life-long conversation we have with ourselves» (*Hunger* 299).

WORKS CITED

- Auster, P. (1982). *The Invention of Solitude*. New York: Sun.
- Auster, P. (1990). *The New York Trilogy*. New York: Penguin.
- Auster, P. (1992). *The Art of Hunger. - Essays, Prefaces, Interviews*. Los Angeles: Sun and Moon Press.
- Freud, S. (1919). The Uncanny. In *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works* (Trans. and ed. James Strachey) (Vol. 17, pp. 217-256). London: Hogarth, 1955.
- Jackson, R. (1991). *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion*. London and New York: Methuen.
- Poe, E. A. (1839). William Wilson. In *The Complete Works of Edgar Allan Poe* (Ed. James A. Harrison) (Vol. 3, pp. 299-325). New York: AMS Press, 1965.
- Russell, A. (1999). Deconstructing *The New York Trilogy*: Paul Auster's Anti-Detective Fiction. *Critique*, 31 (2), 71-83

A patient-therapist relationship: An unconscious symmetry

MAX DAY (*)

INTRODUCTION

The more psychotherapy becomes widely used, the more it becomes evident that many more patients and therapists engage in sexual activity than we purists care to believe. What unconscious connections are there between patient and therapist, who engage in sexual relations during psychotherapy? This paper takes its title as an allusion to the book, «A Secret Symmetry» by Aldo Carotenuto (1982), which deals with the life story of Sabina Spielrein, who had an affair with her therapist, Karl Gustav Jung, was jilted by him and then worked strenuously to maintain a symmetrical relationship with both Jung and Freud in her subsequent scientific work. An exploration of their backgrounds, character structures and interrelationship may tell us about the unconscious underpinnings of participants of some such mixed ventures and the outcome in this case.

The patient, presumably less mature than the therapist, turns to the therapist for help and, in the state of therapeutic regression, wants immediate sexual satisfaction as a solace usually for pain, sadness and anxiety and to avoid dealing with problems generally. At times, too, the wish for sexual gratification may arise from the need to reproduce memories of past actual or phantasied seductions. Particularly as the transference develops, there may be more of a press to acting out such impulses to avoid becoming acquainted with what lies behind them. If the therapist has suffered certain insults in his life, so that he may have been dealing with a life-long depression especially because of deprivation at the hands of his mother, he, too, may wish to make things up to the mother in the patient or to get symbolic revenge from her through his patient. He may also be suffering current deprivations, reminiscent of the old ones, which add to the pressure to act out these old love and sexual longings. Ideally such a request for an affair should be studied like any other production by the patient to understand its meaning and source. Which therapist and which patient are likely to engage in a sexual affair and under what conditions? Equally important is the question what the results may be. They are all assumed to be disastrous. Undoubtedly many are. Yet the results probably lie along a spectrum going from disaster to neutral effects to creative results. The present example may come from this last end of the spectrum.

(*) 108 Lake Avenue, Newton Centre, Massachusetts 02459-2108, USA.

THE SOURCE MATERIAL

The case of Jung-Spielrein (Carotenuto 1982), gives us a way to study this kind of human tangle, since we rely on documents left by the patient, some hints by the therapist and some by his colleague, Freud. This very distance from both of them, while having obvious drawbacks, such as not being able to check matters out with the participants, may nonetheless give us another perspective on the problem. Both participants left written records. The two participants remained respectful to each other and all three remained part of the same general field of psycho-analytic psychotherapy. All three were subsequently productive in their work, the therapist and consultant more so than the patient.

SPIELREIN

Sabina Spielrein came from a wealthy Jewish family from Rostov-on-the-Don in Czarist Russia. Sabina's mother's grandfather, an esteemed rabbi, acclaimed for his prophetic abilities, had forbidden the marriage of his son, also a rabbi, to the daughter of a physician, who was regarded as representing Christianity and therefore was seen as an unbeliever. He then forced his son, Sabina's grandfather, to marry a dull woman, with whom he had four children, of whom only two were bright, Sabina's mother and the youngest son. Grandfather was a spirited person, who despite his Jewishness was allowed to make speeches in public places and even in the courtroom. This was an unheard of privilege for Jews in Czarist Russia. All the children were musical, as were the grandfather and Sabina. The grandfather continued to study what were regarded as Christian matters, as science was then regarded by the Jewish orthodoxy. Sabina's mother was only supposed to study and not help around the house. He even sent her to a Christian Progymnasium, despite the protests of others in the family. Mother's first sweetheart was a physician and probably not religious. His parents interfered with the match, poisoned the bridegroom with false rumors about Sabina's mother and broke up the couple. Too proud to defend herself she left the relationship. Sabina's mother never got over it. She then was courted by a Christian, who shot himself, when she told him that she could not marry him because it would destroy her parents. The grandfather found the father as a prospect for his daughter, because of his intelligence and piety. The mother refused him three times before she finally accepted him in marriage, because she was impressed with his intelligence, his firm and noble character and his tenderness for her. He loved her while she was cold and loveless. One wonders if she ever got over the death of her lovers. This is a background of opposition to familial religion and broken love affairs.

Sabina was the eldest of five children. Coldness between her parents, her repeated deprivation on the occasion of the birth of four siblings in quick succession as well as the death of her grandfather when she was four and the death of her sister when she was ten all must have played a part in her development. She had a thriving imagination from her earliest days on – a useful way to deal with pain. She had her first hallucination of two kittens at an early age. From then on she experienced anguish, was afraid of being forcibly torn away from her parents and was afflicted with serious emotional diseases. By the age of four she wondered where babies came from – a common enough interest at that age, especially in a family with several births after hers. She had happy memories of her great-grandfather at three or four, so he may have died soon after. At about this time she began to dig holes in the ground to see what was on the other side. Carotenuto sees this as a symbol of sexual curiosity about where babies came from but one would think that the loss and burial of the great-grandfather may also have been a factor in this curiosity. There must already have been from early on a desperate dread of losing the cold mother, perhaps reflecting the mother's lost loves, as well as in reaction to the quick successive births of the siblings. The death of her sister some years later must also have played into these concerns. Like many a depressive

personality or borderline, she became intensely involved with her father and men generally in her emotional life to evade the pain of the early disappointments in her mother.

She began to retain her feces for as long as two weeks, helping herself achieve this aim, by sitting on her heel in such a way as to block her anus. This preoccupation began as she watched her father beat her brother on his bottom at the age of four. She wished it done to her and then to defecate in her father's hand. This phantasy showed her envy for her brother's position but also perhaps the wish to strike back at her father. Freud explained this fantasy to Jung as a regressive picture of her love for her father's caresses. (Not much is made by Carotenuto of the other possible meanings of this anal symptom, of its relationship to her dread of losing her mother, the wish to be impregnated like her, to keep a secret of lost love inside her, to keep a baby inside her or the wish to give her father a baby.) She would get aroused sexually at the sight of her father's arms. Thereafter, while sitting at the dinner table, she imagined all the people around her engaged in defecation. After having this phantasy for three years, she gave up these practices and switched to vigorous masturbation by the age of seven. She clearly had no period of sexual latency. The external behavior had changed and the intensity of feeling had moved into the realm of dreams and phantasies. She had Jewish and Christian girl-friends, whom she referred to as «father» and «mother». By the time she was thirteen she gave up her belief in God, in response to her father's mocking her belief but she maintained a belief in «a guardian spirit». From childhood on, she experienced anguish and was assailed by night terrors. She was afraid of being forcibly torn away from her parents and was afflicted with severe anxiety and depression. By the age of eighteen she was no longer able to look at anyone. There were attacks of depression, alternating with fits of weeping, laughter and screaming. The father's response was that she ought to study medicine. Like other enlightened Russians he sent her to Zurich to get treatment and study medicine. Having lost her father's presence and moral support in leaving Russia at the age of nineteen, she developed a hysterical psychosis and entered Burghoelzli, the most modern and respected psychiatric institution available in Switzerland. There she met Jung, who was twenty-nine.

From the beginning of treatment, Jung encouraged her to participate in his association experiments – a not unusual approach by some analysts as late as the forties. Encouraged by a man, she worked willingly and productively. She soon improved, so that she could return to medical school. To have responded so quickly, she must indeed have been an office borderline in character structure. An office borderline has more love-objects in her life, more reaction-formations, an ability to intellectualize and more money available to live on. Such a person has a need to lean emotionally on a compliant love object – in her case first her father and now Jung. She continued to see him for analysis once a week on Fridays. She graduated from medical school in May 1911 at the age of twenty-six. He encouraged her to become a psychiatrist. Again she responded positively to his confidence in her. He helped her with her thesis and helped her get it published. Indeed she became a psycho-analyst, producing some thirty scientific papers. Later, with his encouragement, she became a training analyst.

In 1909, a year after Jung's son was born, they began their sexual affair. Soon an anonymous letter was sent to the Spielreins in Russia – Sabina suspects it came from Emma Jung – exposing the affair to the parents. When they reproached Jung for treating their daughter this way, he wrote her mother that if they paid him a regular fee, he would have no other contacts with her except that of a doctor with a patient. It is not clear if he was ever paid a fee, what it was, why it was stopped and whether payment was resumed. His communication with her family was a matter of extreme humiliation for this proud, twenty-three year old woman. She felt Jung had debased her love by bringing it to her mother's attention and after several scenes she finally boxed him on the ear. This act gave her father a deep sense of satisfaction, that she could take care of herself. In both cases, with her father and with Jung, she showed a positive response to high expectations from a man.

Spielrein wanted a Siegfried child from Jung, a common ideal then, as exemplified in the Wagner operas. From this wish Jung withdrew. She then wrote about her discontent and impasse

with Jung to his mentor, Freud. Freud kept trying to help Jung extricate himself from the affair, by anti-analytically suggesting he tell Spielrein it was best to forget it – what he called «an intra-psychic solution» (McGuire, 1979). Nonetheless, Jung and Spielrein continued a «therapeutic» relationship for another year or two. She maintained her relationship with Jung and then shifted to trying to get these two giants together, Jung and Freud, who obviously could never remain together. (Was this a repetition of her wish to get her father and mother together?) She even adopted more of Jung's thinking in her later work as a Freudian psycho-analyst. After 1912 or 1913, there was no longer any direct mention of Jung in her work.

A year or two after she had done with Jung, she met a man, named Scheftel, and married him in June 1912. In September 1913, after a disastrous pregnancy, she bore a daughter, Renate, and resumed her efforts to unite Jung and Freud with vigor. The old separation problems, this time between herself and her daughter may have been reflected in her child's dermatitis, frequent colds and breathing problems. She wandered about across Europe, first to Vienna with an introduction by Jung, then to Berlin and to several places in Switzerland. She became a training analyst, a concept introduced to psychoanalysis by Jung. She had Piaget as one of her patients. He wanted a taste of psychoanalysis to know what it was about, like many intellectuals then, while she wanted to create a disciple. When after nine months it was clear that he was not about to become a convert, she saw him as dull and discharged him.

In 1923 she finally returned «home» to the now Soviet Union. Psycho-analysis was then still accepted by the budding Marxist revolution as yet another way to bring about paradise on earth for the workers' revolution. She continued to publish a total of thirty papers 'til 1931. She had many intuitive understandings not only about the psychology of young children but also about the importance of the death drive well ahead of Freud and about other matters as well. By the mid-twenties (Etkind, 1994) she had suffered the professional disappointment of seeing the Soviets turn away from psychoanalysis altogether and ban it in 1936. She and her two daughters were murdered by the Nazis in a synagogue along with other Jews in 1941, as the Nazis were taking over western parts of the Soviet Union.

She was a gifted borderline, who had a hysterical psychosis. She was feelingful, imaginative, intuitive, with an interest in music, yet knew how to play off one friend against another, one analyst against his mentor and yet tried desperately to keep the two friendly and working together – a not uncommon phenomenon in certain borderlines. This may have been a repetition of her wish to keep her father and mother apart and yet together – a very stabilizing position psychologically. Perhaps this helped her maintain her inner stability despite frustration, disappointment and loss, something she had not been able to do when she had left home at nineteen. There was also the turning to Christian learning and friends as in her family. She had grown in life and probably from the psychotherapy as well. She was also able to do useful work as a therapist and creative work as a writer and founder of children's clinics. Her contact with Jung, despite its pain and disappointment, helped her grow.

JUNG

The material deals with Jung's life between 1904 and 1913, between his ages of twenty-nine and thirty-eight, as he was beginning to develop professionally and a year after he married Emma. In 1900 at the age of twenty-five, Jung had begun his psychiatric studies at Burghölzli under Eugen Bleuler, the major psychiatric teacher of that time. There he applied association tests, developed by Galton for testing reaction time, to schizophrenic patients. He found experimental, scientific proof for the existence and power of unconscious complexes in the associations of schizophrenics in their delayed reaction time to test words, which struck unconscious complexes. Having been fascinated by Freud's dream book, since he himself had collected his own dreams from early childhood on, he wrote to Freud about these experiments, which confirmed experimentally

that the Unconscious existed. It led to a correspondence between the two, which formed the respectful basis for the beginnings of their scientific relationship. Freud recognized his talent and slowly but persistently kept trying to mold Jung's thinking in the direction of his own theories, promising him a psychiatric empire and fame. He also looked on him as a counterbalance to the competitive battle among the people surrounding him in Vienna, as well as a way of making sure that psycho-analysis did not remain «a Jewish, national business». Almost at once Jung wanted to be seen as a son and not as an equal. This proposed relationship appealed to Freud as well. Jung learned much from Freud's approach and gave him credit for it but clearly understood more about psychosis than Freud. In 1904 at the age of twenty-nine, with four years of clinical experience with psychotics, he received under his care the nineteen year old, Sabina Spielrein.

Jung came from a line of clergymen, his own father being a pastor. There was a coldness between his parents as with Spielrein's, which, along with his mother's depression, contributed to his infant psychotic break. Winnicott (1964) regarded Jung as having had a childhood schizophrenia because of his mother's depression during his infancy. He postulated a psychotic breakdown with depersonalization because of the emotional rift between his parents. Being depressed, his mother could not help him deal with his own aggression successfully, so that it was repressed in him and not available for creative work but channeled in specific directions. His temporary psycho-somatic defense of generalized eczema aroused his father's maternal side, so that he carried the baby around with him and sang to him. He was fortunate in his father's pitching in and got better almost at once. There is a recurrent split in his emotional life from infancy on, in his feelings for his mother and father, and at the same time an effort to heal the split. Mother is avoided and respected at a distance, while father is reviled and battled with – a not uncommon solution among some borderlines. From this breakdown he healed himself by splitting his feelings thereafter and therefore his love objects as well and then trying to heal them. He recalled his dreams from the age of three on and valued them extraordinarily. He had another break at twelve with fainting spells and an alleged epilepsy. Winnicott felt this stood for a suicidal impulse, disintegration, depersonalization and a reversal of maturation. Jung used it to avoid mathematics and athletics. He brought it to a close, when he realized it hurt his father financially.

Jung had married Emma Rauschenbach, whom he had seen in consultation, in 1903, when he was twenty-eight and she was nineteen. She came from a wealthy family. She refused his proposals several times, because she felt overwhelmed by his powerful stories about his interests in the patients at Burghoelzli, mysticism and the occult. They quickly had two daughters Agathli in 1904 and Gret in 1906. In 1908, four years into the treatment with Spielrein, when he was thirty-two and Sabina was twenty-three, the same age as Emma, they had a son, Franz, something he had written Freud he had felt deprived of in having two daughters first.

He had yet a third psychotic episode in 1912 at the age of thirty-seven, when he had just about finished the affair with Spielrein, had witnessed the break between Freud and Adler and was himself breaking with Freud. This break with Freud was a repetition of his life-long relationship with his safer parent, his father, whom he attacked for his dearly held religious beliefs, which he disparaged as dogma. He nevertheless remained attached to primitive and mystic beliefs and used them as a central part of his therapeutic approach. There was the rejection and acceptance in another form. At Burghoelzli he had first had admiration for and later contempt for Eugen Bleuler, the master teacher in psychiatry at the time. In the same way he had turned on Freud for Freud's treasured, dogmatic beliefs in the centrality of libido theory in human life and then developed his own school of analytic psychology. From his involvement with Spielrein, he was impressed with the importance of transference and of bisexuality in all human beings, with the feminine in the man and the masculine in the woman. At the same time he also showed splits in his love life, between his wife and his mistresses. The diagnosis of borderline seems justified in his case too, inasmuch as he recovered by his own efforts, split his feelings for people central in his life, was very intuitive and therefore understood psychotics very well, yet had difficulty with his aggression, much of

which he handled with extremely supportive approaches rather than analysis. He brought into being a life's work out of his defense organization with a permanent tendency to heal the split in his personality.

In 1912 at the age of thirty-seven, when Freud and Adler became estranged, perhaps re-awakening in Jung the feelings of the estrangement between his mother and father at his birth, Jung withdrew into a kind of inner self-confrontation that took him six to eight years to work his way through, while developing his psychological system. This is a more elaborate and somewhat different view of what Ellenberger (1964) calls his «creative illness», an illness which may include the whole breadth of human suffering, from a neurosis, through depression, psycho-somatic illness to psychosis, which comes in alternate periods of suffering and alleviation of the pain. Yet the individual never loses the thread of his main preoccupation and can even maintain normal professional and familial relations. Although totally absorbed within himself, he may alone or with the help of a mentor be guided through the suffering. The episode comes to an abrupt end with a feeling of exhilaration, so that the individual emerges feeling a permanent transformation of his personality, convinced that he has found a great truth or a new spiritual world. Jungians have called this a «guided psychosis». One can see how certain literary or scientific efforts, religious experiences and psychiatric therapies might fit into this spectrum.

The two protagonists tried to paper over their temperamental differences and disagreements but gradually the two parted company. Later Jung explained to Freud in a letter that he did not trust himself to become Freud's protégé, because he had once relied on a man whom he admired and loved very much, who had then sexually abused him – not so different from what he had done to Spielrein and what Freud felt his grandfather had done with him. He, therefore, could not trust an older man. This same ambivalence towards his father and towards Bleuler re-appeared in relation to Freud. He moved from wanting to be Freud's son to wanting to be his equal. Finally he could not bear the relationship and withdrew from Freud altogether.

This split is seen in Jung's emotional and sexual life as well. He remained married to a woman, with whom he had four children. Entranced with the idea of analysis, he began to analyze her. He also wrote Freud that to remain married one must retain the right of sexual freedom. He gave her an area of intellectual interest to study, the Holy Grail, on which he did not intrude. At the same time he had two mistresses, first Spielrein and later Toni Wolff (Jaffe, 1971), with whom he even forced his wife to appear together in public for the next forty years. It was impossible for such an individual to accept Freud's libido theory with its emphasis on the paramount importance of genital sexuality in mature human life, since he lived out a split in many spheres of his emotional life and especially in the spheres of sexuality and religion.

He fits the mold of what has been recently described as «The Two Woman Phenomenon» (Weiss, 1987). This is seen in a man, who marries young and early in marriage loses his sexual and loving interest in the wife. The man remains committed to the wife but either in mid-life or during another emotional crisis falls in love with a new woman but remains committed to both. Such a commitment to both women might go on for years and is disrupted only by the threatened loss of one of the women. The man can be productive and creative. In his background is a need to split his view of the mother as a seductive, critical and threatening woman, from the social image of the mother as proper and reasonable. Indeed he had a powerful effect on women, so that many felt whole again in his presence. Emma Jung complained to Freud that «all the women love Karl» and that she didn't know what to do about it. In 1909, as the affair with Spielrein was coming to an end, Jung had already become closer to Toni Wolff (Jaffe, 1971), who became his associate and mistress for the next forty years. Just as Jung had shown Spielrein his diary and hoarsely said that no one else had seen it except his wife, Toni Wolff later became the keeper of all his documents. He hoped that he could tell the whole world about his affair with Toni Wolff, so that the whole world would know what a great lover he was.

He emerges as a man who was profoundly intelligent and intuitive. He was powerfully attractive to women. He had a life-long interest and belief in psychic phenomena and used his

intuition, his interest in dreams since the age of three, his interest in mysticism, Eastern religions and alchemy to trace their common roots in the Unconscious. He used various expressive outlets such as painting, building the model of a town, building a house in stages and guided imagery to express and try to come terms with his conflicts. He raised these personal approaches to the level of general therapeutic techniques. He may have learned something about his anima from his affair with Spielrein but also earlier from a young woman, who took care of him, while his mother was hospitalized. Yet he continued to need two women and again betrayed his wife, whom he apparently respected. Yet he carried a burden from childhood of requiring a distance from the chosen woman, his mother and later his wife. By splitting his love objects as he had to split himself, he could manage well and creatively.

DISCUSSION AND SUMMARY

We have looked at the story of the intertwining of the lives, dreams, loves, hopes and aspirations of two individuals, a gifted borderline patient and a brilliant, borderline therapist for a period of about seven years and the mutual impacts they had on each other. There is a symmetry in their disparate backgrounds, their character structures and their values, which may have contributed to their remaining engaged to one another in psychotherapy and then in a love affair overlapping with psychotherapy. In both cases there is a familial religion and a need to fight it. Yet both remained interested in strong belief systems, psycho-analysis, eastern religions and analytic psychology. There was also a background of coldness between the mother and the father and broken love affairs. Were these also the factors which may have led to this breach of the ideal therapist-patient relationship and yet continuing therapeutic relationship?

In Spielrein, the triple threads of forbidden love of a Christian, medicine and a clerical background repeat themselves for three generations. There was also the background of opposing familial religions in falling in love with the son of a pastor and broken love affairs. Sabina understood aggression as part of love, while Jung could not deal with aggression directly. She saw her life in terms of a series of double relationships, including that between her father and mother, her Jewish and Christian girl-friends, whom she referred to as «father» and «mother» and Jung and Freud. She wanted to be surrounded by people with passion, to lead them and showed much passion. The early disturbance of her relationship with her mother was followed by a mutually passionate attachment between her father and herself. In response to the births of several siblings and perhaps the death of the great-grandfather, she developed complicated anal symptoms and fantasies, which in time led to vigorous masturbation, so that she enjoyed no period of sexual latency. She had also hallucinated two cats, significant for their symbolic meaning. As she entered puberty, her sister died and she regarded herself as having become sick at that time, with an aversion from people, depression and uncontrolled weeping, laughter and screaming. This nervous breakdown was probably exacerbated by her leaving her home at the age of eighteen, especially losing the presence and moral support of her father and moving to Geneva to go to medical school. She was admitted to Burghoelzli for treatment. There she entered Jung's version of psycho-analytic psychotherapy and responded quickly to a man showing interest in her and confidence in her abilities, so that she was able to return to medical school. She joined him in research, completed her studies successfully, became a psycho-analyst, published autobiographical papers with his help and encouragement, even becoming a training analyst, all this after four major periods of emotional disturbance in her life. The diagnosis of office borderline seems to be justified on the basis of the splits in herself and her choice of love objects, her appreciation of the importance of destruction as an approach to love, her quick recovery from psychosis, her sharp intuitiveness and yet having problems with aggression, the significance of which she appreciated. Despite a love affair with her therapist, which ended in the frustration of her wish to have his «Siegfried child», humiliation at his recoil from her and his

shoddy dealings with her parents, she went on to marry someone else, have two daughters, work usefully with children and be creative, while trying to synthesize the best of her two teachers' ideas.

Each of the participants had a cold relationship with their mothers and split their love objects, showing a need for two objects, Jung for two women and Sabina for two men. Her receiving gratification from children came after she returned to the Soviet Union, where she organized some children's clinics. The large feminine component in Jung is attested to in his theoretical views on anima in men and in his magnetic attraction for women. Both showed great subsequent creativity.

The psychological state of each of them at the time of their meeting played a part in creating the affair. Her needs for emotional support from a man grew on losing the emotional support of her father on leaving her homeland. His needs grew a year after his marriage to Emma and four years later at the time of the birth of his son, to whom he had consciously looked forward, probably with secret trepidation, knowing his relationship with his father and what he might expect from a son. Such needs on both sides may have led to the sexual affair between these two people involved in the difficult work of psychotherapy. The attraction of Sabina to a Christian, which was a repetition of what had happened in the previous generation, runs parallel to Jung's attraction to Jews.

It seems then there was a congruence of family history, the early trauma of a depressed or cold mother, the resultant borderline character structure, which was the form of self-healing, the need to split intra-psychically and inter-personally and efforts to try and heal the split, a general inhibition of aggression, which leads to acting out of these old traumata, a capacity for intuition and aggressiveness and difficulty in being in a committed, mature relationship with one love object. These factors taken together may represent the «unconscious symmetry» in patient and therapist, when an affair takes place during therapy. An overlapping current traumatic situation for both participants summons up feeling memories of old losses and deprivations, so they turn to each other for solace and engage in a sexual affair.

Why can some of these people turn out to be productive? It may be that the innate strength of the participants helps them bear these further stresses and yet remain productive and even creative. Of note, too, is the possibility that such a relationship may have lasting constructive after-effects for both participants, despite the problems the relationship and affair create. Does this creative work occur because of or despite the affair? In the case of Jung and Spielrein, it seems to have occurred in both participants because of it. Both were productive and neither one had another breakdown after Jung's reaction to losing Spielrein and Freud.

REFERENCES

- Carotenuto, A. (1982). *A secret symmetry*. New York: Pantheon Books.
- Ellenberger, H. F. (1964). La maladie creatrice, Dialogue. *Canadian Philosophical Review*, 3, 25-41.
- Etkind, A. M. (1994). *How psychoanalysis was received in Russia, 1906-1936. The Society of Analytical Psychology* (pp. 191-202).
- Etkind, A. M. (1995). The reception of psychoanalysis in Russia until the perestroika. In Peter Kutter (Ed.), *Psychoanalysis international: A guide to psychoanalytic thought in the world. Vol. II America, Australia, Asia and Further European Countries* (pp. 333-344). Frommann-Holzboog: Stuttgart-bad Cannstatt.
- Jaffe, A. (1971). *C. G. Jung: Word and image*. Edited by Aniela Jaffe. Princeton: Bollingen.
- McGuire, W. (1979). *The Freud-Jung letters*. Edited by William McGuire. Princeton: Bollingen.
- Weiss, S. S. (1987). The two-woman phenomenon. *The Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, 56, 271-286.
- Winnicott, D. W. (1964). Book review of «Memories, Dreams, Reflections» by Carl G. Jung. *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 45, 450-455.

Liquid assets: Sex, money and subjectivity in classical psychoanalytic theory

DAVID BENNETT (*)

‘Erotic conduct’, Bataille tells us in his study of Sade, ‘is the opposite of normal conduct as spending is the opposite of getting’. Glossing the rigorous anti-rationalism of the libertine doctrine, Bataille goes on:

If we follow the dictates of reason we try to acquire all kinds of goods, we work in order to increase the sum of our possessions ... use all means to get richer and to possess more. Our status in the social order is based on this sort of behaviour. But when the fever of sex seizes us we behave in the opposite way. We recklessly draw on our strength and sometimes in the violence of passion we squander considerable resources to no real purpose.... we always want to be sure of the uselessness or ruinousness of our extravagance. We want to feel as remote from the world where thrift is the rule as we can.¹

By contrast with the so-called ‘producer ethic’, which preaches the ascetic virtues of frugality, sobriety and the self-repressing postponement of pleasure in the interests of productive labour, the so-called ‘consumer ethic’ stimulates the economy by promulgating the values of spending not saving, self-gratification not self-denial, the pleasures of consumption rather than the dignity of labour. The emergence of consumerist culture in the ‘West’ has been variously dated from the ‘decadent’ 1890s, the ‘modernist’ 1920s, and the ‘countercultural’ 1960s – the decade when Heffner’s *Playboy* and Penguin’s *Lady Chatterley* helped to turn countercultural recreational sex into what has been called the ‘dominant pornographic culture’ of contemporary transatlantic consumerism.² By identifying the ‘decisive discovery’ of ‘what spending can really mean’ with a Sade pictured as being struck by this ‘violent truth’ in the loneliness of the Bastille as he watched the guillotine at

(*) University of Melbourne, Department of English, Parkville, Victoria 3052, Australia.

¹ Georges Bataille, ‘De Sade’s Sovereign Man’, *Erotism: Death and Sensuality*, trans. M. Dalwood (San Francisco: City Lights, 1986), p. 170.

² See, e.g., Susan Griffin, *Pornography and Silence: Culture’s Revenge Against Nature* (New York: Harper and Row, 1982).

work from his cell window, Bataille dates the emergence of the consumer ethic – and of the spender as ‘sovereign’ – from the very moment of the Bourgeois Revolution itself.³

It is with the figure of the ‘sovereign’ spender that this paper will be concerned: a figure ambiguously positioned on the dividing-line between law and the underworld, between ‘white’ and ‘black’ economies, in the writings of early-twentieth-century sexual psychologists like Freud and D. H. Lawrence, whose inconclusive efforts to separate a discourse of desire from the discourse of economics reveal (I shall argue) the profound complicity of the consumer and producer ethics in the early twentieth-century moment of that other ‘long revolution’, the sexual revolution, which is coterminous with modernity itself.

Like Lawrence, Freud prided himself on plainspeaking. In 1913, he warned his colleagues that there were two subjects that ‘civilized people’ will always treat ‘with the same inconsistency, prudishness and hypocrisy’, and about which psychoanalysts must insist on speaking with ‘the same matter-of-fact frankness’: ‘money matters’ and ‘sexual matters’.⁴ An ironic warning, you may think, since it was psychoanalysis that taught the twentieth century the *impossibility* of speaking plainly about money: taught it that speech about money is invariably metaphoric, to be decoded into speech about sex – taught it, in other words, a cardinal principle of the consumer ethic: the imperative of eroticising money, never economising on sex. Freud’s case histories continually ‘dematerialise’ economic relationships – the relationships of unequal property and power enacted in the taking, giving, lending or withholding of money – decoding them into symbolic expressions of erotic desire and denial, secondary transcriptions of a truth anterior to money, the originary truth of sex. This, at least, is the familiar Freud. But now consider how the opposite process can also occur in Freud’s writing.

Addressing medical colleagues in his paper ‘On Beginning the Treatment’, Freud explained why the bourgeois patrons of his new therapeutic technique were making a sound investment in spending their income on the unorthodox practice of purchasing a daily hour of the doctor’s time.⁵ Laying down what he called the ‘rules of the game’ for psychoanalysis – including ‘the strict principle of leasing by the hour’, the charging of high fees, the refusal of credit to patients, and the denial of gratis treatment however deserving or desperate the case – Freud acknowledged that by his rules ‘analytic therapy is almost inaccessible to poor people’.⁶ But he settled his conscience on this score with the observation that ‘perhaps there is truth in the widespread belief that those who are forced by necessity to a life of hard toil are less easily overtaken by neurosis’, and indeed that neurosis in the poor typically functions as a screen for indolence, enabling the malingerer to claim ‘by right of his neurosis the pity which the world has refused to his material distress, and ... [to] absolve himself from the obligation of combating his poverty by working’.⁷ For the middle-class client, by contrast, the expense of psychoanalysis was ‘excessive only in appearance’ – and not because health is priceless, but, on the contrary, because health is synonymous with ‘efficiency’, and ‘efficiency’ with ‘earning capacity’. Proving himself as canny a salesman of his services as any insurance broker, Freud points out that the relatively ‘modest financial outlay’ involved in an analytic cure compares favourably with ‘the unceasing costs of nursing homes and medical treatment’, and if we ‘contrast them with the increase of efficiency and earning capacity which results from a successfully completed analysis, we are entitled to say that the patients have made a good bargain. Nothing in life is so expensive as illness ...’.⁸ For those who can afford it, in other

³ Bataille, ‘De Sade’s Sovereign Man’, pp. 169, 171.

⁴ Sigmund Freud, ‘On Beginning the Treatment’, *Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. James Strachey, Vol. 12 (London: Hogarth Press), p. 131.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 123-144.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 123, 127, 132.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 132-133.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 133.

words, psychoanalysis is not an exchange of wealth for health, a sacrifice of material for mental well-being, but a pragmatic investment in increased earning-power, a hedge against depreciation of one's human capital. Reminding his colleagues of 'the familiar fact that the value of treatment is not enhanced in the patients' eyes if a very low fee is charged', Freud justifies his rule that the analyst should never 'act the part of the disinterested philanthropist' on the grounds that free treatment would increase the temptation to phantasmatic transference-effects; 'the absence of the regulating effect offered by the payment of a fee to the doctor', he says, would mean that 'the whole relationship is removed from the real world ...'.⁹

Like the 'normal conduct' which Bataille identifies with the 'rationality' of acquisition rather than the unproductive expenditure of pleasure, Freud's 'real world' is governed by the producer ethic: it is the world of *homo oeconomicus*, of the citizen as property-owner and worker, a world constituted in the division of labour between fee-paying clients, for example, and wage-labouring analysts. And this world of the producer ethic, whose 'reality principle' checks and defers the 'pleasure principle' of consumption, no more begins, for Freud and his patients, outside the consulting-room door than it begins with the employer-employee contract into which patient and doctor enter in the business of psychoanalysis. The 'real world' of the market economy, the world which Hegel called 'civil society',¹⁰ inhabits our very dreams, governs the productive mechanisms of what Freud tellingly termed 'the dream-work' and what he would come to call 'the economics of the libido' and 'the domestic economy of the mind' itself.¹¹

In *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900), Freud had developed an elaborate simile for the unconscious which struck him as sufficiently definitive to be worth quoting, without further explanation, in his case history of 'Dora' (1905). Illustrating the mechanisms of dream-work, he suggested that the role played by the day's residue of conscious wishes in triggering deep-seated unconscious desires in dreams

may be explained by an analogy. A daytime thought may very well play the part of *entrepreneur* for a dream; but the *entrepreneur*, who, as people say, has the idea and the initiative to carry it out, can do nothing without capital; he needs a *capitalist* who can afford the outlay, and the capitalist who provides the psychical outlay for the dream is invariably and indisputably, whatever may be the thoughts of the previous day, a wish from the unconscious.

Sometimes the capitalist is himself the *entrepreneur*, and indeed in the case of dreams this is the commoner event: an unconscious wish is stirred up by the daytime activity and proceeds to construct a dream. So, too, the other possible variations in the economic situation that I have taken as an analogy have their parallel in dream-processes. The *entrepreneur* may himself make a small contribution to the capital; several *entrepreneurs* may apply to the same capitalist; several capitalists may combine to put up what is necessary for the *entrepreneur*. In the same way, we come across dreams that are supported by more than one dream-wish; and so too with other similar variations, which could easily be run through ...¹²

⁹ Ibid., pp. 131-132.

¹⁰ See Part III, Section II of G. W. F. Hegel's *The Philosophy of Right*.

¹¹ For 'domestic economy of the mind', see *Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria ('Dora') in Case Histories I: 'Dora' and 'Little Hans'*, ed. A. Richards (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977), p. 76. For 'economics of the libido', see *Civilization and Its Discontents*, trans. Joan Riviere, ed. James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1979), p. 17, n. 7. Freud had earlier maintained that the addition of 'the economic point of view' to 'the dynamic and the topographical points of view' was 'the consummation of psychoanalytic research' ('The Unconscious' [1915], *On Metapsychology: The Theory of Psychoanalysis*, ed. A. Richards [Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1984], p. 184.)

¹² Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams, Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, trans. James Strachey, Vol. V (1900-1901) (London, Hogarth Press, 1953), p. 561. See also 'Dora', p. 125.

There are no coincidences in the unconscious, according to Freud, and it seems no accident that this analogy should have occurred to him during a discussion of the dream-work performed by one of his own most gnawingly persistent, conscious wishes, which he identifies as ‘my cherished desire to become at some time in the future a «professor extraordinarius»’.¹³ For the impecunious Freud, who once described himself as ‘a mere money-acquisition-machine’,¹⁴ the prospect of promotion to Professor Extraordinarius promised both the fee-levels and the patient-numbers that would finally free him from his life-long neurotic anxieties about money (and from which, in the event, the disappointing sales of *The Interpretation of Dreams* itself would bring none of the hoped-for relief). Hence the latent analogy that is at once ‘capitalised’ on (as Freud has it) and screened by the manifest one Freud actually offers us in his text: the role of the day’s residue in exploiting the ‘capital’ or ‘capitalist’ of unconscious desire bears an uncanny resemblance to the role of the entrepreneurial analyst who knows how to profit from the repressed desires encoded in his bourgeois clients’ dreams and symptoms. Freud all but brings this latent meaning to the surface of his analogy in his Postscript to ‘Dora’ – the case history with which he hoped to prove the truth, and so boost the poor sales, of *The Interpretation of Dreams*, thus securing his promotion to Professor Extraordinarius. Reflecting on this case history whose dénouement is the analyst’s triumphant discovery of what he calls the ‘key’ to the ‘jewelbox’ of his patient’s dream and to her nervous fingering of her real money-purse, Freud claims in his Postscript that it is by means of his clinical technique ‘alone [that] the pure metal of valuable unconscious thoughts can be extracted from the raw material of the patient’s associations’.¹⁵ If the analyst can be pictured as an industrious miner of the rich vein of his patient’s unconscious desire (or ‘capital’), his clinical technique can also be pictured as an ‘underworld’ one in another sense, the criminal sense. Writing about ‘Dora’ (Ida Bauer) to Fliess, Freud likened psychoanalysis to the technique of burglary: ‘I have a new patient’, he reported, ‘a girl of eighteen; the case has opened smoothly to my collection of picklocks’.¹⁶

In the popular view of Freudianism as a reductionist hermeneutic, which decodes economic and social relationships into disguised repetitions of archetypal erotic ones, the ‘other’ of Freud’s ‘real world’ of *homo oeconomicus* is the so-called ‘private’ world of the family – that traditionally cooperative realm (an economy of love, not money) which intellectuals from Hobbes to Marx contrasted with the competitive domain of the social, inhabited by possessive individuals. But in an era when marriage was still predominantly conceived as an economic contract¹⁷ – when, as D. H. Lawrence put it, ‘marriage has been found the best method of conserving property and stimulating production’¹⁸ – and when father-daughter relationships, as Dora testified, could also be conducted as property-relationships, the ‘other’ of Freud’s ‘real world’ of the market economy was not so much the ‘private’ world of family-life, but the underworld, the burglar’s world. It is in the underworld, according to Bataille, that the producer ethic has no purchase. Bataille prefaces his commentary on Sade in *Erotism* with an essay on ‘Kinsey, the Underworld and Work’, in which he

¹³ *Interpretation of Dreams*, p. 442.

¹⁴ Unpublished letter to Lilly Freud Marlé, March 14, 1911, quoted in Peter Gay, *Freud: A Life for Our Time* (London: Macmillan, 1989), p. 160.

¹⁵ ‘Postscript’, ‘Dora’, p. 153.

¹⁶ Sigmund Freud, *The Origins of Psychoanalysis. Letters to Wilhelm Fliess, Drafts and Notes: 1887-1902*, ed. Marie Bonaparte, Anna Freud, Ernst Kris (New York: Basic Books, 1954), p. 325.

¹⁷ Under the Austrian civil code in the 1890s a husband could forbid his wife to take employment, had the legal right to decide unilaterally the family’s domicile, and had the power to administer his wife’s property, unless a legal agreement to the contrary had been arranged. See John W. Boyer, ‘Freud, Marriage, and Late Viennese Liberalism: A Commentary from 1905’, *Journal of Modern History*, 50: 1 (March 1978), p. 89.

¹⁸ D. H. Lawrence, ‘À propos of Lady Chatterley’s Lover’ (1930), in *À propos of Lady Chatterley’s Lover and Other Essays* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1961), p. 104.

argues that the most significant finding of the Kinsey Reports was that America's criminal population enjoyed, on average, five times as many orgasms per week as its working population.¹⁹ By showing that social class, religion and age were minor influences on the quantity of an individual's sexual spending compared with the overriding factor of work, Kinsey confirmed Bataille's intuition of a deep affinity between eroticism, crime and Nature, linked as they are by their marginality to what Freud called the 'real world' of productive labour.

'[G]enuine pornography is almost always underworld', D. H. Lawrence explained in 'Obscenity and Pornography', his broadside against the forces of law and order that had confiscated his paintings of nudes from the Warren Gallery Exhibition in 1929 and publicly burned *The Rainbow* for 'indecentcy' in the name of the English war effort fourteen years earlier.²⁰ Like Bataille, but with very different sympathies, Lawrence propounded the intrinsic links between crime, pornography and unproductive expenditure. Paring away what he took to be the confusion of customary definitions of obscenity and pornography, he narrowed down his own definition of the 'genuine pornography' that circulates in the black economy of the underworld to material intended as 'a direct provocative of masturbation': 'an invariable stimulant to the vice of self-abuse, onanism, masturbation, call it what you will'.²¹ Describing masturbation as 'the one thoroughly secret act of the human being, more secret even than excrementation',²² Lawrence went on to characterise it, notoriously, as 'the deepest and most dangerous cancer of our civilization.... certainly the most dangerous sexual vice that a society can be afflicted with, in the long run'. Why? Because:

The great danger of masturbation lies in its merely exhaustive nature. In sexual intercourse, there is give and take. A new stimulus enters as the native stimulus departs. Something quite new is added as the old surcharge is removed. And this is so in all sexual intercourse where two creatures are concerned, even in the homosexual intercourse. But in masturbation there is nothing but loss. There is no reciprocity. There is merely the spending away of a certain force, and no return. The body remains, in a sense, a corpse, after the act of self-abuse.... There is what we call dead loss.... the self becomes emptier and emptier, till it is almost a nullus, a nothingness.²³

If there is a criminal aspect to masturbation – that vice most injurious to the social body – it is the crime of spending without receiving a return on one's outlay. As for the bourgeois investor in Freud's economical therapy, so for Lawrence's 'healthy' individual, desire as capital is that form of personal property which should create more capital. Lawrence adds that 'The real masturbation of Englishmen began only in the nineteenth century',²⁴ and his own thinking on the exchange-value of sexual intercourse is not altogether remote from the popular wisdom of the 1850s studiously documented by 'Walter' in *My Secret Life* – that pornographic epic of prodigious, underworld spending, as much by the countless prostitutes who are 'Walter's' partners in sexual 'crime' as by the near-bankrupted autobiographer himself. As 'Walter' understood it, productive sexual exchange depended on simultaneous spending by both partners; in his own words: 'If the man alone spends in the woman's cunt, it will not do it. – If the woman spends alone, it will not do it. – If they spend

¹⁹ Georges Bataille, 'Kinsey, the underworld and work', in *Erotism: Death and Sensuality*, p. 157.

²⁰ D. H. Lawrence, 'Obscenity and Pornography', in *A Propos of Lady Chatterley's Lover' and Other Essays* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1961), p. 67. For commentary on the political context of the war-time campaign against pornographers, pimps and prostitutes in Britain, of which the National Purity League's instigation of the prosecution of *The Rainbow* was a celebrated part, see Cate Haste, *Rules of Desire – Sex in Britain: World War I to the Present* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1992), pp. 50-57.

²¹ Lawrence, 'Obscenity and Pornography', p. 67.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 72.

²³ *Ibid.* pp. 73-74.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

some time after each other, it may or may not do it'.²⁵ Only if both parties to the transaction spend together can they be sure that – as the work-shy 'Walter' put it – 'the job is done'.²⁶ By contrast with the spendthrift libertine 'Walter', Lawrence himself regarded simultaneous orgasm as 'the only evidence of a perfect union':²⁷ a central dissatisfaction in his early sexual relations with his wife Frieda, as in Mellors' relations with Bertha Coutts and Connie's with Michaelis in *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, was their failure to spend together.²⁸ Bataille suggests that 'if one calculates the ratio between energy consumed and the usefulness of the results, the pursuit of pleasure even if reckoned as useful is essentially extravagant; the more so in that usually pleasure has no end product ...'.²⁹ Indifferent though the libertine 'Walter' was to end products, his calculative bourgeois mind was fascinated by the precise quantities of expenditure involved in erotic pleasure; his onanistic researches revealed that a man's average outlay of *élan vital* was a large teaspoonful (a finding that suggests a new meaning for J. Alfred Prufrock's melancholic reflection: 'I have measured out my life in coffee spoons'³⁰); and as for the amount of expenditure that could be received by a woman, 'Walter' found that it amounted to exactly four guineas-worth. A financial-cum-erotic compact with a favourite prostitute revealed that her vagina could hold no less, but no more, than eighty-four silver shillings – a feat that entitled her to keep the money on condition that she provide her services gratis to 'Walter' on two future visits.³¹ The 'sovereign' spender of the underworld libidinal economy measured his outlay in shillings.

The fetishistic association of sexual with fiscal expenditure, so insistently foregrounded in the underworld erotic economy of *My Secret Life*, was mediated for Victorians by a third term, that of 'energy', typically figured as a liquid currency, which is the manifest content of the economic models of the libido that both Freud and Lawrence inherited from early nineteenth-century 'sexual science'. If Lawrence was right, in a sense, that 'the real masturbation of Englishmen began only in the nineteenth century', it was not because the so-called 'secret vice' hadn't been pathologised as a dangerous wastage of personal resources, or capital reserves of energy, at least a century earlier. The institutionalised repression of masturbation which began in England in the early eighteenth century, spread rapidly to the Continent and America, and lasted for some two hundred and fifty years, has been extensively documented – the seminal study being René Spitz's 'Authority and Masturbation', published in the *Psychoanalytic Quarterly* in 1952.³² Spitz's research showed that

²⁵ Anonymous, *My Secret Life*, abridged with an introduction by G. Legman (New York: Grove Press, 1966), p. 367.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Compton Mackenzie, *My Life and Times, Octave Five (1915 1923)* (London, 1966), pp. 167-68. Mackenzie recalls Lawrence confiding his anxieties about his early sexual relations with Frieda: 'What worried him particularly was inability to attain consummation simultaneously with his wife, which according to him must mean that their marriage was still imperfect in spite of all they had both gone through. I insisted that such a happy coincidence was always rare, but he became more and more depressed about what he insisted was the only evidence of a perfect union.'

²⁸ Belief in the importance to health of the mutual exchange and absorption of bodily fluids in sex was a thesis championed by Marie Stopes in her bestselling *Married Love: A New Contribution to the Solution of Sex Difficulties* (London: G. P. Putnam, 1918), and it inspired the pharmaceutical production of pills containing sexual fluids, for use by women whose husbands wore condoms. See Paul Ferris, *Sex and the British: A Twentieth Century History* (London: Michael Joseph), p. 81.

²⁹ Bataille, *Erotism*, p. 168.

³⁰ T. S. Eliot, 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock'.

³¹ *My Secret Life*, p. 526.

³² René A. Spitz, 'Authority and Masturbation: Some Remarks on a Bibliographical Investigation', *Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, vol. 21 (1952), pp. 490-526. See also E. H. Hare, 'Masturbatory Insanity: The History of an Idea', *Journal of Medical Science*, vol. 108, no. 452 (January 1962), pp. 1-21; Robert H. MacDonald, 'The Frightful Consequences of Onanism: Notes on the History of a Delusion', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, vol. 28, no. 3 (1967), pp. 423-424; G. J. Barker Benfield, *The Horrors of the Half-Known Life: Male Attitudes Toward Women and Sexuality in Nineteenth Century America* (New York: Harper and Row, 1976), pp. 163-174; Thomas W. Laqueur, 'Credit, Novels, Masturbation', in Susan Leigh Foster (ed.), *Choreographing History* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1995), pp. 119-128.

while belief in the harmful effects of excessive expenditure of semen can be traced back at least to Hippocrates, Celsius and Galenus, the association of excessive expenditure specifically with masturbation (rather than with heterogenital intercourse, for example) only arose in the early 1700s, with the publication in English, and rapid translation into several other languages, of a pamphlet attributed to a 'Dr. Bekker', entitled *Onania; Or the Heinous Sin of Self-Pollution and All Its Frightful Consequences, in both Sexes, Consider'd, with Spiritual and Physical Advice to Those who have already Injur'd themselves by this Abominable Practice*.³³ It was Bekker who coined the word 'onanism', and his inventory of the frightful consequences of self-abuse – ranging from arrested growth, epilepsy, and impotence in men, to hysteric fits, consumption, and sterility in women – set the terms for the vast outpouring of medical and moral literature on the personal and social costs of masturbation for the next two and a half centuries. But as Spitz shows, prescribed remedies for self-abuse during the first century-and-a-half of masturbation phobia were anodyne – typically, dieting, exercise and hydrotherapy (cold baths) – and it was only around 1850 that severe punishment and restraint, combined with surgical measures like circumcision, infibulation, clitoridectomy, and cautery to the spine, thighs and genitals, became the preferred methods for suppressing masturbation, and remained so in all European countries for the next thirty years, lingering on in parts of Europe and America till as late as the 1930s and 1940s. Measured by its frightful *medical* consequences, the 'real masturbation' of Europeans only began in the 1850s, when the medical profession ensured that castration anxieties were more than phantasmatic.

It was also in the nineteenth century that the economic costs of onanism became an insistent *literal*, as much as metaphoric, theme of anti-masturbation literature. One of the genres of *de facto* pornography used by Victorian self-abusers was, ironically, the aptly-named self-help manual, written by assorted clergymen and doctors, designed to provide young men with regimes of self-discipline to prepare them for success in the competitive world of the modern business economy, and documenting the dangerous practice and effects of masturbation, which they figured as a debilitating drain on the economy of the working body. One of the most popular American exponents of the genre was the Reverend John Todd, preeminent authority on the problems of being a self-made male in the nineteenth century, whose guide to character-building, *The Student's Manual*, went through scores of editions in the US following its publication in 1835 and sold more than a hundred thousand copies in Europe by 1854.³⁴ Todd's theme was the need to maximise the vital personal resources – of energy, time, money and information – indispensable to success in the most 'advanced' because most democratic and business-driven of nineteenth-century societies. Bodily energies in general and sperm in particular were like time and money: to be 'save[d] with the utmost care, and spen[t] with the greatest caution'.³⁵ Todd figured energy and semen, like time and useful knowledge, as liquid, mutually exchangeable currencies, convertible into profit or pleasure, success or failure. In his model of the body, universal business competition was internalised: the self was an economy of energy in which personified interests like Ambition and Sloth, Procrastination and Fantasy competed for limited reserves of the vital currency, and it was as a prodigal wastage of these reserves that Todd indicted what he called 'the practice of pouring out by the hand (the vicious act of Onan)'.³⁶ As another exponent of the so-called 'fundamental law of the animal economy' advised in a manual on *Mental Hygiene* in 1863, the body's resources were valuable assets that should be 'managed' 'so as to ensure the greatest possible return'.³⁷

³³ Spitz dates the first publication of this anonymous pamphlet 'around 1700', whereas Laqueur dates the first edition from 1711.

³⁴ John Todd, *The Student's Manual* (Northampton: Hopkins, Bridgman, 1835). See Barker-Benfield, *Horrors of the Half-Known Life*, p. 135.

³⁵ 'A miser will frequently become wealthy – not because he has a great income, but because he saves with the utmost care, and spends with the greatest caution' (Todd, *The Student's Manual*, p 168).

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 146.

³⁷ Isaac Ray, *Mental Hygiene* (New York: Hafner reprint, 1968 [1st pub. 1863]), pp. 68, 89.

It was no coincidence that the decade in which such advice manuals began to proliferate - the 1830s - also saw the establishment of classical thermodynamics as a science of energy defined as capacity for work. The pseudo-scientific conception of sexuality that prevails in Victorian self-help literature of Todd's kind is a hybrid of the economic and the thermodynamic: an application of the laws of the conservation and transformation of energy, and of the entropy that Lawrence called 'dead loss', to the monadic economy of the self.³⁸

Why masturbation phobia should have begun to grip the minds of moralists and medical men in the eighteenth century is still subject to debate. There is not sufficient space here to rehearse these debates, nor to develop my argument about the emergence of consumerist economic theory during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, in which anxieties about wasted spending-power underwrite a correlation of semen, money and energy, and a perception that all three were in short supply, to be profligately spent at the waistrel's peril.³⁹ What I do want to argue is that the visions of scarcity that haunt Victorian sexual psychology were both a development and an inversion of the classical model of scarcity established by Enlightenment thinkers like David Hume and Adam Smith, who saw the rapid turnover in consumer fashions made possible by the Industrial Revolution as generating an insatiable desire to spend in the burgeoning middle classes – and who postulated the relative scarcity of goods, compared with an infinite abundance of desire, as a universal economic condition. It is this classical model of scarcity that becomes inverted in the so-called 'sciences' of neo-classical economics and sexology, which emerged in tandem with one another in the 1880s and 1890s, and whose own theories of scarcity and desire help to explain the ambiguous status of the spender, as both waster and winner, in Freud's and Lawrence's discourses of desire.

While English and French entrepreneurs were developing mass-advertising techniques to stimulate and intensify spending-desire in the late nineteenth century, neo-classical economists like Alfred Marshall in Britain, Leon Walras in France, and Carl Menger in Austria were stressing the essentially unreliable, idiosyncratic and ephemeral nature of consumer-wants and spending-desire. In Marshall's words:

It is an almost universal law that each several want is limited, and that with every increase in the amount of a thing which a man has, the eagerness of his desire to obtain more of it diminishes; until it yields place to the desire for some other thing ... There is an endless variety of wants, but there is a limit to each separate want.⁴⁰

When desire for any given object is perceived as limited and exhaustible, capable of burning itself out at any moment, what appears to be in demand in an economy of scarcity is not so much goods, or potential objects of desire, but desire itself – the desire that Freud figured as 'capital', or as the 'pure metal' to be 'extracted' by psychoanalysis from its middle-class clients' unconscious. Treating consumer desires as the sole yardstick of the value of goods, neo-classical economics reinterpreted production as simply an indirect or deferred form of consumption (driven as it was by a vision of the future consumption for which it provided), and it redefined *homo oeconomicus*, or the citizen-producer, as *homo desiderans*, the citizen-consumer, the capricious subject of a desire to spend.

³⁸ For a systematic application of the laws of classical thermodynamics to psychoanalytic theories of the libido, see C. J. Jung's discussions of entropy and the conservation and transformation of energy in 'On Psychological Energy', *Contributions to Analytical Psychology*, trans. H. G. and Cary F. Baynes (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1928), pp. 1–76. Jung here defines 'culture' itself as 'a machine' which 'functions as a converter of energy', or libido, from one form into another. For a discussion of attempts to correlate Freud's theory of the death instinct with the second law of thermodynamics (i.e., that of entropy), see Frank J. Sulloway, *Freud, Biologist of the Mind: Beyond the Psychoanalytic Legend* (London: Burnett Books, 1979), pp. 406–407.

³⁹ These arguments are developed in a longer version of this paper, entitled 'Burghers, Burglars and Masturbators: The Sovereign Spender in the Age of Consumerism', forthcoming in *New Literary History*.

⁴⁰ Alfred Marshall, *Principles of Economics* (London: Macmillan, 1890), p. 155.

Channelling this potentially scarce and unreliable desire into profitable exchange in the legitimate market of civil society – preventing its ‘wastage’, or what Lawrence called its ‘dead loss’, in the underworld economy of pornographers and prostitutes, masturbators and fornicators – was clearly one of the motives for the intensified campaign against ‘unproductive’ expenditure mounted during the increasingly consumerist eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

If neo-classical economics was an attempt to investigate the desire of the ‘sovereign’ spender ‘scientifically’, so, too, was the new ‘science’ of sexology which developed alongside it in the 1880s and 1890s. Like the economists, the sexologists treated desire as a universal, but its manifestations as essentially capricious and idiosyncratic, to be studied ‘scientifically’ across a spectrum of polymorphous perversity.⁴¹ For the sexual as for the economic ‘scientists’, the number of potential objects of desire is unlimited, but desire directed toward any one object soon falls off, because desire itself is scarce. Sexologists like Havelock Ellis equated erotic pleasure with the depletion or discharge of nervous energy, and they distinguished sexual practices on the basis of the speed with which this expenditure of energy occurred: masturbation was equated with immediate discharge, or ‘impulse-spending’; homosexuality with less instant but still rapid spending; and what Ellis termed ‘normal’, ‘civilised’, heterogenital love with long-delayed expenditure, or periods of abstinence in which the quantity of energy accumulated, projecting a correspondingly greater value onto the object of desire.⁴² The protracted courtship rituals Ellis equated with ‘civilised’ love thus resemble an interest-bearing deposit account, in which capital reserves of spending-power keep accumulating the longer expenditure is delayed, increasing the investment-value of the ultimate ‘discharge’. Freud, whose work profoundly influenced the sexologists and who recorded his debt to their research in his *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, also viewed object-love as a series of displacements of a single libidinal energy which he figured, not as inexhaustible or endlessly expendable, but as a potentially scarce resource that could be variously channelled, diverted, dammed up, or discharged. The law of the pleasure principle was that this libidinal energy tended to spend itself via the shortest possible path; hence the conservationist principle of diverting it along ‘the defiles of the signifier’ (Lacan), or the symbolic displacements (‘sublimations’) that Freud identified with civilization. When sexual energy was so dammed that spending was permanently delayed, it appeared to Freud to transform itself into pathological symptoms – civilization’s discontents. Uninvested capital, so to speak, burns a hole in one’s trouser pocket.

Sexology and neo-classical economics were complementary, ‘scientific’ moments in a broader redefinition of the citizen during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as primarily a subject of desire rather than of labour – a unit of spending-power rather than work-power. Freud and Lawrence were among the early twentieth-century sexual psychologists whose writings participated in this centring of desire – understood as the urge to spend (more or less ‘recklessly’) rather than to produce – in the definition of the social subject, which is to say in ‘civil society’. Critics of the industrial work ethic and advocates of libidinal release or expenditure as a means of alleviating its discontents, they represented the impulse to spend as a biological or natural imperative, anterior to the social, and thus irreducible to soci-economic or cultural determinations.

Sex, for Lawrence, was an originary psychical truth, irreducible to either the profit or the pleasure principles, and to *speak* sex was to speak the truth with a capital-T: ‘Sex is the one thing you cannot really swindle. Once come down to sex, and the emotional swindle must collapse ...

⁴¹ Thus the sexological debates of the 1880s and 1890s between Krafft-Ebing and ‘associationist’ psychologists like Alfred Binet and Albert von Schrenk-Notzing focused on the question of whether it was personal associations with chance events in childhood, or congenital factors, that determined a given individual’s unique sexual pathology, his or her specific form of fetishism, homosexuality, sadism or masochism. See Sulloway’s overview of these debates, in *Freud, Biologist of the Mind*, pp. 283-287.

⁴² Havelock Ellis, ‘Analysis of the Sexual Impulse’, *Studies in the Psychology of Sex* (Philadelphia: F. A. Davis Company, 1908), pp. 1-55.

Sex lashes out against counterfeit emotion, and is devastating against false love'.⁴³ Putting this truth 'back' into 'civil' circulation meant bringing it up from the underworld, out of the legal closet of the family or marriage vows, and stripping away the screens of Latin, blue book covers and the stigma of 'obscenity' from a plainspeaking sex – just as for Freud it meant freeing polymorphous desires, in the name of scientific reason, from the medical and moral stigmas of 'perversion' which had pathologised masturbation as an unnatural and immoral wastage of potentially profitable energies. But even as they construct sex as *the* truth of the subject, Freud and Lawrence irresistibly translate it into the currency of other truths. Sexology and psychoanalysis borrowed much of their aura of scientificity from the putatively non-ethical discourses of thermodynamics and economics: the one, however, a theory of energy defined as capacity for work, the other a theory of desire defined as the motor of industrial expansion. The repressed voice of the producer ethic thus returns in the putatively 'neutral' discourse of science. Lawrence famously repudiated the scientism of psychoanalysis, insisting on the 'untranslatable otherness' of unconscious desire, but even as he stresses the unfakeable, unexchangeable truth of sex, his terms threaten to convert it into the very monetary interests from which he wanted it freed: sex is that which cannot be 'swindled', it drives the 'counterfeit' off the market, 'collapses' the 'false' economy – as if sex were the only authentic currency, the one true coin, Freud's 'pure metal of valuable ... associations'.

In my reading of Freud's analogy between the unconscious and capital, psychoanalysis undertakes to put the sleeping asset of blocked libido to work, to bring it up from the unconscious, out of the closet of the symptom, into the open market of profitable exchange – profitable, alike, to analyst and analysand as investors in the economy of desire, the desire to be economical. This is one way of reading psychoanalysis's contribution to that 'putting-into-discourse' of sex which the nineteenth-century defined as a secular imperative, and which Lawrence helped to define as a twentieth-century literary imperative. Lawrence's tropes, like Freud's, can be read against their grain, his manifest metaphors interpreted as latently literal. Of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, he writes: 'I want men and women to be able to think sex, fully, completely, honestly, and cleanly. Even if we can't act sexually to our complete satisfaction, let us at least think sexually Now our *business* is to *realize* sex'⁴⁴ (my italics): as if the 'business' of converting sex into words, the legitimate currency of social exchange, were a matter of 'realising' hidden assets – which, indeed, is how Lawrence represents his own linguistic business of reclaiming what he terms 'the evocative power' of 'the so-called obscene words' from the underworld and putting them back into 'honest' circulation in 'civil' society, or middle-class conversation and 'serious' fiction.

In pointing to the stubborn traces of economism and productivism in Freud's and Lawrence's discourses on desire, however, I don't mean to imply either that a non-metaphoric language of desire might be possible or that Freud and Lawrence were closet opponents of the deregulation of the desire-to-spend – the libertarian or 'consumerist' revolution in sexuality. I want to suggest something more than that the producer ethic continues to inhabit the thinking of sexual theorists who were often critics of the repressive work ethic. Establishing erotic desire as an untranslatable ground of the psyche – and turning what Foucault called '*the* secret' of the self into an Open Secret – meant participating in the redefinition of the citizen as a subject of desire rather than of labour. But putting this secret into circulation in 'civil' society meant sacrificing its 'untranslatable otherness', opening it up to exchange. Freud was the first to admit the unavoidability of this exchange, or what he described as the 'figurative language peculiar to psychology';⁴⁵ any attempt to give unconscious desire a voice, to know the unknowable, cannot but substitute a reproduction for the original – or, as Derrida puts it in his reading of Freud, the unconscious is 'a text nowhere

⁴³ 'Apropos of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*', p. 96.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Sigmund Freud, 'Beyond the Pleasure Principle' (1920), in *On Metapsychology: The Theory of Psychoanalysis*, ed. A. Richards (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1984), p. 334.

present, consisting of archives which are *always already* transcriptions'.⁴⁶ But if unconscious desire is always already metaphoric, money is no less inherently metaphoric: to be 'realised' it must be translated or exchanged, as Marx illustrated when, in order to speak plainly about economic relationships, he translated them into erotic ones. In the first volume of *Capital* (1867), Marx tells us that 'commodities are in love with money', they ogle it with their price, 'casting wooing glances' at consumers' pockets;⁴⁷ and in his *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, he described capital as 'the eunuch of industry', arguing that 'no eunuch flatters his despot more basely or uses more infamous means to revive his flagging capacity for pleasure, in order to win a surreptitious pleasure for himself, than does the eunuch of industry ... [to] coax the gold from the pocket of his dearly beloved neighbour'.⁴⁸ Here, Freud's monetary metaphor (repressed sexual desire as capital) is Marx's sexual metaphor (capital as frustrated or castrated sexual desire). The economising of sex and the eroticising of money, it seems, are two sides of the same metaphoric coin. On the face of it, the pervasive use of economic metaphors by sexual psychologists during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries has the effect of extending market logic to the psychic domain, incorporating the most intimately 'private' and 'personal' in the public sphere of the market economy. But the discourse of erotic expenditure is inherently ambiguous and duplicitous: what appears from one side to be an economising of sexual desire appears from the other to be an eroticising of money. Flip the coin, so to speak, and the productivist and consumerist sexual ethics become indistinguishable.

The recourse by political economists to the language of sexual attractions, courtship and seduction to explain the logic of money and the 'fetishism of commodities' is the subject of another paper; but if, as I am suggesting, the languages of money and sex became inseparable at a certain historical moment, and quite possibly remain so, then neither discourse can ultimately claim to 'demystify' the other, or explain the other historically; in other words, neither discourse can finally establish itself as the language of historical facts, not rhetorical figures – as the literal, rather than the metaphoric, voice of history.

⁴⁶ Jacques Derrida, 'Freud and the Scene of Writing', *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press; Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978), p. 211.

⁴⁷ Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, Volume 1 (1867), 3rd ed., ed. F. Engels (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr & Co., 1919), pp. 121, 124.

⁴⁸ Karl Marx, 'Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts', in *Early Writings* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1974), p. 359.

Unconscious inference from metaphor: What follows from mothers' being warm and soft

BURTON A. MELNICK (*)

I

This is a very abbreviated summary of an article about the interlocking metaphors that structure our concepts of *softness* and *hardness*, *warmth* and *cold*. I'll be largely concerned with how fundamental patterns that we perceive in the physical world give rise to certain social preconceptions, especially about gender difference. I will not be dealing with literature at all, and I'm afraid I'll be dealing much less with psychology than I had originally expected to. But what I will be saying is, I think, relevant to psychology and to literature both.

Let me begin with two quotations. The first is from a commencement speaker: «It is a cold hard world.» The second quotation is from a psychoanalyst: «If for instance we designate ... a little boy's passionate love and wish to touch etc. his beautiful, warm, soft inviting mother as sexual then we have to postulate that the youngster is having an erotic experience.»

Cold hard world; warm soft mother. Typically, indeed, we pair «cold» with «hard» and «warm» with «soft». English, that is to say, includes the so-called conceptual metaphors COLD IS HARD and WARM IS SOFT. Presumably these metaphors originate in everyday physics. Heat matter, and it gets softer; chill it, it gets harder. With enough heat, a solid will soften into a liquid; with enough cold, a liquid will freeze – solidify. The prototypical case is water and ice (with steam being also relevant).

Now, since we often use metaphor to understand something abstract in terms of something physical, it's natural that we should apply the four physical terms «cold», «warm», «hard», and «soft» to more abstract domains. We normally use «hard», for example, to indicate difficulty, and to a lesser degree «soft» to indicate ease. We use «hard» and «soft» to express moral or emotional comfort and discomfort, as when we speak of «hard luck» or of «softening a blow». In speaking of

(*) Ecole Internationale de Genève, 62, route de Chêne, 1208 Genève, Switzerland.

character we frequently use the terms «warm», «cold», «hard», and «soft». We also use those terms in reference to intellectual qualities, referring to «cool reason» or an «overheated imagination».

Our metaphorical extensions of physical terms are governed by a principle of systematicity, by which the metaphorical use of «warm», «cold», «hard», and «soft» includes a sense of the relations prevailing among the physical terms. If «cold» and «hard» go together in the realm of the physical, that same relation will hold in more abstract domains. Thus, for example, we may have a tacit sense that cold reasoning is somehow *solid*, whereas an overheated imagination is *airy*.

In part because of this principle of systematicity, certain implicit value judgments result from the pairing of «hard» with «cold» and «soft» with «warm». Kathleen O'Connor has analyzed the conceptual metaphor SOLID IS GOOD. «Solid», she shows, requires *effort* (a positive value in our work-oriented society); it is *unchanging*; it is *safe*; it *keeps its shape*; and it is *permanent*. My article proposes a parallel analysis for «hard». Noting among other things the *immutability* of hardness (as in «Diamonds are forever»), I identify the conceptual metaphor HARD IS RELIABLE.

This leads to an interesting permutation. The original metaphor COLD IS HARD combines with HARD IS RELIABLE to produce COLD IS RELIABLE. Although this new metaphor normally remains unconscious and unexpressed, it impinges, I think, on expressions like «keeping a cool head» or «keeping one's cool» – certainly we feel that people who do *keep a cool head* are more reliable than *hot-heads*. We may well tend, even more generally, to perceive people with colder personalities as more reliable (even if less likable in other respects) than people with warm personalities. And is there not a widespread, usually unspoken, perception (or prejudice) that people from a cold climate – northern Europeans, for example – not only have colder personalities than people from warm climates – southern Europeans, say – *but also are more dependable*? Relevant here, I suspect, is the old patronizing image of certain Mediterranean peoples as «mercurial» – i.e., shape-changing.

Through their logical implications (or «entailments»), then, both COLD IS HARD and WARM IS SOFT give rise to whole constellations of qualities, including some to which value judgments are attached. The analyses in my article show that the COLD/HARD constellation includes the terms *solid*, *uncomfortable*, *unsympathizing*, *reliable*, *well-defined*, *comprehensible in detail*, *sharp* (sometimes *blunt*), *precise*, and *difficult*. WARM/SOFT includes the antithetical terms *liquid* or *gaseous*, *comfortable*, *sympathetic*, *mutable*, *ill-defined*, *not comprehensible in detail*, *flaccid* or *spongy*, *imprecise*, and *easy*. Whenever any one of those terms is used, all the others, with the value judgments that they may imply, are potentially present, consciously or unconsciously.

Consider the expression «the hard sciences». There, of the different senses attached to HARD/COLD, the most immediately operative is no doubt *precision*. A *hard* science makes precise measurements and gives well-defined results. But the other senses in the HARD/COLD constellation also operate. The «hard» sciences are perceived as more *solid* than other fields, as producing more *reliable* results, etc. They are even seen as *unsympathizing*, since in the popular mind they are disassociated from human qualities. Indeed, one of the overtones of the word «objective», often applied to the «hard» sciences, is «like an object» and therefore *unlike* a human being. A connotation of *difficulty* also adheres to the «hard sciences». And the apparent contradiction between «comprehensible» and «difficult» is apparent only. While it is difficult to master the hard sciences, success in mastering them gives you knowledge that is perfectly comprehensible.

If, then, a kind of intellectual cachet attaches to the «hard» sciences, it's in part because of the connotations of all the unspoken terms in the HARD/COLD constellation. Those who work in the «hard» sciences are unafraid of intellectual *difficulty*, their professional thinking is *solid* and *objective*, they produce knowledge that is *reliable*, *well-defined*, and *comprehensible*, and their minds are *sharp* and *precise*. Those who work in «softer» disciplines, on the other hand, have chosen fields that by comparison are *easy*. Their thinking is *airier* and more *subjective*. They deal in knowledge that is *imperfectly defined*. Indeed, they are likely to have *flaccid*, *imprecise* minds. It's hardly necessary to ask which of the two groups is, for example, more *worthy of trust* (or which of them is, on the other hand, more likely to display *humane sentiments*).

If the expression «the hard sciences» carries, along with everything else, benighted implications about the aptitude of females for subjects like Physics, it is because *male* is usually perceived as a term in the COLD/HARD constellation, and *female* a term in the WARM/SOFT constellation. Why men first come to be seen as basically hard and cold and women as soft and warm is a complicated question.

The intuitive answer would be that an infant's first caretaker is a mother, whom the infant experiences as soft and warm, especially when being held or fed and most especially when being breast-fed. The father is seen, in contrast, as hard and cold. He has no breasts, but may have harder, more prominent muscles than the mother. Furthermore, since the father does not nurse – or, in the case of bottle-feeding, probably does not give bottles as frequently as the mother – he is likely to hold the infant in a rather different way from the mother, perhaps not quite so close to his body, so that with him the child has somewhat less of a sense of warmth.

Such a picture is probably too simple. Men and women have the same body temperature. It may well be that anyone who picks up an infant and holds it tenderly against her or his body will be experienced as warm and soft. Though men cannot breast feed, they do give bottles. In any case, much or most of the experience of being nursed or given a bottle is, at least in Western societies, already over by the time the linguistic categories «mother» and «father» have been acquired. (And if the categories «mother» and «father» have any pre-linguistic fore-runners, a good part of the experience of nursing is in the past before even these pseudo-categories have been acquired.)

It is in fact extremely difficult to say how many of the perceived differences between «father» and «mother» correspond to real physical experiences during infancy and how many of them are later constructions, influenced by linguistic structures, which we retroject, presumably by the process that Freud called *nachträglichkeit*, onto our infantile memories. At some point we fit the opposition *mother/father* and its generalized equivalent *female/male* into the whole inferential system implied in cold is hard/warm is soft. Once that is done, *mother/father* and *female/male* partake of all the entailments that the logic of the system generates – so that if «father» strikes us as *cooler* than «mother», it may well be due as much to the way our language makes us think and speak about «fathers» and «mothers» as to our actual experience. Similarly with respect to other qualities that we ascribe to one or the other gender, the two factors – our experience and the logic of the underlying metaphorical system – will interact, often without our being able to know which plays the greater role.

Take the ascription of a cluster of metaphorically «phallic» qualities to males. Why does the potential of the male organ to become *hard* carry over to, say, stereotypes about male and female thinking? Phallic considerations become a concern to the child only fairly late in the developmental process, after it has mastered language. Possibly those considerations are simply inserted into logical and metaphorical schemas that have already developed. If so, there would then ensue a number of further, largely unconscious entailments concerning gender difference.

Such entailments do in fact occur. One of them has to do with *vigor*. I have pointed out elsewhere that the traditional association between this quality and the phallic stage of development is in fact based largely on a developmental coincidence. Conventionally, nevertheless, *vigor* is perceived as characteristic of hard maleness. That being so, the inverse quality of *languor* is attributed by binary logic to the female. *Languor* connects in its turn with further characteristics from the SOFT/WARM/ FEMALE constellation, such as *warmth*, *flaccidity*, and *moistness*.

Vigor has a further entailment. It implies *effort*. This association helps to generate the notion that the «hard» male is created for difficulty and strenuousness, the «soft» female for ease and indolence. And a slight extension of that opposition (between *hard/strenuous/male* and *soft/indolent/female*) produces the notorious sexual metaphor MALE IS ACTIVE/FEMALE IS PASSIVE. That metaphor combines with the opposition between *penetrativeness* and *receptivity*. There is, of course, an empirical basis for connecting maleness with penetrativeness and femaleness

Matthew Arnold's struggle for a true self

SAUNDRA M. SEGAN

I would like to begin with an epigraph from Roland Barthes who says, «He who refuses to reread reads the same story everywhere».

In my early attention to Matthew Arnold's poetry and prose, I systematically pathologized him through a Freudian reading of his work. I saw evidence everywhere of his adult struggle with incompatible and unacceptable desires which were transformed derivatives of the child's desire for his parents, or infantile sexuality. I viewed his poetic and prose constructions as expressive of the profound ambivalence he felt towards an always precarious identity, and I concluded that Arnold could not tolerate the psychological discomfort and uncertainty essential to poetic function and development. The longing in all of his writings to see poetry created anew through the use of past forms to me represented a nearly obsessive use of tropes expressive of a desire to return to origins as a source of imaginative life.

If Arnold encouraged readers to know «the best that has been thought and said in the world», show disdain for the «philistine», seek an approach to what he called «perfection» through attention to «adequate» language and ideas in literature of the past, particularly that represented by classical myths, as I saw it, he also attempted to recreate those myths through classical forms, particularly those burdened with Oedipal issues. I have always thought that Arnold's choice of subjects created intolerable anxiety in him, and that by turning to language that is descriptive rather than performative, by becoming a teacher of poets and readers instead of remaining a poet, he was able to say obliquely what his poems addressed too directly. Still, having been a poet of deep seriousness and melancholy, he privileged poetry in his prose, and in his correspondence he tells us that he saw himself as a failed poet or according to his own definition, as «a scanty spring». The result was that he used his prose commentary on the best uses of the past to deepen his own spiritual experience and that of others through attention to the symbolic or sublime nature of language.

Although my chosen way of reading the world continues to be psychological, I am now less inclined to read anything or anyone so conclusively. I do have theoretical inclinations, but these have become embedded in a relational way of doing clinical work, or what is also referred to as a two person psychology in which transference and countertransference issues both get examined for the benefit of the patient. Following Winnicott, I try to correct early deficits from an environment which was not good enough, which impinged on the expression of love and hate. Following Fairbairn, I try to address intrapsychic splits between exciting, or good, and rejecting, or bad objects. Following Sullivan, I try to distinguish between the need for security and the need for satisfaction. Together with the patient, I try to construct an atmosphere of spontaneous and authentic

response in which my reason and insight becomes less important than my patient's use of me as an object, as a means of access to *the true self*.

Although the analyst is always a resource which makes the relationship asymmetrical, interpretation gets arrived at through mutual play and not by either person alone; the work gets done in the transitional space created by both workers. Now, how can such an approach translate into the critical reading of literature? How can a text itself, which is all we have, serve as the transitional space? How can we use psychoanalytic assumptions created dynamically to read a printed text? Is mutuality a possible construct with a poem or a novel or an essay?

If I assume that Matthew Arnold's work reveals an approach/avoidance with poetry, especially his own, as I have been hinting, what gets constructed in my reading? What can I make of his complaints about the inaccessibility of «the buried life», about his dominant feelings of frustration and deprivation? Do his feelings suggest that he is living through *the false self*? Now Arnold is best remembered for telling us that

...we are here as on a darkling plain
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,
Where ignorant armies clash by night.

The poet here is a restless wanderer in an embattled state, as he is in many of the poetic narratives taken from classical myths and in the prose with its attack against «philistinism» and an intellectual and aesthetic call to arms with «the best that has been thought in the world» as the means of conquest. Here metaphors of noble warfare inscribe feelings of sadness which in turn raise questions about Arnold's attitudes towards the aggression in these tropes and bear witness to possible ambivalence in him about his identity. Now if I try to use my theoretical assumptions and clinical approach as a frame for constructing a psychological reading of Arnold through his texts, which is the subject and which is the object? Do the writer and the reader serve as both?

Perhaps a look at Arnold's poem, «The Buried Life», published in his first volume of poetry in 1852 and not again until 1885, three years before his death from a heart attack at the age of 65, can help. The poem begins,

Light flows this war of mocking words, and yet,
Behold, with tears mine eyes are wet!
I feel a nameless sadness o'er me roll.

Here is an object-seeking speaker who is expressing feelings of sadness, helplessness, and aloneness in the face of a linguistic attack and the lack of comfort from the object of his affection. He says,

Alas! is even love too weak
To unlock the heart, and let it speak?
Are even lovers powerless to reveal
To one another what they feel?
I knew the mass of men concealed
Their thoughts, for fear that if revealed
They would by other men be met
With blank indifference, or with blame reproved;
I knew they lived and moved
Tricked in disguises, alien to the rest
Of men, and alien to themselves – and yet
The same heart beats in every breast!

We can read his torment and outrage here in the face of deprivation as a re-creation of a persecutory or bad object experience which has been split off from the good or exciting object, but he does in the end acknowledge an urge towards connection.

At the same time, he bemoans the inadequacy of self-knowledge and/or the impossibility of knowledge of another and expresses frustration and restlessness at his predicament of living through a *false self* when he observes,

Fate, which foresaw
How frivolous a baby man would be –
By what distractions he would be possessed,
How he would pour himself in every strife,
And well-nigh change his own identity –/
That it might keep from his capricious play
His genuine self, and force him to obey

and thus ignore «The unregarded river of our life». To gain access to his own identity, to a *true self*, he realizes that he needs to be less embattled; he needs to feel less impinged upon by an intrusively demanding environment, one that fosters false compliance in him, or a *false self*. He needs to experience a good-enough environment which will reproduce a good-enough mother's sense of reciprocity and will adapt to her infant's needs and embrace his sense of helplessness and dependence until the helplessness abates.

Adam Phillips construes Winnicott's sense of reciprocity as his antidote for compliance with the environment. To Phillips via Winnicott, compliance is a crucial sign of an embattled child, of aggression misdirected. To Winnicott, aggression, which exists from the beginning of life, is at first synonymous with activity, appears prior to integration of the personality, and is part of the primitive expression of love. At the same time, the infant depends upon the mother for survival while the mother depends upon the infant for satisfaction of her needs. When the holding environment, that is, use of the mother through play that is vital to being and to feeling real, allows erotic and aggressive impulses to fuse appropriately, *the true self* can develop. On the other hand, if the infant needs to split off aggression as a reaction to the impingement from the environment on his sense of self, the self-system cannot grow in a transitional space, as the language constructs under discussion reveal.

Arnold's poem represents his struggle against his inclinations towards compliance. Of the «buried life», he remarks,

But often, in the world's most crowded streets,
But often, in the din of strife,
There rises an unspeakable desire
After the knowledge of our buried life;
A thirst to spend our fire and restless force
In tracking out our true, original course;
A longing to inquire
Into the mystery of this heart which beats
So wild, so deep in us – to know
Whence our lives come and whence they go.

The longing and sense of lack in these lines would be repeated throughout Arnold's writing life in poetic rewrites of ancient myth and in a kind of totemic worship of classical and religious literary form, subject matter, and attitudes. The myths chosen for his poems represent fratricide, patricide, and incest, but rather than fix on the Oedipal issues in these poems as I used to, I think now that Arnold's interest in this kind of primitive experience allowed him some legitimate access to unfettered aggression. For example, in his dramatic poem called *Merope*, the Electra myth gets rewritten through the story of a son thought to be dead who returns to his mother's land to avenge his father's death by a brother who has assumed the throne and married his mother. This son is nearly killed by the mother who thinks he is her enemy before they reconcile, he informs his mother of his uncle's misdeeds, and they plan together the murder of her current husband. In the epic narrative, *Sohrab and Rustum*, a son seeking recognition by an unknown warrior father challenges him on the battlefield and is mortally wounded by the father who then learns of the youth's relation to him and wants to kill himself but doesn't do it at his son's urging.

Arnold ends his poetic examination of the «buried life» by once again bemoaning the inadequacy of individual human experience and the sadness that arises when he thinks about it. He concludes,

Only – but this is rare –
When a beloved hand is laid in ours,
When, jaded with the rush and glare
Of the interminable hours,
Our eyes can in another's eyes read clear,
When our world-deafened ear/
Is by the tones of a loved voice caressed –
A bolt is shot back somewhere in our breast,
And a lost pulse of feeling stirs again.
The eyes sink inward, and the heart lies plain,
And what we mean, we say, and what we would, we know.

At the last, Arnold seeks self experience through an object and in so doing he anticipates a late twentieth century psychoanalytic way of reading. At the same time, psychic change did not occur for him through the writing of this or any other piece of poetry or prose. So what of the subject, or self, and object experience here?

Much has been written about the crippling effects of the famous, severe, moralistic Dr. Thomas Arnold, headmaster of Rugby, on his son's writing life, but other complicating issues exist: for example, his place as the second child and first born son in a family of nine children very close to one another in age, his wearing of a body brace until he was six years old in a household which encouraged vigorous physical activity in the children, his sporadic attention when very young from a very loving but gently demanding father, his possible neglect by an endlessly distracted, overburdened, and perhaps, cold mother, his growing up in a world that would continue into his adulthood to privilege action. After Arnold completed a memorial poem in the form of a classical idyll to his childhood friend and lifelong intellectual companion, Arthur Hugh Clough, who died prematurely while in Florence, he stopped writing poetry. Is it possible that this happened when his poetic forms of representation had helped him resolve some of his conflicts, or could it be that poetry could no longer refract but instead brought into focus his own psychological irresolutions? The problem for me is that it really is impossible to tell, much as I would like to know, much as I would like to understand if there is a relationship between the splitting of the object and blockage of this man's creativity or, for that matter, that of anyone else.

That which either encourages the flow or blocks creativity has interested me for a long time. I suppose that explains my long time interest in Arnold, for I do believe that the choice of one's subject is subject to one's subjectivity as is the assessment of a patient or the interaction with him or her. I also know that when I began to read Arnold, I was deeply impressed by his outspoken, elegant, witty, and controversial prose. In lectures, contributions to the periodical press, and ceaseless flow of books, he prophesized many things, many of which have come true. His most recent biographer, the Welsh poet, Nicholas Murray, has pointed to the fulfillment of a number of his predictions, such as «that we (the British, I guess) would become more European, that art would increasingly fill what Salman Rushdie has called 'the God-shaped hole' in the secular mind of the twentieth century, that religion must update itself if it wished to survive, that the rise of the mass media would force us to confront the question of the value and legitimacy of literature and art in an age of mass democracy, that Parliament would slowly be marginalized by other forces in the modern world, that England's problems with Ireland would be solved by justice and not by coercion, that the study of the classics would decline», and so forth.

If so much of our post-modern predicament was anticipated by Arnold, is this not as indicative of the kind of expansiveness that constitutes creativity, or expression of *the true self*, as any poetic endeavor? Cannot his abstract thought be as important as his poetic subjects and forms? Perhaps, but Arnold felt that poetry was the highest art form because of its affect and its capacity therein to produce affective states in the reader. He privileged tragedy because it not only aroused the passions but also tried to calm them. He gave the lowest marks to a poem in which «everything is

to be endured, and nothing to be done». He also called himself «a scanty spring» and thus suggested complicated issues surrounding his own sense of his capacity to feel rather than think. By sharing the degree of my interest in Arnold long ago, I have also revealed some of my own issues around thinking and feeling at that time, for every reading must serve as a barometer of the reader's feelings at that particular moment in his or her psychological history.

Now that I have become a therapist who prefers an interpersonal or relational mode of working, I have come to believe that the choice one makes for textual analysis always reflects the condition of one's psyche at that particular moment in one's personal history. However intense or extensive the study, this work can at best only comfort the critical reader; from my own experience, I would suggest that it cannot produce psychic change. Sullivan saw the role of the clinician as that of a «participant-observer» who engaged in «collaborative inquiry» with the patient. Such a way of working includes transference-countertransference interactions that are mutually constructed and thus enacted. In the end the capacity to experience psychic change, the capacity to realize *the true self*, can only occur in a dyadic exchange in which support and challenge allow for tiny incremental internalizations. This cannot occur through reading.

In 1968 Heinrich Racker said: «The first distortion of truth in 'the myth of the analytic situation' is that analysis is an interaction between a sick person and a healthy one. The truth is that it is an interaction between two personalities... each personality has its internal and external dependencies, anxieties, and pathological defenses; each is also a child with his internal parents; and each of these whole personalities – that of the analysand and that of the analyst – responds to every event of the analytic situation.»

I would like to close with a reading of two poems, one by each of two of my patients, the first, an African-American woman who is turning 40 as we speak and whom we will call K, and the second, an African-American woman recently turned 50 whom we will call L. Both of these women present lives seriously scarred by the after-effects of the slavery of their individual and racial ancestors. As with Arnold, their poems reflect the predicament of each poet at the point in time of creation, but do even poems of patients have anything to do with psychic change in them or in me? I think not. The poet of the first poem has improved her life considerably, but she continues to struggle against a depression grounded in a background of acute emotional and material deprivation. The poet of the second poem, the eleventh of thirteen children born into a Southern sharecropping family, has been struggling to improve the quality of her own life despite the retarding effects of a non-challenging job and a grown son who stays at home and is schizophrenic.

Winnicott said, «If society is in danger, it is not because of man's aggressiveness but because of the repression of personal aggressiveness in individuals». It seems to me that repression of personal aggressiveness can get represented in poetry, but to me undoing such repression is an interactive enterprise which hopefully will release greater access to the creativity of each individual involved.

Here are the poems written by my two patients.

The Origin of My Clothes

- - - by K

My grandmother
on
bended knee
elbow deep
in
pine-sol/steelwool pads/silver cleaner/
ammonia water/floor wax and tidy bowl
never wore the clothes I wore.

My grandmother
yes ma'm, no sir'd
an'
i don't know, 'all morning long.
'do you inderstand?'
they would say
'you're sure now?'
like she never had a mind of her own.

Yesteryear's
gold-dust twin
this year's
Tide
make my clothes clean and white
my grandmother never wore the clothes
i did.

*she never got called by her real name/never had a face/she never had a day's rest/an'a she could
never really laugh/an' if she got real sick/she had to recover fast./Her dreams were visioned in
silence for she never had an opinion/she never wanted to be somebody or so they thought.*

she cleaned/
she strived/
she washed/
she wiped three sets of
white children's silly tears and mine.
she struggled/
with the idea of spittin' in their food
an' tellin' her boss that 'colored gals
do grow up and not all women are
white.
she scrubbed/
her blackness against the floors/window/dishes/
and silver trays.
and in
frustration
she sweated/anger/rejection/degradation/and humiliation
against the backboards to clean/but
not once did she lose her pride
that
could never be taken away
my
grandmother
never wore the clothes i did
but
she brought
them home to me.

Nothing to Wear

- - - by L

Despair fits me
knows my contours
a tailored frock
I wear often.

Sometimes I accessorize
embroidering laughter
draping high spirits
onto certain areas
failed attempts
to refashion myself.

After short phrases
of being well turned out
I dress once again in despair
arranging my body for ease
into this perfect fit of despondency.

WORKS CITED

- Arnold, M. *The Complete Works of Matthew Arnold*. R. H. Super (Ed.). Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Arnold, M. (1960). *On the Classical Tradition I*.
- Arnold, M. (1962). *Lectures and Essays in Criticism III*.
- Arnold, M. (1965). *Culture and Anarchy V*.
- Arnold, M. (1965). *The Poems of Matthew Arnold*. Kenneth Allott (Ed.). New York: Longman.
- Arnold, M. (1970). *God and the Bible VII*.
- Aron, L. (1996). *A meeting of minds: Mutuality in psychoanalysis*. Hillsdale: The Analytic Press.
- Fairbairn, W. R. (1952). *Psychoanalytic study of the personality*. London: Tavistock.
- Murray, N. (1997). *Matthew Arnold*. London: Thomas Dunn.
- Phillips, A. (1996). *Terrors and experts*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Racker, H. (1968). *Transference and counter-transference*. New York: International Universities Press.
- Sullivan, H. S. (1953). *The interpersonal theory of psychiatry*. New York: Norton.
- Winnicott, D. W. (1971). *Playing and reality*. London: Tavistock.
- Winnicott, D. W. (1975). *Through pediatrics to psycho-analysis*. M. Masud R. Khan (Introd.). New York: Basic Books.

Con man fictions: Psychoanalytic reflections on a perverse structure

JANE KUPERSMIDT (*)

Summon to mind images of the con artist, and a diverse parade appears, from the medieval trickster to the great Vermeer forgers, or a fictional representation like the self-revealing long and short con master in Mamet's film *House of Games*. Perpetrators of hoaxes, literary or scientific frauds, swindlers and cult leaders could fit the designation, with every profession liable. Psychoanalysts are included as suspects, for they stand accused of preempting the position of knowledge in a dialogue whose rules are unequal, and imposing reified theory to define, organize and interpret life stories. But that is another problematic than the one I'll address in this paper.

Neither professional swindlers nor a world class impostor like the poet Thomas Chatterton can fully provide a model, though Chatterton typifies an aspect of the con theme in which the fiction lies in inventing an entire edifice of false data, including an authorial identity (his was Thomas Rowley), but not in the creation of the poems themselves. The art work stands as «true», even with a dubious provenance. This ironic twist formed the basis of one of Orson Welles' last films, *F for Fake*, which tropes the true, the real and the honest shamming that entices artist and audience alike. As a master forger laments in the film, he can paint a Matisse, a Picasso, a Mondrian – only he can't paint them with his own signature. Such people, needing to borrow a signature or an identity to present their work, thrive through psychological and tactical strategies that allow them to falsify origins and create another, richly imaginary «local habitation and a name». And whether artists by profession or not, most con men share their borrowings.

The con men I have in mind are inebriated with their own virtuosity, and devoted to an ongoing, self-inventing fictiveness. For them, the game yields as much and more than the end gain. They construct personal, relational identities – sexual, social, linguistic – that create transitory spheres of influence in the world, with all judgment and rules of interpretation shaped accordingly. Mephistophelian in their pursuit of difficult conquests, they use external constraints to provide impetus for the invention of a fictional self and its promotion. They seduce and abandon, inveigle and convince, invest all in speculative schemes, thrive on risk, and derive as much pleasure from setting up the stage as watching it collapse. They avoid envy by stealing in one form or other as soon as a difference in possession is observed, and the greater the odds against succeeding the

(*) 101 W. 12th Street, Apt. 7-S, New York, New York 10011, USA. E-mail: jkuper@mindspring.com

greater the triumphs. Easily stimulated, they play at semblance, performing disappearing acts that let them materialize. Con men rise to the challenge of constructing fictions about themselves as forgers rise to the challenge of making fakes that are true imitations, being frankly impostors in order to become authentic. When such a self is continually recreated, painted over and over on the same canvas of personality to conform to a consciously and unconsciously prescribed image, self and the work of art are the same.

Thomas Mann's comically ironic novel, *The Confessions of Felix Krull, Confidence Man*, gives a rendition of a con man's repertoire and methods. As a fabricated character, Krull can serve only as an imitation of a con man, but even a partial catalogue of his doings illuminates the type. Some of his seductions figure as classics of the genre – he ingratiates himself with a family, beguiles two generations of women and increases the piquancy of courtship by directing his gaze at the mother while warmly addressing the daughter (and vice versa). Never ceasing to marvel at his own endowments, Krull when an adult has as much fun getting a king to take him for a nobleman as he once had insisting his nursemaid salute when, with all due ceremony, he played at being the Kaiser. The picaresque plotting of Mann's novel could serve as an instruction manual for aspiring con artists. Sent off after the decline of the already shady family fortunes to make his way in the world, with just a promise to be taken on, unpaid, as a hotel apprentice in Paris, Krull develops his game plan. Assuming that any help that comes his way is a sign of divine approval, and that he is therefore obliged to make use of it, he relies on information gleaned from «a publication of clinical character» to disqualify himself from military service. He increases his stock of poses and cadences by conversing engagingly with everyone he meets, confiscates the jewels of his neighbor at the customs search while so charming the douanier that his own luggage is passed over (he will charm the owner of the jewels with this story during their mutual seduction shortly afterword), quickly rises at the hotel from elevator boy to waiter, with enough offers given him from men and women that he has to choose carefully which of the world's riches to take to his bosom, and begins a double life by renting a little room to house his gentleman's wardrobe and permit him to mingle in society. In this transformation he meets a young nobleman he has already pleased (when serving dinner at the hotel), is recognized as alike in body and soul and quickly chosen to impersonate the young man on a family prescribed educational voyage. The easily duped parents believe they are saving their son from decadence, but leaving the marquis in the arms of his mistress in Paris, Krull will take his place and embark on a succession of new adventures. We accompany him in his new guise only as far as Lisbon, where he is taken up by royalty, learns enough paleontology to delight a savant, writes home to his mama a heartfelt letter from her (fake) son, and devotes himself to the double seduction mentioned above. His capacity for delight gladly embraces both women, though the narrative leaves him well taken in hand by the mother. Like real life con men, Krull sustains his intoxication through the heady business of planning his conquests, elaborating their settings and applying himself diligently to learning whatever his seductions require and costuming himself accordingly.

What we don't see in the novel, in other than comic turns, is the con man's inevitable satisfaction in the sting aspect of his traffic with another's fantasies, or the elaboration of the aftermath of his passage. Even self-intoxicating con men more than temper their libido with aggression, and tend to leave desolation behind them as they move on when the game is over and the triumph secured. Though dangerous, they differ in quality and degree from the great villains. Both types, though the distinction is slender, have a primary investment in the diminishment or destruction of others, and reach heights of accomplishment in seduction and its pursuit. But in the scheming of Iago, for example, though trickery and dissembling provide the chosen and brilliantly theatrical means to destroy, the greater erotic charge in his language is carried by fantasizing about and witnessing the devastation he works. Malignancy plays out as more central than deception in the makeup of Iago, as Shakespeare portrays in Richard III as well. The Merry Widow murderer of Hitchcock's film *Shadow of a Doubt*, or the fortune seeking ex-con minister of Laughton's *Night of*

the Hunter, with the words «love» and «hate» tattooed on his knuckles, charm and seduce as the pathway in their drive to kill the women they despise.

In everyday life it's rare to meet the full-blown variety of the dramatically stunning but not purely villainous con man, but I'd like to offer the portrait of a character in which certain structures predominate. Most of these qualities, motivations and perversities appear in some degree in ourselves and the personalities we meet with regularly or know intimately. It is only when the crystallization of traits becomes so perceptible in one figure, and his forms of satisfaction so fit his need to seduce, delude, entrap and entrance with a story, that the label applies.

Generally male, with extraordinary exceptions like Laclos's Marquise de Merteuil in *Les Liaisons dangereuses*, (although it will be interesting to see how shifts in aspects of gender role expectations and gendered assumptions implemented from infancy on will enable latent con women), most of my examples are taken from literary, film and finally clinical versions of con men scenarios. In each case, the account shows that quite early in one's acquaintance with him, the con man introduces himself in terms of some particularity in his provenance, often a sort of grandeur in his family situation. The «family romance» of the impostor has frequently been described; the con man – imposturish in particular about his intent – conforms to this pattern.¹ Accordingly, in his fantasy, either one or both parents comes from high places, whether of family position, cultural sophistication, talent or wealth, or has some similar distinction: illustrious or heroic but insufficiently recognized and perhaps brought down by an overly ordinary world. In one example taken from my psychoanalytic practice, the father was convincingly portrayed as a brilliant, angry and isolated pianist, bound by the claims of pedestrian responsibilities to live out a claustrophobic family and professional life. The mother may be given an equally exaggerated set of particularities – either beautiful and possessed of uncommon grace and attraction, or uncommonly negligible in the grander scheme of things. The child's role in the family romance rises upward as well – he is more important, brilliant or desirable than the other siblings, and perhaps has special knowledge they can't understand. The family romance has various psychic functions, some quite complex. But one benefit is that, should his charm not work, the failure can often be attributed to deficiencies in the other. For Krull, it's the general loutishness of most people, unfortunates raised without the benefit of right instincts bettered by a fine upbringing.

Mann's ordering of his narrative follows these preoccupations of the con man's internal process, and emphasizes the crucial role of these grandiose fantasies for his hero. He begins with Krull's claims to a gifted legitimacy: «... I come of an upper-class though somewhat dissolute family.... my godfather Schimmelpreester, with whom I was on the most intimate terms, was a greatly admired artist whom everyone in our little town called 'Herr Professor'... and my father, though corpulent, possessed much personal charm and always laid great stress on the choice and lucid use of words. He had French blood on his grandmother's side, had himself spent his student years in France, and as he assured us, knew Paris like the palm of his hand.... This only by way of preface and out of its proper sequence. As to my natural instinct for good form, that is something I have always been able to count on all too well, as my whole career of fraud will prove....»²

¹ The psychoanalytic literature on the psychopathology of impostors and also on their relation to family romance fantasies is extensive, and begins essentially with Freud and Karl Abraham. See in particular Sigmund Freud, «Family Romances», in *SE IX*, 236-241; Phyllis Greenacre, «The Impostor» in *Emotional Growth Vol. I*, «The Family Romance of the Artist», and «The Relation of the Impostor to the Artist, in *Emotional Growth Vol. II*, (New York: International Universities Press, 1971); Louise J. Kaplan, *Adolescence: The Farewell to Childhood*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1984), Louise J. Kaplan, *The Family Romance of the Impostor Poet*, (New York: Atheneum-Macmillan, 1987).

² Thomas Mann. *The Confessions of Felix Krull, Confidence Man (The Early Years)*, trans. Denver Lindley, (New York: Vintage, 1955), 3-4.

Enhancing as he goes on, the con man recounts his history as part of a repertoire of pitches to engage one's sympathies. So extraordinary is his story, so wrenching the circumstances that preoccupy him, so vital the intensity of his revelations, that one cannot help being honored by the confidence so bestowed. This, after all, is the talent and signature of Melville's character in *The Confidence Man: His Masquerade*. In various guises, he informs his «marks» that they have been chosen by him for their intelligence, broadmindedness, and general air of charitable sensitivity. His interlocutors thereby become actors in the fictionalizing performance.

Clearly, the need to articulate an image, to find through language and speech the play in thought, is a general human enterprise (privileged in psychoanalysis, as in writing). But the turn to a heightening fiction to mediate intercourse with the external world takes this universal to an entrepreneurial level particular to the con man. It enables him to claim much and avoid even more. The fiction flamboyantly clouds the registration of limitations; the creation of a persona with a plot to implement permits the disavowal of unchosen difference – whether of anatomy, class, or generation. Basking in the warmth of his self-approval, he can consider the world his oyster, he its pearl. He constructs one or a series of repetitive fictions about who he is, what he knows and what he can perform that mediate the need for attachment, guarantee eternal, if infantile, victory over the paternal rival, and exert a persuasive, pervasive presence. In these story lines, whether in a clinical family drama or a crafted narrative form, the elaboration of a substitute reality is a life's work, and the enactment of fantasy representations a serious profession.

Both anonymous and famous con men display common structures, male gender being only one of them. The narcissism revealed in the perverse use of objects dominates in this character, along with the need to deny paternal potency, thus obscuring the fact of his own castration. Early on, the con man pursues the belief that he is the central figure in everyone's (his mother's) eyes – his own subjectivity demands an uneven playing field. Such a belief likewise demands a morality that is purely subjective. Superego development lags behind an infantile version of the ego ideal, which remains archaically self-invested. Further, just as, in the classical psychoanalytic theory on perversions, the fetish object is seen as standing in for an intolerably absent female phallus, so does the fiction stand in, for the con man, for all intolerable insufficiencies, narcissistic wounds and gaps in attunement.³ This is the con man's primary strategy, and it generates many derivative maneuverings to form the narrative web covering his own lack, smallness and insignificance.

What follows delineates in more detail the theoretical bases for my understanding of con men, and examines elements that are central in their mediating fictions and the necessity to perpetuate them at all costs. I continue with Felix Krull as exemplar of the fictional, fiction-bearing con man, then turn to the corresponding elements at work in the «victim». The line of reasoning follows further aspects of perversion, construction and delusion, and the replication of structures used in shaping these narratives, for both members of the dyad. I end with a clinical example, related to identification (by the «victim») with the psychic needs and the guilt of the aggressor, as discussed by Ferenczi.

PERVERSION

In general, psychoanalytic discussions of fraudulence turn not only to the topics of the recurring family romance but also, as elaborations of the profound narcissism involved in a devotion to misrepresentation, to facets of perversion. The perverse can be discussed in many different ways, in terms of what it permits creatively, its role in soldering the maternal tie, and what it reveals

³ Sheldon Bach, *The Language of Perversion and the Language of Love*, (Northvale, New Jersey: Jason Aronson, 1994).

about the human psyche in general and the realm of desire and the erotic in particular. But its various mechanisms of repression, displacement, disavowal and idealization all play prominent roles in the con man's inner theater and suit his creative purposes. More specifically, since certain perversions fix on an object, frequently concrete in nature, to represent a missing but essential presence, the use of a central focal point – a fetish – to provide erotic vitality enters the discussion of the con man's fictions. The fetish object is traditionally seen, (I quote Phyllis Greenacre), as having as its function «...to insure the fetishist of his possession of [the female phallus]. This is a...complicated magical procedure, related to fascination and self-hypnosis.... It combines magical materialization and obliteration, a figurative bringing to life or killing, and it very much influences tumescence and detumescence.» It also, of course, «contains congealed anger, born of castration panic».⁴ It doesn't require very much transposition to see these psychic states and actions in the use of a «fetish fiction» by the self-inventing, self-and other-deluding con man, who turns aside the threat of castration by refusing to enter a vulnerable phallic competition – i.e. one subject to the laws of the father and of difference. By reliving staged moments of infantile glory, he severs their historical sequel – the memory of the loss of omnipotence.

In Janine Chasseguet-Smirgel's discussion of perversion, the Oedipal is avoided through anal fixation, which fosters the illusion that pregenital sexuality satisfies the mother and eliminates the superiority of the father. «The two differences – between the sexes and between generations – are abolished at the anal level.»⁵ The con man's use of fictions for arousal and ascendancy demonstrate «... the idea according to which the fetish is an imitation of a genital penis, and that imitation, in general, is associated with anality. This leads us back, once more, to the fact that fetishism and perversion are connected with sham, counterfeit, forgery, fraudulence, deceit, cheating, trickery and so on – in short with the world of semblance.... The excitation the fetishist derives from the fetish... is necessary to maintain the lure on which his psycho-sexuality is built.»⁶ The proliferating stories the con man develops renew his own image, but without the process of idealization, his skill at imitation and invention would be an undirected tool. Like Krull, the con man can be absorbed in admiring his own body, the deft elegance of his hands as he waits on tables, even while using the affective charge this generates in him to reflect a semblance of love toward another person.

With all the polymorphous gratifications inherent in infantile sexuality, perversions permit many variations on the theme of narcissistic fulfillment. Lover-like in outward form, the perversely structured con man inserts his objects, those who cross his path and catch his fancy, into scenarios that will aggrandize one or another aspects of his presentation. Disguising the insufficiency at his core, the con man proposes barely reworked versions of the nursery fantasy, where frustration is only a game. The more the strategy is implemented, the more the pretense is enhanced, and grows into an entirely subjectified, erotic activity. When Mann's Felix Krull considers his great success at feigning, even as a child pretending to be seriously ill, he explains: «I have always been very sensitive, susceptible, and in need of care; and everything I have accomplished in my active life has been the result of self-conquest – indeed, must be regarded as a moral achievement of a high order.... I had improved upon nature, realized a dream; and only he who has succeeded in creating a compelling and effective reality out of nothing, out of sheer inward knowledge and contemplation – in short, out of nothing more than imagination and the daring exploitation of his own body – he alone understands the strange and dreamlike satisfaction.... I was highly excited; I had concentrated my whole being upon an act of will; I was drunk with the intensity of my own performance....»⁷

⁴ Phyllis Greenacre, «Fetish and Transitional Object», in *Emotional Growth Vol. I*, (New York: International Universities Press, 1971), 333.

⁵ Janine Chasseguet-Smirgel, *Creativity and Perversion*, (New York: Norton, 1984), 91.

⁶ Chasseguet-Smirgel, 80-82.

⁷ Mann, 36-39.

His auto-erotic pretense functions like the fetish object that must exist in order for excitement to be liberated. Objects are simultaneously essential and superfluous, needed only as audience and incitement to imagination. Where someone else is needed for the self fiction, this temporary, necessarily idealized (and then debased) figure need not resemble a wished-for real object. To the extent that the con man worships his own acquisitive, enmeshing form of desire, the process of seduction itself has the status of its own object. Intent on a semblance of uniqueness and mastery, his strategy of fleeting attachment enables him to first control, then devastate, the integrity of an external object. In a way altogether characteristic of perversion, object and aim, desire for a person and desire for a particular form of gratification, are separate, and the former shrinks under the dominance of the latter. Such a desire calls for acting upon the object, making of the object a narcissistically providing environment or a mirroring setting, rather than seeking interaction. The perverse behavior, then, really has the action as its object⁸, and essentially the deliberate destruction of any subjectivized desire in the other. It is an ironic crystallization and parody of how object finding and loss plays out when an other cannot stand as separate, becoming mere projection in the con scenario.

In its fashion, the con man's solution is a brilliant one – as Freud pointed out, the perverse scenario achieves its goal – for the repetition of the lie allows him again and again to locate his own semblance of authenticity and simultaneously create the scene of contempt for the object, much as occurs in other forms of fetishism. Again, Krull's insight is pertinent. At the beginning of his career in the world at large, as opposed to the nursery world, he can find satisfaction even in the bright livery of a menial elevator operator position. «Although later on I achieved dazzling success in passing myself off for more than I was, for the time being I passed myself off for less, and it is an open question which deception gave me the greater inner amusement, the greater delight in this fairy-tale magic.»⁹ And surprised by his own coolness, he muses upon the idea that sometimes preoccupies him, «the idea of interchangeability. With a change of clothes and make-up, the servitors might often just as well have been the masters... an aristocracy of money is an accidental and interchangeable aristocracy.»¹⁰ And a bit further, as a waiter «...Thus I masqueraded in both capacities, and the undisguised reality behind the two appearances, the real I, could not be identified because it actually did not exist.»¹¹ Being so easily depersonalizing of any object in the service of his enactments, this figure is an undisputed master of metonymic modes.

THE VICTIM'S ENACTMENT

Can the victim be said to follow as predictable a psychic «patterning» as the con man, and exhibit as many preconditions for even fictional loving? Yes, and no, for in this peculiar co-construction, each party carries a different fantasy/delusion, yet they share a plot, even though each interprets it differently. In this model of alienation from subjectivity, the two have quite different perspectives and are pursuing radically different emotional needs. But they have in common an inability to be authentically subject for themselves or object for another. Krull describes the heightened place of the joint fantasy, the glance and the embrace: «Only at the two opposite poles of human contact, where there are no words or at least no more words, in the glance and in the embrace, is happiness really to be found, for there alone are unconditional freedom, secrecy, and profound ruthlessness. Everything by way of human contact and exchange that lies between is

⁸ M. Masud R. Khan, «Intimacy, complicity and mutuality in perversions», *Alienation in Perversions*, (Madison: International Universities Press, 1979), 20-21.

⁹ Mann, 187.

¹⁰ Mann, 224.

¹¹ Mann, 230.

lukewarm and insipid; it is determined, conditioned, and limited by manners and social convention.»¹² For the victim, wanting the reassurance of «everything that lies between», since the glance and the embrace are fantasized as absent, abjection becomes a familiar home base, the point of departure for submission. Even though the victim's restitutive needs do not focus on a humiliating genital absence, the specter of the unavailable object, unresponsive to love and rendered sadistic by the victim's need, infuses every connection with doubt and the potential for shame. The con artist weaving stories recognizes his victim as one not in possession of the essential, if mysterious, quality of adequacy. Thus the subjectivity of each depends on the fantasy of the other for its construction – the two inhabit a vertiginous space without stability. The con man chooses the vitality of the fiction as more real than the dead space left in its absence. The corresponding delusion of the victim, believed in with equal fervor, is that the lost love object, the banishing, punitive parent or the seducer, will be the same as the savior, the rescuer from exile. (This is the scenario that Heinrich von Kleist's *The Marquise von O...* so ironically parodies.) But self and fiction, by definition, are inadequate to the task of restitution. Accepting in this way the con man's lie, the victim forecloses his or her own ability to decipher meaning and thereby change the script.¹³

The invitation to complicity offers only a delay in the slippage from delusion to conscious doubt as the tantalizing object recedes. For the victim, the effort to not know is unsuccessful and the hopeful fiction, the demand that carries the demise of desire, breaks down. Unable to find a language, the victim ceases to be a site of interest. Viewed from the position of a third, the motive force of the narrative moves elsewhere. Victims fare no better in literature than in life; in both they are likely to arouse the sadism of the reader/onlooker. The victim in any case receives less attention than the perpetrator – many works turn on the progressive decline, alienation from society and inevitable disappearance which constitute the fate of the duped victim.

CONSTRUCTIONS AND DELUSIONS

Not only why, but how such fictions gain a hold in the consciousness of both participants remains a question. In his 1907 discussion of Jensen's *Gradiva*, Freud begins to map the nature of construction and delusion in psychoanalysis. Not overlooking the central, if obvious, assumption in such a discussion, that «the most important of all the explanatory and exculpatory factors remains the ease with which our intellect is prepared to accept something absurd provided it satisfies powerful emotional impulses... and far more so if some of the mental processes concerned are linked with unconscious or repressed motives»¹⁴, Freud sketches what is involved in forcing congruence of fantasy and fact. First, some element of truth must obtain. «If a patient believes in his delusion so firmly, this is not because his faculty of judgment has been overturned and does not arise from what is false in the delusion. On the contrary, there is a grain of truth concealed in every delusion, there is something in it that really deserves belief, and this is the source of the patient's conviction, which is therefore to that extent justified. This true element, however, has long been repressed. If eventually it is able to penetrate into consciousness, this time in a distorted form, the sense of conviction attaching to it is over-intensified as though by way of compensation and is now attached to the distorted substitute of the repressed truth, and protects it from any critical attacks. The conviction is displaced, as it were, from the unconscious truth on to the conscious error that is linked to it, and remains fixated there precisely as a result of this displacement.»¹⁵ For the con man,

¹² Mann, 83.

¹³ Though different from the frame of this paper, here in particular Lacan's understanding of demand, desire and the locus of lack is crucial. See Jacques Lacan. «La direction de la cure et les principes de son pouvoir.» (1958) in *Écrits*, (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1966) 585-645.

¹⁴ Sigmund Freud, *SE IX*, 70.

¹⁵ Freud, *SE IX*, 80.

the conviction that the hierarchy of power achieved through the use of a fetish fiction is symbolically adequate and thus «real» perpetuates the distortion for which it was the solution. An unconscious act of substitution, one of many equally complex constructions he performs, allows belief to hold sway.

Much later, in his 1937 paper on «Constructions in Psychoanalysis», Freud takes up aspects of the question again. «In the mechanism of a delusion we stress as a rule only two factors: the turning away from the real world and its motive forces on the one hand, and the influence exercised by wish fulfillment on the content of the delusion on the other.... The delusions of patients appear to me to be the equivalent of the constructions which we build up in the course of an analytic treatment – attempts at explanation and cure....»¹⁶ That is, they are attempts at bridging incompatible psychic experiences – very close to what I have been calling mediating fictions when the analogy to the self-cure of the con man is considered, or when the hopeful fantasy of the victim is examined.

Likening delusions to hysteria, Freud here explains that his earlier characterization also applies to delusions, «those who are subject to them are suffering from their own reminiscences....» Compulsive beliefs, reminiscences of an infantile fantasy scenario given an adult *mise en scene* – these characterize con man and victim, though in the perpetrator we are struck by the degree of organization, the method strenuously applied. The con man, imbued with his family romance fantasies, repeats the moment when all eyes follow the adored child, as in the game of Krull riding stiff with pride in his role of Kaiser. He permanently prolongs the moment just before the arrival of the real Kaiser, the father capable of separating child from mother and sending him to an Oedipal defeat.

The archaic past called up for the victim presents almost the Janus-faced opposite of the con man. The reassurances sought by the victim serve a temporary, recuperative function. At last it becomes possible to leave the reticent safety of invisibility to be identified, chosen, and included in a fully idealized, intensified drama. Believing that he or she appears necessary for the other's sense of wholeness restores a moment of legitimacy to the victim. To have persuaded the con man to give his confidence – often central to the action of the con itself – has a victorious, if ironic, ring. But the remembrance of reciprocal ties with a good object that could foster enough «survival narcissism» quickly fades before the presence of lack.

REPLICATIONS

In citing cinematic and literary evocations of such scenarios, and in drawing on *The Confessions of Felix Krull* in particular, pathography is not the goal. Rather, my intent is to show how, through such means as digressive rhythms, concretization and interchangeability of characters and plot elements, the structure of the narrative displays the substitutional axis along which the con man carries off his representational theater. Krull, for example, interrupts himself when he relates an external event to give asides calling the reader's attention to yet another display of the hero's manifest and inevitable superiority – his virtuosity of description and subtlety of insight reassert his subjectivity as the given narrative frame.

Hitchcock's *Vertigo* is so aptly entitled in that the continual oscillation between conviction and despair, false knowledge, and a «reality» negated when perceived, all characterize the world its hero inhabits. He embraces a deception enacted by a woman deceived in her turn by the film's nearly absent con artist – the murderer who alone knows the purpose of his fiction. The hero then recreates the disturbances of coherence found in his fantasy, falling victim again in an effort to construct a scenario of verisimilitude out of his delusion. The film moves with the vertigo of physical gravity, of visual perception, of distance and closeness to the so greatly desired object, of

¹⁶ Sigmund Freud, *SE XXIII*, 267-268.

multiple fictional layers and misperceived realities. Like Mann's novel, *Vertigo* uses formal means to substantiate an intrapsychic reality.

IN THE CON MAN'S AFTERMATH

The seemingly radical discrepancies between the purposes of the con man couplings, on the one hand, and a perversely structured parent-child relationship, on the other, can shed light on the complex fantasy structures I have been discussing. The use of a created and perpetrated fictional scenario provides the link between perverse behavior of adult toward child and the con man's doings. A different approach is invoked by the needs, purposes and victims of a perpetrator of fictional attachments than that called for in considering the dilemma of a confused, inarticulate individual unable to locate his own reality in regard to an object. But like the con man's victim, the child is caught in a dyadic pact where power and knowledge are unequally distributed. Such a child struggles to be the central subject of his own experience, or to find any idealizable core in himself. The constructions required to sustain the delusion of love draw subject and object into the same symbolic frame, yet no reciprocal intimacy occurs.

The child's vulnerability in being subjected to this semblance of intimacy comes out of a dependence that erases boundaries. Ferenczi's paper on «The Confusion of Tongues between Adult and Child: The Language of Tenderness and of Passion», portrays the recognition of disguised aggression and the descent into confusion experienced by the misused child. Ferenczi first noticed that certain patients had an extraordinary ability to key into any critical or negative feelings harbored by the analyst. Unable to refute or articulate what they felt, these patients insisted on relating to the aggression they knew existed. When once able to recognize the truths in their claims, Ferenczi began to hear more about the unconscious process which linked the transference behavior he saw with his patients' experience of pathogenic trauma. He writes: «A typical way in which incestuous seductions may occur is this: an adult and a child love each other... this play may assume erotic forms but remains... on the level of tenderness. Not so, however with pathological adults... If more love or love of a different kind from that which they need, is forced upon children in the stage of tenderness, it may lead to pathological consequences....»¹⁷ And a further, key explanation: «Through the identification, or let us say introjection of the aggressor, he disappears as part of the external reality, and becomes intrainstead of extrapsychic... the attack as a rigid external reality ceases to exist... When the child recovers from such an attack, he feels enormously confused, in fact, split – innocent and culpable at the same time – and his confidence in the testimony of his own senses is broken.» Like the victim in the con man dyad I have discussed, the child here loses the adequacy of his perceptual and explanatory capacity. With so few options, he comes to accept love in the (only) form available. If he attempts to relinquish the offered fiction of an intimate connection with a loving adult, the child loses even the fantasy of a secure embrace. Without the means to develop a clear identity of his own, the child takes root in the often guilty, perplexed identification with a faithless, manipulating object. Both conned victim and confused child have attempted to construct a language of tenderness out of the language of differently motivated passion addressed to them.

Though a shift in discourses is required to follow the analogy I suggest, in my psychoanalytic practice I have seen the effects of mismatches of kinds of love sought and experienced. These patients lose their bearings because they cannot read or tolerate knowing the intention in the

¹⁷ Sandor Ferenczi, «Confusion of Tongues Between Adults and the Child: The Language of Tenderness and of Passion (1933)», in *Final Contributions to the Problems and Methods of Psychoanalysis*, (New York: Brunner/Mazel, 1955), 161- 164.

attention directed toward them. The psychic mechanisms mobilized to defend against knowledge, and the loss of identity, are as characteristic of them as of the con man's victim. Unable to make reparative or reorganizing use of fictions, they bring into treatment the signs of too much and the wrong kind of libido directed their way, and the consequent disturbances in the reading of reality. Subjected to the morbidly self-referential coerciveness of parents unable to love, these patients are continually apprehensive about abandonment and disapproval. While the con man can range freely through his world, populating his psychic theater with whatever objectprops he needs, the less perverse child can't sustain such independence. Forced to lean on an unreliable object, he must construct a guilty fantasy that will permit him to retain his parent as a love object. Moreover, his fantasy of his own guilt must be severe enough to accommodate the destructiveness of the aim directed his way. Like the con man's chosen object, such a person depends for survival on maintaining the deceptions of a deeply ambivalent, idealized figure. Forced to emulate a mode of attachment deriving from an adult's conscious and unconscious schema, he internalizes and becomes aligned with the perverse mechanisms of the conning parent.

Con men wouldn't be expected to seek psychoanalysis, for they are necessarily wary of any intervention in their strategies. However, an experience in my practice with a patient who displayed both con man and victim characteristics was precisely what led me to think about the connections between the fictional and clinical pictures. As a child, the patient in this case was treated suggestively, not actively abused, but he felt coerced to adopt the fiction of having an idealizable, loving parent. The picture insisted upon by the perversely structured parent (who of course could sometimes also be that figure) was sustained by the complicity of his son.

The young man who came for analysis was well educated, scientifically gifted and from a well-to-do family. He suffered from an inability to enter the world as a player of any significant kind, nor could he succeed in less demanding professions. He was contemptuous about the abilities of others, hated all adult constraints on his behavior, and needed to claim exaggerated powers for himself. Concrete reporting dominated in his speech, and his inability to play symbolically made his discourse impoverished. Analogies and metaphors were initially suspect in our work – they opened a field for ambiguity and so were threatening. Only gradually did the distortions in identification appear. Protecting his father's image went along with an inability to emulate his successes.

It was clear to him that he was too vividly present for his father in a sexual sense. The latter was verbally and physically suggestive, multiplying sexual innuendo, gestures of affection and moments of contact performed as if incidentally in the intimate spaces of bedroom and bathroom, always skirting transgression while inviting constant overstimulation and perplexity on the son's part. Sexual props and anal-sadistic pornography were easy to find in the house, and occasionally pointed out. The patient could not recognize or articulate this as aggression; rather, he had internalized awareness of his whole body as an unwholesome sexual target that must be the agent of misdeeds as well. He developed various disorders of his «skin envelope», and later felt that his semen would be toxic – outer and inner were both suspect. His dreams and transference fantasies contained many sadistic and passive elements. The sexual confusion of being undermined and yet overly empowered as an object of desire made the certainty of his castration and the anxiety of preventing it equally blocking to thought.

He got insufficient help from his mother – too little in the way of warmth, too much that was uncomprehendingly hostile. Her own anxiety, harsh super ego and uncertain identity had the effect of making her a partner in the distortion. Her criticism redoubled his own attacks on his unacceptable body, with all its imperfect parts. Although the mother's investment in her son's sexuality was very different from the father's, she also had difficulty obeying the generational difference; she too wanted to be victorious in his desire. Determined to make him sexually aware of her, she commented extensively on her attraction to his adolescent friends and her curiosity about his sexual practices. He couldn't take in the mirage of an Oedipal victory called up by his mother's deceptively simple

question – Shall I teach you how to kiss? But he couldn't renounce that fictional victory either, and was profoundly immobilized in several areas of development. Since, as an adolescent, he was sexually capable of choosing his Oedipal object as a real object, the distinction between cherishing in fantasy and possessing in reality was seriously blurred. This situation, like the passive desires awakened by his father, and like the con artist dyad, has sufficient truth buried in its narrative, sufficient reminiscences behind its delusions, to conjure endless repetition, to make all identifications problematic, and to set in motion the inadequacy of refinding as leading to another object of desire.

The tangle of fictions such a patient inhabited were his credentials, his unfortunate passport to the world of the con man's perverse satisfactions. Believing that I would not use him for my own purposes required his developing a new category of thought and a new possibility for desire. And as for any such victim, it was a long time before it was clear whether his grief over losing the infinite promise the fictional love had offered would be assuaged, and would give way to the paler enticements of attachment and intimacy.

All of which brings us round to the thought that the con man's constructions and a victim's fantasies are equally involved with the reworking of reminiscences and the necessity of fictions to come to terms with those reminiscences. In analyzing such configurations, the question is one of apportioning knowledge and duplicity as they interweave in inventing a past to tolerate the present, or constructing a present to tolerate the past.

«The Symbol of that which constrains us»: David Mamet's *Homicide*, paranoia, and the ambivalence of cultural identity

GEOFFREY GREEN (*)

David Mamet's *Homicide* (1992) explores the ambivalence of cultural identity within the boundaries of an explosive terrain of mistrust, paranoia, duplicity, deceit, and death. Whereas Mamet's stories typically confine themselves to the delimited regions of a particular subcultural milieu (i.e., salesmen, teachers and students, confidence artists, etc.), *Homicide* opens up the Mamet landscape to include a larger panoply of urban culture: politicians, the federal and city police forces, the urban ghetto, the urban middle class, the society of drug dealers, the house of worship, and the world of terrorists. Sociology, psychology, and religion intersect: on Mamet's terms, it is as if Thorstein Veblen, Sigmund Freud, and Moses Mendelssohn sat down to a high stakes poker game. Mamet asks the ageless question – *Who am I?* – but onto it he appends the additions – *to myself, to my cultural communities, to my God*.

Mamet's film opens with a silent paramilitary expedition by the FBI to break into the home of Robert Randolph, a notorious black drug dealer. The campaign is botched – two residents of the house and an FBI agent are killed while Randolph escapes over the roof tops – and Mamet creates the impression of the FBI as an out-of-control militia bent on breaking and entering. The mayor discharges the FBI and, under considerable community pressure, returns to the police force the case to which they had originally been assigned before the FBI seized control. At a meeting with Deputy Assistant Mayor Walker and *his* assistant, Patterson, Bobby Gold, a Jewish detective, defies the advice of his partner, Tim Sullivan, to remain uninvolved and speaks up to present a plan. Gold's plan is that the detectives arrest Randolph's brother-in-law, Willie Sims, and then pressure Sims to give up Randolph. Gold is astonished that the response of the city officials is anger that he did not volunteer the plan earlier despite the fact that the cops had been pulled off the

(*) San Francisco State University, College of Humanities, Department of English, 1600 Holloway Avenue, San Francisco, CA 94132, USA.

case. Patterson threatens him with suspension; Gold's wiseguy retort to Patterson insults him as a «Queen for a Day» (11). The black city official, breaking the bounds of decorum and denying that Gold's plan might help the mayor, calls Gold a «little *kike*» (11).

Despite the fact that Gold had ignored his partner's advice to lay low, and despite the fact that Gold was volunteering for a high profile assignment to garner more recognition, Sullivan, Gold's partner, rushes to defend him against the mayoral official. «You fucken faggot...» he tells Patterson, «...[do] you know what this man has *done*... in the line...?» (12). Mamet presents us with a powerful image of the police as an institution at war with its own city government officials. The language is powerful and incendiary: that it would be used by city officials is unnerving, but, as Sullivan reminds Gold, it all balances out: «So he called you one, you called *him* one...» (21). Gold, however, is disturbed: Patterson «had no fucken call to get *racial* on me» (21); Gold's conclusion is that the «Job's changed» (23). Sullivan reminds him that everything is the same: «people dying, people killing them» (23). We see Gold and Sullivan as partners bound by respect, affection, and even love. «You're like my family, Tim,» Gold tells his partner, and he receives this reply, «Bob... I *am* your family...» (80). Nevertheless, Gold is unlike the other members of the detective squad: he is the «hostage negotiator» (10), the department's «*talkin'* man» (38); he is called «The Orator» by his colleagues (40). He enforces the law with words as well as strength, with his brain as well as his body.

On his way with Sullivan to roust Randolph's brother-in-law, Willie Sims, Gold is catapulted into a new case. Initially, it seems to be a routine act of violence, the murder of an old woman who ran a small store, or, as Sullivan describes it, a «candy store pop» (79). But the victim is an old Jewish woman and the store is in a black ghetto neighborhood. As Gold begins to suspect that the motive may be anti-Semitism and that a conspiracy may be involved, his commitment to the case intensifies: we see Gold detecting not only the solution to the case but to his own identity.

Mamet imparts the aspects of the case with such psychological, symbolic, and cultural intensity that we, the viewers of the film, become detectives as well, searching for a mode of inquiry that will lead to a solution – to the murder *and* to the question of cultural identity. This viewer-as-detective process begins before Gold and Sullivan leave to arrest Willie Sims, when Gold is embroiled against his will in a squad room altercation. A suspect (referred to by Mamet in his screenplay as «The Grounder»), accused of murdering his wife and three children, lunges at Gold. The Grounder administers a powerful blow to Gold's head, and inadvertently damages Gold's gun holster. The Grounder's avowed purpose was to steal Gold's gun and commit suicide. This police house incident takes on psychological and symbolic significance and directs – in coherent and mysterious ways – the subsequent events of the story.

Thus, on the way to the Willie Sims arrest, their attention diverted by tending to Gold's head wound, Gold and his partner stop at the candy store to help out their fellow police on the scene: one of them is trapped inside by a dangerous pit bull. Sullivan proceeds to the Sims bust, but Gold, the originator of the Sims plan, feels obliged to remain and quell the threat of the dog. After succeeding, he calls for a car to take him back to the high profile case. But the police brass who arrive on the scene inform him that the arrest of Sims has already taken place and that this case, this candy store shooting, is now his: «You caught the case. Do your job» (35).

«Do your job» is what Gold had been told earlier by Patterson (as a means of getting him to work on the Randolph drug bust case). Now he is told the same platitude in order to pull him *off* the Randolph case and onto the candy store case. He is told the same thing by Dr. Klein (56), the son of the old murdered woman, to persuade Gold to stay on the candy store case when Gold begins to feel that it is merely a routine robbery gone awry. Gold's difficulty is that, for him, the «Job's changed» (23): he has been labeled derogatorily as a Jew and his sense of himself as an officer whose job is «to serve and to protect» (15) in a detached manner has now changed. His partner warns him: «Bob. I want to tell you what the Old Whore said – and this is the truest thing I know – When you start coming with the customers, it's time to quit» (84). Gold discovers that he has been officially assigned to the candy store case *because* he is a Jew: his lieutenant tells Gold Dr. Klein

requested him: «you're 'his' people, you're on the case» (40). Gold responds heatedly: «I'm his people...? I thought I was *your* people, Lou...» (40). What *is* his job, and who *is* he: is he a Jewish cop? or a cop who recognizes himself primarily as a Jew?

The more Gold delves into the candy store case, the more he is conflicted: his investigation reveals that there may be an unfolding conspiracy that may or may not include neo-Nazi violence and Israeli/Palestinian commandos. Gold's sense of himself as a cop draws him to the Randolph drug case: he devised the plan and he is needed by his associates to carry it out. When Sims gives up Randolph's address, Gold sweet-talks Randolph's mother into handing over her son in order to save his life. The plan involves a false passport and airplane tickets: Gold is to meet his colleagues at five a.m. to accompany Randolph's mother in the trap to arrest Randolph. Robert Gold, «The Orator», will carry the false documents and convince Robert Randolph, the drug dealer, to give up. But Gold's sense of himself as a Jew draws him to the candy store case: he discovers that the murdered woman had years ago been a Palestinian commando fighting for Israeli independence. She had stolen and distributed machine guns and other weapons. Gold finds anti-Semitic literature near her store and, when Dr. Klein's house is possibly fired on, Gold discovers a cryptic word, «GROFAZ» (67), that may represent a conspiracy that dates back to the last years of the Nazi regime. On the same night that he will bust Randolph, he decides to track down the anti-Semitic conspiracy. Will Gold choose institutional affinity or religious/cultural identity? Our conclusion is based on how we interpret.

«'Every attempt at murdering my soul, or at emasculating me...'»

These words of Daniel Paul Schreber are quoted by Freud in his «Psycho-Analytical Notes on an Autobiographical Account of a Case of Paranoia» (1911; *Standard Edition* 12: 19) as part of his descriptive analysis of the mechanism of paranoia. Freud theorizes that «generally speaking, every human being oscillates all through his life between heterosexual and homosexual feelings, and any frustration or disappointment in the one direction is apt to drive him over into the other» (46). In the case of Schreber under analysis, Freud posits that the «cause of the illness was the appearance in [Schreber] of a feminine (that is, a passive homosexual) wishful phantasy... [and] an intense resistance to this phantasy [within] Schreber's personality» (47). Out of this resistance proceeds «*the delusional formation, which we take to be the pathological product, [but which] is in reality an attempt at recovery, a process of reconstruction*» (71). In his last book, *An Outline of Psycho-Analysis* (1940; *Standard Edition* 23), Freud isolates the two analogous «mental structures least accessible to [psychoanalytic] influence...: in a woman her wish for a penis, in a man his feminine attitude towards his own sex, a precondition of which would, of course, be the loss of his penis» (194).

These elements provide the basis for an understanding of Bobby Gold's psychological dilemma: in many ways, Mamet's film underscores the basis of paranoia as described by Freud in «The Schreber Case» and issues a challenge that we consider paranoia and identity in relation to the construction of culture. When Gold is attacked in the squad room by The Grounder, the restraining strap on his holster is torn off; consequently, Gold's gun repeatedly falls out of its holster and he is unable to perform adequately in his job. Gold lashes out at The Grounder: «Ah, Christ, you tore my fucking *holster*, what the *fuck* do you want to do that for...? ...You tore my holster, man. N'I got *work* to do. The fuck I ever do to you?» (18-19). Gold's damaged holster emasculates him as an active homicide detective: he loses his gun three times before the final loss when he confronts Randolph. It is important to see the empty, damaged holster as a symbolic castration.

When Gold stood up to volunteer a plan for the Randolph case and was then castigated as a «kike» by a city official, he was labeled as being someone outside the institutional model of police culture: the derogatory slur highlighted Gold's ethnicity rather than focusing (as his lieutenant does afterwards) on his «fine record, good cop, twenty-two citations for valor» (10). Even after his blow

to the head and his broken holster, Gold dwells on this initial public emasculation: «The man's got no call to question my loyalty... and he had no fucken call to get *racial* on me...» (21). But the public (and symbolic) «dressings-down» that Gold sustains at the meeting and in the squad room are followed by an actual change in his professional life and productivity: Gold, the honored police detective, the mastermind of the solution to the Randolph case, is taken *off* the Randolph case, precisely because he is a Jew. The son of the woman murdered in the candy store, Dr. Klein, requests that Gold be assigned to the case. As Gold's lieutenant tells him: «He wants you, you were there, you're his 'people,' you're on the case» (40). To which, Gold replies: «I'm his people...? I thought I was *your* people, Lou» (40). Gold is stupefied that his identity as a Jew should influence his status as a cop. Characteristically, he expresses this in sexual terms: «What? I'm your 'backup' girl? I'm trine' a follow orders, Lou, n'I'm getting *whiplash*. Why'nt you just go send me to the *airport*. What did I do to you?» (41). Gold describes himself in female terms: to his lieutenant, he relates his status on the case to being the female courtesan of an already married male lover – he is the «'backup' girl», the emasculated object of male domination (in Freud's usage, *Outline*, SE 23: 188, female because «weak and passive», male because «strong and active»).

This internalized notion of being a woman in relation to a man is what prompts Schreber's paranoia: Freud writes that «once, in the early hours of the morning, moreover, while he was in a state between sleeping and waking, the idea occurred to him 'that after all it really must be very nice to be a woman submitting to the act of copulation'» (SE 12: 13). When Bobby Gold is, in his opinion, doing his duty by helping his fellow police officers who are threatened by the pit bull at the scene of the candy store murder, Gold's partner, Sullivan, informs him that he must leave to proceed to the high-profile Randolph case. Gold's response to his partner is: «Fuck *me*... get *on*... Go on, get outta here. Take the car» (29). Not «fuck you», but «fuck me»: Gold sees himself as the recipient of the fuck, abandoned and emasculated of car, power, and high-profile case.

So pervasive is his feeling of castration that he must overcompensate as he has in the past. Gold's partner asks him: «How come you always gotta be the first one through the door? So brazen...» (45). It is clear that Gold compensates for his feelings of inadequacy by exaggerated gestures of constructed male mastery. Just as he has demonstrated his expertise as the department's «orator» (40) by convincing Randolph's mother to cooperate with the police by betraying her own son, Gold is pulled away from the Randolph case in order to investigate suspicious shots at the home of Dr. Klein, the son of the murdered woman at the candy store. Gold is furious at being pulled from the Randolph case and he lashes out at Dr. Klein: «Would [your wife] know what a shot sounds like? How would she know that?» (53). But Mrs. Klein takes Gold's implied meaning when she responds: «But I see that you feel, that, what, you're dealing with hysterical Jews...? I'm making it up, is that right? We're always making it up» (54).

Gold remakes himself as a masculine cop of no conspicuous ethnic persuasion: he is unable to fathom why shots would be fired on the Kleins after a routine candy store robbery attempt and tells them as much. The doctor challenges him on his objectivity. Once again, Gold becomes defensive: «I've got nothing against the Jews, Doctor. I'm a Jew» (55). But *being* a Jew places Gold in the situation of not being a police officer. Gold's homicide squad is a family: Gold tells his partner, «You're like my family, Tim», and his partner replies, «Bob... I *am* your family» (80); the family takes care of its own, they use derogatory language among themselves, but they defend any attack against any of their own members. But Dr. Klein tells Gold something that haunts him and establishes the paranoia that will torment him and resonate throughout the film: «It's always a 'fantasy.' Isn't it?... When someone wants to hurt the Jews.... And I'll tell you something else. When the fantasy is true, when we've been killed, then you say 'what a coincidence.' What a coincidence. That at the same time we were being paranoid, someone was coincidentally trying to hurt us» (55).

The doctor's speech impresses on Gold the suggestion that things occur for a purpose: events that *seem* to be related *are* related – to dismiss them as coincidences is to become a pawn in an ominous and conspiratorial chess game. But the doctor presses beyond this: he suggests that Gold

lacks the «pride» to do his «fucken job» (56). This threat to his competence and his professional potency Gold takes as an assault and he responds with stereotypical insults that reveal his cultural ambivalence: «I'm not scared of your *money*. I'm not scared of *you* – I don't need your threats. I'm here to do the job» (57). But when mourners arrive at the home to pay tribute to Dr. Klein's mother, Gold is unable to understand them: he is dependent on a woman to interpret for him. He is on the case because he is a Jew, but as a Jew, he is impotent – unable to understand Hebrew or Yiddish, unable to function in the manner that is appropriate to the active (i.e., «masculine») role definition.

At the Kleins' house, Gold is notified by phone that his plan worked without him: Randolph's mother has agreed to turn her son over to the police – provided that Gold facilitates the deal. Typically, Gold denigrates his own significance and focuses on his passivity in female terms: «Fantastic. Oh, fuck *me*, why do I always miss it... I'm the lynchpin. Big deal.... I *woulda* been there, I'm stuck here with my Jews» (60). On the defensive, he lashes out at the Jews who are supposedly causing him to miss all this excitement, never realizing that, as a Jew, he is part of all that he attacks: «Fuck 'em, and the taxes that they pay.... Not... 'my' people, baby... *Fuck*'em, there's so much anti-Semitism, last four thousand years, they must be doin *something* bring it about» (61). These hateful, inflammatory words are rendered even more revealing in the film because Mamet has Bobby say «*we* must be doin *something* bring it about» instead of «they»: in his anger, in his fury, Gold lashes out at his own people – he blames them for the violence inflicted upon them, and, in the process, is blaming himself for the violence that has been leveled at him as a Jew.

In a moment of chilling revelation, the camera reveals that the murdered woman's granddaughter, Miss Klein, has been present in the room throughout Gold's fiery telephone call. She challenges him directly on his ambivalent identity: «You're a Jew. And you talk that way. In the house of the dead. Do you have any shame?... Do you hate yourself that much? Do you belong nowhere?» (62-63). Gold is shamed and humiliated that his masculine posturing has been overheard by a woman capable of interpreting it as so much self-loathing, projected outward. He swears to her that he will «find the killer»: (63) – and at that moment, Gold hears shots from the roof, sees a man on the roof, and, on the roof, finds a mysterious handwritten message, «GROFAZ» (67).

Gold is now torn between his affinity to the institutional culture of the police force and his identification with Jewish culture. On the one hand, he discovers that the murdered woman had been a Jewish commando working for Israeli independence: she had been involved in the illegal theft and distribution of machine guns (69, 72-73). On the other hand, he uncovers anti-Semitic leaflets in the vicinity of the old woman's store (69), and he learns that GROFAZ is an acronym, deriving from the late Nazi era, designating Hitler as the «'Grosster Feldherr aller Zeiten', the greatest strategist... of all time. Der Grofaz» (86). All of Gold's expertise as a cop drives him to follow the lead that suggests a conspiracy in the candy store case. But when he confides in his partner, a fellow cop, about the possible conspiracy, Sullivan tells him to «just look busy» (79) on the Jewish case, in order to better «play cops and robbers... [and] swagger *around*» (80) on the high-profile Randolph case.

The cops may «swagger», but is that who Gold is? He has already been labeled a *Jew among cops* by the city official. Now he lashes out at his partner (who a moment before had told him he was his family) for not understanding why he needs to follow the Jewish case: «Maybe you don't want to get it... you ain't a Yid.... It's not your thing, it's my thing, okay?» (83). Gold is declaring momentarily that he must choose the Jewish case because he is a Jew – and in so doing, he validates what he had earlier considered preposterous: that he, the mastermind of the Randolph strategy, should be pulled off that case merely because of his shared cultural heritage with the candy store victim's family.

Gold's attempt to repair his damaged holster is unsuccessful: instead, he is directed to the Jewish library. There he is told by a religious scholar that his police star, a «pentagram», is the «symbol of that which constrains us» (90). Lacking a crucial sixth point, Gold's inadequate star is hopelessly worldly, deficient, minus the dimension of «heaven» possessed by the star of David

(90). Gold is again reminded of his inadequacy: «You say you're a Jew and you can't read Hebrew? What *are* you then?» (91). To the scholar, Gold is forever a swaggering cop.

This second castigation by another of his own people – that he is a deficient, inadequate Jew – pushes Gold to psychological extremities. It is significant to recall that he received from The Grounder a crushing blow to the head and he has not slept for 48 hours. Nevertheless, Gold has trouble keeping in mind that he must meet his fellow police at 5 a.m. to coordinate the arrest of Randolph in collaboration with Randolph's mother. Instead, at the library, Gold is struck by his discovery that the file he requested – on contemporary anti-Semitic incidents involving the word, GROFAZ – has been claimed by a group known as the «Two Twelve» (92). The librarian, a fellow Jew, lies to him and says there is no such file. Gold uncovers the address of the secret organization: «212 Humboldt Street» (93). Upon his arrival, he is confronted by many of the individuals he had encountered in mourning at Dr. Klein's house: they are, in fact, a group of pro-Israeli Jewish commandos.

In response to Gold's appeal for help with the case, he is taken inside, past a group of individuals assembling automatic weapons, past a communications room with a short wave radio: here, at last, is a group of Jews who are potent, powerful, filled with masculine energy! They tell him about the old days, how they battled side by side with the murdered woman for Israeli independence. They ask him to help them, to be one of the «Good Americans. Good Jews. Who are good friends to Israel» (98). Gold tells them: «I would do anything» (99). But when they ask him to produce the original of the list of recipients of the smuggled machine guns so that they might destroy it, Gold refuses: he is, he remembers, a «sworn Police Officer» (101). This enrages Benjamin, the leader of 212: «Are you a Jew...? ...Then be a Jew!... WHERE ARE YOUR LOYALTIES?» (101). Thrown out of the commando headquarters because he «disgust[ed] (101))» them, Gold appeals to Chava, the Jewish commando who interpreted for him at the house of the Kleins: «Let me help. Please. I'm begging you» (102). It is as if Gold were attracted to each group that rejects him: to the extent that the police castigate him as an outsider, he relishes their company; when the Jewish commandos throw him out in disgust, he views them as «heroes... Jewish guys who had Nothing to Prove» (104-105).

Talking with Chava in a diner, Gold confides to her his sense of identity confusion and male inadequacy: «What can I tell you about it. They said... I was a *pussy* all my life. They said I was a pussy, because I was a Jew. Onna' cops, they'd say, send a Jew, mizewell send a *broad* on the job, send a *broad* through the door... All my goddamned life, and I listened to it...» (103). Gold reveals his internalized self-loathing that he had been projecting on to the Kleins: according to his perception, people viewed him as a «pussy» because of his Jewishness. When he was sent out on the job, it was because of his Jewishness: his particular skills – verbalizing, communicating – were not stereotypically *active* male skills but stereotypically *passive* female skills; when the police called for Bob Gold, they were calling for the woman among men. He was the hostage negotiator not for his skills but for his minority status: «I knew how the bad guys felt» (103). Chava claims to understand: «...you were the Outsider... never working for yourself» (103). In conflict over his sexual identity, Gold, like Schreber, resists by overcompensating: he has to be the first one in the door.... Not for *me*, *all for someone else*... Why? Because *I was no good*. Because I'm nobody. I want to be a part of it, that's all» (105). Gold wants to be a part of a culture, a somebody, an active, masculine participant in something real with which he may identify. Out of this impulse, he insists on breaking and entering Andersen's toy train store, an operation that Chava suspects is responsible for the anti-Semitic leaflets Gold found and, perhaps, the murder of the old woman. Gold's job is to «give them a message» (105). Removing his pentagram police badge, Gold enters the store, armed with the heavenly aura of the star of David and a portable bomb to ignite the shop!

Inside the store, Gold discovers Nazi regalia, anti-Semitic leaflets, holocaust photographs, and Gestapo banners: these items verify his suspicions that there *is* a conspiracy against the Jews, he is a Jew, he is now part of the solution. They toy trains symbolize the holocaust death trains, and he vandalizes them and blows up the shop. He drives off with Chava back to the diner. But at the

diner, he is surprised to encounter the chauffeur from the Jewish commandos: does he dare suspect that Chava arranged this? He tells the chauffeur: «I want to be a part of it»; the chauffeur replies: «Good. Then you are a part of it. You've *shown* it. And now we need something from you... That list. Of names. We need the list» (109). Gold's police instincts smell trouble: once again, his identity allegiance shifts – he reminds them that, as a policeman, he can not turn over evidence. Chava, his presumed ally, sides with the chauffeur against him: «What he wants. Give it to him, please...» (110). It was all a set-up – his «people», the ones he wanted to be a part of, they were as bad as the police: whereas the police used him for his Jewishness, to communicate, orate, work the cerebral angles, the Jewish commandos used him for his police connections, to steal and destroy evidence, break and enter. As if to verify Gold's most paranoid suspicions, the chauffeur presents him with a set of photographs of Gold «entering and leaving»: the toy store had been «under surveillance» (110) by the Jewish commandos. His own people are blackmailing him. When he will not comply, Chava leaves with the chauffeur and the other commandos. Gold launches a punch at the chauffeur only to have his punch blocked and instead receive a devastating blow to his stomach. Once again, he is physically inadequate, «womanly», struggling with his sense of himself as passive, and his concomitant self-loathing.

It is as a result of this second blow that Mamet has Gold swing back to his affinity with the institutionalized culture of the police: Gold looks at his watch and realizes that he is several minutes late to the Randolph appointment, an appointment at which he was needed not only for his verbal skills but because his partner had entrusted the crucial forged documents to him. By the time Gold arrives at the scene, the bottom has dropped out: his promise to Randolph's mother (to bring her son in alive) is useless because Randolph is now cornered, firing wildly at the police. Gold's partner, Tim Sullivan, is pinned down on the second floor and the flying bullets are preventing any medical assistance. «Where were you?» (113) he is asked by his family, his police brethren. The unspoken meaning is: *we trusted you, we counted on you, you betrayed us*.

Central to the mechanism of paranoia are the projective devices by which conflicted individuals attribute to others the internalized emotions they already feel. Whereas Freud (in «The Schreber Case») and Melanie Klein («Notes on Some Schizoid Mechanisms», 1946) focus on the splitting and projection onto particular individuals, Mamet provides us with an illustration of how racism is projected onto cultures and peoples as a result of internal states of conflict and self-hatred. When Gold is stigmatized as a Jew, he turns on the Jews and, from the position of institutional affinity as a police detective, utters statements of bigoted hatred. When Gold is insulted and traumatized by his fellow Jews, he betrays his police colleagues at their crucial appointment. When he is filled with self-hatred at what he has done, he turns on the black man, Randolph, whom he had promised to save: «You shot my partner, you fucking nigger... I'm going to kill you» (117). Gold, in a projective frenzy, has lashed out at blacks, Jews, and the police. His motivation: «I'm a piece of shit. It's all a piece of shit» (122). When his partner dies, Gold hears him say: «If you're moved, there's someone doing it» (117) and, in the context of the story, Gold assumes that this verifies a linkage, a causality, a conspiratorial agency that has resulted in his now facing the murderer Robert Randolph, Robert to Robert, but without his weapon!

Gold is gunless because, for the fourth time since his holster was emasculated by The Grounder, he has lost his weapon. It is possible that he storms in without a weapon to confront the dangerous Robert Randolph precisely because he *wants* to die. Nevertheless, Randolph taunts him about his inadequacy: «Well, you forgot your gun, Jim.... Yeah, man, you could of paid me *back*, you'd brought your gun... See, that's your *mistake*, maan» (119). Facing the other Robert, the man he swore to protect, and toward whom he directed a racial slur, Gold identifies himself as «Robert» (119) - his double in the depths of evil. Now Randolph maligns him: «One Smart Kike. Ain'tcha, Mr. Gold? All you forgot. If you want to *kill* me, you best come armed» (121). Gold is unarmed, «weak», possessing only a chain and a flashlight, facing an armed and powerful assailant: earlier, he had used his gifts as the orator to seduce Randolph's mother into his plan to capture her son –

his argument then was based on empathy and understanding. Now, deprived of empathy from the Jews and the police, Gold lashes out at Randolph by projecting onto him the full measure of his own self-hatred: he reveals to Randolph that his own mother turned him over to the cops: «Your momma turned you over, Man. Look at it! That's right» (122). When Randolph stands to examine the false passport documents, he is killed by the police sniper. By using racial hatred and projective enmity, Robert Gold bests Robert Randolph in this dastardly game of the dozens.

«We solved your case for you.» [?]

When next we see Gold, he is limping into the squad room, on a cane. He is greeted by his still-wounded colleagues, but there is a cold distance. Sullivan is dead. The lieutenant tells Gold: «We solved your case for you» (125) and out of his office are led the same two black youths who had earlier claimed that the old Jewish woman was killed for the «fortune in her basement» (125). In the published screenplay, Mamet leaves the words somewhat ambiguous: the youth says «they killed her» and «I would have got» the treasure but for the dog (125). But in the film, Mamet emphasizes that the two boys *were* responsible for killing the old woman by substituting «we killed her» for «they». Mamet wishes us to see the ultimate irony – that Gold's entire investigation has been mired in a paranoid delusional system. The candy store murder *was* a routine case. The lieutenant issues the ultimate reprimand: «You're off *homicide*. You're off» (125). Conversing with The Grounder, Gold had declined the offer of learning how to solve the problem of evil: if he ever did, he'd be out of a job (20) – now, out of his job, he knows the essence of evil: when The Grounder passes him, in chains (duplicating Gold's confrontation with Randolph during which Gold carried a chain), there is nothing for them to say. Both Gold and The Grounder know the nature of evil: The Grounder murdered his wife and children, Gold reneged on his pledge to Randolph's mother and his pledge to Miss Klein, he violated his police oath (by bombing the train store), and he caused his partner to be killed. The ultimate indignity arrives with a file that is handed to Gold: a flyer reads: «GROFAZT PIGEON FEEDS – NUTRITION, QUALITY, VALUE» (126).

The immediate response is to perceive that the GROFAZ conspiracy that Gold was investigating was nothing more than his paranoid delusion of persecution as a result of his sexual identity confusion and self-loathing. The addition of one letter – «t» – transforms a Nazi conspiracy into a brand name for bird seed. A pigeon himself, Gold failed to protect Randolph, failed to solve the Klein case, broke the law, and was cast out by his Jewish colleagues. Having abandoned his detective partner to ambush, he is ostracized by his former brethren cops. In Gold's plight, we see revealed Mamet's words about the «tragedy of America» (from «The Northern Novel», in *Make-Believe Town*, 1996): «that violence takes precedence over love. It took (and takes) the Immigrants to tell us that we live in a violent land; that the violence is not caused by 'the other,' but is in us all; and that there may be both a remedy and consolation, but that we cannot recognize, let alone enjoy, either, until we correctly understand and frankly admit the nature of our day-to-day lives» (91).

WORKS CITED

- Freud, S. (1953-74). *An Outline of Psycho-Analysis*. In *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud* (Vol. 23, pp. 144-207). 24 vols. Translated and edited by James Strachey. London: Hogarth.
- Freud, S. (1953-74). Psycho-Analytic Notes on an Autobiographical Account of a Case of Paranoia. In *Standard Edition* (Vol. 12, 9-82). London: Hogarth.
- Klein, M. (1946). Notes on Some Schizoid Mechanisms. In *The Selected Melanie Klein* (pp. 175-200). Edited by Juliet Mitchell. New York: Free Press, 1986.
- Mamet, D. (1992). *Homicide*. New York: Grove Weidenfeld.
- Mamet, D. (1996). The Northern Novel. In *Make-Believe Town* (pp. 85-91). Boston: Little, Brown.

The phenomenology of upper rooms

SHERRY LUTZ ZIVLEY (*)

C. G. Jung believes that «[d]reams give information about the secrets of the inner life and reveal to the dreamer hidden factors of his personality» (6). Not only can one learn about himself by analyzing his dreams (17), but one can also, as a reader, gain understanding from fictional imagery. More specifically, an understanding of our phenomenological responses to human dwellings can contribute to our understanding of the human psyche. In *The Poetics of Space*, Bachelard argues for utilizing a phenomenological approach to literary images. To react phenomenologically, he explains, one «must forget his learning and break with all his habits of philosophical research ... [and] be receptive to the image at the moment it appears: if there be a philosophy of poetry, it must appear and re-appear through a significant verse, in total adherence to an isolated image; to be exact, in the very ecstasy of the newness of the image. The poetic image is a sudden salience on the surface of the psyche» (xi).

Bachelard is convincing when he argues that human dwellings that are portrayed in literature often have important psychological implications and when he asserts that «the house image would appear to have become the topography of our inmost being» (xxxii). But once Bachelard gets more specific, he is unconvincing for three reasons. First, although he defines himself as a phenomenologist, he interprets as a theorist. Second, although he cites C. G. Jung, who understood the ephemeral and sometimes shifting implications of dreams, Bachelard's theory of space is theoretical and fixed. Third, Bachelard draws on so very few examples (and those obscure) that his theories about rooms are largely unsupported. Therefore, I began analyzing those spaces again, relying on my own phenomenological experiences of those spaces, on my phenomenological experiences when reading about those spaces, and on the assertions of writers who have portrayed those spaces.

By «phenomenological» or «eidetic» experience, Bachelard, like Roman Ingarden, the first major literary theorist to explore Edmund Husserl's phenomenology and the reading experience, means a person's *immediate*, rather than analytical, reaction to a specific event or detail. For example, when, in a suspenseful movie, the music changes – becomes louder or softer, modulates to a minor key, is produced by different instruments, or abruptly ceases – one immediately experiences fear and suspense. One does not stop, analyze, conclude that the music has modulated

(*) University of Houston, University Park, Department of English, 4800 Calhoun Road, Houston, Texas 77004, USA.

to a different key or from the full orchestra to only cellos and double basses, and *then* decide that these changes suggest danger. Instead, one's spine chills and adrenaline pumps immediately.

Basing nearly all of his conclusions on only one novel, Henri Bosco's *L'Antiquaire* and a paradigmatic house having either three or four stories (25), Bachelard's conclusions about cellars, ground-floor rooms, and upper story rooms are too neatly analogous to the Freudian trilogy of id, ego, and super ego. Discussing a house's «verticality» (17), Bachelard concludes (1) that the cellar, «the dark entity of the house» involves «buried madness» and «walled-in-tragedy», and man's «irrationality» (18) or «unconscious» self (19) and (2) that the attic is the place of reason, where fears can be «rationalized» (19). He has nothing to say about ground floor rooms, which apparently parallel the ego.

Relying not only on my own experience in having grown up in a two-storied house with accessible basement and attic but on my analysis of many texts which describe such houses, cellars, main floors, upper story rooms, and attics, I cannot accept Bachelard's interpretation. Instead, it seems to me that main floor is a familial and societal gathering place – a place of Heidiggerian «everydayness». The *ground floor*, therefore, represents the space of everyday consciousness and of familial and social awareness. The *cellar* is a far worse place than that which Bachelard describes as a place of the «unconscious», «unredeemed guilt», «childhood fears», or that «trepidation» which is «flush with madness». Although it may produce emotions of guilt or fear, the cellar is primarily a place of evil, an evil which I will define as acting to deliberately harm others physically, psychologically, or, spiritually. Nor is the *attic* or *upper room* merely a place of serenity; it is the place in which one can become aware of one's unconscious self, a place in which one can become healed, can remain unchanged, or go mad. The attic is, as Bachelard points out, is also a place of «reverie and memory» (26) – a setting in which one can meditate on one's personal memories and sometimes learn significant facts about one's familial past (activities which will be considered in a subsequent paper). Upstairs bedrooms and some inhabited attic rooms are places into which one can retreat, meditate, and either grow or deteriorate psychologically.¹

This paper focuses on the imagery of upper rooms – private bedrooms and attics.

Like Bachelard, I am torn between using a three-floor and a four-floor house as a paradigm. Writers describe both. And always it is the top floor to which characters retreat and to remain unchanged, to grow, or to deteriorate psychologically.

ROOMS

Here, although I will refer to other works, I want to focus on four fictions which utilize remarkably similar upstairs bedrooms and inhabited attics: Charlotte Francis Gilman's *The Yellow Wallpaper*, Doris Lessing's «To Room Nineteen» and *Memoirs of a Survivor* (with some references to *Four-Gated City*), and Ingmar Bergman's *Through a Glass Darkly*.²

¹ Despite the allure of Gilbert and Guber's title, *The Madwoman in the Attic*, very few fictional attics, except for *Jane Eyre*, house madwomen.

² Certain well-known fictions that involve a character's retreat to his or her upper room have not been included in this study because they contain significant variables which make the characters' situations quite different than those of characters considered here. Some of these fictions portray characters who retreat to their upper rooms because of illness. These include Leo Tolstoy's *The Death of Ivan Illych*, Katherine Ann Porter's «Pale Horse, Pale Rider», and Virginia Woolf's *The Voyage Out*, all of whose protagonists are critically ill, and Margaret Drabble's *The Waterfall*, whose protagonist has just given birth.

Other fictions portray characters whose period of isolation in their upper rooms is heavily influenced by the actions and conversations of characters outside their doors. These include Septimus Smith, who is threatened by Sir William Bradshaw in Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*, and Aunt Sally, who is badgered not only by her many relatives and friends who try to persuade her to leave her upstairs bedroom but also by the trashy science fiction novel she finds and spends part of her time reading.

The literary constructions that work – that have an eidetic impact on the reader – are those in which the author of the fiction represents everyday human experiences credibly. In such works the writer shows believable characters going about their ordinary lives and retreating occasionally, as we all do, to our upper rooms to escape the stress of our public and familial lives – perhaps merely for a brief nap and perhaps for a period of introspection. When characters evolve or devolve in ordinary interior spaces, their experiences in those spaces resonate credibly for the reader. Such is the case for the characters and fictions focused on here. But there are other fictions, which will not be discussed here, in which the writer, instead of attempting to replicate the people and places of real life, seems to have chosen to construct artificial places and experiences to conform to certain preconceived psychological theories. These works are almost inevitably didactic – stressing dogma at the expense of credibility. And I believe they such works have less capacity to have impact on the reader.³

Upstairs rooms – usually bedrooms – are often places of retreats, not for secrecy as much as for privacy. They are places of security from the needs or desires of others, places apart from the day-to-day activities of family and society. An upstairs room can be, as Woolf called it «a room of one's own», in which characters can relax and shed not only uncomfortable public clothes, if they wish, but also shed the equally uncomfortable personae which their familial, business, and societal duties require of them.

Alone in such rooms they may even be able to diminish or shut down the activities of their rational conscious minds and to be able to retreat into themselves, into a state of emptiness: Not a state of unconsciousness. Not a state of numbness, be it produced by exhaustion, shock, alcohol, or drugs, but a state of emptiness. This is not a Zen emptiness for its own sake, nor a mystically transcendent emptiness, but a state of emptiness in which one is attentive, open and receptive – receptive to new potential and the kinds of new insights that can lead to a new vision or perception of oneself, of the world, and of one's place in the world. Kate Chopin describes this condition in «The Story of an Hour» as «a suspension of intelligent thought» (199). This kind of passive attentiveness provides the conditions for what Lessing's Martha Quest calls «work» and about which she says, «she knew, absolutely, without any doubt at all that this 'work' was more important than anything» (225). In such a state one would be receptive to input from one's conscious and unconscious mind and from memories one had inadvertently forgotten or suppressed. Such awareness can provide understanding and growth.

How characters react to the possibility of quiet introspection are indicated by how they respond to the windows, walls, and doors of their upper rooms.

³ Both Robertson Davies in *The Manticore* and John Fowles in *The Maggot* have constructed fictional places and characters' experiences in those places to conform to certain Jungian concepts. Of the two, Davies's description of David Staunton's descent, with Liest as his shamanistic or psychological guide, into the dangerous bowels (or womb) of the mountain, is the more credible. In *The Manticore*, Staunton has gone to Switzerland in order to undergo Jungian analysis, thus establishing the context in which Davies constructs Staunton's cave experience. In contrast Rebecca Lee's description of her and Dick Bartholomew's exploration of the spaceship – like innards of a giant, white maggot that floats in a remote part of England in a cavern in the earth is too didactic to effect the reader eidetically – no matter how thoroughly that reader may intellectually endorse the Jungian theories they espouse. Davies's novel is more credible because people do explore caves (although non-splunkers rarely decide to explore very dangerous caves, as Staunton does, in search of a particular psychological breakthrough) more frequently than they see and enter fantastic maggots. In *The Maggot* Fowles insists on verbalizing an experience which, if true, must be nonverbal. He describes Bartholomew as transformed, wearing heavenly garments, staring at Rebecca «with a loving care and tenderness such I had never known», and beseeching her to «forget me not» (386), and smiling like «one who has heard... an annunciation» (400).

Similar, of course, are the many fictions that are artificially constructed to dramatize Freudian theory and which fail as literary works because of their didacticism – fail to engage the reader or viewer to the degree that Sophocles's *Oedipus* or Shakespeare's *Hamlet* do.

WINDOWS

Whether characters look out of their upstairs windows and what they see indicates whether they will deteriorate or improve. Some refuse to look and remain stuck in their neurotic or psychotic states. Rosabel, in Katherine Mansfield's «The Tiredness of Rosabel», remains stuck. Although she goes to the window of her upstairs room and pulls up the blind, she does not look out the window. And because she focuses all her attention on daydreaming – imagining that she is the belle of a ball attended by princes and is being courted by a wealthy, handsome gentleman, she emerges from her musings unchanged. In Mansfield's «The Daughters of the Late Colonel», the colonel insists that he never be disturbed by anything from outside his window. Obeying his commands, his daughters rush out daily and give the organ-grinder sixpence to keep quiet. The result of his self-imposed insulation from the natural world is that neither he nor his daughters ever developed. When he dies, they are middle-aged, unable to cope with the simplest everyday responsibilities, and almost infantile. In Mansfield's «Revelations», Monica Tyrrell insists that the window and curtains of her room remain shut fast, just as she remains shut in her almost solipsistic self-centeredness.

Those who are psychotic or suicidal refuse to look out their windows. Lynda, in *Four-Gated City* is so psychotic that she cannot look out the window and has closed the curtains to hide the view (462). And Franz, in Sartre's play *The Condemned of Altoona*, is initially quite psychotic. He boards up a real window so that he cannot see the prosperity of post-World War II Germany, preferring to believe that Germany is in ruins. He then imagines a non-existent «black window» through which he «sees» a Germany in total disintegration and poverty. Suffering from enormous guilt from his participation in various Nazi activities, he needs to believe that Germany is being punished. He says, «My eyes pierce the door, and what do they see? The corpse of murdered Germany» (62). He believes that outside are «the razed towns, the smashed machines, the looted industry, the steep rise in unemployment and tuberculosis, and the sharp fall in the birth rate» (85) and «families huddled in the cellars.... the invalids, the slaves, the traitors, and the prostitutes» (86), and he is convinced that «in fifty [years] the last German will be dead» (85).

When characters who choose madness or death, such as Susan Rawlings in «To Room Nineteen» and the protagonist of *The Yellow Wallpaper*, do look out of windows, they do not see the natural world, but superimpose their own fears and distorted visions upon it. They believe the world to be malevolent – a conviction which contributes to their choosing psychosis or death.

In *The Yellow Wallpaper*, when the protagonist first arrives at the country house, she describes the details of «delicious garden» (42). But she feels that the garden is «mysterious» and imagines a «ghostliness» there. That she says, «I always fancy I see people walking in these numerous paths and arbors» (46) is a harbinger of her future deterioration. As her condition worsens, she hallucinates seeing a creeping woman «out of every one of my windows!» She says, «she is always creeping.... in that long shaded lane, ... in those dark grape arbors, ... all around the garden and «on that long road under the trees» (55). By this time she says this, the speaker herself is creeping around the room like a caged animal. As she finally succumbs to psychosis, she refuses to look out the window, saying, «I don't like to *look* out of the windows» because «there are so many of those creeping women, and they creep so fast», and she believes that the women and she herself have «all come out of the wall-paper» (58).

In «To Room Nineteen», Susan Rawlings had once had a «big well-tended garden», (284). But she begins to feel «invaded by emptiness» (284) when she is in the garden and comes «to avoid the garden» (284), because she senses it as evil. She believes «an *enemy* was in the garden with her» (287, emphasis mine) – «an enemy there waiting to invade me» (288). She then retreats, first, «to her bedroom», from where «[s]he look[s] out into the garden» and concentrates on «defeating the enemy» (289). And then, as she deteriorates, she retreats, further removing herself from her family and normalcy, to an attic room. Looking out into the garden, she begins to hallucinate: «[O]ne day she saw him.» She describes her hallucination very specifically, saying, «[h]e was looking at her, and grinning. In his hand was a long crooked stick, which he was ... using ... to

stir around in the coils of a blindworm or grass snake (or some kind of snake-like creature) ... [which] was twisting about, flinging its coils from side to side in a kind of dance of protest against the teasing prodding stick» (295). She concludes «Right, then, so I've seen him with my own eyes, so I'm not crazy after all - there *is* danger because I've seen him. He is lurking in the garden and sometimes even in the house, and he wants *to get into me and to take me over*» (295). That Franz in *Condemned of Altoona*, the protagonist of *The Yellow Wallpaper*, and Susan Rawlins are all convinced of the malevolence in the natural world outside their windows indicates how badly disturbed they are.

In *Through the Glass Darkly*, there are no windows in the attic room for Karin to look out of, but that she has chosen to spend so much time outdoors, may indicate that she would not have refused to look at the real world.

In contrast to these marginal or psychotic characters, recovering or sane characters look out their windows and see and appreciate the natural world. Chief Bromden, a permanently institutionalized acute schizophrenic in Ken Kesey's *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, for years refuses to believe that he is big and strong and refuses to look out of the asylum window at the Pacific Northwest forests in which he was reared. Only after McMurphy has helped Bromden to accept the truth about himself, can he look out the window, in what is the dramatic fulcrum of the novel. Consequently, Bromden chooses to abandon insanity, escape from the asylum, and to redefine his life. In *Four-Gated City*, Martha Quest's decision to get out of bed or leave Lynda's room and go outside marks her choice of health and sanity. After her self-imposed incarceration, she is astonished at the beauty she sees in nature when she leaves the house. Their willingness to see and celebrate the beauty of nature is evidence of Bromden's and Martha Quest's recoveries.

Likewise, the grieving Mrs. Mallard, in «The Story of an Hour», looks out her bedroom window, enjoys «the tops of trees that were all aquiver with the new spring life ... [t]he delicious breath of rain was in the air», and sees «... countless sparrows ... twittering in the eaves ... [and] patches of blue sky showing here and there through the clouds» (198). Responding to the «very elixir of life through that open window», she breaks through to the insight that she is «free, free, free!» – «Body and soul free!» (199).

How each of these characters responds to the natural world outside their windows is directly related to what happens to their mental health and sense of well being.

WALLS

That such diverse writers as Gilman, Bergman, and Lessing, in *Memoirs of a Survivor*, who almost certainly did not know each other's works, create female characters who begin to see a «world» and «people» «beyond the bedroom wall»⁴ may indicate that we all have the capacity for such visions.⁵ In «The Spot on the Wall», Virginia Woolf, whose character begins to see a Rorschachian significance in the spot on the wall, also approaches such an insight. Such beyond-the-wall visions are like glimpses into one's own forgotten memories and subconscious perceptions - glimpses that can lead to growth or deterioration. In order to grow, one must «work» to see more fully and to understand what one sees.

⁴ *Beyond the Bedroom Wall* is the title of Larry Woiwode's multigenerational family novel. In that novel, Woiwode seems to suggest that the experiences of previous generation lurk behind bedroom walls and exert enormous influence over subsequent generations, but he does not envision any character «seeing» anything through the walls.

⁵ A surprising number of my students have indicated that they have had similar experiences in dreams. They have dreamed of the house in which they grew up or the one in which they are currently living, but in their dreams there were rooms – some furnished, some not – that did not exist in the real houses.

Two Lessing characters can see nothing beyond the wall. In *Four-Gated City* Linda, whose chances of growth and health have been obliterated by drug and electro-shock therapy, can make no headway toward understanding her inner self. Instead, all she can do is circle her basement room, through whose walls she can see nothing. As she circles, «she pressed her palms against it [the wall] in a desperate urgent way, as if doing this would cause it to fall outwards and let her step out of the room» (462). She has circled so often that «all around the wall to the height of about five feet the paper had an irregularly smudged and rust look, which turned out to be bloodstains from Lynda's bitten finger ends» (462). During her acute attacks, she can only eat, on all fours, lapping milk from a bowl on the floor. As a result of too much electro- and chemo-therapy, Lynda is stuck, unable to grow.

Gilman's and Bergman's female protagonists see through their walls, but only painful and frightening visions. In *The Yellow Wallpaper*, the protagonist's need to break through the walls of her conscious self to deeper insights are shown by her circling of the room. But, overwhelmed by the demons that haunt her, she cannot get through the wall or understand what she sees there. And, gradually she, like Lynda, reverts to animal behavior, crawling around the room on all fours.⁶ In «Through A Glass Darkly», Karin retreats to an attic in which she hears voices telling her that «he's coming» (57). She refuses to explore beyond the wall, and finally her inner demons emerge from beyond the wall and submerge her in madness. She exclaims, «[t]he god who came out was a spider. He had six legs and moved very fast across the floor.» Karin describes his face as «loathsome» and «evil», and claims, «he clambered up on me and tried to force himself into me» (58). In both of these narratives, it is clear that if one does not deal with one's inner demons, those demons will eventually overwhelm one.

In contrast, although what the protagonist of Lessing's *Memoirs* initially sees beyond the wall is a house in neglect, she exerts her will in order to improve it. At first she sees only «a patch of morning light» on the wall (12). Then she gradually sees «a set of rooms» beyond the wall, rooms which seem to represent her subconscious mind. These rooms «had been neglected for years». Looking at these rooms she says, «I felt the most vivid expectancy, a longing: this place held what I needed, knew was there, had been waiting for – oh, yes, all my life, all my life. I knew this place, recognized it ... before I had actually absorbed the information through my eyes» (13), and she realizes «how much work needed to be done» (14).

Beyond the walls, part of what she sees she calls the «impersonal» (41), a place with «a strict, unalterable law» (41), a place which represents not only her own childhood, but that of most children in her culture. Living in these rooms is a typical, European, middle or upper class nuclear family, with its Oedipal attachments, sibling rivalry, concern for appearances, and inevitable pain for all of its members. Here she feels «[c]laustrophobia, airlessness», and «suffocation of the mind» under what she calls «a tyranny of the unimportant» (43). Another place beyond the wall she calls the «personal» (41), a place which can be tidied, repaired, and refurbished. Finding these rooms neglected, messy, and dirty, she rolls up her sleeves – psychologically – and begins to clean and make those rooms habitable. Like anyone who is working to grow psychologically she inevitably experiences much regression. No matter how much she sweeps, cleans, and orders the rooms, when she returns to the rooms after a few days absence, she finds the rooms again «disordered or damaged» and «all [her work] had to be done again» (63). Nevertheless, she perseveres, because, her «task made sense» (65).⁷ Gradually the narrator's efforts begin to pay off,

⁶ Whereas Gilman focuses her attention on problems with living related to a woman's role in her society, Bergman's attention is usually on an individual's existential predicament and on the difficulty of finding meaning out of the nothingness which exists in a world from which God has disappeared. It makes sense, therefore, that Gilman's protagonist's visions would be of a woman and that Bergman's protagonist's vision would be of an elusive God.

⁷ Deep inside these rooms is one in which people are trying to transform scraps of fabric into a complex pattern of the carpet, as if searching for meaning.

and the these interior rooms remain habitable. And she realizes that because «of the experiences behind the wall, I was changing.» «[R]estlessness» no longer overwhelms her, and the «hunger that had been with me all my life was being assuaged» (100).

The protagonists of *The Yellow Wallpaper* and *Through a Glass Darkly* see beyond these walls into their subconscious, but refuse to enter or take responsibility for these «rooms». Consequently their internal demons eventually overwhelm them and reduced them to madness. Only the protagonist of *Memoirs of a Survivor* «works» to change both her visions beyond the wall and herself, and she emerges wiser, saner, and more contented.

DOORS

When characters have freedom to come and go, the decision they make with respect to the doors to their rooms is crucial. Some, like Herman Melville's *Bartleby* decide to retreat to their rooms to die or go mad. That both Gregor (in Franz Kafka's «The Metamorphosis») and Ralph Ellison's invisible man choose to remain in abandoned buildings is indicative of their social alienation and existential failure. In contrast, when characters are incarcerated against their wills, that incarceration does not seem to effect their emotional health or willingness to accept their existential responsibility, as can be seen in Miranda in John Fowles's *The Collector*.

In none of the works considered here are characters locked in. Those who deteriorate, like *Bartleby the Scrivener*, «prefer not to» leave their rooms. *Bartleby's* retreat is gradual, but it leads, inevitably, to his death. Unlike Melville, who makes no attempt to explain *Bartleby's* retreat, Ivan Goncharov devotes over 500 pages of the novel *Oblomov* to analyzing the character the novel is named for. Goncharov blames generations of his landowning Russian ancestors' luxury and irresponsibility for *Oblomov's* decline. In contrast to the other characters considered here, *Oblomov* does occasionally leave his room, but nearly the first 100 pages of the novel are devoted to *Oblomov's* unwillingness to get out of bed one morning, and he spends the last years of his life in bed, and lives, as Janko Lavrin concludes, in «a purely vegetative state» (28). *Oblomov* is, Lavrin explains, the «arch-type» of that stagnation which so often stands in the way of a man's growth and prevents him from facing the stern demands of life. Goncharov even coins the term «*Oblomovism*» to explain such «moral deterioration» (35, 34).

Similarly, the protagonist, who is identified only as «the wife and mother», in Gail Godwin's «A Sorrowful Woman», retreats to her room and gradually cuts off all communication with her family. After abandoning her responsibilities to her husband and children, she retreats to her room, does nothing for a while, and then – after apparently having made her choice of death – goes into a brief frenzy of activity and then dies. Likewise Goodhue Coldfield, in William Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom*, retreats to the attic of his house in order to avoid being drafted into the Confederate army. Refusing to accept the reality outside his room, he remains in the attic until he dies. And in Paul Auster's *The Locked Room*, Fanshawe abandons his writing, his wife, his young son, and even his name, buys a house and locks himself into a small closet, where, if he can be believed, he claims to have a gun with which he will kill himself if anyone enters and to have already drunk the poison which will end his life.⁸

In *Four-Gated City*, Lynda circles and seems frantic to escape her room even though she is not confined there. Martha «keep[s] reminding her – You aren't locked in, Lynda, you can walk out

⁸ In Jean-Philippe's *The Bathroom*, the protagonist alternates retreating to his bathroom for periods of times and returning to the outside world. But even when he is in periods of retreat, he does not isolate himself; instead his lover and some friends visit him there.

anytime you like ... there's the door» (463). But, reminded of her freedom, Lynda only becomes «wild and angry» (464) and «moved faster, using her fists in a series of short violent bangs on the walls» (463). Her inability to leave her room suggests that her psychosis is permanent.

Likewise Susan Rawlings leaves the hotel room to which she retreats daily with greater and greater reluctance. And although she «simply went dark, feeling emptiness run deliciously through her veins, she develops no new insights or attitudes». Finally, unwilling or unable to do anything to reclaim her life, she retreats to the room, turns on the gas, lies down on the bedspread, and is «quite content lying there, listening to the faint soft hiss of the gas that poured into the room, into her lungs, into her brain, as she drifted off into the dark river» (299). She permanently rejects the door.

Similarly, the protagonist in *The Yellow Wallpaper* chooses to remain in her room and go mad. Although most of the *The Yellow Wallpaper* implies that the protagonist is imprisoned in the upstairs room by her husband and sister-in-law, she has possessed the door key all along. At the conclusion of the story the protagonist admits, «I have locked the door and thrown the key down into the front path» (34). That she throws the key where even she cannot retrieve it indicates how strong is her resolve to not leave her prison. What is of enormous existential significance is her decision not only to lock the door from the inside but to throw the key out the window. She chooses not merely isolation but madness itself.

Those who grow healthier eventually use their doors and leave their rooms.⁹ Despite the fact that her hallucination of having seen God in the shape of a spider makes it clear that Karin, in *Through a Glass Darkly*, is having a nervous breakdown, her condition would seem to be hopeful. She does not seek to remain in her upstairs room, but leaves it, descends the stairs, and willingly goes outside to the helicopter which offers the hope of cure.¹⁰ Although he initially seems the most psychotic of these characters, Franz lets his sister-in-law goad him into leaving the attic room in which he incarcerated himself for years. Once downstairs, he confronts with his family, and it becomes clear that he will not retreat again either to the attic¹¹ or into his psychosis. And Mrs. Mallard, in Kate Chopin's «Story of an Hour», stays in her room only long enough to reach insights about herself, her life, and her future. She locks her door and remains, despite her sister's entreaties, long enough to «drink[] in a very elixir of life through th[e] open window» and to realize that «[s]pring days, and summer days, and all sorts of days ... would be her own» and to «breathe[] a quick prayer that life might be long.» She soon opens the door and descends the stairs «like goddess of Victory» (5).

Similarly, Martha Quest, in Doris Lessing's *Four-Gated City* suffers a nervous breakdown which leaves her in bed with the bedclothes pulled over her head for weeks at a time, unable to get up. But she does not choose to remain in the room permanently. And she learns more about herself from her introspection in her room than she does from her psychiatrist, Dr. Lamb. Having been warned by Lynda, who suffers bouts of acute psychosis, Martha rejects medication and spends her time «working» to know herself better.

When Martha Quest uses the door and goes outside, she finds that her perceptions have been changed by the «work» she did in the room with Lynda. Like Mrs. Mallard, she has experienced a rebirth as a result of her time in introspection in the room. She felt that «she wanted to go out and walk» (478). Once outside, she finds delight in nature and thinks, «The day was fresh and the world newly painted... [and she] wanted to cry because it was so beautiful» (478-79). She feels that

⁹ Many fictions focus on characters who have been locked in, but those works and the reactions of those characters are not the subject of this study.

¹⁰ Unike Lessing in *Four-Gated City*, Bergman here gives no indication in this film that he things that professional psychiatric treatment is anything other than therapeutic.

¹¹ That his sister-in-law will take his place and incarcerate herself in the attic provokes tantalizing questions about the nature of this particular family, a family which seems to need a psychotic member.

«the! sky and the trees ... whose branches moving in gentle air sent her messages of such joy, such peace», and she prays, «Oh Lord! ... Let me keep this [awareness], let me not lose it» (480). And she concludes, «I am here, now, and conscious that I am here, now noticing what is around me» (480). Like Mrs. Mallard, she emerges a happier, more integrated, and stronger person.

All of these characters develop positively or negatively as a result of their time in introspection in upstairs rooms, and their reactions to windows, walls, and doors indicates how they have changed. And that so many writers choose to show psychological change occurring in upper rooms suggests that such rooms symbolize – for many people who have lived in such houses – a state of consciousness in which growth is possible if one works at it.

WORKS CITED

- Auster, P. (1986). *The New York trilogy: City of glass, Ghosts, The locked room*. New York: Penguin.
- Bachelard, G. (1969). *The poetics of space*. Trans. Maria Jolas. Boston: Beacon Press. Trans. from *La poétique de l'espace*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1958.
- Bergman, I. (1967). *Three Films by Ingmar Bergman*. Trans. Paul Britten Austen. New York: Grove Press. Trans. from *En Filmtrilogi*. Stockholm, P. A. Norstedt and Söners Föroag, 1963.
- Joseph C. (Ed.) (1971). *The portable Jung*. Trans. R. F. C. Hull. New York: Viking.
- Chopin, K. (1984). *The awakening and selected stories*. New York: Penguin Books.
- Davies, R. (1976). *The manticore*. New York: Penguin. Rpt. from Viking, 1972.
- Faulkner, W. (1936). *Absalom, Absalom*. New York: Random House.
- Fowles, J. (1963). *The Collector*. New York: Dell.
- Fowles, J. (1986). *The Maggot*. New York: Signet. Rpt. from Little, Brown, 1985.
- Gilbert, S. M., & Gubar, S. (1979). *The Madwoman in the Attic: The woman writer and the nineteenth-century literary imagination*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Gilman, C. F. (1998). *The yellow wallpaper*. Ed. Dale M. Bauer. Boston: Bedford Books. Rpt. from Charlotte Perkins Stetson, *New England Magazine: An Illustrated Monthly*, vol. 5, September 1891-February 1892.
- Godwin, G. (1976). «A sorrowful woman». *Dream children*. New York: Knopf.
- Gonchorov, I. (1929). *Oblomov*. Trans. Natalie A. Duddington. New York: Macmillan.
- Jung, C. G. (1933). *Modern man in search of a soul*. Trans. W. S. Dell & Cary F. Baynes. New York: Harcourt, Brace.
- Kesey, K. (1962). *One flew over the cuckoo's nest*. New York: Viking.
- Lavrin, J. (1954). *Goncharov*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Lessing, D. (1963). «To room nineteen». *A man and two women*. New York: Simon and Schuster.
- Lessing, D. (1969). *Four-gated city*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.
- Lessing, D. (1988). *The memoirs of a survivor*. New York: Vintage. Rpt. from London: Octagon Press, 1974.
- Mansfield, K. (1956). *Stories*. New York: Vintage.
- Melville, H. (1997). *Bartleby*. New York: Simon and Schuster.
- Sartre, J.-P. (1964). *The condemned of Altona*. Trans. Sylvia & George Leeson. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.
- Toussaint, J.-P. (1990). *The bathroom*. Trans. Nancy Amphoux & Paul De Angelis. New York: Dutton. Trans. from *La Salle de Bain*. Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1985.
- Woiwode, L. (1975). *Beyond the bedroom wall: A family album*. New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux.

Bathmology: Science or art of the good distance

HENK HILLENAAR (*)

The somewhat surprising word ‘bathmology’ in the title of this lecture was probably invented by the French scholar and writer Roland Barthes. In his autobiography *Roland Barthes par Roland Barthes* I first encountered this term more than twenty years ago. There he defines ‘bathmology’ as «a new science, which studies the different levels of language».¹ Barthes derived this neologism from the Greek ‘bathmos’, meaning ‘degree, step or stadium’. The term also belongs to the same word family as ‘bainoo’, meaning ‘to march’. Bathmology should make us conscious of the distance that exists in every linguistic utterance between what we actually say or do with words and what they are also referring to, more or less consciously: eroticism or politics, fashions of any kind, or the spirits of our age. What is interesting is that we can take our distance also from that phenomenon and reflect on it, as we are doing now. And the process, the game can continue forever. Many of us know this play with distances from our daily occupation with psychoanalysis, but one does not need to be a Freudian to practise ‘bathmology’. It is part of all intellectual work. Barthes was no Freudian either. Yet he did not go deeply into these concepts. He liked to launch ideas and to play with them, then pass on to another subject.

Since reading Barthes, this ‘bathmology’ has often run through my mind. The idea of distance, of inner stratification, of different spaces in our inner self that determine our actions, speaking and attitudes: that idea fascinates me more and more as something essential to the experience and knowledge of our inner life.

Obviously such an interest must have its reasons. Like many of you, I suppose, I have experienced how ideology, politics or religion can take you very far away from what you really desire or would like to achieve. With or without psychoanalysis, many of us have experienced how a human being can conquer other distances towards himself and those with whom he exists. Wondering how this works, I have often been inspired by Roland Barthes’ ‘bathmology’. That is my starting point today. For me, distance, if I may say so, is something of a ‘metapsychological metaconcept’.

(*) Rijksuniversiteit Groningen, Faculteit der Letteren, Oude Kijk in’t Jatstraat 26, Postbus 716, 9700 AS Groningen, Netherlands.

¹ «bathmologie [...] une science nouvelle: celle des échelonnements du langage», *Roland Barthes par Roland Barthes*, coll. *Ecrivains de toujours*, Seuil, 1975, p. 71.

I do not seek that distance exclusively in language, as Barthes and many other French thinkers tend to do. As much as by language, distance, inner distance is determined by imagination, and before that, by the distance we keep from our own bodies. These distances are much more difficult to formulate: the respective 'spaces' we create in ourselves to our feeling, our seeing, and our hearing, are of course connected to each other but nevertheless form different layers in our inner reality. We encounter these layers and their interplay repeatedly in the works of numerous thinkers and writers, each of them exploring from his or her own point of view – philosophy, psychology, anthropology, literature – our inner existence and its stratifications. This is not surprising: philosophy has always been teaching us that distance as we experience it outside ourselves, distance in time and space, forms the condition of all consciousness and all spiritual activity. Without distance, often frustrating distance, there is no experience, no imagination, no knowledge, no 'I', no 'we'.

Now I am going to make a big 'bathmos', a big jump in my argument: It is striking how nearly everyone who is thinking or making theories about the functioning of our mind eventually ends up with a tripartite system. For many philosophers and anthropologists the number three seems to be a key number, a basic assumption when distances and gradations in the human mind are concerned. In the beginning was the three...²

In this lecture I will first give you some short and, to me, striking examples of such tripartite systems. After that, and in order to keep my subject less theoretical, I will show you such a combination of three inner spaces at work in a beautiful poem, entitled *IJsselmeer Dam*, written by the Dutch poetess Vasalis (text on hand-out). That analysis will lead me to a series of questions about the meaning of these three spaces. It will also bring me to the title of my lecture: 'science or art of the good distance'.

I

Thinking about all those who have approached our inner space in this tripartite way, we can not ignore the Christian theology, the science which, throughout centuries, governed all other sciences in our Western civilisation. According to this belief, the highest truth about God himself is that one Being is not sufficient to Him; He needs or prefers in Himself the triple distance of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. As you will understand I can not dwell on this subject. I only want to insist on the fact that the confession of faith which until two or three hundred years ago we regarded as the criterium of all thinking, all science, had this trinitarian structure. Still many theologians, orthodox and less orthodox, have sensed that this image of the Divine had more to do with ourselves than with God's own mystery; hence all kinds of suggestive comparisons between the Holy Trinity and our own inner world and its stratifications. The most famous – among many others – is undoubtedly Saint Augustine's treaty *De Trinitate*, in which he presents the interplay in the human mind between memory, intelligence and will as the reflection of the mystery of the Trinity. Nowadays we would be inclined to see the reverse, God's image becoming the reflection of our mind. Be that as it may, tripartite structures can be found in the writings of many Western thinkers. I will give three examples that could be specially interesting for a psychoanalytically trained public:

The first is the Scottish philosopher David Hume, who so intrigues us because he put the concept of association in the centre of his theories of the mind. According to him all our ideas,

² I have been told that three is also the first number that babies experience: only after the arrival of a third person, who arouses also the interest of the mother, the child starts to realise that he or she is not one and the same being as the mother, but that they are two in number. But as long as there is no third, there is no two, and no one either, and therefore no inner distance.

however complicated, originate in processes of association. Association bridges distances in the mind, and Hume teaches us that there are only three ways to do this: by *resemblance* – a painting, he states, reminds us of what it represents – by *proximity* – a room in a building makes us think of the room next to it – and by *cause or consequence* – a wound gives us the idea of pain³. Hume also maintained that there are no other forms of association, of making ideas. The more examples one considers, the more one is convinced that these three forms are exhaustive. Since Hume no one has proven that he was misguided in this matter.

In our century, many theoreticians of linguistics have confirmed Hume's ideas. One of the most important of them, the Russian Roman Jakobson arrived at analogous conclusions in his famous article on speech-impediments for aphasia-patients⁴. Jakobson shows us that speaking consists of an unification in our mind of two movements : choosing words and combining them. Anyone who speaks has to be able to choose from similar words, for example 'woman', 'dame', 'sister', 'Virginia' or 'walking', 'going', 'striding', 'strolling'. A speaker must also be able to combine words in a field of proximity, resulting in sentences like: 'the woman is walking', or 'Virginia is strolling'. People who suffer aphasia are lacking one of these two capacities: Jakobson calls them the *metaphorical field of resemblance* and the *metonymical field of proximity*. He does not insist on what Hume called the idea of *cause and consequence*, but this capacity seems to be presupposed in what Jakobson calls the capacity to *combine* the other two. This function refers to an other distance than those underlying the associations with resemblance and proximity.

In the meanwhile the more literary orientated among us will probably have been thinking of fairy tales like *Cinderella* or *Little Red Riding Hood*. There we encounter many games with threefold adventures or images. One can also think of Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice* and *King Lear*, or of *Siegfried* in Wagner's *Ring*, with the same obsessive presence of the number three. Another modern science that could be mentioned here is semiology – or semiotics – and its main representative, the American Charles Sanders Pierce. He describes the world and our relationship to the world in his well known tripartite system of icons, indices and symbols. Proximity, resemblance and growing distance determine the functioning of the system. I do not want to insist on all these forms of theory, however intriguing they may be, but I proceed to my third example which I consider as a key to understanding inner distance, to everything discussed until now. I find this key in a very old, somewhat forgotten science – or art – in rhetoric, which was for centuries the main skill a student had to acquire at University. It was the Dutch scholar and psychoanalyst Peter van der Zwaal who stirred my attention in this field some years ago. In one of his studies on this interest he poses the old question why there are only three rhetorical genres: the 'demonstrative' – which praises or disapproves - the 'juridical' – which accuses or defends - and the 'deliberative' – which examines and proposes compromises –. Van der Zwaal shows how behind this apparently arbitrary division we can recognise a progression of 'bathmoi', a growing distance: With praising and disapproving we discover the climate of direct involvement and even 'fusion', feelings that have their roots in our very first years, which Freud terms 'pre-oedipal', symbiotic. With accusation and defence we enter another inner space, of conflict, rivalry and conquest, feelings we knew in a later stadium of our life, the Oedipal, when we had to decide on our attitude towards each of our parents. The third genre refers to a realm of counselling and debate: We have acquired more distance to both the pre-oedipal and the oedipal space, being able to handle those feelings with more freedom and openness. Therefore we recognise in the old rhetoric the three inner spaces that Freud discerned in his way in the psychoanalytical practice: before, during and after the oedipal situation. One could also speak of the three forms of transference every analysis and experiences, a

³ David Hume, *An Enquiry concerning Human Understanding*, chapter 3.

⁴ Roman Jakobson, *Essais de linguistique générale*, Paris, Minuit, 1956, pp. 43-68.

maternal space, an oedipal space, and the more distant space, that every analysis should create eventually, from where the analysand can freely, or at least more freely than before, deal with the other two. However we have to consider that these three inner spaces and the corresponding forms of transference never occur separately, but that each relates to the others. As often happens with this kind of theoretical distinction, it is above all a matter of emphasis. In the pre-oedipal we find already oedipal elements, and the reverse is still more true. This applies to a greater extent to the third space, which I would like to call 'post-oedipal', because it results from the distance we have been able to take towards the oedipal and the pre-oedipal feelings that are at work in us.

And of course, many of you have been thinking, during the last minutes, of Jacques Lacan, whose theoretical system also has a tripartite character. In that system our inner world also functions in three realms: the real, the imaginary and the symbolic⁵. I will return to this very suggestive lacanian 'bathmology', but it may be clear by now that I would prefer another tripartite approach, which corresponds to most of the systems I have mentioned.

II

But first I would like to analyse with you the poem *IJsselmeer Dam* by the Dutch poetess Vassilis, which illustrates in its own way how workable my own bathmological approach can be.

IJsselmeer Dam

The bus drives like a small room through the night,
the road is straight, the dam without an end,
to our left, the sea, tamed but restless,
we look outside, a small moon softly shines.

In front of me the young, fresh-shaven necks
of two sailors who restrain their yawning,
and later, after a short and limber stretch,
innocently sleep on each other's shoulders.

Then, suddenly, as in a dream, I see
in the glass, transparently clinging to ours,
sometimes clear as we, sometimes drawn in the sea,
the spirit of this bus; the dike's banks grass
cutting right through these two young sailors.
There I see also myself. Alone
my head rocks over the water surface
moves my mouth as if it
spoke, an amazed mermaid.
There is no end and no beginning
of this journey, no future and no past,
only this long and strangely split today.

Some of you may know the *IJsselmeer Dam* of the title. It is a dam or a dike, 35 kilometers long, through the North sea, built in the 1930's, to close the Zuiderzee, big parts of which were

⁵ Cf., among other texts, Jacques Lacan, *Ecrits*, Paris, Gallimard, 1966.

consequently reclaimed. Freud was very impressed by this achievement and once compared the work of psychoanalysis with the reclamation of the Zuiderzee.

What grips me in this poem is above all that it shows a remarkable interplay of the three forms of distance I mentioned before. In the first stanza the distance to reality, to the bus driving on the endless dam, with the water of the sea on one side and the dike on the other⁶ – that distance is very small. These lines breathe an atmosphere of proximity and symbiosis: we are in a ‘room’, which even becomes a bedroom, time and space are geared to endlessness, like in a dream. The words «a small moon softly shines» come from the lullaby that mother just sang, and perhaps this drive in the belly of the bus evokes even earlier memories of the poetess. The regular rhythm also contributes a great deal to that effect. She does not feel alone, as she seems to do later on in the poem: here she speaks about ‘we’, who are looking outside. Everything refers to security. Only one thing seems to indicate that this peace will not last, for though the sea may be tamed, it is still restless...

In fact, not only the sea but the poetess herself starts to feel restless and uneasy when she looks at the two young sailors in front of her. This is a look filled with eroticism. She sees their bodies, and chiefly the uncovered parts of them. In a bus that can not be a lot, but nevertheless: those ‘young fresh-shaven necks’ fascinate her, and even more the ‘short limber stretch’ of the two bodies under those necks. This enables them to sleep on each other’s shoulders, like two people after having made love. Of course, these are only her fantasies, which almost make her feel guilty. Rebounding from this fantasy, she can see them only as two ‘innocent’ boys.

Thus, in the second stanza the distance is growing in the same time as desire. In the beginning we still seem to be in a space of proximity, the construction being mainly metonymical, and everything close together: the poetess, the bus, the road, the night, the moon, and even the sailors. What creates more distance are the dreams around the sailors. In the long third stanza, the play with metonymies, those of our childhood, changes into play with a metaphor. The metaphor which inspires and carries the whole poem – that of the mermaid – originates from the encounter with another world. This new world urges itself upon her through the reflection that the windows of a bus produce at night. What she sees, looking out of the window, is not only the water of the Zuiderzee with high grass on the banks, but also the reflection – the ‘spirit’ – of the bus, sometimes above the watersurface, sometimes below it. The passengers participate in this mirror game. The two sailors are submitted to a somewhat sad fate: the grass is cutting as a knife right through their bodies. Such an image is a negative prediction, when sexuality is involved. However, the frustration, or the ‘castration’ which is here ironically projected on the innocent sailors seems to concern in the first place the poetess herself: her desire does not meet the desire of the other. Or is she imagining a punishment that she wants to inflict on these boys who are not listening to her voice, when she addresses them in her dream? In this special situation, with water, sailors and a mermaid around, we could even speak of a ‘wet’ dream...

The poem shows us how, in addition to the mechanisms of a maternal world, there are also other ones at work in her, acquired during a later period, those of an oedipal world. Tonight she is discovering, not without amazement, that she can also be a seducer of young men. Yet in this oedipal world it is no longer possible to live only with metonymies, with all those familiar, nearby things and words of the maternal world. On the crossroads with other worlds, other people, another way of feeling and speaking comes into being. For metaphors are not carried by proximity but by resemblance. She is no longer the same, no longer only the woman travelling home, in a bus, or through life, she is also someone else, a mermaid for example, an intruder in otherman’s lives.

⁶ The bus is not driving in top of the dam, but on one of its slopes, on the safe side, where the sea has been reclaimed.

Living with metaphors, with adventure, is more demanding than an existence where you are happy with just metonymies, with only yourself and the well-known people and things around you.

The metaphor of the mermaid, which has been prepared by the poetess during a long while, has taken us away from the world of the beginning in the first stanza. We now have entered the realm of seduction, conquest and castration. The dam seems to lead us to Thebe and to King Oedipus. But – and this is important – the poem does not finish there. The writer knows also about another distance, another space, where she turns out to be a philosopher and even a wise person. Now that she realizes – as we all have to do in every day life – that her desires and imaginations are torn between two poles, one being the proximity of her own body, her own world, and the second the world of the unknown, of the other with its own desires and codes, choices have to be made, borders explored, limitations accepted. In her writing the poetess is in turn the same and another, the traveller of always and the mermaid. This is only possible if she is staying in a third space in herself, a space with more insight and freedom from where she is able to govern the going to and fro between these two other inner spaces. The last lines of the poem show the presence of that space: «There is no end and no beginning in this journey, no future and no past, only this long and strangely split today.» This time the desires of the beginning of the poem and also those she was caught into afterwards have acquired enough distance to enable her to smile about what is happening, and to write a poem. We have truly left Oedipus behind us. Why should not we speak of ‘wisdom’?

What the poetess is telling us at the end of *IJsselmeer Dam* is a kind of metapsychological insight which is the result of taking her distance from the different feelings she experienced during this bus trip: life is a never ending game with distances in and outside of us. That is why she sees our inner existence as a ‘long and strangely split today’. At the first sight, this inner division – the big dam runs straight through it – seems to point at a dichotomy inside us, between a ‘maternal’ and a ‘paternal’ world. And we are continuously swung from one side to the other.

However what Vasalis is doing here needs a third space where this game of desire becomes manageable, a space from where it is possible to command to a certain degree the two others⁷, to say yes or no to them, and most of the time a little bit of both yes and no, in a poem for instance. After all, our inner experience is not only highly determined by this dam running through us, we are also driving in top of it... Life becomes indeed a continuous working with inner and outer distances: it becomes movement, distance-in-movement: the third distance is handled from above, from the dam. It is a going to and fro between regression and integration, between ‘Sinnlichkeit’ and ‘Geistlichkeit’, body and code (Didier Anzieu). Those two movements form the warp and woof of the texture [or tissue] which we like to call our identity. We are ourselves the Fates (the three Fates!) who, with the dreads we dispose of, weave that texture, the story or text of our life (texture and text are etymologically linked).

III

Freud once studied a similar movement when observing one of his grandchildren. Afterwards he wrote his well-known pages on the Fort/Da game of this child. The desire of the absent mother leads to a play with a reel, this piece of wood giving him a kind of satisfaction that replaces the other satisfaction which is now unaccessible. Freud will often come back to this movement between satisfaction inspired by memory and satisfaction in reality, actually to ‘castration’, and to the Oedipal situation. One of his very last texts, *Die Ichspaltung im Abwehrvorgang* [The Splitting of

⁷ Those with a theological culture will undoubtedly think here of the Holy Spirit, as the result of and the link between the Father and the Son.

the Ego in the Defenceprocess], from 1938, discusses this at length. Freud observes that where instinctual gratification as well as the claims of reality are taken into account, this leads inevitably to a 'split in the ego' [Einriss im Ich], that does not disappear and that in the long run even grows. Freud's image resembles that of the 'dam' splitting the sea into two parts. Freud who tells us that he has always believed in the 'synthesis of the ego processes' [Synthese der Ichvorgänge], shows in 1938 a certain amazement about the lasting co-existence of these opposite movements. He is implicitly pleading for the texture model we just mentioned. In his view, our Ego is not a synthesis of opposite movements that neutralize each other, on the contrary : this Ego does not neutralize anything, but makes exist together. He produces a 'texture' of movements, determining himself the distances and patterns that are involved. The Ego is such a texture of maternal and metonymical elements on one side, the bodily and the needs of proximity being dominant, and of paternal and metaphorical elements on the other, the body being henceforth governed by the laws of rationality and the demands of other people. Among these the most important are the laws of resemblance, a resemblance that leads us further and further away from proximity and repetition, to a world of abstraction and universality.

In this weaving process, body and spirit are not two opposites. Warp and woof are both body and spirit, and both are imagination and symbol. But in an early, pre-oedipal stage, the primordial dimension of our creative existence, the emphasis is on direct proximity and representation, while as the years of reason and the distance of the oedipal situation start to play a part, this proximity is no longer really possible. Therefore we must find our fulfilment from a distance and after a time of delay. Remembering the past, we mostly live with resemblances, often far resemblances. It is true that this movement brings us away from what we experienced in the beginning but at the same time it opens new horizons. What matters is that this process is not a linear one - and certainly not a movement from 'lower' to 'higher', as maturity is often considered, but a weaving one that is going to and fro. Thus identity appears as the way we cope with and interweave those two components of our inner being, the maternal and the paternal. Identity becomes in the first place the distance, the degree of freedom, by which we can conduct this process.

The metaphor is here the moment of transition, when the world of the beginning opens up and enters in contact with the world of the other, the really different. Only the metaphor allows us to acquire an identity, a face for the other, and for ourself. The metaphor operates condensation, makes us leave the flat surface of me-being-only-me, teaches us the dimension of being with others, with the other. However, in this weaving process, this play with distances, the most mysterious distance is the third, the 'spirit' which is actually the big weaver in us. This third distance enables us to prevent the dangers that are involved in the maternal as well as in the paternal field, as soon as they start to operate for their own sake, without the other. For the maternal, pre-oedipal field alone, without the distance created by law and metaphor, is a world that eventually devours us, the 'mother' no longer giving life to her child but pulling it into the realms of death. The paternal is there to create another distance and to protect us against such a mother. But the reverse is equally true: the maternal has to protect us against a paternal world which ignores all proximity, where human beings only live through laws and distance. We see that happen with philosophical or religious systems that have lost all reality, all bodily existence, out of sight. Such a unilateral way of coping with distance can also be fatal. Mothers have to protect us against deadly fathers, as fathers have the same task with mothers threatening to become deadly...

Regression to the Ego of the beginning as well as integration of the laws and codes of the world of the other are necessary if we want to survive, in a sensible way. Nothingness is imminent as soon as one of these two inner spaces is neglected or repressed, when reality loses its sense, or when we are giving to our lives a sense that has nothing to do with reality. In that perspective too, life, or better survival, is a question of 'bathmology': science and art of the good distance.

What the third distance should generate in us is not death but metamorphosis, access to other life: the weaving of metonymies-around-the-same and metaphors-around-the-other changes our

identity. Thanks to the distance of freedom our life does not need to be a tragedy without choice nor escape from fate, but becomes something like a drama, with alternatives that we can keep under control. Metamorphosis exposes and disbands fixations, false dilemmas, all kinds of predestination to which we felt submitted. It does not mean that everything changes, or becomes possible, but due to this new distance, I myself can govern my metonymical and metaphorical movements and even play and laugh with them, or, at least try to pretend to be doing so. It is the story of our poet taking the pleasure as well as undergoing the frustration of being a mermaid.

It is clear that the division of our inner scene into three spaces, as presented here, is different from the one that we encounter in Lacan's writings. However rich and suggestive that system may be, it seems that Lacan emphasises excessively the symbolic order, which in his view determines all the rest. This could be a consequence of his rationalistic – I have previously termed it 'jansenistic' – attitude in life. His experience of language is purely 'horizontal', from word to word. He ignores the 'vertical' movement that is also included in language when it generates 'metalanguage'. Lacan does not seem to have an eye or an ear for the third inner space that constitutes the 'top' of our ego, from which we control and weave the two other spaces. For him everything revolves around the interplay between the imaginary and the symbolic orders, the idea of freedom being probably one of the many illusions of life.

But when one believes in freedom, in at least some freedom, it seems inevitable to assume that behind or above those metonymous and metaphorical spaces in us there exists a third 'post-oedipal' space, which we could describe as the space of metamorphosis, because it helps us to transform ourselves into something, someone new. That is probably the reason why we find this kind of tripartite constellation back in so many different ways of thinking about the human mind, all of them laying the emphasis in a different field.

Talking about the human mind in this perspective – and this is my final remark – we can distinguish three – again three – kinds of approaches which coincide more or less with what we classify under the categories of Mysticism, Literature and Science. All three are busy with the knowledge and the metamorphosis of man and of mankind, but each of them emphasises another distance in our inner world: mysticism is like music most attracted by the – metonymical – forces of regression, of exploring the sources where life originates and to which we are bound to return one day. Literature, the world of fantasy, with the theatre as its radiant centre, develops above all the capacity to dream and to play with our desires – metonymical as well as metaphorical desires, the make-belief that we need and cherish. Ultimately, science, in our case psychoanalysis – the field of metamorphosis – uses all of this but is inspired by the idea that more insight into regression, imagination and language will set us freer and enable us to deal better with our inner and outer existence.

However, none of these can entirely do without the others. They all participate in the process of metamorphosis, each on its own level, from its own distance. That is why psychoanalysis can learn so much from literature and from the great mystics, and vice versa. Their interplay, that we are also practising here today, reflects the interplay that is going on in our minds between the spaces that we have just recognised as determined by metonymy, metaphor and metamorphosis. Hopefully you share my opinion that each of them speaks in its own way about 'bathmology', the art of the good distance.

Knights of the Heavens in the representation of death

VIKTOR MAZIN (*)

1. UNREAL REALITY: THE (F)ACT OF REPRESENTATION

On the screen the Bronze Horseman appears – the symbol of Petersburg, the totem of Peter the Great, who eternally strains toward the heavens; the logo of the city's principal film studio, Lenfilm. It was there in 1989 that Yevgeny Yufit shot the twenty-minute fiction film *Knights of the Heavens* in Alexander Sokurov's workshop. This film marks a midway point in the filmography of necrorealism's founder and was preceded by the short, punkish 16mm films Yufit made in the home studio Mzhalalafilm. After *Knights*, he went on to shoot the full-length films *Papa*, *Father Frost is Dead*,¹ *The Wooden Room*, and *Silver Heads* at Lenfilm. Despite the many differences between his works of the 'eighties and his works of the 'nineties, it is the concept of necrorealism and the connotations bound up with it that link all stages of Yufit's artistic evolution.

Introduced by Yufit in the early 'eighties, the concept of necrorealism indicates an absent (necro) presence (realism) and a present (realism) absence (necro), the ambivalence and indissolubility of life's relationship to nonlife, to the ambiguity of necrorepresentation. The intellectual ambivalence of *necrorealism* reveals itself in the speculative tension that emerges between the positive (realism) and negative (necro) poles of conceptual space. The filmgoer is faced with a filmic reality - a dead, unreal reality, the *necroreality* of images that were at some time copied, removed, filmed from reality; at the same time, because the viewer recreates it within his own mental space, it is a living filmic reality. On the one hand, the viewer sees certain things, objects from the material world, the *real* world, and identifies them as such; but at the same time these are «merely» *representations* of objects from the real world, ghostly membranes of reality.

Knights of the Heavens opens with a picture of a swampy river. This landscape on screen, what is it? Reality? A documentary? A fictional film?

(*) 199 406 Russia, St. Petersburg, Shevchenko, 22/2-2, Russia.

¹ Grand Prize, 1992 Rimini Film Festival.

The answer is not slow in coming: thirty seconds later, the painted Mzhalalafilm logo – two motionless sailors showing traces of strangulation asphyxia - appears to erase the significance of Lenfilm's Bronze Horseman (Figure 1). This dense painting, Leonid Trupyr's *Stifling Night in the Reeds*, temporarily closes the cinematic presentation, thus highlighting the (f)act of representation proper.



2. TALKING PHOTOGRAPHS

As the film continues, painting is replaced by photography. A radio voice serves as the background to photorepresentation. Concealing contradictions, the smooth flow of speech accompanies captured, frozen phototime. This smooth flow does not soothe. The talking photographs introduce two conflicting levels of representation. The photographs show patients lying in various poses on hospital beds.² Against this backdrop, a radio voice from Soviet times tells of a heroic expedition

² These photographs were taken from the archives of the First Institute of Medicine. According to Yufit, they show people who had been admitted to a psychiatric clinic after imitating suicide. In this instance, the mimetic peculiarities of representation bring patients and artists together and explain to real reason why Yufit chose to quote precisely these pictures.

being mounted to save our planet's inhabitants.³ The images on screen do not simply contradict the narrative: they affirm its inauthenticity. The voice can lie, the image cannot: such is the situation of opticocentrism, hidden from the eye. In the borderzone of the preconscious, images of patients and words about heroes merge. It is not only the patient-heroes, however, who constitute this oxymoron's internal contradiction and make the film's introduction pathogenic. The semantics of the announcer's speech is deviant «in and of itself»: he informs us of a fateful experiment involving a detachment of army mountaineers who are to join up with a top-secret unit. The paralogical, stylistically coherent, but semantically «empty» message introduces the motif of inauthenticity in the logocentric drive to speech itself as the ultimate arbiter of truth.

The intradiscursive gap between the uninterrupted flow of the announcer's voice and the discrete images points to, among other things, the allegorical character of the representation, which contains two different levels of language, literal and metaphorical, the one contradicting what the other affirms: knight-patients. As the film progresses, an analogous situation takes shape: the knights of the heavens are literally alive (they are played by live actors), but metaphorically dead (the knights of the heavens have left the earth behind); *at the same time* they are literally dead (not the film actors but their ghosts are «present» here and now) and metaphorically alive (the knights of the heavens appear as living beings).

And this step towards allegory already points to the approaching but still indistinct figure of death, whose representation is *always already* doomed to be an allegory. In the given instance, this is allegory par excellence, since we are faced with the representation, the reproduction, of pre-existing images as such (Owens, 1992); with the borrowing, not of images of what already exists, but of *already existing* images, even of *already existing images of what no longer exists*. Film-and-photography present kidnapped images of landscapes, pictures, and patients that now *literally* no longer exist.

In the process of necroelaboration, the allegory does not resort to simple symbolization or metonymic substitution but to the imitation of process, to the reproduction of the death work; that is, not simply to – an impossible (necro) – mimesis (realism), but to a double mimesis (necrorealism). In necrocinema, death performs a supplementary role: the knights' zombie make-up, the inflatable doll lying on the marshy shore, the train rolling into the distance are only rudiments of necrodiscourse. The realism of necro is manifested in the double mimesis (Derrida, 1975) of the death work (*Todesarbeit*).

In this type of double mimesis, moreover, the parareal picture does not find its end, does not die, freezing in mute verisimilitude, but moves toward the body that never appears, the dead body. The endless indeterminateness of every fragment, every element of the narrative, creates the feeling that the end is near – precisely in light of its absence, precisely in light of the suspended narrative, which as a whole becomes an ostensible narrative.

Necrorepresentation *obviously* differs from the centuries-old tradition of the allegorical or metaphorical representation of death. *Knights of the Heavens* reveals an allegorical combination of metaphoricity (re-presentation as reality) and film-realistic metonymicity (re-presentation *instead of* reality). The voice falls silent. All trace of photography disappears. The film narrative «proper» begins.

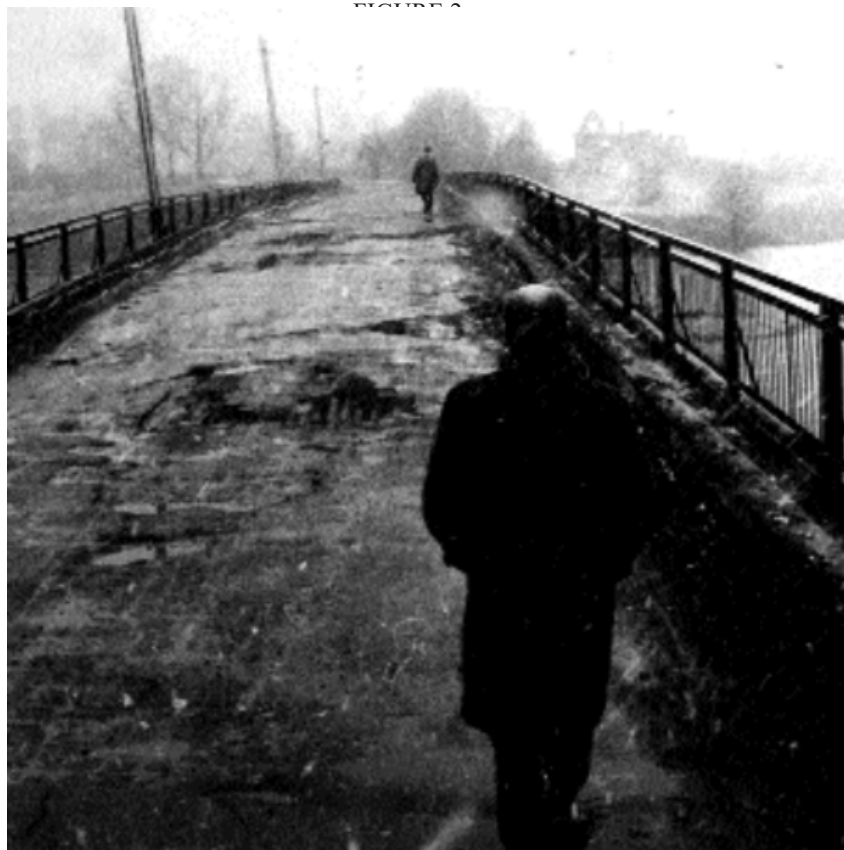
3. THE MECHANISMS OF NECROREPRESENTATION

3.1. *Ostensible narrative*

The film's plot is scarcely amenable to retelling. One is not sure that everything happened this way. Nevertheless. Slowly the image of one of the participants of the (filmic) event appears, one of the

³ The dialogue for *Knights of the Heavens* – as for all of Yufit's subsequent films – was written by Vladimir Maslov. *Silver Heads* (1998) was their last creative collaboration.

heroes of an unprecedented experiment, one of the knights of the heavens. The hero is faced with a choice: to disclose the secret of the experiment or not. The other knights come on screen. One thing is certain: they must conduct the experiment. The only thing that is not clear is who «they» are, what «the experiment» is, and how to «conduct» it. The crackling of fire in a furnace, the rasping of a saw, and the striking of a clock are followed by a barely discernible set of sounds produced by human vocal organs. The mechanism of articulation is malfunctioning. The knights' speech becomes utterly indiscernible: it is deprived of its communicative function. It is swallowed, dissolved, incorporated. A period of interpersonal aphasia sets in. The life-important message sinks in the oral cavity's swamp.⁴ Disarticulation pushes the subject towards regression into a fantasized pre-linguistic order. Even when the speech is articulate, it doesn't contribute to movement: «'Well, so should we head into the mountains?' 'We can't. The instructions say we should disperse and rendezvous here.'» Meanwhile, the shoe of a woman who might have known the secret floats on the surface of a well. The man who might have betrayed secret is not sure whether he did so or not. Progress is stymied. One of the knights belly-crawls across a bridge. After this transitional object, we expect things to become clearer – but are disappointed: the very same place. The knights romp among ruins. One knight bandages, mummifies another knight alive, either inhibiting what remains of the latter's expressive facial gestures or revealing the heroic nature of his wounds. He lowers



⁴ To shot this scene, actor Yuri Tsirkul moved his lips, while another actor who was standing on his head and «reading» Tsirkul's lips spoke for him. This method demonstrates, first, the splitting of the actor into representing image and «speaker»; second, the topsy-turvy order of what is happening; third, the aphasic character of communication.

him into a dried-up well and fills it with rubbish. Another knight appears with a report: he says that he has been deprived of his purity, that he was raped, that he cannot go on with the experiment. Half-naked knights hide in the forest.

We have the feeling that there is a story. *It seems* that we can get to the bottom of it. *It seems* that someone knows the secret. Who will give it away?

This seemingness introduces a sense of disorientation into our reception of the narrative. What, finally, is going on here? The impossibility of finding an answer, of recognizing anything, tells us: this story is tomfoolery, a travesty,⁵ a riddle with no answer wrapped in a mystery.

The characters on screen are ostensibly alive and ostensibly dead; they are *necropeople*, the knights of the heavens. They are represented as alive and dead, not alive and not dead. If a living man is the bearer of a certain meaning, if his actions are expressive and reciprocating, then the knights of the heavens are dead; but nevertheless, since they move from place to place, since they sometimes pronounce more or less intelligible phrases, they are not corpses.

Ostensible narrative is simultaneously present and absent. Present – insofar as there is a certain syntactical sequence of events which we might call paralogical narrative.⁶ Absent – insofar as the links between fragments are not logically connected. Ostensible narrative is homologous to the ostensible thinking (*scheinbare Denken*) of dreaming. It imparts the subject matter of filmic thoughts, but not the mutual relation between them (Freud, 1965, p. 348).

Ostensible narrative makes it possible to overcome the boundaries between the real and the imaginary, waking and dreaming. As we wait for the next element of the narrative, we anticipate a solution to the mystery of the knights of the heavens. Alas – our hopes are shattered. This constantly maintained disappointment of expectations, the uncertainty, the unpredictability of what is happening, gives rise to a tension between now and later. Ostensible narrative is effective by virtue of the automatically functioning logical operation that identifies temporal succession with causal succession.

There is no (chrono)logical sign of a future event in *Knights of the Heavens*. It dwells in obscurity. Having once appeared, Chekhov's proverbial gun disappears forever without acquiring the status of an omen. Narrative space is not marked by reference points. Necrospace is disoriented.

Ostensible narrative suspends the flow of events, constantly halts it by spinning off virtual paths. Any minute now something will happen, something will become clear. The shattering of expectations provokes expectation. Ostensible narratives freezes... and goes off on a tangent by constituting another, unexpected event. An event already in the past.

3.2. *Deviations in the rate at which events unfold*

The rate at which the narrative of *Knights of the Heavens* progresses, the rate of scene changes and focus shifts, the speed of the heroes' behavioral reactions, is retarded.⁷ Time is dragged out. The

⁵ Neither seriousness nor a joke, a travesty is a story that somehow or another constantly refers to another story which forever remains a mystery. As a result, we have «the overall impression [that we are] listening to a joke poorly translated and seemingly in bad taste, told as if to prevent its teller from being consumed by grief». (Gianivito, 1997, p. 44.)

⁶ Which can be restored. Meaning is reconstituted. If Chomsky held that the syntactically correct sentence «Colorless green ideas sleep furiously» was meaningless, then Jakobson showed that interpretation is a function of the perceiving subject, thanks to whom the sentence acquires meaning.

⁷ There is also a technical explanation for this deceleration – the switch to a 35mm camera.

agonizing paralysis of the filmic event suspends the knights of the heavens between photography and cinematography.⁸ We can follow the story, but we hardly shall be able to reconstruct its spatio-temporal development. Rate is violated anew. In Yufit's evolution as a filmmaker it slows: from the accelerated early shorts to the later decelerated feature films (Turkina, Mazin, 1995).

Presupposing an increase in exposition time, deceleration intensifies the significance of the individual episode, which is shot, sublimated, withdrawn by the next scene.⁹ The work of cinematography is homologous to the dream work in this case as well: meaning can be produced by duration, lighting, contextual editing (cf. the so-called Kulishov effect) – but not by means of logical operations.

Change of speed, of the temporal parameters of narrative development, opposes the «normal» time of the work of consciousness-perception, resists it.

The retarded progress of events makes it impossible to retain what has come before in operative memory, to link fragments into a single whole simultaneously. Deviations in the rate of the knights' behavioral reactions reflect deviations in memory and the mechanisms of orientation. The sluggish scene changes not only instill the illusion of an integral narrative; *at the very same time*, they paradoxically dispel this illusion.

The time between now and later is prolonged. Nevertheless the signs of life persist, the depressive symptoms of the lost time of consciousness.

3.3. *A demonstration of pathopsychology: purposelessness and displaced actions*

Narrative and rate deviations are naturally supplemented by behavioral deviations. In the face of death there is no order. Expectations are disappointed, but this can afford pleasure. Each new step taken by the knights seems neither logical nor expected. This sort of behavior, this way of «developing» the ostensible narrative, this kind of thinking demonstrate goal displacement, evasion, inhibition. Malfunctioning goal reflex, deflected drive to mastery (*Bemächtigungstrieb*) disorient: the task is subject to endless revision. One task replaces another. The task has no destination. The task is put off.

And that is how it happens. Despite the fact that the knights of the heavens have been directed to carry out an experiment, the goal is displaced, continually lost from view. The knights of the heavens are on a mission, their will has been reassigned to the will of voices, to the radio-relayed thoughts of the experiment's imaginary controllers.

This is not purposelessness – this is circling around the goal, its circumvention. Because it is impossible to imagine thought without purposive ideas (Freud, 1965, p. 567), obsessive avoidance of a goal indicates a malfunctioning of the thought process, a pathology in conscious activity. Here it is not a matter of the general absence of goals, but of their not being manifested in the waking state.

The knights of the heavens are paralyzed. In the face of death their position in necroallegorical representation is far from romantic fearlessness: it is reflected in imitation, in necromimesis. Theirs is a tricksterish, ritual position that identifies with death, rather than an existentially tragic one. The knights of the heavens are heroes stuck between heaven and earth. The ostensible knights are «upright and steadfast fighters for any cause» (Dahl, 1882, p. 119), whose cause is any cause, never determined, never concretely earthly. The cause as such, linked with the derivation of fore-pleasure.

⁸ In fact, Yufit turned a number of stills from *Knights of the Heavens* into individual photographs and multipart photocompositions.

⁹ *Translator's note.* These three verbs – to shoot (i.e. with a camera), to sublimate, to withdraw – are an attempt to convey what is implied by the single verb used in the Russian original, *snimat'*.

3.4. *Neither figure nor background*

The destruction of the principal gestalt of spatial perception is what the viewer collides with in *Knights of the Heavens*: the hero is not a figure. His contours erode. Vegetation is grafted on the heroes' faces. A visual hybrid is generated by the condensation of man and wood.¹⁰

The knights dissolve in their habitat, in the suburban borderzones between city and non-city, where in their transitoriness the demolished and abandoned houses, the ruins, once again call to mind the allegory of death. Knights among ruins reflected in the heavens, *between* heaven and earth, under the heavens, above the earth.

The contour-eroding soft focus and the optical distortions on screen create the illusion of a subjective gaze, thereby creating additional tension for the eye. Optical decentralization forces the eye to change state, to alter its distance from the object, to converge with its elusive contour or move away from it. One has to do something.

The indistinguishability of the central image violates the a priori cognitive function of the imaginary, for which those factors that attest to the coincidence of signifier and signified – resemblance, the similarity of discernible forms – are of paramount importance. On the one hand, the disappointment of expectations leads to growing anxiety amid disorientation; on the other, the absence of the anticipated coincidence of signifier with signified causes the appearance of perceptual delusions, pareidola.

The all-consuming background contains hints, variants for recognition; the pareidola demonstrate the freedom of the eyewitness. Absorption by a foreign landscape takes place, however. The all-consuming background and polysemy cause disorientation, which in turn leads to the anxiety-generating desemiocization of space.

The suspended process of figure and background recognition opens a path to the pre-mirror stage, refers us to the vague world of partial objects. The subject is disabled. The circulation of energy is blocked. Fear seizes the contours of the body, paralyzes it, inviting death, as it were (Laplanche, 1992), while at the same time (lessness) imitating, taking «its place».

The erosion of boundaries, the loss of body contour integrity, is the annihilation of life. Life is possible only in a delimited, differentiated state (Anzieu, 1985) that regulates the organism's necessary degree of autonomy. Bandaging and rebandaging are symbolic attempts to maintain the endlessly traumatized object's integrity.

The erosion of boundaries is, however, a coming into being as well. The crossing of boundaries is a ritual of consecration. Initiation is temporary death. *Knights of the Heavens* is a representation of the ritual passage from one order to another (Propp, 1946), a coming into being in the semiotic interregnum.

A time of initiation. The objects of coming into being lose their form: vague images barely stand out against an all-consuming, verdurous background.

3.5. *Playing at sadism*

The images on screen do not represent sadism *as such*. The necroknights reproduce *substitute sadism*. A utterly lost knight emerges from the forest with a broken doll in his arms.

Imitative sadism is not the death drive's voice, but its symptom. The imitation of sadism is a demonstration of the threat to life. If participation in the experiment is the hero's principal goal, then by virtue of his inner impurity he cannot achieve it. The knight has been raped. A disgraced knight is an ostensible knight. Even if the hero were pure, however, even if he were homogeneous,

¹⁰ This theme would become dominant in *Silver Heads* (1998).

unsullied by his association with others, the goal would not be attained all the same, for paradoxically this goal has no external attractor; that is, it is practically not a goal, although it is declared as such. Symbolic sodomy serves to lampoon, to act out the toppled order. To pull down one's pants, to rip off someone else's pants, to bare one's butt are all gestures that refer us to the structure of the carnival, to the inversion of the established order (Bakhtin, 1965).

The necroregression into anal-sadistic relations reveals one other symptom of allegory: rebus. Freud's rebus (Freud, 1965) indicates the interchangeability of words and images in dreaming, in the borderzone of the preconscious, where the representatives of both objective and objectified verbal notions collide. Moreover, even this rebus is of a unmanifested, furtive nature: we hear sounds instead of words. Sounds replace words, words copulate: we hear the sound of a saw - men are sawing. Bare buttocks are glimpsed fleetingly to the accompaniment of a woodpecker's hammering.¹¹ One man chases another. Their pants dangle around their ankles. The knights of the heavens hide in the ritual, fairy-tale grove. A caption appears:

«It was the second day of the thaw; by the sea, a joyful sense of animation reigned.»

4. THE PRINCIPLE OF REPETITION: CHILDREN AGAIN

«It was the second day...»: *Knights of the Heavens* ends with a quotation, a children's round dance, rotation, repetition (Figure 3).



¹¹ It should be pointed out that in Russian slang the verbs «to saw» and «to hammer» mean «to engage in coitus».

This dance is a dead dance and a dance of the dead. Girls from a 1936 Spanish newsreel move forward and backward, to and fro. The movement is false. The impossible movement proves to be another effect on the part of the director – the movement of the disoriented, the movement of the paralyzed. Time is reversible: there is no time. The ring has no beginning and no end. The girls form a circle. In the circle, the girls circle. The circle is encircled. Repetition is repeated.

Moreover, the repetition is contained not only in the final episode itself, not only in the ritual character of the movement, but in the fact that this is a quotation, the repetition of a film fragment in a (necro)context.

It was precisely the demon of obsessive repetition, precisely the repetitive game of hide-and-seek with the frustrating reality principle (Fort/Da), that led Freud in his day to isolate the death drive (Freud, 1955). The death work is manifested in the demonstration of paralyzed movement, in the demon of obsessive repetition, which indicates sadomasochistic, agonizing pleasure, on the one hand; the nirvana principle that throws off the pleasure principle, on the other. By means of repetition and the repetition of the frustrating event, by means of the *mise en scène* in which the absence of the beloved object that recently appeared (the mother) is made up for by a surrogate, transitional object (the reel), an *artificial symbol*. The infant masters the world by constituting a filling presence in mental space.

The repetitiveness and disembodiment of matter is made absolute *in the light* of dematerialized cinematography, in rendering the semiosphere abstract and phantasmagoric (Mazin, 1998).

Without repetition, the event does not take place. *Reliving*, recalling, reproducing – always already other – disclose events, our memory of them, the mourning for the impossible «first» event, for the death which in repetition contains the mourned *omitted* death.

Representation of the (ideal) object and self-representation depend, in the present, on ideality, on the possibility of repetition, reproduction. This repetition presupposes finiteness, the possibility of death.

«It was the second day.» The knights of the heavens have vanished. *Knights of the Heavens* has begun going round in circles. Double mimesis in necroaction.

Rotation around one and the same place. The mystery of a narrative which again and again brings us there – that is, nowhere. Space has been squandered. Time has been squandered. Space has been squandered. Time has been squandered.

Translated, from the Russian, by Thomas Campbell

REFERENCES

- Anzieu, D. (1985). *Le Moi-peau*. Paris: Bordas.
- Bakhtin, M. (1965). *Tvorchestvo Fransua Rable i narodnaia kul'tura srednevekov'ia i Renessansa* [The work of François Rabelais and the popular culture of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance]. Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura.
- Dahl, V. (1882). *Tolkovyj slovar' zhivogo velikorusskogo iazyka, t. 4* [Explanatory dictionary of the living Great Russian language, vol. 4].
- Derrida, J. (1975). *Economimesis. Mimesis des articulations*. Paris: Flammarion.
- Freud, S. (1955). *Beyond the Pleasure Principle. The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, vol. XVIII*. London: The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis.
- Freud, S. (1965). *The Interpretation of Dreams*. Trans. and ed. James Strachey. New York: Avon Books.

- Gianvito, J. (1997). An Inconsolable Darkness. In Christoph Gruneberg (Ed.), *Gothic: Transmutations of Horror in Late Twentieth Century*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press.
- Laplanche, J. (1992). *La revolution copernicienne inachevée*. Paris: Aubier.
- Mazin, V. (1998). *Kabinet necrorealisma: Iufit i* [The cabinet of necrorealism: Yufit and]. Saint Petersburg: Inapress.
- Owens, C. (1994). *Beyond Recognition*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Propp, V. (1946). *Istoricheskie korni volshebnoj skazki* [The historical roots of the fairy tale]. Leningrad: LGU.
- Turkina, O., & Mazin, V. (1995). Evgeny Yufit: gen estarrtes Pathos. In *Der Herzog auf dem Kirschkern und die Prinzessin auf der Erbse*. Erfurt: Kunstverlag Gotha.

Shakespeare's continuity through the daughter

DIANNE HUNTER (*)

«My reaction to my father's death – that is to say, to the most important event, the most poignant loss, of a man's life» – Sigmund Freud, 1908, Preface to the Second Edition of *The Interpretation of Dreams*.

«Full fathom five thy father lies ...
Those are pearls that were his eyes;
Nothing of him that doth fade
But doth suffer a sea-change....»

Ariel's song to Ferdinand, *The Tempest* (I.ii.396-403).¹

«Pied? Dappled, two-coloured, part-coloured, two-souled. Where was the advantage in that, *O master-mistress of my passion?* ... A child tugged at the knotted edge of his grey shawl. Another child was laughing, but it wasn't Hamnet. He looked at her-his face. They were both his children, but Judith with her hair tucked over her ears, was no Juliet. Judith was Hamnet. Hamnet was Judith.» – H. D., *By Avon River*.

Viola. I am all the daughters of my father's house,
And all the brothers too... *Twelfth Night* (II.iv.119-120).

«Let me imagine, since facts are so hard to come by, what would have happened had Shakespeare had a wonderfully gifted sister, called Judith, let us say. Shakespeare himself went, very probably – his mother was an heiress – to the grammar school, where he may have learnt Latin – Ovid, Virgil and Horace – and the elements of grammar and logic. He was, it is well known, a wild boy who poached rabbits, perhaps shot a deer, and had rather sooner than he should have done, to marry a woman in the neighborhood, who bore him a child rather quicker than was right. That escapade sent him to seek his fortune in London. He had, it seemed, a taste for the theatre; he began by holding horses at the stage door. Very soon he got work in the theatre, became a successful actor,

(*) Trinity College, English Department, Hartford, CT 06106, USA. E-mail: dhunter@mail.trincoll.edu

¹ All Shakespeare citations are from *The Riverside Shakespeare*, ed. G. Blakemore Evans (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974).

and lived at the hub of the universe, meeting everybody, knowing everybody, practicing his art on the boards, exercising his wits in the streets, and even getting access to the palace of the queen. Meanwhile his extraordinarily gifted sister, let us suppose, remained at home. She was as adventurous, as imaginative, as agog to see the world as he was. But she was not sent to school. She had no chance of learning grammar and logic, let alone of reading Horace and Virgil. She picked up a book now and then, one of her brother's perhaps, and read a few pages. But then her parents came in and told her to mend the stockings or mind the stew and not to moon about with books and papers. They would have spoken sharply but kindly, for they were substantial people who knew the conditions of life for a woman and loved their daughter – indeed, more likely than not she was the apple of her father's eye. Perhaps she scribbled some pages up in an apple loft on the sly, but was careful to hide them or set fire to them. Soon, however, before she was out of her teens, she was to be betrothed to the son of a neighboring wool-stapler. She cried out that marriage was hateful to her, and for that she was severely beaten by her father. Then he ceased to scold her. He begged her instead not to hurt him, not to shame him in this matter of her marriage. He would give her a chain of beads or a fine petticoat, he said; and there were tears in his eyes. How could she break his heart? The force of her own gift alone drove her to it. She made up a small parcel of her belongings, let herself down by a rope one summer's night and took the road to London. She was not seventeen. The birds that sang in the hedge were not more musical than she was. She had the quickest fancy, a gift like her brother's, for the tune of words. Like him, she had a taste for the theatre. She stood at the stage door; she wanted to act, she said. Men laughed in her face. The manager – a fat, loose-lipped man – guffawed. He bellowed something about poodles dancing and women acting - no woman, he said, could possibly be an actress. He hinted - you can imagine what. She could get no training in her craft. Could she even seek her dinner in a tavern or roam the streets at midnight? Yet her genius was for fiction and lusted to feed abundantly upon the lives of men and women and the study of their ways. At last – for she was very young, oddly like Shakespeare the poet in her face, with the same grey eyes and rounded brows – at last Nick Greene the actor-manager took pity on her; she found herself with child by that gentleman and so – who shall measure the heat and violence of the poet's heart when caught and tangled in a woman's body? – killed herself one winter's night and lies buried at some cross-roads where the omnibuses now stop outside the Elephant and Castle» – Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*.²

Viola. Make me a willow cabin at your gate,
 And call upon my soul within the house
 Write loyal cantons of contemned love,
 And sing them loud even in the dead of night;
 Hallow your name to the reverberate hills,
 And make the babbling gossip of the air
 Cry out “Olivia!”

Olivia. You might do much.
 What is your parentage? (I.v.268-279).

When psychoanalysis looks at Shakespeare, ever since Freud's reading of Hamlet's oedipus complex, it tends to focus on the meanings of fathers and the dynamics of father-son succession to the

² Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1929), pp. 48-50.

crown.³ One can cite in this regard Freud's and Jekels's studies of the theme of childlessness in *Macbeth*, Ernest Jones's *Hamlet and Oedipus*, C. L. Barber's work on the importance of hierarchy and heritage in Shakespeare's histories and tragedies, and Norman Holland's formulation of Shakespeare's personal myth in which Shakespeare is identified as a great man's phallus.⁴ These classic phallic-oedipal readings have worked only up to a point – the end of Shakespeare's tragic period; they haven't illuminated Shakespeare's comedies and late romances. With the exception of Leonard Manheim's 1964 essay on Shakespearean wish fulfillment in *Twelfth Night*, Judith Shakespeare's figuration in her father's work has not been emphasized by psychoanalysts or literary critics; but she has in a fictional way, in the wake of Virginia Woolf's invocation of the parthenogenesis of female literary genius in *A Room of One's Own*, become a publishing bonanza for feminist writing in English in the twentieth century.⁵ Following Manheim, and outlining a psychoanalytic reading of *Hamlet* and *Twelfth Night* as representations of mourning and wish-fulfilling responses to grief, I want to argue that the comedy reverses the tragedy by imagining a surviving daughter miraculously recalling a lost son, setting the pattern of continuity-through-the-daughter in Shakespeare's last romances. I want to address the problem of the consequences of mourning for creativity by examining how Shakespeare enacted mourning through dramatic representations of the intergenerational dynamics of loss and continuity. These representations are meaningful not only for the playwright's personal circumstances but for his historical moment and for our own.

Hamlet, a turn-of-the-century play (1600-1601), focuses collective Elizabethan anxieties around the nexus of sexuality, succession, and aging, associated with the anticipated death of Queen Elizabeth, then in her sixty-seventh year, and without a directly lineal heir.⁶ These cultural issues and the millennial discontinuity and anticipated renewal commonly felt at the end of every century had personal counterparts in coincident signature issues in the life of Shakespeare – his only son, Hamnet, a twin, died in 1596, and John Shakespeare, father of the playwright, died in 1601. As the

³ See David Sundelson, *Shakespeare's Restorations of the Father* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1983); and Dianne Hunter, «Doubling, Mythic Difference, and the Scapegoating of Female Power in *Macbeth*», *The Psychoanalytic Review*, 75:1 (Spring 1988), reprinted in *The Persistence of Myth: Psychoanalytic and Structural Perspectives*, ed. Peter L. Rudnytsky (New York and London: Guilford Press, 1988), pp. 129-152.

⁴ Sigmund Freud, «Some Character-Types met with in Psycho-Analytic Work», (1916), trans. James Strachey, *Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud* (London: Hogarth Press, 1957), 14: 316-324; Ludwig Jekels, «The Riddle of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*», *The Psychoanalytic Review* 30:4 (1943), reprinted in *Selected Papers* (New York: International Universities Press, 1970), pp. 105-130; Ernest Jones, *Hamlet and Oedipus*, 1949 (Garden City, New York: Doubleday Anchor, 1954); C. L. Barber, «The Family in Shakespeare's Development: Tragedy and Sacredness», *Representing Shakespeare: New Psychoanalytic Essays*, eds. Murray M. Schwartz and Coppélia Kahn (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), pp. 188-202; C. L. Barber and Richard P. Wheeler, *The Whole Journey: Shakespeare's Power of Development* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1986); Norman N. Holland, «Sons and Substitutions: Shakespeare's Phallic Fantasy», *Shakespeare's Personality*, eds. Norman N. Holland, Sidney Homan, and Bernard J. Paris (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1989), pp. 66-85.

⁵ See *Shakespeare's Sisters: Feminist Essays on Women Poets*, eds. Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1979); Peter Erickson, *Rewriting Shakespeare, Rewriting Ourselves* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, Oxford: University of California Press, 1991); Marianne Novy, *Engaging with Shakespeare* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1994), and *Cross-cultural Performances: Differences in Women's Re-visions of Shakespeare*, ed. Marianne Novy (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993); and *Shakespeare Quarterly* 47:4: Special Issue on Judith Shakespeare, eds. Elizabeth H. Hageman and Sara Jayne Steen (Winter 1996).

⁶ Steven Mullaney, «Mourning and Misogyny: *Hamlet*, *The Revenger's Tragedy*, and the Final Progress of Elizabeth I, 1600-1607», *Shakespeare Quarterly* 45:2 (Summer 1994): 139-162.

16th century and the Elizabethan era neared their endings, the playwright faced the prospect of discontinuity in his own male line, cut off as it was biologically from the past by the death of his father, John, and the future by the death of son Hamnet. Death, grief, and survival-as-continuity-or-heritage inform the cluster of plays Shakespeare wrote around the turn of the century, as does the emergence of important configurations of Shakespearean daughters and sisters.

James Joyce has indicated the complex personal family dynamics of Shakespeare's first staging of *Hamlet*. Of the play as a ghost story, Stephen Daedalus asks, «What is a ghost? Who is king Hamlet?

– The play begins. A player comes on under the shadow, made up in the castoff mail of a court buck, a wellset man with a bass voice. It is the ghost, a king and no king, and the player is Shakespeare who has studied Hamlet all the years of his life which were not vanity in order to play the part of the spectre. He speaks the words to Burbage, the young player who stands before him beyond the rack of cerecloth, calling him by a name:

Hamlet I am thy father's spirit

bidding him list. To a son he speaks, the son of his soul, the prince, young Hamlet and to the son of his body, Hamnet Shakespeare, who has died in Stratford that his namesake may live for ever.»

Had «Hamnet Shakespeare lived he would have been prince Hamlet's twin», says Stephen.⁷ But Hamnet's actual twin, Judith Shakespeare, did live. If we read *Twelfth Night* as a manic counterpart to the depressive *Hamlet*, we can see that Prince Hamlet's comic, fictional twin is the composite character Viola/Olivia. Listen to the word «live» in «Olivia». Shakespeare's contrapuntal stagings of mourning show traces of the loss of his son Hamnet, whose female twin survived; together the plays demonstrate Shakespeare's dialectical imagination - no sooner does he stage one representation of grief, the tragedy, than he represents its opposite. The first play figures the dead (Hamnet and John Shakespeare) as walking shadows in the figures of Hamlet and Hamlet Sr., and as memory of a primary, idealized world of childhood evoked by the skull of Yorick. These images fuse in identification/impersonation father and son. As Stephen Daedalus reminds us, Shakespeare played the part of the murdered father when the play was first performed, and in that role spoke to a character named like his actual dead son. The character Hamlet as a mourner is split in the play into the counterparting mourning children young Fortinbras, Laertes, and Ophelia. Hamlet leaves his dying voice to Fortinbras, and to Horatio his story to narrate and mourn. Laertes and Ophelia «couple hell» – he by pursuing a poisoned revenge, she by drowning in grief, ultimately committing suicide. Whereas Hamlet speaks of suicide, Ophelia acts it out. Young Fortinbras may be seen as an alternate of Hamlet because Hamlet's father defeated old Fortinbras on the date of Hamlet's birth, as we learn in the graveyard scene. The first gravedigger discloses that King Hamlet became a father and won for his son the inheritance of lands that, had the fight gone the other way, would have been belonged to Fortinbras Jr., in effect disinheriting Hamlet. By giving his dying voice in support of Fortinbras's claim to the Danish throne, Hamlet in effect erases from history the events of the date of his birth, disinheriting himself. But at the same time, through Fortinbras, Hamlet can be regarded as symbolically reborn, since young Fortinbras doubles Hamlet. This parallel shows not only in Fortinbras's standing as the son of a recently dead father but by his displacing onto Poland the aggression he intended against the «Majesty of Denmark», as Hamlet displaces onto Polonius, named like the founder of Poland, the aggression he intends against King Claudius, most dramatically in the closet scene where Hamlet, thinking he is stabbing the King, kills Polonius

⁷ James Joyce, *Ulysses*, 1914 (New York: Random House Modern Library, 1934), p. 186.

behind the arras. Hamlet admires Fortinbras as if he were an ego ideal, an idealized, vengeful warrior in action. Though Hamlet realizes that the Polish land Fortinbras leads an army against is not big enough to bury the dead who fight for it, Fortinbras for Hamlet is nevertheless a «delicate and tender prince», honorable and «great» (IV.iv.49-55). Fortinbras in the end takes the Danish throne, as Hamlet had himself wished to do. Survival here is a matter of displacing aggression onto targets away from the self, while identifying with an old-fashioned feudal ideal that regresses historically to martial masculinity – the father in armor as he appears in the opening act of *Hamlet*, reincarnated in the soldier Fortinbras. If we see Fortinbras as an alterego of Hamlet, we can say that the dead son reappears as a theatrical persona doubling a dead father whose defeat is reversed into a victory in the next generation.

Revenge is marked masculine in this play; suicide, feminine. Ophelia weeps and dies of grief. Laertes, of whom Hamlet remarks, «by the image of my cause/ I see the portraiture of his» (V.ii.76-77), briefly lets the «woman» in him out by weeping when he hears that Ophelia has drowned: Laertes cries, «Too much of water hast thou, poor Ophelia,/ And therefore I forbid my tears; but yet/ It is our trick, Nature her custom holds,/ Let shame say what it will; when these are gone,/The woman will be out» (V.i.185-189).

Freud writes, «[I]n the unconscious every one of us is convinced of his own immortality.»⁸ Otto Rank explains fantasies of immortality taking the form of belief in the soul as defenses against recognition of mortality. Belief in the soul, says Rank, founds the story of the double, which serves to deny death. But when the projection of the wish for immortality in the form of an everlasting soul fails as a defense, the double comes to embody precisely what it was believed to ward off. In these stories of failed defense, the double, ultimately death itself, haunts the protagonist like a mirror image. When the protagonist attempts to end the haunting by killing his shadow, this killing proves to be the protagonist's suicide.⁹

Rank's paradigm of the double as paradoxically both immortality and death itself illuminates aspects of the denouement of *Hamlet*. Ophelia, a feminine split of Hamlet, drowns, while Hamlet himself takes a sea journey from which he returns «naked», as if reborn from the sea. Hamlet and Laertes, mutual agents of death, confront one another in Ophelia's grave and then go ultimately to their deaths at one another's hand in the final duel. Claudius pricks Laertes on to emulate pride by calling up the image of Lamord (La Morte), as if death, having entered the play in the person of the ghost and uncannily penetrated his earthly counterpart Hamlet as the embassy of death, now stalks the kingdom at every turn.¹⁰ Osric, the courtier who summons Hamlet to the duel, is named so that he recalls «Yorick» the skull, «Osric» and «Yorick» being the only two Danish names in the play. The rhyme between them suggests that they are both death's heads. Coincident with Hamlet's death comes the first onstage appearance of his successor Fortinbras, back from the Polish wars to claim his rights in Denmark, a double as survivor.

Hamlet makes mourning into a spectacle, and stages the ending of a dynasty and its supplanting by an alternative royal line. By originally performing in person the role of the dead father, the playwright may be imagined to have enacted physically a variation of the psychic process called identification, according to which a survivor treats the internalized image of the a dead loved one as if it were part of the survivor's self, and treats the self as if it were part of the lost loved object.¹¹ Internalizing, incorporating or introjecting the loved one, the playwright's strategy is to embody

⁸ Freud (1915), «Thoughts for the Times on War and Death», *St. Ed.* XIV: 289.

⁹ Otto Rank (1914) «Der Doppelgänger», *Imago* III: 97-164; *Beyond Psychology* (New York: Dover, 1958), pp. 90-93.

¹⁰ Margaret W. Ferguson, «*Hamlet*: letters and spirits», *Shakespeare and the Question of Theory*, eds. Patricia Parker and Geoffrey Hartman (New York and London: Methuen, 1985), p. 302.

¹¹ Freud (1917 [1915]), «Mourning and Melancholia», *St. Ed.* XIV: 243-258.

him in play. This is representation as symbolic impersonation in which death is transformed theatrically – as something to be seen – into immortality. Shakespeare mourned his father by theatricalizing a walking shadow or spectre who struts and frets his hour upon the stage and then reverberates through time at every subsequent embodiment of the ghost's role in performance. Hamnet he mourned by projecting him as an earthly double of Hamlet's father whom he remembers by revenging his death and so proving his love, obliterating himself in so doing however and canceling his own birth by assigning his place to young Fortinbras, who marks Hamlet's death, succeeds him, and operates as his symbolic alterego who survives. The roles of Fortinbras Jr. and Hamlet Sr. can be doubled in performance – that is, played by the same actor.

A variation of watery grief and spectral solution to loss appears in *Twelfth Night*, where two sisters, Olivia and Viola, move beyond mourning by imagining that a surviving twin daughter Viola (latently Judith Shakespeare) is a son.¹² As the poet H.D. has written in her scene reconstructing Shakespeare with his children at Stratford, Judith «was no Juliet. Judith was Hamnet».¹³

Female survival power in the form of matrilineage and father-daughter heritage were actually more effective than patriarchal primogeniture in the politics of Tudor-Stuart continuity in Shakespeare's lifetime. Queen Elizabeth I had come to power as Tudor continuity passed from Henry VIII, through Mary Tudor, to Edward VI, and then to Elizabeth I, the sole royal surviving child. She emphasized her identity as her father's daughter, daughter of a King and, said she, «a King of England too». Elizabeth's successor, her Scottish cousin James Stuart, claimed British royalty through his matrilineal connection to Henry VIII's sister Margaret. Shakespeare began late in his works, around the time of the Tudor-Stuart transition, to dramatize the idea of continuity through the daughter. King Lear (1603) dreams of laying his dead on Cordelia's kind nursery, and invites her to think of their imprisonment as a chance to live happily ever after together, singing like birds in a cage. In *All's Well That Ends Well* (1602-1603), Helena, a healer, having learned magic arts from her father, regenerates the Winter King. Perdita in *The Winter's Tale* (1610-1611) survives her brother's death and her father's infanticidal rage to return Persephone-like in time for the restoration of her mother Hermione and the redemption of her father, the mad King Leontes. Leontes feels himself restored to youth when he sees Perdita approach him looking much as her mother had when Leontes first loved her. In *Pericles* (1609), Marina, whose name means «gift from the sea», is, like Hamlet, saved by pirates from death; a gifted embroiderer, singer, and dancer, Marina restores joy to her father, who sees the goddess Diana in a vision that ultimately reunites him with his wife. In *Cymbeline* (1609-10), Imogen (cf. imagination), a daughter disguised as a boy, proves destined to restore «lopp'd branches» (sons and heirs) «which, being dead many years, shall afterward be jointed to the old stock, and freshly grow» (V.iv.141-143). Shakespeare's last major dramatic work was written on the occasion of the marriage of the Stuart Princess Elizabeth, granddaughter of Mary, Queen of Scots, mother of James I, whose claim to be King of England James traced through her. These royal lineages frame the prominence of father-daughter relationships in Shakespeare's late romances. His last play, *The Famous History of the Life of Henry VIII*, celebrates the birth of Elizabeth I. In *The Tempest* (1611), performed upon the occasion of the marriage of King James's daughter to the Elector Palatine, we hear of the marriages of two daughters – Claribel, daughter of King Alonso of Naples, becomes Queen of Tunis; Miranda is betrothed to Claribel's brother, Ferdinand. Prospero retires to Milan, «where/ [his] Every third thought shall be [his] grave» (V.i.311-12), as Miranda, whose name suggests she is a mirror as well as a miracle, redeems her father's painful history of exile by marrying the son of one of his former enemies. She is Mir[ror] and «Da» [Dad – Father].

¹² Leonard Manheim, «The Mythical Joys of Shakespeare; Or, What You Will, *Shakespeare Encomium* (The City College of New York, 1964), reprinted in *The Design Within: Psychoanalytic Approaches to Shakespeare*, ed. M. D. Faber (New York: Science House, 1970), pp. 463-478.

¹³ H.D., *By Avon River*, (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1949), p. 36.

This redemptive focus on father-daughter relationships in the late romances can be attributed to the 1608 birth of Shakespeare's granddaughter Elizabeth Hall, the child of Shakespeare's first daughter Susanna and John Hall, whom she had married in 1607. During the playwright's successful retirement to Stratford, the oedipal and fratricidal conflicts of the early history plays and the tragedies having issued in an impasse and descent into madness, the romances crowned Shakespeare's work with a grace newly discovered in the power of the figure of the daughter as key to the continuity of the father.

But this birth-of-the-granddaughter explanation for the shift in direction of Shakespeare's work overlooks the female double of Hamnet, Judith Shakespeare, whose trace can be found in Olivia/Viola in *Twelfth Night, or, What You Will*, the only Shakespeare play that bears its author's name in its title. What he willed is that the lost brother would in effect reappear, miraculously back from the dead, to live on in a mirror world counterparting his sister's marriage. The deployment of twins in *Twelfth Night* can be read as symbolizing what Rank calls «the self-creative principle» leading to the «hero[ine] who combines in one person the mortal and immortal self».¹⁴

The doubling and counterparting of plots in *Twelfth Night* create a mad, theatrical world in Illyria which is a mirror image, in which everything appears backwards, to the extra-theatrical world. First the daughter impersonates her apparently drowned brother; then he reappears. Unlike Olivia, whose name is an anagram of Viola's, Viola does not stop to grieve her lost brother. She simply impersonates him without mourning. Olivia's mourning seems to be a sort of theatrical game, a play-within-the-play, emphasized in the recent Nicholas Hytner production by her melodramatic train of funereal accoutrements and the device she has installed in a garden pond - a black forearm-and-hand rises on cue holding a skull in amusing recall of the icon from the graveyard scene in *Hamlet*, now a metonymy for not only that play but for the theatre per se. *The New York Times* reviewer Ben Brantley remarked, «[O]ur first glimpse of Olivia, in a self-conscious procession of women in exaggerated mourning costumes (the clever work of Catherine Zuber), establishes her as a pose-striker par excellence. When she pauses by a pond, a skull pops out of the water, in one of the work's many visual flourishes.»¹⁵ Olivia ostentatiously mourns the death of her father and brother, partly it seems to evade Orsino's marriage proposal; her mourning is forgotten when Viola disguised as Cesario appears to woo her. The narcissistic Orsino mourns his unrequited love for Olivia, but quickly gives it up when a substitute presents itself in Cesario revealed as Viola. The self-conscious mourner role of Olivia and the self-conscious, unrequited lover role of Orsino counterpart the comic gender masquerade of Viola. If Ophelia is a feminine split of Hamlet, his suicidal grief that drowns itself in a watery element suggesting both tears and Hamlet's symbolic rebirth from the sea - immersion in the destructive, creative, transformative element, then Viola is a feminine split who survives in androgynous form. Fused with the image of her dead brother, Viola represents what Rank calls the «mortal and the immortal self». Ophelia sings in her madness. Viola, heroine of a musical play and named like a musical instrument, «can sing/ And speak ... in many sorts of music» (I.ii.57-58). All Ophelia's violets withered when her father died. Laertes prays that from Ophelia's unpolluted flesh violets may spring (V.i.240). Hamlet suffers from melancholy, «Viola» is the Latin word for the flower violet; and in the Renaissance violets were generally considered a medication against melancholy.¹⁶ Having worked through Hamlet's depressive fixation in grief on the haunting image of his dead father and having laid to rest the father's ghost, the playwright smiled at grief in *Twelfth Night*, manically moving from melancholy to festive celebration of double genderedness as a magical vehicle to survival through the looking glass.

¹⁴ Rank, *Beyond Psychology*, op. cit., p. 93.

¹⁵ Ben Brantley, «'Twelfth Night': Addled Sailors in a Sea of Love», *New York Times*, July 17, 1998.

¹⁶ Winfried Schleiner, «Orsino and Viola: Are the Names of Serious Characters in *Twelfth Night* Meaningful?», *Shakespeare Studies: An Annual Gathering of Research, Criticism, and Reviews* XVI (1983):135-141.

Double genderedness suggestive of bisexuality provides the erotic charge dispelling the melancholy that haunts *Twelfth Night*. Olivia woos Cesario/Viola whom the audience knows is a woman, and whom Elizabethan audiences would have known was a boy playing a woman playing a man, «[a male] woman's face, with Nature's own hand painted», a «master-mistress» of Olivia's and Orsino's passions. Viola as Cesario, dressed as a man, broods on her love for Duke Orsino. He proposes marriage to her while she is still dressed as his page. Viola's assumed name – Cesario – suggests a form of birth, Caesarean, as though the shipwreck dis severing her from Sebastian were a replay of their separation from each other and their mother at birth. Just as the sea brings Hamlet back from the death threatened for him in England, the sea that took Sebastian from Viola can bring him back again.

To the shipwrecked Ferdinand in *The Tempest*, Ariel sings, «Full fathom five thy father lies... Those are pearls that were his eyes:/ Nothing of him that doth fade,/ But doth suffer a sea-change/ Into something rich and strange.» If we hear in the «pearls that were his eyes» an upwardly displaced reference to the stones or testicles of the drowned father, who, moreover in Ferdinand's case, is not really dead, we may say of the playwright who staged mourning in *Hamlet* and *Twelfth Night*: with his father's, son's and daughter's shadows he did play. In the psychic struggle between death and survival that marks mourning, a Shakespearean daughter dispels grief and shows the way to continuity – this before Virginia Woolf called for the birth of Judith Shakespeare, Gilbert and Gubar's *Shakespeare's Sisters*, Jane Smiley's feminist rebuttal of *King Lear* in *A Thousand Acres*, and the rest of the Shakespeare-inspired female literature of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.¹⁷ Perhaps a question arises here as to whether the Shakespearean daughters I have named are phallic daughters. In the Freudian sense, perhaps not; but in the Lacanian sense of the phallus as representative of cultural centrality, authority and the power to leave a reverberating trace, I think they are.

REFERENCES

- Barber, C. L., & Wheeler, R. P. (1986). *The Whole Journey: Shakespeare's Power of Development*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press.
- Brantley, B. (1998). «Twelfth Night»: Addled Sailors in a Sea of Love. *New York Times*, July 17.
- Doolittle, H. (H.D.) (1949). *By Avon River*. New York: Macmillan.
- Evans, B. G. (Ed.) (1974). *The Riverside Shakespeare*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Erickson, P. (1991). *Rewriting Shakespeare, Rewriting Ourselves*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, Oxford: University of California Press.
- Faber, M. D. (Ed.) (1970). *The Design Within: Psychoanalytic Approaches to Shakespeare*. New York: Science House.
- Gilbert, S. M., & Gubar, S. (Eds.) (1979). *Shakespeare's Sisters: Feminist Essays on Women Poets*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Hageman, E., & Steen, S. J. (Eds.) (1996). *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 47 (4), Special Issue on Judith Shakespeare.
- Hartman, G., & Parker, P. (Eds.) (1985). *Shakespeare and the Question of Theory*. New York and London: Methuen.
- Holland, N. N., Homan, S., & Paris, B. J. (Eds.) (1989). *Shakespeare's Personality*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press.

¹⁷ See Virginia Woolf, *Orlando* (1928); H.D. *By Avon River* (1949); Jane Smiley *A Thousand Acres* (New York: Fawcett Columbine, 1991); and the texts cited in footnote 5 above.

- Hunter, D. M. (1988). Doubling, Mythic Difference, and the Scapegoating of Female Power in Macbeth. *The Psychoanalytic Review*, 75 (1), 129-152.
- Jekels, L. (1970). *Selected Papers*. New York: International Universities Press.
- Jones, E. (1954). *Hamlet and Oedipus*. Garden City, New York: Doubleday Anchor.
- Joyce, J. (1934). *Ulysses*. New York: Random House Modern Library.
- Kahn, C., & Schwartz, M. M. (Eds.) (1980). *Representing Shakespeare: New Psychoanalytic Essays*. Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Mullaney, S. (1994). Mourning and Misogyny: *Hamlet, The Revenger's Tragedy*, and the Final Progress of Elizabeth I, 1600-1607. *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 45 (2), 139-162.
- Novy, M. (Ed.) (1993). *Cross-cultural Performances: Differences in Women's Re-visions of Shakespeare*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press.
- Novy, M. (1994). *Engaging with Shakespeare*. Athens: University of Georgia Press.
- Rank, O. (1914). Der Doppelgänger. *Imago* 3, 97-164. *The Double*, trans. and ed. Harry Tucker. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1971.
- Rank, O. (1958). *Beyond Psychology*. New York: Dover.
- Rudnytsky, P. L. (Ed.) (1988). *The Persistence of Myth: Psychoanalytic and Structural Perspectives*. New York and London: Guilford Press.
- Schleiner, W. (1983). Orsino and Viola: Are the Names of Serious Characters in *Twelfth Night* Meaningful?. *Shakespeare Studies: An Annual Gathering of Research, Criticism, and Reviews*, 16, 135-141.
- Schoenbaum, S. (1977). *William Shakespeare: A Compact Documentary Life*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Smiley, J. (1991). *A Thousand Acres*. New York: Fawcett Columbine.
- Strachey, J. (trans. and ed.) (1955). *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*. London: Hogarth Press.
- Sundelson, D. (1983). *Shakespeare's Restorations of the Father*. New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press.
- Woolf, V. (1928). *Orlando*.
- Woolf, V. (1929). *A Room of One's Own*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World.

Ophelia and the (im)possibility of a female subjectivity

JAMES N. BROWN (*)

PATRICIA SANT (*)

In a letter to Michael Fraenkel in 1936, Henry Miller asked three questions: «Were *you* born Hamlet? Or did you not rather create the type in yourself? Whether this be so or not, what seems infinitely more important is – *why revert to myth?*» (Miller, 1939: 112-13). «Why revert to myth?» The question Henry Miller asked in the 1930s, and which is represented by the sign «Hamlet» in this paper as in European culture, is at the heart of the two post-Hamlet, postmodern texts we examine here. In a post-Cold-War, late-capitalist world, Miller's prior questions – «Were *you* born Hamlet? Or did you not rather create the type in yourself?» – are perhaps the prior questions which form the bases of these texts. As Michel Foucault stated in his «Preface» to *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, the major enemy confronted by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, in that 1972 analysis of the relationship of desire to reality and to capitalism, is fascism:

... not only historical fascism, the fascism of Hitler and Mussolini – which was able to mobilise and use the desire of the masses so effectively – but also the fascism in us all, in our heads and in our everyday behavior, the fascism that causes us to love power, to desire the very thing that dominates and exploits us. (xiii)

We will argue that Heiner Müller's 1977 *Hamletmaschine*¹ and Justine Ettler's *The River Ophelia* (1995) engage with the problems of fascism in the public and the private realms. We are concerned particularly with attempting to explicate some of the ways in which Müller and Ettler define and decry our world's production of the *self* as a subject produced by psychoanalysis who, like Nietzsche's man of *ressentiment*,

needs very much to believe in some neutral, independent "subject" – the ego – for he is prompted by an instinct for *self*-affirmation and *self*-preservation that cares little about preserving or affirming life, an instinct «in which every lie is sanctified». This is the realm of the silent majority. (Henning, 1995:xvii)

Oedipal and oedipalized territorialities (Family, Church, School, Nation, Party) work to sustain «the territorialities of the individual», Deleuze and Guattari argue, following Foucault. Both Müller and

(*) Macquarie University, Department of Critical and Cultural Studies, New South Wales 2109, Sydney, Australia.

¹ First published in *Theatre Heute*, Nr. 12, Seelze, 1977; world premiere staged by Jean Jourdeuil on January 30, 1979, together with a production of MASEUR, at the Théâtre Gérard Philipe in Saint Denis, near Paris.

Ettler discredit the project of psychoanalysis, which measures everything against neurosis and castration, the former's *Hamletmaschine* concerning Oedipal and oedipalized territorialities in relation to the State and to the subject, and *The River Ophelia* concerning the discovery by the self (especially in relation to the Family) of the «detrterritorialized» flows of desire, described by Marc von Henning as «the flows that have not been reduced to the Oedipal codes and the neuroticized territorialities, the *desiring-machines* that escape such codes as *lines of escape* leading elsewhere» (Henning: xvii).

In this context, we see Shakespeare's *Hamlet* as a seminal text of European culture precisely because it marks unmistakably the moment of emergence on the European stage of the (masculine) subject as it has come to be known and theorized in psychoanalysis. Inscribed in *Hamlet* is the oedipalized subject, that subject inscribed in opposition to the Other, in patriarchal discourse the feminine, as madness, incoherence, fluidity or silence; as negativity, absence, and lack (Showalter, 1985:78). Certainly Shakespeare's *Hamlet* sees Ophelia that way, joking just before the play-within-the-play (his by-play is verbal fore-play):

Lady, shall I lie in your lap?
 No, my lord.
 I mean, my head upon your lap?
 Ay, my lord.
 Do you think I meant country matters?
 I think nothing, my lord.
 That's a fair thought to lie between maids' legs.
 What is, my lord?
 Nothing. (*Hamlet* III.ii.111-19)

The genital puns here, on «country/cunt» and on «nothing/no/O», point to the basic anxiety at the centre of the play, that is, «being» and «nothing»; and as Freud pointed out, awareness of absence results in imagined or re-enacted presence: a re-collection or re-memembering of what was lost («Negation»: 19). We should recall that contemporary French psychoanalysis emphasizes this primary myth of loss in linguistic terms; as Anthony Wilden explains, concerning Lacan's «diacritical theory of meaning» whereby words rest finally not on any thing, but only on the circularity of mutual interdefinition, «it is this implied circularity and autonomy of language that leads Lacan into postulating a sort of fault in the system, a hole, a fundamental lack into which, one might say, meaning is *poured*» (Lacan: 217).

This Lacanian «primordial *manqué*» corresponds, as David Willbern points out, to Derrida's idea that «the signature is a *wound* – and there is none other at the origin of the work of art» (see *Glas*). These metaphors of an original lack, hole, defect, or wound signify that anatomical manifestation of presence and absence which demonstrates the fact of genital difference (*la différence* in the Derridean «*différance*»). «The sexual, bodily senses of Shakespeare's Nothing and O thus connect to various myths of symbolic origins» (Derrida, *GS*; Barthes). Of *Hamlet*'s anxiety concerning his origins from his mother's «O», and Ophelia's «nothing» we are made continually and uncomfortably aware; *Hamlet*'s definition of Ophelia as lack, hole, defect, wound – as «nothing» – is reiterated in the Gentleman's report of Ophelia's mad discourse. «Her speech», he says, «is nothing»:

Yet the unshaped use of it doth move
 The hearers to collection; they yawn [aim] at it,
 And botch the words up fit to their own thoughts,
 Which as her winks and nods and gestures yield them,
 Indeed would make one think there might be thought,
 Though nothing sure, yet much unhappily. (IV.v.7-13)

Ophelia is without meaning (her speech is nothing) until that «no(-)thing» which *Hamlet* has described as «a fair thought to lie between maids' legs» is «shaped» by (pro)creative «use», penetrated and given a meaning, a function in Danish court culture. In this reading, «court» and «country» are posited in Shakespeare's tragedy as a binarism: Ophelia's speech represents «the

horror of having nothing to say in the public terms defined by the court» (Showalter: 79). Ophelia's discourse, then, accurately replicates Hamlet's view that «nothing» lies between maids' legs, that in the male scopic economy of representation and desire, women's sexual organs, in the words of Luce Irigaray, «represent the horror of having nothing to see» (*Ce sexe*: 101). «Deprived of thought, sexuality, language, Ophelia's story becomes the Story of O – the zero, the empty circle or mystery of feminine difference, the cipher of female sexuality» (Showalter: 90).

The Freudian re-readings of Ophelia which re-sexualized her, consequent upon Freud's tracing, in 1900, of Hamlet's irresolution to an Oedipus complex, have been supplemented since the 1960s by more contemporary anti-psychiatric readings. Showalter writes: «In contrast to the psychoanalytic representation of Ophelia's sexual unconscious that connected her essential femininity to Freud's essays on female sexuality and hysteria, her madness is now seen in medical and biochemical terms, as schizophrenia» (90). She attributes this change to R. D. Laing's 1960s work on female schizophrenia in which he argued that «schizophrenia was an intelligible response to the experience of invalidation within the family network, especially to the conflicting emotional messages and mystifying double binds experienced by daughters» (Showalter: 91). But this project serves only to silence and to reduce Ophelia to «nothing», to an empty space, once more: «In her madness there is no one there.... There is no integral selfhood expressed through her actions or utterances. Incomprehensible statements are said by nothing. She has already died. There is now only a vacuum where there was once a person» (Laing: 195n.).

Heiner Müller draws from this reading of Ophelia in his uses of her as victim: in *Hamletmaschine* he stages upon the «myth of Hamlet» a denunciation of fascism(s) – the Oedipal and oedipalized territorialities (Family, Nation, Party) and especially the territoriality of the individual. *Hamletmaschine* begins with a grue somely detailed «Family Album», a grotesque reworking and reinscription of the triangulated binarism which is the family – father, mother, son – in which Hamlet renounces subjectivity – «I was Hamlet» (87). Confrontation with the Symbolic father leads immediately into meditation on and rejection of the Mother: «I wish my mother had had one less [hole] when you were still dressed in flesh; it would have spared me myself. Women should get stitched up, a world without mothers.»

The first movement of the drama continues with this hallucinatory vision of Denmark as «a prison, a wall is rising up between us», in which Hamlet fantasizes making his mother, the bride, a virgin «once more, mother, so your king can have a bloody wedding. MOTHER'S WOMB IS NOT A ONE-WAY STREET», and then announcing, «Now I'm going to have you, mother, in his, my father's invisible trail. Your screams I'll choke with my lips. Do you recognize the fruit of your womb.» And as in some of the Freudian interpretations of *Hamlet*, Müller's Hamlet fantasizes an «unmistakably sensual» Ophelia who «is very aware of her body» (Jones: 139), an Ophelia who has an unresolved Oedipal attachment to her father (Lidz: 88, 113): Hamlet speaks to Horatio of «charming Ophelia, she enters on cue, see her shake her arse, a tragic part».

On her first appearance, however, Ophelia, whose «heart is a clock», proclaims her lack of subjectivity, her claim to represent the European Woman in «Europe of the Woman»:

I am Ophelia. The one the river didn't keep. The woman dangling from the rope. The woman with slit arteries. The woman with the overdose SNOW ON HER LIPS. The woman with the head in the gas oven. Yesterday I stopped killing myself.... I dig the clock that was my heart from out of my breast. I go out on to the streets, dressed in blood. (89)

This transformation from past victim to present agency reinforces this Ophelia's diffusion as it replaces passivity with vengeance; in this manoeuvre Müller inscribes Ophelia-as-Europe(an) in Laingian, anti-psychiatric terms, and adds to it the 1970s' interpretation of Ophelia's madness as protest and rebellion. Müller understands that for many feminist theorists of that decade, «the madwoman is a heroine, a powerful figure who rebels against the family and the social order; and the hysteric who refuses to speak the language of the patriarchal order, who speaks otherwise» (Showalter: 91), and makes of her a grotesque exemplification of the «liberated» woman of the decade.

Müller thus brilliantly adapts the dominant feminist discursive strategies of his time, seeing in Ophelia the potentially revolutionary and active agency which Hamlet manifestly lacks: as Hamlet-become-«the Hamletperformer» states:

I am not Hamlet. I have no more role to play. My words have nothing more to say to me. My thoughts drain the images of their blood. My drama does not take place any more. Behind me a set is being erected. By people who aren't interested in my drama, for people whom it doesn't concern. I'm not interested any more either. I'm not playing any more. (90)

On that monumental set, he narrates a pageant evocative of the revolutionary movements of the 1960s and '70s in which he is, ultimately, the victim of his own ego («I am my prisoner ... I go home and kill time, at one with my undivided self» [92]), exclaiming, «My thoughts are wounds in my head. My brain is a scar. I want to be a machine. Arms to grab legs to walk no pain no thinking.»

The text ends, inevitably given her «rôle» as schizophrenic, with Ophelia-as-Electra in a wheelchair at the bottom of the sea, (being) bound «in white muslin wrapping» as «Fish/wreckage/ corpses and limbs drift by», proclaiming:

Here speaks Electra. In the heart of darkness. Under the sun of torture. To the metropolis of the world. In the name of the victims. I discharge all the sperm I ever received. I transform the milk from my breasts into deadly poison. I take back the world which I gave birth to. I bury it in my crotch. Down with the happiness of surrender. Long live hatred, contempt, uprising, death. When it walks through your bedroom with butchers' knives you will know the truth. (94)

The Return of the Repressed is assured.

Müller's comments on Hamlet(s) in «Shakespeare a Departure», the speech given at the Shakespeare Festival in Weimar, 23 April 1988, provide a gloss on *Hamletmaschine*, situating the title of the final scene of the text in Hölderlin:

NO MORE HEROS / NO MORE SHAKESPEAROS is the chorus of a punk song. A Hölderlin fragment describes the still-incarcerated Shakespeare: MADDENING ENDURANCE / IN THE DREADED ARMOUR / MILLENNIA. The Shakespeare wilderness. What is he waiting for, why inside an armour, and for how long. Shakespeare is a secret, why should I reveal it.... The dominance of monologues is no coincidence: *Hamlet has no partner*.... Time invading the play constitutes the myth. The myth is an aggregate, a machine on to which an infinite number of others can be attached.... The terror emanating from Shakespeare's reflections is the repetition of the same. (our emphasis: 101)

Müller's Ophelia seems not to exist except as the (parent-destroying) Electra of Freudian theorisation, the threat to the father which must be bound.

As a recent example of the «disappearance» of Ophelia-as-subject, Justine Ettler's 1995 text, *The River Ophelia*, stakes out another terrain on another of the Oedipal and oedipalized subject's vulnerable margins. This mélange of Sade, Masoch, Bataille, Hamlet and Ophelia – all are (re)present(ed) in the narrative – owes much, according to its author, to Deleuze and Guattari, and Foucault, among other French theorists.² *The River Ophelia* is a noteworthy example of that «Sado-Marxism» of which Drew Milne recently observed:

Marxism has a reputation for blindness to the darker forces of sexuality and transgression. Perhaps it needs noting, then, that along with Walter Benjamin, unorthodox Marxists such as Adorno and Horkheimer placed Sade's negativity next to Kant in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1947). Indeed, the heterological materialism of Bataille's quasi-Marxist reading of Sade could be said to have invented the thematics of transgression which influenced Foucault. (Milne: 202)

² Authors' interview with Justine Ettler 23 April, 1996.

The *River Ophelia*'s five sections – «Sade», «Ophelia», «Hamlet», «Juliette», and «Justine» – are named for presences in the text. Rigorously anti-realist, *The River Ophelia* is an elegantly deconstructive reading of «woman» under and as read by patriarchy, negotiated through Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and the Sadean corpus (especially *Justine* and *Juliette*) as interpreted by Bataille, Klossowski, Lyotard, Foucault and Macherey, tempered by lashings of Kristeva and Irigaray. Yielding its secrets reluctantly, the text offers multiple, often dissonant readings of contemporary Australian culture, deconstructing its representations of «woman», that Other which so threatens the Australian male. Among various representations of «Australian woman» is an Ophelia who is represented as feminist-*auteur*. At the centre of the text, Ophelia lives with Hamlet in a Foucauldian, panoptic townhouse which affords views of all beneath them (Foucault, *DP*: 195-228; Ettler: 217), including their pre-oedipal children playing a game called «strip dictionary» and cavorting carnivalesquely, in Bakhtinian manner:

The children were dancing wildly around the kitchen, pulling faces and pulling down their pants and swinging their hips to the music. They mimed singing into microphones and playing air-synthesizers and guitars and sang along to the chorus in four-part harmony. They rammed their naked ass-cheeks together in time to the beat and grabbed their crutches and fingered their chests where their breasts would be if they had any. They incorporated making the cups of chocolate milk into their dance routine and went about mixing and adding the ingredients in time to the song. (223)

Ophelia walks out of her relationship with a dependent Hamlet and into a feminist critique of hyper-masculinity and, conversely, a defense of «sensitive men in fiction»:

I find it incredible that Australian men won't wear condoms.... It's like, to them their dicks are immune.... I mean it's the same old story, the vagina is a wound, it's already sick. The penis is erect, visible, and as result easier to protect.... That's what I really like about that book.... The main character, he's not a hero... he's just an everyday guy. He has an everyday job, and a conventional marriage, and then he falls for this woman who's very cynical, sophisticated, not his type at all. A divorced woman with a career and a small son. Even though he's tempted to fuck her, his feelings for her are more complicated than that.... He's a sensitive guy. The writer turns a fairly mundane cliché – the love triangle – into a subtle and complex story.... And I think it's great... to see sensitive men in fiction. (335-6)

When this sentimental, quasi-patriarchal reading of *The River Ophelia* is challenged by Juliette (in this text, Dr. Juliette Lorsche, Hamlet's psychoanalyst), Ophelia takes refuge in the classic «argument-from-aesthetics», countering with, «But what about the way the relationships between the man and the two women are presented?... Don't you think they're sensitively portrayed?» (337). The oedipalized Justine «agreed with Juliette. Furthermore, the man and his wife reminded her of Hamlet and Ophelia. Hamlet was a coward who couldn't live up to his desires and Ophelia let Hamlet drive her insane rather than ask for more» (337).

Hamlet, who sees himself as a man of feeling, agrees with Juliette and disagrees with Ophelia: «'The man only seems sensitive because he's not as bad as the unlikable women. He's just another Hamlet,' he said, smiling with regret. 'I mean fuck Hamlet and his ambiguous feelings.... Ophelia gave it to me to read.... She said the main character reminded her of me'» (339). Justine has (literally) the last word on the text and on Hamlet:

No doubt he was totally engrossed in another of Ophelia's noxious novels where a so-called sensitive man selfishly and self-consciously pontificates about infidelities that never even take place. More contemporary Hamlets and every bit as cruel in their self-obsession as Shakespeare's original. To be or not to be and who gives a damn once he denies Ophelia anyway? She sighed. To all the men who've ever fobbed off a woman with a bullshit story like that, the paralysing effects of the vicissitudes of being, get fucked. And yes, you better believe it, it is as if all the love were gone from the world. Sorry, Ophelia. Too bad about all those tears streaming down your face, and all those crazy words spurting out like a river of spew. (346)

At this point in the text Ophelia dies, and Justine hears «Ophelia's voice, snapping with anger and protesting the patriarchy» (353), as Sade and Ophelia unite in her mind,

becoming a constant stream; Ophelia's streaming tears, streaming like a long winding river, a river rushing on to meet the sea, and, in the quiet of dusk on a summer's night, the river cutting into the sand, making a dark incision in the white sand – the river a sea of blood, a bloody gash, the sand a dazzling ephemeral skin – and everything wet before the police photographer's lens, the flash exploding... captur[ing] in the brief passage of an intensely bright light, in the instant of her abject cry, and reproduced to infinity. (355)

We may, then, see this text as representing the damage done to the Oedipal and oedipalized subject – especially, here, represented by Justine – as delineated by Deleuze and Guattari or, since throughout the text not only Hamlet's *bleeding* «eye» (located on the calf of his leg) but Justine's *black* eye scrutinise, dissect and anatomise all physical relationships, and of the damage done, by late capitalist panopticism, to the psyche – especially by the family. As Foucault wrote:

«Discipline» may be identified neither with an institution nor with an apparatus; it is a type of power, a modality for its exercise, comprising a whole set of instruments, techniques, procedures, levels of application, targets.... ([O]ne day we should show how intra-familial relations, essentially in the parents-children cell, have become «disciplined», absorbing since the classical age external schemata, first educational and military, then medical, psychiatric, psychological, which have made the family the privileged locus of emergence for the disciplinary question of the normal and the abnormal). (215-16)

No one of either gender is untouchable by modern surveillance and the effects of oedipalization: as Deleuze and Guattari explain concerning the «Oedipal cell»:

The Oedipal cell will have to complete its migration; it must no longer be content to pass from the state of the displaced represented to that of repressing representation; rather, from being the repressing representation, it will have to finally become the representative of desire itself. And it must become the latter by virtue of being the displaced represented.... Oedipus-the-despot will have to be replaced by Oedipuses-as-subject, Oedipuses-as-subjugated individuals, Oedipuses-as-fathers, and Oedipuses-as-sons. All the formal operations will have to be resumed within a decoded social field, and must reverberate in the pure and private element of interiority, of interior reproduction. The apparatus of social repression-psyche repression will have to undergo a complete reorganization. (216-17)

Finally, *The River Ophelia* comments not only on the virtual scrutiny and policing of desire in contemporary society, but also on the results of the continuation of the Freud-based, specular logic of patriarchy, by which the *gaze* is theorized as a phallic activity linked to the anal desire for sadistic mastery of the object (Moi: 134, 180). If the views of «woman» in this text seem to enact this specular representation of herself as a lesser male, then this is because of her exclusion from patriarchal discourse; hence the mock-ironic tone of the narratives of *The River Ophelia*. We might then see how, like Irigaray in «Speculum of the other woman», Ettler copies Shakespearean and Sadean discourse, theatrically staging the mime, «miming the miming imposed on woman... undermining... patriarchy through the overmiming of its discourses» as «one way out of the straitjacket of phallocentrism» (Moi: 140).

For different reasons and in different ways, then, these two texts indicate the impossibility of woman's subjectivity – Müller's by its binding of «Ophelia» to the «Hamletmaschine», Ettler's by its insistence-by-proliferation that «all theories of the subject have always been appropriated to the 'masculine'», and that when the woman submits to them, she unknowingly gives up her specific relationship to the imaginary (Irigaray, *Spéculum*: 165). The gaze is, then, centrally important in both texts: in any production of *Hamletmaschine*, Ophelia is a spec(tac)ular Other, seen and recognised as hysteric, schizophrenic; in *The River Ophelia*, the multiple representations of post-modern «woman», and the name of the text, inscribe femininity as plural and multiple, female sexuality as inclusive, and fluid (Irigaray, *Ce sexe*: 109-110). By her denial of authority to / denial

of authorisation of any one voice, Ettler embraces and celebrates the inclusivity and multiplicity of femininity, non-unity and tactility of woman's *jouissance*, as described, famously, by Irigaray: «A woman 'touches herself' constantly without anyone being able to forbid her to do so, for her sex is composed of two lips which embrace continually. Thus, within herself she is already two – but not divisible into ones – who stimulate each other» (*La Croyance même*: 101; *Ce sexe*: 25-6).

The insistence, by both texts, that «woman» is multiple, decentered and undefinable would lead us to conclude that they reject definitively the possibility of a «women's writing» as Hélène Cixous would (idealistically) have it; in neither text is there an essential «woman» to write or to be written, no pre-oedipal, metaphysical space as the source of the voice that resonates through all female writing (Cixous: 173); no essentialist identification on the basis of gender. Both texts reinforce Kristeva's argument that «femininity», if it can be defined, is «that which is marginalized by the patriarchal symbolic order», as «that which cannot be represented, that which is not spoken, that which remains outside naming and ideologies» («La femme»: 21).

In this light we can understand how the (potentially) positive drive to power in these texts is the *political analysis* of desire, how (like Deleuze and Guattari) these two texts urge mankind to strip itself of *all* anthropomorphic and anthropological armouring, all myth and tragedy, and all existentialism. So stripped, human beings are free to analyze and fight against the effects of power that subjugate them:

For a revolutionary group at the preconscious level remains a *subjugated group*, even in seizing power, as long as this power itself refers to a form of force that continues to enslave and crush desiring-production. ... A *subject group*, on the contrary, is a group whose libidinal investments are themselves revolutionary, it causes desire to penetrate into the social field, and subordinates the socius or the forms of power to desiring-production. (Quoted in Seem: xxi)

We would conclude, then, that Deleuze and Guattari's «schizoanalytic» approach is a healing process, the major task of which is «to destroy the oedipalized and neuroticized individual dependencies through the forging of a collective subjectivity, a nonfascist subject – anti-Oedipus» (Seem: xxii-xxiii). The texts by Müller and Ettler we have discussed expose the urgency – and the difficulty – of the task of this destruction and the substitution for it of a nonfascist subject.

REFERENCES

- Adorno, T. W., & Horkheimer, M. (1973). *Dialectic of enlightenment*. Tr. John Cumming. London: Allen Lane.
- Allison, D. B., Roberts, M. S., & Weiss, A. S. (Eds.) (1995). *Sade and the narrative of transgression*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Artaud, A. (1965). Here Lies. Tr. F. Teri Wehn and Jack Hirschman. In *Artaud Anthology*. San Francisco: City Lights Books.
- Bakhtin, M. (1968). *Rabelais and his world*. Tr. H. Iswolsky. Cambridge, Mass. and London: MIT Press.
- Barthes, R. (1964). La métaphore de l'oeil. In *Essais Critiques* (pp. 238-245). Paris: Seuil.
- Barthes, R. (1968). *Writing degree zero*. Tr. A. Lavers and C. Smith. New York: Hill and Wang.
- Bataille, G. (1970). Histoire de l'oeil. In *Oeuvres Complètes* (Vol. I, pp. 9-78). Paris: Gallimard.
- Cixous, H. (1975). *La jeune née* (en collaboration avec Catherine Clément). Paris: UGE, 10/18.
- Deleuze, G., & Guattari, F. (1983). *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and schizophrenia*. Tr. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem and Helen R. Lane. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Derrida, J. (1974). *Glas*. Paris: Editions Galilée.
- Derrida, J. (1977). Genesis and structure of *Essay on the Origin of Language*. In *Of grammarology* (pp. 165-268). Tr. Gayatri Spivak. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Ettler, J. (1995). *The River Ophelia*. Sydney: Picador.
- Foucault, M. (1977). *Discipline and punish: The birth of the prison*. Tr. Alan Sheridan. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

- Foucault, M. (1983). Preface. Gilles Deleuze & Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*. Vol I: of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (pp. xi-xiv). Tr. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem and Helen R. Lane. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Freud, S. (1953-74). Negation. In *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud* (Vol. 19, 235-241). Ed. and tr. James Strachey et al. London: Hogarth Press.
- Henning, M. von (1995). Introduction: Müller Material. In *Theatremachine* (pp. vii-xvii). Tr. and ed. Marc von Henning. London: Faber and Faber.
- Irigaray, L. (1974). *Spéculum de l'autre femme*. Paris: Minuit.
- Irigaray, L. (1977). *Ce sexe qui n'en est pas un*. Paris: Minuit. Tr. Claudia Reeder, as «This sex which is not one», in Elaine Marks, & Isabelle de Courtivron (Eds.), *New French Feminisms* (pp. 99-106). Brighton: Harvester, 1980.
- Irigaray, L. (1983). *La croyance même*. Paris: Galilée.
- Jones, E. (1949). *Hamlet and Oedipus*. London: Gallancz.
- Klossowski, P. (1969). *Nietzsche et le cercle vicieux*. Paris: Mercure de France.
- Kristeva, J. (1974). La femme, ce n'est pas jamais ça. *Tel Quel*, 59, 19-24.
- Kristeva, J. (1982). *Powers of horror: An essay on abjection*. Tr. Leon S. Roudiez. European Perspective Series. New York and Oxford: Columbia University Press.
- Lacan, J. (1968). *The language of the self: The function of language in psychoanalysis*. Tr. with notes and introduction by Anthony Wilden. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press.
- Laing, R. D. (1971). *The politics of experience*. New York: Ballantine Books.
- Laing, R. D. (1982). *The divided self*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Lidz, T. (1976). *Hamlet's enemy: Madness and myth in Hamlet*. London: Vision.
- Liotard, J.-F. (1971). *Discours, figure*. Paris: Klincksieck.
- Macheray, P. (1995). *The object of literature*. Tr. David Macey. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Miller, H. (1939). *Hamlet*. Puerto Rico: Carrefour, Vol. I.
- Miller, H. (1965). *Sexus*. New York: Grove Press.
- Milne, D. (1996). Review article. *Textual Practice*, 10 (1), 201-207.
- Moi, T. (1985). *Sexual/Textual politics: Feminist literary theory*. New Accents Series. London and New York: Routledge.
- Müller, H. (1995). *The Hamletmachine*. In *Theatremachine* (pp. 85-94), tr. and ed. Marc von Henning. London: Faber and Faber.
- Müller, H. (1995). Shakespeare a departure. In *Theatremachine* (pp. 99-102), tr. and ed. Marc von Henning. London: Faber and Faber.
- Nietzsche, F. (1969). *On the genealogy of morals*. Tr. Walter Kaufmann. New York: Random House, Vols. I and II.
- Sade, Marquis de (1991). *Juliette*. Tr. Austryn Wainhouse. London: Arrow Books.
- Sade, Marquis de (1991). «Justine, or Good Conduct Well Chastised (1791)». In *Justine, Philosophy in the Bedroom and Other Writings* (pp. 447-743). Tr. Richard Seaver and Austryn Wainhouse. London: Arrow Books.
- Seem, M. (1983). Introduction. Gilles Deleuze & Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Tr. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem and Helen R. Lane. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Shakespeare, W. (1982). *Hamlet*. Ed. Harold Jenkins. London and New York: Methuen.
- Showalter, E. (1985). Representing Ophelia: women, madness, and the responsibilities of feminist criticism. In Patricia Parker, & Geoffrey Hartman (Eds.), *Shakespeare and the question of theory* (pp. 77-94). New York and London: Methuen.
- Suleiman, S. R. (1986). Pornography, transgression, and the avant-garde: Bataille's *Story of the Eye*. In Nancy K. Miller (Ed.), *The poetics of gender* (pp. 117-136). New York: Columbia University Press.
- Willbern, D. (1981). Shakespeare's 'nothing'. In Murray M. Schwartz, & Coppélia Kahn (Eds.), *Representing Shakespeare: New psychoanalytic essays* (pp. 244-263). Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Moby-Dick or the Whale by Herman Melville: «jouissance at work»

PIERRE MET (*)

What a forty year's fool – fool – old fool, has old Ahab been! Why this strife of the chase? (...) Close! stand close to me, Starbuck; let me look into a human eye; it is better than to gaze into the sea or sky; better than to gaze upon God. (MD, 591)

The novel is a classic: *Moby-Dick*, published by Melville in 1851,¹ is the story of the hunt for a white whale by Ahab, a sea captain, from Nantucket. The frantic pursuit ends by the destruction of the ship, the *Pequod*, and the death of her crew.² Only Ishmael,³ the narrator, survives, rescued by the *Rachel*, a ship whose captain was searching for his missing son. The question that comes to mind here, in relation to Freudian theory is: does the voyage of the *Pequod*, – by the way an aggressive fantasy –, make sense, and why did Melville, after the completion of *Moby-Dick*, report to Hawthorne:

I have written a wicked book, and feel spotless as the lamb.

It is probable that the author was already aware of the possible existence of a concealed relationship between Desire and language, the secret of which could be only deciphered by the understanding of his central concern in fighting a white Leviathan and imagining the destruction of a ship by a sperm

(*) Université de Paris Sud, Faculté Jean Monnet, 54, boulevard Desgranges, 92331 Sceaux Cedex.

¹ References to *Moby-Dick or the Whale* are to the Penguin Classics edition, 1992. The text is that of the edition published by the North-western University Press and the Newberry Library in 1988 and edited by Harrison Hayford, Hershel Parker, and G. Thomas Tanselle. Melville dedicated his novel to the «genius» of Nathaniel Hawthorne.

² The book is a romance of adventure, founded upon certain wild legends in the southern sperm whale fisheries and illustrated by the author's own personal experience, of two years and more, as a harpooner. (Melville's letter to Richard Bentley, New York, June 27, 1850).

According to Melville's biographers, there is no evidence that he may have been a harpooner during the time he spent on different whaling boats.

³ Ishmael was the son of Abraham and his servant Hager. He is the archetype of the outcast. When Melville opens his story with the words «Call me Ishmael», he is recalling the description of the biblical Ishmael. (See Calvocoressi, Peter, *Who is Who in the Bible*. Great Britain: Viking, 1987.)

whale.⁴ It is also likely that Ishmael is the only one to survive because someone must be left to tell Ahab's wicked story, but there is more, no doubt. In this context the compulsion to repeat operates as a defence mechanism in order to represent and perpetuate a conflict with the object, which derives its energy from the child's own aggression. And here we can quote Plato:

The good are those who are content to dream of what the other, the bad really do.

We all know, after Freud, now that the infant's loss of its mother's breast represents a form of castration. Ishmael, the first person narrator, who is both the central actor, and the retrospective teller of his adventures, begins his story with an allusion to the open gap introduced by absence.⁵

Call me Ishmael. Some years ago – never mind how long precisely – having little or no money in my purse, and nothing particular to interest me on shore, I thought I would sail about a little and see the watery part of the world. (MD, 1)

The absence of a grammatically «other», see the watery world: a good way to deny the painful experience of separation and also a way to discover what the mother is made of. At sea everybody lives on board of the same ship but in separated worlds. On one hand the captain, the mates, and the harpooners, on the other the seamen.⁶ And Ishmael is introduced as the archetype of the outcast. We all know that according to *The Bible*, how after the birth of her own son Isaac, Sarah persuaded Abraham to send away Hagar, and Ishmael, Abraham's other son by Hagar. Melville seems to take pleasure in recalling what the *Scriptures* say about Ishmael:

A wild man; his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him. (Genesis: 16,17,21,25,28)

I think Ishmael and captain Ahab may be defined by parental absence. The former is a cast off son, whereas the latter is also an orphan, his father having died before he was born and his mother when he was twelve months. In addition to what has already been said, because of Ahab's tragic death, his own son will be also fatherless. In this story, *Moby-Dick*, the whale, as object (a), may come to symbolise this central lack and a quest for completion.

In chapter 9, the sermon of Father Mapple, a curious name by the way, is based upon the biblical account of Jonah and the whale. After three days and three nights in the belly of the fish, Jonah is cast up on dry land, safe. Throughout the story, Melville insists on the importance of dissolution and on the regeneration of life, and he seems able to reduce, by this means, the displeasure of tension due to loss. At the end of the story, Ishmael, following the example of Jonah, is rescued by a ship whose captain has lost his son and is looking for him.

Shipmates, I do not place Jonah before you to be copied for his sin but I do place him before you as a model for repentance. (MD, 52)

The Freudian subject is always guilty. In order to reduce his feeling of guilt and to fight deprivation in terms of love, the subject imagines he is swallowed by a whale, a mother and a father figure as well, as explained in chapter 86 entitled «The Tail».⁷ In chapter 90, entitled «Heads and Tails», Melville reminds us that the law of England makes visible this dichotomy by making it effective:

(...) that of all whales captured by anybody on the coast of that land, the King, as Honorary Grand Harpooner, must have the head, and the Queen be respectfully presented the tail. (MD, 436)

⁴ The sperm whale: one of the larger variety. It protects himself with rows of ivory teeth and the slap of his tail; it dives to the sea bottom and is known to attack great objects which threaten him.

⁵ I borrow this formulation from Arvin, *Herman Melville*. New York: Sloane, 1950, 171-2. Arvin sees Ahab's loss of his leg as a kind of castration and *Moby-Dick* as the archetypal parent.

⁶ An aggressive phallic system of power is present on the *Pequod*. On sea the sailors are subject to the authority of the captain or the «Law of the Father» as Lacan calls it.

⁷ To be eaten is the most radical form of loss of identity imaginable.

This demand of English law can be taken as an example of displacement of the rejected idea of castration. The only relation is the impossible relation and Moby-Dick, the threatening object, becomes associated with lost completeness.⁸ It becomes obvious now that the quest of the *Pequod* is a quest for what is lacking, and that, for Melville, whaling seems to be the «result» of the influence of a traumatic experience. Freud demonstrated the anxiety of the infant when he finds his mother is not here. This hypothesis is not simply that separation causes distress or even unhappiness, but that deprivation in terms of love can also create frustration leading to aggressivity. The narrator and the characters are homeless sailors who have lost property of their own persons. Ahab, an obvious father figure, is an isolated man during the voyage, and the failure of his pursuit of Moby-Dick can be interpreted as a metaphor of impotence. Isolation, in this violent world, equates to death. Many men are lost overboard during the voyage faced with the fear of being destroyed. During the first chase, Ishmael's boat capsized and Moby-Dick escaped. The child does not ask for the return of the mother, but on the contrary imagines a repetition of the mother's departure. Water seems to reward the achievement of manhood: it kills and gives life, destroys as well as creates. In chapter 22, «Merry Christmas», Captain Peleg and Captain Bilbad, the owners of the *Pequod* are reluctant to leave their ship.

But at last, he turned to his comrade, with a final sort of look about him, – «Captain Bilbad – come, old shipmate we must go.» (MD, 114)

Their different attitudes, showing us how opposite they are, comes from different sources. To remain aboard appeared to be a danger which must be avoided, and to leave may come to symbolise the danger of the central lack we have just mentioned. Seen in this light, the character of Moby-Dick can be interpreted as a detached emblem that always signals a sense of incompleteness. Protected by his narrator, Melville seems to obtain pleasure in repeating an unpleasurable experience, thus giving way to what must have been a compulsion. With Ahab, the writer seems to describe how the subject is faced with the task of coming to terms with castration. His pursuit of Moby-Dick, which cost him a leg, illustrates his failure as a «father». The captain of the *Samuel Enderby*, another father figure, has an arm of white whalebone. In Chapter 86, «The Tail», Ishmael explains that the tail of the whale is a thing of beauty and enormous power. (MD, 410)

The more I consider this mighty tail, the more I deplore my inability to express it. (MD, 414)

Here, the author acknowledges his inability to put into words the vertical undulatory movement of the whale.⁹ Mute in front of such an image of power and probably of complete, ideal power, the novelist is fascinated and can only «gaze» speechless. As a subject I am the Desire of the Other solving the mystery and seeing. The subject can't speak openly about sexuality and his search for sexual pleasure. Like a little boy observing the primal scene and highly valuing the male sexual organ, he is also exposed to castration anxiety.¹⁰ Thus many characters are symbolically and physically castrated. Captain Boomer the captain of the whaling ship *Enderby* lost his arm as we saw and even Moby-Dick is carrying a scar on his great head from a previous «enemy attack». The scar is moreover particularly meaningful, since it reminds us of another scar mentioned only a few pages earlier. Before the story begins Ahab has been robbed of his leg; he has a huge white scar running down the side of his face. But as if he wanted to prevent this from becoming part of his

⁸ Moby-Dick: an object of desire as a signifier of a present danger.

⁹ Melville insists in *Moby-Dick* upon the reality of the story he is telling. He transferred the name of his fictional ship to a real one. *Moby-Dick* is an oral legend turned into a text.

¹⁰ Chapter 94 «A Squeeze of the Hand» ends with a remark on castration fears about chopping off toes while preparing the sperm. (MD, 458) (Masturbation seen as a dangerous and non-productive sexuality?)

own experience, the narrator represents what is sexual by non-sexual objects or relations accompanied by strong affects. Whether that mark was born with him or whether it was the scar left by this wound remains a taboo. By some tacit consent, throughout the voyage, little or no allusion is made to it, and certainly not by the mates... !!! (MD, 134) Repression is taking place under the form of shame, disgust and morality. Throughout the story, sperm whales are killed, dissected and their oil taken.¹¹ In the story, the characters are not to be removed of their genitals but of their arms or legs. This displacement of the loss of the male organ may result in difficulties to unite with the object.

So deprived of one leg, (...), Ahab now finds himself abjectly reduced to a clumsy landsman again; hopelessly eyeing the uncertain changeable height he could hardly hope to attain. (MD, 477)

Here, the subject does not accept his symbolic castration. According to psychological theory, the purpose of defence mechanism is to protect the ego. The captain of the *Samuel Enderby* lowers a large hook, Ahab slides his thigh into the curve and soon gently lands on deck. (MD, 477) From chapter one to the end of the book we understand that the return to sea amounts to a rebirth, and that whale hunting can be interpreted as a denial: «no, it is not true». The motif of Ishmael departure seems to be based on this exchange. He ships out on the *Pequod* as a simple seaman and does not have to «pay»; instead he is paid to discover the world. (MD, 6)

(...) – having little or no money in my purse, and nothing particular to interest me on shore, I thought I would sail about a little and see the watery part of the world. (MD, 1)

Moby-Dick is the story of Melville's determination to conquer the lost object. In this case, Desire has abandoned its true object, has given up the fantasy of returning the mother's womb, and replaces it by the frantic pursuit of the white whale. We can't do without projection forward (object a)¹². It is easy to understand, this has been pointed out many times, that Ahab's ivory leg stands as an emblem of oedipal castration and that the imago of the mother as well as the imago of the father is contained in *Moby-Dick*. Chapter 95 describes how according to a strange custom the whalers use the skin of the whale's penis as a cassock, which becomes symbolic of the tremendous reproductive powers of the whales and appears to him as something detachable from the body.¹³

Ere long, it is taken down; when removing some three feet of it, towards the pointed extremity, and then cutting two slits for arm-holes at the other end, he lengthwise slips himself bodily into it. (MD, 459)

Melville writes about the construction of the subject and this scene, illustrates the replacement of lost integrity by a two part-structure.¹⁴

Thus is marked the first split that makes the subject as such distinguish himself from the sign in relation to which at first, he has been able to constitute himself as subject.¹⁵

Ahab splinters his ivory leg; the trumpet of the captain of the *Albatros* falls from his hands into the sea (MD, 258) and *Moby-Dick* becomes the symbol of the mother, but of the phallic mother, of whom we are afraid.

¹¹ The object of the voyage of a whaler is to kill and process into oil as many whales as possible and to return to port safely with a profitable cargo.

¹² Lacan, J. (1994). *La relation d'objet, Séminaire IV*. Paris: Le Seuil.

¹³ Chapter 95 «The Cassock is a discussion of the Whale's penis. This phallic worship recalls the role of the phallus as an idol. A subject who is wearing a cassock hides and display his own castration.»

¹⁴ There are two Ishmaels:

- the narrator of the novel;
- the sailor, a young man whom Ishmael tells us a story.

¹⁵ Lacan, J. (1977). *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*. Translated by Alan Sheridan. London: The Hogarth Press, p. 141.

In *Moby-Dick* the relation to the object is constituted thanks to vision and in order to illustrate this I will give you a few examples. In chapter 1, «Loomings», Ishmael turns himself into an eager spectator and explains that he goes to sea to satisfy his curiosity about giant whales.

Chief among the motives was the overwhelming idea of the great whale himself. Such portentous and mysterious monster rouse all my curiosity. (MD, 7)

Melville gathers as much information as possible about whales in his chapter 32 entitled «Cetology». Ahab always repeats the same question:

«Hast seen the white whale?» (MD, 576)

This curiosity, this pleasure in looking, emphasises the fantasy of control over the object. What the subject is looking for is not the object, but its absence precisely. We all know that a picture is a trap for the gaze, and according to N. N. Holland's theory of literary response we appreciate literature because it gives us pleasure.¹⁶ This very force is responsible for transforming the subject into a hero who conquers by sight what «wholeness» he has lost by the means of violence. Melville makes visible for us that the world is a violent world. The sea is connected to images of death and destruction and beneficial love between the object and the subject turns menacing. Ahab, a father figure, killed his first whale at the age of eighteen. In chapter 7, «The Chapel», Melville, describes a congregation of sailors, sailors' wives and widows. They seem to take pleasure in observing marble tablets with black borders.¹⁷ Starbuck's father and brother have been killed by whales and before we see what happens we can understand from this very moment that Ahab will die at the end because death is the only way he has to become free.

«What is it, what nameless, inscrutable unearthly thing is it; what cozeroing, hidden lord and master, and cruel, remorseless emperor commands me; that against all natural lovings and longings, I so keep pushing, and crowding and jamming myself on all the time; recklessly making me ready to do what in my own proper, natural heart, I durst not so much as dare? Is Ahab, Ahab? Is it I, God, or who that lifts this arm?» (MD, 592)

For the child the primal scene is a scene of aggression. The mother is defending herself against an act of violence. In Chapter 3, «The Spouter Inn», a painting is hanging representing a sinking ship with a huge whale nearby.

The picture represents a Cap-Horner in a great hurricane; the half foundered ship weltering there with its three dismantled mast alone visible; and an exasperated whale, purposing to spring clean over the craft, is in the enormous act of impaling himself upon the three mast-heads. (MD, 14)

Throughout the novel, *Moby-Dick* is seen as very destructive. In chapter 71, «The Jeroboam's Story», captain Mayhew began a dark story concerning *Moby-Dick*.

Next instant, the luckless mate, so full of furious life, was smitten bodily into the air, and making a long ark in his descent fell into the sea at the distance of about fifty yards. (MD, 345)

We can now understand the recommendation of captain Mayhew to captain Ahab:

«Think, think of thy whale-boat, stoven and sunk! Beware of the horrible tail.» (MD 344)

¹⁶ Holland, N. N. (1968). *The Dynamics of Literary response*. New York: O. U. P.

¹⁷ Yes, there is death in the business of whaling. (MD, 42)

This primal scene being thought traumatic, its representation in the novel takes the form of an aggression against the threatening but loved object.¹⁸ In chapter 119, «The Candles», the *Pequod* is deprived of her sail by a storm. In Melville's fantasy the male organ finds symbolic substitutes in objects which share with the thing they represent the characteristics of penetrating the body and injuring: the harpoon among other.

After weeks of search, Moby-Dick is finally sighted and attacked. The chase takes place three days and the last three chapters give a dramatic account of the final chase. The first day harpoons are driven into Moby-Dick; the whale smashes Ahab's boat; men are rescued and Moby-Dick escapes. The second day, the harpoons of all the three boats find their marks in Moby-Dick; Ahab's boat capsizes and they are all rescued save the Parsee and Fedallah. The third day, Ahab drives his harpoon into Moby-Dick's side; Moby-Dick drives his forehead into the side of the *Pequod* splintering the bow. Ahab throws another harpoon into Moby-Dick but its rope strangles him. We can point out here the importance of the number three. Captain Ahab has three mates, three harpooners, and the double ended rowing boats used for capturing the whales have a crew of only six men. We all know thanks to Freud that three is often the figure of male genitality.

Fantasies involving a sexual relationship transacted by the eye or by the ear. A doubloon¹⁹ made of pure gold is fastened into the main mast and during the night, the noise of the ivory leg of Ahab pacing across the quarter-deck keeps the sailors below deck awake. Melville uses symbolic language²⁰ when no verbal concept exists to address the figure that has always been hunted and cursed: the image of the idealised parents. The narrator taking the place of a young child wants to discover what really happens when one is married and imagines a singular maiden voyage by the sea which happens to be a hunt for an object: a hated white whale.²¹ The author through his story gives himself the means to observe the way how this external danger is transformed into an internal one.²² In the story the essence of scopic satisfaction takes advantage of the fact that the repressed object of desire, Moby-Dick, continually returns. No one in the crew is tempted to remove the doubloon nailed to the mast. Melville gives us a long list of accusations and grievances against the object which are supposed to justify the subject's hostile feelings. It is well known that wishes for revenge and death in dreams are directed against those who are nearest and dearest in waking life. At the end of the story the object is idealised and it is the disparaged father who receives hostility.

The harpoon was darted; the stricken whale flew forward; with igniting velocity the line ran through the groove; – ran foul. Ahab stooped to clear it, he did clear it; but the flying turn caught him round the neck, and voiceless as Turkish mutes bowstring their victim, he was shot out of the boat, ere the crew knew he was gone. (MD, 623)

The plot illustrates the fantasy of control over the object viewed, Moby-Dick, by a wicked man, Ahab, with a harpoon. This shows Melville was obsessed by possession and dominance and that the writing of this novel was an attempt at controlling the threatened part of himself. More concretely, Blanchot writes of Melville's *Moby-Dick*: «It is quite true that Ahab only encounters Moby-Dick in Melville's Novel.»²³ This aggression against an object seen as threatening (the father, the mother) probably provides energy to enable the ego to satisfy other drives by repeating an unpleasurable experience. Ishmael alone survived the wreck of the *Pequod*, to tell more than Ahab's wicked

¹⁸ Melville views the sexual act as a murder. The penis harms the interior of a female body.

¹⁹ In chapter 99 «The Doubloon» identity is generated by looking.

²⁰ Ishmael narrative told in the symbolic mode lies close to the world of dreams (an hallucinatory vision of the spirit). The story is based on a timeless and space less concept.

²¹ In chapter 42 «The Whiteness of the whale» whiteness is associated with royalty (the parents), with royal pre-eminence. There is an ambiguity about whiteness: death can be identified with glory. Ishmael tries to understand why the colour white strikes terror. Whiteness is imagined as the absence of colour and is at the same time the concrete of all colours.

²² Ahab takes the sea to kill his fear of «nothingness» in the form of a white whale.

²³ Blanchot, Maurice (1959). *Le livre à venir*. Paris: Gallimard.

story.²⁴ He apparently denies the share of responsibility for the catastrophe. The figure of the opposite sex has many dark menacing qualities which are visualised by the author in symbolic forms. Ishmael, as a witness of Captain Ahab experiences fear. Hunting Moby-Dick represents a repressed wish accompanied by fear. Queequeg removes his clothes, fumbles in his pockets and pulls out a small black idol, before which he builds a sacrificial fire. Then picking up his tomahawk he blows out the candles and spring into bed. Rituals and ceremonies during the story are distortions of the dual aspect within the author's psyche. Ishmael relationship with Queequeg at the beginning of the novel, probably homosexual love, is a displacement of incest and seems to be very beneficial to him. Melville insists on the fact that Queequeg turns out to be the most admirable type of person. In this case, the bed they share in the hotel represents the womb in which a ritual transformation is taking place. There can be expressed the real love and passion for a masculine mother. This awkward situation reminds Ishmael of a childhood experience when his stepmother sent him to bed as a punishment.

I think I was trying to crawl up the chimney, as I had seen a little sweep do a few days previous; (...) My mother dragged me by the leg out of the chimney and packed me off to bed, though it was only two o'clock in the afternoon of the 21st June, the longest day in our hemisphere. (MD, 28)

Then he dreamed a strange force was holding him in bed until the sun rose...!! and that someone was holding his hand (MD, 29) He was frozen with the most awful fears not daring to drag away his hand. In this case, the child experienced a painful experience of anxiety and prohibition and because he feels unloved. He erected his dream as a defence against reality.²⁵ Ishmael dissatisfied with his mother country leaves Nantucket on Christmas day and will be gone for three years. The first chapter introduces the idea of the sea as a source of life which remains mysterious (the womb).

When on that shivering winter's night, the *Pequod* thrust her vindictive bows into the cold malicious waves, who should I see standing at the helm but Bulkington! (MD, 116)

The helmsman (an other aggressive father figure) who has just landed from a four-year voyage has a sadistic attitude toward the sea. He seems to be wanting to pierce it and not surprisingly will be the first to be washed over board and drowned. We are to understand here that the scene is from the past and that the remoteness in space means also remoteness in time. The voyage of the *Pequod* may be interpreted as a regression, as a crossing from the unborn state to this world. In the novel the world of water is the one symbol upon which Melville devoted considerable space. During her voyage the *Pequod* is surrounded by the mysterious sea the fantasy of which can be the result of the displacement of the amniotic fluid. The author organises his book around whales, boats, seas, and numerous images of death which are well known feminine metaphors. We all know that water is the precondition of life and its origin. It is an even older form of existence that precedes and sustains life and can be related both to the uterine and seminal fluids into which life dissolves and from which it regenerates. Man spends the first phase of its existence in water. Here Melville deals with the seduction theme. We all know that for the child the seducer is regularly the mother. This attitude seems to be dominated by the action of destroying and losing.²⁶ The main conflict of Melville becomes the principal theme of the novel: love is threatening and *forbidden by* statute. Death which is also pictured as a return to the womb (to the water) can be a response to an oral frustration. Symbolism as usual tries to depict on our unconscious forces at work. The value of the experience appears to be that which leads to individual wholeness.

²⁴ After the *Pequod* was destroyed, only Ishmael lived to tell the story. The survivor is supposed to control his representation of loss.

²⁵ Sharing a bed means admitting the possibility of sexuality and can entail a fear of loss of bodily integrity.

²⁶ In the chapter entitled the Sphynx, Ahab pleads with the decapitated head of the whale. (MD, 339)

Ishmael abandoned was left in the sea till he was freed by a boat. He derived new vigour from the experience. This regression compels the subject to reexperience anxiety appropriate to the stage to which he has regressed, for example separation anxiety. Birth is almost represented by something in connection with water and the novel describes man's relation to the whole sea. The prospect of being separated from someone believed to be necessary for one's survival is painful. Departing in dreams means dying (c.f. the last journey) and is used by Melville to express a feeling of gratitude which takes the form of a propitiatory sacrifice to avert evil. The novel insists in describing a case in which a reaction to danger is still present. In chapter 7, «The Chapel», we find memorial tablets to whalemens dead or missing. Obviously the sea is a territory which belongs to someone and is connected to numerous images of aggression, slaughter, death and frustration. Loss calls forth the artist's Desire to fill the void by projecting a symbolic representation in which the object can still be regarded as phallic. The world described by Melville is coming to an end, but always recurs. Ishmael falls into the water, climbs out of it. Being engulfed by the sea, the narrator faces the term of death, but is rescued. Ishmael, the son who escapes, meets the mother as an impossible sexual object. During this experience, Melville investigates, unconsciously, a meeting of sexual knowledge and innocence during which the subject hopes to turn illicit sexuality into an acceptable experience. Generally a living being develops a destructive impulse when he wants to destroy a source of danger. In the story, Melville describes the danger of maternal regression under the form of whaling and voyaging at sea. The author goes so far as to identify the sea as the devouring mother (the sea as *vagina dentata*) and the maternal womb is described as a murderous anal trap.

(...) it must be remembered, that all ships, whaling vessels are the most exposed to accident of all kinds, and especially to the destruction and loss of the very thing upon which the success of the voyage most depends. (MD, 105)

The relation between the subject and the object are described by the verb «to destroy», a verb that might characterise that anal-sadistic phase. The *Pequod's* log and line never used have been rotted by sun and water. In order to satisfy himself by hunting and destroying the object, the narrator of the story becomes the subject of his parents disappearance. The crew of the *Pequod* goes aboard without knowing something of the captain (the bad father). Queequeg, a good nurturing mother figure meets his death at the end of the novel. The crew perishes as a consequence of the hunt of the whale, but the fatal agent is the sea (a maternal figure). Thus the voyage of the *Pequod* can be interpreted as a regressive fantasy so as to reunite with the lost good mother and the search for Moby-Dick by captain Ahab becomes a myth of nostalgia, a version of *Paradise lost*.

Generally we hate most when we are prevented from loving or being loved. Melville transforms his passive role into an active one and takes pleasure in cruelty and aggression against the object.²⁷ The nature of the injury is a symbolic emasculation. Ahab sworn death for Moby-Dick who crippled him. Melville repeats murderous inclination towards men and whales which can be interpreted as metaphors of the child's aggressiveness towards his parents and himself. The destruction of a ship and her crew by a sperm whale, the death of captain Ahab allows the subject to experience the blissful satisfaction of returning symbolically to the comforting mother's womb. This death by strangling can also mean the hero's umbilical fixation to the object and his restoration to the lost maternal principle.

Melville organises a splitting of the mother's image and creates an ambivalence towards parental figures. Many father figures are to be found. The captain, the mates and the harpooners are the leaders of the hunt. Moby-Dick contains the image of the mother and the father as well. Melville takes pleasure in imagining a construction of two images of the mother of whom he is originally dependent. In Chapter 65 «The Whale as a Dish», Stubb kills a whale and immediately

²⁷ The novel is the story of the whale's disembodiment.

requests a whale steak before he sleeps. The child wants to eat up the object from whom it had its nourishment. The sea is a source of life and provides sustenance for all the creatures inhabiting it. Chapter 66 describes the strange behaviour of the sharks which are eating each other while tearing flesh away from the huge carcass of a whale.

They viciously snapped, not only at each other's disembowelments, but like flexible bows, bent round, and bit their own; (MD, 329)

In this case the author attempts to actualise an impossible jouissance: the pleasure of the ego destroying itself. From the beginning of the novel Ahab is presented as deserving his punishment. His monomania may be interpreted as a desire for destruction and suicide, a substitute for punishment impulses. Melville describes his compulsion to repeat an unpleasurable experience. Ahab, in Chapter 30 deprives himself from a smoking pipe. He flings the lighted pipe into the sea.

«How now», he soliquized at last, withdrawing the tube, this smoking no longer soothes. «Oh, my pipe! hard must it go with me if thy charm be gone!» (...).
He tossed the still lighted pipe into the sea. (MD, 141)

This association of pleasure with the ego harming and destroying itself illustrates that on one hand, an object (a) is the accepted object, the good nurturing mother, and on the other hand is also the bad frustrating object, the rejected object. The subject claims to get erotic pleasure from inflicting pain to his object and establishes a sado-masochistic relation.²⁸ Pleasure in biting, pleasure in cruelty, manifestation of aggressive tendencies are responses to frustration. The *Pequod* goes to the bottom taking the boats with her in the enormous suction. Moby-Dick, as the repressed object of Desire that has always been hunted and cursed continually returns and escapes. Ishmael is left alone in the middle of the sea looking for the object, but precisely its absence.²⁹

And now, concentric circles seized the lone boat itself, and all its crew, and each floating oar, and every lance-pole, and spinning, animate and inanimate, all round and round in one vortex, carried the smallest chip of the *Pequod* out of sight. (MD, 623)

This paper is an attempt to interpret the nature and meaning of *Moby-Dick* and to cast light upon the complex mind of its author. The merciless sea, the triumph of Moby-Dick and the compulsion to repeat an unpleasurable experience in which what is recognised is simultaneously repressed are acts which seem to be used by Melville to express an «unconscious train of thoughts». As the narrator of the story, Ishmael witnesses not only his own thoughts but also the action of captain Ahab. He survives the wreck of the *Pequod* to tell more than Ahab's wicked story. It becomes clear now that the threatening object is the father and the mother as well and that the voyage of the *Pequod* is the search of the object thought to have been lost.

Water occupies considerable space in the story. The capture of the whale, to fall into the water, are actions which can be interpreted as oedipal *manifestations* and attempts at the fulfilment of a wish: to kill the father in order to possess the mother. The sense of guilt which results in this feeling will entail this appeal to confession and the repetition compulsion to repeat past events in his fiction to torture the reader as a substitute to torture himself. The ending is the masked suggestion of punishment for the fantasised death wish against the parents. With the use of the water as an organising symbolic structure, Melville in his fiction recreates the conditions necessary

²⁸ Captain Ahab uses the blood of the harpooners to baptise the harpoon with which he plans to kill Moby-Dick.

²⁹ On some level the hunger for «converse» with the absent Father is almost certainly a transposition of the young Melville's feeling of abandonment by his actual father – Allan Melville – having died when Herman was twelve. (See Robert Milder, «Melville and The Avenging Dream» Robert S. Levine, *The Cambridge Companion to Herman Melville*. Cambridge University Press, 1998, 250-278.

to seduction. Desire finds itself at loss before Moby-Dick, a white whale, a metaphor of an association of the pleasure of destroying oneself, which is simultaneously recognised and repressed.

REFERENCES

- Arvin, N. (1950). *Herman Melville*. New York: Sloane.
- Blanchot, M. (1959). *Le livre à venir*. Paris: Gallimard.
- Broadhead, R. (1976). *Hawthorne, Melville and the Novel*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Freud, S. (1993). *Inhibition symptôme et angoisse*. Paris: PUF.
- Holland, N. N. (1968). The dynamics of literary response. New York: O.U.P.
- Jaworski, P. (1986). *D'où vient – tu Hawthorne?* Paris: Gallimard.
- Jaworski, P. (1986). *Melville: le désert et l'empire*. Paris: Presse de l'Ecole Normale Supérieure.
- Lacan, J. (1973). *Les quatre concepts fondamentaux de la psychanalyse*. Paris: Le Seuil.
- Lacan, J. (1994). *La relation d'objet, Séminaire IV*. Paris: Le Seuil.
- Levine, R. S. (1998). *The Cambridge Companion to Herman Melville*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Markels, J. (1993). *Melville and the politics of identity from king Lear to Moby-Dick*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- Martin, R. K. (1986). *Heroes, captains and strangers*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press.
- Matthiesen, F. O. (1941). *American Renaissance*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Mayoux, J. J. (1958). *Melville par lui-même*. Paris: Le Seuil.
- Sachs Viola (1975). *La contre-Bible de Melville: Moby-Dick déchiffré*. Paris: Mouton.
- Sachs Viola (1992). *L'imaginaire Melville: a French point of view*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de Vincennes.
- Santraud, J. M. (1972). *La Mer et le roman américain dans la première moitié du XIXe siècle*. Paris: Didier.
- Santraud, J. M. (1989). «Préface», *Moby-Dick*. Paris: Garnier Flammarion.
- Silhol, R. (1970). «Préface», *Moby Dick*. Paris: Garnier Flammarion.
- Ujházy, M. (1982). *Herman Melville's world of whaling*. Budapest: Akademia Kiado.
- Young, P. (1993). *The private Melville*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press.
- Wright, N. (1949). *Melville's use of the Bible*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Is *The Prelude* a national epic?

EDMOND WRIGHT (*)

Current literary criticism on Wordsworth's *The Prelude* has one peculiar feature. It is generally recognized that Wordsworth is one of our greatest poets and that *The Prelude* probably his greatest poem. There are New Historicist critics, philosophical critics, psychoanalytic critics: a survey of them elicits a fascinating range of insights into Wordsworth's concerns. After quotation of passages such as his description of the dawn in Book IV or that on the Gorge of Gondo in Book VI one frequently comes across terms like 'visionary', 'incomparable', 'magnificent' or 'justly famous'. It is when looking for the justification of this chorus of praise that one is left puzzled.

I

So what kind of things do these critics tell us? The New Historicist critic Alan Liu discovers in the Gorge of Gondo passage interesting echoes of Napoleon's crossing of the Alps; the philosophical critic Keith Thomas discerns a continual engagement in the poem with epistemological problems and wrestles with the question of whether Wordsworth is to be called a Hartleian empiricist or a Kantian transcendentalist; the Freudian psychoanalytic critic Richard Onorato has combed the text for oedipal struggles, finding them particularly focused around Wordsworth's early loss of both his parents and discovering a wealth of significant imagery; the Lacanian critic Robert Young has produced a persuasive account of *The Prelude* as a quest for the *objet petit a*.

For a philosopher of perception with a special interest in both epistemology and psychoanalysis, the reading of this current literature has been fascinating, and has revealed insights remarkable in their discernment and sophistication. Since this is a gathering of psychoanalytic critics, let me give you first a brief indication of the subtlety of what Onorato, Young and others have had to say. The death of Wordsworth's mother when he was eight had a traumatizing effect on him; his imaging of nature in manhood as he wrote of his childhood recollections is undoubtedly marked by this loss. Onorato (1971) argues that Wordsworth is treating the nurturing mother in nature as a region in which she can be found once again. Already in «'Tintern Abbey' he had expressed a sense of ecstatic union with nature», «And I have felt a presence/That disturbs me with the joy of elevated thoughts ...», a passage that closes with the lines that nature is «the anchor of my purest thoughts, the *nurse*/The guide, the guardian of my heart.» In Book 14 of the 1850 version of *The Prelude* Wordsworth sees the poet as turning into the idealized mother and female:

(*) 3 Boathouse Court, Trafalgar Road, Cambridge CB4 1DU, England.

he whose soul hath risen
Shall want no humbler tenderness; his heart
Be tender as a nursing mother's heart,
Of female softness shall his life be full,
Of humble cares and delicate desires,
Mild interests and gentlest sympathies (XIV, 225-231)¹

Given this line of inquiry, Onorato soon detects a range of maternal allusion so wide and so copious that the influence can hardly be denied. To give a few examples. The word 'drink' is significantly used whenever the sense of union with nature is at its most intense:

 Thence did I drink the visionary power (II, 311)

 drinking in a pure
Organic pleasure from the silver wreaths
Of curling mist, or from the level plain
Of waters coloured by impending clouds (I, 563-6)

And of the 'spots of time' from which his 'mind is nourished' the poet says,

 All these were kindred spectacles and sounds
To which I oft repaired, and thence would drink,
As at a fountain (XII, 324-6)

For Onorato, the 'level plain of waters' appears in the Winander Boy episode as 'the bosom of the steady lake' into which the 'uncertain heaven' was received. Waters throughout become the amniotic waters, from the Derwent, which in childhood, 'loved/To blend his murmurs with my nurse's song' (I, 271), to his bathing in the mill-race, to his running from his mother's hut 'to sport/A naked savage, in the thunder shower' (I, 298-300). Barbara Schapiro (1983) finds such imagery throughout Wordsworth's shorter lyrics, as well as many allusions to abandoned and dying women. The oedipal challenge with the father is equally evident. For instance, he cites the Stolen Boat episode: having stolen a boat for a night row on the maternal waters, the young Wordsworth sets out over the lake and is described by the elder Wordsworth in terms that unmistakably allude to sexual joy as much as to the guilt of invading the father's province. As the boat moves out from the shore still close enough to the shore for the ridge of Skybarrow Crag to hide the peak of Black Crag behind it, there are images of melting, *idly* glittering light at the same time as he hears 'the voice of mountain echoes' coming close upon his 'act of stealth':

 It was an act of stealth
And troubled pleasure, nor without the voice
Of mountain echoes did my boat move on;
Leaving behind her still, on either side,
Small circles glittering idly in the moon,
Until they melted all into one track
Of sparkling light. (I, 361-66)

His boat is 'an elfin pinnacle/penis'; he 'dips his oars' into the lake 'lustily':

 lustily
I dipped my oars into the silent lake,
And, as I rose upon the stroke, my boat
Went heaving through the water like a swan (I, 373-6)

¹ All references are to the 1850 version of *The Prelude*.

At the point where he is carrying the boat far enough out from the shore to allow sight of the apparently rising Black Crag, that paternal phallic peak induces a shock of guilt, inexplicable to both the younger and the elder Wordsworth. The peak thus acts with his own acts of intrusion, for as he 'struck and struck again' with his oars, the peak appears to follow him with that same rhythm, a rhythm of punishment as David Collings suggests, also noting that in the 1805 version those words had appeared in the earlier maternal portion and thus become ironically repeated (Collings, 1994, 137), the guilt thus lingering for days after the theft and disturbing customary modes of seeing:

No familiar shapes
Remained, no pleasant images of trees,
Of sea or sky, no colours of green fields,
But huge and mighty forms, that do not live
Like living men, moved slowly through the mind
By day, and were a trouble to my dreams. (I, 395-400)

These are a few of many similar Freudian interpretations of *The Prelude* (see also Friedman, 1979; Simpson, 1962; Heffernan, 1988; and Wilson, 1993), such that it becomes impossible to follow an anti-Freudian line which doubts whether there could be any such echo as 'lustfully' in 'lustily' (Ellis, 1985, 43).

The Lacanian critic Young sees art becoming an exemplary fiction which 'the (imaginary) self tells itself in order to defend its (illusory) sense of autonomy', so that in *The Prelude* Wordsworth produces a fiction he calls the concept of the imagination, which is 'the represencer of a lost totality' and 'the fantasmatic goal of [his] quest' (Young, 1979, 85, 79). For Wordsworth the wound of castration is to be healed by union with nature, yet the cure is endlessly pursued, 'something evermore about to be' (VI, 608). The imagery of water goes beyond the maternal in being like the mist and the wind, something that can heal a gap, blur across an opening. The poem winds its way 'from one assuagement to another' in its unrealized quest (84). The uncanny moments like the Stolen Boat episode make clear the uncertainty of the child's attempts at mastery, producing what Lacan called *aphanisis*, the 'fading' of the subject (Lacan, 1977, 208). As the young Wordsworth hurried home with a stolen bird, as he hung on a cliff above the raven's nest having removed an egg, as he rowed back to the Ullswater shore, he suffered shocks to his identification as 'a strange contingency' invaded his fragile subjecthood (87). Young points out that Wordsworth attributes to these remembered moments of uncertainty, these 'spots of time' as he terms them, a reviving energy in which the imagination was working with particular force. Wordsworth envies the infant its relation of plenitude with the mother, as witness the 'Blest the infant Babe' passage in Book II where the infant, 'in-fans' (outside speech), is still no 'outcast' but is interfused 'along his veins' with a 'filial bond of Nature' that connects him to the world. Young, though, does not say why Wordsworth's reflections should thus enthrall us, so this question continues to occupy us since one might see the same topos in a contemporary:

O Caledonia! stern and wild,
Meet *nurse for a poetic child!*
Land of brown heath and shaggy wood,
Land of the mountain and the flood,
Land of my sires! what mortal hand
Can e'er untie *the filial band*
That knits me to thy rugged strand!

(Sir Walter Scott, 'The Lay of the Last Minstrel' VI, 17-23; my italics)

Another Lacanian critic agrees with Young that the status of the subject is what is central to *The Prelude* but refuses to see the poem as escapist, and agrees that the subject is not a substantial entity, existing only 'in the interstices of the signifying chain' because, being 'metaphorically

capable' in its imagination, it can take part in its own '(hi)story' (Sitterson, 1989, 105). Neither passive as a Cartesian certainty nor forever shifting as an illusory linguistic entity, the subject maintains itself as an 'articulator' between Symbolic and Real in the story in which it is itself involved, this articulator view could be the best interpretation of 'Wo es war, soll ich werden' (Where Id was, there Ego shall be). Wordsworth points to the possibility of imaginative re-experiencing in attributing to the poet the power of perceiving 'similitude in dissimilitude' (Wordsworth, 'Preface', 1927 [1800], 186):

the observation of affinities
In objects where no brotherhood exists
to passive minds (II, 384-86)

There are also manifold distinctions of another kind that we should be just as much on the watch for, that contribute to society being made 'as sweet as solitude':

Society made sweet as solitude
By silent inobtrusive sympathies,
And gentle agitations of the mind
From manifold distinctions, difference
Perceived in things, where, to the unwatchful eye
No difference is (II, 296-301)

Hence, 'dissimilitude in similitude' is as much a source of 'sublimar joy' as its reverse.

II

In my analysis of the Story I claim that, in communication., subjects in dialogue proceed by presupposing a selection from the Real, treating what can only be a rough overlap of numerically distinct choices as if they were a singular entity (Wright, 1994). The presupposition of a perfect coincidence of reference is *performed*. The partial coincidence of what each subject is attending to is treated as if it were complete, as if there is only thing before them, and the purpose of this play is to ensure that some measure of overlap is being held in place. Why? So that a change of attention could be induced in one subject by another, perhaps onto an aspect that one was not consciously aware of at all, that was not part of his knowledge. Thus here is a case of 'dissimilitude' coming to be perceived in 'similitude', and it partakes exactly of the nature of a Story, as, for example:

Someone having observed that the next Waverley novel was to be *Rob Roy*, Wordsworth took down his volume of ballads, and read to the company his own 'Rob Roy's Grave'; then, returning it to the shelf, observed, 'I do not know what more Mr. Scott can have to say on the subject.' (Sutherland, 1977, 179-80)

What is amusing here is the clash of valuations of Scott as a novelist testifying in one of our greatest poets to either envy and vanity or a whimsical impertinence that shows the serious Wordsworth in an unwontedly playful mood. Here is the valuation of Wordsworth as a man transformed: Wordsworth at the beginning of the story is not the same Wordsworth at the end of it, even if there is a problem of interpretation – a dissimilitude revealed in a similitude.

Hence, it is not that *The Prelude* has for its theme the indeterminacy of the subject behind the veil of representation, but that, while regarding any final self-definition as a lure, Wordsworth engages in a narration about himself that shows him articulating his ego in a continual adjustment, so that the growth of the child to young man and poet matches the narrator's own quest. The subtitle of *The Prelude* is 'The Growth of a Poet's Mind'; with the apocalyptic vision of Snowdon in the last book, it is as if young man and narrator hopefully coincide. The Wordsworth at the beginning of the poem is not the same as the one at the end.

Coming back to our original question, what then makes critics use terms like ‘visionary’, ‘incomparable’, ‘magnificent’ of *The Prelude*? The question is of course one about valuation. Stories have been told, concluding with one that sees *The Prelude* as presenting a subject that is ‘metaphorically capable’, with the ability to be responsible for engaging in the process of self-definition without believing in the final attainment of any ecstatic unity, that can, as in the Stolen Boat episode, powerfully re-experience the pain of acceding to that responsibility, to wrestling with the paternal order, with ‘the huge and mighty forms’ of the Symbolic, the Platonic forms ‘that do not live like living men’ (Collings, 1994, 137). Lacanian critics can claim to have answered the question, for they have shown how intimately Wordsworth has disturbed our memories of the growth of our own subjecthood, and how his making of nature the region in which such oedipal conflicts can be played out, enhances the maternal with the beautiful and strengthens the paternal with the sublime.

However, I should like to change the valuation in turn, but in a dialectical way so that, when the concept has been sublated (*aufgehoben*), much of what was understood before will be retained, although viewed in a different light. The poem is significant not only for the philosopher with a special interest in perception and psychoanalysis, but also for someone born in the North of England, brought up in the shadow of the Pennines in a miniature Lake District, where five long lakes lay among moorland hills beside a stately park. In Book I Wordsworth declares that he wants to write a national epic, considering the theme of King Arthur, but finally, being overcome with ‘humility and modest awe’ and drooping in ‘vain perplexity’, now prefers ‘to stray about/Voluptuously through fields and rural walks’. The general assumption has been that this notion of writing a national epic was laid aside; after all, the narrator in the book says so himself. What Wordsworth wrote has convinced everyone that, far from writing anything national, he held to another romantic course in taking the individual as his theme. He wrote to his friend Sir George Beaumont that no other English poet had ever written so much about himself, and in *The Prelude* itself we hear the narrator declaring ‘a Traveller I am/Whose tale is only of himself’ (III, 198-9). Are we not all familiar and strongly influenced by Keats’ clever little snapshot of his work as the ‘egotistical sublime’? But this is to be unduly influenced by the Romantic assessment.

III

At the very moment in Book I that Wordsworth confesses his ‘vain perplexity’ he moves into the description of his childhood., but what he describes of his childhood is not those around him, nor even himself as a person as one would expect of an autobiography, but his encounters with nature. We have seen how we discover much about him indirectly from these encounters, what feelings attended the great passages, but remarkably little that is personal. What is characteristic are the lines informed by his natural surroundings acting as imagery working within and through those feelings, the sort of lines that Coleridge exclaimed over when he said that there were lines that only Wordsworth could have written, quoting the Winander Boy episode:

or the visible scene
Would enter unawares into his mind
With all its solemn imagery, its rocks,
Its woods, and that uncertain heaven, received
Into the bosom of the steady lake. (V, 384-88)

Suppose that we give both psychoanalytic aspects of the poem, the ‘uncertain heaven’ of the maternal bosom and the terrors of the sublime, the ‘huge and mighty forms’, a political valuation in addition, allowing the two to become metaphors of *each other*. This escapes reductiveness on both sides, making the poem not merely a piece of dreamwork for either Wordsworth or reader, nor for each a mere galvanic response to the existing ideology. So in what way political? Wordsworth was a

political animal, as Books IX to XI make plain, as well as a very large number of the later poems. Let us go back to the quotation from Sir Walter Scott. You may recall that the section from 'The Lay of the Last Minstrel' from which I quoted begins

Breathes there the man, with soul so dead,
Who never to himself hath said,
This is my own, my native land!
Whose heart hath ne'er within him burned,
As home his footsteps he hath turn'd,
From wandering on a foreign strand!
If such there breathe, go, mark him well;
For him no minstrel raptures swell;
High though his titles, proud his name,
Boundless his wealth as wish can claim;
Despite those titles, power and pelf,
The wretch, concentred all in self,
Living shall forfeit fair renown,
And, doubly dying, shall go down
To the vile dust from whence he sprung,
Unwept, unhonour'd and unsung.

(Scott, 'The Lay of the Last Minstrel' VI., 1-16)

This is patriotism. It is not necessarily nationalism. Nevertheless, our Enlightenment instincts make us uncomfortable in its presence to the point where we prefer to be blind to it. We either reduce it to the sentimentality of 'Home sweet home', or, worse, we associate it fairly readily with fascism. In the world today most of the troublespots owe their anguish to such intense identifications – consider the World Cup or Milosovi's cynical rhetoric about the Battle of Kosovo five hundred years ago. Has patriotism not become as disenchanted as religion?

But let us go back to communication. By dint of a playful *presupposition* of a perfect coincidence of our choices we are enabled to assist each other to alter our choices (Wright, 1992). By *performing* a perfect Symbolic, we try to keep it tuned to the flux of the Real by an endless succession of adjustments – a simultaneous admission that it is *not* perfect. By a series of stories we call statements, and statements we call stories, we hopefully move our tentative partial agreements on over the Real. Did the little story above perfectly refer to Wordsworth? – No, because we discovered a different Wordsworth at the end of it, a dissimilitude in our similitude. We are hardly aware of this presupposition; indeed it partakes of the nature of a habitual faith.

When the subject 'assumes' its own linguistic identity, among the elements that will aid that faith is the place in which it has been brought up, for that will be so infused with mutual memory as to constitute a support of that faith. The sentimentalists turn it into a narcissistic superstition, with nothing of becoming about it, nothing metaphorical, nothing playful, nothing poetic. Enchantment, even for myth and religion, can only attend them if the imagination plays the foremost part. But does that mean that Wordsworth is only writing for the British? One can utter and uphold this inconsistent series: it is not nature that Wordsworth is writing about, it is Cumbria; it isn't Cumbria, it is North Britain; it isn't North Britain, it is all temperate maritime landscapes, it isn't just those landscapes, it is all landscapes, and all countries, the planet; it isn't the planet, it's nature. Each is a metonym for the other, hence you do not have to be British to appreciate Wordsworth. Yet in order to ignite your own national feelings, you have to enter into his Britishness. Yevtushenko wrote in a poem about the massacre at Babi Yar that, to the degree he imagined himself a Jew, to that degree he was a Russian. For me, *The Prelude* is a national epic. It gives grandeur to my native land, my 'dear native Region' (VIII, 468); hence the natural beauty that Wordsworth evokes works powerfully upon me, the growth of whose mind was similarly invested with the beauty of this northern land.

But, granting this, what is epic about it? It presents the *epic* of the constitution of the subject in that land and with that land, where there are demons to fight and serpents to throttle (X, 333-8, 391-3), where figures in dreams will issue warnings, where there will be apocalyptic threats of disaster (V, 71-140), where journeys will go awry (VI, 557-572), where an uncanny light can fall over a familiar landscape (XII, 225-262), where the undead can burst upright as if living out of a lake (V, 426-481), where one can pursue stars and find oneself lost in the world (I, 447-463), where things like waterfalls can move and yet stay in their place (VI, 626), but where the 'Home at Grasmere', it is hoped, will be finally gained. For the writer who has 'the wishing-cap of Fortunatus' (V, 341-2) tales will be 'in league' with 'great might' (ibid., 527). A sombre taciturn vagrant (IV, 387-460) will stand in admonition in a country where community and its poetic sources are even more neglected and shamefully ignored. A hero too is represented in epic terms:

through the events
Of that great change wandered in perfect faith,
As through a book, an old romance, or tale
Of Fairy, or some dream of actions wrought
Behind the summer clouds. (IX, 298-302)

A city will become a Vanity Fair in which an angelic child lies under threat of corruption (VII, 333-81). The place of origin is a paradise fairer than the Chinese Xanadu, the 'sumptuous dream of flowery lawns, with domes/Of pleasure sprinkled over' (VIII, 84-5). When 'rural ways and manners' (ibid., 159-60) of one's own birthplace suffice, there is no need to re-read the Greek myths of Arcadia, or even search for Shakespeare's Forest of Arden (VIII, 111-72) or his pastoral meadows of Bohemia. Battles there were as those of the Great Mogul, whose armies, too confident of victory, came to flee in terror before the champions of freedom, the heartening epic transformation from direst threat to 'perfect triumph for the better cause' (X, 16-30). Everywhere Wordsworth writes his life adventure with epic resonance at every step in the great journey. And all of this is read as one read myth in childhood, not believing a word of it and yet unconsciously alert to its allegory.

In this allegory, one can pursue the 'evermore about to be', to strive to align the Real of one's desire with the ever-receding Symbolic. Antagonism is implicit in the fact that our choices can never perfectly coincide, yet similitude has to be performed to reckon with dissimilitude. Hence it is necessary to perform a loyalty to one's native land. To call such loyalty 'heritage flummery' is to commit the same error as the jingoist. The splendour of the lines in the Gorge of Gondo passage in Book VI resides in the performed faith of its coincidence of opposites.

To conclude, Wordsworth's sensitivity to the pattern of the Story shows in the dialogue between Real and Symbolic, the half-creating and half-perceiving to which he testifies throughout the poem and which alone can establish a true 'dominion':

An auxiliar light
Came from my mind, which on the setting sun
Bestowed new splendour; the melodious birds,
The gentle breezes, fountains that ran on
Murmuring so sweetly in themselves, obeyed
A like dominion, and the midnight storm
Grew darker in the presence of mine eye. (II, 368-74)

REFERENCES

- Collings, D. (1994). *Wordsworthian errancies: The poetics of cultural dismemberment*. Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press.
Ellis, D. (1995). *Wordsworth, Freud and the spots of time*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Friedman, M. H. (1979). *The making of a Tory humanist: William Wordsworth and the idea of community*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Heffernan, J. A. W. (1988). The presence of the absent mother in Wordsworth's *Prelude*. *Studies in Romanticism*, 27 (2), 253-272.
- Lacan, J. (1977[1964]). *The Seminar, Book XI: The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*. Trans. Alan Sheridan. London: The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis.
- Onorato, R. J. (1971). *The character of the poet: Wordsworth in The Prelude*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Schapiro, B. A. (1983). *The romantic mother: Narcissistic patterns in romantic poetry*. Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Simpson, D. (1982). *Wordsworth and the figurings of the real*. London: Macmillan.
- Sitterson, J. C. (1989). Oedipus in the Stolen Boat: psychoanalysis and subjectivity in *The Prelude*. *Studies in Philology*, 86 (1), 96-115.
- Sutherland, J. (Ed.) (1977). *The Oxford Book of Literary Anecdotes*. London: Futura.
- Wilson, D. B. (1993). *The romantic dream: Wordsworth and the poetics of the unconscious*. Lincoln, Nebraska: Nebraska University Press.
- Wordsworth, W. (1927 [1800]). Observations prefixed to the Second Edition of the «Lyrical Ballads». In Ernest Rhys (Ed.), *The Prelude to Poetry: The English poets in defence of their art* (pp. 168-198). London and New York: Dent and Dutton.
- Wright, E. (1992). The entity fallacy in epistemology. *Philosophy*, 67 (259), 33-50.
- Wright, E. (1994). The story of the Story. In Frederico Pereira (Ed.), *Literature and Psychology: Proceedings of the Eleventh International Conference on Literature and Psychology* (pp. 101-114). Lisboa: Instituto Superior de Psicologia Aplicada.
- Young, R. (1979). A Lacanian reading of *The Prelude*. *The Oxford Literary Review*, 3 (3), 78-98.

Rubek's choice

Psychoanalytical approaches to Henrik Ibsen: *When We Dead Awaken*

TOM EIDE (*)

I

In Ibsen's last play, *When We Dead Awaken* (1899), we meet the ageing sculptor Arnold Rubek. He has realised his artistic ambition; he is the creator of the masterpiece «The Day of Resurrection», which has achieved great fame throughout the world. However, Rubek is not a content or happy man. He is restless, unsettled and without the necessary momentum or inspiration to create anew.

Rubek's counterpart in the play is his former model, Irene, the woman who once loved him, posed for him, and whose young love contributed to the artist creating his much acclaimed masterpiece. During the time when she posed for Rubek, he was nearly driven out of his mind by «all her loveliness», as he expresses it (p. 258).¹ But in spite of this, he never even touched her. Why not? In retrospect he puts it this way:

For me you became a sacred being, untouchable, a thing of worship in thought alone. I was still young then, Irene. I was obsessed with the idea that if I touched you, if I desired you sensually, my mind would be profaned and I would be unable to achieve what I was striving to create. And still I think there is some truth in that. (p. 259)

Rubek's choice is the very topic of this paper. His own explanation is not very convincing. What I am going to discuss is different psychoanalytical approaches to the question why art (to Rubek) seems to overpower love. But first a little bit more about the relationship between Rubek and Irene.

(*) The Ethics Program, The Research Council of Norway, Gaustadalléen 21, N-0371 Oslo, Norway. email: tom.eide@extern.uio.no

¹ *When We Dead Awaken* (trans. James Walter McFarlane, *The Oxford Ibsen*, Vol. XIII, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977, pp. 235-297).

II

The fact that he never gave way to his sensual desire, is to Rubek a victory: «I never did you any wrong! Never, Irene», he says. «Yes, you did!» she replies. «You did wrong to my deepest inmost being...» (p. 258). To her, this constitutes a failure. After having subjected herself to Rubek's art, she has finally realised that his art was more important to him than she was, and she left him.

Irene is bitter after having left Rubek. She wanted children – many children – and reproaches herself: «I, too, had a life to live», she says, «... and a human destiny to fulfil. All that I put aside ... threw it all away in order to serve you. It was suicide. A mortal sin against myself.» (p. 280) In other words, she accuses herself as well as him.

Since Irene left Rubek, her life has been filled with degradation, rage and madness. She describes how she has earned a living as a prostitute, driven one husband to suicide, stabbed another to death and murdered all her children – «As soon as they came into the world. Oh, long, long before that. One after the other», she says (p. 256). She also intimates that she has been admitted to an insane asylum, and that she is afraid that she may one day return there. Whether her story about her past is true, or is instead an expression of her mental instability, is not obvious.

As the play opens, Rubek and Irene have not seen each other for many years. Rubek has married, and is currently at a spa on the coast together with his young wife, Maja. Sleepless and discontented, he is obviously plagued by something beyond his comprehension. Out of the dark – as if out of the unconscious – Irene emerges. As in many other Ibsen plays, a confrontation with the past begins, a struggle which finally destroys them both. *Irene* accuses Rubek of having killed her soul (p. 279). *He* fails to understand and hides behind his artistry.

For the audience (and readers), the original conflict is revealed little by little: Irene loved Rubek and wanted children; Rubek desired Irene, but would not give in to his feelings for fear of jeopardising his art. Two life projects – or *ground projects* – have clashed, and one was defeated.²

In many of Ibsen's works, we are faced with main characters like Rubek, completely preoccupied with their own ground projects, projects which prevent them from having satisfying relationships with other people. This preoccupation with a ground project Ibsen often juxtaposes with the ethical demand incumbent on each individual in human relations.³

To return to Rubek, *his* artistic vision was to create an image, a sculpture embodying «the world's noblest, purest, most perfect woman» (p. 259). For this purpose, for the making of «The Day of Resurrection», he needed – and used – Irene. In the final sculpture, however, he included a portrait of himself, a portrait which is often understood to be Ibsen's self-portrait.⁴ Rubek describes it as follows:

In the foreground, beside a spring – as it might be here – sits a man weighed down with guilt. He cannot quite break free from the earth's crust. I call him remorse for a forfeit life. He sits there dipping his fingers in the rippling water – to wash them clean. He is cracked and tormented by the thought that he will never, never succeed. Never in all

² The concept of «ground project» was developed by the British philosopher Bernard Williams, and characterises personal ideas and projects of such importance that without them, a person's life would lose part of its meaning. See Williams: *Moral Luck* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

³ The concept of «ethical demand» is derived from the Danish ethicist Knud E. Løgstrup, and refers to the moral responsibility of the individual not to abuse other people's trust. See Løgstrup: *The Ethical Demand* (Notre Dame & London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997), translated into English from the Danish original *Den etiske fordring* (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1956).

⁴ One characteristic example is the Danish literary scholar Aage Henriksen. In his article «Limbo. Om Ibsens alderdomsværk» (in *De ubændige*, Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1984), he puts it this way: «Here [in *When We Dead Awaken*] we find his life put in order, worked through, and condemned» («Her ligger hans liv ordnet, gennemtænkt og fordømt», p. 48).

eternity will he win free to achieve the life of the resurrection. He must remain forever captive in his hell. (p. 279)

When We Dead Awaken is an ethical drama. It deals with how we should – or should not – live our lives.⁵ There are, however, no clear answers or recommendations to be found in the play. On the contrary. *When We Dead Awaken* is an extremely complex and ambiguous text, full of internal contradictions and – from a rational point of view – inconsistencies. From different angles Ibsen pursues the ethical demand and the feelings of guilt, regret and despair brought about by a life which ought to have been lived differently, as Rubek slowly realises.

Rubek's deepest wish when he meets Irene again after all these years, is to undo what he has done, to change the past, to start all over again; a kind of wishful thinking typical of the mid-life crisis. Once Irene was there for him to help him create «The Day of Resurrection». Now he wants her to be there for him to help him start a new life (p. 268). This wishful thinking is, however, impotent in Ibsen's universe of disillusionment.

I will now pursue three psychoanalytical interpretations of the play. The first is based on Freud's classic psychoanalysis (III), the second on the self psychology of Heinz Kohut (IV), and the final one on the object-relations theory of Melanie Klein (V). I will keep my discussions brief, focusing on main points.

III

One possible interpretation of Rubek's choice not to give in to his sensually desire may be found in Freud's theory on sublimation, which Ibsen, in pre-Freudian times, seemed to grasp intuitively.⁶ Hence, Rubek imagines that his mind would be profaned if Irene were to be sensually desired by him. This might in turn indicate that he is afraid nothing would be left to sublimate, and that all his creative forces would vanish, if he lived out his sexual energies in his relationship with her.

Another, and in my view more fruitful, Freudian inspired reading, has been suggested by the Danish scholar Jørgen Dines Johansen. He perceives in the character of Irene an embodiment of an archaic male fantasy – as a «threatening, phallic mother figure».⁷ He argues more or less as follows: the play was written by a man, and its main character is a man. Consequently, the female figure could be seen as part of a male imagination. When Irene reveals how she murdered her husband and children, she implicitly expresses the male anxiety fantasy of what would happen if he let his sexual desire have its way.

Johansen argues that Irene's story of degradation, insanity and feeling of emptiness can be viewed as a male need to suppress the threatening nature of the female figure. Accordingly, Rubek makes his choice under the influence of the unconscious idea that erotic love is associated with female aggression, and finally – with death. In other words, Ibsen has incorporated deep sexual anxiety into his play: After all, death is a core theme of the play.

⁵ For discussions of ethical aspects of Ibsen's work, see Daniel Haakonsen: «Ethical Implications in Ibsen's Drama» (in *Ibsen rbok* 1968-69. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1969, pp. 7-21) and Tom Eide: «Ibsen, Ethics, and the Object World» (in *Proceedings from The 7th International Ibsen Conference*, Oslo: Center for Ibsen Studies, 1994, pp. 464-484).

⁶ Jørgen Haugan: *Diktorsfinnen. En studie i Ibsen og Ibsen-forskningen* (Oslo: Gyldendal, 1982), p. 88.

⁷ Jørgen Dines Johansen: «Art is (not) a Woman's Body: Art and Sexuality in Ibsen's *When We Dead Awaken*» (in *Contemporary Approaches to Ibsen*, Vol. IX, edited by Vigdis Ystad and Bjørn Hemmer. Oslo: Scandinavian Universities Press, 1987, pp. 103-131). It seems to me, however, that Johansen uses the concept of «the phallic mother» in a quite independent way. While Freud uses it exclusively in connection with female sexuality, Dines Johansen applies it to male fantasy.

In this interpretation, Rubek avoids anxiety and manages to express his desire by channelling his sexual energy towards creating an idealised image of the pure woman. This appears to me a possible explanation to why Rubek chooses art over life. It does not, however, explain why Rubek *needs* Irene so badly; why he felt that he would be unable to create and to realise his ground project without her.

IV

The Norwegian psychiatrist Sigmund Karterud asserts that *When We Dead Awaken* dramatises the essential theses of the self psychology of Heinz Kohut.⁸ He sees Rubek as a traveller seeking a remedy for his own artistic stagnation, much like the character Aschenbach in Thomas Mann's *Death in Venice*, which Kohut himself has discussed.⁹ According to Karterud, Ibsen's play is first of all about self object failure, self object needs and narcissistic rage. In particular Karterud emphasises Rubek's need for another human being – a self object – as a condition for being a creative artist. Rubek expresses this self object need to his wife Maja in the following way:

RUBEK (*somewhat uncertainly*). I feel a deep ... a tormenting need of having somebody near who is really close to me ...

MAJA (*interrupts him intensely*). Am I not that, Rubek?

RUKEK (*with a gesture of repudiation*). Not in that sense. I need to live with somebody who can fulfil me ... Make me complete ... be as one with me in everything I do. (p. 268)

Rubek's need for and dependence on a self object dominates his relationship with Irene to the point where she is reduced from a full human being and a potential object of love and desire, to merely a self object serving his ground project. In other words, because of his urgent need for a self object, he transforms her into a means to his artistic end. This may be seen as the core of his ethical failure: his violation of Kant's categorical imperative, the principle that a human being must always be treated as an end in itself, and never merely as a means.¹⁰

Rubek's need for a self object is so powerful that other aspects of Irene become invisible to him, for instance her desire to realise her own ground project. This lack of sensitivity to her needs offends her so deeply, that it arouses in her a boundless narcissistic rage and desire for revenge.

According to Karterud, the tragedy amounts to this: What Rubek perceives as a full, creative life, with Irene as a self object, is a kind of death to her, i.e. her abandonment of her own ground project. What leads to both characters' tragic death is Rubek's lack of empathy.

This self-psychological perspective may explain Rubek's need for Irene, his ethical failure, Irene's rage and why their relationship is necessarily doomed. But neither this Kohutean nor the Freudian approach seem to explain the core symbol of the play – Rubek's sculpture, and the image of resurrection in this work of art. To Ibsen this image was vital, and for a long time he used «The Day of Resurrection» as a working title for his play.¹¹ In order to understand Rubek's vision and the role of the sculpture psychologically, I will now move on to Melanie Klein's object-relations theory.

⁸ Sigmund Karterud: *Fra narcissisme til selypsykologi* (Oslo: Ad Notan Gyldendal, 1995), p. 195.

⁹ Heinz Kohut: «Death in Venice by Thomas Mann: A Story about the Disintegration of Artistic Sublimation» (*The Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, 26, pp. 206-228).

¹⁰ «Act in such a way that you always treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, never simply as a means, but always at the same time as an end.» Immanuel Kant: *Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals* (1785, trans. by H. J. Paton, New York: Harper & Row, 1964, p. 96 [429]).

¹¹ Didrik Arup Seip: Introduction to *When We Dead Awaken* (in Henrik Ibsen: *Samlede værker*, vol. 13, Oslo: Gyldendal, 1934), p. 198.

Rubek's ambition is to create what he calls «the world's noblest, purest, most perfect woman» (p. 259), an image of «a pure young woman, untainted by the world, waking to light and glory, and having nothing ugly or unclean to rid herself of» (p. 278). He also describes it this way:

RUKEK. (...) I wanted to create my vision of how the pure woman would wake on Resurrection Day. Not wondering at things new and unfamiliar and unimagined, but filled with a holy joy at finding herself unchanged – a mortal woman – in those higher, freer, happier realms, after the long and dreamless sleep of death. (p. 259)

Implicit in Rubek's vision is something from the past, something vile and impure, something fatal which has occurred, something which has led the woman into «the long and dreamless sleep of death». In other words: behind Rubek's vision there appears to be an idea of the loss of something pure, light and good. Simultaneously there is an intense wish to reverse what has occurred, to *restore* something destroyed, to *give life* to «the pure woman» which is lost and dead. An element of re-creation and reparation appears explicitly present: Rubek wants to create this «most perfect woman» – *unchanged*, as he puts it.

This idea of re-creation seems to have much in common with Melanie Klein's description of the unconscious fantasy of the infant in the so-called «depressive position». According to Klein, in early development the child goes through a phase in which an unconscious fantasy about destroying the good object takes hold of the child. This experience is the cause of guilt, fear of persecution and a wish to restore what is lost.¹² According to Klein's colleague and biographer Hanna Segal, «all creation is really a re-creation of a once loved and once whole, but now lost and ruined object, a ruined internal world and self» (1952: 197).¹³ She describes the internal dynamics of the child's imagination in this way:

The infant is at that stage under the sway of uncontrollable greedy and sadistic impulses. In phantasy his loved object is continually attacked in greed and hatred, is destroyed, torn into pieces and fragments; and not only is the external object so attacked but also the internal one, and then the whole internal world feels destroyed and shattered as well. Bits of the destroyed object may turn into persecutors, and there is a fear of internal persecution as well as a pining for the lost loved object and guilt for the attack. The memory of the good situation, where the infant's ego contained the whole loved object, and the realization that it has been lost through his own attack, give rise to an intense feeling of loss and guilt, and to the wish to restore and re-create the lost loved object outside and within the ego. This wish to restore and re-create is the basis of later sublimation and creativity. (Segal 1952: 199)

The play as a whole can thus be seen as an intuitive anticipation and illustration of this theory. We recognise the fantasy of attacking and destroying the good object in Irene's accusations against Rubek for killing her soul (p. 279) and in the fact that Irene is portrayed as «dead». Also, the images of Irene's aggressive and violent attacks on her husband and children point in this direction. We also recognise the feelings of loss, emptiness, and guilt as basic feelings in Rubek's life, symbolised in his self-portrait «Remorse for a forfeit life», which he has incorporated into his

¹² See Melanie Klein: «Love, Guilt and Reparation», in Melanie Klein and Joan Riviere: *Love, Hate and Reparation* (London: Norton, 1964 (1937), pp 55-119), and Hanna Segal: *Introduction to the Work of Melanie Klein* (London: Hogarth Press, 1978).

¹³ Hanna Segal: «A Psycho-Analytical Approach to Aesthetics» (*International Journal of Psycho-Analysis*, XXXIII, 1952, pp. 196-207). See also Melanie Klein: «Infantile Anxiety Situations Reflected in a Work of Art and in the Creative Impulse» (*The Writings of Melanie Klein*, Vol. I, London: Hogarth Press, 1975 (1929), pp. 210-218).

masterpiece. And finally, we recognise the need for reparation in Rubek's artistic creativity, in his more or less desperate urge to recreate the pure, ideal woman, such as she «would wake on Resurrection Day» (p. 259).

Klein's theory may thus contribute to a psychological interpretation of the core symbol of the play – Rubek's vision of «The Day of Resurrection» and its role within the drama as a whole. The question is whether it also can contribute to an understanding of why Rubek's and Irene's relationship had to end in tragedy. Can it also explain why art overpowers love in this play?

To Freud, sublimation was the outcome of a successful renunciation of an instinctual aim. In object-relations theory sublimation and creativity are seen as results of successfully overcoming the depressive position, i.e. a process of mourning whereby feelings of loss, anxiety and guilt in connection with the idea of destroying the good object are experienced and acknowledged (Segal 1952: 202).

To explain why Rubek chooses art over the woman he desires and who loves him, it could be argued from a Kleinian point of view that Rubek carries such guilt and loss that the mere thought of a true and sexual love relationship arouses in him the unconscious fear that he once more will attack and destroy the good object; his unconscious fantasy tells him that history will repeat itself and that this time his good object and harmonious inner world will be destroyed for good. Accordingly, Rubek (on an unconscious level) could have several strong reasons for converting Irene into a desirable *object of art* instead of making her the concrete *object of sexual desire*. Firstly, in this way he protects himself from repeating the act he fears most: the attack on and destruction of his most loved object. And in doing so, he also protects himself from the terrible feeling of guilt and fear of persecution such an act induces. Secondly, he protects his loved object from being hurt and annihilated, and accordingly also himself from the feelings of loss and emptiness this would entail. And finally, he succeeds in making reparation, in recreating the good object that he – in his unconscious mind – has attacked and destroyed, the cause of his feelings of guilt, fear, and emptiness. These unconscious emotional motives may be seen as so imperative, that instead of giving in to his love and sexual desire for Irene, he has to make his sexual desire for her a taboo. His mind «would be profaned», as he puts it (p. 259). Consequently, art remains his only option.

VI

What about Ibsen himself? What kind of choice did *he* make in relationships to women? Is Rubek also in *this* respect a self portrait? The conflict between a ground project, the ethical demand, and a longing for a sensual and intimate love relationship, was an undoubtedly also an essential conflict in Ibsen's own life. Like Rubek, Ibsen placed his art above everything, like Rubek he was plagued by guilt, and like Rubek his love life was apparently not successful.¹⁴ This brings me to the threshold of new, interesting and complicated inquiries; but also, at least for the moment, to the end of my discussion.

¹⁴ See the biographies Halvdan Koht: *Henrik Ibsen. Eit diktarliv* (I & II, Oslo: Aschehoug 1928-29), Michael Meyer: *Henrik Ibsen* (Oslo: Gyldendal, 1971), and Robert Ferguson: *Henrik Ibsen* (Oslo: Cappelen, 1996).

Illness and the body in Katherine Mansfield's fiction

CAROLE STONE (*)

Katherine Mansfield used her physical self in her writing, suggesting that literary creation arises not only from social and historical context, but from the physical self as well. Mansfield died in 1923, at thirty-five, from tuberculosis, which had been diagnosed six years earlier. In addition to tuberculosis, she suffered all her life from other illnesses. She had urinary tract infections resulting from an abortion, gonorrhea that generated symptoms of rheumatism, and weakened resistance from constant travelling and her exposure to the 1918 influenza epidemic.

In many of her stories, she used images of these illnesses as well as representations of herself as a patient. Her use of an insect image – the fly – as a metaphor for the disgust she felt toward her ill body, immediately suggests affinities with Franz Kafka, who also died from TB, in 1924. As a consequence of her illness, Mansfield's world grew smaller and smaller as did her stories, which finally, like Kafka's, became unfinished fragments, published posthumously.

In this paper I will show how Katherine Mansfield recreated in her writing images associated with her ill body. By providing a reading of her work, I want to disclose Mansfield's bodily self, and how Mansfield's illnesses came to define her sense of self. To amplify Mansfield's fictional sense of her illness, I will also use her journals and her letters. I will confine myself primarily to her earliest collected stories, *In a German Pension*, in which she presciently describes a spa, resembling the commune she went to live in before her death. Mansfield's T.B. had not been diagnosed yet; nevertheless, surrounded by patients, some of whom, were tubercular, Mansfield had direct contact with the effects of this disease on the mind and the body. Additionally, she experienced the confined life of the sanitarium, which was to be her final home. Therefore, while Mansfield was not yet a TB patient, she lived the life of one. Perhaps this is why critics of *In A German Pension*, have neglected the imagery of tuberculosis in this work. I will also discuss «The Fly», written shortly before she died because, like stories in *In A German Pension*, in its condensation and irony, it bears the earmarks of her tuberculosis.

Like Chekhov, the writer she most admired, with whom she identified, and who also died of TB, Mansfield used irony as a defense against pain. Irony, in Mansfield's fiction, declares itself as inexpressible pain. As Elaine Scarry observes, «Physical pain does not simply resist language, but actively destroys it» (Scarry 4). Scarry observes as well, «Physical pain has no voice, but when it at

(*) Montclair State University, Upper Montclair, NJ 07044, USA.

last finds a voice, it begins to tell a story» (Scarry 1). These early stories of Mansfield's, which many critics consider imitative Chekhovian sketches, contain his heavy irony. And they suggest generic German types rather than specific fully-realized characters. But rather than view these stories as derivative of Chekhov's style, I see their type-casting as expressions of an ill person, who has a jaundiced view of the world. For as Susan Sontag notes, «Yet it is hardly possible to take up one's residence in the kingdom of the ill unprejudiced by the lurid metaphors with which it has been landscaped» (Sontag 4). For, «Illness is the nightside of life, a more onerous citizenship» (Sontag 3). Sontag's observations recall Mansfield's words about Chekhov's illness and her own:

How much do we know of Tchekov from his letters? Was that all? Of course not. Don't you suppose he had a whole long life of which there is hardly a word? Then read the final letters. He has given up hope... Illness has swallowed him But perhaps to people who are not ill, all this is nonsense. They have never traveled this road. How can they see where I am? (*Journal* 250)¹

With this sense of alienation in mind, it is easy to understand how in her early and later work, when her sense of self was diminished by illness, Mansfield's fiction forsook characterization for condensation through metaphor. Yet, the triumph of her art, a defense against her illness, is that her master plot, the story of her body, is always told in material reality embodied in concrete imagery. Rhoda Nathan suggests that «Katherine Mansfield used the ailing body in which she found herself to imagine and record experience with an unusual attention to the unnoticeable details of everyday existence» (Nathan 170). And Jeffrey Meyers observes that «Writers like Chekhov, Kafka, Lawrence, Mansfield and Orwell, who died of tuberculosis, rarely wrote fiction about their own disease», and «confined their description to personal letters and journals» (Meyers, *Disease* 16). A closer look at Mansfield's fiction will show that, in fact, her early fiction contains images of TB. In Julia Kristeva's terms, Mansfield's stories are «Narrative as the recounting of suffering, fear, disgust, and abjection crying out, they quiet down concatenated into a story» (Kristeva 145).

Susan Sontag in her discussion of the metaphor of TB has shown that «TB sufferers may be represented as passionate but are more characteristically deficient in vitality, in life force» (Sontag 7). Sontag sees TB, as depicted throughout the nineteenth century and into the early twentieth century, as the prototypical passive death – «the death of someone like a child thought to be too good to be sexual» (Sontag 7). Her observations fit perfectly the case of Katherine Mansfield who, dying of tuberculosis, passively gave herself up to the ideas of the mystic, Gurdjieff, believing «I must heal myself before I will be well» (*Journals* 23). Just before her death in July 1923 at Gurdjieff's institute, La Prieure in Fontainebleau, her husband, John Middleton Murry, wrote of her:

I have never seen, nor shall I ever see, anyone as beautiful as she was on that day: it was as though the exquisite perfection which was always hers had taken possession of her completely. To use her own words, the last grain of 'sediment', the last traces of 'early degradation' were departed forever. But she had lost her life to save it.

Murry turned his wife into the non-material being that was at the core of the mythologizing of TB, particularly when an artist contracted it. But while Murry cosmeticized Mansfield's life and while Mansfield turned blindly out of despair to a guru, her work does not falsify reality, especially the reality of the body when ill.

In A German Pension, published in 1911, is set at a spa, Bad Worisshofen, Bavaria, that could as easily be a tubercular sanatorium. In fact, at the turn of the century many of these spas had been used as tuberculosis sanatoriums. For in 1856 the physician Hermann Brehmer recommended treatment for TB in institutions with parklike settings. This came to be known as the «fresh air» cure

¹ All references to Mansfield's *Journal* are from *Journal of Katherine Mansfield*, Ed. J. Middleton Murry. London: Constable & Co, 1933.

(Gilman 170). Mansfield's *A German Pension* is based on her residency in such a spa where her mother brought her when Mansfield was unmarried and pregnant. While there, she had a miscarriage. In these stories, Mansfield expresses an anxiety about confinement and about exile, indeed about punishment for being ill, which, as Sander Gilman points out, was a major part of the discourse about TB at the end of the nineteenth century (Gilman 231). Mansfield's writings about her own life suggest the suffering of incarceration:

To be alone all day in a house where every sound seems foreign to you, and to find a terrible confusion in your body, which affects you mentally, suddenly pictures for you detestable incidents, revolting personalities, which you only shake off to find recurring again as the pain seems to grow worse again. (*Journal 1*)

Her real-life experience is reflected in the first story of *In A German Pension*, «Germans at Meat». The speaker's Englishness sets her apart from the German guests. They seem to be enjoying their «cure» by eating with gusto and conversing about their bodily functions. The main character, Herr Rat, describes his English breakfast as «Four slices of bread, two eggs, two slices of cold ham, one plate of soup, two cups of tea» (*Pension 9*).² The English narrator feels he is «bearing the burden of the nation's preposterous breakfast – I who drank a cup of coffee while buttoning my blouse in the morning» (*Pension 9*). Food and body functions are the chief subjects of conversation. For example, The Traveller from the North says, «I eat sauerkraut with pleasure, but now I have eaten so much of it I cannot retain it I am immediately forced to-» (*Pension 10*). The widow is at one with her body as are the men. She has had nine children while the narrator has had none. And family, food and nation comprise the body. «'Germany,' boomed The Traveller, biting round a potato which he had speared with his knife, 'is the home of the Family.'» But the speaker's worst crime in the Germans' eyes is that she does not remember her husband's favorite meat. Furthermore, she is a vegetarian. I view the emphasis on gluttony and the body in the story as over-compensation for illness since the boarders have, after all, come for «the cure». The speaker, on the other hand, who eats sparingly and has never given birth, is an exposed form of the emaciated TB patient forced to eat, and a protest against her exile at the Bavarian spa.

The Germans function both as jailers and jailed, living entirely within their bodies in order to ward off the self-awareness that their gluttony is a disease. That their behavior has a greater dimension than these particular Germans is evidenced in the unnamed characters, signaling a morality tale. The simplest reading of this tale would be antagonism between Germany and England just before The Great War. So, the Germans become the «rats». One character, for example cautions the English woman not to be afraid, saying, «We don't want England, if we did we would have had her long ago» (*Pension 12*). I suggest that the vulgarity and primitivism of the German guests as an affronting image for the TB sufferer's horror of his or her own eventually emaciated body, and that the speaker punishes herself for being ill by not eating. The Germans punish themselves for their aggression, both personal and political, by overeating.

The second story, «The Baron», takes up the theme of overeating in the person of the Baron whom the other pensioners are in awe of because of his title. Frau Oberregierungsrat, whose name means senior government councillor, a reference to her husband's position, which makes her into an important person, tells the English narrator, «Surely you cannot understand. He is one of the First Barons» (*Pension 14*). However, when the English woman looks at the Baron, «He was eating salad – taking a whole lettuce leaf on his fork and absorbing it slowly, rabbit-wise» (*Pension 14*). She also observes that as coffee is served, «the Baron took three lumps of sugar, putting two in his cup and wrapping up the third in the corner of his handkerchief» (*Pension 15*). The Baron is the

² All references to *In a German Pension* are from *In a German Pension*, Katherine Mansfield. London: Penguin Books, 1964.

first to enter the dining room, the last to leave, and he carries with him a little black bag, which he places on the vacant chair beside him.

Obviously, there is something peculiar about this Baron whom the speaker discovers when she is caught in the rain and the Baron offers to share his umbrella with her. He reveals that he carries his clothing in the bag because he doesn't trust servants and when she asks why he has not spent more time with the guests and he replies, «I sit alone that I may eat more, my stomach requires a great deal of food. I order double portions, and eat them in peace» (*Pension* 18).

And what he does all day is «imbibe nourishment in his room» (*Pension* 18). Mansfield's Baron is the opposite of Kafka's hunger-artist who would eat if only he could find the food he needed. Instead of the emaciated figure of the TB patient which Kafka's hunger-artist represents, Mansfield gives us the overeating royal Baron whose fear of contamination by the lower classes makes him carry his possessions with him everywhere and whose private gluttony preserves his status, and his health, and staves off infection. Mansfield knows that being ill means forcing oneself to eat. While recuperating in Mentone, France, she wrote in her journal, «Isn't it awful being ill! I lie all day on my old balcony lapping up eggs and cream and butter» (*Journal* 178). To ward off disease, one must overeat and avoid contact with the Volk who undoubtedly carry germs. For TB, as Susan Sontag notes, «is often imagined as a disease of poverty and deprivation – of thin garments, thin bodies, unheated rooms, poor hygiene, inadequate food» (Sontag 15).

Mansfield's «The Sister of the Baroness», like «The Baron» appears to simply be a mockery of aristocratic pretensions. But I would argue that Mansfield is parodying nineteenth century popular mythology of tuberculosis, while making clear the danger from TB's bacterial infection. Her light tone can also be seen as a defense against her isolation in the Bavarian spa where the other curetakers continually remind her of their cultural differences. So when the supposed sister of the baroness arrives, the manager asks the English narrator if he can take down the portrait of the Kaiserin Elizabeth above her bed and hang it over the baroness's sister's sofa. For, as Frau Oberregierungsrat tells her, it is «of no possible significance to you» (*Pension* 20). The narrator feels crushed «at the tone – placing me outside the pale-branding me as a foreigner» (*Pension* 20). And the Frau Doktor criticizes the Englishness of her body, «since you are always exposing your legs on cricket fields and breeding dogs in your back back gardens» (*Pension* 23).

Mansfield encapsulates tuberculosis through the figures of the student from Bonn and the poet from Munich. The poet is immediately attracted to the baroness's sister and her ward, «never taking his eyes off the pair». The English woman, observing his interest, thinks:

Unyoking Pegasus, thought I. Death spasms of his Odes to solitude! There were possibilities in that young woman for an inspiration, not to mention a dedication, and from that moment his suffering temperament took up its bed and walked. (*Pension* 21)

This passage suggests the myth of the suffering romantic artist, connects TB and creativity and also the notion that TB sufferers are passionate beings. When the poet says he has written some lines for the sister of the baroness «last night from my window in the sweet night air», Frau Doktor exclaims, «Oh, your delicate chest» (*Pension* 22). Here we have the myth of the thin, delicate TB sufferer who is made more interesting by his disease. Her satiric denunciation of the myths associated with illness comes through a conversation she overhears as she reads Morike's lyrics in the pension's garden. She is also trying to write a poem, which ends «close-pressed», as a response to the suggestion of nature's half-mourning. Dissatisfied with words that «did not sound at all fascinating», she overhears the student from Bonn telling the baroness's sister, «What small hands you have. They were like white lilies lying in the pool of your black dress». She thinks, «This certainly sounded the real thing» (*Pension* 24). But then the student says:

How should I adore to kiss you. But you know I am suffering from severe nasal catarrh, and I dare not risk giving it to you. Sixteen times last night did I count myself sneezing. And three different handkerchiefs. (*Pension* 24)

The English woman's response is to throw Morike into the lilac bush, rejecting the association of TB with romanticism. If her poetic words are ordinary, the student's are a fake and his symptoms make him into a *poet maudite*. At the story's end the baroness's sister is revealed as the baroness's maid. Pretension to aristocracy parallels pretension to being an artist because one is ill. As Susan Sontag points out, one of the myths of TB was, «The melancholy character – or the tubercular – was a superior one: sensitive, creative, a being apart» (Sontag 32).

In «Frau Fischer», Mansfield satirizes illness as the narrator observes a new arrival at Pension Miller, Frau Fischer, who suffers from nerves. She asks the English woman «What complaint are you suffering from? You look exceedingly healthy?» (*Pension* 27). When she replies by smiling and shrugging her shoulders, Frau Fischer castigates her response as typically English:

Ah, that is so strange about you English. You do not seem to enjoy the functions of the body. As well speak of a railway train and refuse to mention the engine. How can we hope to understand anybody, knowing nothing of their stomachs? (*Pension* 27)

Again Mansfield raises the issue of being an exile in a foreign country whose notions about the body she exaggerates in order to convey her own diminished sense of her body. Like many TB sufferers – and Mansfield, who, as I pointed out had other illnesses as well – lived constantly outside of England. A brief history of where she went in search of health would include Bandol in the south of France in 1915 to recover from her brother's death in the War, and again in 1917 after an attack of pleurisy, Cornwall in the summer of 1918, Hampstead that winter, and from 1919-1920 Mentone, France and Switzerland, and finally Fontainebleau in July 1922 where she died on January 9, 1923.

Some brief entries from her journal when she was living at Mentone will corroborate the feelings of exile and disgust for the body of the female narrator in *A German Pension*.

January 4. Horribly depressed. Worked. I cannot write. Immediately the sun goes in I am overcome – again the black fit takes me.

January 6. Black day. Dark, no sky to be seen; Heart attack 8 a.m. Awful day. No relief for a moment. Couldn't work.

January 8. A day spent in Hell Unable to do anything. Took brandy. Determined not to weep wept. Sense of isolation frightful. I shall die if I don't escape. Nauseated, faint, cold with misery. I shall survive it somehow. (*Journal* 138-9)

Acutely aware of the reality of her illness and how it forced her into exile, Mansfield wrote:

I seem to spend half of my life arriving at strange hotels. The strange door shuts upon the stranger, and then I slip down into the sheets. Waiting for the shadows to come out of the corners and spin their slow, slow web over the Ugliest Wallpaper of All. (*Journal* 87)

Underneath her satirization of Frau Fischer's declaration of «needing 'the cure' very badly this year. My nerves!» (*Pension* 27) lies Mansfield's consciousness of her own real illness. And while the cleansing of Frau Fischer's room – «The wash stand has, of course been scrubbed over with soda... every stick of the furniture has been sunning in the garden for three days» (*Pension* 26-27) – can be understood as an ironic commentary on German cleanliness, I see the notion of resisting infection in a spa that resembles a TB sanatorium.

«In The Luft Bad», the story, which I think most, exemplifies the compulsive, ridiculous rituals of spa life; Mansfield exposes the body pitilessly, as well as ridiculing nourishment as providing cure. As in other stories, the ironic tone defends the narrator from confronting her own body's vulnerability and confronting the fact that she is a patient. The controlling metaphor of the story, one might say, the objective correlative, is the umbrella under which the narrator's fellow-bathers walk about naked. They are patients, following a therapeutic regimen:

And there in all the weathers we take the air – walking or sitting in little companies talking over each other's ailments and measurements and ills that flesh is heir to. (*Pension* 61)

In this communal bath, the speaker is acutely aware of her body, saying «On the first day I was conscious of my leg», and of others' bodies too, «Opposite to me was the brownest woman I have ever seen», and «a Hungarian lady of immense proportions» (*Pension* 62-63). Bodily functions are also important, as when a «young Russian» does the «Salome» dance, and then notes that she is «perspiring so splendidly». Another woman follows her own diet cure to rid herself of «layers of superfluous flesh», existing on nuts and raw vegetables like lettuce, carrots and potatoes which she eats raw when they are «fresh and uncontaminated». The speaker is once more aware of her own body as she wishes this woman would not stare at her. Another patient is mentioned who didn't come because she «she has come out in spots all over on account of her nerves. She was very excited yesterday after having written two postcards» (*Pension* 63). This comic incident underscores the isolation the spa patients feel, having left their real lives behind, as Mansfield so frequently did. But the body rather than the mind is always underscored. It is revealed that Frau Hauptmann, who is a delicate woman, «'has a separate plate for each of front teeth'.» (*Pension* 63)

Of all the stories discussed, «In the Luft Bad» is most a patient's text in which the patients' bodies are scrutinized by others, self-examined, and manipulated. When the narrator attempts to get away from her fellow-bathers by climbing on a swing where, in a liberating metaphor, the air rushes past her, and losing her body for the moment she becomes «light and free and happy», a woman warns her that swinging is upsetting to the stomach. Consequently, she returns to the bath shelter where in an image of being treated, which, for me, has more sinister overtones, she is hosed, while next door there is a man who buries himself up to the armpits in mud. Finally, the narrator hides behind an umbrella where she cannot be scrutinized and is no longer ashamed of her legs. And so the umbrella functions as a screen, which allows the patient to conceal her body's weaknesses from others, but also herself.

The sub-text of the story is the spa-seekers' taking the cure to ward off death which looms in comic relief. The Hungarian lady, for example, talks about the beautiful tomb she bought for her second husband, which is so large she can go there and walk about for «it makes such a pleasant excursion for a fine Sunday afternoon» (*Pension* 62). But then she gets her first and second husbands' death agonies mixed up.

In Mansfield's story, «The Fly», published the year before she died, she has moved from the communal existence of the pension where patients come to cure themselves of their bodily ailments, to a more fantastic representation of TB in which the body has virtually disappeared. The destruction of the TB patient's body and sense of self is complete; she projects her sick body onto a fly's. The fly's death symbolizes the disgusting death of the tubercular patient. Like *In A German Pension*, the story is set against the German-English conflict of The Great War, and there is, as Vincent O'Sullivan has described, «a sense of shared corruption between 'the old battlefield' as she called her lungs and a pillaged civilization» (O'Sullivan 18). O'Sullivan also observes that the fly was one of her consistent metaphors for bad luck and ill health» (O'Sullivan 19).

Before discussing «The Fly», I think it would be useful to delineate Mansfield's symptoms.

On November 9, 1918, a year after Mansfield's TB had been diagnosed, Virginia Woolf described a visit to her ill friend. «Katherine was up but husky and feeble, crawling about the room like an old woman.» (*Diary* 1: 216) Mansfield described her own symptoms when she was living in Gurdjieff's commune as «night-coughing and sweating, weight loss, an ache in the left lung, spitting blood, acute neuritis in her arm and shoulder, the end of her menstrual period. (CL 11, 17, 22, 49) In a January 21, 1922 journal entry she wrote, To move is an agony; till finally one discovers a movement which is possible. But that helpless feeling about with the legs first» (*Journal* 221).

On October 10, 1922 Mansfield wrote that she had improved slightly only by living the life of a corpse in the Victoria Palace Hotel.

What does it amount to? Can I walk? Only creep? Can I do anything with my hands or body? Nothing at all. I am an absolute invalid. What is my life? It is the existence of a parasite. (*Journal* 248)

Besides such references to herself as a «parasite», and «a corpse» she thought of herself as a fly, saying she was like a fly «dropped into the milk-jug & fished out again, still too milky and drowned to start cleaning up yet» (*CL* 2: 8). It is revealing to compare Mansfield's descriptions of her ill health to her description of the fly in her story

...a fly had fallen into his broad inkpot, and was trying feebly but desperately to clamber out again. Help! help! said those struggling legs, But the sides of the inkpot were wet and slippery; it fell back again and began to swim. (*Stories* 147)³

At the time she wrote «The Fly» in February, 1922, Mansfield was undergoing an extremely painful treatment for tuberculosis which she described in her journal as:

Had palpitations from the moment of getting on to the table till 5 o'clock. But when I felt this coming on while rays were working, I felt simply horribly callous. I thought: Well, if this kills me now – let it. (*Journal* 227)

She also felt that the doctor who treated her was a good man but she had a «sneaking feeling» that «he is a kind of scrupulous imposter». (*Journal* 226)

Here, then, are the basic elements of «The Fly»; the victim, the fly and the victimizer, the boss. The fact that the main character, the boss, is not named recapitulates the allegorical technique of *In A German Pension*, and her ironic defense against illness. In «The Fly», however, the communal environment has been replaced by a singularly individualistic office setting. One could speculate that this highly condensed focus expresses Mansfield's heightened awareness that her writing time is running out. This would also account for the image of ink in which the fly drowns. At the same time, the ink is an image of tuberculosis for as Jeffrey Meyers observes, «both the fly and tubercular victim suffocate – one in ink, the other in blood» (*Stories* xiv). From her journals it is evident that Mansfield associated her reduced writing with her TB saying, for example, that she had «12 'spasms' of 2,000 words each» (*Journal* 233). Also, she was thinking about TB when she wrote «The Fly», for she patterned the name, Woodfield, the man who comes to visit the boss to remind him of their dead sons killed in the war and buried in Belgium, after Fairfield, a tubercular patient in a Swiss spa, a friend of Manifold's companion, Ida Baker. Neither man has been to Belgium to visit the graves, nor it is the boss's guilt, which appears to be the catalyst for his torturing of a fly that has fallen into his inkwell.

While critics have focussed on «The Fly» as symbolizing Mansfield's feeling that she, and her brother who was killed in the war, will not be remembered after their deaths, I would to look at the story as expressing her feelings about the effects of tuberculosis on her body and her spirit.

Like the fly in the boss's power, by October, 1922, three months before she died, Mansfield felt that her illness had made her into a prisoner. «Think of five years imprisonment», she wrote. «Someone has got to help me get out» (*Journal* 249). Her experience of being a patient contributed to her feelings of entrapment for she had had to undergo countless exams to diagnose her TB and to keep track of its progress. As Mary Burgan points out:

'Being up' implies that Mansfield had to spend much of her time in bed. Moving her body about a room was an exercise of will over fatigue. Loss of weight changed her face from that of an incipiently buxom young woman to the ethereal worn visage. (Burgan 119)⁴

³ All references to «The Fly» are from *Stories* by Katherine Mansfield. Ed. Jeffrey Meyers. New York: Random House, 1991.

⁴ Mary Burgan, the only critic to have addressed issue of gender, body, and illness in Mansfield's work, provides valuable information about Mansfield's tuberculosis as well as other aspects of her body such as her lesbianism, her abortion and issues of childbirth, as well as Mansfield's psychological responses to early family trauma.

In «The Fly», Mansfield transformed her ill body into the body of a fly. Her self-image has become that of the diseased patient. Her sense of powerlessness is total as her ill body, represented by the fly, is placed within the hands of the boss who picks the fly out of the ink and puts it on a piece of blotting paper where the fly cleans its wings and its face and appears to have escaped danger. «It was ready for life again.» (*Stories* 347) The fly seems to possess human qualities such as courage, which the boss admires. He even feels a momentary tenderness toward the insect, admiring its artfulness in drying itself. But then:

He dipped the pen deep into the inkpot... The last blot fell on the soaked blotting paper, and the dragged fly lay in it and did not stir. The back legs were stuck to the body; the front legs were not to be seen... The fly was dead. The boss lifted the corpse on the end of the paper-knife and flung it into the waste-paper basket. (*Stories* 148)

One can hardly read these lines without being reminded of Gregor Samsa in *The Metamorphosis* awakening one morning and finding that he had turned into a beetle. I would argue that Mansfield in «The Fly» enacts a similar masochistic metamorphosis as Kafka's, and that the fly's body as trash similarly represents the way TB sufferers' contagion, made them, like vermin, expendable. Sander Gilman's application of the «masochistic text» to Kafka's work, I believe is also useful in regard to Mansfield's. Gillian writes, «It is masochism not as self-abnegation or self-flagellation, but as a demand on the part of the author that the literary representation of the sense of powerlessness be understood as a tool to shape those who claim to have power over oneself» (Gilman 21-22).⁵ Consequently, I would argue that Mansfield's text is addressed to the medical establishment whose treatment of tuberculosis patients lacked compassion, knowledge and understanding. The boss can be seen as a composite of the many doctors who treated Mansfield and who were often cruel. But perhaps the boss is not as simply one man, but an amalgam of the many men who let Mansfield down during her illness. As biographers have noted, her father Leslie Beauchamp gave her a small allowance which she was dependent upon and he did not increase it during the final stages of her tuberculosis when she needed money for treatment. Her husband, John Middleton Murry, was unsupportive, unwilling or unable personally to care for her when she was sick.

Unlike John Middleton Murry's mythologizing of his wife as beautiful at her death, which I noted at the beginning of this paper, she faces the reality of herself as a corpse. As such her story breaks taboos about the discourse of the body, especially for a woman writer. Julia Kristeva observes, «Excrement and its equivalents (decay, infection, disease, corpse, etc.) stand for the danger to identity that comes from without: the ego threatened by non-ego, society threatened by its outside, life by death» (Kristeva 71). Mansfield dared to present herself as corpse in a story where her bodily self finally became non-existent; the condensed form signals her writing is, too. To quote Kristeva once more:

A decaying body, lifeless, completely turned into dejection, blurred between the inanimate and the inorganic, transitional swarming inseparable lining of a human nature whose life is undistinguishable from the symbolic – the corpse represents fundamental pollution. (Kristeva 109)

In *A German Pension* sarcastically attacked the notion of curing infectious illness through isolating its sufferers. In these stories, Mansfield is speaking of her own health, drawing upon her experience as an inmate, for *In A German Pension*, in my view, is a community where its English resident is isolated and punished for her body's contamination. The fact that it takes place in

⁵ Sander Gilman's study of Kafka as a Jewish patient was extremely useful in its examination of the discourses of TB at the end of the nineteenth century, most particularly the myths about TB and Jewishness. His study helped me to understand better the relation between Mansfield's illness and her sense of self.

Bavaria reinforces this connection to novels such as Thomas Mann's *The Magic Mountain* (1924) which takes place at Davos, the site of a sanitarium. It was also an era when those who were thought to infect society were banished. Kafka's story, «In the Penal Colony», (1914) can be seen as an example of the notion of banishing so-called poisonous elements of society in its setting of Devil's Island where Dreyfus, a Jew, was imprisoned after his conviction for treason. The empty rituals of the inmates of *A German Pension* can be said to inherit Kafka's sense of meaningless, alienation and terror in *The Castle*. I think they also foreshadow Aharon Apelfeld's post-Holocaust novel, *Badenheim*, 1939, an allegory in which a group of people, for mysterious reasons, are interred in a nameless hotel, much like Mansfield's Bavarian spa, from which there will be no escape.

Mansfield tried to cure herself through a spiritual regimen at the Gurdjieff Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man, where she gave up medical treatment, believing it was more Important to cure her soul. She was aware, however, that spiritual efforts were as impossible as medical and wrote, «I can no more cure my psyche than my body». But in that same journal entry she also said, «Thank God for writing» (*Journal* 248). Though her creative work could not save her either, her achievement was to show how tuberculosis, rather than beautifying her body destroyed it, as well as to refute cultural myths of contagion which persist into our own time. Mansfield's literary texts faced the reality of illness that was impossible to face in her own life.

WORKS CITED

- Daly, S. (1994). *Katherine Mansfield*. New York: Twane Publishers.
- Burgan, M. (1994). *Illness, gender and writing the case of Katherine Mansfield*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press.
- Gilman, S. (1995). *Franz Kafka, The jewish patient*. New York: Routledge.
- Kristeva, J. (1982). *Powers of horror An essay on abjection*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Mansfield, K. (1933). *Journal of Katherine Mansfield*. Ed. J. Middleton Murry. London: Constable & Co..
- Mansfield, K. (1982). *In A German Pension*. Middlesex, England: Penguin.
- Mansfield, K. (1991). *Stories*. Ed. Jeffrey Meyers. New York: Random House.
- Meyers, J. (1985). *Disease and the novel, 1880-1960*. New York: St. Martins's Press.
- Nathan, R. (1993). *Critical essays on Katherine Mansfield*. Ed. Rhoda Nathan. New York: G.K. Hall & Co..
- O'Sullivan, V. (1994). Finding the pattern, solving the problem, Katherine Mansfield the New Zealand European. In Roger Robinson (Ed.), *Katherine Mansfield In from the Margin*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press.
- Scarry, E. (1985). *The body in pain*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Sontag, S. (1977). *Illness as metaphor*. New York: Farrar, Strauss, Giroux.
- Woolf, V. (1977-84). *The Diary of Virginia Woolf*. Vols. 1-5. Ed. Anne Oliver Bell. New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich.

«Let's Hope the Red Army isn't Listening in on Us»: A psychoanalytic hearing of the unspoken in *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*

MAUREEN TURIM (*)

The line from which I take my title, «Let's hope the Red Army man isn't listening in on us» spoken in Milan Kundera's *Nesnesitelná lehkost byti* (*The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, 1984) is a statement of fear, justified fear, presented as a sarcastic aside. If this enunciation is not exactly light, humor lightens its gravity. The phrase occurs quite late in Kundera's novel (212) in a conversation between the editor of the journal of the Union of Czech Writers and Tomas, the novel's protagonist, a brain surgeon; years earlier, this editor published the only political statement ever made public by Tomas, who sent it in as a letter to the editor. We will come back to that letter and its reverberations shortly. For now, let's stay with the phrase and the idea of listening from a psychoanalytic perspective. For in a context where one is afraid to speak and to be heard, psychoanalytic listening can not escape surveillance, just as letters and photographs potentially become State's evidence against the self.

The phrase warning of unseen listeners is left out of the filmic adaptation in 1988 by Philip Kaufman from a script on which the director collaborated with Jean-Claude Carrière. I will address such differences in representation through a comparative approach that includes not only how literary representation differs from a filmic and visual one, but also how a Czech context differs from that sustained by a Euro-American (U.S. and French) production. In this instance, note that the editor and Tomas's statement do appear forcefully in the film, and the idea of police and army forces listening to all potential conversations pervades several scenes. In this atmosphere of fear, any utterance is suspect, any speech act one made with trepidation, and any instance whatever has the potential to become the marked instance that can potentially undo one's life.

(*) University of Florida, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, Department of English, PO Box 117310, Gainesville, FL 32611-7310, USA.

In this circumstance where one dares not speak, the significant struggle for being which Kundera himself terms «existential», seems to transfer in his writing to the sexual realm. Here is where I want to start, with the novel as an experiment with the exposition of desire under a certain historical circumstance. Kundera tells us his characters are elements of an experiment whose parameters he establishes. He crafts the novel as a structured experiment seeking knowledge. Characters demonstrate the ways in which desire speaks in its permutations between sexual desire and other desires: desires to speak, to act, to be involved, to move, to create, to form a relationship, to form a community. Our role is to listen analytically.

Kundera's is not a psychological novel, a form he associates with stream of consciousness and a different authorial voice than the essayist's voice this author gives us so prominently. The psychological novel demands an authorial voice that exposes characters' psyches and motivation, woven through telling descriptions of thoughts, background information, dialogue enunciations and actions crafted to be consonant with and revelatory of a particular psychic formation.

Kundera's objection to «psychological», as well as «philosophical» as adjectives describing his novel's form ask us to approach his work with a different methodology. Kundera's novels supply enough information coded as character psychology to have lead to many psychological interpretations, but to do one more such reading is not my purpose here. Instead, I wish to explore what Kundera means when he suggests his novel is an experiment with each character's existential coding, which can be found through words, key words for each character. Kundera's admiration for Diderot is well-known, and one senses a parallel will to drive characters to abstraction, as embodiments of concepts. Let me also suggest here a certain affinity with Goethe's *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* (Elective Affinities), to evoke a comparison that is far less obvious, but one which illuminates the structural staging of characters and desire, and one that will speak to an underlying Romanticism that Kundera's novels, particularly in their resolutions play out against the counterpoint of irony. So if Kundera's novel is not to be seen as psychological or philosophical in the historical literary sense of those terms, it is an engagement with the concepts and forces of current intellectual work on being, with philosophy as it blends into contemporary psychoanalysis, with structural and post-structural thought key to the form of that engagement. Specifically, here I mean to concentrate on how those concepts circulate in psychoanalytic debates, including the work of Jacques Lacan on one hand, and Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torak, on the other, and others working in relation to their ideas.

The novel presents emblematic elements of the psyche to be understood in a specific historical context. The phenomenology of being is presented through the function of desire, a very Lacanian notion; yet due to other elements of structuration and context, a post-Lacanian view of psychoanalysis can elucidate both the psychoanalytic and political/ethical questions of engagement here. Kundera writes shadowed by longing for substance and rebellion against the State, yet he creates through his characters struggles with compulsive desires that include Tomas's desire to remain detached, to not speak, at least not directly, in either the personal or political realms. This desire to not speak on Tomas's part exceeds the mere fear of repressive consequences meted out by the state; Tomas is assigned a set of codes which include a parallel desire not to speak seriously in the personal realm.

That it is a letter to the Union of Czech Writers through which Tomas finally speaks words that commit and transform his being is not without significance for my psychoanalytic approach. As I shall develop, a writing that makes a single letter so significant, and that traces the various meanings of words to different peoples, given their language, cultural, personal and gendered status traces its intervention in contemporary theory in several ways.

«Wunsch», which Freud associates with the unconscious and connects to the libido and sexuality, becomes translated into English as wish, as in the phrase, «unsatisfied wishes are the driving power behind phantasies». Hear this phrase again as «unsatisfied desires are the driving power behind phantasies»; the difference calls for a theorization of desire, its definition. The French translation of Wunsch as *désir* inspires Lacan to link such phrases to a Hegelian desire of the other and for recognition; Lacan stresses desire not because he is unaware of the differential translation history,

but to reanimate the force of desire. This philosophical speculation begins to supply the theory with definitions of desire which significantly open up the term to a broad range of meanings, a process Mikkel Borch-Jacobsen traces (84-96). Desire is reconceived by Lacan in relationship to the drive and its object, drawing on the intervening poetics of surrealism to invigorate his word choice, to allow it to assume a cultural resonance in a French context. Coupled with his focus on the gaze and his metaphorical use of and pervasive reference to physical arousal, Lacan significantly brings to the foreground a theorization of desire that has roots in Freud, in the term sometimes translated as «sensual feeling» as it is in «The Most Prevalent Form of Degradation of Erotic Life».¹ Desire then is a term that encompasses feelings of longing which is what situates it in relationship to lack and causes Lacan to postulate it as beyond satisfaction; desire is the unconscious force linked to the simple «I want» as demand of possession, knowledge, and power enacted ever since motor skills first allow the toddler to pick up a toy.

There is by now a large bibliography on Lacanian theories of desire and applied readings of desire in literature. However, many of these accounts take literature as illustration or exemplum of the theory, directly, often staying so close to the singularity of certain Lacanian pronouncements and aphorisms that they do not read his diagrams of desire with enough appreciation of their doubleness. Such readings often stumble over the issues of representation, of structure, of writing, of fiction, of the visual image, of metaphor, of staging and of the collection of desires that might constitute the psychology of character. Maire Jaanus's «Kundera and Lacan: Drive, Desire and Oneiric Narration» which in many ways is exciting and powerful, especially in its interpretation of maternal imagery, is a case in point as it still uses the novel to illustrate a given interpretation of Lacan by glossing the character psychologies presented. It concludes that all characters illustrate the Lacanian dictum that desire remains forever unsatisfied, flattening and universalizing what needs to be kept distinct in how each represents different points of departure in pursuing complex and multiple desires. While there is great richness to much of what Jaanus says about the characters, she fixes meanings for them that remain for me quite problematic. Whenever I speak about characters in both book and film, then, I want to avoid reduction, universalization and stasis, while staying with their fragmented representation. I hope to delineate these characters and their actions within a textual dynamic.

In parallel, by attempting to speak of desire I am trying to tease out the play of words that we use in psychoanalysis and philosophy to speak about desire and the play of representations that literature and film enact in their multivalent inscriptions of desire. It is appropriate to remind ourselves here of the self-consciousness with which Kundera as a writer approaches such issues of representation; «Words Misunderstood» is the title he assigns Part Three of *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, chapters that focus on Sabina and Franz through which he laces a dictionary of terms that mean contradictory things to each of these two characters. The characters, from the outset defined as experimental abstractions, are signs of differences bounded by contrasts in how words resonate for each of them. Alongside this structural use of the antithetical associations of single words, Kundera also gives us a series of oppositional dyads that also figure antithesis, such as lightness/weight or Kitsch/Art. This investigation of words and of oppositions asks us to look beyond certain readings of Lacan to other theorists more inclined to investigate paradoxes and multiplicities, such as Abraham and Torok's formulation of the shell and the kernel of symbols in psychoanalysis, which has a complex relationship to the work of Jacques Derrida. I would argue that there is far more paradox in Lacan's writings than many of his theory's proponents or detractors

¹ Freud's essay «The Most Prevalent Form of Degradation of Erotic Life» includes a paragraph that lays the basis for the Lacanian assertion that desire always exceeds its object and is always unsatisfied, bearing within in the unresolved aspects of Oedipal desire. It begins, «However strange it may sound. I think the possibility must be considered that something in the nature of the sexual instinct itself is unfavorable to the achievement of absolute gratification» (184).

recognize; the point here is that we have to tease out how words such as desire, drive, jouissance, and the object of desire are always in a shifting, rather than an entirely stable, relation to one another.

We should also note that Kundera uses the word desire and its negation frequently in representing his characters, as in the following sentence describing Tomas in which the temporal alternation of the force of desire is complexly and parenthetically inscribed: «The desire to fall into Tereza's arms (he had still felt it in Zurich) had completely disintegrated» (34). Kundera seems to want to celebrate a poetics of desire, just he does that of dreams. He cautions that dreams' beauty «seems to have escaped Freud in his theory of dreams. Dreaming is not merely an act of communication (or coded communication if you like); it is also an aesthetic activity, a game of the imagination, a game that is a value in itself (59). Desire, dreaming, and writing are valuable as aesthetic forms and integrally connected as games of imagination.

So let's return to the sexual quests which drive the novel and film, the characters who are often seen as embodiments of libertinage or of DonJuanism, terms which of course summon other fictional characters and psychoanalytical writings as points of reference.² Let me suggest that while these terms might be appropriate, there are absolutely specific characteristics of the representation of the sexual drive at work here. Tomas's libertinage is not entirely dominated by the Rake's drive for power over the other, though at one point Kundera does speak to his desire to accumulate conquests. Rather, Tomas's encounters and affairs are conditioned by withdrawal. Tomas seeks continual affairs with new women, sustaining simultaneously certain long-term relationships, while constantly seeking any new encounter. Tomas has a series of idiosyncrasies that govern these encounters that finally are time limits. Temporal restrictions help Tomas delimit his investment, his involvement. In fact, Tomas's rule of three (never see a woman more than three times, or else not more often than once every three weeks) has the mathematical charm that often marks compulsions. Delimiting the temporal aspects of his involvement, Tomas is assigned the role by Kundera as protector of his own autonomy, his detachment, elements central to Kundera's assigning him at this point «lightness»: at the beginning of the novel Tomas is he who strives for lightness.

Creating Tomas is presented by Kundera within the novel itself as both a proposition and an initiating idea for all that follows; after positing Tomas, Kundera then creates three other major characters to interact with him either in parallel or across differences that structure the writing. Sabina, the artist and Tomas's long-term mistress parallels Tomas across the boundary of sexual difference, and other differences as well. As an artist and a woman, her attributes include a different relationship to her work and a different compulsion to move and withdraw. The only men we see her with are Tomas and Franz. With Tomas, she responds to his terms, playing her part on his stage and in the triangle. In the shifting focal modes of the novel, we only switch to a perspective on her in exile, in Geneva, in section three, «Words Misunderstood». Kundera has Sabina understand Tomas' lightness, but assigns her to seek a heavier and more classic power over the other, consummated by betrayal, presented as an unconscious and compulsive drive. With Franz, she elicits attachment which she can then betray in the most dramatic terms; seemingly welcoming him into her apartment when he finally decides to leave his wife, she must leave him, orchestrating his entrance the next morning into a space she has left as an empty stage set. Tereza, the small town girl who later becomes a professional photographer and Tomas's second wife counterpoints these two, as she who desires monogamy, interdependency, and exclusivity. Once she finds herself caught a triangle formed with the other two, she struggles with the imbalance of power created by her different desires by trying to join their world, their stagings. The fourth character in the quartet, Franz, the Swiss professor who becomes Sabina's lover in Geneva, serves as the Western European counterpart to these Central Europeans in this exploration of desire in its political contexts.

² Consider, for example Slavoj Žižek's passage contrasting Mozart's Don Giovanni with Cassanova (112-116), which in turn cites Søren Kierkegaard's reading of Don Giovanni in *Either/Or*.

Lightness of being, then, is at first an oppositional stance associated with the direct acting on sexual desires, a playfulness, a joyous staging of sexuality in Prague as an antidote to the weight of Kitsch rewritings of history and of justifications of the Communist regime. In Sabina's words, «In the kingdom of Kitsch, you, Tomas, are a monster». This playfulness and ironic distance finds public expression in the Spring of 1968, embodied in the film by the Czech version of the Beatle's song «Hey Jude» as non-diegetic music underscoring images of a newly reanimated city, with its chorus of «Better Better, Better», a spirit only to be crushed by August's entry of the Russian tanks.

For Tomas and for his female double, Sabina, sex takes place accompanied by a series of ritualized lines and gestures, as if on a stage setting, played out without contractual conversations about its specific meanings or significance, as much as those words can be avoided. The film frames the pair's sex as a stunningly staged romp, just as Kundera's voice builds frames for the sexual scenes within the novel. As the scriptwriters have interpolated some of Kundera's commentary on Tomas as lines Sabina has in conversations with Tomas, the pair speaks more in the film than they do in the book about the nature of their relationship. The film compensates by turning such conversations into foreplay. Sabina plays along with Tomas in stagings of desire that pursue the pleasure of repeated sexual performances. They have an «unwritten contract of erotic friendship» (13) we are told in the novel, and shown in the film by their mutual laughter, their spontaneous complicity of gestures. The framing devices that stage this sex in both novel and film at the outset establish it as initiating proposition; what causes the characters to behave this way (psychology of character) remains pointedly sketchy and somewhat beside the point. Characters are signs in «what if» propositions that link us to the question: What is the role of sexual desire in relationship to the other, other desires, and the context of history and within psychoanalytic theory?

The others, Teresa and Franz, are the partners to Tomas' and Sabina's stagings, attracted to the flamboyant pursuit of desire in Tomas and Sabina: to perform sex as central, obsessive ritual. Tereza's first encounters with Tomas take on many of the rituals of his encounters with other women, as under the encouragement of his gaze, his offer of availability and desire, she offers herself up to his attentions, in her native small town which he visits to perform a surgery but has little time for her. Then emphatically, she arrives uninvited at his apartment in Prague a few days later. However, Tereza's acts are not cleverly staged performances; she seems to act out a deeper and perhaps more naive desire, and she comes to stay. Franz, too, is different as he is subject not specifically to Central Europe's repressive atmosphere, but to a different form of post-68ism, the form that has haunted such West European intellectuals whose political activism of the late sixties evolved and permutated into a different *Weltenschung*. Consider the questions, observations and desires found in the works of the Swiss filmmaker Alain Tanner, and the Swiss-born French filmmaker, Jean-Luc Godard; Franz is an abstraction of such western intellectuals at a temporal and spatial juncture where the existential struggle of their own being is displaced onto the history of others whose cause remains in the forefront. So we are told Franz «first sympathized with Cuba and then with China, and when the cruelty of their regimes began to appal him, he resigned himself with a sigh to a sea of words with no weight and no resemblance of life» (103). Notably, the film translates this portrait of a Western leftist intellectual with screenwriter Carrière's autobiographical trace made by addition to Franz's lines, «When I was a student in Paris, I liked the demonstrations, the marches, the crowds, the shouting. I liked to be a part of it...»

Franz attends a meeting of Czech exiles in Geneva out of admiration for their cause, and is attracted to Sabina first because she as an exile represents the authenticity of a cause, but more so from the moment her gestures slice through the false rhetoric of the Czech exiles reifying their cause as noble. Later in the novel, he will take part in a demonstration staged on the border of Cambodia, manifesting a desire to force medical aid through the lines of Vietnamese. In the shifting topographies of geopolitical social struggle, Franz seeks a symbolic frontline presence; this desire is complexly linked to the staging of sexuality in both novel and film.

Like Tomas, Franz defines a ritual staging of his encounters with Sabina, constructed stipulations that allow him to meet Sabina only outside Geneva, as if to give the extra-marital affair its

own nomadic territory. Lightness of sexuality demands a stage set, a ritual, an unspoken contract; but a contract can not be entirely unspoken. It is somehow written, leaving traces that lead to a weight it can't escape.

Staging sex becomes linked through a chain of events to letters, fantasy wishes, and dreams in a manner very significant for my analysis. Teresa first learns of Tomas's affair with Sabina in a letter she finds in which Sabina speaks of the desire for precisely such staging. Sabina writes Tomas of a desire for voyeuristic witnesses to their intercourse in the following terms:

«I want to make love with you in my studio. It will be like a stage surrounded by people. The audience won't be allowed up close, but they won't be able to take their eyes off us...»

Of course, the readers and the audience of the film have been voyeurs to these stagings, and Tereza becomes one by dint of stealing a look at another's letter. The film elaborates this voyeurism self-consciously in its first depiction of a sexual encounter, that of Tomas and a nurse, viewed by fellow doctors and a patient through a door of milk glass; at the crucial moment in which the nurse offers Tomas a view of her breasts, she turns away from the secret hospital spectators, but the camera jumps 180 degrees across the glass to see what the diegetic voyeurs can not. All sexual encounters between Sabina and Tomas are filmed as if stagings for an audience, and in the crosscutting of sequences, Tereza's request to witness these scenes is inserted immediately after we have just witnessed one of them.³ The film, in editing short fragmented scenes into a longer discursive development relating voyeurism, fantasy and oneiric reiteration, parallels the way the novel's short chapters and authorial voice build these elements into the characters' interrelationships.

Tereza's nightmares reveal her anxiety about Tomas's sexual stagings. In the novel her dreams first transform the day's residue material of Sabina's platform stage letter into the following dream scenario: Tomas, Tereza and Sabina «had been in a big room together. There was a bed in the middle of the room. It was like a platform in the theater. Tomas ordered her to stand in the corner while he made love to Sabina» (15-16). Later she repeatedly dreams of cats jumping on her face and digging her claws into her skin, and of a swimming pool where Tomas commands naked women to exercise and shoots any woman who does a bad knee bend (18). The sadism she assigns Tomas in her dreams escalates, as she dreams that he joins a militia leading her up Petrin Hill to assassinate her (146-151). Finally she dreams of being buried and speaking to Tomas when he visits her grave, telling him she has «holes for eyes» and of her «sleepless» months (even as a corpse) between their visits (227-228). Her dream life thus turns her anxiety over her incomplete possession of Tomas into a desire to witness Tomas with others, then blurs him into the anxiety evoked by figures of military repression, subsuming those of World War II and predicting the Russian tanks. Through Tereza's dreams, then, Kundera forms a condensation that links the lightness of a free-floating sexuality with stagings of pornographic performance, the politics of the display of power over others, and with fears of a spectral existence of suffering beyond death. He self-consciously gives us elements of a dream interpretation in the case of the cat-claw dream, when like a psychoanalyst he tell us interpretation is obvious once one knows the slang word for woman in Czech means cat. In other instances, though the dream interpretation resonates in the

³ The voyeurism here and in all the sexual scenes may be critiqued in terms of feminist theory as a late inscription of the privileged male gaze, just as Tomas could be seen as embodying a phallic male prerogative; reflexivity could be evoked to justify such inscriptions. These arguments have their validity, and have been answered by some who see the scenes in which Tereza and Sabina photograph each other as a reversal and appropriation of this gaze (Green, 1993). If I do not take these issues up here per se, it is because they have been discussed elsewhere convincingly, and I wish instead to focus on how staging and framing operate, and how the provocation Tomas poses as male is differentially answered by the female respondents, Sabina and Tereza.

weave of his writing, as an earlier description of Tomas «pouncing on Tereza as if to save her from drowning» is the element she inverts into its opposite in the pool assassination dream. Such writing through dreams reveals the psychoanalytic aspects of the novel's structure: images assigned Tereza's unconscious work similarly to the motifs of the essayist passages in the author's voice, requesting a poetic assimilation of this material. Characters become points of departure and of entry into this arrangement.

The film selects two of the dreams, one, the platform bed witnessing dream which is told by Tereza in intimate conversation with Tomas, and the swimming pool dream that is truncated as an effectively-imaged daydream fantasy sequence while Tereza is swimming. The water surface sets up an alteration between actual scene and the substitution of the fantasy that condenses the strategy of this filmic adaptation, to work by alternating images, to stage, to fragment, to condense and to combine by alternation. Filmic writing as dream-like imaging interweaves stylistically within the ongoing filmic narration, supplementing the actual dream imagery presented.

Tanks alone are not all that bury under their weight the lightness Tomas and Sabina each seek in Prague preceding 1968, though in the film, the entry of the tanks has the surrealistic weight of the nightmare sequences. The film's powerful Prague invasion sequences use rear projection process shots to put Tomas and Sabina into the historical confrontations, carefully editing historical documentary footage and fictional restaging, a process doubled by the way in which Tereza's photographs capture stills of the action; while a realist reading of these sequences works to construct fictional identifications, the spectator only has to think a moment about the impossibilities of this representation of fictional presence on a historical scene to realize that what is at stake here is a self-conscious presentation of staging. Knowing also that none of this film could be shot in Prague makes us aware of the special effect cinematography throughout, binding our fictional protagonists to a cityscape only through image processing. Fictional characters take a historical stage.⁴ In both works the tanks' massive intrusion does perform the demonstrative act of crushing, embodying what is an ongoing process, a crushing that occurs both before and after, in the personal and political realms respectively.

Many have seen Tomas's romantic involvement with Tereza as his break with lightness, but let's remember that the new weight in his life is coupled and amplified by his speaking out, his writing of the letter to the editor. Tomas and Tereza most defy lightness through political engagement, hers the aiming of her camera at the invading tanks, his, a letter.

Let us pause here to remark on Lacan's emphasis on hearing language in psychoanalysis in terms of the Letter, a postulate that sets up a play between the formative letter of typography, the letter's status as allegorical emblem of the signifier (the semiotic term for any unit potentially bearing meaning), the letter as missive and, through the phrase, «à la lettre», a French pun on the relations between literal and figurative meanings. Much theoretical debate critiques aspects of this analysis, some hinging on the meaning of a phrase, introduced by Lacan at the conclusion of his essay on Edgar Allen Poe's «The Purloined Letter», «a letter always arrives at its destination». We might say Poe's antequely sealed letter explodes in contemporary theory into a questioning of the parameters of language and desire.

So when Tomas cites Oedipus in his letter it is to suggest that Czech Communist leaders had lost their sense of responsibility; that when confronted with crimes that occurred during their rule, they plead ignorance instead of, like Oedipus, acknowledging their part in abominable acts. Figurative blindness meets with the justice of an intentional deprivation of literal sight, in Sophocles' poetic justice. Tomas crafts a metaphor that borrows on this metaphor, placing in the hands of both sons and fathers (for Oedipus is both) the responsibility of knowing what consequences their acts

⁴ When the film was shown in Moscow under the auspices of a series, «Sex in the American Cinema» in 1989 the Russian audience cheered the Czechs fighting the Russian tanks, and gave the film ovations.

might have. The novel has a subplot that takes up the personal Oedipal element in the Freudian sense of this letter. Tomas's estranged son from his first, short marriage seeks his father's acknowledgment, but to no avail. Even so, as the son turns toward dissident activities, the story of the letter becomes the element supporting a fantasy that transforms the absent father into a hero. To the son's disappointment, when they finally meet, Tomas virtually denies the significance of the letter that has cost him his career. Reconciliation of father with son comes only towards the very end when both have retired to the countryside. One destination of the letter then is from father to son, making it an Oedipal letter in a double sense.

As the film eliminates the son almost entirely, this double significance of the letter is no longer as apparent, though the film does include the son's own letter, the one he sends Sabina in the U.S. telling her of Tomas and Tereza's death. This third of the novel's letters completes the relay begun by the other two, and is the only instance in which the film partakes of the temporal inversion and reiteration of events that the novel uses repeatedly as a gesture away from suspense and melodrama towards the signification and structure of events, another post-structuralist thematic. I want to suggest that the film is designed to be viewed in the shadow of the novel. Funaara's is writing not obliterated by the images, but possible to hold in mind while watching. The film traces its scenes as narrative fragments accented by the musical excerpts from Janacek. Touches of incidental surrealism such as the chess game at swimming pool's edge evoke Czech new wave films of the sixties, indicating not only the role Jan Nemec⁵ as advisor, but constitute a filmic gesture towards characteristics of Kundera's writing. Similarly Kundera's discursis on Kitsch finds its insertion in the intercutting of the band in square at clinic. Fragments of Janacek's music inserted as musical questions and punctuations beneath equally fragmented scenes recall the posing of questions in Beethoven's last quartet that Kundera cites as a motif in the novel.

Most significant is the work on double exposure within a work of art that in the novel occurs as Tereza's commentary on her paintings; in the film these paintings represented by the French artist are doubled by fragmented mirror sculptures of the self and again by Tereza's photographs that are themselves doubled by the comparison to works of Man Ray and cinematic framings within the film itself. Throughout this essay I have attempted to highlight a process of delineation within the abstract and a parallel work on doubling in the film and novel – a process of abstraction and double exposure. The «aggression of love» (Kundera's phrase) itself becomes desirable, for a time replacing the earlier withdrawal characterized by the phrase which describes the protagonist, «he just didn't want anybody making him fight for his son in the name of paternal sentiments». Yet such moves occur as fragments, as repetitions, and as somewhat governed by change. It is in this process that Kundera inscribes elements that suggest the theory of desire. Positing the force of the sexual within desire, the writing does this to move beyond unidirectional assumptions, to explore the intergenerational and multiple aspects of desire, that set the stage for the political context of desire.

Returning then to the pivotal letter, it may be seen as the emblem of linked desires to speak, to write, to criticize, to be able to listen, to be heard. These desires circulate beyond the circuit of sexual desire with which the narrative opens, forcing a change in the protagonist's pursuit only of

⁵ Jan Nemec directed *Diamonds of the Night* (1964), *Report on the Party and its Guests* (1966), banned for its attack on Stalinism at the time and only briefly released and sent as the Czech entry to Cannes in 1968 as result of the Prague Spring, and *Martyrs of Love* (1967), formally innovative and political contestatory films. At the time of the Prague Spring, Jan Nemec said, «I have been possessed by such a feelings of joy and liberation – maybe madness – nothing holds me any more» (Mottl 46). He was working on a documentary about Prague when the Russians invaded, which became *Oratorio for Prague* (1968), smuggled out and screened in Western Europe. He emigrated to France in 1974 and made *Czech Connection: Reflections on my Own Death* (1975). He moved to California in 1977. He not only was a consultant on *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, but is cast in the film as well.

encounters he can limit and revealing how the context that surrounds us refracts our desires, multiplying, transforming and realigning them. This is the psychoanalytic hearing I propose for *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*.

REFERENCES

- Borch-Jacobsen, M. (1991). *Lacan: The absolute master*. Trans. Douglas Brick. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Derrida, J. (1987). *The Post Card: From Socrates to Freud and beyond*. Trans. Alan Bass. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Derrida, J. (1988). The Purveyor of Truth. Trans. Alan Bass. In John P. Muller, & William J. Richardson (Eds.), *The purloined Poe: Lacan, Derrida, and psychoanalytic reading*. Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins.
- Freud, S. (1953). Interpretation of Dreams. In *The Standard Edition of the Working of Sigmund Freud*, Vol. 4 and 5. London: Hogarth Press.
- Freud, S. (1958). The most prevalent form of degradation of erotic life (1912). In *On Creativity and the Unconscious* (pp. 173-186). New York: Harper and Row.
- Green, J. M. (1993). Subject, object, camera: Photographing women in *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*. In *Transgressions of Reading* (pp. 101-115). Duke: Duke University Press.
- Jaanus, M. (1996). The Démontage of the Drive. In Bruce Fink, Richard Feldstein, & Mairie Jaanus (Eds.), *Reading Seminar XI: Lacan's Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Jaanus, M. (1996). Kundera And Lacan Drive Desire And Oneiric Narration. In Willy Apollon, & Richard Feldstein (Eds.), *Lacan, politics, aesthetics* (pp. 199-236). Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Johnson, B. (1988). The frame of reference: Poe, Lacan, Derrida. In John P. Muller, & William J. Richardson (Eds.), *The purloined Poe: Lacan, Derrida, and psychoanalytic reading*. Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins.
- Kundera, M. (1984). *The unbearable lightness of being*. Trans. Michael Henry Heim. New York: Harper and Row.
- Kundera, M. (1986). *The art of the novel*. New York: Grove Press.
- Lacan, J. (1973). *Le Séminaire, Livre XI: Les Quatre concepts fondamentaux de la psychanalyse*. Paris: Editions du Seuil. Trans as Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis, Alan Sheridan, New York: Norton, 1977.
- Lacan, J. (1986). *Le Séminaire, Livre VII: L'éthique de la psychanalyse*. Paris: Seuil.
- Lacan, J. (1988). Seminar on 'The Purloined Letter'. Trans. Jeffery Mehlman. In John P. Muller, & William J. Richardson (Eds.), *The purloined Poe: Lacan, Derrida, and psychoanalytic reading* (pp. 28-54). Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins.
- Lacan, J. (1991). *Le Séminaire, Livre VIII: Le Transfert*. Paris: Seuil.
- Lacan, J. (1992). *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan Book VII The Ethics of Psychoanalysis 1959-60*. New York: W. W. Norton.
- Lyotard, J.-F. (1993). *Libidinal economy*. Trans. Ian Hamilton Grant. Bloomington, Indiana: University of Indiana Press.
- Mottl, T. (1990). Interview with Jan Nemec. In *The banned and the beautiful: A survey of Czech filmmaking, 1963-1990*. New York: The Public Theatre.
- Pontalis, J.-B., & Laplanche, J. (1973). *The language of psychoanalysis*. Trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith. New York: W. W. Norton.
- Sophocles (1994). *The Theban Plays*. Trans. David Grene. New York: AA Knopf.
- Torok, M., & Abraham, N. (1994). *The shell and the kernel*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Zizek, S. (1991). *For they know not what they do: Enjoyment as a political factor*. London: Verso.

The Kreutzer Sonata: A Kleinian approach to Tolstoy's hatred of sex

DANIEL RANCOUR-LAFERRIERE (*)

Let me begin by saying a few words of thanks to our sponsor here in Saint Petersburg, the East European Institute of Psychoanalysis. In particular I wish to thank Dr. Mikhail Reshetnikov, director of the Institute, for hosting the 15th International Conference on Literature and Psychology. I also wish to mention the late Sergei Matveevich Cherkassov, who did so much to foster the resurrection of psychoanalysis here in Saint Petersburg with his lectures and with his energetic organizational work. It was Sergei Matveevich who gave your Institute its culturological orientation, and who championed the idea of psychoanalysis as an interdisciplinary enterprise.

I turn now to the topic of our conference which, as the program indicates, is «literature and psychology». What an interesting and problematical conjunction! The potential modes of intersection between these two broad fields seem endless. A literary work may be subjected to psychological study, on the one hand, but psychology may be the object of literary depiction on the other, as when Nabokov made his famous cracks about «the Viennese medicine man» in *Lolita*, or Zoshchenko depicted Pavlovian and Freudian theories in *Pered voskhodom solntsa (Before Sunrise)*. And then the two categories of psychology and literature are themselves diverse. According to the Holland guide,¹ for example, psychology would have to include such diverse areas as traditional psychoanalysis, psychosocial theory, object-relations theory, identity theory, third force psychology, «French Freud», narcissism theory or self-psychology, feminist psychoanalysis, and cognitive psychology – to which I would like to add the recently burgeoning field of evolutionary psychology. As for literature, I can't even begin to capture its breadth and diversity. Shakespeare is literature, Dostoevsky is literature – but apparently just about anything else too is literature as long as it can be construed as *text* or *representation*. In any case, I see from our conference program that literature now includes folklore, drama, film, painting, philosophy, psychoanalytic practice, and various «miscellaneous» topics.

(*) University of California, Davis, Department of Russian, 616 Sproul Hall, Davis, California 95616-8606, USA.

¹ Holland 1990. Works by Tolstoy will be cited from the so-called Jubilee Edition (Tolstoy 1928-64), with volume number preceding page number (e.g., 58: 12).

So, the category of «literature and psychology» is unwieldy at best, and perhaps meaningless at worst. But not to worry. Categorization is not our main concern. Creative thinking about specific, focused topics is what we will be doing at this conference. Besides, if we are lucky, we may even be able to draw some general, categorizing conclusions at the end.

My own research of late – which I would like to share with you – concerns the great Russian writer Lev Nikolaevich Tolstoy. Oddly enough, there has been little psychoanalytic research on Tolstoy, by comparison to Dostoevsky. When one thinks of psychoanalysis and Russian literature, one is more likely to think of Dostoevsky than Tolstoy, even though the two are generally regarded as equals in literary stature. Dostoevsky seems to have been more «psychoanalyzable» than Tolstoy. Perhaps this has something to do with what Valerii Leibin terms *ruskost' Freida* («the Russianess of Freud»), since Dostoevsky is the more «Russian» of the two writers.² In any case there is Freud's famous 1928 piece on «Dostoevsky and Parricide», as well as a host of psychoanalytic studies on Dostoevsky by Mark Kanzer, Elizabeth Dalton, Richard Rosenthal, and many others. Against this we have the precious few psychoanalytic studies of Tolstoy, beginning with the work of Russian analyst Nikolai Osipov in the 1920s, and resuming with the more recent Kohutian studies by Arnold Rothstein and by myself.³

One of the most interesting things about Tolstoy, and something that other Russian writers like Dostoevsky, Chekhov, Pasternak, and Solzhenitsyn do not share - is intense hostility to sex. In the year 1888 Lev Tolstoy decided that human sexual intercourse should no longer exist. Tolstoy was, as he later admitted, «horrificed» by this conclusion. Yet for the rest of his life he honestly believed that total sexual abstinence was best. Frequenter of brothels in his youth, father of thirteen children by his wife, and at least two children by peasant women before he was married,⁴ Tolstoy now had the arrogance to suggest that it would be a good idea if people stopped having children. This «tireless fucker», as he referred to his younger self in conversation with Maksim Gorky,⁵ was repudiating an essential part of himself, and of humanity generally.

How can such a repudiation be explained? It was not merely a literary fact - although it was first revealed to the world in a literary work, titled *The Kreutzer Sonata* (1889). It was not a religious belief either, although Tolstoy did marshal quotations from the bible to support his thesis. Tolstoy's repudiation of sex was, rather, a fact of his particular *biography*, a strikingly *personal* declaration reflecting the state of his psyche at the time he made it.

Tolstoy's rejection of sex was a personal matter, and personal matters are an appropriate subject for psychoanalytic study. In this case, moreover, the personal concern arose within a specific time frame, and was developed in a particular literary work of moderate length. It thus constitutes a well-defined and feasible topic for psychoanalytic study.

Of course everything about Tolstoy is psychoanalytically interesting. Someone, someday, ought to write a psychobiography of Tolstoy.⁶ That someone is not me, however. A true psychobiography of Tolstoy would be a lifetime project (like Leon Edel on Henry James), and I have neither the lifetime nor the desire to produce a full psychobiography of Tolstoy. Even an ordinary scholarly biography of Tolstoy, lacking the depth a psychobiography is supposed to

² Leibin 1994.

³ For a bibliography of psychoanalytic studies of Russian literature, see: Rancour-Laferriere 1989, 18-37. See also: Rancour-Laferriere 1993; 1998.

⁴ One illegitimate child was Tolstoy's son Andrei's stableman, Timofei Ermilovich Bazykin (57:218; S. M. Tolstoi, 1994, 182). The child's mother was Aksin'ia Aleksandrovna Bazykina, wife of a peasant in one of Tolstoy's villages (Gusev, 1957, 301-2, 363; Ivanova, 1971, 46-53). Another (somewhat less solidly documented) illegitimate child was named Maria (Matrena), daughter of another local peasant woman named Mariia Kraineva (Murygin, 1995).

⁵ Gor'kii, 1949-55, vol. 14, 262. The obscenity is deleted in Gorky's text, but the context ('using a salty peasant word') makes it clear that the word is ebyr' (thanks to Yuri Druzhnikov for assistance here).

⁶ Rancour-Laferriere, 1993, viii.

achieve, seems impossibly huge. One thinks of Nikolai Nikolaevich Gusev who, by the time of his death at the age of eighty-six, had reached the year 1885 in his monumental four-volume work *Lev Nikolaevich Tolstoi. Materials for a Biography* (Moscow, 1954-1970). If Tolstoy was too big for Gusev, then who will ever truly encompass him?

Tolstoy's (still incomplete) works come to an impressive total of ninety-one volumes. Everything contained in these volumes (minus the commentary and the index volume) is a part of Tolstoy's biography. The real, live Lev Nikolaevich wrote what is printed there. For example, every single messy page of every single draft of *The Kreutzer Sonata* has to be a part of Tolstoy's biography, for Tolstoy went to the trouble of writing each page within the bounds of his real lifetime, not within some postmodern, intertextual pseudo-time concocted by late twentieth-century academics. It may be possible to read, appreciate, and even psychoanalyze Tolstoy's literary works without knowing much about Tolstoy «the man», and here Tolstoy does live beyond the bounds of his literal lifetime. But it is impossible to study the live Tolstoy without an intimate knowledge of the works he produced while he was in the business of living. This is as true of the great novels *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina* as of the autobiographical *Confession*. *Works are always part of a writer's biography, even if the biography does not always take part in the works.*

Let's begin by considering some straightforward evidence of misogyny in Tolstoy's life. Often, and in a variety of contexts, Tolstoy expressed hostility toward women. In all-male company he was inclined to refer to women with obscene terms.⁷ Mere mention of «the woman question» would invariably make him angry. At a gathering of Petersburg literati in 1856 the young Tolstoy expressed his hatred for Georges Sand, declaring that the heroines of her novels ought to be tied to a wagon and paraded in disgrace about the streets of Petersburg.⁸ On numerous occasions and at various periods in his life, from adolescence to old age, Tolstoy would vent his animosity toward women in a direct manner. Here I offer a selection of quotations:

To marry a young lady means dumping on yourself the whole poison of civilization [ves' iad tsivilizatsii].⁹

... women are generally so bad that the difference between a good and a bad woman scarcely exists.¹⁰

Regard the society of women as an inevitable nuisance of social life, and avoid them as much as possible. Because from whom do we actually learn voluptuousness, effeminacy, frivolity in everything and a multitude of other vices, if not from women? Who is responsible for the fact that we lose such feelings inherent in us as courage, firmness, prudence, fairness, and so on, if not women? Women are more receptive than men, and during the age of virtue were better than we were; but now in this age of corruption and vice they are worse than we are.¹¹

Everything would be fine if only they (women) would be in their place, i.e., submissive [smirennny].¹²

For seventy years my opinion about women has fallen lower and lower, and it's still falling even lower. The woman question! How can there *not* be a woman question? But it

⁷ For example: Gor'kii, 1949-55, vol. 14, 261-2, 291-2; Boborykin, 1978 (1909), vol. I, 272.

⁸ Grigorovich, 1978, 77. Cf. p. 525 of the same volume for corroboration of this incident by both Nekrasov and Turgenev.

⁹ Peterson, 1978 (1909), 122.

¹⁰ As translated from the memoir of Aleksandr Gol'denveizer (1959, 51) by Ruth Crego Benson (1973, 4).

¹¹ I have slightly modified Ruth Crego Benson's translation (1973, 9) of an 1847 diary entry (46:32-3).

¹² 50:42.

should have nothing to do with how women should begin to direct life, but how they should stop *ruining* it.¹³

When I read a letter and see a woman's signature on it, it no longer interests me.¹⁴

... if men knew all women the way a husband knows his *wife*, then they would never enter into serious conversation with them about anything.¹⁵

I will hunt for a friend among men. For me no woman can substitute for a friend. Why do we lie to our wives, saying that we consider them our true friends?¹⁶

One cannot expect a woman to evaluate her feeling of exclusive love on the basis of moral feeling. She cannot do this because she has no true moral feeling, that is, feeling which stands above everything.¹⁷

Yes, give a woman only a beautiful exterior, and she will be happy....¹⁸

For a woman it is very important whether there is more or less sugar, or more or less money, but she is sincerely convinced that it makes no difference whether there is more or less truth.¹⁹

Several of these statements occur in a context where Tolstoy is thinking about his wife Sonia. Marriage, it seems, intensifies the hatred of women. *The Kreutzer Sonata* is about a marriage. The husband in this work so hates his wife that he kills her. All his adult life Tolstoy felt a hatred for woman in her bodily, sexual aspect, but because this *particular* masterpiece goes to such extremes, the deep psychological structure of the hatred becomes visible.

The object of Tolstoy's hatred, as it turns out, is as much himself as it is woman. There is masochistic aggression directed at the self as well as sadistic impulses toward women. Not only women, but men such as Tolstoy himself should remain virgin. Not only women, but men too should be punished for their sexuality. I believe that Tolstoy's misogyny cannot be understood without reference to his moral masochism. Anna Karenina's suicide, for example, is as much a representation of Tolstoy's own wish to punish or kill himself for his sexuality as it is a representation of his hostility toward sexually unfaithful women.²⁰ Part of this necessary linkage stems from the ontogenetically archaic confusion between mother and child typically experienced in early development, and exacerbated in Tolstoy's particular case by early maternal loss. Punishment of the other and punishment of the self are easily confused when self is confused with (m)other.

We arrive, then, at what I believe is the source of the problem. Lev Tolstoy was separated from his mother for the last time on the day she died, 4 August 1830.²¹ Mariia Nikolaevna née Volkonskaia was thirty years old, her son was just a few weeks shy of two years old. In his unfinished *Reminiscences* of 1903-1906, Tolstoy says he cannot remember his mother, yet he retains a vivid spiritual image of her.

¹³ As translated from a diary entry of 1899 (53:231) by Ruth Crego Benson (1973, 13).

¹⁴ Gusev, 1973 (1911), 90; cf. Gol'denveizer, 1959, 78.

¹⁵ Gusev, 1973, 141.

¹⁶ As quoted from P. A. Sergeenko by Dmitrii Mezezhkovskii, 1955 (1900), 27.

¹⁷ Diary entry for 24 Aug. 1898 (53:209).

¹⁸ As quoted by Andrei Gavriilovich Rusanov in Rusanov and Rusanov, 1972, 186.

¹⁹ Diary entry for 4 July 1890 (51:58).

²⁰ Cf. Benson, 1973, 107; Sémon, 1974, 470ff.; Armstrong, 1988, 136; Mandelker, 1993, 40.

²¹ Gusev, 1954, 57, 59. The funeral took place on 7 August.

I was born and spent my early childhood in the village of Yasnaya Polyana. I do not remember my mother at all. I was 1 1/2 years old when she passed away. By odd coincidence not a single portrait of her remains, thus I am unable to picture her as a real, physical being. I am partly glad of this because in my imagination of her there is only her spiritual aspect [dukhovnyi oblik], and everything that I know about her, everything is wonderful, and I think [this is] not only because everybody who has spoken to me about my mother has tried to say only the good about her, but because there really was much of this good in her.²²

Tolstoy's need to idealize his mother is fairly obvious and understandable here. Psychoanalysts find that idealization or glorification of a lost parent can persist into adulthood.²³ Tolstoy does have something objective to go on, for his mother was indeed highly educated and cultured for her time: besides Russian she knew French, German, English and Italian, she played the piano, she was a marvelous storyteller, and so on. But Tolstoy's mother was more than merely accomplished. For him she was a lofty ideal who in his mind still really existed, so lofty and so real that later in life he would even pray to her:

She seemed to me to be such a lofty, pure, spiritual being that often, in the middle period of my life, when struggling with temptations which were overwhelming me, I prayed to her soul, asking her to help me, and this prayer always helped me.²⁴

In old age Tolstoy confessed that he *still* practically worshipped his mother. To his children he conveyed a sense that her memory was sacred.²⁵ In the summer of 1908 he said to the biographer N. G. Molostvov, holding back tears, «I only know that I have a *culte* toward her».²⁶ In a diary entry of 13 June of that year he declares that «I cannot talk about my mother without tears».²⁷

The sentimentality seems excessive here.²⁸ With good reason psychoanalyst Nikolai Osipov speaks of «Tolstois Fixierung an die Mutter-Imago und seine Sehnsucht nach ihr».²⁹ At some level Tolstoy does not quite *accept* the fact that his mother has died. Otherwise it would be difficult to explain the tears (approximately seventy-eight years after her death). Also he would not pray to her if he did not feel that she still existed in some sense. It does not matter that he follows religious convention, speaking of her «soul». The important thing is that she is still somehow with him, still very real for him.

Nowhere does Tolstoy express feelings of this intensity for *other* deceased family members, such as his father or his beloved elder brother Nikolai. The image of the allegedly unremembered mother is special, she is practically a saint for Tolstoy. But, as I hope to show, this is only a small

²² 34:349. Large chunks of the *Reminiscences* appeared in various places at various times, including Pavel Biriukov's biography of Tolstoy (e.g., the edition Biriukov, 1921, vol. I). Here I use the version which appears in the Jubilee Edition of Tolstoy's works.

²³ For example, Lewin, 1937, 871; Jacobson, 1965, 200. Tolstoy's idealization of his mother (especially in the early novella *Childhood*) initiated what Andrew Wachtel terms 'the myth of the perfect mother' in Russian gentry autobiography (see Wachtel, 1990, 96-9).

²⁴ 34:354.

²⁵ For example, Il'ia Lvovich Tolstoi (1914, 26).

²⁶ See: Molostvov and Sergeenko, 1909, 64; Gusev, 1954, 60.

²⁷ 56:134; cf. Gusev, 1954, 60.

²⁸ Tolstoy's sentimental *culte* of his mother is reminiscent of his depiction of Napoleon's sentimental reflections on 'ma chère, ma tendre, ma pauvre mère' in *War and Peace*. These come in a passage where, as Aleksandr Zholkovskii has shown (1955, 95-6). Tolstoy represents the city of Moscow as a maternal body which Napoleon wishes to violate. There is also a certain similarity between Napoleon's feelings for an imagined 'Maison de ma Mère' in Moscow and Tolstoy's emotional attachment to the maternal house in which he was born, and which was later moved to the village of Dolgoye.

²⁹ Ossipow, 1923, 97.

part of the story. For example, Tolstoy incorrectly states his age at the time of his mother's death: he was actually close to two years old, not one and a half.³⁰ Many Tolstoy scholars (whose names I will not mention here) have repeated this error. The mother's death actually occurred in the same month as Tolstoy's birth, i.e., August. It seems odd that the narcissistic Tolstoy would be ignorant of such an important fact. Certainly he visited his mother's grave in the family chapel-crypt in Kochaki, where his father and his brother Dmitrii were buried as well.³¹

Another curious error seems to desexualize the mother. According to Tolstoy, his mother was originally betrothed to one of the sons of a Moscow prince.

This union was not fated to take place, however. My mother's fiancé, Lev Golitsyn – whose name was given to me, the fourth son, in memory of this Lev – died of fever before the wedding. They used to say to me that Mama loved me very much and called me «mon petit Benjamin».

I think that her love for her deceased fiancé, precisely because it ended in death, was that poetic love which girls experience only once. Her marriage to my father was arranged by her relatives and my father's. She was rich, no longer young, an orphan; my father was a merry, brilliant young man with a name and connections, but ruined financially because of my grandfather Tolstoy (he even was obliged to refuse his inheritance). I think that my mother loved my father, but more as a husband, and primarily as the father of her children, for she was not in love with him.³²

So, the mother *might* have enjoyed sex with Lev Golitsyn, but then he died, leaving only Tolstoy's father, with whom sexual intercourse was apparently more a duty than a pleasure.

Most interesting is Tolstoy's statement that he was named after the man his mother *really* loved. Here Tolstoy seems retrospectively to win an Oedipal battle with his father, who was not his mother's first choice after all, and who was morally weak, the male equivalent of a gold digger. As the all-knowing N. N. Gusev points out, however, there was no such person as Lev Golitsyn in the love life of Tolstoy's mother. Instead, the fiancé, was most probably *Nikolai* Golitsyn,³³ that is, a man who bore precisely the name of both Tolstoy's father and elder brother.

The elder brother Nikolai was important for Tolstoy. He, unlike little Lev, received an enormous amount of attention from the mother. But the attention was exclusive: «It was imperative for her not to love herself, and one love was succeeded by another.»³⁴ Thus, at the same time that Tolstoy is praising his mother for her selflessness, he seems to be covertly rebuking her for not spreading the love around more. She could love in series, as it were, but not in parallel.

This rebuke could be understood as a disguised expression of ordinary sibling rivalry, for mothers are normally quite capable of loving more than one child at a time. On the other hand, Tolstoy's mother may in fact have been incapable of more than one serious love at a time (in her letters she talks much more about her eldest, Koko, than about the other children³⁵). In either case Tolstoy is covertly expressing a very important subjective feeling: he did not get enough love from his mother.

³⁰ More than twenty years earlier Tolstoy was making the same error in a draft of *Confession* (23:488; cf. 23:508). Curiously, Tolstoy's mother herself lost *her* mother at the age of two years (S. L. Tolstoi, 1928a, 41).

³¹ Puzin 1988, 11-12.

³² 34:352. '*Mon petit Benjamin*' might be translated as 'my pet' - after Benjamin, the youngest and most beloved son of Jacob (*Genesis* 43, 26-34).

³³ S. L. Tolstoi, 1928a, 44; Gusev, 1954, 46-7.

³⁴ 34:353.

³⁵ See: S. L. Tolstoi, 1928a, 123-52.

This and other equivocations about whether Tolstoy's mother loved him, ultimately result from a simple fact: she died on him. *Could* she ever have loved him enough, given that she died so early in his life? *Could* her death have been experienced by Tolstoy the toddler as anything other than abandonment, proving to him that he was unlovable and inferior?³⁶

For an eighty-year-old man to cry at the very thought of his mother is unusual. She is still *hurting* Tolstoy by what she did, as if he were still the easily hurt «crybaby» child his siblings said he was.³⁷ The narcissistic injury is still there, unhealed.

On 10 March 1906 the aging Tolstoy wrote the following note to himself on a stray piece of paper:

A dull melancholy state [tosklivoe sostoianie] all day. Toward evening this state changed into a tender feeling, a desire for affection, for love. As in childhood I longed to cling to a being who loved me, who took pity on me, and to weep tenderly and be consoled. But who is that being to whom I would cling so? I go over all the people whom I love, and none will do. To whom can I cling? I'd like to make myself small and cling to mother as I imagine her to myself.

Yes, yes, mommy [mamen'ka], whom I had not even yet called by that name since I couldn't speak. Yes, she, my most exalted concept of pure love, not that cold, divine type, but a warm, earthy, motherly love. That's what my better but tired soul yearns for. Yes, mommy, come cuddle me [Ty, mamen'ka, ty prilaskai menia].

All this is insane [bezumno], but it is all true.³⁸

Insane indeed. Tolstoy recognizes his psychopathology here, specifying it as his usual depressive *toska* («tosklivoe sostoianie», or outright «toska» in the next day's retrospective diary entry³⁹). But what is unusual about this particular episode is the direct reference to the mother – «Mamen'ka», the real, biological mother, not the lofty ideal he prayed to in his youth. He calls her by the name he must have used with her, despite his claim to the contrary, for it is highly unlikely that a twenty-three month-old Tolstoy did not have rudimentary language skills.⁴⁰ Only she, the warm cuddly «Mamen'ka», can soothe his psychological pain. Many decades have passed, yet he longs for her still.

The fact that Tolstoy longs for his mother in old age indicates that he has never truly mourned her passing, that he had not really reconciled himself with his early loss and still feels a need for the lost object. Here it should be observed that the child Tolstoy was cared for by other women in addition to his mother. Even before his mother died other women were involved in his care, most notably his peasant wet nurse, Avdot'ia Ziabreva. Tolstoy's wealthy gentry family was in a position to bring in all sorts of hired child care assistants, as well as other servant help. In old age Tolstoy once remarked on how *unnatural* this was, comparing his mother to those aimless young people who study law out of nothing better to do: «In thirty years people will be just as surprised at the fact that young men go to law school as we today are surprised at the serfdom of my mother who was good, sensitive, deep, but who permitted herself to be waited upon by many servants, as was the custom then.»⁴¹ Tolstoy's obligatory reference to his mother's goodness cannot hide the hint of his disapproval of her in this particular case. Very likely he had read the one of his mother's letters in which she expresses concern about the temporary illness of the wet nurse she had employed for her eldest son Nikolai, and hopes her doctor will soon permit the wet nurse to breast-feed little Koko again: «I want this very badly because she has become so attached to the child, and is so well-behaved that I would be sorry to be separated from her.»⁴² Tolstoy's mother then goes on to

³⁶ On persisting low self-esteem after loss of a parent in childhood, see: Tyson, 1983.

³⁷ «Leva-reva» was the nickname Tolstoy earned from his brothers. See: Gusev 1954, 88-9.

³⁸ 55:374, as translated by Gustafson, 1986, 14-15; cf. Gusev, 1954, 60-61.

³⁹ 55:207.

⁴⁰ Pigott, 1992, 57.

⁴¹ Quoted by Makovitskii, 1979-81, vol. II, 484.

⁴² S. L. Tolstoi, 1928a, 126.

talk about the weather, about her lovely English garden, Italian lessons, etc. Not a word about poor Koko, the one who is actually deprived.

As an adult Tolstoy disapproved of substitute mothering, especially in the early stages of a child's life. For example, in a letter of 23 June 1889 to one of his followers – and while he was in the throes of rewriting *The Kreutzer Sonata* – he states that «collective upbringing of children» on communes is «bad», and that one should not tolerate a situation where «there is not upbringing of children by their own mother».⁴³ Tolstoy repeatedly expressed outright hostility toward women, including his wife, when they did not breast-feed their own children. His attitude on this score was identical to Pozdnyshev's attitude in *The Kreutzer Sonata*. This attitude could not but reflect his underlying attitude toward his mother who did not breast-feed him.

I would like to suggest that Tolstoy did indeed feel a great rage toward the mother who did not breast-feed him and who died on him. But he expressed this rage indirectly, displaced it onto other persons who in his unconscious mind bore some resemblance to his mother. Already in childhood, in fact, he was encouraged by the very multiple mothering he received to *displace* his feelings from one object to another. The objects of his displaced rage included his downtrodden wife and mother of his own children, some of his fictional mothers (e.g., the unfortunate Anna Karenina), and even women as a class. Maksim Gorky came closer to the truth than he perhaps realized when he characterized Tolstoy's misogyny as follows: «It is as if, once upon a time, he had been insulted, and he could neither forgive nor forget.»⁴⁴

As we have seen, Tolstoy plays down his mother's sexuality. The fact that she is dead early on in his life makes her particularly pure. She is on a higher pedestal than even most Russian men place their mothers. At the same time, however, there is evidence that Tolstoy reproached her for her sexual behavior.

Tolstoy was under the false impression that his mother died as the result of complications from childbirth. When he comes to the name Mashenka while listing his siblings in the *Reminiscences*, he appends the clause «in consequence of whose birth my mother also died».⁴⁵ As Gusev demonstrates, this claim cannot be true. Masha was born on 2 March 1830, while the mother died on 4 August of that year. Five months separate the two events. The official church record indicates a «fever», but an eyewitness says the fever was of only a few days duration. Yet another eyewitness speaks of a head injury resulting from being pushed too high on a swing. Apparently, toward the end Tolstoy's mother had headaches and became easily confused, e.g., she would hold a book upside down when trying to read it. But whatever the precise medical cause of death, it is clear that Tolstoy was mistaken in believing that his mother died from complications of childbirth.⁴⁶

Why Tolstoy should make such a mistake is another question, one which a descriptive biographer such as Gusev wisely does not address. The question is most appropriate for psychoanalytic study, however.

We may recall that Tolstoy was also under the mistaken impression that his mother died when he was one and one-half years old. That, indeed, *would* have been his approximate age *if* his mother had died as a result of childbirth. Thus we now have *two* errors that jibe with one another rather well – but not with reality. The larger question becomes: what psychological purpose might have been served by this double lapse?

To phrase the question a bit more directly: why does Tolstoy need to blame the loss of his dear mother on the one time she gave birth after he was born?

This question, in turn, leads to the main theme of *The Kreutzer Sonata*, that is, to sexuality. In order for Tolstoy's mother to have given birth to Maria in August of 1830, she has to have had

⁴³ 64:277.

⁴⁴ Gor'kii, 1949-55, vol. 14, 291.

⁴⁵ 34:354. The error also occurs many years earlier, in a draft of *Confession* (23:508).

⁴⁶ See: Gusev, 1954, 57-8; Ogareva, 1914, 113; S. L. Tolstoi, 1928, 63-4.

sexual intercourse with Tolstoy's father nine months earlier, late in 1829 (I think no one would suggest that she had sex with anyone else). At that time, however, the infant Tolstoy was probably still nursing at the breast of his wet nurse, rather than at his mother's breast. Or, if Tolstoy's false assertion that his mother died from birth complications when he was one and one-half years old were true, then nine months before *that* time he would definitely still have been at the breast.⁴⁷ The question now becomes: why, by his lapses, does Tolstoy need to blame the loss of his dear mother on the fact of her sexual interaction with her husband at a time when he, the infant Tolstoy, might have been nursing at her breast?

Tolstoy created several fictional characters who question the morality of sexual intercourse. Only Vasilii Pozdnyshev, however, elaborates on how utterly disgusted he feels about having sexual intercourse with his wife specifically during the nursing period. That is, only Pozdnyshev advocates a postpartum sex taboo. And only Pozdnyshev actually murders his own wife. Let us consider the manner in which Tolstoy represents this murder.

Much of the imagery immediately surrounding the murder has to do with mother-child relations. To get at his wife the jealous Pozdnyshev first tries to pass through the two *children's* rooms (he could have just gone through the drawing room and not risk disturbing the children).⁴⁸ He thinks: «Five children, and she's kissing a musician because he's got red lips! No, she isn't human, she's a bitch, a repulsive bitch! Right next door to a room full of children she's pretended to love all her life.»⁴⁹ A most unsatisfactory mother she is, especially to her son Vasya: «My Vasya! Now he was seeing a musician embracing his mother. What must be taking place in his poor soul? But what did she care?»⁵⁰ Here we should recall that Pozdnyshev's first name, too, is Vasya. His sympathetic identification with his son is assisted by the coincidence of names, and makes his wife all that much more a mother(-icon) to him.

On the other hand, it never once occurs to Pozdnyshev that, in killing his wife, he is depriving his five children of a mother. As Vladimir Golstein points out: «Pozdnyshev wants to destroy sex, but in fact he destroys the mother...»⁵¹ Any identification with the children is merely episodic and narcissistic. Even after the foul deed is done and the dying wife declares that she won't let Pozdnyshev have the children, he does not concern himself with how they feel.⁵² He is busy trying to comprehend the terrible thing he has done to her.

The murder itself is accomplished with premeditated precision. «I rushed at her, still keeping the dagger hidden in case he tried to stop me plunging it into her side, under the breast [v bok pod grud'iu]. That was the spot I'd chosen right from the outset.»⁵³ It is ironic that this area of the body was once attractive to Pozdnyshev, back when it was wrapped in a sexy jersey during the courtship.

For a moment Trukhachevsky, the third party, manages to block Pozdnyshev, but then he runs off in abject terror (never again to appear). This leaves Pozdnyshev free to hit his real target. He strikes his wife in the face with his elbow, then tries to strangle her, and finally he stabs her in the

⁴⁷ In the fragment 'My life' Tolstoy seems to suggest that he was weaned no earlier than one year old: 'I don't know, and I never will know whether they were swaddling me when I was still an infant at the breast and was trying to pull my arms out, or they were swaddling me when I was already more than a year old to prevent me from scratching sores...' (23:470).

⁴⁸ Cf. Golstein, 1996, 460, n. 1.

⁴⁹ 27:70; Tolstoy, 1983, 109.

⁵⁰ 27:67; Tolstoy, 1983, 104.

⁵¹ Golstein, 1996, 460.

⁵² Cf. Botkin, 1893, 14. In the first draft there is a three-year-old girl with Pozdnyshev on the train, and he is looking after her 'like a nurse or a mother' (27:353). The Pozdnyshev of the final version would be incapable of such child care.

⁵³ 27:72; Tolstoy, 1983, 111.

side with the dagger: «... I struck her with the dagger as hard as I could in her left side, beneath her ribs.»⁵⁴

Now Pozdnyshv's wife will die (unlike by the way Khadzhi Murat's mother, who survives a knife-wound in the same part of the body). Pozdnyshv has now committed the most heinous crime, he has perpetrated the most extreme act of violence imaginable. But this had to happen, after all. Sexuality *must* lead to violence by Pozdnyshv's theory, i.e., by Tolstoy's theory. From the very beginning of writing his novella Tolstoy had hoped to convey the idea that sexuality tended to result in «murder». In the first draft (the future) Pozdnyshv says – referring to himself still in the third person: «... He killed his wife because he loved her. And he could not not [sic] do this.»⁵⁵ In another variant Pozdnyshv says: «yes, sir, if men and women, husbands and wives were to love one another with just this animal love that they write about in novels, they would long since have all slaughtered [pererezali] one another....»⁵⁶

For the most part Tolstoy believes that *women*, not men, end up being «slaughtered» by love. In the fragment titled «The Wife Murderer», which clearly anticipates *The Kreutzer Sonata*, a (former) wife is disemboweled by her jealous husband: «They say he ripped out all her innards [Ves' potrokh vypustil, skazyvaiut].»⁵⁷ In the first draft of the novella itself a crossed-out passage reads: «with a knife, a dagger, he let out his wife's guts.»⁵⁸ In another crossed-out passage in the same draft Pozdnyshv decides to surprise his wife with her lover, gets a revolver, but changes his mind and takes down a dagger from the wall instead. He plans to hold the dagger with its curve turned upward «in order to rip open the belly from below, so the guts would come out».⁵⁹ Later in the same draft he actually does kill his wife in this fashion after seeing the artist enter her balcony window: «I ran up to her, struck the dagger in from below, and pulled it upward. She fell and grabbed me by the arm. I tore out the dagger with my hands. Blood spurted out. I became disgusted from her blood.»⁶⁰

The fury with which Pozdnyshv attacks his wife's body is reminiscent of the rage he must once have felt toward his mother. Melanie Klein depicts the fantasy life of the pre-Oedipal child as highly sadistic with respect to the mother's body: «... The subject's dominant aim is to possess himself of the contents of the mother's body and to destroy her by means of every weapon which sadism can command.»⁶¹ This sadism amounts to a death-wish against the mother:

When a baby feels frustrated at the breast, in his phantasies he attacks this breast; but if he is being gratified by the breast, he loves it and has phantasies of a pleasant kind in relation to it. In his aggressive phantasies he wishes to bite up and to tear up his mother and her breasts, and to destroy her also in other ways.

A most important feature of these destructive phantasies, which are tantamount to death-wishes, is that the baby feels that what he desires in his phantasies has really taken place; that is to say he feels that he *has really destroyed* the object of his destructive impulses, and is going on destroying it....⁶²

Tolstoy arranges his plot in such a way that Pozdnyshv does «really destroy» the body of his wife, his maternal icon. Tolstoy's infantile, autobiographical hero thus fulfills a sadistic wish which, for a real infant at the breast, would be no more than a wish. Pozdnyshv even plans, as we saw earlier, to

⁵⁴ 27:72-3; Tolstoy, 1983, 111, 113.

⁵⁵ 27:361.

⁵⁶ 27:392; cf. 409, n. 1.

⁵⁷ 7: 149.

⁵⁸ 27:361.

⁵⁹ 27:365.

⁶⁰ 27:368; cf. 27:405.

⁶¹ Klein, 1977 (1930), 219.

⁶² Klein, 1977 (1937), 308 (italics in the original).

stab his mother-icon «under the *breast*».⁶³ In a variant, instead of stabbing her, Pozdnyshev shoots her *twice in the chest* and, when he comes back to see her on her deathbed, she is lying propped up on a bed in an unbuttoned, open blouse, chest bandaged.⁶⁴

With Pozdnyshev's destructive aggression being discharged in the vicinity of the breast of the maternal icon, it should not be surprising that images of *orality* are abundant. Pozdnyshev had earlier characterized woman as a «sweet morsel», and had imagined sexual intercourse as cannibalism. There is also his definition – in the lithographed edition – of one's own wife as something you put into you mouth: «Someone else's wife is a swan, one's own is bitter wormwood.»⁶⁵ Shortly before the murder itself, Pozdnyshev arrives home to find his wife engaging not in sex with Trukhachevsky, but *eating* with him («in there they ate and laughed»). At this moment he imagines that his wife must be appealing to Trukhachevsky, even if she is «not quite fresh» («uzh ne pervoi svezhesti»⁶⁶ – an expression the primary meaning of which applies to unfresh edibles such as meat or vegetables).

Earlier, Pozdnyshev seems particularly offended by Trukhachevsky's oral activities, such as crunching the gristle of a cutlet as he eats, or seizing the rim of a wineglass with his «red lips». The «red lips» come up several times in the narration. They go all the way back to the first draft, when Trukhachevsky does not yet have a name, and is an artist rather than a musician.⁶⁷ In the final version they take on a life of their own, they seem even to compete with Pozdnyshev for access to the breast of his maternal icon.⁶⁸ They lose their obscene red color, i.e., they turn pale («poblednel ... do gub»⁶⁹), only at the moment Pozdnyshev threatens to kill Trukhachevsky.

Klein says that «... in the oral-sadistic stage which follows upon the oral-sucking one, the small child goes through a cannibalistic phase with which are associated a wealth of cannibalistic phantasies. These phantasies, although they are still centered on eating up the mother's breast or her whole person, are not solely concerned with the gratification of a primitive desire for nourishment. They also serve to gratify the child's destructive impulses».⁷⁰ Thus, for Pozdnyshev to characterize his wife's sexual body as «not quite fresh» suggests not only that this body is 'edible' for him, but also that it is slightly disgusting. That is, the cannibalistic desire for nourishment is sadistically tinged. This is clearer in «The Wife Murderer», where the precursor of Pozdnyshev rips out the innards of his wife, for innards («potrokh») also suggest a Russian culinary delicacy termed «potrokha» or «potroshki», which are the edible innards of animals («haslets», «giblets»⁷¹).

The first draft of the novella makes nearly explicit the idea of adultery as sharing milk from a breast. Pozdnyshev is describing (in the third person) how other men were attracted to the milking station of his beautiful wife:

... He did not consider that there would be lots of people seeking after these pleasures which he had arranged for himself, including intelligent people who not only knew that sometimes it is very pleasant to live with a woman, but that in order to get this you don't have to go through all this fuss and bother of married life. Instead it's much more pleasant to gather cream without any trouble from a milking [sobirat' slivochki s togo podoia] arranged by someone else.⁷²

⁶³ 27: 72; Tolstoy, 1983, 111 (emphasis added).

⁶⁴ 27:412.

⁶⁵ 27:295.

⁶⁶ 27:71; Tolstoy, 1983, 109.

⁶⁷ 27:364.

⁶⁸ Cf. Pigott, 1992, 59.

⁶⁹ 27:72.

⁷⁰ Klein, 1977 (1933), 253.

⁷¹ See: ANSSSR, 1950-65, vol. 10, 1645.

⁷² 27: 362.

The key word here, «podoi», is an unusual regionalism.⁷³ It is cognate with such words as the verb «doit'» («to milk») and the noun «doiarka» («milkmaid»).

Earlier in the novella the failure of Pozdnyshev's wife to breast-feed her first child was interpreted as «coquettishness» by Pozdnyshev. This was a paranoid idea, but Pozdnyshev is consistent in his paranoia, for now, late in the story, it is in the general area of the offending, orally charged breast that the wife is stabbed in revenge. If the wife had been nursing (or pregnant with) a child, she would not have been engaging in imagined «coquettishness» with Trukhachevsky, i.e., if the maternal metonym had been providing nourishment to a child rather than being offered sexually to an interloping adult, then it would not have become the target of Pozdnyshev's rage. In short, if the wife had been able to live up to Pozdnyshev's paranoid, regressively pre-Oedipal expectations, she would not have been murdered by him (but then Tolstoy would not have had a story, either).⁷⁴

The manner in which Pozdnyshev murders his wife suggests not only a regressive destruction of the mother's breast and innards, but also leads to an answer to an important question: why is he so opposed to sexual intercourse in the first place? Could it be that sex necessarily entails this very destruction of the mother's breast and innards? Pozdnyshev had felt, after all, that he had «murdered» his pregnant wife simply by having sexual intercourse with her.⁷⁵

I have in mind the shape and action of the *murder weapon*. A dagger is a long, pointed object which, in this case, is wielded by a man and is inserted into a woman's body. It appears to be a classic «phallic symbol» of the type Freud discerned in his *Interpretation of Dreams* and in his subsequent writings on dreams.⁷⁶

However, this «Freudian» reading would be true only in a certain sense, for it is exactly backwards. Pozdnyshev's problem (and Tolstoy's) is that he views the sexual act as «murder», not that he views murder as «the sexual act». This is a subtle but important difference. As Robert Louis Jackson says, the (admittedly) «phallic organ» is «a kind of murder weapon».⁷⁷ We have here the (implicit) erect penis signifying a weapon of destruction, not a weapon of destruction signifying the erect penis. Such an interpretation of the iconic signification of Pozdnyshev's unmentioned penis explains why Pozdnyshev thinks sexual intercourse «murders» the woman: *sex «murders» a woman because the penis is not only a penis, but in the context of sexual excitement it is actually experienced by Pozdnyshev as a destructive weapon which harms the interior of a woman's body*. The *actual* murder which occurs at the end of the tale only follows through on what Pozdnyshev believes sexual intercourse with his wife has been accomplishing all along.

Such an interpretation takes us beyond – although it does not contradict – classical Freudian iconicity, and is in agreement with Kleinian theory: «In the earliest stages of his life the male child

⁷³ ANSSSR, 1950-65, vol. 10, 509.

⁷⁴ With good reason psychoanalyst Ben Karpman suggests that Pozdnyshev '... may have experienced in his early life some highly traumatic experiences that have to do with [the] breast, feeding, weaning...' (1938, 35-6). Unfortunately, Karpman does not elaborate on the pre-Oedipal aspects of this suggestion, and he mistakenly (I believe) explains Pozdnyshev's aversion to sexuality in Oedipal terms (p. 38).

Alison Sinclair, in her Kleinian reading of the novella, says that Pozdnyshev 'presents a classical example of the paranoid-schizoid position' (1993, 228). I agree that Pozdnyshev makes numerous paranoid assertions in the course of his monologue, but I do not think he undergoes the internal splittings which the Kleinian infant supposedly experiences in the pre-Oedipal paranoid-schizoid position. Pozdnyshev rejects sexuality, but he does not project it outward so completely as to disown it. On the contrary, he keeps castigating himself for his own sexuality, and he keeps assuming narcissistically that other people are as bad as he is. Similarly he bears his rage and other bad feelings within, rather than projecting them outward. When he finally explodes in murderous rage, he does not falsely imagine that others are enraged at him.

⁷⁵ 27:34; Tolstoy, 1983, 60.

⁷⁶ *SE* XV, 154. See also Møller (1988, 13) who reads the knife as phallic without referring to Freud, as do Jackson (1978, 289), Burgin (1987, 32), and Isenberg (1993, 92).

⁷⁷ Jackson, 1978, 289.

looks upon his penis as the executive organ of his sadism....»⁷⁸ Normally, according to Klein, this idea of a destructive penis is overcome:

In the sexual relation to his love partner the man's early aggressive phantasies, which led to a fear of his penis being destructive, come into play to some extent, and ... the sadistic impulse, when it is in manageable quantity, stimulates phantasies of reparation. The penis is then felt to be a good and curative organ, which shall afford the woman pleasure, cure her injured genital and create babies in her. A happy and sexually gratifying relationship with the woman affords him proofs of the goodness of his penis, and also unconsciously gives him the feeling that his wishes to restore her have succeeded. This not only increases his sexual pleasure and his love and tenderness for the woman, but here again it leads to feelings of gratitude and security.⁷⁹

This, however, is precisely what does *not* happen in Pozdnyshev's case, for his feelings about his wife can hardly be characterized in terms of «love and tenderness», or «gratitude and security». Instead, Pozdnyshev is still thinking like an infant, he still believes he is «murdering» his wife every time he experiences sexual desire for her, i.e., every time he gets an erection. Similarly, Tolstoy felt he «murdered» Sonia every time he had sex with her.

In two passages of the first draft, Pozdnyshev suggests that murderous excitement is interchangeable with male sexual excitement. The first describes what Pozdnyshev (speaking of himself in the third person) does after arming himself with the *dagger* in expectation of finding his wife with her lover:

He entered her room. She was alone and asleep. Upon seeing him she exclaimed: 'ah!' For a moment he was sorry that now he didn't have to give free rein to the beast in himself, but then something *else* awoke in him. It's all the same thing, just two sides of the same coin. Romances and murder. Yes sir!⁸⁰

This is crossed out and replaced later by a passage involving a different long, pointed, dangerous object, i.e., a *pistol*:

The first time, grabbing a pistol, he gave full rein to the beastly feeling, and another beastly feeling grew stronger. It's all the same, only the other side of the coin.⁸¹

Whereas the first «beastly feeling» is the urge to kill the wife, the second is sexual desire for her, the urge to penetrate her sexually. In a flash Pozdnyshev moves from one to the other, so one is clearly the semantic and emotional equivalent of the other, is «all the same» as the other. This equivalence or interchangeability of emotions is discernible in another variant, where Pozdnyshev declares: «Previously it used to be that, the more I abandoned myself to carnal love, the more I hated her. Now it came out the other way around: the more I hated her, the more I desired her.»⁸² Yet another variant has: «... I never desired her so passionately, and I never hated her so passionately.»⁸³ The final variant tones down this equivalence somewhat by making the two opposed emotions non-simultaneous, that is, by making them alternate with one another: «A bout of love would be followed by one of animosity; a vigorous bout of love would be followed by a long bout of animosity, while a less intense bout of love would be followed by a correspondingly shorter bout of animosity.» Yet even here the equivalence of the «love» («liubov'») and the «animosity» («zloba»)

⁷⁸ Klein, 1977 (1931), 243-4.

⁷⁹ Klein, 1977 (1937), 315.

⁸⁰ 27:365.

⁸¹ 27:366.

⁸² 27:401.

⁸³ 27:404.

is emphasized: «We didn't realize it then, but this love and animosity were just two sides of the same coin, the same animal feeling.»⁸⁴

So, sexual desire («what we called 'love'») and hatred are the same thing. This will seem rather peculiar to the normal reader, but it is a very real sensation for the disturbed Pozdnyshev, and probably was for Tolstoy as well, who felt he committed a crime every time he had sex with his wife. Tolstoy would not have been so hostile to sex if he had not perceived (male) sex as so hostile.

Here, by the way, Tolstoy looks like a certain kind of feminist. Andrea Dworkin, in her unscholarly and frenzied first chapter of *Intercourse*, does capture Tolstoy's message: «The radical social change demanded by Tolstoy in this story – the end of intercourse – is a measured repudiation of gynocide: in order not to kill women, he said, we must stop fucking them.»⁸⁵ Dworkin, like Tolstoy, believes heterosexual intercourse «kills» the woman, is «gynocide». This idea is the basis of her great resentment: «Maybe life is tragic and the God who does not exist made women inferior so that men could fuck us....»⁸⁶ But whereas Dworkin utilizes the idea of a necessarily hostile male sexuality («fucking», as she puts it, not mere intercourse) to support her real, militant feminism, Tolstoy has his own – misogynist – agenda. The resemblance of Tolstoy's position to Dworkin's position is an accident due to resemblance of psychopathologies: both the Russian misogynist and the American feminist are obsessed with the idea that sex harms a woman's body.

If love did not have to involve sex, then the problem might be alleviated. In a passage crossed out in the third draft Pozdnyshev says: «this love, egotistical, and thus sensual, is not love, but malice, hatred.»⁸⁷ Love, it seems, becomes its opposite, hatred – if sexual feelings are allowed into the picture.

Why not, then, simply delete sex from marriage? This, as we already know, is precisely what Tolstoy advocated. Only now we also know yet another reason why: sexual abstinence is to be desired because intercourse involves wielding a dangerous, aggressivized phallus against a maternal figure. Better the human race should come to an end than bring harm to an idealized mother. That, it seems, was Tolstoy's infantile philosophy of sex.

REFERENCES

- ANSSSR (1950-1965). *Slovar' sovremennogo russkogo literaturnogo iazyka*. Moscow-Leningrad: Nauka, 17 vols.
- Armstrong, J. M. (1988). *The unsaid Anna Karenina*. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Benson, R. C. (1973). *Women in Tolstoy: The ideal and the erotic*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- Biriukov, P. I. (1921). *L. N. Tolstoi: Biografiia*. Berlin: I. P. Ladyzhnikov, 3 vols.
- Boborykin, P. D. (1978). V Moskve - u Tolstogo. In G. V. Krasnov (Ed.), *L. N. Tolstoi v vospominaniakh sovremennikov* (Vol. 1, pp. 265-273). Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura.
- Botkin, I. A. (1893). *Prestupnyi affekt kak uslovie nevmeniaemosti (Analiz prestuplenii Otello i Pozdnysheva)*. Moscow: A. A. Kartsev.
- Burgin, D. (1987). Jungian dactyls on death and Tolstoy (Verses burlesque with notations in earnest). In Anna Lisa Crome, & Catherine Chvany (Eds.), *New studies in Russian language and literature* (pp. 27-38). Columbus: Slavica Publishers.
- Dworkin, A. (1987). *Intercourse*. New York: The Free Press.
- Gol'denveizer, A. B. (1959). *Vblizi Tolstogo*. Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo khudozhestvennoi literatury.
- Golstein, V. (1996). Narrating the murder: The rhetoric of evasion in «The Kreutzer Sonata». *Russian Literature*, 40, 451-62.

⁸⁴ 27:45; Tolstoy, 1983, 74. The translation is slightly modified.

⁸⁵ Dworkin, 1987, 8.

⁸⁶ Dworkin, 1947, 143.

⁸⁷ 27:375; cf. p. 379, where love and hatred are called 'two sides of the same feeling' (*tozhe samoe chuvstvo, tol'ko s raznykh kontsov*).

- Gor'kii, M. (1949-1955). *Sobranie sochinenii*. Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo khudozhestvennoi literatury, 30 vols.
- Grigorovich, D. V. (1978). Iz 'literaturnykh vospominanii'. In G. V. Krasnov (Ed.), *L. N. Tolstoi v vospominaniakh sovremennikov* (Vol. 1, pp. 77-78). Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura.
- Gusev, N. N. (1954). *Lev Nikolaevich Tolstoi: materialy k biografii c 1828 po 1855 god*. Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Akademii Nauk SSSR.
- Gusev, N. N. (1957). *Lev Nikolaevich Tolstoi: materialy k biografii c 1855-1869 god*. Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Akademii Nauk SSSR.
- Gusev, N. N. (1973/1911). *Dva goda s L. N. Tolstym*. Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura.
- Gustafson, R. F. (1986). *Leo Tolstoy: Resident and stranger*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Holland, N. N. (1990). *Holland's Guide to psychoanalytic psychology and literature-and-psychology*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Isenberg, C. (1993). *Telling silence: Russian frame narratives of renunciation*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.
- Ivanova, N. G. (1971). *Derevnia Iasnaia Poliana*. Tula: Priokskoe knizhnoe izdatel'stvo.
- Jackson, R. L. (1978). Tolstoy's Kreutzer Sonata and Dostoevskij's *Notes from the Underground*. In Victor Terras (Ed.), *American Contributions to the Eighth International Congress of Slavists* (vol. 2, pp. 280-291). Columbus: Slavica Publishers.
- Jacobson, E. (1965). The Return of the Lost Parent. In Max Schur (Ed.), *Drives, affects, behavior, vol. 2: Essays in Memory of Marie Bonaparte* (pp. 193-211). New York: International University Press.
- Karpmann, B. (1938). The Kreutzer Sonata: A problem in latent homosexuality and castration. *Psychoanalytic Review*, 25, 20-48.
- Klein, M. (1977). *Love, guilt and reparation and other works 1921-1945*. New York: Delta.
- Leibin, V. (1994). *Russkost' Freida*. Moscow: Tipografiia izdatel'stva MGU.
- Lewin, B. D. (1937). A type of neurotic hypomanic reaction. *Archives of Neurology and Psychiatry*, 37, 868-873.
- Makovitskii, D. P. (1979-81). *U Tolstogo: 'Iasnopolianskie zapiski' D. P. makovitskogo (=Literaturnoe nasledstvo, vol. 90)*. Moscow: Nauka, 4 vols, index vol.
- Mandelker, A. (1993). *Framing Anna Karenina: Tolstoy, the woman question, and the victorian novel*. Columbus: Ohio State University Press.
- Merezhkovskii, D. (1995). *L. Tolstoi i Dostoevskii: vechnye sputniki*. Moscow: Respublika.
- Møller, P. U. (1988). *Postlude to the Kreutzer Sonata: Tolstoy and the debate on sexual morality in Russian literature in the 1890s*. Leiden: E. J. Brill.
- Molostvov, N. G., & Sergeenko, P. A. (1909). *L. N. Tolstoi: zhizn' i tvorchestvo, 1828-1908 gg*. St. Petersburg: P. P. Soikin.
- Murygin, G. (1995). *O L. N. Tolstom i ego potomkakh*. Novosibirsk.
- Ogareva, I. M. (1914). Vospominaniia Iu. M. Ogarevoi. *Golos minuvshago*, 11 (November), 109-127.
- Ossipow, N. (1923). *Tolstois Kindheitserinnerungen: Ein Beitrag zu Freuds Libidotheorie*. Leipzig: Internationaler psychoanalytischer Verlag.
- Peterson, N. P. (1978/1909). Iz zapisok byvshego uchitelia. In G. V. Krasnov (Ed.), *L. N. Tolstoi v vospominaniakh sovremennikov* (Vol. 1, pp. 122-126). Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura.
- Pigott, A. C. (1992). Regard de la psychanalyse sur La Sonate à Kreutzer. *Cahiers Léon Tolstoi*, 6, 53-60.
- Puzin, N. P. (1988). *Kochakovskii nekropol' (semeinoe kladbishche Tolstykh)*. Tula: Priokskoe knizhnoe izdatel'stvo.
- Rancour-Laferrriere, D. (1989). Introduction. Russian literature and psychoanalysis: Four modes of intersection. In Daniel Rancour-Laferrriere (Ed.), *Russian literature and psychoanalysis* (pp. 1-38). Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Rancour-Laferrriere, D. (1993). *Tolstoy's Pierre Bezukhov: A psychoanalytic study*. London: Bristol Classical Press.
- Rancour-Laferrriere, D. (1998). *Tolstoy on the couch: Misogyny, masochism and the absent mother*. London: Macmillan.
- Rusanov, G. A., & Rusanov, A. G. (1972). *Vospominaniia o L've Nikolaeviche Tolstom*. Voronezh: Tsentral'no-chernozemnoe knizhnoe izdatel'stvo.
- Sémon, M. (1984). *Les femmes dans l'oeuvre de Léon Tolstoi*. Paris: Institut d'Études Slaves.
- Sinclair, A. (1993). *The deceived husband: A Kleinian approach to the literature of infidelity*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Tolstoi, I. L. (1914). *Moi vospominaniia*. Moscow: Tipografiia T-vo I. D. Sytina.
- Tolstoi, L. N. (1928-64). *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, ed. V. G. Chertkov et al. Moscow-Leningrad: Gosudarstvennoe Izdatel'stvo Khudozhestvennoi Literatury, 90 vols, index vol.

- Tolstoi, S. L. (1928). *Mat' i ded L. N. Tolstogo*. Moscow: Federatsiia.
- Tolstoi, S. M. (1994/1989). *Deti Tolstogo*, tr. A. N. Polosina. Tula: Priokskoe knizhnoe izdatel'stvo.
- Tolstoy, L. (1983). *The Kreutzer Sonata and Other Stories* (trans. David McDuff). London: Penguin.
- Tyson, R. L. (1983). Some narcissistic consequences of object loss: A developmental view. *Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, 52, 205-224.
- Wachtel, A. B. (1990). *The battle for childhood: Creation of a Russian myth*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Zholkovskii, A. (1995). *Inventsii*. Moscow: Gendal'f.

Gender, class, and religion in eastern european immigrant fiction

ANNE M. WYATT-BROWN ()*

The fiction of immigrant writers demonstrates a salient fact: the psychological development of immigrant children in America has been greatly affected by the interplay of gender, class, and religion. For the most part, historians have focused on class and economic issues (Bodnar, 1985). Feminist literary scholars (Wilentz, 1995), on the other hand, generally emphasize gender and class. All of these factors, however, intertwine. Additional complications are the age of writers and the length of their sojourn in the United States. Of course, generalizations based on fiction, or on other qualitative data, are risky.

Novelists often use their experience in vastly different ways. Some draw on incidents from their own lives and those of family and friends. Yet they transform them to suit their own purposes. Sometimes they distort events or combine them so that their closest relations do not recognize themselves. In other situations, the depiction of relatives may be only too transparent if novelists use writing as way of demonstrating their superior values or of venting their guilty feelings. In bildungsroman one or both parents are often blocking figures, who seek to dissuade their child from becoming a writer. Few parents play admirable roles. We are, however, startled when such a novelist as Henry Roth writes about his sister and girl cousin in derogatory terms. Using one's surviving siblings and cousins as literary fodder seems unfair. Readers may feel required to serve as judge and jury against their will. Nonetheless if one is interested in how a writer's creative process develops or in the novelist's psychological development, we long to know how facts are transformed into fiction.

The autobiographical works of Henry Roth and Anzia Yezierska provide vivid pictures of immigrant life. Both colorfully describe parents and children fighting over religion and sex and depict how the protagonists treat lovers and friends. Yet truth-telling is not a primary goal. Both disclose in poignant detail the poverty, dirt, and desperation of the ghetto. They connect these problems with the apostasy of the younger generation. Moreover, they explain how gender roles affect the children's reactions to parental piety. On the other hand, the writers combine fact and fiction in a bewildering fashion. The theme to be pursued is the way questions of credibility affect our understanding of the tapestry in which gender, class, and religion is interwoven in the lives of children of immigrants.

(*) University of Florida, Program in Linguistics, PO Box 115454, USA.

One cannot assume that the fictional accounts of writers represent the truth of their lives. Anzia Yezierska, who presents a feminine perspective, and Henry Roth were both particularly devious. Irving Howe described some of Yezierska's life in *World of Our Fathers* (1976). Lacking other sources, he was forced to rely upon her autobiography and novels for details of her life. As Louise Henriksen reminds us in her memoir, her mother in interviews «had a way of rearranging or inventing the facts to suit her current feelings» (1988, p. 2). She was especially prone, according to her daughter, to enhance her Cinderella story: the girl from the ghetto who becomes a famous author. She minimized her education by describing Columbia Teacher's College as «a domestic-science school» (Duffy, 1923, p. 262). She implied that she had only recently emerged from the lower East Side when she had long since left her childhood poverty behind her. She suppressed information about her failed marriages and daughter, whom she left behind in the care of the father and his aged mother while she zealously pursued her writing career. Besides Henriksen, other recent scholars have also pointed out the inconsistencies in her life stories (Dearborn, 1988; Schoen, 1982). They endeavored to remove the mythical elements. Despite consulting her family and friends, they found many areas of Yezierska's life murky, inchoate. In the absence of evidence, they also turned to her fiction and autobiography (1950) for insight, a problematic endeavor at best.

Readers of the four volumes of Roth's *Mercy of a Rude Stream* (1994; 1995; 1996; 1998) also recognize that many of the events contained in these autobiographical novels may well be fiction (Wyatt-Brown, 1998). In his case, one hopes that he exaggerated his character's predatory ways. In his narrative Roth is highly critical of Ira, blaming him for evil thoughts, sexual misconduct, and weakness. Unlike Yezierska, who preferred to project on her relatives and friends her own problems, Roth took the opposite approach. He made Ira, his literary persona, in the words of his editor, Robert Weil (1997, p. 279), «as sexually compulsive and loathsome as possible». He ponders the mystery of the novelist's motives, debating how to interpret Roth's «sexual preoccupations and obsessions» (p. 278). Like most of us, Weil avoids making a judgment. Instead, he refers to a comment by Larry Fox, Roth's literary executor. Fox, he reports, assumed that Roth was guilty of some of Ira's predations and attributes the confessions to the novelist's desire «to unburden himself so that he could die free and perhaps free all of us». Weil himself wonders if Roth in deep old age was confessing his sins or flirting «with Nabokovian flights of fancy» (p. 279). Noting how violently Ira's parents fight – they make the name calling of Yezierska's parental figures seem quite mild in contrast – Weil draws upon folk knowledge of psychiatry to remark that «familial incest ... comes twinned with family violence». Given that connection, he concludes that Ira's fictional incestuous relationship with his sister and cousin «must have had some basis in the models provided in various ways by both of Ira/Henry's parents». He further declares that Roth was «transfixed in his declining years by the possibility of mercy, perhaps not for himself, but rather for his wife Muriel, for both of his sons, for Eda Lou Walton whom he had abandoned in the late 1930s, and in fact, for us all». (Walton, Edith Welles in the novel, was the English professor who supported Roth while he wrote *Call It Sleep*.) Desire for redemption kept Roth writing «keenly aware that his days were diminishing, the stream of urine dripping from his leg not even deterring him» from completing his account (Weil, 1997, p. 280). At the very least Roth's sexual worries help explain why sixty years elapsed between *Call It Sleep* (1934) and the first volume of *Mercy of a Rude Stream* (1994).

We should not view these writers as deviant because they used their lives in their fiction to serve their own purposes. Jaber Gubrium (1993), a sociologist and specialist in interviewing, warns against taking anyone's life story at face value. Instead, he claims, these accounts reflect their feelings in the present, which explains why few of us rarely tell incidents from our lives the same way twice. Inaccurate as their lifelong narratives may be, both offer insights into how their immigrant children interacted with their lovers, friends, and parents. They gradually reveal the complexity of these relationships, warning us not to oversimplify the effect of class or gender upon religion.

Other scholars and critics, such as Irving Howe (1976), have amply discussed the effect of class upon religion. On the whole, the newcomers, especially Jews from Eastern Europe, had few

financial resources. They left their homes to escape persecution and to improve their children's prospects. In the process, however, they agonized over the loss of religious values that had sustained their families through centuries of oppression in Europe. School-age offspring of impoverished Jews, many of whom settled in New York's East Side, found American folkways more appealing than the pinched existence of their religious parents. In turn many parents reacted, sometimes overreacted, to the threat of Americanization. As Irving Howe put it, «the older immigrants were too suspicious, too thoroughly under the sway of past humiliations, to believe there might be some neutral ground ... for the years of adolescence» (1976, p. 261). Afraid of the lure of the streets and overwhelmed by their own helplessness, many elders berated their children. They threatened, lectured, and cajoled but only made escape even more attractive to the young people. W. H. Auden, himself an immigrant, noted an irony about American optimism. Unlike Europeans, Americans, he observed, have always considered poverty to be «temporary or accidental» rather than ascriptive, an inevitable part of one's life. As a result, he concluded «nowhere else in the world is real poverty – admittedly, rarer here than anywhere else – so cheerless, sordid, and destitute of all grace» (1950, p. 13). Not surprisingly, powerless parents worried lest their children improve themselves materially but in the process lose their souls in «the land without heart – the land without a God!» (Yeziarska, 1920b, p. 286). Both Yeziarska and Roth dramatize the intergenerational conflict. They showed how different family members reacted to the social liberation and economic hardships of America.

Important as class was, gender also played a significant role in the psychology of immigrant children. Although the social rules for girls were stricter than for boys, both were shackled to familial conventions. Partly because most of the first-hand accounts were composed by the male children of immigrants, the problems facing girls were largely ignored or filtered through the male perspective. Occasionally so sensitive an observer as Irving Howe illuminates the plight of women in *World of Our Fathers* (1976), but most literary critics and scholars have not compensated for the gender imbalance. As recently as 1992, Sanford Pinsker in *Jewish American Fiction 1917-1987* (1992) writes at length about only one woman writer, Cynthia Ozick, who was born in 1928, just as Yeziarska's writing career was declining. Leslie Fiedler (1971), who wrote extensively about Jewish American writers, omits Yeziarska from his collected essays and mentions almost no women writers. In contrast, Anzia Yeziarska's novels, and in particular *Bread Givers* (1925), speak for the often silent girls. Her novels fill the gap left by writers such as Roth, who focused relentlessly upon his protagonist, David Shearl, in *Call It Sleep* (1934). Roth omitted any reference to a sister until 1995, when he published the second volume of *Mercy of a Rude Stream* (1995). Davey recoils in horror from the advances of forward girls, whereas Ira becomes a sexual predator at an early age, seducing first his sister, Minnie, and then his cousin Stella. In the last volume of *Mercy of a Rude Stream: Requiem for Harlem* (1998), however, Roth dramatizes the thoughts and feelings of the girls somewhat more fully, while emphasizing the ill effects of gender stereotyping on Ira's view of the world. To complicate matters more, by the novel's end many members of Ira's family have participated with alacrity in sex games. His father is caught by his wife fondling Stella, Ira's cousin and paramour. Stella says nothing of that encounter but admits to Ira that she has a weakness for married men. Edith Welles, the literature professor Ira adores, confesses to several affairs and describes her illegal abortion to Ira. Far from condemning Ira for possibly making Stella pregnant, as soon as he confesses, Edith promptly seduces him. By the novel's end Ira's strong sense of guilt seems atavistic, the last gasp of the rigid religiosity of his mother's father, Zaida, the eldest and most observant member of their family. His cousin Stella astutely tells Ira that he thinks only of himself: «You're like Zaida when he lived with us: worry, worry, worry. Now I know where you get it from» (p. 195).

Even a brief comparison of Roth's and Yeziarska's lives and fiction suggests how important a role gender, complicated by issues of class and religion, played in the lives of children of immigrants. As Howe put it, «Jewish boys faced the problem of how to define their lives with relation to Jewish origin and American environment, but Jewish girls faced the problem of whether they were

to be allowed to define their lives at all» (1976, p. 267). Jewish boys were more likely than girls to receive an education. That opportunity made it easier for them to escape the ghetto. The boys may well have resented the assumption that they would imitate their father's piety and poverty. The girls, though, were discouraged from aspiring to any kind of career. They were expected to subordinate themselves to husbands and children just as their mothers had. In households where the fathers were rabbis, as in the case of Yeziarska's father, the burden of survival fell upon those mothers. Often they had too many young children to nurture to be able to work. When they felt overwhelmed by their situation, they had few outlets other than shrieking at their children and cursing them for being born. That reaction is well described by Yeziarska in «The Fat of the Land» (1920a), a story in *Hungry Hearts*. Needless to say the children resented those curses. After they left the ghetto, however, their situations altered so completely that they could not understand their mothers' desperation. Energetic young women, such as Yeziarska, who had a sense of mission often fled from their families, which in turn left them with unresolvable feelings of guilt.

Yeziarska, the older of the two writers, had more difficulty than Roth in establishing her career. According to her daughter, she was born about 1880 in Plotsk, a Russian-Polish town. Yeziarska's mother, as she later reported, was entirely too busy with seven other children to record the date of her birth. A shortage of food made the family unwilling to celebrate anyone's birthday (Yeziarska, 1950). (Years later Yeziarska, who had only one daughter, also had no record of that child's birth. According to her daughter, Louise (Henriksen, 1988), her mother failed to pay the entire fee she owed the doctor for the delivery. He retaliated by refusing to register the birth.) Yeziarska claims to have been instrumental in her family's decision to leave their homeland for America (1920b). That is possible. According to her daughter, though, the novelist often made herself the center of all her stories, even when the narratives were based on events that happened to one of her sisters. Once in America Yeziarska's efforts to educate herself did not please her parents. Her brothers went to night school and became professionals. She was expected to deliver all of her earnings to her family once she turned fourteen. Before that time, however, unlike her older sisters who went directly to work, she had been to school and learned English and American ways. The skimpy education she received inspired her to receive more, but her parents resisted her attempts to save up for college. Defiantly, she moved out of her parents' flat into the Clara de Hirsch Home for working girls, where she quickly came to the attention of the patrons. Recognizing her talents, they decided to send her to Columbia Teacher's College to become a cooking teacher (Henriksen, 1988).

As Henriksen points out, Yeziarska was not suited for such a career. Her one desire was to become a writer. Therefore education frustrated rather than fulfilled her and encouraged her critical faculties. When she later enrolled in night school, she was equally scathing about her humanities course. She accused most of her professors of being dry academics teaching «dead» classics (1920b, p. 290). Mostly she encounters judgmental deans (1920c) and burnt-out teachers, but she also describes Miss Latham, a teacher who transcends the profession and gives her hope for the future (1920b).

Henriksen describes Yeziarska's mood swings as typically adolescent, but they formed a consistent pattern in her later life. Most of the time her moments of depression were followed by elation, and although she had her black moments (Henriksen, 1988), she was apparently not diagnosed as a manic depressive. Her daughter bore the brunt of her dark moments much of the time. Yeziarska fought with the men in the family (including all her in-laws) because they tried to prevent her older sisters and her daughter from taking care of her, as she so much desired. She divorced her first husband and never married Henriksen's father, leaving her daughter as the only family member with whom she had a close relationship. As Henriksen describes her, she expended much effort hunting for mentors. For a time she would find one but soon became alienated. Yeziarska would invest too much in a person, be wildly enthusiastic after the first meeting, and then quickly become disillusioned. It never occurred to her that those she cared for had lives and feelings of their own. Once she no longer believed that an individual would be her salvation, she had difficulty in treating that person as an ordinary human being. The one exception was John

Dewey, the educator and philosopher, who despite his twenty year seniority, for a short time wrote her passionate love poetry. Apparently Yeziarska resisted his one attempt to act upon his feelings, and Dewey thereafter steadfastly refused to reopen their relationship (Dearborn, 1988; Henriksen, 1988). Seeking mastery, Yeziarska wrote repeatedly about that aborted romance. In *Salome of the Tenements* (1923) the portrait was scathing, but in her autobiography (1950), written nearly thirty years later, she expressed gratitude for his help in getting her career started.

Roth also used the people with whom he was the closest, but throughout his life was able to find individuals who were willing to take care of him. Born in Galitzia in 1906, he emigrated with his mother to the United States around 1909. His father had preceded them to New York. According to *Call It Sleep* (1934) he was extremely close to his mother in childhood. Such intimacy is not surprising since he describes Albert Schearl as a bundle of pathologies. Sanford Pinsker claims that Herman Roth was not as «embittered nor as angry, as oedipally ferocious nor as 'huge' as the Albert Schearl» in the novel (1992, p. 10). He may be right, but he offers no proof to support his claim. Roth's novels are full of discarded friends and lovers, chief among them Eda Lou Walton, who encouraged his efforts to write *Call It Sleep*. Unlike Yeziarska he had a happy and fulfilling marriage, for which he was very grateful. For many years his wife sacrificed her musical career for him. She behaved much like the nurturing Jewish mothers described so vividly by Yeziarska and Roth. His relationship with his sons, however, was more strained. Only one of them attended his funeral (Marcia Landau, personal communication, July 3, 1997).

The path leading to literary recognition was equally different for the two writers. Gender and luck both contributed to their different fates. Yeziarska had an extended apprenticeship and a short period of fame. Her vocational education could not help her obtain her goal. She was, however, adept at finding people who could advance her knowledge. She pressed her friends and acquaintances into service, begging them to help her revise and perfect her work (Henriksen, 1988). Her style in life and fiction was frequently confrontational. Critics have commented upon her distinctive voice, but unlike more polished writers, she rarely varied her tone. Readers and friends sometimes wearied of her insistent demands. For a short time during the early 1920s, when her novels were selling well, she found editors who were willing to help her. As soon as her sales declined, however, she lost their support. Their withdrawal left her bereft. Her education was less extensive than Roth's, who graduated from City College and became a friend, confidant, and lover of Eda Lou Walton, a professor at New York University. Through her he met other literati, including Margaret Mead, the anthropologist. Walton introduced Roth to the poetry of T. S. Eliot and the novels of James Joyce. More important, she provided an environment in which literary matters were the subject of daily conversation.

As she aged, however, Yeziarska gradually modified her indictment of her parents. Her portrait of family life in the *Bread Givers* (1925), written when she was around forty-five, however, was quite bleak, especially in the early pages of the novel. Sara Smolinsky and her sisters are bullied by their father, who lives as if he were still in the old country, praying and reading the Torah rather than working to feed his family. His refusal to work places a burden on his children, but Yeziarska implies that he is spending his time as wisely as his talents permit. His attempts to be businesslike fail utterly; his gullibility makes him an easy mark. Although the neighbors treat him like a hero when he wins his case against the rapacious landlord, his daughter Sara concludes that he «in his innocent craziness to hold up the Light of the Law to his children, was as a tyrant more terrible than the Tsar from Russia» (pp. 64-65). Unfortunately, he compounds his religious fervor with greed. He foolishly picks the worst possible husbands for his all too pliable older daughters. Mashah, the beautiful sister, hopes that her looks will earn her a suitable man, but when she falls in love the fathers on both sides interfere to destroy the match. As a result, only Sara has the gumption to «make ... [herself] for a person» (p. 21). In Yeziarska's stories older siblings may surrender to parental pressure. The protagonists, however, have enough taste of the new world to resist. Sara leaves home and works hard to earn the money for an education, by means of which she eventually forges a new life.

Generational differences also emerge in Roth's *Requiem for Harlem* (1998). Zaida, Ira Stigman's grandfather, keeps to old customs. Like Reb Smolinsky, he is too religious to work for his living. His sons take care of him, but family members are not as beguiled by his religiosity as Smolinsky's wife. They comment upon Zaida's willingness to accept the financial support of his sons, all of whom work on the Sabbath, without mentioning their violation of the law. For years he lives with his daughter Mamie, because she keeps kosher but suddenly moves out claiming that his granddaughter Stella has been entertaining lovers. He has been so protective of his granddaughters' virtue that he has refused to allow any young man to enter the house. The only exception is Ira, who, in fact, has been having sex with Stella. Mamie, Stella's mother, in contrast, thinks that if a girl doesn't have sex by twenty, «she would be a mental case» (p. 151). The younger members of the family, the children of Zaida who have grown children of their own, take an equally relaxed attitude toward religion. As Joe, Mamie's husband, comments, «America is America Everything is a little *traife* [nonkosher].... Piety is stretched here. It's not Europe, and that's how it is» (pp. 108-09). Ira's parents accuse him of being an *Epikouros* [an atheist], but then his mother admits to being half a one herself (254).

At the same time gender differences cannot explain everything. Both Roth and Yeziarska had much in common. Each became as May Sarton put it, «*un monstre sacré* [a sacred monster].... someone larger than life, set apart by genius, whom genius has made impossibly difficult as well as impossibly marvelous» (1977, p. 214). A recent article in the *New York Times* (Bryant, 1998) reproduced Abraham Maslow's chart of the hierarchy of needs. Maslow claimed that Self-Actualization, which involves one's creative instincts, sits atop the pyramid, but is far smaller than the rest of the hierarchy: Esteem Needs; Belongingness and Love Needs; Safety Needs; and Psychological Needs. Writers like Yeziarska and Roth must have inverted that pyramid. For them self-actualization, as demonstrated in their art, had to compensate for the absence of self-esteem, safety, and psychological comfort. Yeziarska also lacked a lasting love relationship, but Roth was more fortunate in that regard. First Eda Lou Walton offered him support and comfort and then his wife Miriam remained staunchly loyal. Because of the imbalance in their lives, they each made enormous demands upon their families and acted as if their writing entitled them to any sacrifices necessary to sustain their talents. As her daughter pointed out, Yeziarska imposed upon her sisters and her daughter. Her behavior mirrored that of her father, who «exacted ... deference» to his religious vocation (Henriksen, 1988, p. 209). No wonder their more ordinary family members often felt abused by these importunings. One comes away with respect, however, for Yeziarska's daughter, who was able to write about her mother with such remarkable understanding.

Roth also suffered from intermittent depression (1996) and writer's block, but nonetheless he was happier in midlife than Yeziarska, who lived by herself in nunlike simplicity, visited periodically by her daughter, Louise (Henriksen, 1988). Unlike Yeziarska he had a loyal and long-suffering wife. Moreover, after *Call It Sleep* was republished in 1964, interest in his career revived. Still for years his family lived in poverty while he took a series of poorly paying jobs «as a woodsman, a schoolteacher, a psychiatric attendant in the state mental hospital, a waterfowl farmer, and a Latin and math tutor» (Roth, 1996, p. 396). His talented wife had to postpone her promising musical career to teach school so that he could build «up the confidence to endure the shifting demands of serious writing, of coping with new and untried and questionable forms» (*Ibid.*, p. 211). He kept a journal during the fallow years (1987, p. 285) from which he constructed pieces for *Commentary* in 1959 and 1960.

In old age, the differences between the two writers's situations can also be attributed, at least in part, to gender. Even during his extended fallow period Roth never lacked for women to help him. His editor reports that three women helped «him to create literature throughout his life»: Eda Lou Walton, his wife Miriam, and Felicia Steele, a youthful assistant (Weil, 1997, p. 274). In 1980 Roth (1987) began his postmodern, late-life saga in which he traversed across time, mixing elements of his youth, his old age, and deep old age, the days leading up to his death. At first he described his effort «as suborning an autobiography to my whim» (*Ibid.*, p. 259), but by 1981 he

reported being «well on the way to Volume Two of my fictionalized and debased past» (*Ibid.*, p. 260). In the first three novels when he had trouble getting his narrative under way, he talks to the computer, Ecclesias, as if it were a psychotherapist. In the final volume, he seemed not to need that device. He tells most of his story uninterrupted, as if he no longer needs a crutch, the forgiving ear of Ecclesias. Good critical reception and sales had something to do with that change. Once it became obvious that his novels of old age were going to be a literary sensation, New York editors added their support. In contrast, Yeziarska never regained the fame of her midlife, nor did she have enough experience of love to allow her to invent a supportive figure like Ecclesias. She received good reviews but few sales from her late-life autobiography, *Red Ribbon on a White Horse* (1950). She had sufficient critical success, however, for the *New York Times* to ask her to review books throughout her seventies (Henriksen, 1988). In her eighties she published a few remarkable stories of old age (Yeziarska, 1985), but her daughter remained her primary supporter.

Perhaps the backing of family, friends, and editors explains why in old age Roth, unlike Yeziarska, found it possible to reveal his weaknesses, whereas Yeziarska's late life autobiography never mentions her two discarded husbands and her daughter. Still the autobiography, written in her middle sixties, shows that Yeziarska no longer resented her father as much as she had at midlife. She half apologizes to him by admitting the emotional attachment she has to the religion that sustained him. Moreover, she tells a sad story of her attempt to reconcile herself to her father after the publication of *Bread Givers*. She mistakenly thought that he would be proud of her literary success. Instead he turned on her, denouncing her effort to write on gendered grounds. Ignorant women, who know little of philosophy and religion, have no business pretending to be writers, he declared (Yeziarska, 1950). Given the scathing portrait that Yeziarska had painted of her father in *Bread Givers*, one cannot help but wonder how much hurt pride increased his angry rhetoric. On the other hand, he firmly believed that women's only role was to serve husbands and children. Their mutual inflexibility made rapprochement impossible.

Having left the Jewish ghetto in youth – Roth left in childhood with his parents, Yeziarska by herself in young adulthood – both writers mourned their loss of roots. They used their relatives and friends in a desperate attempt to make themselves «for a person», but especially in Yeziarska's case the strain of loneliness showed. At the same time, they were well aware that they could not return to the ghetto. Once out there was no turning back. Instead, they spent their lifetimes recreating the crises of their youths and trying to give their protagonists a less troubled future than their own pasts. Their novels help us understand why immigration can intensify the ordinary parent-child conflict to such an extent that many immigrants and their progeny feel permanently lost between two worlds.¹

REFERENCES

- Auden, W. H. (1950). Introduction. In A. Yeziarska, *Red Ribbon on a White Horse* (pp. 11-19). New York: Persea Books, 1987.
- Bodnar, J. (1985). *The transplanted: A history of immigrants in Urban America*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Bryant, A. (1998, June 21, 1998). Looking for purpose in a paycheck. *New York Times*, pp. Section 4, 1.
- Dearborn, M. V. (1988). *Love in the promised land: The story of Anzia Yeziarska and John Dewey*. New York: The Free Press, Macmillan, Inc.

¹ Marc Kaminsky (personal communication, May 15, 1997), a social worker who works with fourth-or-fifth-generation immigrants, told me that as late as the fifth generation, some cannot resolve the conflict (see also Kaminsky, 1994, p. 311).

- Duffy, R. (1923). An interview with Anzia Yezierska – «You Can't be an Immigrant Twice». In A. Yezierska, *Children of loneliness: Stories of immigrant life in America* (pp. 261-270). New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company.
- Fiedler, L. (1971). *The collected essays of Leslie Fiedler*. New York: Stein and Day.
- Gubrium, J. F. (1993). *Speaking of life: Horizons of meaning for nursing home residents*. New York: Aldine de Gruyter.
- Henriksen, L. L. (1988). *Anzia Yezierska: A writer's life*. New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press.
- Howe, I. (1976). *World of our fathers*. New York: A Touchstone Book, Simon and Schuster, 1977.
- Kaminsky, M. (1994). Discourse and self-formation: The concept of *Mentsh* in Modern Yiddish Culture. *The American Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 54 (4), 293-316.
- Pinsker, S. (1992). *Jewish-American fiction 1917-1987*. New York: Twayne Publishers.
- Roth, H. (1934). *Call it sleep*. New York: Noonday Press, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1991.
- Roth, H. (1987). *Shifting landscape*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994.
- Roth, H. (1994). *Mercy of a rude stream: A star shines over Mt. Morris Park*. (Vol. 1). New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Roth, H. (1995). *Mercy of a rude stream: A diving rock on the Hudson*. (Vol. 2). New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Roth, H. (1996). *Mercy of a rude stream: From bondage*. (Vol. 3). New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Roth, H. (1998). *Mercy of a rude stream: Requiem for Harlem*. (Vol. 4). New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Sarton, M. (1977). *The house by the sea: A journal*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1981.
- Schoen, C. B. (1982). *Anzia Yezierska*. Boston: Twayne Publishers.
- Weil, R. (1997). Editor's afterward. In H. Roth, *Mercy of a rude stream: Requiem for Harlem* (Vol. IV, pp. 273-282). New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998.
- Wilentz, G. (1995). Introduction, *Salome of the tenements* (pp. ix-xxvi). Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- Wyatt-Brown, A. M. (1998). Creative change: The life and work of four novelists: Jane Austen, E. M. Forster, Barbara Pym, and Henry Roth. *The Journal of Aging and Identity*, 3 (June), 67-75.
- Yezierska, A. (1920a). «The Fat of the Land», *Hungry Hearts* (pp. 178-223). Salem, New Hampshire: Ayer Company, Publishers, Inc., 1984.
- Yezierska, A. (1920b). How I found America, *Hungry Hearts* (pp. 250-298). Salem, New Hampshire: Ayer Company, Publishers, Inc., 1984.
- Yezierska, A. (1920c). Soap and water, *Hungry Hearts* (pp. 163-177). Salem, New Hampshire: Ayer Company, Publishers, Inc., 1984.
- Yezierska, A. (1923). *Salome of the tenements*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1995.
- Yezierska, A. (1925). *Bread givers*. New York: Persea Books, 1975.
- Yezierska, A. (1950). *Red ribbon on a white horse*. New York: Persea Books, 1987.
- Yezierska, A. (1985). Uncollected stories. In A. Yezierska (Ed.), *How I found America: Collected stories of Anzia Yezierska* (pp. 261-312). New York: Persea Books, 1991.

Nineteenth-Century Russian Literature and Modern Southern Writers

BERTRAM WYATT-BROWN (*)

«It's dreary in this world, ladies and gentlemen.»

Gogol, *Mirgorod*¹

William Faulkner's generation and the one that followed owed much to the Russian writers of the late nineteenth century. The Southern authors themselves would have been the first to acknowledge a sense of gratitude, almost as if they were rejecting purely American or English roots as signs of Southern parochialism. For instance, Faulkner claimed a «spiritual kinship» with «the Russia that produced Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, Chekhov, Gogol etc.» Faulkner's putative successor, Walker Percy, declared, «I was strongly influenced by the Russian novelists, much more strongly than by the English novelists. I would be ashamed to tell you how few English novels I've read. I read Russian novels primarily and the French. More than the American novelists even.»² From Faulkner to William Styron, Southern writers read and re-read the classic Russian writers of fiction.³ As late as 1988 novelist Shelby Foote exclaimed, «Chekhov. My God, my God, what a

(*) National Humanities Center, 7 Alexander Drive, P. O. Box 12256, Research Triangle Park, North Carolina 27709, USA.

¹ Hugh McLean claims that, this statement in Gogol's *Mirgorod* is «one of the most famous in all Russian literature. (Skučno na ětom svete, gospoda.)» See «Gogol's Retreat from Love: Toward an Interpretation of *Mirgorod*», in *Russian Literature and Psychoanalysis*, ed. Daniel Rancour-Laferriere (Philadelphia: John Benjamin, 1989), 101. David Magarshack translates it as: «It's a tedious world, gentlemen!» which catches the melancholic satire more accurately. See Nikolai Gogol, *Mirgorod* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Cudaby, 1962), 275.

² See Joseph Blotner, *Faulkner: A Biography*, 2 vols. (New York: Random House, 1974), 2: 1695; Carlton Creameens, interview, 1968, in *Conversations with Walker Percy*, eds. Lewis A. Lawson and Victor A. Kramer (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1985), 31.

³ James L. West III, ed., *Conversations with William Styron* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1985), 15, 17, 37-38, 112.

writer! How he does it is a mystery you can[‘]t resolve by analyzing it - he just does it; does it out of being Chekhov. You can say of other great writers, even Tolstoy and Dostoevsky, that if they hadn[‘]t come along, someone else would have filled their places. Not him; he landed running and never looked back.»⁴

Literary influences of this kind fall rather naturally into three overlapping categories: cultural and historical affinities between the American South and late Czarist Russia; connections arising from similar psychological factors affecting the writers and their themes; and, third, direct artistic and philosophical borrowings and affiliations.

The first of these is perhaps the most obvious. The Russian sense of place and a long adherence to the ideals of rural society over the supposed evils of urban life somewhat resembled the age-old preferences of the people of the American South, regardless of their color. Still more obvious, Russian feudality – the lord and peasant society – had its parallel in the lower states of the Union with a hierarchical social order, based first on African-American slavery and then upon white rule over the freedmen. Such a social order produced a feeling of utter indifference to cruelty and even to the humanity of lesser members of the society. Along with that insensitivity there developed a lethargy about ordinary work that signified the privilege of an indulged leisure. «Everything in Russia comes from idleness», a character in Feodor Dostoevsky’s *The Possessed* complains. «We don’t know how to live by our own labour.»⁵ To a degree idleness was also a preferred style that Southern authors deplored - and sometimes celebrated. The Russian nineteenth-century modern writer felt obliged to record injustices and expose the weaknesses of his country’s character. Southern writers did likewise. In the process a tendency to romanticize the peasantry became almost obsessive for some intellectuals in the late Czarist era.⁶ When the ignorance, barbarity, and drunkenness of Russian servile life was directly confronted, disillusionment set in. On the other hand, modern Southern white writers seldom if ever proposed African Americans as truer to basic principles of life than were members of the white race.

With regard to matters of conscience, the Russian soul, particularly that of the thinker and writer, was complicated and anguished. So was its Southern counterpart, though not to the same degree. The Russian literary historian and critic, Daniel Rancour-Laferriere, argues that a sense of guilt, self-abnegation, and cringing acceptance of authority has long marked Russian polity, affecting most especially the intelligentsia – chiefly high-born – in both the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries. «Only through suffering and sacrifice could the guilt of privilege ever be extirpated», observed Tibor Szamuely, nineteenth-century author of *The Russian Tradition*.⁷ At the same time, Russians tended to presume their committing of wrong and then apologize for it in ritual fashion after the fact, a reaction less observable in the American South. For instance, in Russian the common word in English for «goodbye» or «see you» – innocuous marks of leave-taking – becomes the untranslatable but mordant «proshchai», Rancour-Laferriere points out. Loosely translated, it means «forgive me», as if transgressions had been committed.⁸ Yet, we should remember, an overwhelming sense of guilt, regret, and imagined but terrible crimes – unexpiated, unforgiven – does pervade the literary conscience of modern Southern writers, from Ellen Glasgow to Henry Crews. Remorse for the slaveholding past, for instance, figured markedly in the work of William Faulkner.

⁴ Shelby Foote to Walker Percy, 27 December, 1988, in *The Correspondence of Shelby Foote and Walker Percy*, ed. Jay Tolson (New York: W. W. Norton, 1997), 300.

⁵ Feodor Dostoevsky, *The Possessed*, trans. Constance Garnett (New York: Modern Library, 1936), 34.

⁶ Orlando Figes, «The Russia of the Mind», *Times Literary Supplement*, 5 June 1998, 15.

⁷ Daniel Rancour-Laferriere, *The Slave Soul of Russia: Moral Masochism and the Cult of Suffering* (New York: New York University Press, 1995); 46 (Szamuely quoted).

⁸ Rancour-Laferriere, *Slave Soul of Russia*, 113-14.

As if engaged in self-consolation, the South stood apart in its mourning for an enormous and humiliating defeat and for a sense of cultural inferiority, masked by «New South» bravado and celebrations of the Lost Cause Legend with analogies to the sense of nostalgia for a supposedly halcyon and religious past in Russian lore. Yet, in early twentieth-century America and in late Czarist Russia the intelligentsia were certain that the old verities were falling away and the days of yore were so idyllic by comparison. No suitable ideological replacements sprang up - most especially in relation to familial integrity. As early as 1877 Dostoevsky suggested, «never has the Russian family been more unsettled, more disintegrated, more disarranged and unformed than it is now». Where could you now find such *Childhood* and *Youth* as were recreated so harmoniously and distinctly by Count Leo Tolstoy, for instance, in depicting his era and his family or as he did in *War and Peace*?⁹

Likewise late Czarist Russia knew the strains of military disaster, in the Crimean episode, in the war with Japan. By comparison with the American Civil War these were distant and less bloody conflicts. Yet in a humiliating fashion they exposed the weakness of the czarist empire, which had long prided itself, like the slaves states of America, on its military prowess, especially with the great victory over Napoleon in 1812.

In addition, the Russian intelligentsia looked with envy at the vigorous cultural life of the West European states just as the Southern intellectual felt humbled by the achievements of Northern and transatlantic artists and philosophers. Yet there were great differences. Southern thinkers were less likely than the Russians to voice resentment of their low intellectual standing at home and abroad. Russians have always been very outspoken. In 1823, for instance, Prince P. A. Viazemskii, a poet, wrote, «Judging by the books which are printed in our country, one might conclude either that we have no literature or that we have neither character nor opinion». The satirist Nikolai Gogol wrote a friend, «There is no room in Russia for admirable people. Only swine can live there!» Just as Southern letters had long depended on English models, notably in the Scottish romance tradition, so in Russia, according to a historian, «many of the lecture halls were», figuratively speaking, «located in Berlin, Munich and Paris».¹⁰

Paradoxically, there was pride in a Russian capacity to endure deprivation, poverty, calamity, and all the other burdens imposed on humanity, as if redemption existed only in martyrdom, that is, a form of near suicide for noble ends. In 1946 Nikolai Berdiaev, the Dostoevsky scholar, noted: «The Russian is capable of enduring suffering better than the Westerner is, and at the same time he is exceptionally sensitive to suffering, he is more compassionate than the Western person.»¹¹ Similarly, Southern writers have generally agreed that their compatriots may lack intellectual curiosity but did not create the plastic and shallow forms of modern life. Instead they knew how to live close to the earth.

In spite of the powerful force that the ethic of honor exerted in Russia and the South, artists of both countries felt compelled to question the rules of the ancient ethic rather than celebrate it without reflection as earlier generations in both countries had done. Take, for example, the issue of honor and warfare. According to Feodor Dostoevsky in *The Writer's Diary*, the typical Russian soul found war uplifting, glorious. «Who feels depressed during... war? Quite the contrary: everybody is enheartened.» With full sardonic measure, Dostoevsky has his narrator explain that even when peace first returns, «Honor, humaneness, self-sacrifice are still being respected... but the longer peace lasts – the dimmer, the more withered... things grow.... At length, there is nothing left

⁹ Fyodor Dostoevsky, *A Writer's Diary*, trans. Kenneth Lantz 2 vols. (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1994), 2: 1034.

¹⁰ Quoted in Geoffrey Hosking, *Russia: People and Empire, 1552-1917* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 271, 276; Gogol to Pogodin, 1839, quoted in Henri Troyat, *Divided Soul: A Life of Gogol* (New York: Doubleday, 1973), 196.

¹¹ Berdiaev quoted in Rancour-Laferriere, *Slave Soul of Russia*, 55.

but hypocrisy – hypocrisy of honor, of self-sacrifice, of duty... There will be no genuine honor, and nothing but formulas will be left. Formulas of honor mean the death of honor.»¹² Similarly Binx Bolling's father in Walker Percy's *The Moviegoer* goes to war in a state of high excitement. It offers escape from a chronic sense of despair. «He had found a way», Binx recognizes, «to please» the family «and please himself». Happily he might even die in the noble cause to «save old England».¹³ In 1985 Percy referred to Tolstoy's Prince Andrei and his self-discovery as he contemplates death on the battlefield and feels for the first time more alive and attuned to living things than ever he had before. «I did that with Binx Bolling», Percy confessed to Father Dennis Corrado. «Being knocked out of everydayness, by ordeal, by illness» sounds «depressing» but the opposite may happen: «You say to yourself: 'if I could ever get back to where I was, I will appreciate what that tree looks like.'» He was referring to the famous oak tree episode when Prince Andrei regains his appreciation of life.¹⁴ Though less introspective than the Bollings, Faulkner's Colonel Sartoris in *The Unvanquished* would have agreed as well.

Finally, comparable roles for artists within the separate cultures developed - first in Russia and only later in the early twentieth-century South. In the absence of a civil society and the overbearing presence of a repressive, corrupt government, Russian intellectuals of the middle and late nineteenth century felt a special obligation to be «national prophets», a priesthood of suffering and sacred tradition. Through their words, they were to rescue the ideal Russia – a concept impossible to construct – from its abysmal realities. To a greater or lesser degree, Gogol, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, and Chekhov had more than the creation of art in mind. At the same time such aspirations led them to seek relief from inner agonies. For instance, American critic Edmund Wilson points out that in Gogol's childhood the Russian author confessed being sometimes overcome with a «sense of desolation» - not from dread of raging storms but from the silence and isolation of a cloudless sky. Underneath the surface of his satires, «there lurks Gogol's usual dread of insignificance and triviality». Even as he was completing his most famous work, *Dead Souls*, he was losing interest in the life around him. «Now», he wrote, «I am not amused any more, and what would in former years have awakened a lively interest... now slips by me without notice and my motionless lips keep an apathetic silence.» According to Orlando Figes, Gogol sought to bridge the moral gap between the real and the imagined, between the ambition to literary greatness and the fear of anonymity. His inability to resolve these dilemmas, Figes asserts, helps to explain his death by self-starvation. The chief problem, however, was Gogol's severe depression and sexual confusions. Obsessed as well with a religious asceticism that fanatical priests encouraged and an incompetent physician failed to arrest, he ate little more than a sauerkraut brine or a thin gruel.¹⁵

External, anti-intellectual constraints also brought together the pair of creative groups. The modern Southern writers – at least most of those who read the Russians assiduously – were not overscrutinized by a central government but by the conventions and prejudices of ordinary people. The strictures of ordinary folk could be as dispiriting, suspicious of intellectuality, and violent – even murderous – as any censorship officer, judge, or military commandant in Moscow or St. Petersburg. Nevertheless, both groups boldly criticized their societies for inhuman reactions to the suffering of others. «The circumstances under which Southern literature has been produced are strikingly like those under which the Russians functioned», declared Carson McCullers in 1941.

¹² F. M. Dostoevsky, *The Diary of a Writer*, trans. Boris Brasol (Salt Lake City, Utah: Gibbs M. Smith, 1985), 297-98.

¹³ Walker Percy, *The Moviegoer* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1961), 157.

¹⁴ «A Conversation with Walker Percy», *Delta Factor: Walker Percy Newsletter* 3, 1 (1996): 1-2.

¹⁵ Edmund Wilson, «Gogol: The Demon in the Overgrown Garden», in *A Window on Russia for the Use of Foreign Readers* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1972), 45-46; David Magarshack, *Gogol: A Life* (New York: Grove Press, 1957), 41-42; Figes, «The Russia of the Mind», 14; Simon Karlinsky, *The Sexual Labyrinth of Nikolai Gogol* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1976), 276-79.

«In both old Russia and the South up to the present time a dominant characteristic was the cheapness of life.»¹⁶ It was the assignment of writers in both nations to present this and other features of collective and personal existence in a freshly objective way, without an overt shaking of heads and finger-wagging. McCullers traced, for instance, Faulkner's sense of Gothic realism, which was not a contradiction in terms, to the example of the «Russian realists» as they are generally called. The realists were, she continued, the first modern writers to explore «the outwardly callous juxtaposition of the tragic with the humorous, the immense with the trivial, the sacred with the bawdy, the whole soul of a man with a materialistic detail».¹⁷ That, too, would be the aim of so many Southern writers as well. The Russian artists' sense of alienation, long-suffering, and introspectiveness – a temperament predating Freud but leading to remarkable insights about the inner life – were all factors contributing to a particularly Southern literary appreciation of the Russian spirit.

The second theme, the personal rather than social affinities that marked the psychology of Russian and Southern American writers, is more challenging than the point just explored. The record of mania and depression in American, in Southern, and indeed in Western writers in general is well documented. Using one of the largest samples so far gathered, Arnold Ludwig compiled information on 1,005 subjects of biography and discovered that those engaged in the literary and plastic arts and theater were, in some cases, four times more likely to have been hospitalized, whether forcibly or voluntarily, for psychopathological reasons – usually depression – than those in military, business, or social-work vocations.¹⁸ One interesting factor that draws the two countries together in this regard is the climatology of the illness. Scientists have discovered that the condition is particularly acute for North Europeans because of limited sunlight in winter. Complementarily, in southern locales elevated temperatures induce similar reactions of mania and depression.¹⁹

Somehow – no one has yet given a complete explanation – art and depression have a causal or at least parallel connection. The sufferer and the creative individual both explore the realms of mortality, uncontrollable grief, self-inflicted humiliation, epiphanic but transient joy. Some artists, of course, suffer few or no plunges into gloom but choose to examine the inner life for art's sake, speculates the writer Linda Leonard. Having experienced the horrors of an alcoholic addiction, she observes, artists who are also addicts of one sort or another, experience «a 'double descent' – the one of their addiction and the other of their creativity». Leonard continues that «once in the realm of the underworld mysteries» of their despair and their artistic impulse, these writers «must

¹⁶ Carson McCullers, «The Russian Realists and Southern Literature», in *The Mortgaged Heart*, ed. Margarita G. Smith (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1971), 252.

¹⁷ McCullers, «Russian Realists and Southern Literature», 252-53.

¹⁸ See Kay Redfield Jamison, «Manic-Depressive Illness and Creativity», *Scientific American* 272 (February 1995): 62-67; Ruth Richards, Dennis Kinney, Inge Lunde, Maria Benet, and Ann P. Merzel, «Creativity in Manic Depressives, Cyclothymes, their Normal Relatives and Control Subjects», *Journal of Abnormal Psychology* 97, 3 (1988): 281-88; Arnold M. Ludwig, «Creative Achievement and Psychopathology: Comparison among Professions», *American Journal of Psychotherapy* 46 (July 1992): 330-56, esp. Table VIII, 344; Nancy J. C. Andreasen, «The Creative Writer: Psychiatric Symptoms and Family History», *Comprehensive Psychiatry* 15 (March/April 1974): 123-31; idem, «Creativity and Mental Illness: Prevalence Rates in Writers and their First-Degree Relatives», *American Journal of Psychiatry* 144 (1987): 1288-92; idem, «Mania and Creativity», in *Mania: An Evolving Concept*, eds. R. H. Belmaker and H. M. van Praag (New York: Spectrum, 1980): 377-86; Nancy J. C. Andreasen and Pauline S. Powers, «Creativity and Psychosis: An Examination of Conceptual Style», *Archives of General Psychiatry* 32 (January 1975): 70-73; Frederick K. Goodwin and Kay Redfield Jamison, *Manic-Depressive Illness* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 332-68.

¹⁹ T. A. Wehr and N. E. Rosenthal, «Seasonality and Affective Illness», *American Journal of Psychiatry* 146 (1989), 829-39; Goodwin and Jamison, *Manic-Depressive Illness*, 562-71; O. Lingjaerde, T. Bratlid, T. Hansen, K. G. Gøtstam, «Seasonal Affective Disorder and Midwinter Insomnia in the Far North: Studies on Two Related Chronobiological Disorders in Norway», *Clinical Neuropharmacology* 9 (supplement 4) (1986): 187-89.

eventually choose to find form and meaning from the chaos and to return to life and society».²⁰ These circumstances are practically universal in Western cultural settings.

In addition to the general incidence of affective disorders and their relation to art, another feature links writers, whether Russian or American. By and large those with whom we are concerned – as well as many artists in general – lost one parent or both, either by physical departure or emotional withdrawal, before they reached the age of eighteen, some before eleven. Even at eighteen or so, the child is still vitally in need of parental example and guidance, particularly since both puberty and menarche occurred earlier in life than they do in more recent times.²¹ The absence of sufficient caring may throw the child into realms of fantasy without a sufficient check on reality being provided. They may, however, become painfully aware of the inconstancy of their surroundings; they cannot sustain prolonged mourning.²² The incompleteness of bereavement may make worse any problems that family tendencies toward emotional difficulties had already engendered.²³

Indeed, both a predisposition for artistic talent and chronic depression are strongly related to genetic factors, as close scientific studies of twins have revealed.²⁴ The continuity of familial depression through generations, even when only one or two members show remarkable talent, suggests that family and cultural factors are intimately bound together, a confluence that introduces a major point of this part of the discussion. The writers most influenced by Russian literature were William Faulkner, Walker Percy, Carson McCullers, Tennessee Williams, and Flannery O'Connor. O'Connor once remarked, «Do you like the novel *Dead Souls*? I like Tolstoy too but Gogol is necessary along with the light».²⁵ All but O'Connor (who suffered from lupus disease) were subject to deep and weakening episodes of inanition and despair. Carson McCullers, for instance, saw parallels in her emotional life with that of characters from Dostoevsky's works. During her affair with David Diamond, she warned him that she was too sexually ambivalent to be passionate about a heterosexual relationship. She urged him to read Dostoevsky's *The Idiot* so that he would understand her when she confessed that «she felt like a cross between Rogozhin and Myshkin». McCullers, whose novel, *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* – psychologically intense, richly creative and grotesque – suffered severely from alcoholism, oversmoking, and depression. She once tried to commit suicide. Having discovered that she had slashed her left wrist, her mother had her hospitalized at the Payne Whitney Psychiatric Clinic in Manhattan. The three weeks she spent there convinced McCullers that she knew exactly how Franz Kafka had felt in the midst of his mental anguish. As her biographer reports, she claimed, however, to «lack his hope of ultimate redemption».²⁶

In some instances, part of the affliction that these writers experienced stemmed from familial predispositions. Walker Percy's family was peculiarly subject to inherited chemical imbalances that induced suicide, chronic melancholy that required hospitalization, as well as less threatening

²⁰ Linda Schierse Leonard, *Witness to the Fire: Creativity and the Veil of Addiction* (Boston: Shambhala, 1989), xvi.

²¹ See Joan Jacobs Brumberg, «Something Happens to Girls: Menarche and the Emergence of the Modern American Hygienic Imperative», *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 4 (Spring 1993): 99-127.

²² Humberto Nagera, «Children's Reactions to the Death of Important Objects: A Developmental Approach», *Psychoanalytic Study of the Child* 25 (1970): 371-73.

²³ Felix Brown, «Bereavement and Lack of a Parent in Childhood», in E. Miller, ed., *Foundations of Child Psychiatry* (London: Pergamon, 1967), 435-55; Daniel Rancour-Leferrerie, *Tolstoy on the Couch: Misogyny, Masochism and the Absent Mother* (New York: Macmillan, 1998).

²⁴ A. Bertelson, B. Harvald, and M. Hauge, «A Danish Twin Study of Manic-Depressive Disorders», *British Journal of Psychiatry* 130 (April 1977): 330-51.

²⁵ Oliver Evans, *Carson McCullers: Her Life and Work* (London: Peter Owen, 1965), 33, 42, 43, 57, 133, 154, 169; O'Connor quoted as epigraph in Nikolai Gogol, *Dead Souls*, trans. and eds. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky (New York: Pantheon, 1996), vii.

²⁶ Virginia Spencer Carr, *The Lonely Hunter: A Biography of Carson McCullers* (New York: Carroll & Graf, 1975), 301.

forms of the ailment.²⁷ Several generations of alcoholism, that could be at least partly attributable to affective disorder (as depression is clinically labeled), help to explain William Faulkner's chronic bouts of insane binge drinking.²⁸ Tennessee Williams built his plays around the culture and history of his own emotionally dysfunctional family. His sister Rose had to be admitted to a mental hospital, where her mother authorized a lobotomy. Mother Edwina Williams was herself unstable. Her son, too, was almost craven in his determination not to be left alone, so wretched did his depressive episodes make him.²⁹

To a surprising extent the emotional issues confronting the Southern writer had a very close parallel with those that invaded the Russian intellectual's spirit. By far the most important example in this regard is the enigmatic and complicated picture we have of Dostoevsky's emotional life. Like Walker Percy, his most serious disciple among the Southern writers, he lost his father by violence. In a brief, highly speculative essay on the Russian writer, Sigmund Freud claimed that Dostoevsky nourished a murderous, oedipal malice against his father, that his epilepsy was a manifestation of guilt when his father was perhaps murdered by others, that his conversion to religious faith represented an escape from remorse by worship of «the Christ ideal».³⁰ Actually, as Joseph Frank has demonstrated, Freud built his case on selective misreadings of texts and biographies.³¹ The son's reaction to his father's death scarcely revealed much guilt but rather great relief. Instead, he hoped to prepare a better life for the younger siblings of the large family. From the St. Petersburg Academy of Engineering, the senior cadet wrote a brother, «The harmonious organization of the soul in the midst of one's own family, the development of all tendencies on Christian principles, the pride of family virtues and the fear of sin and dishonor – this is the result of such an education. The bones of our parents then will sleep tranquilly in the moist earth.»³² Moreover, the death of Feodor's father enabled him to reject the military career that his parent had imposed on him and instead pursue his own interests in literature.

At the same time, despite the impressive detail that Frank has amassed, his interpretation of Dostoevsky's psychology is very unsatisfying. Little, for example, is made of his mother's death when Feodor was a very immature sixteen. To make matters worse, his father, a respected, stolid, and caring parent until losing his wife, abruptly went to pieces. The Moscow physician neglected his work, became alcoholic, took up with a peasant mistress on his country estate, and mistreated his peasants in outbursts of uncontrolled fury. According to some accounts, two years after his wife's death, in 1839, four of those serfs so cruelly abused, assaulted him, forced a liter of vodka down his throat, crushed his testicles, and mortally wounded him with repeated stabbings. He died under a tree, and there the body remained unburied for several days. Neither the authorities nor the family made efforts to prosecute the assassins. No doubt the publicity of a trial would have further disgraced a once honorable family. These factors as well as a family inheritance of epilepsy helped

²⁷ Bertram Wyatt Brown, *The House of Percy: Honor, Melancholy and Imagination in a Southern Family* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

²⁸ Bertram Wyatt Brown, «William Faulkner and the Ravages of Alcoholism», *International Psychoanalytical Studies of the Arts Annual Meeting*, Bentley College, Waltham, Massachusetts, July 3, 1996.

²⁹ Lyle Leverich, *Tom: The Unknown Tennessee Williams*, (New York: Crown, 1995).

³⁰ Sigmund Freud, «Dostoevsky and Parricide», in Sigmund Freud, *Character and Culture* (New York: Macmillan, 1963), 286; 274-93.

³¹ Anthony Storr, *Freud*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), accepts 77-79 Joseph Frank's opinion that Freud was factually wrong and that his interpretation is therefore considerably damaged. Storr admits that Freud suited the selection of fact to meet his preconceived ideas. Joseph Frank, *Dostoevsky: The Seeds of Revolt, 1821-1849* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), 379-91.

³² Quoted in Joseph Frank, *Dostoevsky: The Seeds of Revolt, 1821-1849* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), 90; Louis Breger, «Dostoevskii and Medicine», *Slavic Review* 45 (Winter 1986): 735-37.

to shape the mordant imagination that Dostoevsky brought to his work and used to reach his monumental artistic goals.³³

Although not necessarily confirming Freud's speculations, neurologists and analysts do agree that Dostoevsky was afflicted with some form of chronic or clinical depression – the same sort of emotional malady that affected so many of his Southern literary admirers. Moreover, the relationship between epilepsy and chronic affective disorder has been scientifically documented. One scientist has observed, «'Most melancholics usually also become epileptics, and epileptics melancholics.'» According to a recent study of manic depression, «Clinically these psychoses are generally mixed syndromes with a prominence of visual and olfactory hallucinations, rapid fluctuations of mood, catatonic features, and dreamlike states – all of which occur during an epileptic fit». Dostoevsky's son, Alyosha, died in 1878 after a severe three-hour epileptic seizure. It was one of several signs that the malady in the Dostoevsky line was genetic.³⁴ Undergoing a fit about once every three weeks, the impact of epilepsy on his art had to be highly complex. Louis Breger points out that he «had the capacity – in argument, in relationships, in illness, and in writing – to go to emotional extremes. The boundaries between fantasy and reality, between objective observation and wild imagination, were permeable, open.» He had an unusual talent for merging other selves within his creative orbit. Epilepsy does not explain that skill by any means, Breger observes, but somehow a connection between art and medical factors did exist.³⁵

Dostoevsky's manic habits of gambling and his plunges into abject self-disgust afterwards also suggest some form of affective disorder. Yet, out of the experience of eight years' enslavement to gambling he creatively drew some of his most memorable work. Dostoevsky explained that the gambler is caught between the rush of pleasure in winning and the anxiety attending loss: «The excitement makes the stress and distress of life disappear and nullifies the basic needs of affection, sex, safety, hunger and sleep. Then, in turn, it generates agonizing, unbearable pain.»³⁶ His insights once again demonstrate the powerful interconnection of art and near madness. According to Konstantin Mochulsky, «He analyzed his own self not for the sake of dispassionate knowledge, but as a *therapy*».³⁷ Perhaps so, but it is a therapy that offers no permanent cure and only temporary relief.

Similarly, the other Russian writers whom the Southern professionals most admired – Gogol, Chekhov, Turgenev, and Tolstoy were subject to periods of deep melancholy which inspired, accompanied, and sometimes interrupted their art. Like Dostoevsky, Nikolai Gogol, reared in an aristocratic Ukrainian family, at age sixteen, lost a parent. When his father, a long-term hypochondriac, died, Nikolai almost leapt from a window, so intense was his grief. Manic depressive illness was a burden for others in the Gogol lineage.³⁸ He was an eccentric, melancholy, and manic figure in early Russian intellectual circles. As Edmund Wilson notes, he presented «an unusual case of a frustrating impasse of spirit, a hopeless neurotic deadlock with a gusto for life, an

³³ See James L. Rice, *Dostoevsky and the Healing Art: An Essay in Literary and Medical History* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: Ardis, 1985), 75-76, 101; Lowell R. Weinkamp, Harvey G. Stanger, Emmanuel Persad, Christine Flood, and Sally Guttormsen, «Depressive Disorders and HLA: A Gene on Chromosome 6 That Can Affect Behavior», *New England Journal of Medicine* 305 (November 26, 1981): 1301-06; essays in Rancour Laferriere, ed., *Russian Literature and Psychoanalysis*.

³⁴ See Norrnan Gerschwind, «Dostoevsky's Epilepsy», in *Psychiatric Aspects of Epilepsy*, ed. Dietrich Blumer (Washington, D.C.: American Psychiatric Publications, 1984, 325-34; Goodwin and Jamison, *Manic Depressive Illness*, 116.

³⁵ Breger, «Dostoevskii and Medicine», 737.

³⁶ Leonard, *Witness to the Fire*, 38-47 (quotation, 43).

³⁷ Konstantin Mochulsky, *Dostoevsky: His Life and Work*, trans. Michael A. Minihan (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967), 8. See also Geir Kjetsaa, *Fyodor Dostoevsky: Writer's Life*, trans. Siri Hustvedt and David McDuff (New York: Penguin, 1987).

³⁸ See Henri Troyat, *Divided Soul: The Life of Gogol* (New York: Doubleday, 1973), 20; Kay Redfield Jamison, *Touched with Fire: Manic-Depressive Illness and the Artistic Temperament* (New York: Free Press, 1993), 236.

enormous artistic vitality».³⁹ His controversial and successful play *The Inspector-General*, thanks to an attractive woman's plea, surprisingly won Czar Nikolai's approval, even if the comedy lampooned Russian autocracy. Amidst the ensuing storm Gogol plunged into misery.⁴⁰ His short-story, «The Overcoat», followed.⁴¹

Both of Gogol's great works were among the early examples of an existentialist approach to fictional representation that would assure a Southern literary appreciation. In them, recent critics have found an unmistakable homoerotic strain. Yet, most early twentieth-century Southern writers would probably not have recognized such implications. Others would have appreciated these hints but would fail to acknowledge them. The rest, like the equally homophobic Soviet interpreters of earlier days, would hotly have denied any such imputations.⁴² «Read the Russian writers, not Tolstoy so much but Dostoevsky, Turgenev, Chekhov, and Gogol», advised Flannery O'Connor to a friend. No doubt she had in mind those productions of Gogol, studies of provincialism, tragic realism, and satirical absurdity that O'Connor herself produced in her own work. «We all come out of Gogol's 'Overcoat'», Dostoevsky observed.⁴³ Gogol died in 1852, only a few years after the melancholy Edgar Allan Poe, whom Dostoevsky so admired.

As another major figure in the Southern literary repertoire of reading, Anton Chekhov did not lose his parents at a young age. Later in life, however, he wrote, «I never knew a real childhood». His father, a grocer in Taganrog, was a fierce disciplinarian, whipping his boys on the slightest provocation or without any cause whatsoever.⁴⁴ Leo Tolstoy, to whom Faulkner was particularly devoted, lost his mother when he was just under two in 1830. Brought into the death chamber, he squirmed and screamed until the nurse took him back to the security of his own toys. When the child was nine his father died abruptly from apoplexy. Young Tolstoy could not quite comprehend the loss. Momentarily he mistook strangers on the street... his dead parent. «I loved my father very much», he recalled, «but I did not learn how strong that love was until he died». He suspected that his father was poisoned.⁴⁵ Tolstoy's many passions – his wenching, gambling, and bouts of abject remorse – also included suicidal obsessions. He was convinced for a time that «Life is a senseless evil.... Nothing prevents our denying life by suicide ... You live, and can not understand the meaning of life – then finish it, and do not fool about in life». At the time of his despair, he was only fifty, had a beloved wife, healthy children, a vast and growing estate, many close friends, and great fame as a writer. Then, like Walker Percy, also a strange pilgrim in search of divine truth, Tolstoy discovered his sense of God's presence, «And I was saved from suicide».⁴⁶

Like Tolstoy, Turgenev, whom Southern writers greatly admired, also came from aristocratic forbears. He, too, suffered from severe melancholy. Turgenev's mother, harsh and tyrannical, once banished two serfs to Siberia simply for failing to doff their hats in her presence. Turgenev senior was distant and cold, taking little interest in his offspring. In words almost the same as those that Chekhov used to describe his childhood, Turgenev declared, «I was born and grew up in an

³⁹ Wilson, *Window on Russia*, 49.

⁴⁰ Troyat, *Divided Soul*, 146-58.

⁴¹ See Daniel Rancour Laferriere, *Out from under Gogol's Overcoat* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: Ardis, 1982).

⁴² See Karlinsky, *Sexual Labyrinth of Nikolai Gogol*, and McLean, «Gogol's Retreat from Love», esp. 122, n. 11.

⁴³ Flannery O'Connor to «A», 28 August, 1955, in Flannery O'Connor, *The Letters of Flannery O'Connor: The Habit of Being*, ed. Sally Fitzgerald (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1979), 98; Dostoevsky quoted in Troyat, *Divided Soul*, 305.

⁴⁴ Princess Nina Andronikova Toumanova, *Anton Chekhov: The Voice of Twilight Russia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1937), 12-15 (quotation, 15).

⁴⁵ Henri Troyat, *Tolstoy*, trans. Nancy Amphoux (New York: Doubleday, 1967), 13, 27 28 (quotation from Tolstoy, *Reminiscences* 28), Wilson, *Window on Russia*, 149.

⁴⁶ Jamison, *Touched with Fire*, 44-45. Quotations from Leo Tolstoy, *A Confession*, *The Gospel In Brief*, and *What I Believe*, trans. Aylmer Maude (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), 42, 43, 65.

atmosphere dominated by punches and pinches, blows, slaps etc.»⁴⁷ Along with severe attacks of gout, Turgenev, whose *Fathers and Sons* was a work nearly all Southern writers read, was afflicted throughout his life with episodes of deep dejection.⁴⁸ All these examples demonstrate the truth of Dostoevsky's pre-Freudian observation: «the strongest and most influential memories are almost always those which remain from childhood.»⁴⁹

What difference does it make that these Russian writers shared similarities of mood and psychic background with writers in the American South? Even though the Southern writers probably cared little about the biographical facts of the authors they read, nevertheless, the commonality of experiences in their lives would draw both sets of artists toward similar approaches. They almost uniformly chose themes of death and loss, the heart conflicted against itself, as William Faulkner put it, the introspective issues of human existence – all within a fictive setting based upon outer and inner reality and not upon supernatural fancies.

As Søren Kierkegaard pointed out, despair, such as that which Turgenev, Tolstoy, and Dostoevsky experienced, could be a signal of spiritual growth and possibility. The romantic but also realist conviction of melancholy was a critique of the prevailing notions of progress. Yet it also represented a search for meaning and individuality in an age of stifling hierarchy and conformity, along with growing doubts about the efficacy of divine faith. Like Walker Percy in *Lost in the Cosmos* and all his novels, Dostoevsky tracked down the wraith of suicide. Both he and Percy found release in the act of not embracing that spirit of death. The pair of authors were firmly convinced that suicide was indeed a plausible answer but only if there were no afterlife, no soul in human beings, no divinity to redeem mankind.

A. Alvarez offers an interesting observation on the nature of despair in the psychology and writings of romantic intellectuals like Dostoevsky, Søren Kierkegaard, Percy's spiritual guide, and Percy himself. That state of mind, argues Alvarez, was what grace had been for the puritans – a signal of spiritual potentiality. With more than a touch of extravagance, this concern with the meaning of survival, salvation, and the temptation of self-destruction were the very crux of art in the opinion of both Dostoevsky and Percy.⁵⁰ In fact, Dostoevsky insisted almost obsessively in *The Writer's Diary*, «that suicide – when the idea of immortality has been lost – becomes an utter and inevitable necessity for any man who ... has even slightly lifted himself above the level of cattle».⁵¹ Throughout the year 1876 the Russian novelist was obsessed with the issue. He was particularly struck by the death of a seventeen-year-old girl and the very bitter, callow remarks that she left behind in a note. Flippantly she asked that after her death, she should be proved «altogether dead, since it is very disagreeable to awake in a coffin in the earth. It is not *chic!*» Dostoevsky thought the «ugliest thing» about it was her lack of doubt or questioning about the purpose of life. «This means that she simply died of cold, darkness and tedium with ... animal and unaccountable suffering» – a suffocation «as if there were no air». His preoccupation was an effort to explore but also to reject the various rationales for suicide that victims of that decision left behind them. Like Thomas Aquinas, Dostoevsky believed that the assertion of the self as a final arbiter of life blasphemously preempted the will of God.⁵²

Likewise, Walker Percy argued, «The self in a world is rich or poor accordingly as it succeeds in identifying its otherwise unspeakable self ... as a creature of God».⁵³ In countless interviews he insisted that «some quirk or twist of character» could lead almost anyone to become open to new

⁴⁷ Henri Troyat, *Turgenev* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1985), 5.

⁴⁸ Troyat, *Turgenev*, 58-59, 62, 106, 112, 133-34, 145-46.

⁴⁹ Dostoevsky, *A Writer's Diary*, 1034.

⁵⁰ A. Alvarez, *The Savage God: A Study of Suicide* (New York: Random House, 1972), 216-17.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 541.

⁵² Dostoevsky, *Diary of a Writer*, 468-73.

⁵³ Walker Percy, *Lost in the Cosmos: The Last Self Help Book* (New York: Washington Square Press, 1983), 122.

possibilities, receptive to the proclamation of «good news» – that is, faith.⁵⁴ Both Percy and Dostoevsky wrestled desperately with unbelief. Yet perhaps for the same reasons of escaping the temptation of self-destruction each of them found consolation in the orthodox Christian credo.

From an artistic perspective, the last point is the borrowing of Russian literary tropes and their translation into fiction chiefly Southern in character. By far the most significant writer in this respect – once again – was Dostoevsky. He loomed so large that Southern writers experienced what Harold Bloom identified many years ago as the anxiety of influence. The once promising novelist Shelby Foote, for instance, wrote Walker Percy in 1977, that he was re-reading *The Brothers Karamazov* for the «fifth or sixth» time in his twenty-year preparation to write his «big family thing» – what he called «Two Gates to the City». The novel has yet to appear after another twenty years or more have passed. Shelby Foote hoped, though, to achieve «that galloping drive, that bigness; a drive so furious that it has to be bridled with filler stuff (even the Grand Inquisitor) to keep the writer and reader from being run off with».⁵⁵ For Shelby Foote, the task of matching the achievement of the great Russian writer, it would seem, has proved too daunting.

Foote's close friend Walker Percy could sympathize with the plight of his friend. Ten years earlier, Percy confided to Foote how little progress he was making. «It is a question of melancholy and depression.» He thought perhaps that his inner fury would eventually stimulate him as it had Dostoevsky. «Malice, envy, pride, and other capital sins» could be the source of creativity itself, Percy mused. «This, I am sure, was true in Dostoevsky's case; that he wrote best when simply angry, angry at a rather low level too, i.e. politically angry, ideologically angry etc.» But how to translate that indignation at one's own or another's failure, weakness, and frustration into art! «If you are lucky and God loves you, you do the good things almost by inadvertence.» But he, too, worried that he could not match the artistry of Dostoevsky and the other great masters. «Man», Percy once exclaimed in exasperation, «I can't write one of them saga-novels, wouldn't want to if I could, after Dostoevski and Tolstoy and Faulkner.»⁵⁶

The borrowing of themes, situations, and tropes from the great Russian classics is particularly striking in modern Southern writers. Not surprisingly, among them all, Walker Percy was the most indebted in literary terms, and in a more complex way than merely incorporating Russian references and scenes into his fiction. The Russian critic Mikhail Bakhtin points to the dialogic character of Dostoevsky's work – the multiplicity of voices that react or anticipate what another character is thinking but is yet to put into words. That complexity helped to modify the didacticism of his message of Christian love. Walker Percy's concern for linguistics and the meaning of words had a relationship to the Russian's pioneering in this form of psychological realism. Moreover, both the modern and the nineteenth-century authors were intrigued with explorations of the inner life and the «voices» represented in fictional characters offered the means. Grounded in the «everydayness» or details of ordinary life, Percy's fiction very much resembles Bakhtin's characterization of Dostoevsky's art. «The social and religious utopia inherent in [Dostoevsky's] ideological views», Bakhtin observes, «did not swallow up or dissolve in itself his objectively artistic vision».⁵⁷ This observation was also true for Percy, as Michael Kobre has shown.⁵⁸

⁵⁴ Percy, «Delta Factor», 83.

⁵⁵ Foote to Percy, June 29, 1977, in Tolson, ed., *Correspondence of Foote and Percy*, 231.

⁵⁶ Percy to Foote, January or Feb 1967, in *ibid.*, 128; Percy to Foote, November 22, 1972, 168. See also Percy to Foote, August 29, 1979, 258.

⁵⁷ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* trans. Caryl Emerson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 249-50. See also Kieran Quinlan, *Walker Percy: The Last Catholic Novelist* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1996), 98.

⁵⁸ Michael Kobre, «The Consolations of Fiction: Walker Percy's Dialogic Art», *New Orleans Review* 18 (Winter 1989): 45-53.

Percy himself has an entry in his notebook for 1951 that supported Kobre's interpretation: «Dostoevski's way of creating characters from his own complexity. The Brothers. He is all three. Priest, atheist, worldling.» But it is clear that Percy also fell into the camp of those who, according to Bakhtin, explain that critics tend to oversimplify Dostoevsky's novelistic technique. They fail to recognize the dialogical development of his characters. Kobre reminds us of Bakhtin's insistence that «between the word and its object, between the word and the speaking subject, there exists an elastic environment of other, alien words about the same object, the same theme, and this is an environment that is often difficult to penetrate».⁵⁹

Although aware of Dostoevsky's use of multiple voices and interlocking expressiveness, Percy – intrigued by linguistics and semiotics – did not himself use that technique with much consistency. Kobre argues that «though Percy's imagination is not as various as Dostoevsky's... I believe his work is – like Dostoevsky's – profoundly dialogic».⁶⁰ Kobre is only partially convincing on this score. In terms of Percy's very acute ear for the different voices and the different linguistic choices people make as well as the nuances of dialects, Kobre's point is well taken. But Percy is not as psychologically penetrating as Dostoevsky with his more complex repetitions of ideas echoed in his characters as if they half-know what others are about to say. In Percy's *Lancelot*, for instance, we hear only one voice, that of the protagonist. Perhaps the reason, as Anne Wyatt-Brown suggested to me, lies in Percy's obsession with television, film, and popular culture – media that oversimplify.

On a less complicated plane, Percy borrowed themes and incidents from Dostoevsky with considerable license. Will Barrett's mild epilepsy and depression in Percy's *The Last Gentleman* has its origins in Dostoevsky's Prince Myshkin in *The Idiot*. The neurologist Norman Geschwind observes that such epileptics with such temporal lobe disorders as Dostoevsky very often have had a high sense of religious inspiration, a preoccupation with moral principles. In this respect he resembled Percy himself and Percy's hero Will Barrett in character. On the other hand, Dostoevsky's humorlessness and argumentativeness were certainly not to be found in Percy's makeup nor in those of his fictional representations.⁶¹

Despite the differences in their styles of prose, Percy found much to admire in the Russian «wayfarer», as Percy might have characterized him. The scene in which the hero Binx Bolling in *The Moviegoer* talks with the children about the death of their friend Lonnie was a deliberate steal from Alyosha's similar encounter in *The Brothers Karamazov*. Percy's intentions were not just to ornament the story with a literary allusion but rather to make a strong theological point derived from Dostoevsky and also from Kierkegaard. When asked about the borrowing, Percy explained, «But in the end – we're using Kierkegaardian terminology» with Binx Bolling leaping from «the esthetic clear across to the religious. He has no ethical sphere at all. That's what Aunt Emily can't understand about him. He just doesn't believe in being the honorable man, doing the right thing, for its own sake». Percy indicated that he sought to drive home the point by making the connection with Dostoevsky. «In *The Brothers Karamazov*, Alyosha does the same thing with those kids. One of the kids says, 'Is it true we're all going to rise up on the last day and be together?' A little boy named Kolya had just died. And Alyosha said, 'Yeah, That's true. We're really going to be there.' And the kids say, 'Hurrah for Karamazov!' And so this was a salute to Dostoevsky.»⁶² As literary critic Gary Ciuba points out, «Binx can proclaim the doctrine of the last day when Lonnie will be restored because the moviegoer has seen the vitality of his brother's love, witnessed his own last day, and felt that he himself has been made new».⁶³

⁵⁹ Kobre, «Consolations», 48.

⁶⁰ Kobre, «Consolations», 48.

⁶¹ Geschwind, «Dostoevsky's Epilepsy», 331.

⁶² John C. Carr, interview, 1971, in Lawson and Kramer, eds., *Conversations with Walker Percy*, 66.

⁶³ Gary M. Ciuba, *Walker Percy: Books of Revelations* (Athens, Ga.: University of Georgia Press, 1991), 94-95.

Percy's indebtedness to Dostoevsky is also clearly visible in his angriest and gloomiest novel, *Lancelot*, the story of a self-confessing killer. The protagonist Lance Lamar has a somewhat different agenda from Dostoevsky's Raskolnikov in *Crime and Punishment*. Both commit gruesome murders. Eventually they both recognize their responsibility for their ghastly crimes and confess them. «In the despair of defiance», to borrow Linda Leonard's words, figures like Raskolnikov and Lance Lamar are «consciously angry at God» and bend themselves toward rebellion out of pride and misapprehended notions of honor. The next step is suicide; both, however, reject that course just as in life both Percy and Dostoevsky repudiated it. The answer that prevents their choosing death is the leap of faith that Søren Kierkegaard described.⁶⁴ The critic Ted Spivey claims that Percy's assault on the modern Gnosticism that Lamar espoused springs directly from Dostoevsky's similar critique. Like Lamar, Raskolnikov feels a deadness inside, the numbness of the depressive whose salvation, like that of Lamar, must come no sooner than his first step toward the Christian search. Percy and Dostoevsky both believed that the individual could only overcome the inhibiting isolation of self-centeredness by commitments to love and to the Danish theologian's «leap of faith».⁶⁵

The Grand Inquisitor motif in *Brothers Karamazov* also appears in *Lancelot*. Literary critic Linda Hobson notes that the setting for *Lancelot* is a prison (though for the criminally insane), as in Ivan Karamazov's story of the Sevillian prelate, when Ivan tests the faith of his pious brother Alyosha. Percy notes that Lance Lamar is playing «Satan showing [us] the kingdom of the world from the pinnacle of the temple».⁶⁶ As Hobson observes, «Percy is concerned with the same problem of freedom and evil that haunted Dostoevsky» - as well as Tolstoy.⁶⁷

Yet on another level, to which Percy never referred in his many interviews, both he and Dostoevsky shared a strong sense of illogical guilt and the necessity for suffering to expiate it. The source of it in both cases could be the loss of their respective fathers, and the anger and grief that rationally both knew was not a rational or socially justifiable response. Behind the stories of Will Barrett, Lance Lamar, and Percy's other heroes lie the hidden reasons for their unease – the sense of emotional deprivation that the early and violent death of the parent had incurred. We find in Dostoevsky's *The Idiot*, the work of Dostoevsky which Percy most admired, the curious and antagonistic relationship of Prince Myshkin and his polar opposite in nature and physical appearance, Rogozhin. Hugh McLean argues that the pairing of these two figures signifies the doubleness of masculine nature – cruelty and love, perhaps of a homosexual character. Rogozhin, dark, short, and Tartar-like, both attracts and repels the blond and handsome Myshkin. Percy offers no such doubling. Yet Lance Lamar certainly represented the «Rogozhin» in his own psychological makeup.⁶⁸

Like Percy, William Faulkner was a close student of Dostoevsky. In his case, however, one suspects exaggeration when the Mississippi writer claimed to read all the major Russian authors, along with Dickens, Cervantes, and Conrad, at least once every ten years.⁶⁹ Nevertheless, he thoroughly absorbed *The Brothers Karamazov* and *Crime and Punishment*.⁷⁰ Such a connection was

⁶⁴ Leonard, *Witness to Fire*, 185.

⁶⁵ Ted R. Spivey, *The Writer as Shaman: The Pilgrimages of Conrad Aiken and Walker Percy*, 118.

⁶⁶ Walker Percy, *Lancelot, a Novel* (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1974), 254.

⁶⁷ Linda Hobson, «The 'Darkness that is Part of Light': *Lancelot* and the 'The Grand Inquisitor'», in Nordby Grettind and Karl Heinz Westarp, eds., *Walker Percy: Novelist and Philosopher* (Jackson, Miss.: University Press of Mississippi, 1991), 120.

⁶⁸ See Elizabeth Dalton, «Myshkin and Rogozhin, From *Unconscious Structure* in 'The Idiot': A Study in Literature and Psychoanalysis», in Daniel Rancour Laferriere, ed., *Russian Literature and Psychoanalysis* (Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamin, 1989), 89-100.

⁶⁹ *Faulkner in the University: Class Conferences at the University of Virginia, 1957-1958*, eds. Frederick L. Gwynn and Joseph L. Blotner (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia 1959), 150.

⁷⁰ See the enlightening article by M. Thomas Inge, «Teaching Faulkner in the Soviet Union», in Doreen Fowler and Ann J. Abadie, eds., *Faulkner: International Perspectives* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1984), 174-92 on Faulkner's reputation in Russia

observed as early as 1928 when *The Sound and the Fury* first appeared. In her review of the work, southern writer Evelyn Scott compared Faulkner to Dostoevsky in the creation of Benjy, the idiot. She argued that Faulkner was able to gain «the kind of distance from and involvement in his characters» to be found first in the European and especially Dostoevskian mode.⁷¹ The stress upon human cruelty and violence that he employed for dramatic but also moral effect owed much to the Russian's example.

In the Faulkner canon, the most significant borrowing of a Dostoevskian theme appeared in *The Fable*, a late and failed work about the First World War. In one of his most sensitive readings of a Faulkner text, the late Cleanth Brooks explains how Faulkner's use of the Grand Inquisitor episode in *The Brothers Karamazov* fell short of his artistic intentions. Ivan's story powerfully dramatizes the potentiality of evil within the Church itself and the tragedy of a returned Christ's martyred purity. On the other hand, Faulkner muddles his meaning in ways that Brooks so well elucidates.⁷² Despite this lapse in late life, Faulkner should be considered a dedicated disciple of the Russian masters. As Michael Millgate argues, «There are obvious dangers... in attempting to place Faulkner in any exclusively American tradition. His literary environment includes Melville, Hawthorne, and James, but also includes – to name only the most significant for Faulkner himself – Dostoevsky» and a host of other sources from abroad.⁷³

Further examinations of the literary interconnections between so distant a land as Russia and the American South would have to include such writers as Tennessee Williams, Flannery O'Connor, Evelyn Scott, Elizabeth Spencer, William Styron, Reynolds Price, Richard Wright, and perhaps many others.⁷⁴ For some reason, the Nashville Fugitives took little interest in Russian literature. Allen Tate, Robert Penn Warren, and Caroline Gordon, for instance, were apparently less inspired by them than those mentioned already. Despite these defections, some fifty-odd years ago Carson McCullers had put it well when she urged that Southern letters «had reached the limits of a moral realism» and unless something fresh appeared in the way of a «philosophical responsibility» the region's artists would never regain the level of achievement of their predecessors from the 1920s and 1930s. «As yet there has been [in the South] no forerunner of an analytical moralist such as Tolstoi or a mystic like Dostoevsky.»⁷⁵ Some critics may dispute McCullers's imperative. Yet, she wrote her critique as early as 1941. Walker Percy, Flannery O'Connor, and William Styron, and other Southern writers had not yet appeared on the scene. When they did, the Russian influence revived in Southern letters. That connection between writers so widely separated by geography and time, demonstrated the enduring factors of cultural and personal malaise as well as the spiritual and psychological affinities that still drew Southern writers to study the Russian masters.

⁷¹ Frederick R. Karl, *William Faulkner: American Writer* (New York: Ballantine, 1989), 379.

⁷² Cleanth Brooks, *William Faulkner: Toward Yoknapatawpha and Beyond* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1978), 230 50.

⁷³ Michael Millgate, *The Achievement of William Faulkner* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1989), 291.

⁷⁴ *Richard Wright: Critical Perspectives Past and Present*, eds. Henry Louis Gates, Jr., and K. A. Appiah (New York: Amistad, 1993), 8, 76, 107, 125, 126, 192, 324, 326, 347, 366; Kenneth Kinnamon and Michel Fabre, eds., *Conversations with Richard Wright* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1993), 4, 16, 28, 32, 81, 133, 141, 163, 165, 185, 208, 209, 210, and 214; Elsa Nettels, «Elizabeth Spencer», in *Southern Women Writers*, Tonette Bond Inge, ed. (University, Ala.: University of Alabama Press, 1990), 70; Jefferson Humphreys, ed., *Conversations with Reynolds Price* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1991), 19, 27, 39, 52, 149, 155, 194, 214, 229, 240, 272, 286, 289; *Conversations with William Styron*, W. ed., 122, 132, 164, 183, 187, 230, 239, 250, 274; Albert J. Devlin, ed., *Conversations with Tennessee Williams* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1986), 28, 85, 114, 131, 221, 282, 331; Carr, *Lonely Hunter*, 32, 169; *Letters of Flannery O'Connor: The Habit of Being*, ed. Sally Fitzgerald (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1979), 44, 83-84, 99, 117, 145, 243, 296, 304, 331, 398, 488, 498, 513, 515.

⁷⁵ McCullers, «Russian Realists», 258.

Urga and the metapsychology of postnational identity

SCOTT NYGREN (*)

Genghis Khan. Been at war?
Gombo. No, I hit town.
Genghis Khan. You captured it?
Gombo. No, but I bought a TV set.

I first had the good fortune to see Nikita Mikhalkov's *Urga* at the French Film Festival in Sarasota, Florida, in 1991, and was immediately struck both by the film and by its anomalous context. Here was a film by a Russian director, shot in Mongolia, with a story about the importation of a Japanese TV set to a remote rural area for programs alternating between George Bush and Chinese music; yet nonetheless it was being claimed as French, since it was produced by Michel Seydoux with primarily French financing, in order to justify its screening in the United States. This was more than a case of international co-production, it was part of a postmodern and postcolonial phenomenon characterized by an economic crossing of cultural boundaries unprecedented in the history of cinema. Films like Tizuka Yamasaki's *Gaijin* (a film by a woman of Japanese ancestry made in Brazil, 1980), Ann Hui's *Song of Exile* (a young woman from Hong Kong educated in London discovers her mother is Japanese, produced in Taiwan, 1991), Jean-Pierre Bekolo's *Quartier Mozart* (pop culture, witchcraft and sexual politics in Africa, released as French, 1992) and Jim Jarmusch's *Mystery Train* (Japanese, Italian and English travellers intersect with African-Americans and popular culture in Memphis, US, 1989) all assume a density of relationships across cultural boundaries that can no longer be easily accommodated within the categories of national cinema.

When *Urga* became available for classroom use, released in the U.S. under the curious retitling of *Close to Eden*, I was able to show it in a film criticism and theory class and discovered my students liked it best of all the films they had encountered during the semester. Although a skeptic might argue that this reception was by default due to the kind of films that I ask my classes

(*) University of Florida, College of Liberal Arts & Sciences, Department of English, P. O. Box 117310, Gainesville, Florida 32611-7310, USA.

to watch, I don't think this is the case, since the students were enthusiastic about many other films as well. Films are not only being produced that address multiply intersecting cultures, they seem to be finding audiences willing to identify in multiple and shifting ways.

These films take up concerns previously addressed only in the context of ethnography, but they do so in a narrative mode inflected with the emotional and libidinal investments that circulate through cultures. As such, they raise interesting questions for a psychoanalytic approach to the arts, and invite consideration by way of the metapsychological concerns of Freud's late works. In this paper, I will consider some of the metapsychological issues that *Urga* provokes, through Lacanian and post-Lacanian approaches. Lacan's work on metapsychology is helpful here insofar as his reconsideration of the subject as *cogito* suggests a historical and cultural specificity to Western formations of self, and opens the door to further theorization of identity and the unconscious across culture difference in terms of language and the text. Clément, Lyotard, Irigaray, Bataille and Deluze and Guattari are among the many others offering models for this pursuit.

AN ANTI-ETHNOGRAPHY

Urga does not at first seem concerned with psychoanalytic issues, but instead appears as a kind of ethnographic comedy. Sergei, a Russian truck driver from Irkutsk, is sent to what is presumably the Chinese province of Nei Mongol (or Inner Mongolia) for work on a development project. There he encounters a Mongol shepherd named Gombo and his family living in a yurt, whose story this becomes. Gombo's wife Pagma sends him to town to buy condoms and a TV, since the Chinese are broadcasting a population control policy that discourages large families. Gombo returns with the TV but not the condoms, and the couple instead have a fourth child, whose voice-over from the future ends the film.

The initial ethnographic effect generated by the film when distributed outside Russia derives from audiences being potentially unaware of the proximity of Irkutsk, Sergei's home, to Ulan Ude, the center of Buddhism in Russia, across Lake Baikal, and of the long border of Siberia with Inner Mongolia further east. Viewers may not realize that the Mongolian city of Hailar, to which Gombo may have travelled (although his destination remains unnamed in the film), is not far from the Russian border. American audiences might also be surprised to learn that the Mongols were the only army to have conquered Russia by means of a winter invasion in 1237-38, led by Batu Khan, a grandson of Jenghiz Khan, who appears as a character in *Urga*. Since Americans often know little about Russia, they know even less about Mongolia, with the result that even ordinary details can seem exotic and historical allusions can remain opaque.

However, *Urga* also includes several tropes that invite an ethnographic reading by even knowledgeable viewers, with sequences detailing such Mongolian practices as sky burial, ritual sheep butchering, Lamaist Buddhism and the *urga* (a pole with a rope used for herding sheep) for which the film is named. Mongolia is represented in the film through informed allusions to its cultural specificity, and is not simply an exotic other. The exotic appearance of these practices to outsiders is marked through their introduction in the narrative as strange behavior discovered by Sergei, who is often shocked by his experiences.

Sergei plays the role of stand-in for Western audiences, a positioning of spectator-within-the-text. Yet his reactions of nausea and abjection are themselves represented as excessive and idiosyncratic, precisely to invert their negation and argue the autonomy and integrity of Mongolian cultural traditions on their own terms. Further, Sergei is seen as appearing equally strange in a Mongolian context, when Gombo's children, Bourma and her younger brother Bouin, stare with amazement at the tattoos on his back. Alienation and abjection are constructed as reciprocal effects of communication across cultural difference, not as an unproblematic or universal hierarchy of values.

Urga is simultaneously anti-ethnographic, in the traditional sense of how ethnography has been conceived, by refusing any cultural isolation or purity to Mongolia as an imaginary primitive

culture. Mongolia here is already fully in contact with the modern, with technology, media and products appropriated to its own purposes. Under an electric light powered by a windmill, Sergei discovers that Gombo's daughter Bourma knows how to play the accordion, and she entertains him after dinner with an enthusiastic performance next to a poster of Sylvester Stallone as Rambo pinned on the fabric wall of the yurt. The film attributes agency and knowledge to the Mongols in their negotiation of a complex relationship between modernization and tradition, rather than leaving them objectified as passive victims or a primitive other.

However, like most summaries, this brief description leaves out most of what makes the film interesting. *Urga* is punctuated by moments of what might be called 'found' surrealism, through intersections of elements that are logical enough in their own context but create striking effects when displaced across contexts. There is nothing 'found' about it, of course, since all the elements in the film are entirely scripted, but the juxtaposition of familiar elements found in separate cultures produces effects remarkably similar to photomontages produced by the historical surrealists of the 1920's-30's. I am thinking, for example, of the 1929 photo-essay «Masque de clinique»/«Danseur thibétain», which juxtaposes a woman wearing an optometric device over her face in a Western clinic with a masked Tibetan dancer (Foster 162).

One such moment occurs when Sergei meets his wife Marina in a hotel room to make love next to a miniature display of a Buddha, a bonsai, a telephone, a Russian Orthodox church and a pack of Marlboros, while their daughter Stessik stands outside the door proudly reciting a poem celebrating the Bolshevik revolution and Gombo's relative Bayartou rides his horse up the darkened hallway to give her an apple. It is at this moment that Sergei explains the urga's alternative use as a 'Do Not Disturb' sign when a Mongol couple makes love outdoors. Ethnographic models of reading, already undermined by modernization, need to be reinvented further to address such moments, and inflected by a psychoanalysis sufficiently multivalent to engage so heterological a text.

POLYVOCAL SUBJECT/S

One of the theoretical puzzles that circulates through *Urga* is the question of narrative voice. Whose story is this, whose point of view informs or frames the diegesis, what role is the viewer invited to take, and how is the viewer as subject positioned by the text? Conventional narratives may depart from the usual assumption that the camera will tacitly perform as some cross between an omniscient and a restricted narrator, but in *Urga* the polyvocality of the narrative is unusually sustained and complex. As the viewer shifts from one subject position to another within the text, the topography of the text is cast in different modes of relief and different determining figures become recognizable.

A first answer to the question of voice might be to consider Gombo's as the central position configuring the text. Gombo, after all, is the one figure with a clearly marked dream (or at least daydream) sequence, with the familiar tropes of close-up head shot transition and sutured reverse shots to position the viewer within Gombo's internal experience. Gombo, returning home with a SONY TV strapped to his pack horse, sits on the side of a hill and day/dreams that Genghis Khan and his consort (looking just like his cousin Bayartou and Gombo's own wife Pagma) arrive with their army to ridicule modern life and technology as trivial, taking his bicycle prisoner, burning Sergei's truck and killing his TV. Gombo then sits up with a jolt, the standard cinematic trope for awakening, and goes home to install the new TV, apparently having resolved his anxieties about media and identity through fantasy.

In 1991, in an era «beyond containment», as George Bush later announces at a news conference with Gorbachev that Gombo's family watches on their new TV, new national identities are springing up from old empires. Like the newly independent Kyrgyzstan, which produced a film about a medieval Khirgiz hero to construct a historical origin for a new national identity, Gombo dreams of the 13th century. Genghis Khan is displaced from history to become a postmodern emblem of

Mongolian nomadic identity, reinventing the Mongolian subject in an information economy where borders are routinely violated. Indeed, since the collapse of Soviet domination in 1991, Mongolia has constructed a Genghis Khan Mausoleum near Dongsheng out of nationalistic fervour, and pilgrimages to the mausoleum have become common among both Inner and Outer Mongolians. Gombo's dream participates in a collective reinvention of history, and a reconfiguration of the ego Ideal in relation to the unconscious. The psychology attributed to Gombo is that of a transformative psyche, engaged in a Nietzschean refashioning of self.

This is interesting enough, but any emblem so easily linked with a signified also belongs to the narrative discourse of the film, not the unconscious of the text. Determining figures in the unconscious are, as Nicholas Abraham argues, anasemic in their operation, eluding any easily identifiable signified while nonetheless shaping the parameters and limits of discourse. Psychoanalysis invents new figures to articulate metapsychological theory, according to Abraham, which necessarily designify rather than signify in order to allude to the dynamic operations of the unconscious (Abraham 84-85). A series of easily identifiable signifiers of dream and sexuality in *Urga* belong to another strategy, one made most noticeable by Hitchcock, of making explicit certain elements that a popular audience might be expected to identify as psychological or «psychoanalytic» while the film's work of engaging the libidinal economy of the audience continues unnoticed elsewhere. In *Vertigo*, for example, the narrative claims that the anti-hero Scotty has «acrophobia» rather than acknowledging the voyeuristic fetishism that governs his relationship with Judy, and phallic signifiers like Coit Tower signal his sexual arousal by Madeline rather than acknowledging the role of phallic anxiety in the construction of his male identity. Signs of psychoanalysis like this function as lures to seduce the viewer into a reassuring illusion that one can master the text and contain all meaning by inclusion within a known discourse. In another context, Hitchcock used the term McGuffin to describe a mysterious object that drives the narrative, to make the point that the object itself has no necessary significance, but only the actions it triggers. Narratively explicit psychoanalysis functions like this, offering McGuffins to displace attention from the work of the text, even when as in *Urga* those identifiable psychic markers are far from trivial.

There are other figures at work here as well. The role of Lamaist Buddhism, for example, plays a double role in the film both as diegetic or discursive object and as determining figure. Gombo, like Sergei and all the other characters in the film, belongs to a secular world, and when a direct reference to Buddhism occurs, it is insignificant. Gombo visits a Buddhist temple at one point, to ask for advice about condoms, but the lama only replies, «You have problems? So do I. Let us pray together.» Gombo politely donates an apple for the lama's trouble and departs to work through a solution on his own. No one pays any specific attention to religious practices or institutions, yet religious history continues to have unconscious cultural effects on individual thought, language and behavior.

A different image of Buddhism occurs as a trace in the sustained shots of treeless steppes that repeatedly occur throughout the film, devoid of people, dwellings or objects of any kind except for an endless sea of grass. These shots are paralleled by segments of local sound without music or dialogue, from the sound of wind on the steppes to the sound of the grandmother in the yurt quietly popping bubbles in the plastic wrap that came with the TV. These shots suggest the negative space of Chinese and Asian art, and the link of negative space in turn to Buddhist concepts of emptiness or absence in contrast to the presence of action and dialogue that dominate the classic Hollywood cinema. This is a strategy most often associated with the work of Ozu, but which has reappeared in recent films by Hou Hsiao-Hsien and Jim Jarmusch, among others. This visual strategy is not marked by any dialogue or verbal comment, and despite its familiarity continues to position subjects differently than in classical Western narratives. If Ozu here is imagined as the signified of these shots, as a citation or explicit reference, then their effect is diminished. Their role in the film is closer to the anasemic role that Abraham assigns to metapsychological figures in Freud's work, easily misread as if direct signifiers, but effective as metapsychology only when direct semantic reference is suspended.

So-called ‘empty’ shots are no more contained within the name of Ozu than continuity editing can be limited to the individual style of Griffith. Empty or negative space is as implicated in the metaphysics of Asia as classical shot breakdowns are with Western metaphysics, and for better or worse in each case. ‘Empty’ shots work to decenter the human subject to a position as part of the environment, while the action-centered style of Hollywood embodies the human role as transcendent and superior to nature. Such positioning occurs before the narrative itself can take place, and thereby operates as a determining figure regulating the possibilities of action and discourse that can follow. In contrast to the ‘empty’ shots surrounding the narrative of *Gombo*, extreme long shots of Sergei driving his truck through the steppes are not so likely to be edited together with shots that omit action altogether. Shots of Sergei in the distance tend to shift the image in the direction of Dovzhenko’s framing of horizon against sky in *Earth (Zemlya)*, USSR, 1930) to suggest the vastness of the environment, but without losing the centrality of the human position within it. Slight differences like these can imply very different assumptions, very different constructions of ego Ideal, and again the film is diminished if these differences are overlooked.

Mikhalkov is different from Hitchcock in playing discourse and figure against one another, determined in the best postmodern sense to have his cake and eat it too. Insofar as he can represent *Gombo*’s condition directly within classical narrative discourse, he is willing to do so, and thereafter mobilizes the indirect operation of textual figures to address those anasemic operations left untouched by direct address. *Gombo* appears in *Urga* both as unconsciously occupying an empty space inherited from Buddhist metaphysics, and transforming that identity within a recognizable framework of psychoanalysis as discourse. Narrative discourse and anasemic figure work together to represent a configuration of conscious subject and unconscious formation in a Mongolian context, as a strategy of representation across the divide of cultural difference.

THE MODERN MONGOLIAN WOMAN

A second answer to the question of voice might be to consider the role of Pagma as orienting subject, around which other narrative figures circulate. If we extend the principle of traditional Asian aesthetics that compositional centrality is not always where the pivotal position is located, then Pagma becomes a next consideration. Certainly, Pagma is in some respects a more plausible figure than *Gombo*. She was educated in a Chinese industrialized city as well as choosing a role in the traditional rural yurt, and thereby embodies the hybrid position familiar to the postcolonial condition. She is the one who arranges for Bourma to study accordion with her Chinese uncle Van Biao, who plays piano at a restaurant in the city, and it is she who remains skeptical when cousin Bayartou claims that Rambo is his brother in America. Pagma arguably embodies the agency that drives the family and the narrative, since it is she who sends *Gombo* on his modern mission for condoms and TV.

She seems a remarkably interesting alternative figure of ego Ideal as hybrid, that makes *Gombo* almost seem a caricature of rural dunce in contrast. She seems to embody the ideal goal of women in developing countries, that of achieving education and autonomy while continuing to respect one’s own cultural identity, thereby reinventing the identity of women from within. The difficulty of sustaining Pagma as narrative pivot has less to do with her importance and interest as with the utopian image she presents, although this may also be a problem with the film in general, as a comic treatment of rapid cultural change. She is too good to be plausible, not only capable of a Nietzschean refashioning of self, but of remaining always pleasant as well. However, certain other narrative effects of considering Pagma as narrative voice might be pursued, despite these reservations.

If we consider the narrative through Pagma’s position, the figure of *Gombo* changes. Given Pagma’s background and since the grasslands of the steppes are rapidly disappearing, we can be forgiven a suspicion that *Gombo* is not quite the simpleton he is made to play, and perhaps dropped

out of the Chinese equivalent of junior college after a few years of studying engineering. How else are we to understand his ease with windmills, generators and antennae?

Pagma is a hybrid of Chinese and Mongolian heritages, which conditions her relation to such Western cultural influences as music and popular culture, by way of their relay through China. It is Van Biao, her Chinese cousin, who represents the possibility or risk of assimilation to Chinese culture, and it is also he who teaches Bourma Western music on the accordion.

No matter how utopian the figure of Pagma may appear, in one sense she represents the pivotal issue for psychoanalysis and the arts implied by all postcolonial hybrid texts. What would a psychoanalytic model of a hybrid subject be, that takes seriously the idea of incommensurable cultural subject constructions intersecting in a single figure, that is neither an integration into a unitary subject nor a collapse into schizophrenia? Pagma as narrative voice represents the limit of our ability to think through the metapsychological implications of this proposition. Perhaps this question becomes undecidable when posed in these terms, and requires further movement through the text before the possibility of a return.

ORIENTALISM/S

One problem with considering Gombo and Pagma as plausible voices in the text is the Orientalist critique that the West has consistently appropriated images of Asia into an imaginary construction called the Orient. A metapsychology of Orientalism considers it as the positioning of the other as if mirror of the self, a delusional incapacity to recognize the autonomy of the other that instead remains imprisoned in a play of similarity and difference always measured by the unconscious figural investments of one's own culture.

Nikita Mikhalkov, in this argument, unavoidably conceives of Mongol culture in Western or Russian terms, so the film reinforces Western preconceptions rather than engaging with irretrievable difference. Certainly the distributors who retitled the film *Close to Eden* for English language release believed this to be the case, although they were apparently in full support of the idea. «Eden» positions Mongol culture as innocent, natural and primitive, before the fall into corrupt civilization, parallel to Levi-Strauss' nostalgia for a society before writing in *Tristes Tropiques*. Mongolia in this positioning becomes conflated with Western ideas of infancy, as a period of supposedly immediate contact with the body and nature, before education and alienation.

Yet the text escapes so easy and reductive a reading, that can itself all too easily devolve to a retrieval of auteurism in negative mode. Even in classical models of writing, neither the author nor one's own culture compose unities in total control of a text, which always remains open to the intersections of difference by way of the unconscious and language. Under modern and postmodern conditions, these intersections increasingly come to the surface, in contestation with the residual mirrorings of cultural narcissism. We already inhabit a society in which the Orientalist critique has become familiar within popular culture, so that Orientalism, its critique and counter-figural shifts have all come to occupy the same narrative space. No sooner are we introduced to Mongolia in the opening sequence of the film as a mysterious place of animals, sudden actions and violent eroticism than this image is undercut by the appearance of Bayartou riding across the steppes with a red umbrella and a megaphone, drunk and singing. The discordance of this image with what came before makes it impossible to maintain Mongolia in the position of imaginary and idealized innocence, and suggests instead something closer to a textual anarchism or Dada within the Western imaginary. Instead of claiming the status of universal knowledge for the West's idealization of the East, we also have the East's appropriation of the West, a loop that short circuits any single or reductive reading of the film.

Part of what is interesting about *Urga* is the degree to which the Orientalist critique has been recognized and incorporated into the figure of Sergei. It is through Sergei that we as viewers are introduced to Mongol culture, and it is he who responds with horror and disgust to the sky burial,

to Gombo's ritual slaughter of a sheep in his honor, and to Pagma's Mongolian cooking. It is Sergei who first encounters Gombo, who asks but also demands his assistance, and it is Sergei's co-worker on the development project who sees Gombo as a potential sucker to rip off. If Sergei defends Gombo as the one who rescued him, he is also in the privileged position of deciding to be benevolent, since Gombo doesn't understand Russian and can't understand the words proposing his exploitation. It is Sergei who complains bitterly about being a Russian forced to work in the remote areas of Mongolia, and who creates a bond with Gombo and his family only through the accordion and alcoholic drink which he can connect to some unsatisfactory extent with his past. Unlike Gombo and Pagma, he reinvents nothing in himself, and seems instead to pride himself on his good humor in tolerating such strange characters.

When Sergei acts out a series of fantasies and dances to keep himself awake while driving across the steppes, he throws a bottle into the distance and calls out «Fire! Tora tora! Hurrah! Attack!» Since «Tora tora tora» was the battlecry of the Japanese when they bombed Pearl Harbor, a phrase made famous by a 1970 U.S.-Japanese co-produced film of that name, Sergei's fantasy combines Soviet anti-American impulses with ancient Russian hostility towards Mongolia. The limit of known territory becomes a barbarian landscape, where a game of aggressive invasion spontaneously emerges to overcome the anxiety of the unknown. The film seems reminiscent of a displaced American Western at such moments, a recasting of frontier tropes from the vantage point of a declining economy like John Huston's *The Misfits* (written by Arthur Miller, U.S., 1961). Sergei's semiconscious Japanese attack game becomes a cautionary figure, suggesting how easily anti-imperialism can invert into neo-colonialism, especially under conditions of economic distress.

The third possible answer of voice then might be Sergei, as a position critical of Western impulses towards domination even in the guise of generosity and good humor. *Urga* significantly represents Sergei as a solid Russian worker, who nonetheless unconsciously reconstitutes the heritage of domination even as the former Soviet empire is about to break up. Sergei is a mixed character, since his enthusiasm and warmth represent the proletarian ego Ideal from the Soviet era, yet his conscious efforts can't stop his experience of nausea when confronted with Pagma's soup. His stomach betrays him, and suggests his inability to swallow cultural assumptions incommensurable with his own.

As with Gombo, Sergei's position as subject of Russian proletarian discourse is figured in relation to unconscious determinations represented indirectly through the figuration of the narrative. Driving through the vast deserted landscape of the steppes at the beginning of the film, he is represented as a lone driver within the rectilinear enclosure of the truck's cab, with a photo of his wife and child by the rear view mirror. Sergei is constructed as an individualized cogito, closed off from the environment by the framing of the window and the armoring of his machine, with sexuality and family internalized as an imago recalled in their absence. The contrast with Gombo's round fabric yurt, with family continually present in a shared intimate space, could not be greater. Gombo's identity, in contrast to Sergei's, is constructed parallel to what the Japanese call *uchi*, a sense of identification with an in-group rather than with oneself as isolated individual. Social relationships with others, that Sergei experiences as part of the outside world, are for Gombo the experience of what is inside; while sexual intimacy, marked as interior for Sergei, is for Gombo possible only outside on the steppes, away from the family yurt, and marked by an *urga*.

A confusion of inside and outside also appears to be the diegetically marked cause of Sergei's nausea and abjection. Funerals are for the Russian Orthodox church associated with the enclosed space of the tomb and the protection and preservation of the body, while the Mongols' sky burial instead exposes the body to be eaten by birds and conceives of this as a positive act. «That's my uncle, Toumour Akha», Gombo explains. «He was a good man, so the birds like him.» The positive return of the body to the cyclic processes of the environment is never marked as religious within the film, but operates as a secular trace of traditional Buddhist concepts of reincarnation. Sergei similarly never mentions the Orthodox church, but a miniature model of one is by the bed in his hotel room, and he calls on a pantheon of iconic figures only half secularized to allay his discomfort

among the Mongols. «Oh jeez! Oh mother! Oh shit! Damned idiots! What the hell? People, help!» he cries, at least in the English subtitles. The repetition of a similar figure later, as «Jesus! Lord, give me strength.» suggests there's more at stake here than bad translation. In both Gombo and Sergei, religious history survives as an unconscious series of determining figures, even in subjects who are otherwise represented as fully secularized.

When Sergei first appears near the beginning of the film, he is dozing off after driving for 24 hours across the steppes. As he falls asleep, his truck in extreme long shot wanders off the straight road and veers towards the river. Only after he wakes again does he perform his Tora tora dance, encounter the Mongol corpse, and endure all the rest of his adventures in Mongolia. In other words, the viewer could legitimately infer that Sergei dreamed all of Mongolia, or that Mongolia is placed in the position of a dream from Sergei's position within the narrative. The device of travel bracketed by sleep, implying but not explicitly claiming it as dream, derives from the earliest films. In Georges Méliès's *A Trip to the Moon* (*Le Voyage dans la Lune*, France, 1902), the astronomers sleep and dream before embarking in their space capsule to the moon, which then turns out to be a nightmarish landscape of insect creatures, phallic mushrooms and spears.

When Gombo later dreams of Mongolia as well, the narrative lurches toward the figure of mise-en-abime, so that it becomes impossible to determine who is dreaming and who is being dreamed. Sergei and Gombo are each in the position of the other's unconscious. This figure also derives from an earlier period of cinema, that of the 1940's avant-garde. In Maya Deren's *Meshes of the Afternoon* (U.S., 1943), the central character falls asleep near the beginning of the film, but all later moments of apparent waking are simultaneously recoded as other moments within a dream. By the end, the beginning of the film as well has come to be undermined as potentially another form of dream, suggesting that the character never wakes, and that waking is itself a dream.

The polyvocality of *Urga* as text creates a series of such looping structures, destabilizing any easy determination of narrative discourse around a single position. Instead, the film operates like a moebius strip or Klein bottle, figures that Jacques Lacan also used to suggest the organization of the unconscious. The multiple positions through which the viewer is invited to identify with or circulate through the text, such that each figure is in the position of the other's unconscious, suggests that reading might shift to a grammatological unconscious.

THE UNCONSCIOUS OF HETEROTEXTUALITY

At the end of the film, Gombo installs the new TV in the yurt, hoists an antenna on a pole and hooks up the windmill for power. The family encounters three waves of images in relation to this machine.

The first occurs before the family is assembled in front of the electronic screen, as a kind of proto-television. During Gombo's daydream, Sylvester Stallone appears on the TV in *Rambo III* competing in an Afghan contest on horseback to seize and carry the body of a dead sheep, and is ultimately victorious over local nomads. The Rambo poster from Bayartou also remains in the yurt throughout the film, and the TV is ultimately installed directly beneath it. Gombo tells his son Bouin a fable of Ghengis Khan just before the poster arrives with Bayertu, and in his daydream the image of *Rambo III* on screen is followed by the arrival of Ghengis Khan, his consort and army, looking like (and played by the same actor and actress as) Bayartou and Pagma.

Even before the TV is installed, then, it already begins to have effects. The impact of Western popular culture triggers a revival of local traditions and heroic narratives, to reconstitute identity in a media context. The Khyrgyzstan film of a medieval hero and the renewed Mongolian interest in Ghenghis Khan after 1991 are not indications of a deep unchanging tradition, but mark the reconfiguration of history in an electronic context. Gombo's daydream is not only a refashioning of self, but participates in a media economy linked to Western popular culture and modernization. Far from being an archetypal image embedded in the Mongolian collective unconscious, the narrative of

Ghengis Khan is local raw material available for textual reinvention. That the text intersects with and potentially transforms the unconscious is a different matter.

When Freud says that he got his ideas from reading Romantic poetry, or when Žižek discusses Hitchcock to illustrate Lacanian theories of the unconscious, both are acknowledging a connection between exterior texts and the presumably interior operations of the unconscious. However, both seem to assume that the direction of this connection is in one direction only, from interior origin to external text. Studies of melodrama beginning with Peter Brook have argued that melodramatic preoccupations with emotional intensities in family relationships are a popular parallel to Freud's theorization of family dynamics in psychic formation. Film study has also commented on the fantasies of mutilation, devouring and interchangeable body parts in the films of Georges Méliès, as if he had been illustrating his contemporary Freud, although there is no reason to suspect that he had ever read his work.

Derrida's intervention that Western metaphysics imagines the text to be secondary, when figural language suggests that writing systems play a much stronger role in determining the parameters and limitations of thought, problematizes the assumption that texts only illustrate an unconscious fully existent prior to writing. In *Urga*, TV operates as a newly introduced writing system with psychic effects, among which are the formation of nationalist identification by way of a newly constituted origin. Gombo's Nietzschean self-fashioning and the reconfigurative effects of media as writing systems form another loop structure in the film.

Once Gombo plugs in the TV, the family sits in a row to all face towards the screen. They see images of George Bush speaking to Gorbachev about the end of containment alternating with images of Chinese musicians. Suddenly, Mongolia is no longer isolated from other cultures and events by distance and boundaries, but intersects with multiple languages and cultures within the domestic space of the *uchi*. Unlike the American scene of TV, where all channels are in English, universalized to the point of a hallucinatory transparency, Gombo's TV speaks English and Chinese, while he speaks only Mongolian. The family scene is not nuclear and individualized, but constitutes the interactive intimacy of the *uchi*. Mongolian TV, as it appears in *Urga*, is heterocultural and heterotextual, inverting the seeming transparency of world media into an intimate and interactive heterology, parallel to Gianni Vattimo's argument in *The Transparent Society*.

Looping and inversion come to the surface of the narrative at this point. As the family watches, the screen goes black for a moment and then international images are replaced by an extreme long shot of the barren steppes outside, parallel to the 'empty' shots that have punctuated the film throughout. Rather than the cacaphony and heterology of languages that filled the yurt in minutes past, we now hear only the wind through the TV. The outside has become inside, looping impossibly without a camera. Pagma leaps up, runs outside and reappears on screen leading a horse and beckoning for Gombo to join her. Gombo similarly runs out and reappears on screen while the rest of the family watches, comes back for his *urda*, and rides off after Pagma. The video image of the steppes becomes full screen, then dissolves into a film image of the same shot, looping the TV's inversion of space back into the narrative of the entire film. At this site of *mise-en-abyme*, Gombo and Pagma conceive their fourth child, who then speaks to us in voice-over from the future as the end of the film.

The framed image, which of course is also the frame of the film we are watching, echoes the frame of the photograph in Sergei's truck, the frame of the truck's window around the landscape of the steppes, and the photographic frames around Rambo and Gombo's Chinese cousin inside the yurt. The rectilinear frame comes to represent camera media as a writing system as it circulates through Mongolian and Russian societies, generating multiple textual effects. The looping of Western interiority into Mongolian *uchi* and back again is one of its principle effects. It is not that such a heterological space is impossible to think, but that it is impossible to think as a unity. Incommensurable positions within the text are looped together, so that the viewer circulates among multiple configurations, but without a determining center or synthesis by which all points can be gauged within a single system.

In a postmodern film like *Urga*, classical viewer positioning through character identification co-exists with a modernist materiality of the text, so that reading oscillates back and forth between these incommensurable configurations. The viewer is positioned both inside the narrative and outside the film at once, shuttling back and forth between the two. This oscillatory reading, both classical and modernist at once, parallels the dynamics of movement across cultural boundaries. Participation in the reading process generates a nomadic and oscillatory viewing position that challenges us to consider new metapsychological strategies for reading heterological texts. Classical reading itself splits and multiplies through the polyvocality of strong and incommensurable subject positions, so that identification becomes shifting, multiple and nomadic.

A modernist shift of reading to the exteriority of these subject positions, recognized by way of the materiality of the text, populates the filmic landscape with figural combinations that generate complex anasemic effects. Deleuze's word for such densely constructed and generative textual configurations, that work through the body but cannot be contained within the controlling figure of a character, auteur or Oedipalized psyche, is a machine.

One series of machines in *Urga* are alimentary. The sky burial operates as one such alimentary machine, reconfiguring the relationships of mouth and body through the figure of death. For Sergei, the corpse he encounters is a figure of horror, a «stiff» (as subtitled), while for Gombo the same corpse is appreciated by the birds. Positive and negative trajectories intersect, while the corpse itself remains offscreen and unrepresentable. Death marks a boundary site where bodily practices are culturally inverted, and what is contained becomes exposed, what is protected becomes devoured. The categorical barrier that marks the imaginary unity of the individual body for Sergei is transgressed by the Mongolian embrace of fluid and cyclic processes circulating through the environment. Although this conflicted site can be recognized as historically embedded through traces of Orthodox and Buddhist incommensurability, religious history in turn might be reconceived as reconfigurations of the imaginary body in relation to the symbolic of culture. The mouth is here a detachable and wandering organ, simultaneously human and closed in death for Sergei and animal and open to life for Gombo. For Sergei, the mouth that speaks language and cries «Tora tora!» in mastery of nature has suddenly inverted into castrating beaks, the devouring mother and human waste. «Oh jeez! Oh mother! Oh shit!» he cries.

A parallel and linked alimentary machine occurs in the complex weave of figures surrounding Gombo's ceremonial slaughter of a sheep in honor of Sergei's visit. As a mark of traditional hospitality, Pagma prepares a special meal for the Russian guest, which Sergei reluctantly eats after first futilely protesting that he prefers his government-issued sandwich. The sandwich/sheep machine operates as a wrapped vs. unwrapped variation of Levi-Strauss' *Raw and the Cooked*, and is figured most intensely through an almost ethnographic representation of animal slaughter. Unlike the sky burial, death here is made visible on screen, in a depiction that often is the most difficult moment in the film for Western audiences to watch, as it is for Sergei within the diegesis. Gombo slits open the sheep's abdomen, reaches his hand inside the animal's inner organs, then withdraws his hand to cover the sheep's nostrils as it dies in his arms. His children assist him in the process, after which he gently closes the sheep's eyelids, marking the moment as both intimate and reverential. The sheep is then butchered, and its inner organs made into soup, which becomes the soup that Sergei later greets with the words, «Damn it! Well, all right. Here we go.» and a weak smile suggesting nausea.

Before he can force himself to swallow, he first manages to spill some and remarks, «Damn – I messed myself», a barely disguised way of articulating his confusion of food and excrement in the situation. For Sergei, the body's orifices of entry and exit have folded over on themselves, and he has difficulty distinguishing which end is which. Forcing himself to eat marks his willingness to restructure the imaginary body as a price of the hospitality he is receiving. Although comically close to the trivializing pluralism that reduces cultural diversity to the question of what ethnic

restaurant to go to in Manhattan, or to the childhood experience of eating somewhere other than home, Sergei's alimentary distress does something more. It also alludes to cultural boundaries as a site of visceral inversion, a turning inside out of the body in more ways than one, so that the unconscious exteriorization of the mother's body into the landscape becomes part of the negotiation in the move from one cultural context to another. This is a sense of the body closer to Bataille's *The Accursed Share* than to Fodor's *Guide to Dining Abroad*, and the sandwich/sheep machine leads to a paratext we might well call *Cooking with Bataille*.

MANCHURIA

Most of the machines that inhabit *Urga* tend to be alimentary, as discussed above, or phallic, as we will return to later. These are the machines of heterocultural comedy, embodying the utopian wish that all crises of cultural contestation and change can be resolved through positive encounters. In comedy, slaughter can always be restricted to the animal kingdom, men and women always resolve their gender differences with mutual pleasure, and negotiating cultural incommensurability requires nothing more than a strong stomach. But *Urga* is also haunted by the possibility of a very different outcome. In 1991, Bosnia was already moving towards civil war when Mikhalkov set his film at the opposite end of Russia. The former Soviet Union, like the former Yugoslavia, was and perhaps remains capable of catastrophe in its attempted transition to a different kind of society, and Mikhalkov was perhaps hoping for the best with *Urga*. That his next film was *Burnt by the Sun*, an extended meditation on the Stalinist undermining of utopian images with paranoia and violence, suggests that the positive trajectory of *Urga* is neither naive nor fanciful, but partakes of the urgency and intensity of a specific moment in history.

Another series of machines in the film operate in the domain of blood and waste, castration and anality, atrocity and mourning. Immediately preceeding Sergei's revulsion at Gombo's slaughter of the sheep, Gombo's children are astonished to see the tattoos on Sergei's back exposed when he takes off his shirt to wash. Sergei explains he was a soldier, «young and dumb», and the «music written on his back» comes from his role in the army band. Yet as we learn later, the song inscribed in Sergei's flesh is «The Hills of Manchuria», an old ballad lamenting the death of Russian soldiers in a war a century ago. Eventually, Sergei gets drunk and commandeers the band in a Mongolian nightclub to perform the music from his back while he sings:

Mist shrouds the hills,
Suddenly the moon breaks through the clouds
And shines down on the quiet graves.
These pale crosses in the darkness
Guard the sleep of heroes.

Shadows of the past, eternally wandering,
Tell us about the victims of war.
Now all is quiet, the wind has blown away the mist.
On the hills of Manchuria, the warriors sleep,
And Russia harks not their tears.

Weep, weep, sad mothers,
Weep, weep, young wives,
We weep with you.
Together, with one voice, cursing destiny and cruel fate.
May the spirit of the steppes
Inspire your dreams.

Sleep, heroes of Russian soil,
Worthy sons of your homeland.
You, who died for Russia,
You, who died for your motherland,
Believe us, we will avenge you.
And solemnly honor your memory.

Weep, weep, sad mothers ...

When the police come to haul Sergei off for disturbing the peace, by interrupting the disco beat with an ancient lament, Sergei objects, «They died for you, goddammit!»

If Sergei, in his usual Orientalist fashion, seems to confuse Mongolia and Manchuria here, these are not the only geographies collapsed into a figure of memory and war. Just before breaking into song, Sergei stumbles to the door of the nightclub, and in a reverse point-of-view shot the film cuts to a black-and-white newsreel image of a ruined building. The newsreel comes from the era of the Nazi invasion of Russia, and Manchuria evokes not only the Russo-Japanese war of 1903-05 (?), but the Japanese occupation of Manchuria during 1931-45. World War II operates here as a determining absence, reciprocal with the 13th century Mongol invasion of Russia, to generate a horror of war across history, perpetually marked in Sergei's body. «My grandfather was with them», Sergei mourns. «He was wounded.»

Unresolved grief and mourning haunts both Sergei and the text, continually suggesting how easily slaughter can cross over from animal to human domains at moments of cultural crisis. This haunting operates as a slaughter/tattoo machine, inflecting and shadowing all other comic possibilities throughout the film, so that whatever alternative can be imagined emerges from a background of anxiety and mutilation. In a Lacanian model, castration marks a pivotal site in the unconscious, through which phallic identification is transformed into an accession to language and the symbolic. In *Urga*, comic optimism derives from the proposition that such transformation is not impossible.

UMBRELLA/S

The emblematic series of machines embodied in the title of the film as *Urga* are phallic, both in the classical tradition of the phallus as a source of sexual comedy and in its Lacanian role in the formation of identity. The *urga*, specifically and explicitly linked with the phallus as part of the narrative discourse of the film, is also continually linked to other images in the text that open onto the phallus as anasemic figure regulating the unconscious construction of self. For the position of Gombo, the link is to Genghis Khan's spear and the TV antenna as figures of displacement and reinvention of self. For Pagma, the link is to the presence or absence of condom as a figure renegotiating a sexual relationship in a postindustrial economy of population limits and women's autonomy. For Tamulin, the fourth child who speaks in voice-over at the end of the film, the link is to industrialization and the replacement of animals by machines. «Today, a smokestack stands where my dad's *urga* used to be», he tells us. «Next to it, there's a gas station. That's where I work.»

Before any of these phallic machines occur in the narrative, another introduces and displaces the idea of a machine itself. When Bayartou appears at the beginning of the film carrying a red umbrella, the *urga* is radically transformed from an image of essentialist sexual and cultural identity to the status of shifter, parallel to such words as pronouns that change meaning according to context. It is difficult not to think of Derrida's comments on Nietzsche's umbrella here. In *Spurs*, Derrida cites the appearance of Nietzsche's phrase, «I have forgotten my umbrella», in a collection of Nietzsche's unpublished manuscripts as an example of what remains undecideable in any body of work. Bayertu's umbrella, like Nietzsche's, seems to lack any determining context by

which its significance could be established. Why is a Mongol riding across the steppes carrying an anomalous umbrella, and a red one at that? Even later, when the umbrella becomes part of a pattern of Western consumer objects infiltrating Mongolian culture, its initial destabilizing effect can never quite be overcome, and the umbrella effect remains active as a different kind of machine within many other cultural disjunctions throughout the film. In his book on Duchamp, Lyotard introduces the idea of a trans/former («trans/former» is proposed by Ian MacLeod as an English translation of the French word *transformateur* to mark its status as theoretical concept). Lyotard argues for the concept of a trans/former in contrast to a Deleuzian machine, when the effects generated by an anasemic configuration are not stable or repetitive, but unpredictable and transformative.

Derrida's discussion of a possible psychoanalysis of Nietzsche's umbrella, although introduced in *Spurs* as yet another limit to hermeneutic containments of meaning, is nonetheless suggestive for the effects of Bayertu's umbrella on gender and its reinvention in *Urga*. Derrida writes that

The umbrella's symbolic figure is well-known, or supposedly so. Take, for example, the hermaphroditic spur (*éperon*) of a phallus which is modestly enfolded in veils, an organ which is at once aggressive and apotropaic, threatening and/or threatened. One doesn't just happen onto an unwonted object of this sort in a sewing-up machine (*machine à recoudre*) on a castration table.

In other words, Bayertu's umbrella is not just the manifestation of a Sadistic desexualizing machine but a destabilization of the phallus as imaginary ground of Being. Hermaphroditic and undecidable at once, the umbrella circulates throughout the film to reposition all other phallic machines as trans/formers, and generate further effects outside the containment of any possible hermeneutics.

Pagma's proposal of condoms, for example, as a driving narrative preoccupation throughout the film, cannot be accounted for simply as a wish to contain or desexualize Gombo. Coming as it does after the couple's encounter with Bayartou and Sergei, the idea of condoms falls out of Bayertu's umbrella and operates as a kind of wild card throughout the text suggesting that gender identities are not fixed. It is not after all a quest for condoms that drives the narrative, but a question of what condoms suggest for a cultural identity previously based on unregulated proliferation. Gombo's eventual failure to bring any back to the yurt is also not simply a refusal to cooperate with Chinese population control policies, but an allegory of uncontainable desire and unpredictable effects. Although there is no suggestion that Pagma fails to see through Gombo's ruse of claiming that the drugstore was out of condoms, she nonetheless assents to a sexual encounter implying the fourth child at the end of the film. Her assent, like Gombo's failure, implicates them both in an allegory of cultural reinvention.

Insofar as psychoanalysis itself may tend towards the closure of a hermeneutic system in Derrida's terms, Nietzsche's lost umbrella, found perhaps by Bayertu, opens psychoanalysis to a play of meanings throughout the text. No longer identifiable with an unconscious assumed to be contained within the Oedipalized cogito of Western discourse, the operations and effects discovered by psychoanalysis reappear as machines and trans/formers within what Bataille would call a General Economy. Bayertu's umbrella, not simply acquired through the restricted economy of capital exchange, nor even simply symbolic of phallic uncertainty, acts as a hinge opening onto the unrepresentable of the text. Hereafter, and this occurs at the beginning of the film, any image could suddenly connect with and become any other, in an imaginary hypertext of rhizomatic images that inhabits and coexists with the seemingly stable commercial discourse of cinematic and narrative realism.

Bayertu's umbrella circulates beyond the film as well, and affects or infects the possibilities of a psychoanalytic reading. From the position of *Urga*, Freud's appropriation of Oedipus, far from being a universal model of the unconscious, participates in the same economy as Gombo's TV dream of Genghis Khan. The Rambo/Khan connection suggests that Freud's impulse to link ancient Greek with modern Viennese culture is strongly inflected by cinema as a writing system and late 19th century nationalism's quest for an origin. The figure of Oedipus argues a truth of Being not

unlike a Heideggerian phenomenology, while Gombo's Ghengis Khan proposes a more Deleuzian and anti-Oedipal model of nomadic Becoming. *Urga*'s Genghis Khan is a nomadic trans/former, in Lyotard's sense of textual operator, displacing fixed positions and remobilizing all elements of the text. The intersection of Genghis Khan and TV in *Urga*, far from being a retrogressive primitivism, generates an effect very like Deleuze's model of nomadic thought appropriate for an era of electronic information.

For Deleuze, animals and machines occupy the same position in the unconscious, outside the enclosure of an Oedipalized and individualized self. *Urga* again creates a similar effect when animals figure in the film as textual machines, and machines like Sergei's truck die and revive like reincarnated animals. Far from expressing or claiming some kind of indexical and authentic truth of Mongolian culture, *Urga* invites us not to forget, parallel to what Lyotard calls the political act of anamnesis, that we are watching a camera image, mediated through photography, cinema and video. The intersections of Mongolian animals and Russian machines, and of nomads with camera space, generate a series of textual trans/formers, neither Russian nor Mongolian but somewhere between or entirely elsewhere. Animal/machine and TV/nomad inscribe figural shifts gesturing towards a cybernetic information economy, potentially postnational and heterological. If *Urga* at times seems impossibly utopian in its imaginings of such a society, it nonetheless dares to imagine, and along the way suggests a few strategies that might lead a little further in that direction.

REFERENCES

- Abraham, N. (1994). Toward a conceptual renewal of psychoanalysis (1968). In Nicolas Abraham, & Maria Torok (Eds.), *The shell and the kernel*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Trans. by Nicholas T. Rand of *L'écorce et le noyau* (Paris: Flammarion, 1987).
- Bataille, G. (1991). *The accursed share: An essay on general economy; Vol. 1: Consumption*. New York: Zone Books. Trans. by Robert Hurley of *La Part Maudite* (Paris: Minuit, 1967).
- Budick, S., & Iser, W. (Eds.) (1996). *The translatability of cultures: Figurations of the space between*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Foster, H. (1994). Exquisite corpses. In Lucien Taylor (Ed.), *Visualizing theory: Selected essays from V.A.R.*. New York: Routledge.
- Derrida, J. (1979). *Spurs: Nietzsche's Styles*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Trans. by Barbara Harlow of *Les Eperons: Les Styles de Nietzsche* (Paris: Flammarion, 1978).
- Levi-Strauss, C. *Tristes tropiques*.
- Lyotard, J.-F. (1990). *Duchamp Trans/former*. Venice, CA: Lapis Press. Trans. by Ian McLeod of *Les Transformateurs Duchamp* (Paris: Editions Galilée, 1977).
- Lyotard, J.-F. (1991). *The inhuman: Reflections on time*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press. Trans. by Geoffrey Bennington and Rachel Bowlby of *L'Inhumain: Causeries sur le temps* (Paris: Galilée, 1988).
- Vattimo, G. (1992). *The transparent society*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press. Trans. by David Webb of *La società trasparente* (Italy: Garzanti Editore, 1989).

The Northern Irish conflict filmed as a freudian fable: Joe Comerford's *High Boot Benny* (1993)

GEORGIANA M. M. COLVILE (*)

She was a song that nobody sings.
She was a house ransacked by soldiers.
She was a language seldom spoken.
She was a child's purse, full of useless things.
Michael Hartnett.¹

Joe Comerford (born 1949) remains one of the real purists of the Irish cinema. Totally committed to producing films in his own country without the help of either Hollywood or the British Film Industry, he has been very productive in the meteoric but now fading 80s and 90s school of Irish Realism, in spite of severe financial setbacks, and his films have frequently been shown at international film festivals, such as Berlin, Venice and New York. He tends to deal with the socio-political problems of contemporary Ireland by focusing on its most marginal or even outcast groups and individuals, using an experimental, fragmentary technique. Since 1970, he has produced four feature films and three shorts².

High Boot Benny (1993), Comerford's most recent feature is also the the most concerned with the Northern Irish conflict and its repercussions in the South. In this incisive and highly unusual film, Comerford approaches the problem of political violence before the 1994 cease-fire obliquely and metonymically, restricting it to the marginal microcosm of a non-sectarian, alternative private

(*) Université François Rabelais, Tours, U. F. R. Anglais et Langues Étrangères Appliquées, 3, rue des Tanneurs, 37041 Tours Cedex, France.

¹ Michael Hartnett. «Death of an Irishwoman». *The Penguin Book of Contemporary Irish Poetry*. Peter Fallon & Derek Mahon, Editors. London: Penguin, 1990, p. 216.

² Comerford's other feature films are *Down the Corner* (1978), a harsh documentary on teenage unrest and unemployment in a Dublin slum; *Traveller* (1982) and *Reefer and the Model* (1988), which won the Europa Prize. His shorts are *Emtigon* (1970); *Withdrawal* (1974) and *Waterbag* (1983). He is working on a fourth titled *Rough Touch*. The feature films are all available on video.

school for boys, situated just south of the Ulster Border and run by an odd couple, a protestant nurse referred to as «the matron» (Frances Tomelty) and Father Manley (Alan Devlin), a catholic priest (or ex-priest?) and former missionary just returned from working on a Native American reservation. The protagonist Benny (Marc O'Shea), an inarticulate teenage former delinquent from the North with a troubled past, has taken refuge at the school, where he works as a handyman, having adopted Father Manley and the Matron as parents.

Like Jim Sheridan in *The Field* (1989) and Thaddeus o'Sullivan in *December Bride* (1989), Comerford chose a cliché Irish setting of a beautiful but bleak and isolated coastal village, surrounded by a grey-blue amniotic sea, enhancing the beauty by using melancholy Irish music and the bleakness by filming in late autumn. The landscape provides Benny's natural outdoor environment as well as hiding places for militants from both sides, blurs the artificial legal frontier and reveals Comerford's «strong sense of poetry»³.

The limited action of the film revolves around a very Irish trinity of Death, Sex and Religion. Dialogue is used sparingly and the film's effectiveness mainly derives from its purely cinematic qualities and carefully crafted self-conscious structure. A written «pre-text» is, however, projected onto the screen before the credits; at first glance it reads like simple uncoded background information but soon the absurdity of the message becomes apparent:

This story is set on the South side of the border which divides Northern Ireland (under British rule) from the rest of the island of Ireland.

The IRA are fighting to remove the Border, while the British Army, backed by local and civilian forces are fighting to maintain it.

The prologue sequence which follows is framed by two road signs, spatially marking off the no-man's land area of the actual border, the first reads: «Army Border Control Ahead» and the second «Hoping you make a return visit to Northern Ireland». The prologue is filmed within this space and before the credits, simultaneously showing Benny's rabbit-trapping activities on the hillside by the border patrol post and the patrolmen stopping a car below, in fragmented and frequently high or low angle shots. During the prologue (literally pro-logos), the sound-track is limited to the clanking traps, the captured rabbit's squeals and a brief intercom exchange between the patrolmen and the driver of the stopped car. As the car leaves and Benny scrambles up the hillside about his business, a voice on the radio can be heard announcing an IRA murder, whereupon the film's title appears on the screen followed by a shot of the local seascape and stormy romantic clouds, accompanied for the first time by Gaye McIntyre's slightly jarring music and then the credits slowly punctuate Benny's walk back towards the school.

During the prologue, the camera focuses mainly on Benny, who operates in silence. The patrolmen's and the radio announcer's voices can be heard, but unclearly, like background noises. Benny doesn't utter a word until after the credits, when the RUC men corner him in the barn, where he has just found the IRA's victim. Even then he only answers questions by repeating: «I'm not an informer». One official reminds Benny, for the audience's benefit, that he had to leave the North because of petty thefts and probable incest: «You were too much for your sister.» Benny's reluctance to talk reflects this shaky legal situation but also restricts him to a prelinguistic zone, the preoedipal phase, when the infant believes in osmosis with the mother. Infantilism is established at many levels in the film and the use of language tends to be minimalized. Death and violence occur three times, always as the direct result of talking/informing: Manley informs the IRA about the caretaker being an informer for local forces, a deaf and dumb girl denounces Benny in her broken lingo to the IRA and a second priest and teacher is the probable source for the border authorities regarding Manley's IRA connections and the cause of his and the matron's murder.

³ See Terry Byrne. *Power in the Eye/An Introduction to Contemporary Irish Film*. Lanham, MD. & London: Scarecrow Press, 1997, p. 157 «The hallmark of Comerford's films has been a strong sense of poetry».

The main part of the film is framed by violent deaths. First that of the rabbit, trapped and gutted by Benny during the prologue, then Benny's symmetrical discovery of the school caretaker, who had been trapped like an animal in the barn, killed, bled and mutilated by the IRA – we learn later that he was an informer. The parallel montage was probably inspired by the symmetrical deaths of the rabbit and the aviator in Jean Renoir's *La Règle du jeu* (1939), but here the actual killings are not shown, only the gory result. At the end of the film the metaphor is extended to the butchering of Manley and the matron by Northern law forces. The two funerals, the caretaker's at the beginning and the two school principals' at the end, conducted by the treacherous second priest, are filmed almost identically, providing the frame with a mechanically ritual, religious aspect.

More such catholic references, filmed in a deliberately subversive manner, punctuate the film. The characters are basically uncommunicative, Benny in particular, although he enacts a visual pun transgressing and incarnating the communion Signifieds of body and blood. During the prologue, Benny smears the «Hoping you make a return visit to Northern Ireland» sign with the blood of the rabbit and shortly afterwards he discovers the dead caretaker's underpants, bloodied by sexual mutilation, mockingly fitted onto a sheep, an animal with strong Christian connotations. Blood creates a link between violence, religion and sex. When Benny meets two teenage girls on the hillside, the deaf and dumb Dorothy and her friend the orphan, who, with the matron are the only females at the school, they are carrying bags of blood for a wounded IRA man and they teasingly ask Benny for a kiss and a screw. He rejects their advances and defies the IRA by stomping on and bursting the bags of blood, making it evocative of menstruation and female sexuality as well as political violence.

Religious symbolism returns with the IRA's subsequent punishment of Benny by tarring and feathering him and leaving him tied to a telephone pole with his arms outstretched, like Christ on the cross. Dorothy's role switches from Judas (she denounces the blood episode to the IRA) to Mary Magdalene at the foot of the cross (she later gets help for Benny and seems to want to look after him), to a substitute mother-figure and guide after the two final murders (she leads him to the IRA as to a new family).

The complex character of Manley condenses the three main facets of the film: he is a priest, sexually involved with the matron and in spite of the school's apolitical front, is also an informer for the IRA. Furthermore the male-female relationship between Manley and the unnamed matron is typical of Comerford's films. In the shorts and the feature *Reefer and the Model*, he uses a double standard to film men and women, ostensibly parodying the classical active versus passive, bearer of the look versus object to be looked at configuration denounced by Laura Mulvey⁴ and adding a verbal versus visual opposition – men as talkers, women as images and often nameless, like the matron. Although the female Imaginary versus male Symbolic pattern seems clear-cut, sometimes Comerford's female characters become involved with IRA violence, like Reefer's old mother in *RATM* and Dorothy and the orphan in *HBB*. The obsession with female sexuality and its connection with political brutality tends to characterize most Irish films about the Northern troubles, like Pat o'Connor's *Cal* (1984), Neil Jordan's *Angel* (1982) and *The Crying Game* (1992), Terry George's *Some Mother's Son* (1995) and Jim Sheridan's *The Boxer* (1997) to name only a few. According to Irish film critic Luke Gibbons:

... in some of the finest achievements in contemporary Irish cinema and the visual arts, allegory and signification derive their power from their dense connections with the physicality of the flesh, and in particular, the maternal body.⁵

«The maternal body» looms large in *High Boot Benny*.

The central mother figure of the matron is represented as a woman in her early forties, still attractive and trying to get pregnant. The school was apparently her idea and financed by her. Upon

⁴ Laura Mulvey. «Visual Pleasure and the Narrative Cinema». *Screen* Vol. 16, n.º 3, Autumn 1975.

⁵ Luke Gibbons. *Transformations in Irish Culture*. Cork University Press, 1996, p. 20.

hearing about Manley being an informer she exclaims «I thought my school could be neutral!»: both her institution and her hypothetical child come across as points of resistance against the ongoing violence. The action takes place during the last day or two of the school term before the Christmas break. Shortly after the tarring and feathering episode, Father Manley dismisses the class for the holidays, so that the oedipal triangle constituted by him, the Matron and Benny remain alone. As a result, the previous group class scenes, which I'll come back to, are contrasted with a series of intimate, often sexual confrontations.

One of these precedes the class dismissal scene and frames it with another parallel one. Both take place between Benny and the matron. Their relationship embodies Freud's definition of primary narcissism: «...a human being has originally two sexual objects – himself and the woman who nurses him –»⁶. In the first she brings the trembling battered Benny a cup of tea and a hot water bottle. A series of shots in accelerated montage convey her difficulty in cleaning him up, metonymically focussing on fragments of his tarred body, hair, hands etc... She then promises to work on his damaged hair the next day, inquires after his genitals: «Are your privates alright?» and gives him a shirt of Manley's to wear, incestuously dressing him up in the father's clothes.

The final class scene follows, during which the matron summons Benny to tell his story, to illustrate her lesson on the horrors of war. Manley then enters, taking on the paternal role, interrupting the mother-son exchange and forbidding Benny's confession, so the matron and Benny leave him to wrap up the last class and send the children home for the holidays.

A shot of the maternal seascape precedes the second part of the mother-son tête-à-tête, during which Benny passively allows the matron to continue cleaning the more intimate parts of his tar-soiled body. She tells him she has found a poem in his trouser pocket, he replies it was for her, enhancing the oedipal rapport between them. Seeing himself in the mirror Benny says: «My head looks too big for my body», which is less reminiscent of the mirror-stage than of regression into infancy and the mother's womb. The name Benny sounds like Baby and intertextually evokes two infantile literary characters, Steinbeck's Lennie and Faulkner's Benjy. The mirror stage is not to be ruled out however, since the whole film, during which Benny's main role is that of a witness, silently moving about and framed by doors, windows etc..., his body frequently shown in fragments, creates a structure reminiscent of «the body in bits and pieces» hallucination preceding or following an ill-assumed mirror-stage, according to Lacan.

The next scene, in the kitchen, completes the family triangle. Manley chops up and cooks Benny's totemic rabbit; the three of them sit down to eat it and drink wine – again the body and blood of the communion, after Manley has said grace. Benny soon expresses a coded desire to escape often reiterated during the latter part of the film to «go and feed the animals» and allows his pet, a fetish- or partial-object-like ferret, to scamper about the dinner table. His «parents» rebuke him like a small child, telling him to remove the animal and wash his hands. The camera then shifts to the landscape and to various objects, notably a pair of boots, not Benny's but the matron's who will later use them to arouse Manley.

Two bed scenes follow. First Benny goes into the matron's room and gets into her bed. A clever double focalization is maintained. Benny, regressive as ever, reminds her of her promise to fix his tarred hair and seems to want no more than a motherly cuddle; the matron, however, sees him as a potential stud and undresses, whereupon he «goes to feed the animals». In the middle of this scene the camera cuts to Manley tossing and turning in his own bed, which completes the triple picture of frustrated desire.

Next, the matron joins Manley and climbs into bed with him. In a brief conversation she voices her fear of outside violence and her compensatory desire to have a child. He replies that

⁶ Sigmund Freud. «On Narcissism: an Introduction». Selections in *Freud on Women a Reader*. Edited by Elisabeth Young-Bruehl. New York & London: W. W. Norton & Co., 1990, p. 192.

they already have Benny, whom she then dismisses as «bad and vicious», no doubt as a reaction to the boy's previous sexual rejection. They discuss the sterility of their union, she admits to having once had an abortion (a line of provocation in an Irish film), revealing him to be the infertile one and showing the irony of his name. Meanwhile the ubiquitous Benny is seen creeping about, looking through various windows and other openings, like a child at the keyhole, positing the parental bed sequence as a primal scene and referring to the «primitive cinema», in which Judith Mayne recognizes «heterogeneous modes of pleasure and identification»⁷, that reemerge in postmodern experimental cinema.

At this point the image track becomes increasingly fragmented, the pace quickens with frequent cross-cuttings, creating an almost holographic effect of chaos, fear and pent-up desire. The matron's initial words to Manley: «We're in danger, aren't we?» become justified, as soldiers begin to appear outside the house and in the barn, seen only by Benny and the spectators. An interplay of awareness and unawareness between the characters of each other's presence and a Russian-doll-like triple gaze sets in: Benny watching both the soldiers outside and the couple inside from the rafters, the soldiers, unaware of Benny, looking in through the windows at the couple, detecting the boots and the couple hearing noises, aware of Benny's presence, oblivious of the soldiers... Manley gets up and checks but finds only the ferret. When he returns, the matron has donned the boots which become a link between their sexual activity, the approaching soldiers' violence and Benny's delinquent attire. As the couple embark on an obviously familiar sado-masochistic ritual and come close to consummation, the camera switches back and forth between Benny who, having found an IRA gun is trying to get inside to warn the couple and the prowling soldiers closing in on the house. Benny arrives too late. He reveals the truth about Manley, causing the matron to lose her illusions about the school and her lover before she dies. Poor Benny watches from the rafters as the soldiers brutally shoot his adopted parents and leave them to bleed to death. A different set of officials then appear, British probably, feigning concern for the couple but doing nothing to help them.

The Outside-inside dichotomy creates a *mise en abyme* between the thwarted oedipal family romance inside and the death-drive outside aiming at the destruction of any marginal institution, the failure of the one and the success of the other having been triggered by Manley's tragic flaw. Mother Ireland, like the matron is left there bleeding and a mockery of the Holy Trinity and Freud's oedipal triangle are conveyed through a chopped up picture of infantile activities all linked by partial objects, such as guns and boots. Comerford's vision comes close to Deleuze and Guattari's idea of a schizo-culture, in which desire flows through a series of simultaneously functional and disfunctional, connected and disconnected machines, all plugged into a vast socio-political apparatus.⁸ The marginal characters and their desires are all part of the Irish political situation, here the North-South, British-Irish, Protestant-Catholic conflicts. Comerford is careful not to take sides: the RUC and their local supporters and the IRA both perpetrate their guilty violence in the dark, undercover. The latter live in a cave like prehistoric men and their masks and dance-like movements seem to mimick the early 1913-14 *Fantomas* series by Feuillade, prehistoric cinema, so to speak.

The school community is presented as a viable alternative, victimized by the majority's neurotic and infantile intolerance of difference. Furthermore Comerford's interesting use of «primitive» Native American culture and totem animals comes close to applying some of Freud's

⁷ Judith Mayne. *The Woman at the Keyhole: Feminism and Women's Cinema*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990, p. 159.

⁸ See Gilles Deleuze & Félix Guattari. *L'Anti-Oedipe*. Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1975, in particular the chapter on «les machines désirantes» (7-59) and «appendice bilan-programme pour machines désirantes» (463-487).

theories concerning «The Infantile Recurrence of Totemism»⁹ to the Northern Irish situation. The most obvious totem animal is the rabbit. Its name invites a double Freudian pun: to be slaughtered like rabbits and to multiply like rabbits, further pointing to the juxtaposition of sex and violence. Benny raises domestic rabbits and also traps wild ones, which he and the others eat, feeding off the fatherland. The sheep decked out in the mutilated caretaker's drawers condenses religion with castration; it is also an emblematic sacrificial animal, close to the «scapegoat» and its bleating reiterates Benny's name. According to Freud:

The relation of the child to animals has much in common with that of primitive man (...) the child unhesitatingly attributes full equality to animals; he probably feels himself more closely related to the animal than to the undoubtedly mysterious adult, in the freedom with which he acknowledges his needs» (904).

Benny, though a late teenager, behaves like a child and the presence of adults makes him want to «go and feed the animals».

His smearing wild rabbit blood on the border sign at the beginning of the film evokes a tribal war ritual and introduces the Indian theme. The other priest's failure to teach the children history by showing them a stilted British-made film is countered by Manley's approach. The latter uses his experience on an Indian reservation to teach the Irish orphans Indian tribal dances, chants and body-painting; in one classroom scene, a little boy sings a song about Irish immigrants to America becoming part of the Indian nation, which equates the genocide of the Irish by the English with that of the Indians by the Americans. Manley maintains the children in a «primitive» space, where they sing, dance and mime but seldom talk. Before dying, he tells the matron he should have stayed with his «squaw», whom the boots ritual possibly refers back to. Benny, like a child playing Indians, asks the mother figure to fix his «Mohawk» hairstyle after being tarred and feathered. However, here again Comerford tends to subvert Freud's rapprochement between «savages» and «neurotics». The alternative school shows up the neurosis of the «civilized adults» on the outside and their murderous activities, by purging the children's violent tendencies through play consisting of acting out «primitive» war rituals.

The use of written signs characterizes the early silent cinema, which Comerford emulates at the beginning of HBB as we have seen. The end of the credits is followed by a close-up of the school sign: «The MOUNT/School for Boys/Independence in Education is a Dangerous Thing.» Shortly before the final murders it is shown again, briefly, like a prophecy about to be fulfilled. The word Mount condenses the mountainside in the background, the higher perspective of learning, the New Testament Mount, the sexual verb to mount, the female «mound of Venus» and death (mound as tomb). The school, while it lasts, opposes the eros of a mother-dominated prelinguistic infancy as an alternative to the thanatos of the father – orchestrated war-mongering infantilism. After the mother's death, the action moves outside, to the site of funerals and killings and Benny's regression comes full circle as he integrates the IRA's womb-like cave. Comerford's neo-Freudian allegorical approach to pacifism, like the school, provides a powerful and perhaps dangerous alternative to mainstream epics, such as Neil Jordan's *Michael Collins* (1995).

⁹ Sigmund Freud. «The Infantile Recurrence of Totemism». *Totem and Taboo*. In *The Basic Writings of Sigmund Freud*, edited by Dr. A. A. Brill. New York: Random House, The Modern Library, 1938, 1966, pp. 884-930.

The «Secret at the Bottom of It All»: Freud's Cameo in *The Day the Earth Stood Still*

MARCIA GREEN (*)

«Do you think they'll ever find him?»
«I don't know, Bobby. I'm inclined to doubt it.»

The extraterrestrial creatures and events of science fiction films have been interpreted as having political and/or religious overtones; they are often considered as cautionary tales about the dangerous direction in which scientific and technological innovations are headed. Though these sci-fi creatures come from outside our universe, part of their attraction is that they resonate within our unconscious, resurrect in us uncanny experiences, and exploit our paranoid tendencies. The science fiction classic, *The Day the Earth Stood Still* (1951), is one film which can be interpreted in all of these ways. However, what might actually come closest to helping us understand this film is a psychoanalytic interpretation, not only because it deals with the uncanny and with paranoia but because Freud himself has a significant and profound role in this film as an uncannily-placed subliminal suggestion.

From the very beginning of the film, both Robert Wise, the director, and Bernard Herrmann, the composer, invoke the uncanny. The opening sequence focuses simultaneously on a galaxy of stars and planets accompanied by the eerie and strange sounds of interplanetary music – a music the ancient Greek philosophers alluded to as the «music of the spheres»: a music so powerful that it held the celestial bodies in their place. Next, we view a spaceship flying over and eventually landing in Washington, D.C. Aboard the ship are its two occupants, Klaatu, the spaceman, and his robot companion, Gort. When Klaatu finally emerges from the spaceship, he is accompanied by that same eerie sounding extraterrestrial musical voice. This alien creature looks human but its clothes prevent us from knowing its gender and the translucent helmet prevents us from seeing its

(*) San Francisco State University, College of Humanities, 1600 Holloway Avenue, San Francisco, CA 94312, USA.

face except for its two eyes. The voice resonates with human intonations when it announces to the anxious crowd and the readied army: «We have come to visit you in peace and with good will!» Perhaps thinking that this statement would quell any paranoia, Klaatu reaches into his space suit and removes a projectile-shaped object and directs it out towards the crowd. When the object telescopes out a frightened soldier discharges his weapon, wounding Klaatu in the arm and destroying the interplanetary gift which could have helped study life on other planets. This unfortunate incident brings to life the robot Gort who lumberingly exits the spaceship to powerful and menacing music which also contains the now familiar eerie otherworldly sound. Gort, like Klaatu, resembles a genderless human form but is much larger and more physically and musically threatening. His helmet consists of a visor that raises spontaneously to momentarily reveal a dark abyss. Concurrently, his accompanying musical voice changes timbre to an uncannily focused disconcerting sound. Instantly, from out of the abyss a brilliant ray of light fixes itself on the military weapons and to the discordant clashes of his musical voice, Gort proceeds to dissolve their weapons, leaving the soldiers unharmed. At Klaatu's command, «Gort, Deglet o vrosco!» the robot ceases its demolition.

Within the first moments of this film and in a most economical fashion, we have experienced the uncanny: uncanny creatures, uncanny voices and sounds, an uncanny language, and uncanny powers – all these events certainly invoke the presence of Freud and his essay, «The 'Uncanny'», where he writes that the uncanny «is in reality nothing new or alien, but something which is familiar and old-established in the mind and which has become alienated from it only through the process of repression» (241). Freud uses the E.T.A. Hoffmann story, «The Sandman», to illustrate his theory. In the story the robot Olympia is mistaken for a human being. She is described as «statuesque and soulless» with eyes «utterly devoid of life». Her movements are too measured and her voice is disagreeable because of its brilliance. The characters best convey their anxiety concerning the mechanical doll when they explain, «We felt quite afraid of this Olympia, and did not like to have anything to do with her; she seemed to us to be only acting like a living creature, and as if there was some secret at the bottom of it all» (Hoffmann 208). In the film, when we first see Klaatu, we may perhaps think that he is a robot. His eyes, of course, eventually betray some affinity with human beings and this affinity becomes even more evident when, after he is wounded, we notice his bloodstained shoulder. Having projected onto Klaatu a humanness – that is, we have found out that he is vulnerable to our weapons – we are now confronted with the wrath of Gort: the *real* robot. His eyes are also «utterly devoid of life»; and, additionally, they embody a deadly stare and he, too, acts «like a living creature» but with a pre-programmed agenda. A significant element in Freud's interpretation is the emphasis on the role the eyes play. Freud points out that in the story there is an intimate and recurring connection between the loss of one's eyes and castration. In the film, Klaatu gets wounded by the frightened soldier who symbolically castrates him – the phallic gift lies broken on the ground. In turn, Gort, with his razor sharp beam, retaliates. He, too, symbolically castrates the soldiers by dissolving their weapons – leaving them unarmed but unharmed.

Another theme which Freud observes as the uncanny is the *double*. He notes that uncanny themes can also be «concerned with the phenomenon of the 'double' which appears in every shape and in every degree of development. Thus we have characters who are to be considered identical because they look alike. This relation is accentuated by mental processes leaping from one of these characters to another – by what we should call telepathy –, so that the one possesses knowledge, feelings and experience in common with the other. Or it is marked by the fact that the subject identifies himself with someone else, so that he is in doubt as to which his self is, or substitutes the extraneous self for his own. In other words, there is a doubling, dividing and interchanging of the self» (234). In the film, Klaatu's unpredictable movement may have conveyed a message of aggression to the soldier who instinctively fired his weapon. What is uncanny about this situation is that Klaatu's eyes blink at the moment the gift he is presenting telescopes outward. This reflex doubles that of the soldier's whose eyes also blink when he fires the gun. The blinking of the eye may have been the sense of the uncanny which the soldier read as being possibly Klaatu's intention

of discharging some kind of weapon. However, this uncanny action plus the fact that Klaatu now lies wounded on the ground serves to humanize Klaatu. Even without being able to see his face we have projected onto his translucent mask an image of ourselves. After he has been transported to the hospital, we finally see Klaatu's face and body. He could easily double for a human being. Since no one knows what he looks like – except for the hospital staff and Mr. Henley, the secretary to the president – his relative anonymity allows him to escape from the hospital in order to «get out among [the] people [and] become familiar with the basis for their strange unreasoning attitudes». However, Klaatu gets to lead a doubly «double» life because he assumes another human's identity. He becomes Mr. Carpenter.

He blends in so well that he has no trouble getting accommodations in a boarding house even after being thoroughly scrutinized by all the occupants. His new landlady conjectures that he must have traveled over a long distance because, according to her observation, he has a «New England» accent. In fact, he so convincingly doubles for a human that Mrs. Benson, after consultation with her beau, Mr. Stevens, readily leaves her son Bobby under the watchful eye of Mr. Carpenter. Bobby, too, finds Mr. Carpenter an amusingly strange and likable person whose real identity may be that of an FBI agent looking for the spaceman, whom Bobby describes as having a «big square head with three great big eyes». Has Klaatu successfully communicated his humanness to these people or have the characters because of their transference projected onto him their humanness?

Klaatu's mission to earth is essentially to have us realize that by using atomic power and rockets we may be headed for interplanetary destruction. Apparently the more advanced civilizations had gone through the same experience only to find out that their own destruction was immanent. In an effort to guard against their possible future irresponsible actions, they have created a race of robots to insure the peace of the planets. Klaatu therefore has come here to warn us and to offer a solution. He essentially wants to save the earth from either self immolation or from destruction by the other planets through Gort.

Anyone familiar with the case of the psychotic Dr. Schreber already knows that there is a significant connection between **psy-fi** and **sci-chosis**. Relying on the heavily censored memoirs and writings of Dr. Schreber to supply the necessary information which could be used to interpret Schreber's mental condition and through his analysis of Schreber's writings, Freud developed his theory, «On the Mechanism of Paranoia». Freud's «Psychoanalytic Notes Upon an Autobiographical Account of a Case of Paranoia» (1911) is well known as the case of «The Psychotic Doctor Schreber».

One of the most obvious connections is that Klaatu and Schreber have a similar mission – both are concerned with saving the world. Schreber believes that he can only do this if he is first transformed into a woman. He also believed that by being emasculated he could then be impregnated by divine rays which would enable him to create a new race of men. Klaatu's gender is initially obscured by his space suit (it is rather shiny and cinched at the waist) and his helmet does conceal his face. He is much smaller than his ten foot traveling partner, Gort – who is more aggressive, has a penetrating ray, and wears a loin cloth. The only phallic object we know Klaatu possesses is the projectile-shaped gift whose telescopic properties are threatening and it therefore was destroyed. In the hospital we finally see Klaatu's face and its features, though still somewhat uncanny, incline towards being masculine. But when he is addressed by Mr. Henley, the secretary to the president, as Mr. Klaatu, he replies, «Just, Klaatu». When Klaatu assumes Mr. Carpenter's identity he still shuns the prefix «Mr.» when he introduces himself to the rooming house occupants by saying, «My name is Carpenter».

His maleness is unwarrantedly reinforced by Tom Stevens who is jealous about Mr. Carpenter's closeness with Bobby – thinking it may be an attempt by Carpenter to woo away Bobby's mother Helen. What Tom doesn't realize is that Klaatu is only interested in Helen because of her compassionate, understanding, and nurturing nature. Twice in the film, Klaatu has intimate conversations with Helen in dark, secluded and secure locations. When the world is made to stand still, he makes sure that he and Helen will be trapped in an elevator. He takes this opportunity to reveal his true identity as Klaatu and asks for her help in accomplishing his mission on earth. In a subsequent scene, right

before he dies, he entrusts her with the famous phrase, «Klaatu, barada nikto!» and she travels subterraneously to reach Gort and issue this command. Gort then picks her up and carries her into the spaceship where after he energizes himself with a flashing beam of light, he leaves her in order to retrieve Klaatu's dead body. In the following sacrosanct scene, Helen witnesses Gort carry Klaatu's lifeless body in his arms and lay him on a table. As Gort darkens the room, lights encircle the area around Klaatu's head and to the accompaniment of a pulsating, unbearably intense, constantly rising high frequency, Helen witnesses Klaatu's reanimation. She has witnessed his death and his rebirth but has never once even embraced him nor he her. Is Helen the woman Klaatu needs to become in order to secure earth's salvation? Perhaps. Because in the final sequence (before he reboards his spaceship to leave) there is a wonderfully touching moment when Klaatu's last look and gesture are directly focused towards Helen. His tribute could be interpreted as his acknowledgment of her ability to make the correct decision in saving the earth. In this way, Klaatu does not directly need to become a woman to save the world but Klaatu's gesture does point to his preference for Helen as his choice of successfully carrying out his mission.

Schreber writes, «I became clearly aware that the order of things imperatively demanded my emasculation, whether I personally liked it or no, and that no *reasonable* course lay open to me but to reconcile myself to the thought of being transformed into a woman. The further consequence of my emasculation could, of course, only be my impregnation by divine rays to the end that a new race of men might be created» (in Freud, 20-21). Klaatu admits that he, and an interplanetary cooperative effort, have created a race of robots whose sole purpose is to travel through space and preserve peace. He tells us, «In matters of aggression, we have given them absolute power over us. This power cannot be revoked. At the first sign of violence they act automatically against the aggressor. The penalty for their action is too terrible to risk. As a result we live in peace.» Has Klaatu been castrated? We have seen the precision with which Gort uses his cycloptic ray. Or has Klaatu, like Schreber, after reaching his «heterosexual object-choice», capitalized on his «homosexual tendencies» which have been «merely deflected» and «put to new uses» as a «love of mankind in general». For, as Freud concludes from his work on Schreber, «it is not irrelevant to note that it is precisely manifest homosexuals, and among them again precisely those that set themselves against an indulgence in sensual acts, who are distinguished by taking a particularly active share in the general interests of humanity – interests which have themselves sprung from a sublimation of erotic instincts» (61).

Klaatu and Gort not only have uncanny means of communicating but it is obvious that one of Gort's duties is to protect Klaatu. Helen underestimates the strong bond between Klaatu and Gort because she can't believe a robot could do anything without first being ordered into action by a human. Klaatu, on the other hand, as Gort's creator, has insured both Gort's survival and his own, by giving Gort special powers and impenetrable skin. (Gort and the spaceship are made of the same materials.) No earthly constraint can hold him. The «stronger than steel» plastic encasement placed around him by the army only takes moments for Gort to obliterate and more importantly it has not prevented Gort from somehow receiving a telepathic message: KLAATU...DEAD...DO SOMETHING! For the first time, Gort retaliates by destroying both the guns and the soldiers. This threat of destruction and the potential power of this robot race to destroy the earth correlates with Schreber's terrifying visions about the end of the world. His theories concerning this event include an ice age caused by the «withdrawal of the sun», an «earthquake», or «devastating pestilences». Whatever the cause «the end of the world was the consequence» (in Freud, 69). But Klaatu is just as paranoid about us as we are about him. His planet fears that our aggression, egocentrism, naïveté and narcissism will destroy the earth and the other planets as well. He has been observing us make the same mistakes that his planet made which eventually led to the creation of the robot race. Klaatu has «been there and done that» and our actions have awakened in him a repressed past: a past which necessitated the creation of his interplanetary superego – Gort. And like Schreber, who believed that «the world must come to an end because his ego was attracting all the rays to itself», then the earth is doing an excellent job of attracting the rays of Gort (Freud, 78-79).

It was Schreber's belief that in certain «exceptional instances that [God] would enter into relations with particular, highly gifted persons» (22). This communication to which Schreber refers is the «basic language» (23). It is described as a series of nerve connections which allow the unique communication to take place. Though Klaatu's planet has been monitoring our radio signals in order to learn the earth's languages, Gort does not seem to have been programmed to understand English or for that matter to speak at all. Instead, his actions speak for him and in that sense his lack of an audible voice intensifies his horror. When it becomes necessary for Klaatu to plan the event which becomes the day the earth stood still, he must get back into the spaceship and communicate with his planet. To do this, he needs two things. He needs Gort's help and in order to get Gort's help, he needs to borrow Bobby's flashlight. To obtain Bobby's flashlight, Klaatu fabricates a story that the lights in his room have gone out. Bobby's curiosity is piqued when he notices that Mr. Carpenter turns his room lights off right before he shuts the door on his way out. A curious Bobby follows Mr. Carpenter to the spaceship. Hiding in the shadows, Bobby watches in astonishment as Mr. Carpenter uses the borrowed flashlight to communicate with Gort. Klaatu flashes a beam of light on a wall directly across from Gort. The first series of flashes causes Gort to turn around and face in the direction of Klaatu. Klaatu then continues to flash the beam directly into Gort's helmeted face. Gort next moves towards the direction of two military guards and proceeds to render them unconscious. Bobby continues to watch as Mr. Carpenter walks up the ramp and into the spaceship. Bobby's suspicions are confirmed: Mr. Carpenter *does* have a double identity. Throughout this scene, Bobby remains immobilized while the robot becomes alive – and just like Dorothy, in *The Wizard of Oz*, who all along had the power to go home by clicking her ruby red shoes, Bobby perhaps realizes too late that with his flashlight he had the power to communicate with and control the robot.

Gort responds either intuitively, telepathically, or directly to Klaatu's language. But there is another kind of communication which happens within the confines of the spaceship. What is particularly uncanny about the way the spaceship functions is that nothing inside of it is operated by touch. Klaatu simply waves his hands in front of the electromagnetic fields and things happen: doors open, lights illuminate, generators begin functioning and communications systems are activated. This visual representation of the uncanny is reinforced musically through Bernard Herrmann's use of an electronic instrument known as the theremin. We have already heard this instrument's sound in the film: in the opening scene in outer space; accompanying the entrances of Klaatu and Gort; and, most chillingly, during the retraction of Gort's visor. What is so unusual about this instrument? The sound, of course. But how do you play the instrument to get that eerie sound? You don't touch it!

Let me briefly explain. The theremin, an electronic instrument invented by the Russian scientist Lev Sergeyevich Termen around 1920, basically consists of an upright rectangularly-shaped wooden box containing two oscillators and a speaker. On the top right hand side is a vertical antenna and on the left side of the box is a horizontally-looped antenna. The player holds both hands in the air space around these antennas. Moving the right hand towards the vertical antenna will raise the pitch and moving it away will lower the pitch. The left hand hovers over the looped antenna to control the volume. The closer the hand comes to the antenna the softer the volume. It seems to create music out of thin air. The only other thing which might come close to emulating the theremin's sound and the manner of the production of sound is a human voice. Perhaps this is why it was originally called the thereminvox and the aetherphone. To put it succinctly, the theremin is played identically to the way Klaatu and Gort operate the inside of the spaceship. It may even be conjectured that watching this scene is what inspired Bernard Herrmann to choose the theremin: when we factor in that Herrmann's «lifelong fascination with psychology (particularly deviant behavior) took root in Freud» (Smith 14), and that the scene inside the spaceship accompanied by the theremin evokes the uncanny, how can we not help being reminded of a Freudian influence? Is not the manner in which psychoanalysis functions similar? The analyst, unlike the physician, does not have to touch the patient during the examination in order for the processes to work.

Besides the paranoia inherent in this film, the real reason for using Freud's analysis of Schreber's case is that Schreber was the only one of Freud's analysands with whom he was not directly involved. Through analyzing Schreber's writings, Freud formed his theory of paranoia. *The Day the Earth Stood Still* invokes the presence of Freud in a manner similar to Freud's involvement with the Schreber case. A subliminal inclusion of Freud is something that would resonate well with Klaatu. He comes close to articulating Freudian sentiments as he voices his opinion about the spaceman phenomenon to a news reporter outside the spaceship. He manages to say, «I'm fearful when I see people substituting fear for reason...» before he is abruptly cut off – repressed, you might say. Obviously, the reporter has had a negative transference to Klaatu and he quickly removes the empowering microphone.

During their daytime visit to the spaceship, amidst the newspaper boys shouting that the spaceman is still at large, Bobby is prompted to ask, «Do you think they'll ever find him?» To which Mr. Carpenter responds, «I don't know, Bobby. I'm inclined to doubt it». Soon after this exchange they are outside the house of Professor Barnhardt, «the smartest man in the world», only to find that he is not at home. When Bobby exclaims, «Gee, I betcha this is where he works», Klaatu cannot resist looking inside. There is a large chalkboard with a lengthy scientific equation written on it. Around the wood frame perimeter of the chalkboard are tacked on warning signs: DO NOT TOUCH! DO NOT ERASE! As the camera further pans the board from left to right we see that the warning – DO NOT ERASE! – is also written on the board. The long formula ends in frustration as expressed by the symbols: O! O!! O!!!!?

A close-up of Klaatu's face is framed by the window pane. His expression is affectionate and mildly amused. It is directed towards a colleague who, in his opinion, has done the best he can with limited human brain power. We learn that Professor Barnhardt is working on a problem in celestial mechanics and that he is having trouble finding the answer. Klaatu's compulsion to leave Barnhardt a «calling card» compels him to break open the doors, ignore the warning signs and write on the board. As Bobby's eyes follow a shadow moving across the board he sees a woman has entered the room. «How dare you write on that black board! Do you realize that the Professor has been working on that problem for weeks?» Klaatu replies, «He'll solve it in no time now». After handing the woman a piece of paper containing his name and address, he turns, walks out of the office and closes the door behind him. The woman advances to the board, picks up an eraser and just as she is about to erase his computations, Klaatu reappears just in time to admonish her action. «I wouldn't erase that. The Professor needs it badly».

This multilayered scene is ripe for psychoanalytic interpretation not only because Klaatu has symbolically broken into the mind of Professor Barnhardt in an attempt to help him solve his problem but because he does this in the presence of Freud. When Klaatu enters the office there is a strategically-placed picture of Freud hanging on the wall next to the door on Klaatu's left. All at once the scene becomes uncanny, and psychoanalytically charged. But why does Barnhardt, a Nobel Prize winning physicist, have a picture of Freud hanging in his office? To make Klaatu feel guilt about his actions? Or to make Klaatu aware of his own feelings? I wonder whether Klaatu would even recognize the picture since earlier when he and Bobby visited the Lincoln Memorial, Klaatu had no idea who Lincoln was. What really matters is that once we see Freud's picture we know who Freud is and once we recognize his presence in this film, his image echoes throughout. Without being conscious of it, Klaatu has arguably already been in the presence of «the smartest man in the world». Even Klaatu's method of inquiry emulates Freud's process of psychoanalysis. Klaatu has analyzed a part of Barnhardt's mind by examining his formulaic writing and, like psychoanalysis, Klaatu does not give Professor Barnhardt the answer to his problem; instead, he guides the Professor towards discovering the solution for himself! If Klaatu's plan works (and it does) then Professor Barnhardt will ask to meet him and both of their problems might be resolved.

When they finally meet in person in Professor Barnhardt's office, the whole tenor of their conversation takes on a new level of meaning when we consider it is taking place in Freud's presence. While the two characters speak, Freud's picture hovers in the background. Klaatu is

surprised that Professor Barnhardt has not yet found the answer and he proceeds to point out a substitution of expressions and guarantees that the effect on the other terms is negligible. «With variations of parameters [he points] – this is the answer». But the ever scientifically-minded Professor Barnhardt asks, «How can you be so sure? Have you tested this theory?» Perhaps perplexed that Professor Barnhardt has not yet figured out who he really is, Klaatu provocatively responds, «I find it works well enough to get me from one planet to another». Professor Barnhardt looks puzzled as he hears these words and the astounding ones that follow – «I am Klaatu». When Barnhardt dismisses the military guard outside his office, Klaatu remarks, «You have faith, Professor Barnhardt». But Barnhardt gently reminds him that, «It isn't faith that makes good science, Mr. Klaatu. It's curiosity». Klaatu explains the dilemma that has sent him on this mission to earth. From «scientific observation» he knows that we have discovered «a rudimentary kind of atomic power and that we are experimenting with rockets». As long as we kept the fighting among ourselves, with our primitive weapons, there was no interplanetary concern. However, our experimentation with new scientific advancements –

atomic power + rockets = a threat to the other planets

– will not be tolerated.

Since Klaatu's efforts through official governmental channels were not successful, he sees the Professor as a last resort. Barnhardt's idea is to have Klaatu meet with a group of scientists that he is calling together. But Barnhardt realizes that, «It is not enough to have men of science. We scientists are too often ignored or misunderstood. We must get leaders from every field: the finest minds in the world». And when the Einsteinian-looking Professor Barnhardt (played by Sam Jaffe) articulates this thought, his sentiments recall the correspondence between Freud and Einstein – «Why War?» – which is also a topic of this movie.

In his letter to Freud, 30 July, 1932, Einstein writes, «There are certain psychological obstacles whose existence a layman in the mental sciences may dimly surmise, but whose interrelations and vagaries he is incompetent to fathom; you, I am convinced, will be able to suggest educative methods, lying more or less outside the scope of politics, which will eliminate these obstacles.... Is it possible to control man's mental evolution so as to make him proof against the psychoses of hate and destructiveness?... But it would be of the greatest service to us all were you to present the problem of world peace in the light of your most recent discoveries, for such a presentation well might blaze the trail for new and fruitful modes of action» (Einstein in Freud, «Why War?» 199 and 201-202). This appeal emulates circumstances which both Klaatu and Barnhardt face. Klaatu cannot manage to communicate his imperative message through political channels. The nations' leaders are too suspicious of each other to ever be able to come together in unity – even if it is to save the world from destruction. Barnhardt is his last resort. Barnhardt, like Einstein, has also asked Klaatu for a presentation which «might blaze the trail for new and fruitful modes of action». Barnhardt specifically asks for a «little demonstration of force» which would make everyone aware of the seriousness of the situation. Klaatu picks up and examines Barnhardt's pipe and promises a «dramatic but non-destructive» demonstration – resulting in the day the earth stood still. At precisely noon, on the day after their discussion, all electricity ceases to operate – it has been neutralized. Care is taken not to jeopardize human life. Therefore, planes, hospitals, etc., are exempt. During the half hour standstill, there is a curious conversation between Professor Barnhardt and his secretary – the woman who caught Klaatu writing on the Professor's board. He asks, «Tell me, Hilda, does all this frighten you? Does it make you feel insecure?» She replies, «Yes, sir, it certainly does.» Barnhardt responds, «That's good, Hilda. I'm glad!» By getting Hilda to consciously verbalize her insecurity, Barnhardt can assume that Klaatu's demonstration has worked. Klaatu has successfully broken down the world's resistance to «the talking cure».

In his response to Einstein's letter, Freud writes that he wants to discuss an issue that was not directly addressed in the letter but it is an issue in which Freud is personally interested. «Why do you and I and so many other people rebel so violently against war? Why do we not accept it as

another of the many painful calamities of life? There is no need to be shocked at my raising this question. For the purpose of an investigation such as this one, one may perhaps be allowed to wear a mask of assumed detachment» (213). Freud proceeds to answer his own questions by reminding us of the integrity and value of human life and human achievement. But his final reason is, as he states, «that owing to the perfection of instruments of destruction a future war might involve the extermination of one or perhaps both of the antagonists» (Freud 213). He further acknowledges that «[w]e shall be making a false calculation if we disregard the fact that law was originally brute violence and that even to-day it cannot do without the support of violence.... If willingness to engage in war is an effect of the destructive instinct, the most obvious plan will be to bring Eros, its antagonist, into play against it.... In any case... there is no question of getting rid entirely of human aggressive impulses; it is enough to try and divert them to such an extent that they need not find expression in war» (208; 212).

To enable him to get out among the people and to become familiar with the basis for their «strange unreasoning attitudes», Klaatu also wears a mask – his face. This face is what he wears as he bids the earth farewell. Bobby's question is answered. They have found the spaceman. But, for Klaatu, the doubt still lingers. Now that he has been found, will all his words really make a difference? Will we be able to make the right decision? He tells us, «Your choice is simple. Join us and live in peace or pursue your present course and face obliteration. We shall be waiting for your answer. The decision rests with you». Like Freud, Klaatu's words reveal that he is also troubled by human aggression. He says, «it can no longer be tolerated. There must be security for all or no one is secure. Now this does not mean giving up any freedom except the freedom to act irresponsibly. Your ancestors knew this when they made laws to govern themselves and hired policemen to enforce them.... For our policemen we created a race of robots.... The penalty for provoking their action is too terrible to risk. The result is we live in peace.... Free to pursue more profitable enterprises».

From this speech we realize that Gort has been constructed as a universal super-ego whose «power can never be revoked» and whose provocation is «too terrible to risk». Like the super-ego, Gort «represents the most important characteristics of the development both of the individual and of the species; indeed, by giving permanent expression to the influence of the parents it perpetuates the existence of the factors to which it owes its origin» (Freud, *The Ego and the Id* 35). Klaatu's creation of Gort functions in a similar manner to the way in which human beings construct their super-egos. Gort and his fellow robots were created to safeguard interplanetary ethical behavior and they either approve of or punish that behavior. Gort, however, also functions as Klaatu's father when, in the presence of Klaatu's surrogate mother, Helen, Gort brings Klaatu back into life. (The participation of Helen in this scene helps to explain the absence of any romantic involvement between Helen and Klaatu. The rays of Gort would be too terrible to risk.)

«Psycho-analysis is [also] an instrument to enable the ego [Klaatu] to achieve a progressive conquest of the id [earthlings] ... we [can] see this ego [Klaatu] as a poor creature owing service to three masters and consequently menaced by three dangers: from the external world [other planets], from the libido of the id [earthlings], and from the severity of the super-ego [Gort]. Three kinds of anxiety correspond to these three dangers, since anxiety is the expression of a retreat from danger. As a frontier-creature, the ego tries to mediate between the world [universe] and the id [earth], to make the id pliable to the world and, by means of its muscular activity, to make the world fall in with the wishes of the id. In point of fact it behaves like the physician during an analytic treatment: it offers itself, with the attention it pays to the real world, as a libidinal object to the id, and aims at attaching the id's libido to itself. It is not only a helper to the id; it is also a submissive slave who courts his master's love.... But since the ego's work of sublimation results in a defusion of the instincts and a liberation of the aggressive instincts in the super-ego, its struggle against the libido exposes it to the danger of maltreatment and death» (Freud, *The Ego and the Id* 56). These conditions have already been fulfilled in the film's treatment of Klaatu as being representative of the ego. He has been wounded and then killed and if we earthlings don't take heed we all may

suffer the consequences of the wrath of Gort. Within the confines of the picture and according to Freud, the id «has no means of showing the ego either love or hate. It cannot say what it wants; it has achieved no unified will» (62).

Once we detect Freud's image, these scenes come to the forefront, creating an interpretive psychoanalytic allegory as a means to analyzing the film. How better to explain: Klaatu's gift and its immediate destruction; his being deprived of the microphone as he is about to convey his message; his borrowing of the flashlight; his fondling of the pipe? Freud has no lines in the film, his character is not mentioned in the credits, and in all of my research I could not find one incident where Freud's image is cited as an integral part of what this film may be trying to communicate. I have noticed that when the film is discussed, the scenes with Klaatu inside Professor Barnhardt's office are not generally the focus and in most cases the scenes aren't even mentioned. Like Bobby, I have wondered whether anyone else has ever found him... Freud, the «inner space» man. Did Freud's picture need the executive approval of the Hollywood studio heads? Did Robert Wise, the director, see it? Did Bernard Herrmann, the composer, see it? Who put it there? Did no one notice it was Freud's image? Did they care? Was it a mistake? A visual parapraxis? A statement? A joke? Does the picture challenge us to interpret nuclear aggression as a psychological conflict? Or is a picture sometimes just a picture? *Your choice is simple. I shall be waiting for your answer. The decision rests with you.*

WORKS CITED

- The Day the Earth Stood Still*. Dir. Robert Wise. Music. Bernard Herrmann. Perf. Michael Rennie, Patricia Neal, Hugh Marlowe, Sam Jaffe, Billy Gray, and Lock Martin. Videocassette. Fox Video 1011, 1991. All quotes are taken from the film's soundtrack.
- Freud, S. (1953-74). *The Ego and the Id*. Vol. 19, *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud* (pp. 3-66). 24 vols. Translated and edited by James Strachey. London: Hogarth.
- Freud, S. (1953-74). Psycho-Analytic Notes on an Autobiographical Account of a Case of Paranoia. Vol. 12, *Standard Edition* (pp. 9-82). London: Hogarth.
- Freud, S. (1953-74). The «Uncanny». Vol. 17, *Standard Edition* (pp. 217-256). London: Hogarth.
- Freud, S. (1953-74). Why War? Vol. 22, *Standard Edition* (pp. 197-215). London: Hogarth.
- Hoffmann, E.T.A. (1967). The Sandman. In E. F. Bleiler (Ed.), *The Best Tales of Hoffmann* (pp. 183-214). New York: Dover.
- Smith, S. C. (1991). *A Heart At Fire's Center: The Life and Music of Bernard Herrmann*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Psychoanalysis and literature, as seen by undergraduates (*)

LÁSZLÓ HALÁSZ (**)

Freud (1955:2,160-161) remarked of his first case histories about hysteria written together with Breuer that they could read as short stories, which he found rather problematical from the scientific point of view. He felt some tension between the scientific aim of cathartic method inspired by literature and the manner of non-scientific presentation of symptoms connected to the patients' history of sufferings. He explained this not by his personal affinities but by the nature of the material. After all, according to his affinities psychology is science and nothing else (Freud, 1955a:282).

In two papers I presented at our earlier conferences and published in our volumes (Halász, 1992, 1996) I talked about some Freudian texts as fictive literary and historiographical texts not only metaphorically. But even in these Freud starts from the fundamental phenomena and mechanisms discovered by himself and in his opinion these are parts of science. This means the testability of the empirical predictability based on his hypotheses (Grünbaum, 1984). Thus, my interest in literary-artistic characteristics of Freudian texts does not wish to play off psychoanalytical hermeneutics against empirical psychoanalysis.

In postmodern literature (and in postmodern philosophy and perhaps in some sciences) and in postmodern taste, too, the borderlines between fictive and nonfictive are blurred (Habermas, 1988), as a sign of changes in social thought (Geertz, 1983). From this point of view Freudian text is a postmodern phenomenon as well. The fundamental work *The Interpretation of Dreams* in which Freud traces several of his dreams back to novels that deeply affected him, can be read as an autobiographical novel in which the author discovers unconscious material from his childhood. The narrative presented in the first person singular – is a rather popular narrative form at that time – is a general theory of dream interpretation and is at the same time a particular history of the author's life (Thomas, 1990).

As I pointed out when analyzing his book *Moses and Monotheism*, Freud mixed the forms and did not easily give up his idea of writing novels. And several decades earlier, at the end of his

(*) The study has been financially supported by the National Research Foundation (T 026234).

(**) Institute for Psychology of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, P. O. Box 398, Budapest, H-1394 Hungary.

Leonardo, he realized that what he had written could be regarded merely as a psychoanalytical novel. Although here, as with his first case studies, he refers to literature as something lacking in scientific value, in the case of *Moses* he does not regard his original literary endeavour as negative. While *Moses* is a psychological text – at least in its intention –, it is a historical and not less a literary text at one and the same time. But as I also showed in detail, Freud's work displays an even greater paradox. One of his earlier works is devoted to the interpretation of a literary piece, *Delusions and Dreams in Jensen's Gradiva*. As a matter of fact, this longest work of literary interpretation is the work of a historian whose speciality is the remote past.

Freud – in accordance with the narrative tradition – paid great attention to fashioning a good story, one which is continuous, coherent, clear and closed as Spence (1982) has emphasized. However, Freud admired not only Antiquity; he liked classic detective stories as well. But when we read Freud's stories the material itself and the new, special way of understanding which makes the material understandable, that is, unambiguous, are determined by his intentions. Freud's control over his readers is significantly greater than that of the classic detective story writers over theirs (Fish, 1989). At the same time, Freud approaches his reader (audience) using an intimate «conversational» style. Mahoney (1982) has analyzed in detail the Freudian rhetorical-poetical devices which helped him to appeal to the receiver.

Undoubtedly, the role of the rhetorical-poetical factors in Freud's definition of his material, and his interpretation and shaping of it by any standards. The direct consequence of this is that if a reader resists it or entertains the possibility of a different rhetorical construction, one will reach a different interpretation – even a different narrative. And we know that while some scholars in the humanities are rather tolerant towards Freud's unusual position between fiction and nonfiction and are inclined to highly appreciate it, some others consider it totally unacceptable. And in a number of cases it is not clear whether the given attitude towards Freudian texts in particular and psychoanalysis in general is a genuine consequence of reading Freud or whether the attitude precedes the later reading experience, if there was one at all. Certainly, if we wish to know the extent to which we can speak of Freudianism's effect, and especially its literary-artistic related areas beyond the circle of experts whose work it is to set forth their own standpoints, some empirical study is necessary. Anyway, Moscovici (1975) made a thorough study of how psychoanalysis was represented in France by questioning a sample of the total French population and by content analyzing a year's output of the French press.

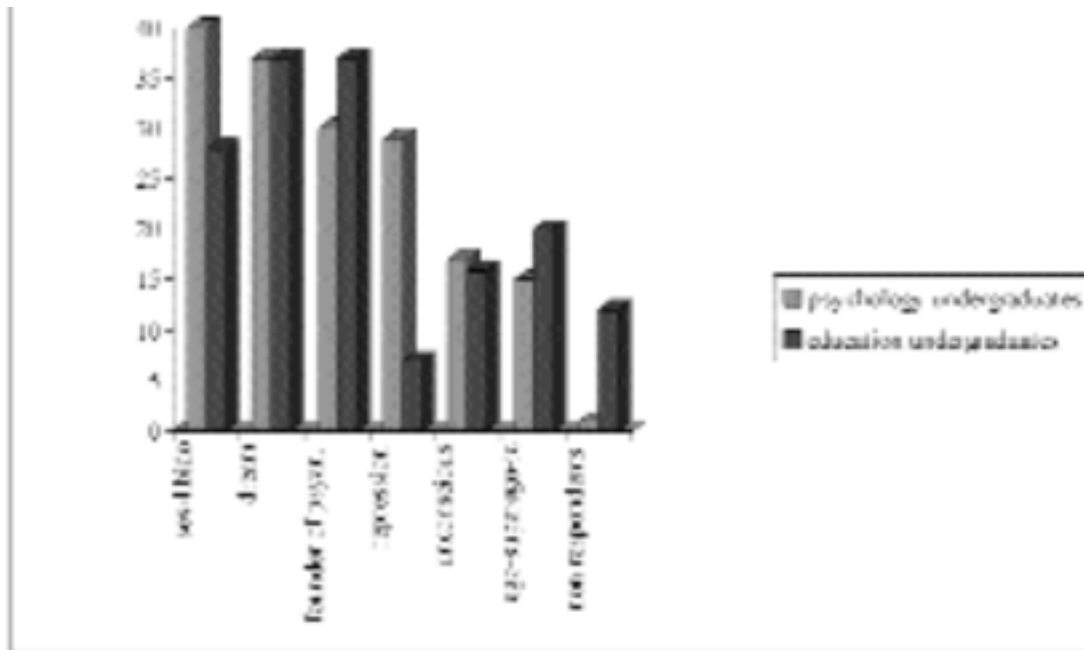
Questionnaire. I put some questions using Moscovici's response alternatives about the main reasons of being patients, social-ideological-political standpoints regarding psychoanalysis, the extent of psychoanalysis, the main sources of psychoanalysis and attitudes towards it. There were four open-ended questions: To associations with Freud's name, the characterizing of psychoanalysis, the enumeration of psychoanalytical terms and the specification of psychoanalytical works relating to the arts were added the subjects' report as to their knowledge. The most important difference with regard to Moscovici's questions was a set of items that could be answered using scales.

Five items were linked with the role of psychoanalysis in psychology, sociology, historiography, literary theory and culture in general, eight additional items were constructed regarding Freud's and psychoanalysis's relationship to fiction, artistic knowledge on the psyche, literature, pathology, fashion and on the activity of a writer, of a scholar and of a story-teller (for these items in detail see the results).

Subjects. It was necessary that the members of the sample had some basic relevant knowledge. This meant that they had studied, or were studying the topic. A population of university undergraduates was chosen: partly students of psychology (N=138) and partly students of education (N=224), from three Hungarian universities. 45 and 94 respectively were freshmen, 47 and 60 respectively were sophomores, 46 and 70 respectively were undergraduates in higher years. 301 were women and the rest men. Considering that there were no significant differences in the frequencies of the responses between universities or between sexes I, shall ignore these factors. We shall see to what extent these undergraduates' mental representations of Freud and of psychoanalysis – especially concerning the characteristics outlined above – accords with that of the experts.

Results. It makes sense first to examine the responses concerning knowledge. «What does Freud's name suggest to you? (Please give your first three associations)» A negligible proportion of the psychology undergraduates, but more than one-tenth of the education undergraduates gave no response. (Here and subsequently the proportions are compared to the number of the respondents.) The most frequent answers among the psychology undergraduates were sex-libido and dream interpretation (more than one-third and one-third respectively), then founder of psychoanalysis and repression (less than one-third and one-third respectively), finally unconscious and at least one of ego-superego-id triad (one-sixth and one-seventh respectively). With the education undergraduates sex-libido and repression were less frequent, and ego-superego-id were more frequent. The whole population was characterized by the associations as follows: founder of psychoanalysis, dream interpretation, sex-libido (one-third and one-third respectively) (Figure 1). (The test of between proportions was used to measure the differences statistically between the data computed in per cent.)

FIGURE 1
The most frequent responses in per cent to the question
«What does Freud's name suggest to you?»

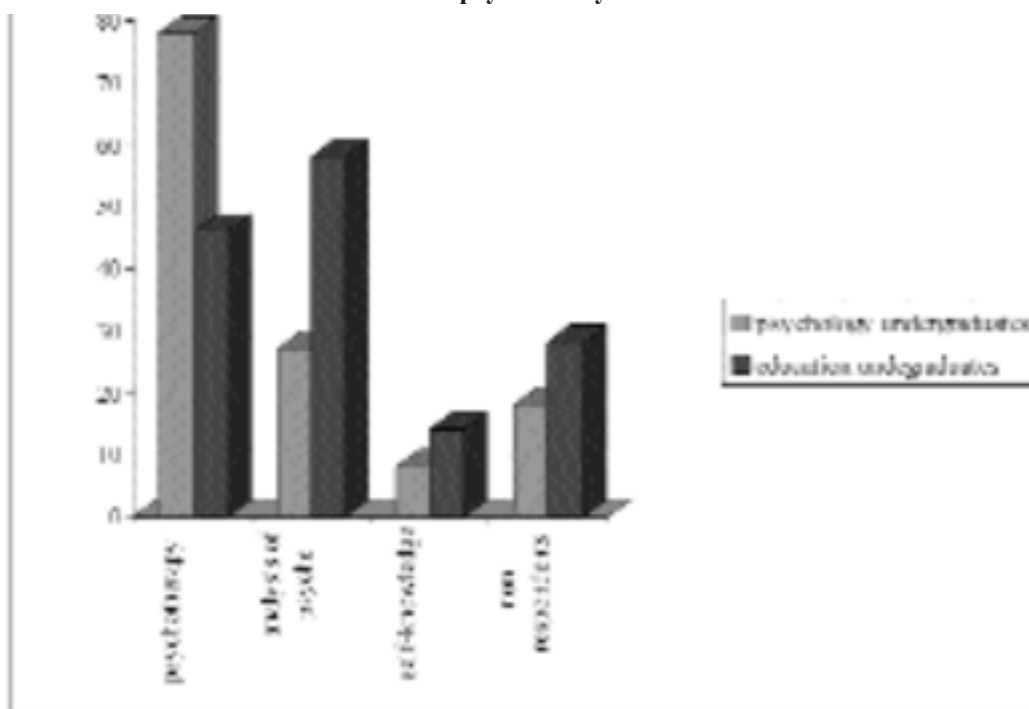


Significant differences between the two groups: sex-libido, repression, ego-superego-id and non respondents

Nearly one-fifth of the psychology undergraduates, but more than one-quarter of the education undergraduates failed to respond to the question «What is psychoanalysis?» Some of the non-respondents may have thought that they had already stated the main points with their associations. Of course, the psychology undergraduates responded not only more, but their also gave more detailed answers. Even if the role of their interest were neglected, we could not overlook the mere quantitative differences in relevant courses. The decisive majority of the psychology undergraduates

characterized psychoanalysis as a kind of therapy which discovered traumas and repressed memories, uncovered the unconscious and solved conflicts (according to three-quarters of them); the frequency of this category was followed by analysis of psyche, factors of personality and study of the human mind (according to one-quarter of them), while less than one-tenth emphasized instruction in self-knowledge, seeking out problems in ourselves, and teaching us to change ourselves using our own resources. With the education undergraduates the dominant category appeared mostly as a mere Hungarian translation of the term of psychoanalysis (Figure 2).

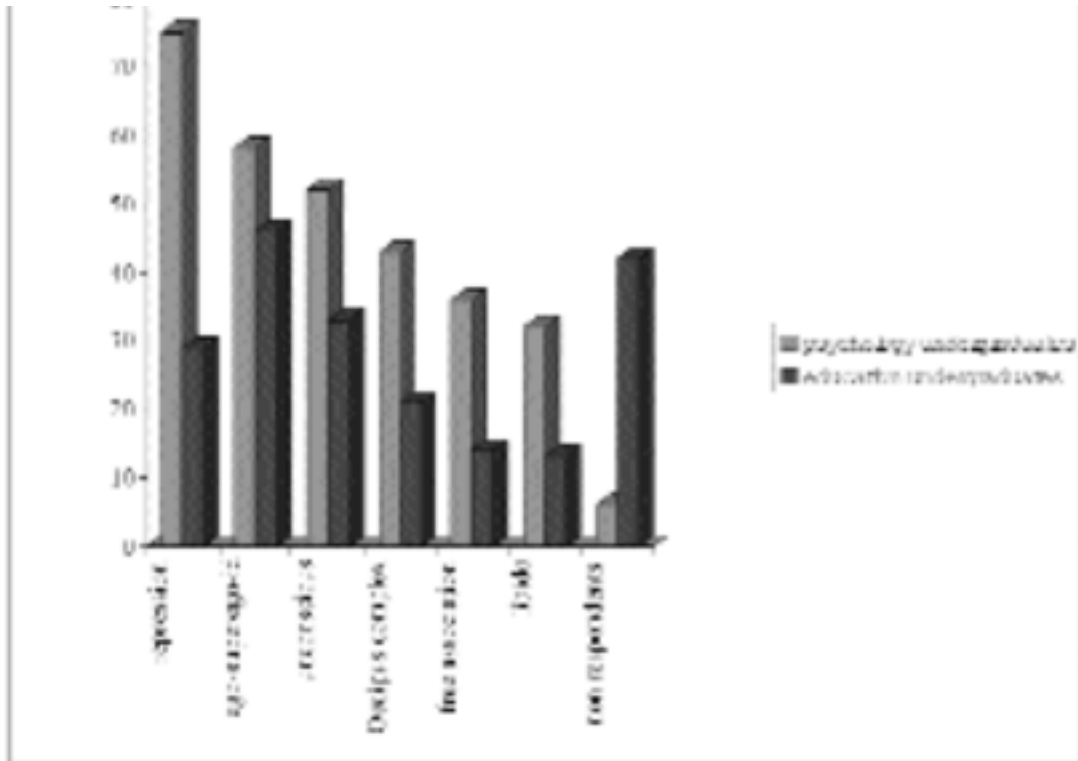
FIGURE 2
Responses in per cent to the question
«What is psychoanalysis?»



Significant differences between the groups: psychotherapy and analysis of psyche

Only a negligible proportion of the psychology undergraduates failed to respond to the request «Please enumerate psychoanalytical terms», but almost half of the education undergraduates failed to do so. With the psychology undergraduates the most frequent category was repression (three-quarters of them), this was followed by ego-superego-id and the unconscious (more than half and half respectively), then the Oedipus complex, free association and libido (one-third each). With the education undergraduates – despite the fact that the data were compared to the much smaller number of the respondents – the frequency of all the terms was behind that of the psychology undergraduates and only ego-superego-id was significant (Figure 3).

FIGURE 3
The most frequent responses in per cent to the request
«Please enumerate psychoanalytical terms»



Significant differences between the two groups: all the categories except ego-superego-id

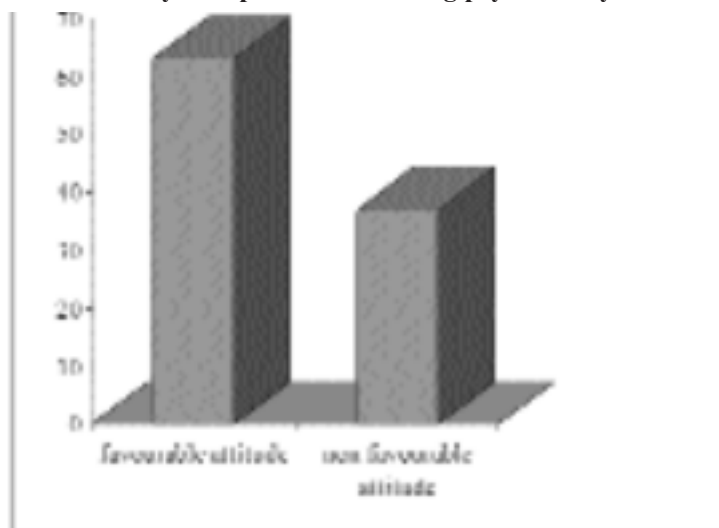
The decisive majority of the subjects did not respond to the request «Please specify psychoanalytical works on arts». The best-known work was Freud's *An Early Childhood Memory of Leonardo da Vinci* (17 references), then Freud's *Michelangelo's Moses* (12 references), Jung et al. *Man and His Symbols* (11 references), Bettelheim: *The Uses of Enchantment. The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales* (6 references).

Practically all the subjects responded to all the questions to express their attitude through opinion. I will only present those which proved significant.

A fundamental variable was the response to the question of «What is your opinion concerning psychoanalysis?» as an index of the favourable or non-favourable attitude. Nearly two-thirds of the subjects marked the unambiguously positive «favourable», the others mostly chose the «neutral» and only a small proportion chose the definitely «unfavourable» alternative. Considering that the choice of «neutral» also differed from «favourable», as an expression of non-favourable attitude, it was reduced to «unfavourable» responses. There was no significant difference between the two groups of subjects (Figure 4).

Of the responses to the question of «From which sources did you acquire your knowledge of psychoanalysis?» education was strikingly the most important factor (with more than four-fifths of the subjects, but with the psychology undergraduates a still higher figure). The most striking difference between the education and psychology undergraduates was in judging the role of specialist books (with four-fifths of the psychology undergraduates, but only with nearly one-third

FIGURE 4
The responses in per cent to the question
«What is your opinion concerning psychoanalysis?»



No significant difference between the two groups of undergraduates

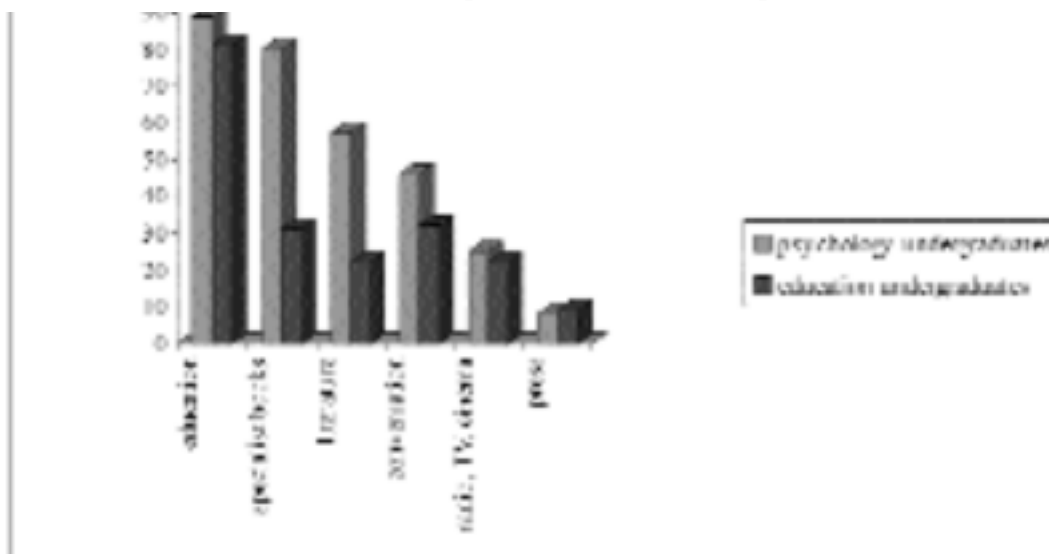
of the education undergraduates). With the education undergraduates conversation was placed as third (one third of them), which was followed by literature, then radio, television and cinema (one-fifth each). Again with the psychology undergraduates literature was in third place (more than half of them), this was followed by conversation (nearly the same proportion), then radio, television and cinema. The role of the press was unimportant in both groups (Figure 5).

«In your opinion can be psychoanalysis used for political purposes?» One-third of the subjects said yes, nearly one-third said no and somewhat more than one-third said they did not know. Reducing the last-mentioned two categories, the only responses that stood out were those saying that psychoanalysis could be used for political purposes and which were not certain about this (Figure 6).

«What do you think is the role of psychoanalysis in ...?» showed the weight of psychoanalysis in psychology, sociology, literary theory, historiography and in culture as such on seven-point scales (from 1 = I completely disagree to 7 = I completely agree). Psychology was the first which was followed by culture as such, then by literary theory and sociology and finally by historiography. The psychology undergraduates gave a higher than average score to the role of psychoanalysis in literary theory than did the education undergraduates, while giving a lower than average score to its role in sociology than did the education undergraduates (Figure 7).

«Freud is one of the greatest scholars of our century» (in the figure: scholar) received the strikingly highest average score. This was followed by the items «Freud is one of the greatest writers of our century» (writer), «Freud is a great story-teller of our life as far as he makes all his patients great story-tellers of their own lives» (story-teller) and «There is much fiction and little fact in psychoanalysis» (fiction) (their average scores were around the middle). The items «Artists, especially writers and poets know more about psychological life than psychoanalysts do» (artists), «Psychoanalysis like any other fashion phenomenon has exercised only a temporary influence on the arts» (fashion phenomenon), «The interest in anything that is pathological connects psychoanalysis with the today's arts» (pathology) and «Psychoanalysis is closer to literature than to

FIGURE 5
The responses in per cent to the question
«From which sources did you acquire your knowledge of psychoanalysis?»



No significant difference between the groups: specialist books, literature, conversation

FIGURE 6
The responses in per cent to the question
«In your opinion can be psychoanalysis used for political purposes?»

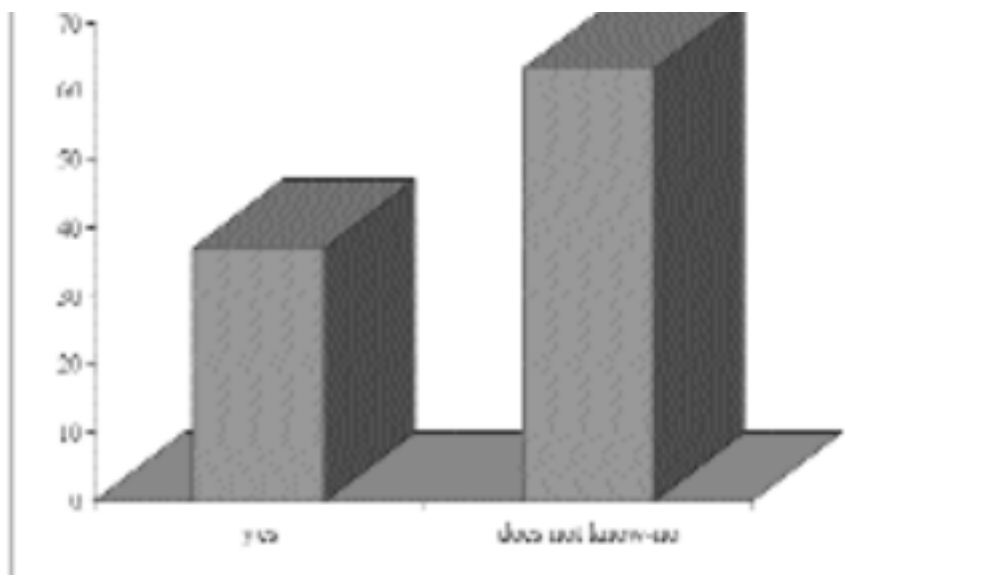
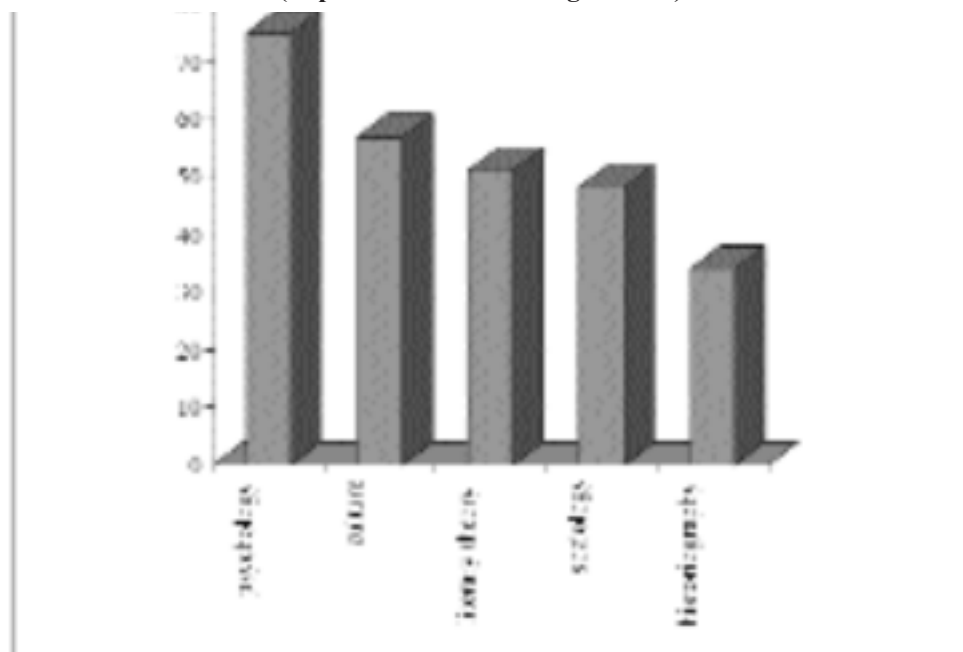


FIGURE 7
The role of psychoanalysis in some sciences and culture as such
(in per cent of the average scores)



science» (literature) all received the lowest average scores. The psychology undergraduates thought Freud even more outstanding a scholar than did the education undergraduates did, again the former undergraduates agreed less that the effect of psychoanalysis on the today's arts was only a temporary fashion phenomenon than did the latter undergraduates (Figure 8). (The test of difference between means was computed to check the difference between the average scores of the items within the same population, the two-tailed test of significance was used to check the difference between the average scores of the items of the two populations(the figures were constructed computing the data in per cent.)

Based on the scores of each subject a clusteranalysis was computed in both populations (clustering by minimum distance method). The results showed which items were closely correlated with each other, – that is, the probability of the connections between the items.

As for the items concerning the role of psychoanalysis on the whole there was a closer correlation between the psychology undergraduates than between the education undergraduates. That is, the psychology undergraduates' judgments were less heterogeneous than those of the education undergraduates. With the psychology undergraduates two closely connected pairs were fundamental: the role of psychoanalysis in literary theory and culture as such, and its role in psychology and sociology. Remarkably, the role of historiography was also associated with the latter paired cluster and the historiography item connected this triad with the paired cluster (Figures 9a and 9b).

The items concerning fiction and arts were also organized into a more homogeneous cluster with the psychology undergraduates than with the education undergraduates. The Freud is a great writer – Freud is a great scholar pair was fundamental to which the Interest in the pathological was connected (although more loosely); another triad was also remarkable: Psychoanalysis is close to literature – As a fashion phenomenon has had only a temporary effect on the arts – Artists know

FIGURE 8
 Psychoanalysis and Freud from the point of view of psychology of the arts
 (in per cent of the average scores)

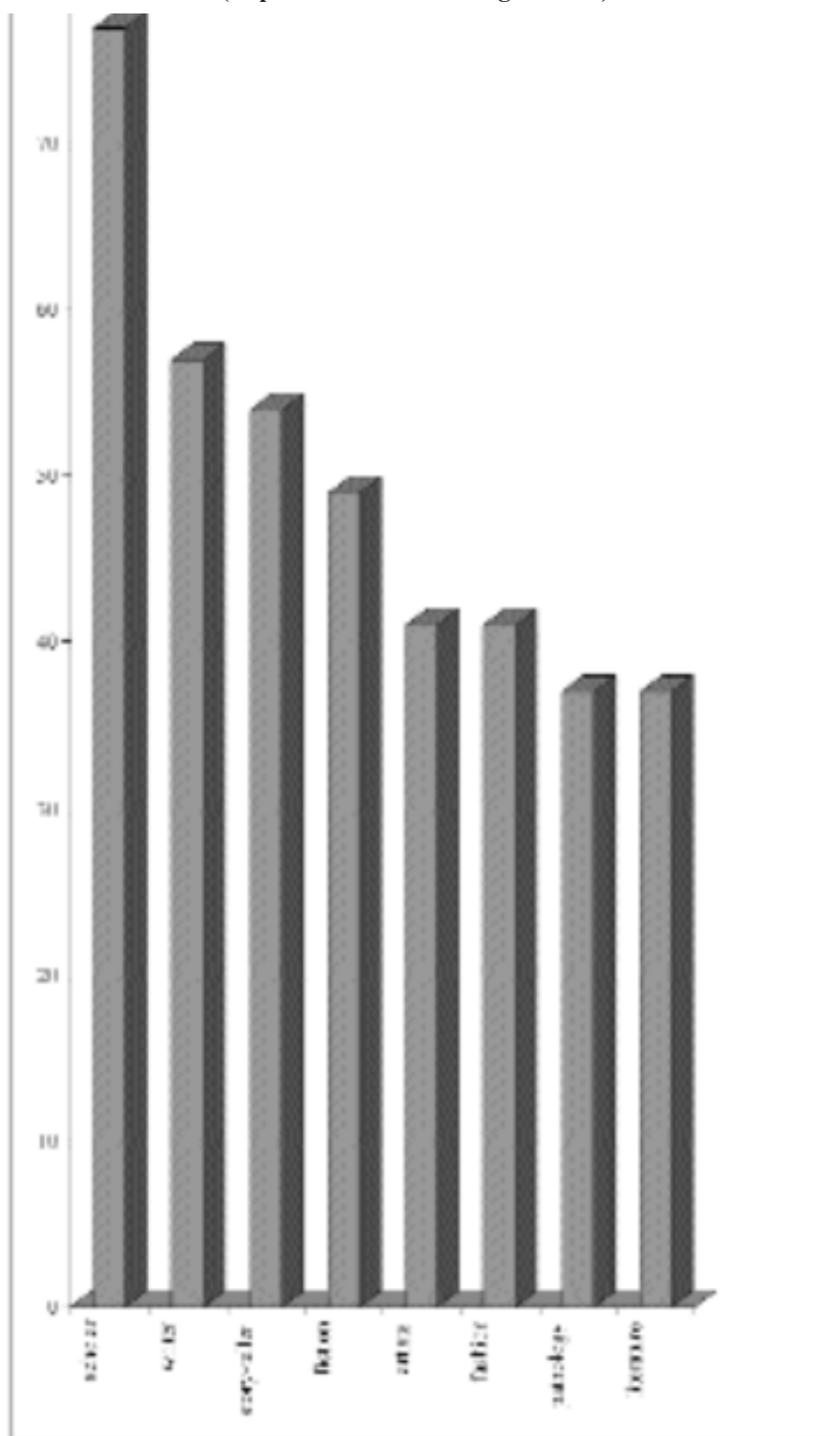


FIGURE 9/a
Dendrogram of the role of psychoanalysis in some sciences and culture as such
with psychology undergraduates

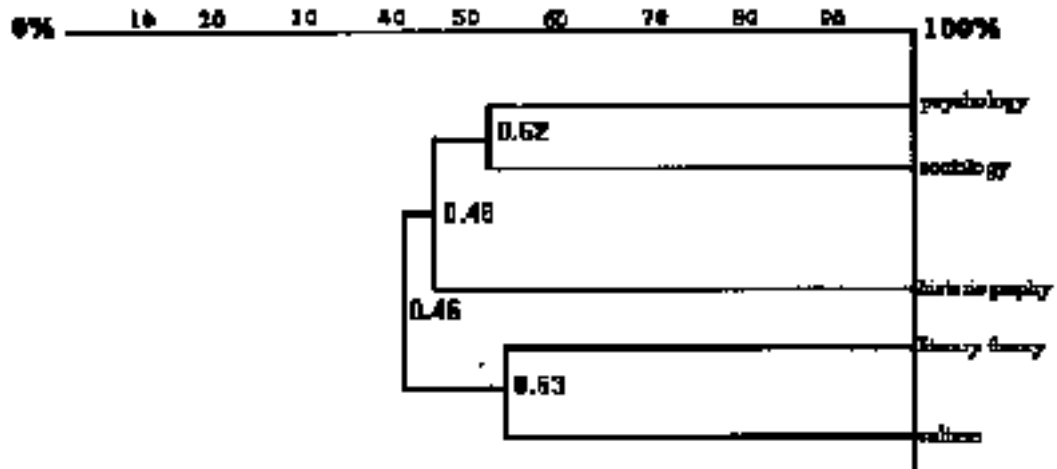


FIGURE 9/b
Dendrogram of the role of psychoanalysis in some sciences and culture as such
with education undergraduates

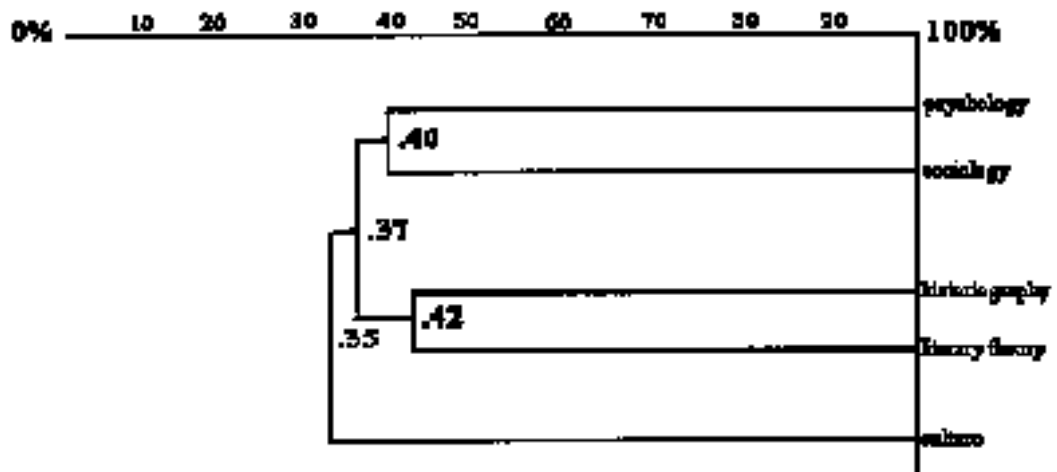


FIGURE 10/a
Dendrogram of psychoanalysis and Freud from the point of view of psychology of the arts
with psychology undergraduates

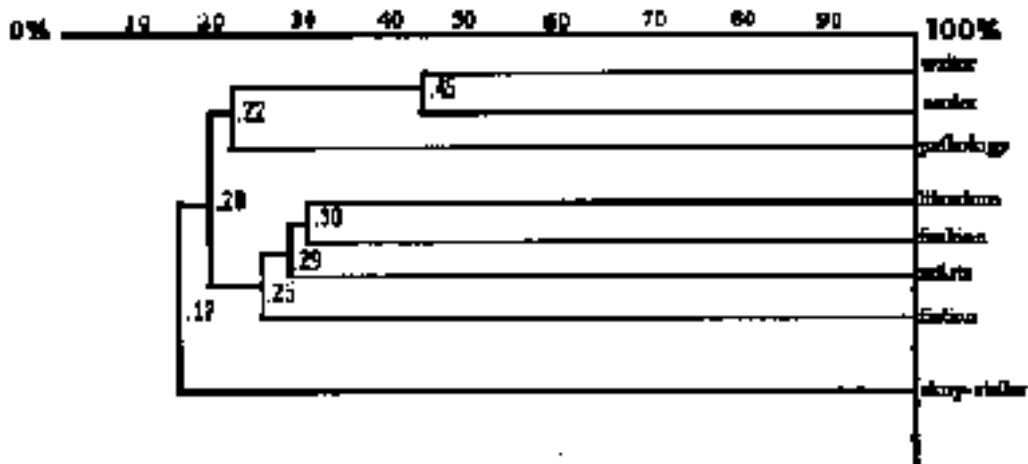
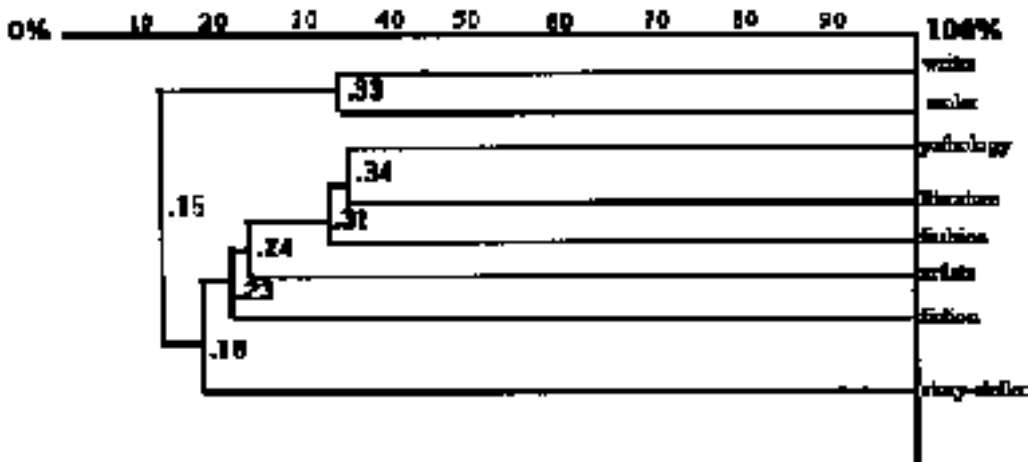


FIGURE 10/b
Dendrogram of psychoanalysis and Freud from the point of view of psychology of the arts
with education undergraduates



more about psychological life; the item Much fiction and little fact was connected with them somewhat more loosely, and at the same this cluster of four items was connected with the triad; the item Freud is a great story-teller was connected with them even more loosely on a low level. With the education undergraduates the correlations were weaker. Great writer – Great scholar were a paired cluster, Closer to literature – Interest in the pathological were the other paired cluster and all the other items were connected with them (Figures 10a and 10b).

A prominent task was to see how far information about psychoanalysis and Freud exercised an influence on the judgments. As fewer than one-tenth of the subjects gave at least one (acceptable) response when it came to enumerating psychoanalytical works on arts, the responses to the other three questions (associations aroused by Freud's name, characteristics of psychoanalysis and listed psychoanalytical terms) were considered. Based on the most frequent responses six categories in the first question, three in the second and again three in the third were presented. But in the first and the third cases ten and fourteen categories were coded. At the same time, a maximum of three associations with Freud's name were requested. Thus if a subject had given responses to all the possible categories, the maximum would have been twenty.

As we could see, the proportion of non-respondents to the second and the third questions was significant. It was very obvious that with the psychology undergraduates the proportion was lower than with the education undergraduates. The subject whose knowledge was relatively established would give fuller responses embracing several categories while the subject who had an information deficit would not. Based on the individual data the subjects' category frequency was between 0 and 13. The two extremities were separated. The group with the least knowledge (in all between 0 and 2 responses) consisted of 66 subjects (mostly the education undergraduates), while the group with the greatest knowledge (in all between 8 and 12 responses) consisted of 80 subjects (mostly the psychology undergraduates).

The relatively well-informed subjects – as compared with those who had an information deficit – judged psychoanalysis conspicuously more favourably and thought its role in literary theory and culture as such to be important, and considered Freud to be one of the greatest scholars, even one of the greatest writers of our century. They agreed less that psychoanalysis like any other fashion phenomenon has exercised only a temporary influence on the arts (Figure 11).

Those who acquired their knowledge of psychoanalysis from literature (as well) - as compared with those who did not - found the role of psychoanalysis in literary theory highly striking and did so in historiography as well, and considered Freud to be a great writer and psychoanalysis significantly closer to literature than to science. At the same time they agreed less that psychoanalysis as a fashion phenomenon has exercised only a temporary influence on the arts (Figure 12). According to the other items which did not show any significant differences, those who relied upon literature as a source were also inclined to appreciate the role of psychoanalysis in other sciences and culture as such. At the same time they saw psychoanalysis as fiction and Freud as a story-teller, and as a scholar somewhat more lucid than the others.

Those who thought that psychoanalysis could be used for political purposes – as compared to those who were uncertain about this – considered the weight of psychoanalysis in sociology and literary theory to be greater; at the same time they rather thought that artists, especially writers and poets, knew more about psychological life than psychoanalysts did (Figure 13). The items which did not show any significant differences showed a similar tendency. Those who thought that psychoanalysis could be used for political purposes on the one hand emphasized the role of psychoanalysis in culture as such more definitely and on the other stressed the common interest in the pathological connects psychoanalysis with the today's arts, and Freud as a story-teller.

The subjects who had a favourable attitude towards psychoanalysis – as compared those who did not – to a significant extent thought the role of psychoanalysis in psychology, in sociology and in culture as such to be important, and considered Freud to be one of the greatest scholars of our century. They agreed less that psychoanalysis contained too much fiction and too little fact, that as a fashion phenomenon has exercised only a temporary influence on the arts, that interest in the

FIGURE 11

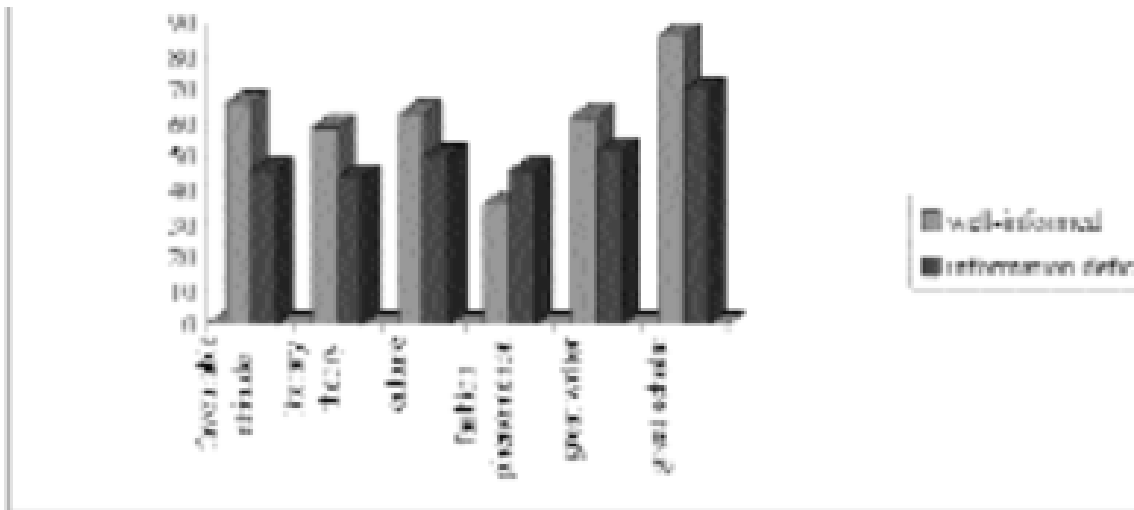


FIGURE 12

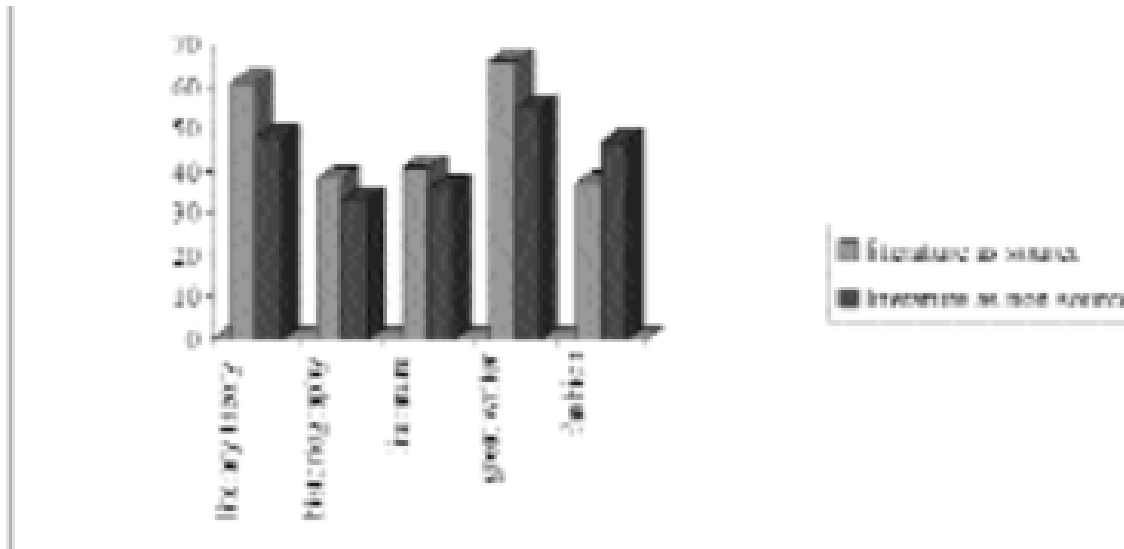
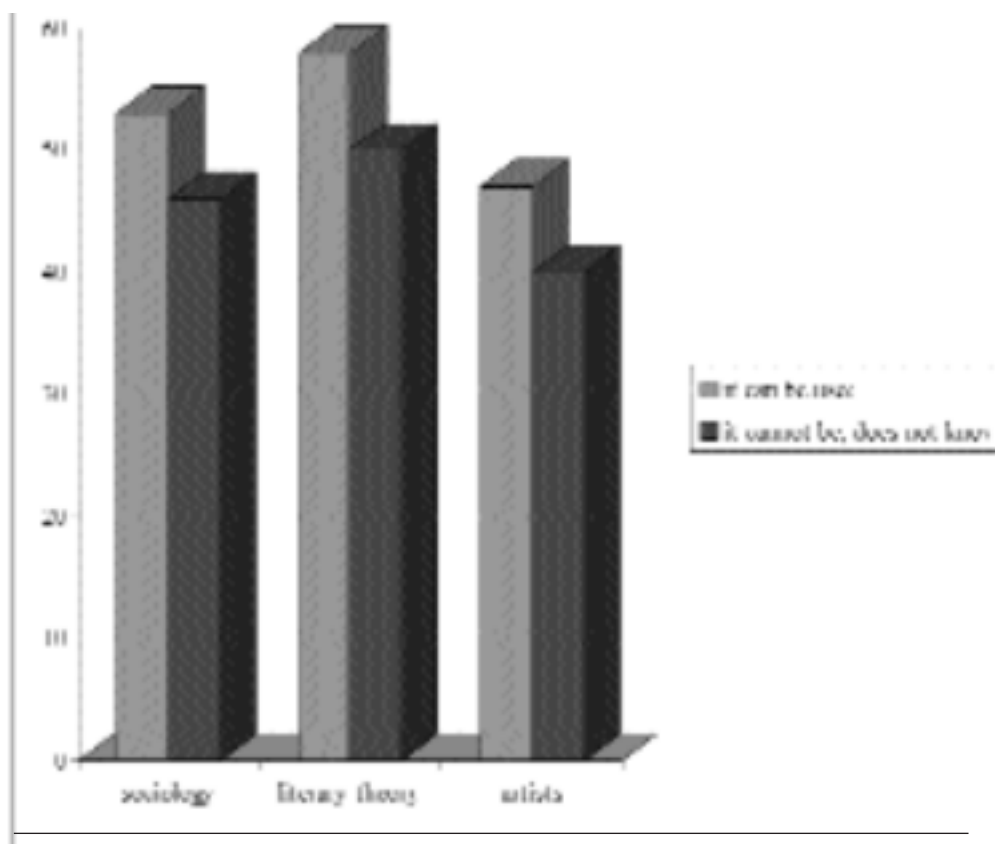


FIGURE 13
Significant differences in per cent depending on political usability

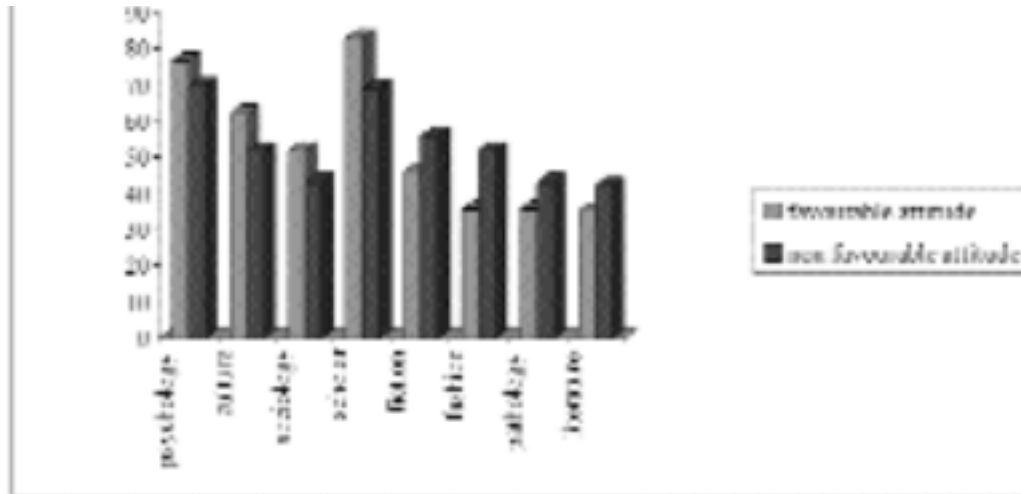


pathological connects it with today's arts, and that it is closer to literature than to science (Figure 14). But the other items in the judging of which no significant differences could be found showed a similar tendency. It can be said on the whole that the judging of the scientific weight of psychoanalysis and Freud was closely connected with the subjects' attitude.

Although Freud's name is far and away the best-known out of all the famous psychologists and although psychoanalysis is a part of the university curriculum for the given subjects, the majority's mental representation was not replete with delicate nuances. Still, they were much above the general level of education and even more above it with regard to Freud. One-quarter to one-fifth of the subjects (mostly psychologists to be) who knew essentially more than some correct, but ready-made phrases about Freud and psychoanalysis. There must have been some who had profound personal experiences of the topic. But even of these subjects only a few (that is, a minority of the minority) knew at least one approximate title of a psychoanalytical work on the arts, although the response did not require the reading of such a work. Anyway, these are easily available in our libraries and bookshops, in good Hungarian translations.

Again, the vast majority of the subjects' attitudes towards psychoanalysis were favourable. That is, the proportion of the subjects whose attitude was favourable was much higher than the proportion of those whose knowledge was detailed and passed significantly beyond some psychoanalytical commonplaces. As was strikingly the most important source of their knowledge,

FIGURE 14
Significant differences in per cent depending on attitude



primarily the lectures were responsible for both the generally moderate level of knowledge and for the basically favourable attitude itself. It is especially remarkable that while there was an obvious difference between the psychology and education undergraduates in terms of their relevant knowledge, there was no difference between the outstanding share of education as the main source of it and between their basically favourable attitude. To all appearances, the lecturers had succeeded in conveying their mostly positive attitude to the topic more than in teaching its rather complicated scientific and hermeneutic aspects thoroughly. It is no surprise that the subjects (mostly psychologists to be) who also used specialist and literary books as sources and who were rather well-informed, showed a significantly more positive attitude than those who had an information deficit.

For the last-mentioned, the mass media could have played a compensatory role. But - as was presented - they could not, partly owing to the lack of systematic and successful programmes, partly owing to the lack of interest and partly owing to the conditions for reception. Thus, it is quite sure that those who are less educated than our education undergraduates have only fragmentary or cloudy ideas regarding the matter, if they have any at all. This refers to those who are not (were not, will not be) undergraduates, or those whose university education (from law school to polytechnics) is rather different.

On the whole, our subjects realized that outside psychology the role of psychoanalysis was remarkable in culture as such, with the well-informed subjects appreciating this even more and also clearly seeing its role in literary theory. On the whole, the subjects judged Freud to be a great scholar to an extraordinarily high degree. No doubt Freud's scientific prestige was exceptionally high in their eyes. In all likelihood, their idea of Freud's scientific merit was more unambiguous than that of the experts. But this did not prevent a great number of the subjects - in accordance with a considerable proportion of the experts - from thinking of Freud as a great writer and a great story-teller, and from admitting that there was much fiction in psychoanalysis. It is important to emphasize that the subjects in general and the better-informed psychologists to be in particular saw no significant contradiction in thinking of Freud as a great scholar and as a great writer. Thus, they connected these two items the most closely with each other.

At the same time, on the whole the subjects were less willing to accept that artists know more about psychological life than do psychoanalysts or that psychoanalysis was closer to literature than to science. They thought these pejorative, that is why those whose attitude was non-favourable were more willing to accept these views. If at the cost of scientific merit one definitely agreed in that psychoanalysis, Freud and the arts and the artistic way of thinking were closely related, one would express – intentionally or unintentionally – one’s non-favourable attitude at the same time. A completely different standpoint was that those who saw psychoanalysis as a politically-ideologically relevant, even fecund issue were sensitized to perceive the considerable role of psychoanalysis in the humanities and the relationship between psychoanalysis and literature. But the well-informed undergraduates and those who had acquired their knowledge from literature as well differed from the former ones to the greatest degree. They were able to tolerate Freud’s peculiar position between science and hermeneutics, between nonfiction and fiction. Their chances for reading and processing psychoanalytical and literary texts in an open-minded way were certainly higher than those of some Hungarian literary and/or history scholars, and, I have to admit, of some psychologists.

REFERENCES

- Fish, S. (1989). Withholding the missing portion: psychoanalysis and rhetoric. In *Doing what comes naturally* (pp. 533-554). Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Freud, S. (1955). *Standard Edition of the Complete Works of Sigmund Freud*, 24. In J. Strachey (Ed.). London: Hogarth Press.
- Freud, S. (1955a). *Standard Edition of the Complete works of Sigmund Freud*, 23. In J. Strachey (Ed.). London: Hogarth Press.
- Geertz, C. (1983). Blurred genres: The refiguration of social thought. In *Local knowledge: Further essays in interpretative anthropology* (pp. 19-35). New York: Basic Books.
- Grünbaum, A. (1984). *The foundations of psychoanalysis*. Berkeley-London-Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Habermas, J. (1988). Philosophie und Wissenschaft als Literatur? In *Nachtmetaphysisches Denken* (pp. 242-263). Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.
- Halász, L. (1992). Freud: Between Fiction and non-fiction. In F. Pereira (Ed.), *Literature and psychoanalysis* (pp. 15-23). Lisbon: Instituto Superior de Psicologia Aplicada.
- Halász, L. (1996). Freudian text - Historical text. In F. Pereira (Ed.), *Literature and psychoanalysis* (pp. 11-17). Lisbon: Instituto Superior de Psicologia Aplicada.
- Mahoney, P. (1982). *Freud as a writer*. Madison: International Universities Press.
- Moscovici, S. (1975). *La psychanalyse, son image et son public*. Paris: PUF.
- Spence, D. (1982). *Narrative truth and historical truth: Meaning and interpretation in psychoanalysis*. New York-London: Norton.
- Thomas, R. R. (1990). *Dreams of authority: Freud and the fictions of the unconscious*. Ithaca-London: Cornell Univeristy Press.